

Report on Archaeological Monitoring

Drainage trench, St John the Baptist, Stoke by Clare, Suffolk

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Felix Reeves Whymark, February 2025

Project name	St John the Baptist, drainage trench monitoring
Parish	Stoke by Clare
District	West Suffolk
Grid reference	TL7410143344
Date of fieldwork	Several days over period 18th September - 18th November 2024

Summary

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the installation of a new drainage system at St John the Baptist, Stoke by Clare. No evidence of burials was seen, as drainage trenches only cut redeposited graveyard fill (0.5m depth).

A few fragments of disarticulated redeposited human bone were found and later re buried. Nothing else of archaeological interest was seen and no finds were recovered.

New 450mm drainage was installed in the East area of the churchyard by GTS Ltd drainage contractors on behalf of the PCC. Trenches were around 500mm in depth, and inspection chambers were installed. The archaeological report will, on completion of the project, be deposited with the Oasis record, following archiving standards.

St John the Baptist Church is situated at TL7410143344, to the south of Stoke by Clare village. The churchyard sits on clay from the quaternary period, above the Holywell Nodular Chalk and New Pit Chalk Formations. The church sits above the Stour valley.

From the HER record:

Church, mainly C16 with a C14 tower. Diverse array of historic graffiti visible. The church was extant in 1124 when monks from Clare were transferred to Stoke. It became the Priory church until 1415 when it became a secular college. The church was originally aisleless, the nave and aisle being a rebuild of the 16th century. The South porch is 13th century and the vestry 15th century. The West tower is 14th century. A C16 wall painting of the Last Judgement was uncovered during 1947/1948, which had been whitewashed at the Reformation and Elizabethan texts had then been superimposed, parts of which also remain

Stoke college, formerly College of St John the Baptist de Stoke, the 11th century Benedictine Convent associated with the church lies 200 metres to the south. It was associated with nearby Clare priory. The College's red brick 18th century stables lie to the immediate east. 100 metres to the the South West of the church a tile, mortar, brick and flint scatter in the adjacent field was thought to date from the 16th to 17th century and probably represents the remains of a building associated with the Priory precinct. A series of ditches the same distance to the South East may be the remains of an associated deer park or Warren.

The 15th -16th century Cellarer's house 50 metres to the North West likely housed Matthew Parker, last Dean of the College, who wrote that he rebuilt an Old House called Cellarer's Hall for the college Dean, Prebendary and Vicars. A T shaped Lodge built in 1815 sits adjacent, as well as the brick 14th century dovecote tower, also a part of the original college. Numbers 16-19 and Cloverlea on The Street to the north of the church form a group of timber framed jettied houses built in the early 17th century.

Archaeological monitoring aimed to observe and record the presence or absence, location, nature and date of any surviving archaeological deposits within the areas affected by the drainage works. The drainage works were excavated by machine. No archaeological features were found, so no recording was required. Digital photographs recorded the excavated trenches. No finds of archaeological significance were made. Several small redeposited fragments of disarticulated bone were reburied in the churchyard.

Trial pits to locate existing blocked drains:

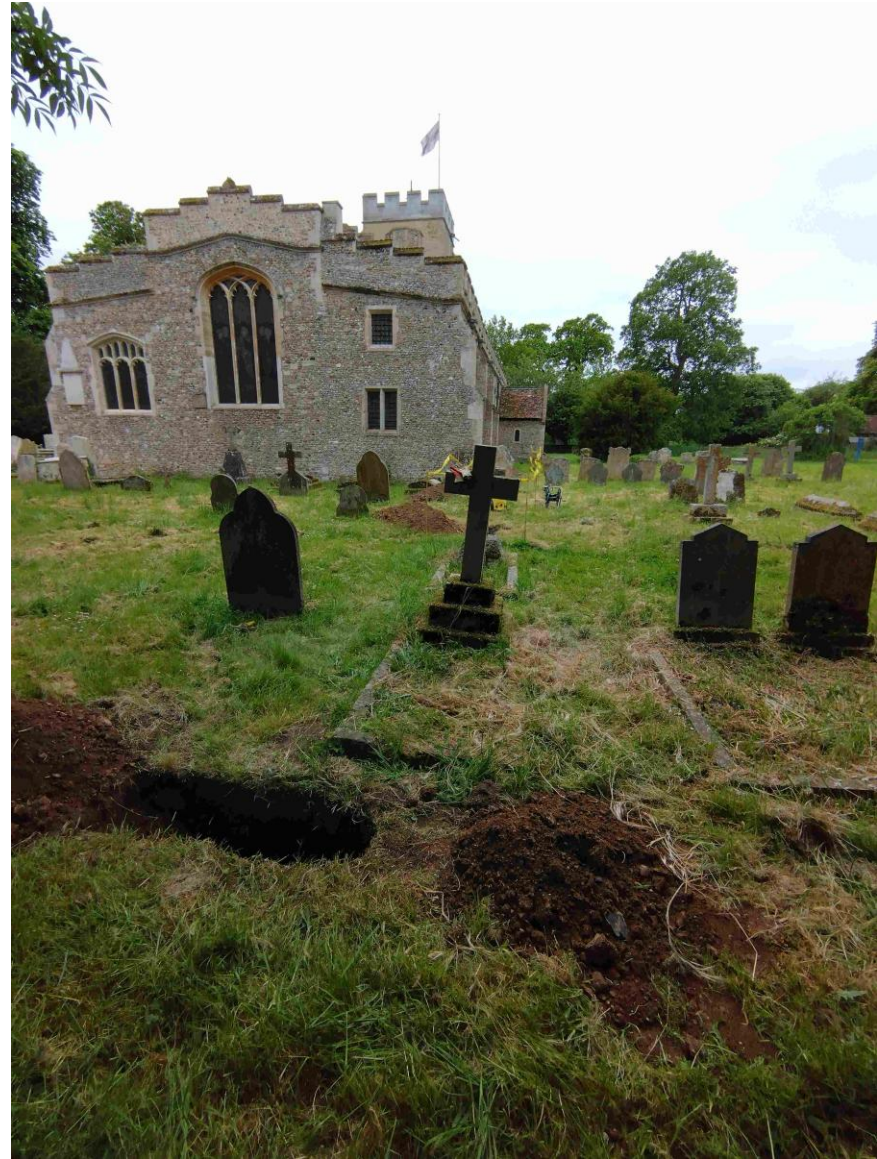
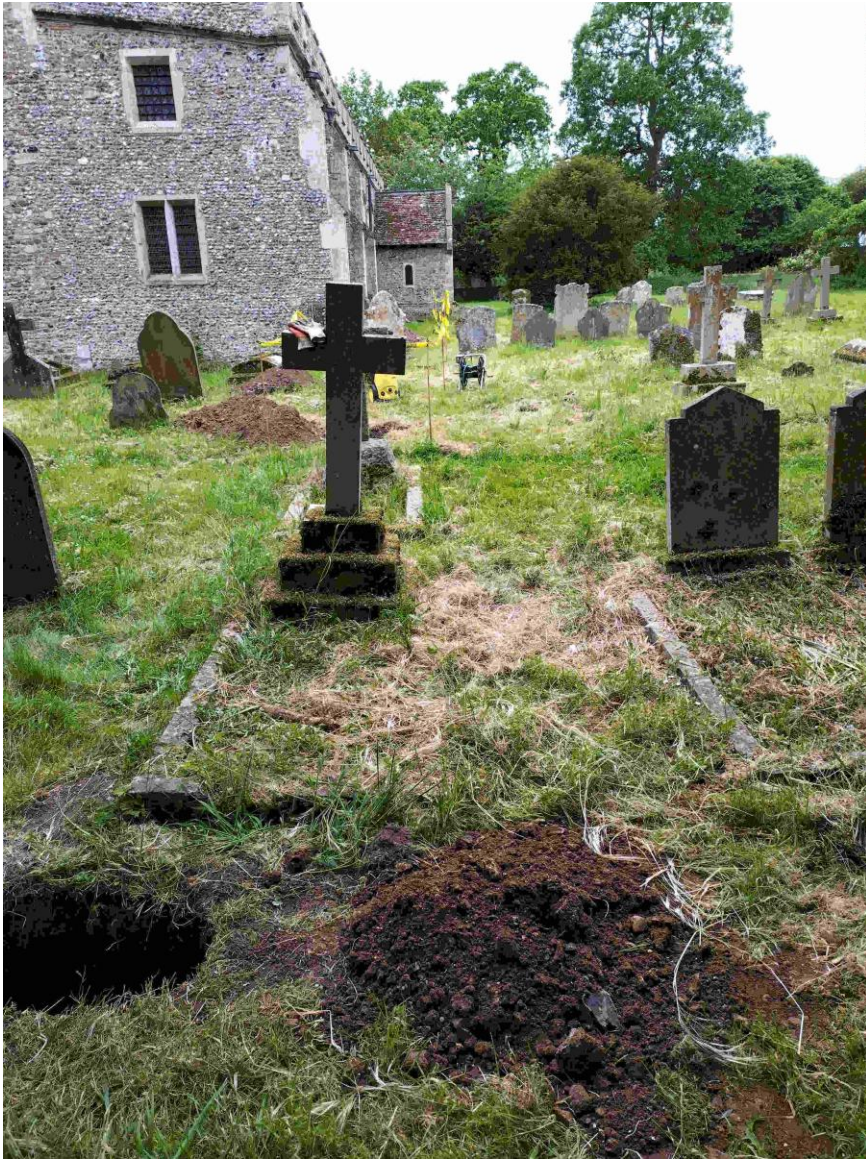


East of chancel northeast corner looking east:



North of chancel and east end of the nave







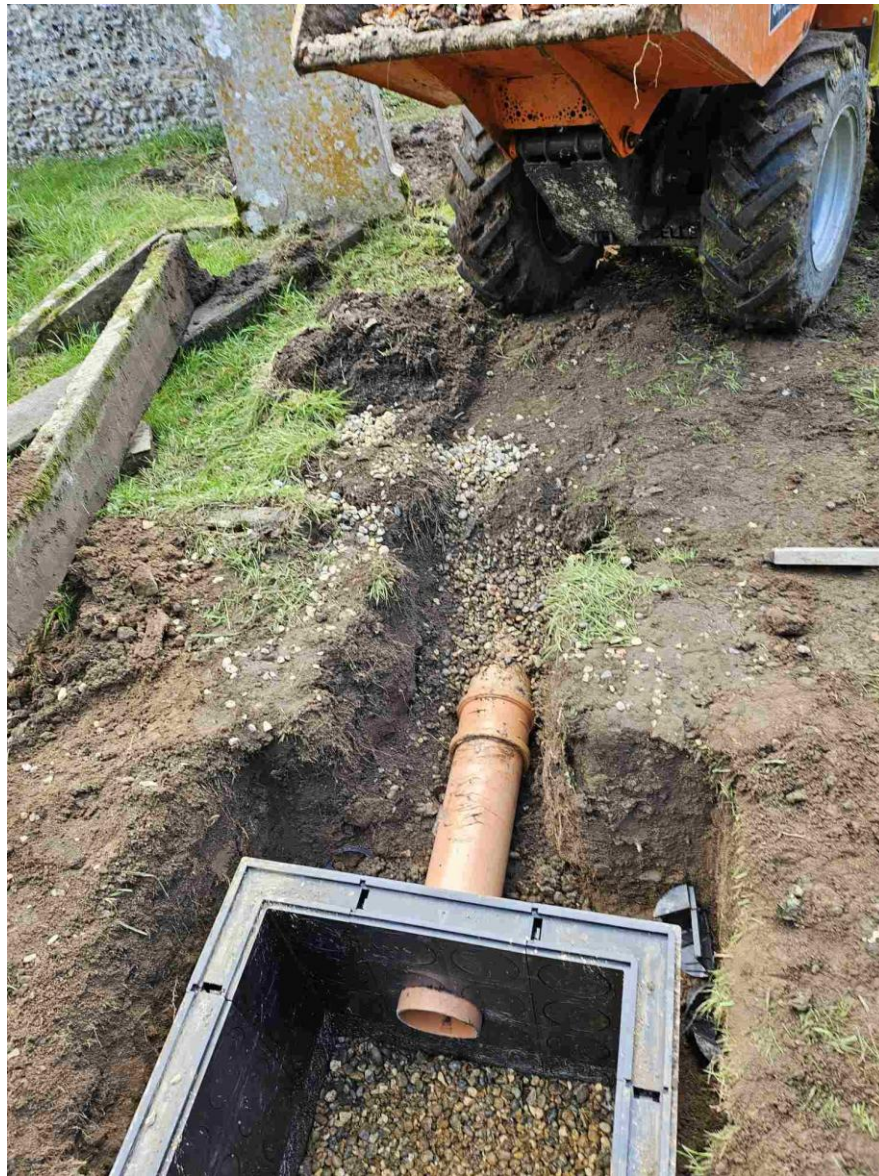


Previously disturbed layers at land drains and early form of socketed drain pipes in white clay with later red clay pipes not salt glazed.





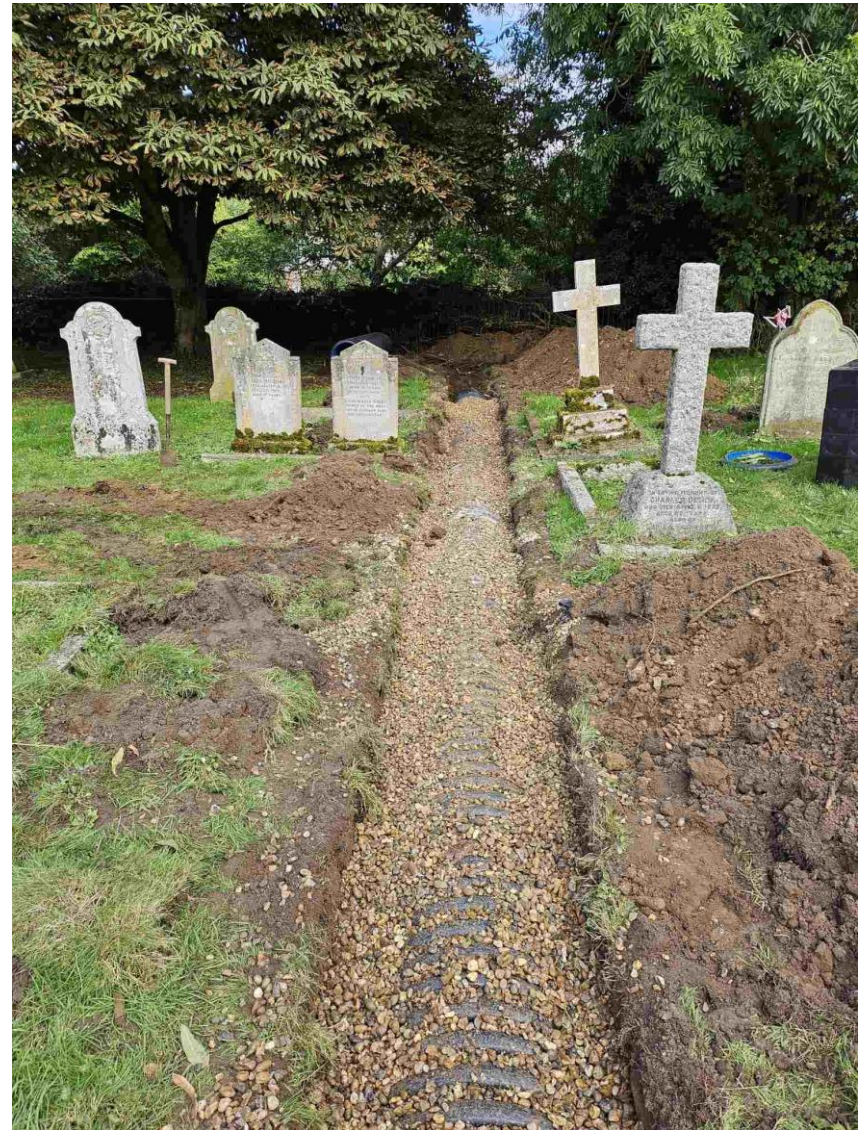
The most likely location of interest close by the church walls where fabric fragments such as tile, glass and worked materials was impacted by previous intervention with no archaeological control to form engineering brick gully catch pits connected to the old drains. These were updated to yard gullies with lift out silt buckets and reusing the bricks at all down pipes around the building.



South soakaways at old positions.



East drainage trench looking west, over old drain trenches.



East soakaway 450mm diameter perforated Twinwall pipe in situ with 150mm plastic pipe from north drains. Looking east prior to back filling.