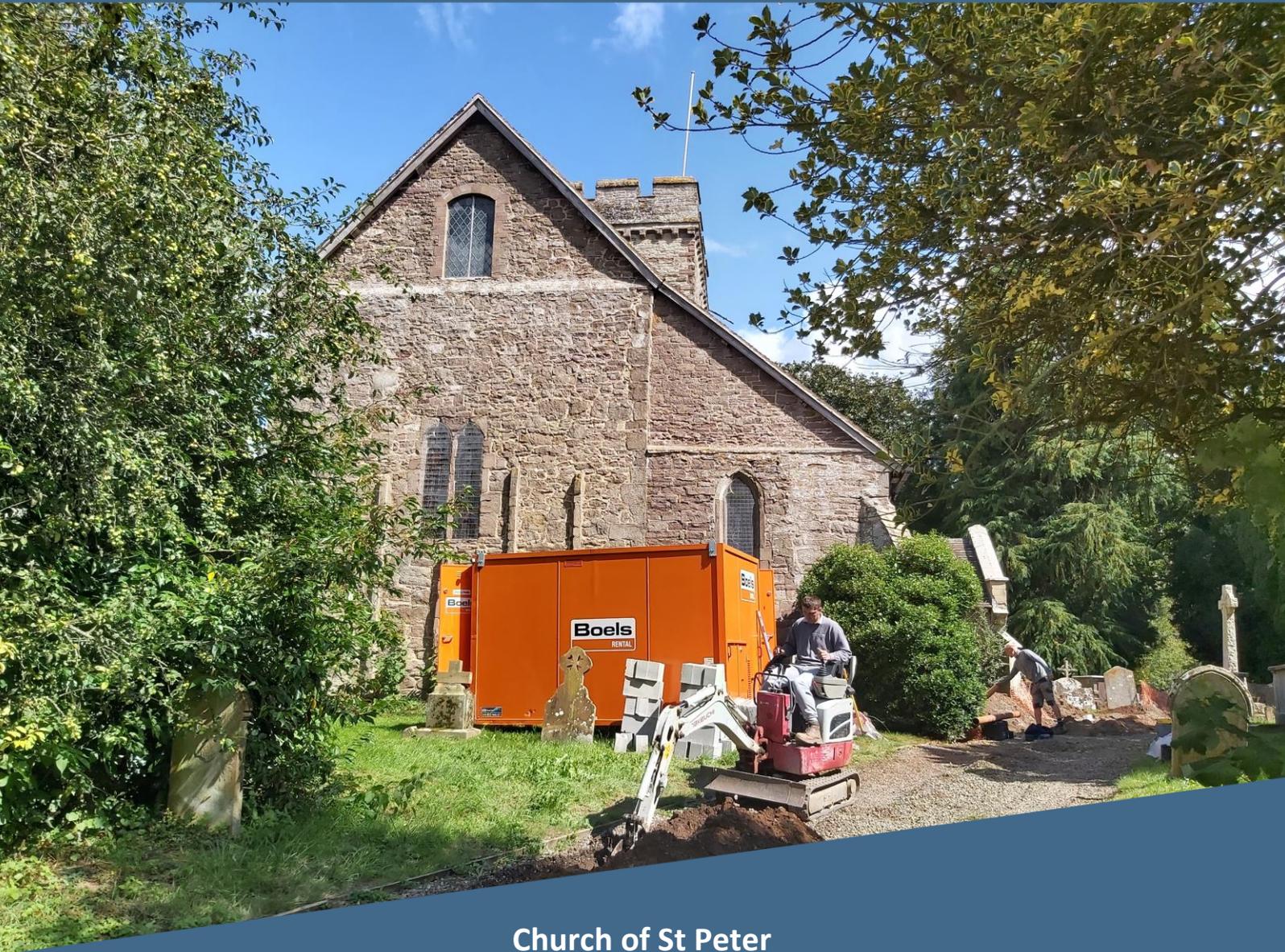


Archaeological Observation



Church of St Peter
Stanton Lacy
Shropshire

On behalf of

Stanton Lacy Parochial Church Council

September 2024

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REPORT REFERENCE

BA24129SLC/REP

GRID REFERENCE

NGR SO 49549 78826

OS LICENCE NUMBER

100055758

DATE

September 2024

Cover: View looking northeast showing trench excavation in progress

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1 Non-Technical Summary

Archaeological monitoring of groundworks was undertaken on August 19th and 20th 2024 in connection with the installation of drainage runs and a trench arch soakaway drain at the Church of St Peter Stanton Lacy Shropshire.

Apart from the section running along the gravel path from the roadside to the south porch, the trenching revealed a disturbed burial soil containing much disarticulated human bone. However, at the terminal end of the drainage trench in the location of the proposed soakaway drain running along the grass path within the burial ground, the near complete articulated human adult (male) skeleton was encountered.

The location of the skeletal remains marginally above the required engineering depth necessitated removal of the burial, which was carried out with due reverence in accordance with professional and ethical standards for the excavation of human remains within Christian burial grounds.

The remains were recorded in full prior to excavation with individual skeletal elements removed and bagged before being transferred to locked storage within the church for subsequent reinterment.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology (BA) was instructed by BCHN Architects on behalf of the Stanton Lacy Parochial Church Council (PCC) to monitor groundworks at the Church of St Peter Stanton Lacy (NGR SO 49549 78826) comprising the following elements:

1. Drain run and trench arch soakaway drain.
2. Water main trench from road gate to church.

The proposed relocation of the font on new foundations and the making good of the floor in existing location was excluded from the archaeological programme. Archaeological observation (AO) was carried out on the 19th and 20th of August 2024 in discussion with the Revd Fr Justin Parker and with Steve Arnold on behalf of the PCC. This report details the results for submission to Mr Arnold on behalf of the PCC.

3 Site Description

The Church of St Peter Stanton Lacy is a Grade I Listed Building (List Entry Number: 1269832) situated within the Stanton Lacy Conservation Area at an elevation of 92.6M AOD on the floodplain of the R. Corve which flow N/S immediately to the W.

The church was listed on the 12th of November 1954 and the listing description reads thus : *Parish church. C11 to C14, restored c1850, by T.H Wyatt. Rubble and dressed sandstone with ashlar detailing; plain tile roofs. Nave, chancel, north transept, south aisle, crossing tower; originally cruciform. Nave and north transept c1050; Early English tower; south aisle C14, with C19 porch.*

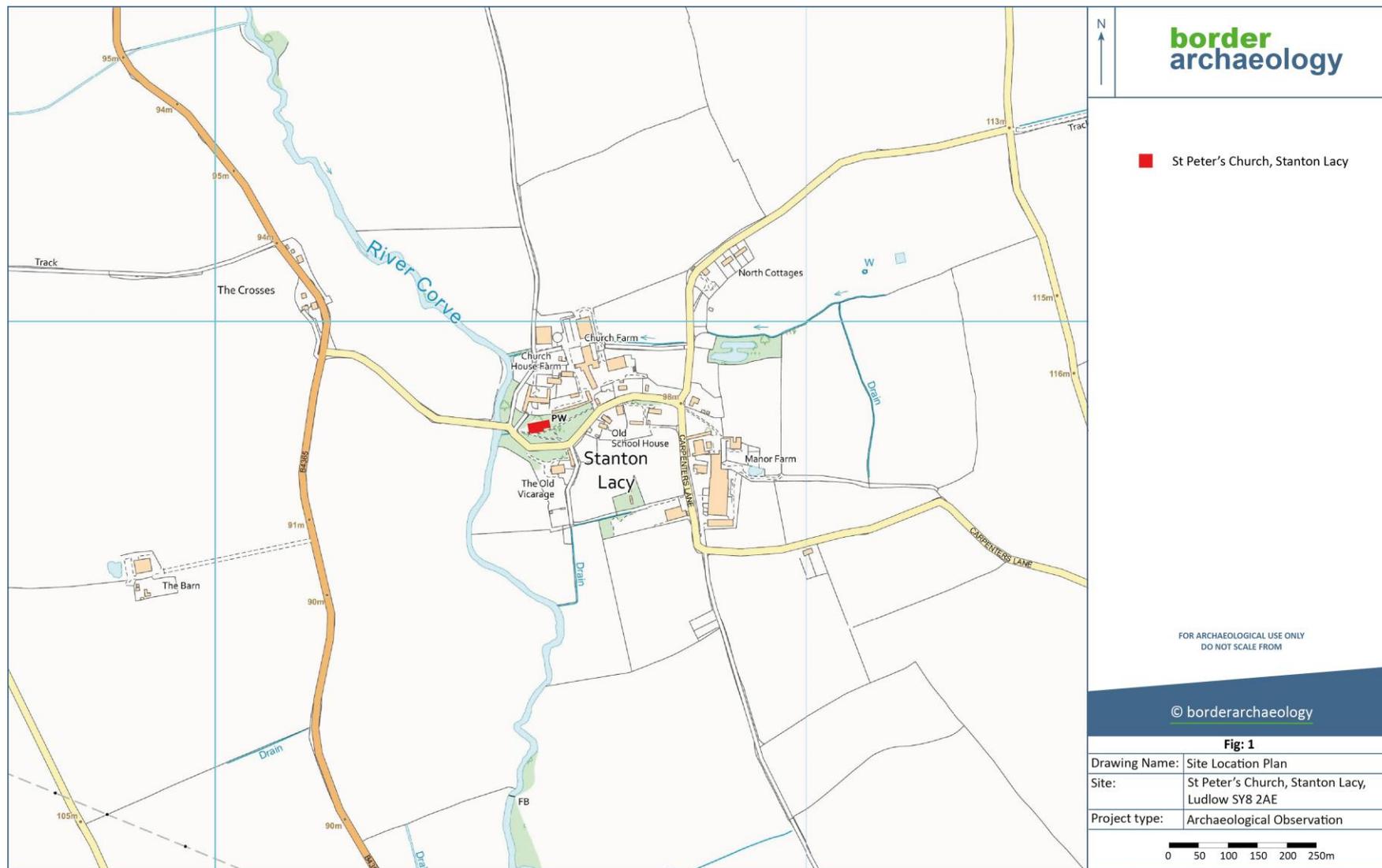
EXTERIOR: east and west walls of north transept and north wall of nave display pilaster strips in long-and-short work; blocked doorway with coved impost-blocks and roll-moulded hoodmould on long-and-short pilasters; tablet above with raised cross and enriched pilaster corbel. Exterior south wall of chancel has two cusped and moulded canopies, over weathered effigies; two plain canopies to south aisle.

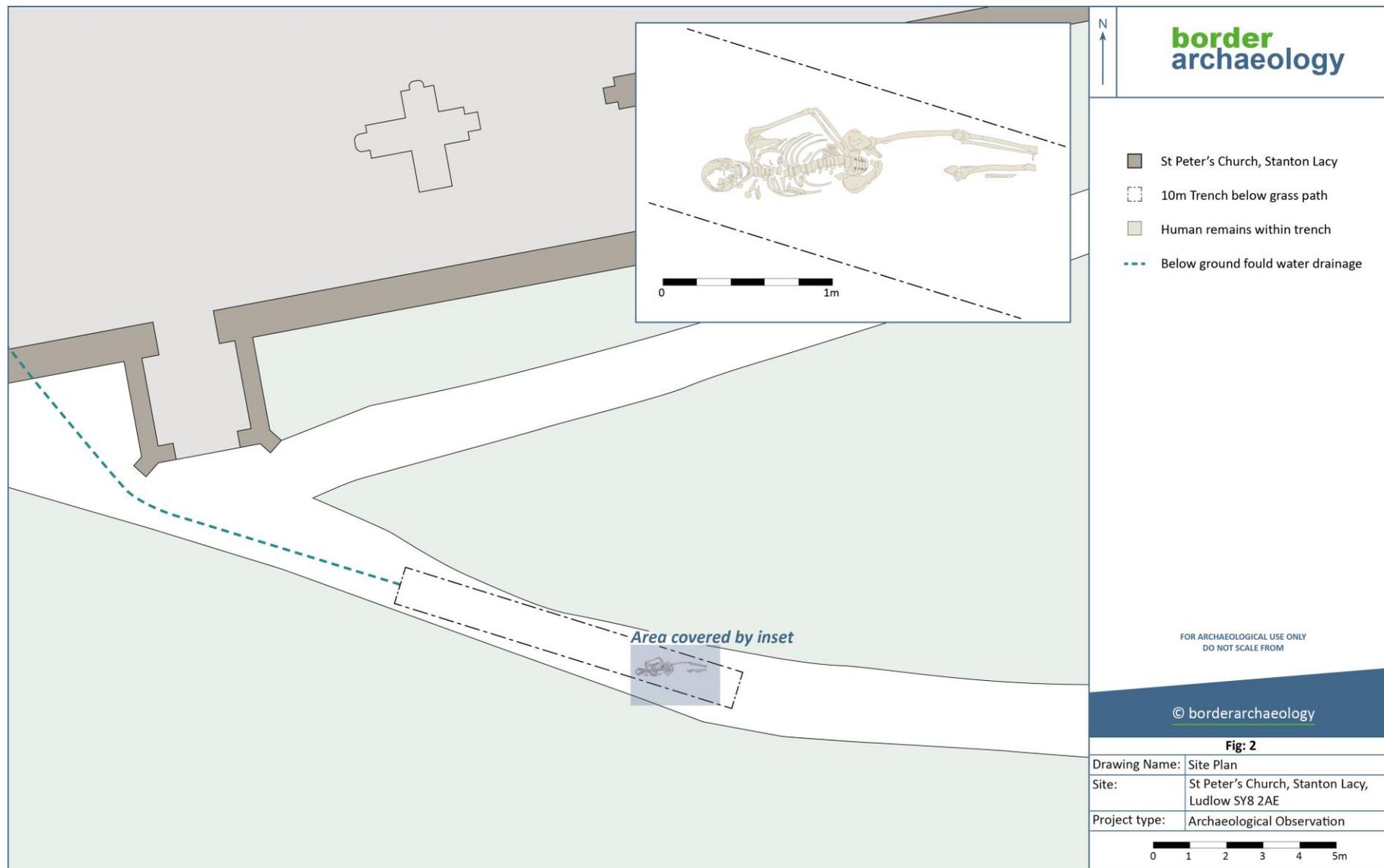
INTERIOR: C14 nave arcade; piscina with small ogee-headed canopy; C14 octagonal font; brass to Thomas Atkinson, 1657; tablet with arms and cherubs probably to John Thyne Armiger, 1717; tablet to Elizabeth Swanne, 1613; tablet to Samuel Newborough, 1718; carved wood figures to chancel arch.

The churchyard is located on the floodplain of the River Corve and is c30m to the E of the river at its nearest point.

3.1 Soils & Geology

The bedrock geology is recorded as interbedded siltstone and mudstone of the Raglan Mudstone Formation formed between 423.6 and 419.2 million years ago during the Silurian period. Overlying superficial Alluvium - Clay, silt, sand and gravel. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 11,800 years ago and the present during the Quaternary period (British Geological Society 2024).





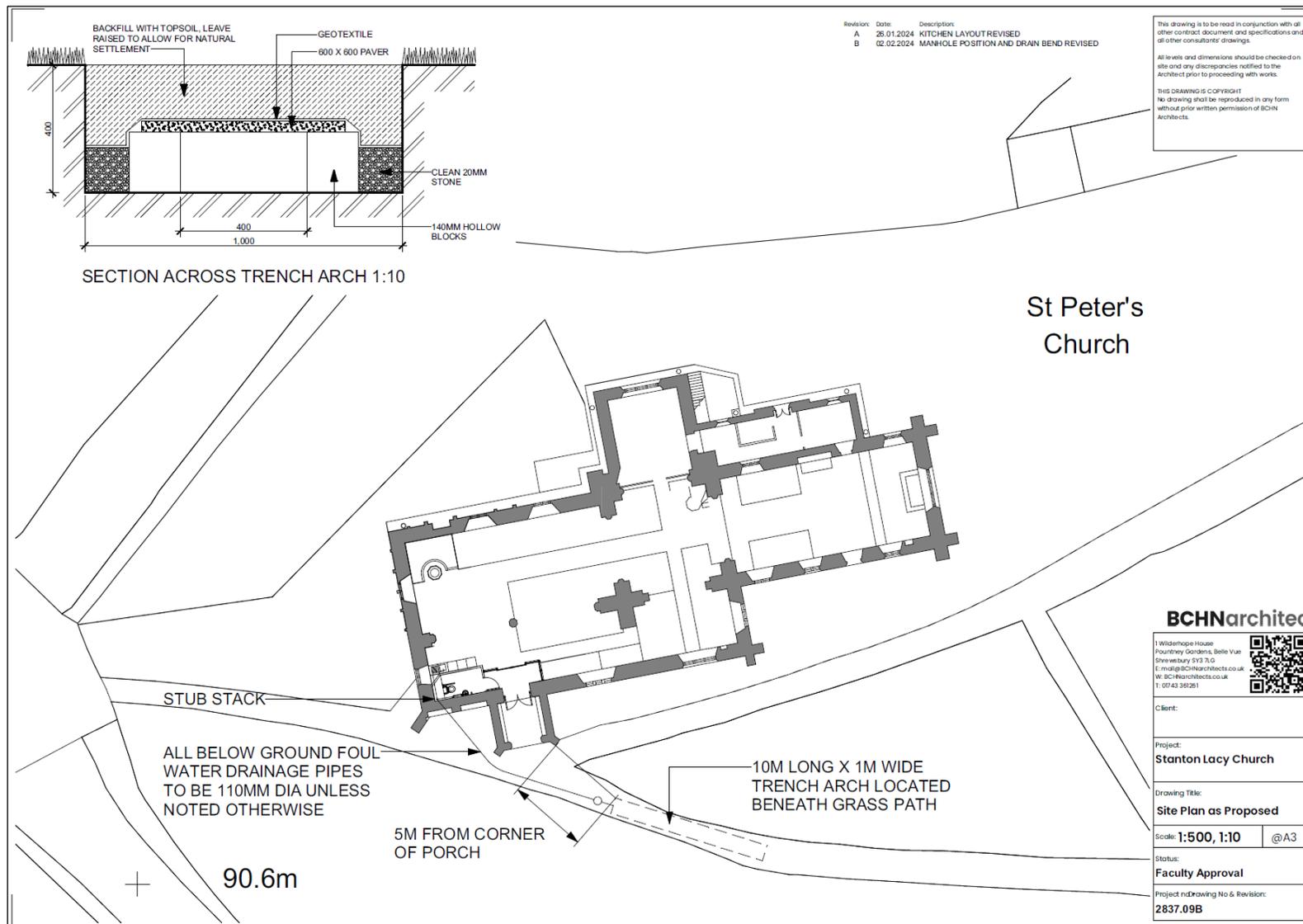


Fig. 3: Plan of groundworks area (supplied by BCHN Architects for information).

4 Historical & Archaeological Background

The churchyard is considered to be a site of some considerable antiquity, its semicircular plan suggesting to some a possible Celtic origin. Traces of what seem to be a rampart have been noted around the churchyard rising to 2-3m above the encircling roadway on the S side.

An association with St Milburga, the daughter of Merewalh, king of the *Magonsaete*, and abbess of Wenlock Priory, may be apocryphal. She is said to have built a church on the site as a gesture of piety following her deliverance from the unwanted advances of a Welsh prince and it is possible that a timber church did once stand within the precinct; however, the earliest surviving fabric on the site dates to the late Saxon period, c. 1050. The legend attributes Milburga's salvation to the rapidly rising water of the River Frome, cutting her off from her pursuers, and this at least is one element of the legend that is grounded in fact as the River Corve remains prone to such flood events.

The small modern village belies the importance of Stanton Lacy during the Saxon and medieval periods. The preconquest estate was a land holding of some considerable size and significance and was one of the many Shropshire manors held in 1066 by Siward (the Fat), a member of the West Saxon Royal house and one of the foremost of the Shropshire thegns. The Shropshire born chronicler Orderic Vitalis identified Siward as a 'thane and kinsman of King Edward' and he was the original patron of Shrewsbury Abbey who was granted Cheney Longville in exchange for the land on which the abbey was built and who probably numbered Frodesley, Overs, Neen Sollars and Milson among his landed possessions.

With an annual value of £25 in 1086, *Stantone* was the largest estate in Shropshire, with a population of 132 households supported by extensive arable land (50 ploughlands) and three mills, these in all likelihood being watermills located on the River Corve. The church was extant and was served by two priests; by the time of the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291-2, the value of the church of *Stantone Lacy* was £47 19s 4d and the patronage of the benefice was in the gift of the Augustinian Canons of the priory of Llanthony Prima, Monmouth.

The post-Conquest lordship was awarded to Roger de Lacy in recognition of his prominent role in the Battle of Hastings who held the fief directly from the Crown as tenant-in-chief. The medieval parish was extensive and included the castle and town of Ludlow at its southernmost extent but by 1200 Ludlow had achieved parish status and had absorbed the southern part of Stanton Lacy parish. Other parts of the parish were lost in the later 19th century, including the southern parish remnant and the W part of the parish, which were transferred to Bromfield and Onibury, respectively.

The church is built on a cruciform plan and is of rubble dressed sandstone construction with ashlar detailing beneath plain tile roofs. The earliest fabric dates to c. 1050 and comprises several distinctive Saxon architectural features. The W walls of the nave and N transept and the N wall of the nave display a series of pilaster strips or *lesenes* in Saxon long-and-short work while in the N wall of the nave is an original blocked doorway with coved impost-blocks and roll-moulded hoodmould on long-and-short pilasters. Over the door is a tablet with raised cross and enriched pilaster corbel. The chancel is mainly 13th century construction with the tower and S transept built a century later. Notable features include four 14th century tomb recesses. Two of these are located to the W of the porch in the wall of the nave, with a second pair on the opposite side of the porch in the S wall of the chancel which

incorporate mid-14th century carved effigies, now heavily defaced. It has been suggested that one of these tombs contained the remains of Edmund de Mortimer who is reputed to have died at Stanton Lacy in 1332.

The church was restored c. 1850 by T.H. Wyatt during the incumbency of the Revd. Joseph Bowles and includes a stained-glass E window by Evans of Shrewsbury which was installed by Bowles in 1858 in memory of his mother, Mary. Earlier incumbents include the notorious Robert Foulkes, a generally disreputable character who was convicted of murder, tried and, on the morning of the 31st of January 1678–9, executed at Tyburn; he was buried under cover of darkness at St. Giles-in-the-Fields.

The following historic maps are reproduced for reference in the following section.



*Fig. 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey surveyor's drawing (Bishop's Castle) 1815
(Reproduced by courtesy of the British Library)*



Fig. 5: Extract from the Parish Tithe map & Apportionment of 1847.
(Reproduced by courtesy of the National Archives)

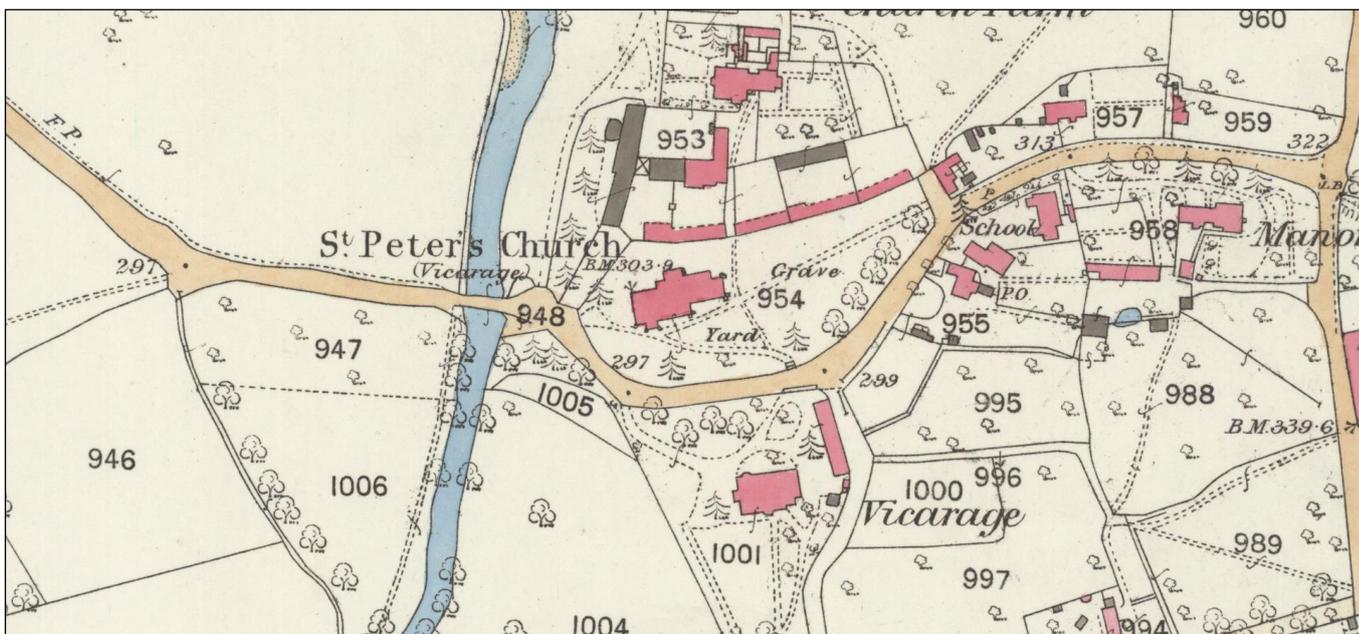


Fig. 6: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25-inch map of 1884
(Reproduced by courtesy of the National Archives)



Fig. 7: Extract from the Ordnance Survey Provisional Edition 6-inch map of 1953
(Reproduced by courtesy of the National Archives)

5 Aims

- To locate and record any human remains or burial features encountered within the groundworks area and to confirm that no impact on any such remains or features occurred without the implementation of this programme of archaeological work.
- Any human remains encountered were to be removed and stored according to professional and ethical standards and guidance pending reinterment under the direction of the Revd. Fr Justin Parker.

6 Methodology

Archaeological Observation was carried out according to the *Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording* (ClfA 2023a), *Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording* (ClfA 2023b) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2020). BA adheres to the *ClfA Code of conduct: professional ethics in archaeology* (2022) and is cognisant of project management advice set out in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015), *Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England* (Mays 2017) and *Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains* (Mitchell & Brickley 2017).

6.1 Recording

The following reference numbers were assigned to this fieldwork project:

- BA site code: SLC24.

Fieldwork notes were compiled and a photographic record made using a high-resolution digital camera in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2023). The progress of the works was recorded and assessed using the Company's ISO 9001 procedures.

Upon discovery of human remains be discovered, BA inform the Shropshire Coroner's Office and the remains were covered, protected and left *in-situ* in the first instance. West Marcia Police were alerted to the possibility of a crime but the heritage crime officer deployed to the site ruled out foul play and excavation proceeded in accordance with *Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains* (Mitchell & Brickley 2017) using BA's *pro-forma* Skeleton Recording Sheet.

Removal of the remains was carried out subject to environmental health regulations and Coroner information, with adequate security provided. Assessment of the remains was carried out on site prior to the lifting of the skeleton and its removal to secure storage for future reburial.

The human bone assemblage was treated at all times with due reverence and in accordance with the following guidelines:

- *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed human remains*, IFA Technical Paper No. **13** (McKinley & Roberts 1993).
 - *Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains*, IFA Technical Paper No. **7** (Brickley & McKinley 2004).
 - *Human Bones from Archaeological Sites: Guidelines for producing assessment documents and analytical reports* (Mays, Brickley & Dodwell 2004).
 - *Science and the Dead: A guideline for the destructive sampling of archaeological human remains for scientific analysis* (APABE; Mays et al. 2013).
 - *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England* (2nd Edition; APABE; Mays 2017).
 - *Updated Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains* (Mitchell & Brickley 2017).
 - *The Role of the Human Osteologist in an Archaeological Fieldwork Project* (Mays, Brickley, Dodwell & Sidell 2018).
 - *Burial Law and Policy in the 21st Century: The way forward* (Ministry of Justice 2007).
 - *Statement on the exhumation of human remains for archaeological purposes* (Ministry of Justice 2011).
-

7 Results

The water main trench extended from the roadside church gate and along the gravel path to the corner of the church before turning to abut the church wall inside one of the cusped and canopied tomb recesses. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.7m and was 0.27m wide extending to 0.85m where it turned towards the church.



Plate 1: View looking W from church porch along the water main trench towards the road and River Corve

The trench section revealed a gravel surface to c 0.20m and light reddish-brown clayey silt above a darker greyish-brown silty clay. Close to the church was a concentration of flat grey sandstone fragments. No archaeological finds or burial evidence were encountered during the trench excavation.



Plate 2: View looking NW showing SE-facing section of water main trench near S porch



Plate 3: View looking NNE showing insertion of pipe through the wall to connect with internal WC.



Plate 4: View looking back along foul water trench towards church porch



Plate 5: Section of foul water trench looking NE.

The foul water drainage trench extended from a point located 5m from the south porch, running ESE to connect with a 10m long, 1m wide trench extending beneath the grass path and incorporating a Trench Arch Sewage Treatment System at its terminus similar in design to a type frequently used for rural churches wishing to add a WC for occasional use.

The first, narrower section of the trench measuring 0.35m wide and 0.7m deep revealed a gravel surface over redeposited reddish-brown clay burial soils above a darker clay at the trench base. No finds, features or human remains were recovered, although frequent disarticulated human bone was recovered from the burial soils.

The main 10m stretch of trench containing the trench arch sewage system was 1m wide and was excavated to a depth of c. 0.8m. The trench section consisted of 0.1m of topsoil overlying a compact clayey reddish-brown disturbed burial soil containing frequent disarticulated human bone and small stones, this deposit being darker and wetter at the WNW end than it was towards the mid-section and terminus.

At the terminal end of the trench in the location of the trench arch sewage treatment installation, the soils became stonier and friable and contained the near-complete skeleton of an adult (male) inhumation interred on an E/W alignment (*Plates 9-15; fig. 8*). The skull protruded slightly above the engineering depth thereby necessitating complete excavation of the remains.



Plate 6: View looking View N showing S-facing section of foul water drainage trench



Plate 7: View NNE showing exposed graveyards soils within the sewage treatment system trench



Plate 8: View NNE showing depression representing the grave within the terminal end of the sewage treatment system trench

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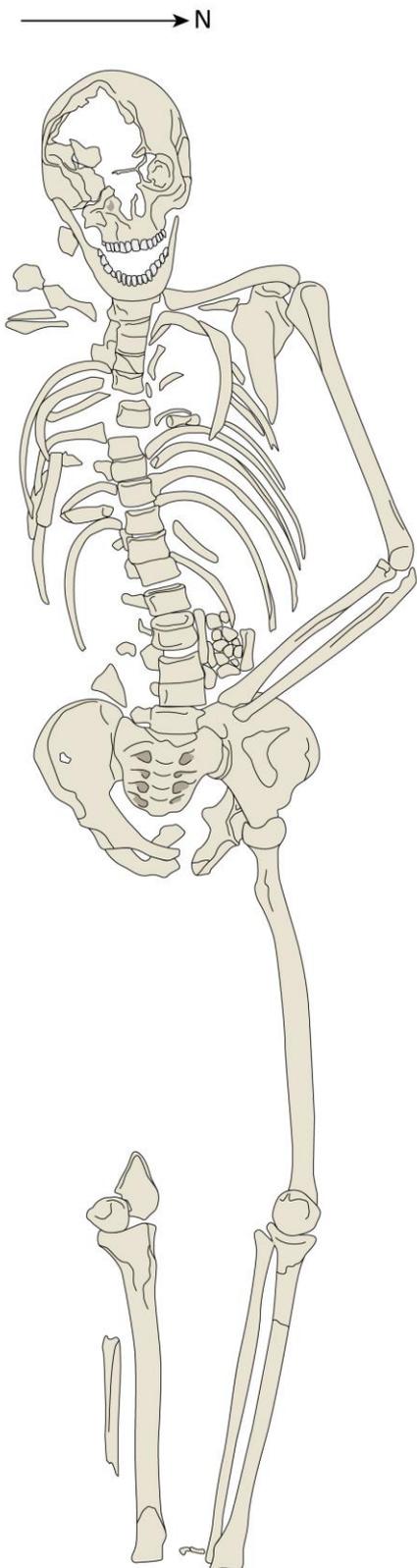


Fig: 8

Drawing Name:	Human Remains Found in Trench
Site:	St Peter's Church, Stanton Lacy, Ludlow SY8 2AE
Project type:	Archaeological Observation
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Plate 9: Human remains upon initial discovery within a friable, stony silty clay



Plate 10: View of the near-complete human skeleton aligned E/W



Plate 11: Complete adult (male) inhumation at base of foul water trench



Plate 12: Photo showing partial loss of left parietal bone and part of the frontal bone and left orbit. Note the near perfect dentition.



Plate 13: Anterior view of thorax and lower vertebrae and pelvis



Plate 14: Close-up view showing lumbar vertebrae and coccyx, pelvis and lost left femur



Plate 15: View of leg bones showing lost left femur and foot bones together with partial left fibula



Plate 16: View of trench arch drainage trench following excavation of human remains

7.1 A note regarding further archaeological observation at St Peter's Church

7.1.1 Introduction

Following archaeological observation carried out on 19th and 20th August 2024 (BA 2024) concerning the installation of a drain run and construction of a soakaway, further work was undertaken at St Peters Church as work to move the font and make good the floor surface was excluded from the initial works. This later stage of the restoration took place on 12th September 2024. The font had already been removed at the time of the visit leaving a surface of compacted crushed brick in preparation for the construction of the new surface (*Plate 17*).

7.1.2 Results

The octagonal font is thought to date to the 14th century and originally stood by the pier of the nave arcade, as shown on the 1839-40 plans of William Vickers, Archdeacon of Ludlow (1830–1851), and E. B. Smith (*Figs. 9 & 10*). It would then appear to have been moved at some point in the following decade to the NW corner of the nave, as shown on Wyatt's plan (1847-1849) (*Fig. 11*) (Klein 1989, 12, 19), before being relocated once again during Wyatt's restoration of 1849-50 to its most recent position in the SW corner of the nave.



Plate 17: Previous position of the font view W

The new position of the font in the NW corner of the nave had already been excavated (*Plate 18*). The position is that previously occupied by the font prior to its removal to the SW corner of the nave under Wyatt's direction and the kerbstone and brickwork seen during the archaeological observation marked this earlier position (*Fig. 11*).

A further mark (*Plate 19*) on the nave floor may record an earlier position of the font, possibly that shown on the 1840 plan of Archdeacon Vickers (*Fig. 9*) (Klein 1989) and the ground plan drawn by Smith (*Fig. 10*).



Plate 18: New location for the font: View N



Plate 19: Hexagonal shape marked on nave floor may suggest earlier position of font

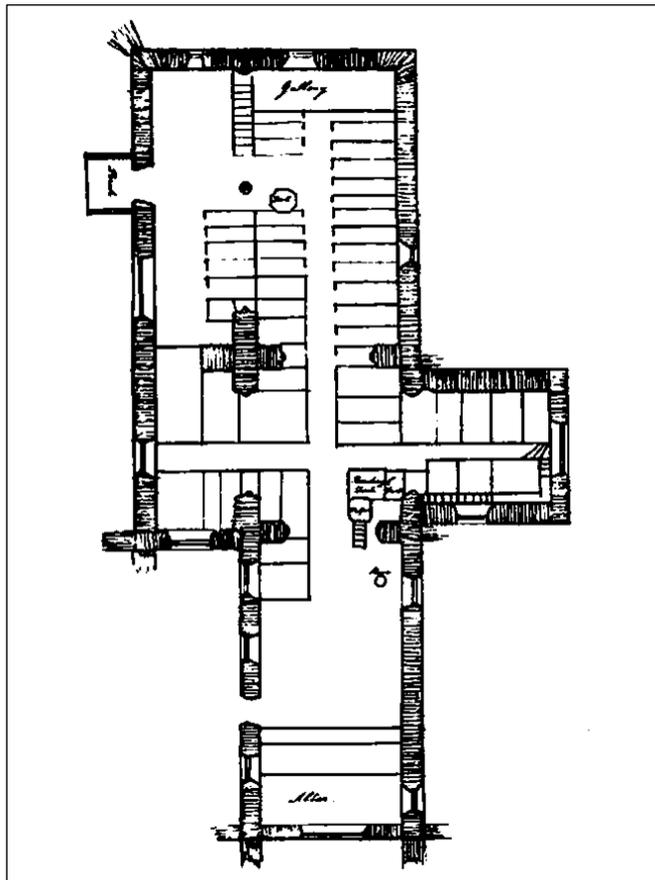


Fig. 9: 1840 plan by Archdeacon Vickers

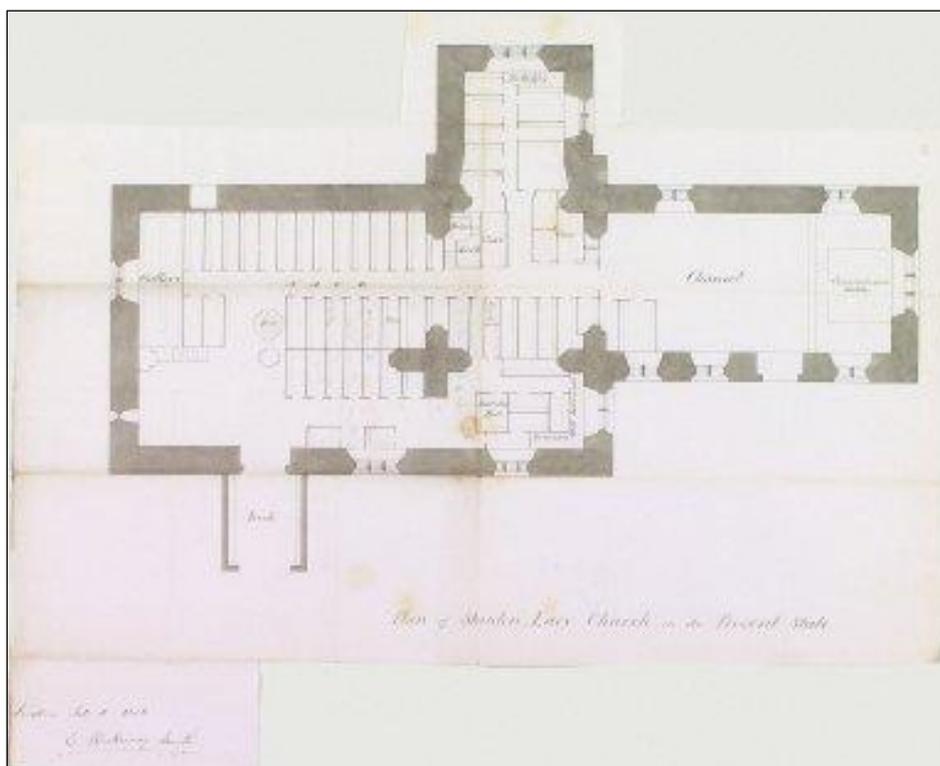


Fig. 10: Ground plan drawn by Edward Blakeway Smith (fl. 1831-49) of Ludlow (1839)

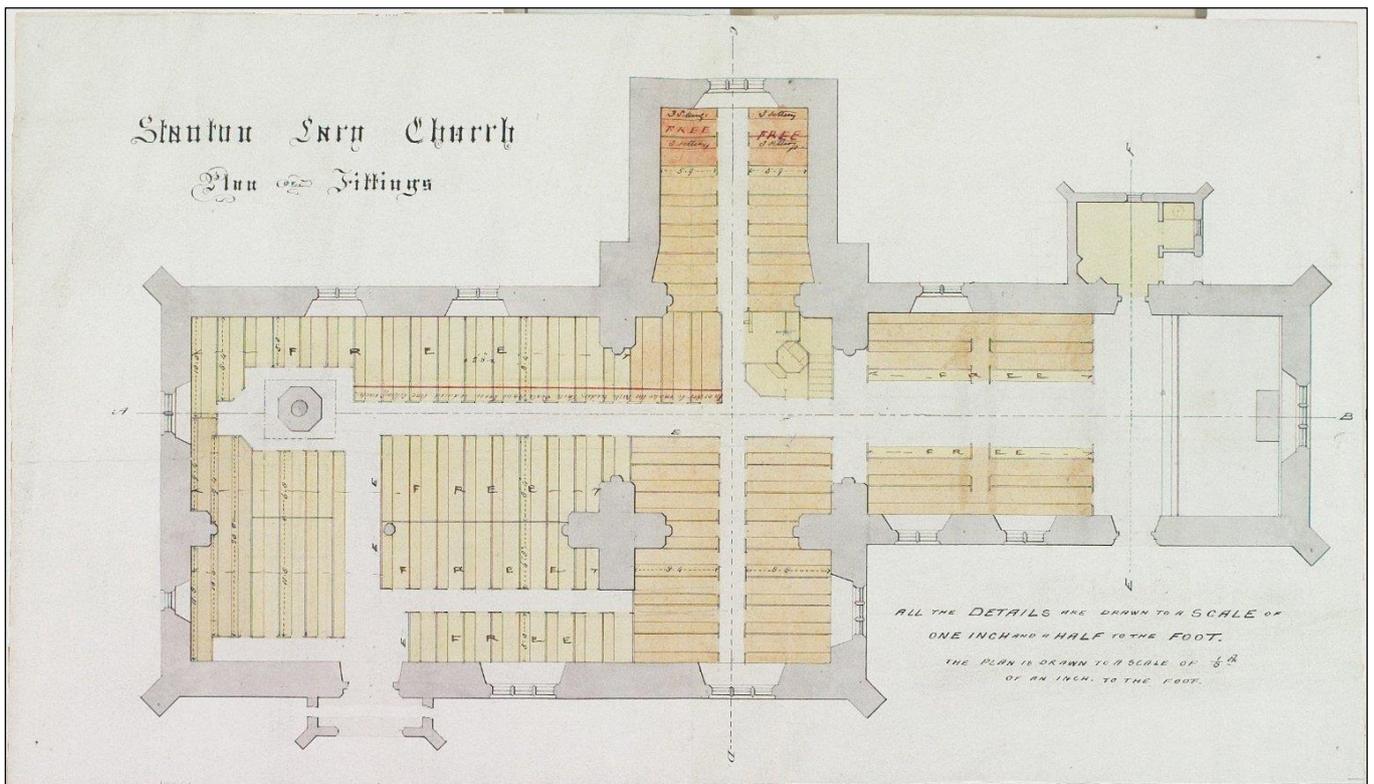


Fig. 11: 'Plan of Fittings' probably drawn by Thomas Henry Wyatt (1807-80) of London (1847-1849)

8 Conclusion

The programme of AO confirmed the presence of the near-intact remains of an adult (male) extended supine inhumation aligned NE/SW encountered beneath the grass path in the location of the proposed trench arch sewer system. The left parietal and orbit had suffered partial loss, possibly due to machine damage during the trench excavation. No evidence of pathology was identifiable in the bones. The burial horizon contained frequent disarticulated human bone as a result of continual disturbance from gravedigging activity but no artefactual evidence was recovered.

The date of the remains could not be determined due to an absence of any associated dating material or grave marker; however, reference is made to the historic mapping, which indicates the antiquity of the existing path alignment which is a long-established feature shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 (fig. 6). Unfortunately, neither the Ordnance Survey surveyor's drawing of 1815 (fig. 4) nor the 1847 tithe map (fig. 5) show the path alignment due to the larger scale of these maps.

The absence of coffin nails or soil-staining indicative of a decayed wooden coffin may be attributable to soil conditions or may alternatively signify that this was a shroud burial of potential medieval date, which remained undisturbed by later burials. Alternatively, the very good preservation of the near-intact remains may be indicative of a more recent date. It should be noted that the Shropshire Coroner's Office was notified of the discovery and West Mercia Police alerted to a potential crime scene. However, the heritage crime officer deployed to the scene ruled out any criminal activity.

No deposits of archaeological significance were seen during the subsequent monitoring of works concerning the relocation of the font. The new position of the font (*Plate 18*) had been previously used for that purpose.

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10 References

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Document Title		Document Reference	
Archaeological Observation: Church of St Peter Stanton Lacy Shropshire.		BA24129SLC/REP	
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Editing	Stephen Priestley MA MCI ^f A.		
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Issue No.	Status	Date	Approved for issue
1	Final	September 2024	Stephen Priestley MA MCI ^f A