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St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (620498)

September 2025 v1.0



Archaeological Evaluation

Project Code: A0545.1

Report no. 0547





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September 2025 v1.0

Archaeological Evaluation

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Project Code: A0545.1

Date: 12/09/2025

Client: Lupiae Architecture and Conservation

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September 2025 v1.0

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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by *Lupiae Architecture and Conservation* on behalf of *St Swithun's Parochial Church Council* to carry out an archaeological evaluation within the churchyard of the *Parish Church of St Swithun, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire*. The works were undertaken under faculty licence in advance of proposals for an external access ramp system, with the aim of assessing the depth of burial deposits and the potential impact of future development.

Three test pits, each measuring 1.00m by 1.00m, were hand-excavated in the north-western part of the churchyard close to the western boundary wall. Two of the test pits contained articulated burials. In Test Pit 1, the lower legs of an adult skeleton were revealed in very poor condition, together with disarticulated fragments representing earlier disturbed burials. In Test Pit 2, an exceptionally well-preserved adult burial was encountered, interred within a coffin with surviving iron fittings and a copper-alloy nameplate, provisionally dating to the eighteenth or nineteenth century. In Test Pit 3, no burials were encountered; instead, the stratigraphy suggested that this part of the churchyard had been extended or levelled, probably during the nineteenth century, which may account for the absence of interments here.

No skeletons were lifted or exhumed during the evaluation, and all remains were left in situ in accordance with Faculty requirements. The results have demonstrated that burials survive from a depth of c.0.82–0.90 m below present ground level in the north and north-west of the churchyard, while the western edge may represent a later extension with fewer burials. These findings will inform the planning and design of the proposed access ramp system and provide an evidential baseline for the management of future works within the churchyard.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by Lupiae Architecture and Conservation on behalf of St Swithun's Church, hereafter 'the Client', to carry out an archaeological evaluation in the graveyard of St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (NGR SJ 71923 29910), hereafter 'the Site' (figures 1-3).

The programme of archaeological work was undertaken under the authority of a faculty licence (620498) and comprised of an archaeological investigation of 3 test pits, each measuring 1m x 1m x 1m, in the churchyard. This was to inform the wider proposal for an external access ramp system [separate faculty application 2023-083734]. The following proviso was assigned to the faculty application:

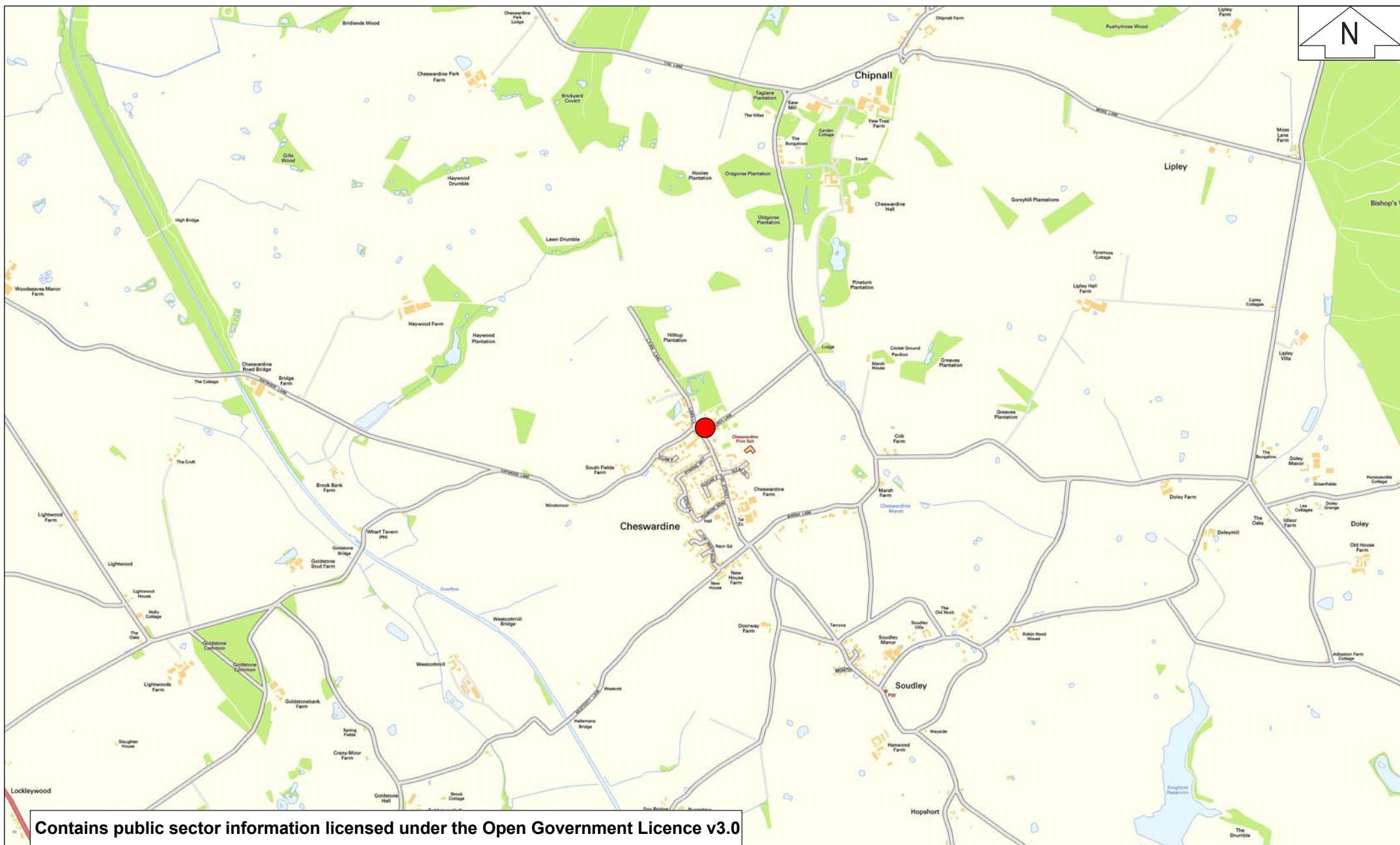
[Provisos] • A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the archaeological test pits should be submitted (via the DAC Secretary) for written approval by the DAC Archaeology Adviser prior to work commencing on site. [Reasons] • In relation to which, the DAC Archaeology Adviser has commented: This Faculty application follows on from informal consultation with the DAC regarding the proposed access ramp [separate faculty application 2023-083734], and with the DAC Archaeology Adviser regarding the need to evaluate the extent to which burials and human remains might be present at this location within the churchyard. It is understood that the PCC's architect has consulted with the archaeological contractor, and they have also checked and agreed the scope of the evaluation (i.e. number and size of the trial pits) with the DAC Archaeology Advisor. On this basis, the DAC Archaeology Adviser is satisfied to recommend this application subject to the recommended proviso.

A WSI or Project Design (PD) was prepared in advance of the works and was submitted to the DAC Archaeology advisor (see Appendix II). For clarity, this PD fulfilled the requirement for an archaeological WSI as requested by the above condition. It is a requirement that the PD was approved by the Diocesan Archaeologist prior to the implementation of the archaeological evaluation at the Site (this was received prior to the commencement of archaeological works).

It stipulated that if any human remains become exposed or were otherwise encountered during the course of the work:

- All work in the vicinity must stop immediately.
- The remains must be lightly covered with soil.
- The Diocesan Registrar (or in their absence the Secretary to the Diocesan Advisory Committee) must be notified.
- The directions of the Diocesan Registrar must be followed.

The work will adhere to the guidelines specified in *Standard for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023) and the *Universal Guidance for Field Evaluation* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023).



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Figure 01: Location of St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (SJ 71923 29910). Scale 1:20,000 at A4.

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Figure 02: Location of St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (SJ 71923 29910). Scale 1:5,000 at A4.

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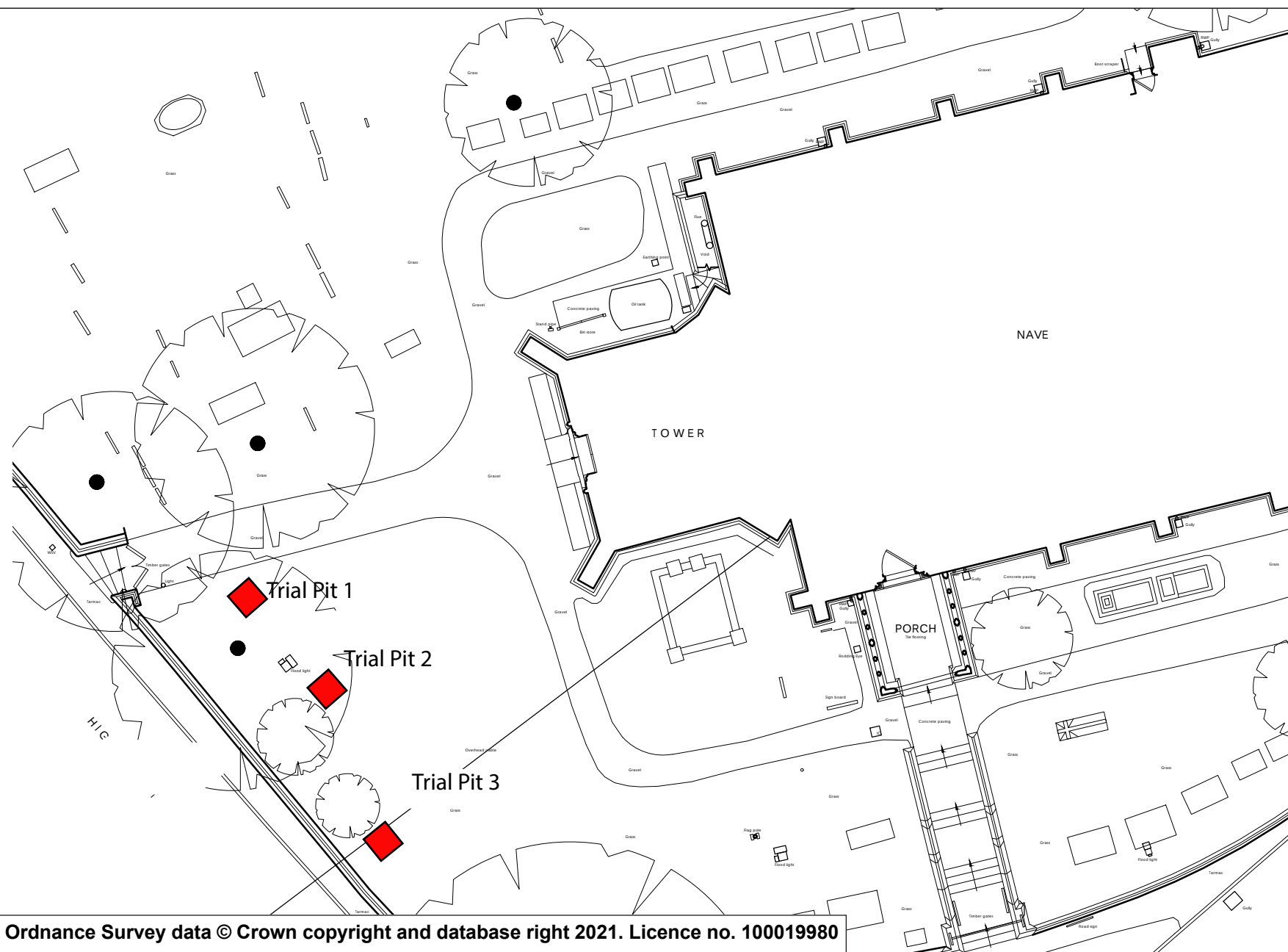


Figure 03: Location of proposed trial pits at St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS. Scale 1:200 at A4.

3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

Archaeological evaluation in England, particularly where it involves consecrated ground or the potential disturbance of human remains, is governed by a framework of legislation, ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and professional standards. At its core, this framework seeks to balance the preservation of heritage assets with the respectful treatment of the dead and the practical requirements of development.

The disturbance of human remains is principally regulated by section 25 of the Burial Act 1857, which makes it unlawful to disturb burials without lawful authority. In consecrated ground, the lawful authority is normally a faculty granted under the Church of England's Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015 (as amended), whereas in unconsecrated contexts a licence from the Ministry of Justice may be required. Since amendments introduced by the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2014, duplication of faculty and licence requirements has largely been removed, although site-specific advice from the diocesan registrar or Ministry of Justice may still be required in complex cases.

The faculty system operates under the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 (as amended), which provides the legal framework for works within consecrated churchyards and buildings. Faculties are granted by the consistory courts of each diocese, informed by advice from the Diocesan Advisory Committee, and reflect the ecclesiastical law principle of a presumption against disturbance of burials. This principle, affirmed in both case law and guidance, treats interment as permanent save for exceptional circumstances where overriding reasons justify disturbance.

Professional best practice is guided by national and international standards. The Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England (APABE), in collaboration with Historic England, has produced widely adopted documents such as *Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England* (2017) and *Science and the Dead: Guidelines for the Destructive Sampling of Human Remains* (updated 2023). These emphasise respectful handling, careful justification for any intrusive analysis, thorough recording, and the expectation of reinterment in consecrated ground. They sit alongside the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and Guidance, which establish professional requirements for excavation, evaluation, and archiving.

Together, this policy framework situates archaeological evaluation within a broader duty to protect the historic environment, to respect the sanctity of the dead, and to ensure that any research value derived from excavation is proportionate, transparent, and responsibly managed.

4.0 METHODOLOGY – ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

If archaeological deposits and/or human remains were identified, subject to the aims of the evaluation, they were manually cleaned, excavated, and recorded to determine extent, function, date, and relationship to adjacent features.

Contingency provision was made for the following:

- Additional excavation of up to 100% of any given feature should the excavated sample have proved insufficient to provide information on the character and date of the feature.
- Expansion of excavation trench limits, to clarify the extent of features equivalent to an additional 20% of the core trench area.

The archaeological works were surveyed with respect to the nearest Ordnance Survey datum point and with reference to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The excavation area, deposits, features, and structures within them were accurately located on a site plan prepared at the most appropriate and largest scale.

A written record of the trench contents and all identified features was completed via Aeon Archaeology pro-formas.

Any subsurface remains were recorded photographically, with detailed notations, measured drawings, and a measured survey. The photographic record was maintained using a digital SLR camera (Canon 600D) set to maximum resolution (72 dpi), with photographs taken in RAW format and later converted to TIFF format for long-term storage and JPEG format for presentation and inclusion in the archive. Photographic identification boards were also used.

The excavation area was opened by hand.

All excavations, where required, were backfilled with the material excavated, and upon departure Aeon Archaeology left the site in a safe and tidy condition. Aeon Archaeology was not requested to re-lay the turf/lawn surface.

5.0 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

St Swithun's Church, Cheswardine, occupies a prominent hilltop site at the head of the village high street in north-east Shropshire. The building is Grade II* listed and constructed in red sandstone, its fabric reflecting a sequence of architectural phases extending from the medieval period through to the major late nineteenth-century reconstruction (Historic England, 2021). The church and its immediate setting exemplify the development of a rural parish centre, showing how ecclesiastical, manorial, and agricultural elements interwove in the shaping of the village.

The origins of the settlement are attested in Domesday Book of 1086, where Cheswardine, recorded as Ciseworde, was held by Robert de Stafford (Wikishire, 2021). By the twelfth century a parish church was firmly established. In about 1167–71 John le Strange granted the advowson of Cheswardine to the Augustinian abbey of Haughmond, near Shrewsbury, in a transaction made for the benefit of King Henry II's soul (Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1908). The abbey held the advowson until the Dissolution in 1539. The relationship between parish and monastery is further underlined by the discovery, during Victorian rebuilding, of a coffin-lid carved with a foliated cross and Agnus Dei, inscribed to Richard de Burnell, Abbot of Haughmond, who died in 1348 (Cranage, 1903). The burial of an abbot at Cheswardine demonstrates the prestige of the church in the fourteenth century and its close ties with Haughmond.

Architectural evidence indicates that the church evolved in multiple phases across the high and later Middle Ages. Before its nineteenth-century reconstruction, the nave retained two medieval arcades: one of Norman date with round piers and cushion capitals, and the other Early English with pointed arches and foliage capitals (Cranage, 1903). These features suggest that the church was enlarged during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The north chapel, dedicated to St Katherine, was originally built around 1200 and retained its timber roof with cambered beams and carved bosses, which was carefully dismantled and reinstated in the later rebuilding (Historic England, 2021). The west tower, erected in the later fifteenth century, is of red sandstone ashlar with three stages, diagonal buttresses, gargoyles, and crocketed pinnacles. It carries relief carvings of the Stafford knot and Talbot dog, heraldic devices that connect the tower to prominent Shropshire families and underscore the symbolic importance of the structure (Historic England, 2021). With its canopied niches and large Perpendicular window, the tower remains the most substantial medieval element of the present church.

By the late eighteenth century, the medieval church had declined into disrepair. In 1809 the nave was partially rebuilt, involving the blocking of the west door and the introduction of galleries (Cranage, 1903). This Georgian structure was short-lived and considered unsatisfactory. By the 1880s, a comprehensive rebuilding was undertaken under the direction of John Loughborough Pearson, one of the leading architects of the Gothic Revival. Between 1886 and 1889, Pearson rebuilt the nave, aisles, chancel, porch and vestry in a vigorous Early Decorated Gothic style, reusing red sandstone from Codsall (Kelly's Directory, 1900). He preserved significant medieval features: the north chapel was reconstructed stone by stone, and its thirteenth-century roof was reinstated; the medieval arcades were carefully reassembled (Cranage, 1903). Internally, Pearson introduced a wagon-roofed chancel, oak choir stalls, a stone pulpit integrated into the chancel screen, and a richly painted reredos. Stained glass by Clayton and Bell and Charles Eamer Kempe was installed, while a marble font was donated in 1889 by Mrs Marie Donaldson-Hudson in memory of her stepfather Henry C. Cust (Kelly's Directory, 1900). The restoration was made possible largely through the patronage of Charles Donaldson-Hudson, the squire of Cheswardine Hall, who financed more than half of the reported

£10,000 cost (Wikishire, 2021). The church was reconsecrated in October 1889, marking the culmination of a transformation that combined respect for the medieval fabric with Victorian ambition.

Patronage has long shaped the church's history. From its medieval association with Haughmond Abbey, through post-medieval local gentry memorialised in brasses and tablets, to the nineteenth-century largesse of the Donaldson-Hudson family, St Swithun's has consistently reflected the influence of ecclesiastical and lay benefactors. Surviving memorials include seventeenth-century brasses to John Sowdley (d.1610) and Gabriel Lloyd (d.1632), recorded by antiquaries in the early twentieth century (Cranage, 1903). The Victorian restoration added a wealth of commemorative fittings and windows, particularly those linked to the Hudson and Donaldson families, which together emphasise the layered nature of remembrance at the site.

Archaeological investigation has added further detail to the picture. During the 1880s rebuilding, the discovery of the abbot's coffin-lid and seventeenth-century brasses provided tangible links to earlier phases of the church (Cranage, 1903). In the modern era, watching briefs have been conducted during development near the church. In 2018, monitoring of groundworks south of the Old Vicarage on High Street, approximately 50 m from the church, revealed no archaeological features or finds, suggesting this area lay outside the medieval core (Davey, 2018). In 2023, drainage works within the churchyard exposed disarticulated human remains, which were carefully lifted and reinterred in line with ecclesiastical requirements (Lichfield Diocesan Advisory Committee, 2025). These findings reinforce expectations of a long-used burial ground while indicating that significant stratified deposits are limited beyond the church itself.

The wider landscape within 300 m of the church is archaeologically rich. Immediately to the north lies the moated site of Cheswardine Manor, sometimes called Cheswardine Castle, a Scheduled Monument comprising a square moat enclosing an island c.30 m across with stone causeways and associated banks (Shropshire Historic Environment Record, 2000). Granted to Hamo le Strange in 1155, the manor was still in use in the fourteenth century but was described as "of little strength" in 1330 and later abandoned (Shropshire Historic Environment Record, 2000). Today the earthworks remain well defined, with associated features such as a linear bank forming part of Lawn Lane, interpreted as either a boundary or hollow way. The proximity of the manor to the church illustrates the interdependence of secular and spiritual power in medieval village organisation, where lordship and parish church were situated in close physical relationship.

Traces of medieval agriculture are evident in the surrounding fields. Ridge-and-furrow cultivation is preserved in pasture to the south-west of the village, representing the remains of the medieval open-field system. Although much has been levelled by enclosure, LiDAR imagery confirms the persistence of these earthworks in the wider parish (Environment Agency, 2019). Within the village core, historic cartography and aerial photographs reveal curving boundaries and trackways that reflect long-established land use. The churchyard itself was enlarged in 1887 with land donated by Charles Donaldson-Hudson, reflecting Victorian concerns about burial capacity (Kelly's Directory, 1900). Within it are listed features including an oval chest tomb of around 1800, with reeded pilasters and a flaming urn finial, and a set of eighteenth-century sandstone steps at the south porch (Historic England, 2021). Surveys have recorded over 270 memorials, most dating from the nineteenth century onwards, which illustrate changing patterns of commemoration.

Several associated structures within the 300 m radius illustrate the integration of church, clergy, and community. The former Vicarage, a substantial brick house of the mid-nineteenth century, provided accommodation for clergy and reflects broader ecclesiastical investment in pastoral provision. Opposite the church is the Old School, built in 1851 as a National School with land and support from the manor. Its Gothic detailing echoes ecclesiastical architecture and demonstrates the close functional relationship between parish church and education. Slightly beyond the radius lies Cheswardine Hall, rebuilt in the nineteenth century and home of the Donaldson-Hudson family, whose financial and personal patronage underpinned the Victorian rebuilding of St Swithun's. Together, these elements form a coherent historic parish landscape in which church, manor, vicarage and school reinforced each other's roles in shaping local identity.

The evidence for St Swithun's Church, Cheswardine, encompasses over eight centuries of development. Documentary sources establish its early patronage and connections to Haughmond Abbey; architectural evidence traces successive phases from the twelfth-century arcades through the fifteenth-century tower to the Victorian rebuild; archaeological discoveries confirm the presence of burials and high-status associations; and the surrounding landscape preserves the imprint of medieval lordship and agriculture. Later additions, from the vicarage to the school and Victorian memorials, demonstrate how the parish church adapted to evolving spiritual and social needs. St Swithun's today stands not only as a testament to continuity of worship but also as a focal point within a historic landscape that embodies the interwoven narratives of faith, lordship and community.

6.0 QUANTIFICATION OF RESULTS

6.1 The Documentary Archive

The following documentary records were created during the archaeological watching brief:

Test Pit proformas	3
Skeleton Sheets	2
Digital photographs	26

6.2 Environmental Samples

No environmental samples were taken as part of the watching brief as no suitable archaeological deposits were encountered.

6.3 Artefacts

Any artefacts encountered during the archaeological watching brief are discussed in relation to the grave fills they were recovered in (*see section 9.2 Burials*).

6.4 Human Remains

The evaluation was undertaken within consecrated ground and, as anticipated, archaeological deposits relating to historic burials were encountered. The objective of the trial trenching was to establish the depth and extent of burial soils in relation to proposed groundworks, and not to exhume or remove human remains. Accordingly, no skeletons were lifted or exhumed during the course of the works.

Where human remains were revealed, they were recorded in situ, their stratigraphic position noted, and the presence of articulated or disarticulated elements carefully described. The evaluation confirmed the expected depth of interments and provided baseline information on the character of the burial deposits without intrusive disturbance beyond what was necessary for observation.

The detailed description of these remains, including their condition, orientation, and degree of articulation, is presented within this section and further expanded in the main results section of the report. All observations were made in accordance with the relevant professional guidance, including the Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England's *Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England* (APABE & Historic England, 2017) and Historic England's *Science and the Dead: Guidelines for the Destructive Sampling of Human Remains* (Historic England, 2023). The presumption of permanence in Christian burial and the requirements of faculty jurisdiction were observed throughout, with exposed remains being promptly re-covered following recording.

7.0 DISSEMINATION AND ARCHIVING

A full site archive, including plans, photographs, written records, and all other material generated during the evaluation, will be compiled in accordance with the *Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA, 2020). All records will be clearly labelled, cross-referenced, and indexed to ensure accessibility and long-term preservation.

Upon completion of the project, copies of the evaluation report will be submitted to the Client, to the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER), and to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) in accordance with Faculty requirements. A copy will also be offered to Historic England for information. The report will include a non-technical summary intended for wider dissemination.

The completed archive, comprising digital and paper elements, will be deposited with the Shropshire Archives or another approved repository, following the guidelines set out in the *Archaeological Archives Forum's Archaeological Archives Guidance* (Brown, 2011, updated 2020). The digital component will conform to current ADS (Archaeology Data Service) deposition requirements to ensure open access to core datasets.

Dissemination will also include uploading project details to the OASIS database, in line with national policy on grey literature and data sharing (Historic England, 2022). This ensures that summary information is made publicly available via the Archaeology Data Service and the HER.

All work will adhere to relevant faculty conditions, national guidance on best practice in archiving, and the principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021), which emphasises the importance of public access to knowledge derived from archaeological investigation.

8.0 DIGITAL DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

8.1 Type of study

An archaeological evaluation of three test pits, in the graveyard of St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (NGR SJ 71923 29910).

8.2 Types of Data

File name	File Contents	Linked File(s)
A0545.1 St Swithun's, Cheswardine EVAL report 1.0.PDF	PDF report	
A0545_1_001 - A0545_1_26.JPG	JPEG site images	A0545.1 _Metadata
A0545_1_001 - A0545_1_26.TIF	TIF site images	A0545.1 _Metadata
A0545.1 _Metadata.XLSX	Excel file of photographic metadata	A0545_1_001 - A0541_1_26 (JPG and TIF)
A0545.1 Trial Trenching Sheets.PDF	Scanned copies of archaeological monitoring & recording day sheets	

All data generated during this project has been selected for archive

8.3 Format and scale of the data

Photographs taken in RAW format and later converted to TIF format for long term archiving and JPEG format for use in the digital report, converted using Adobe Photoshop. All photographs renamed using AF5 freeware with the prefix (project code_frame number) and a photographic metadata created using Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) or Access (.accdb).

8.4 Methodologies for data collection / generation

Digital data will be collected / generated in line with recommendations made in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (2020). Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 are relevant:

3.3.1 Project specifications, research designs or similar documents should include a project specific Selection Strategy and a Data Management Plan.

3.3.3 Project designs or schedules of works etc should outline the methodology used in recording all information, in order to demonstrate that all aspects of archive creation will ensure consistency; for instance in terminologies and the application of codes in digital data sets, highlighting relevant data standards where appropriate

8.5 Data quality and standards

Consistency and quality of data collection / generation shall be controlled and documented through the use of standardised procedure as outlined in the WSI. This will include the use of standardised data capture file formats, digital proformas, data entry validation, peer review, and use of controlled vocabularies.

8.6 Managing, storing and curating data.

All digital data will be organised into Aeon Archaeology proforma project file systems and backed up to the cloud using *Digital River's Crashplan* with additional copies made to external physical hard drive.

8.7 Metadata standards and data documentation

Digital metadata created using Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) or Access (.accdb) of all photographic plates.

Paper metadata created from Aeon Archaeology proformas for contexts, artefacts, environmental samples, watching brief day sheets, trench sheets, and basic record sheets and then scanned to create digital .PDF copies.

8.8 Data preservation strategy and standards

Long-term data storage will be through the submission of the digital (.PDF/A) report and associated metadata to the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and deposition of the full digital archive with the Oasis Database, following their Guidelines for Depositors (2022). Copies of all digital files will also be retained at Aeon Archaeology on secure external hard drives and backed up to cloud storage.

8.9 Suitability for sharing

All digital data will be placed within the public realm (through the channels in 6.8) except for where project confidentiality restricts the sharing of data. All data sets will be selected / discriminated by the Senior Archaeologist at Aeon Archaeology and written permission will be sought from all project specific Clients prior to the sharing of data. Client permission will be sought as required under Faculty licence conditions before deposition or sharing.

8.10 Discovery by potential users of the research data

Project data will be discoverable via the OASIS database and ADS Library, ensuring accessibility through the Archaeology Data Service and Shropshire HER. Potential users of the generated digital data (outside of the organisation) will be able to source the data and identify whether it could be suitable for their research purposes through access granted via the RCAHMS website. Requests can also be made for data through the regional HER's and directly to Aeon Archaeology (info@aeonarchaeology.co.uk).

8.11 Governance of access

Access will be governed by the policies of ADS and the Shropshire HER. Where data is requested directly, the Senior Archaeologist at Aeon Archaeology will act as point of contact, ensuring compliance with Faculty and CIFA standards.

8.12 The study team's exclusive use of the data

Aeon Archaeology's requirement is for timely data sharing, with the understanding that a limited, defined period of exclusive use of data for primary research is reasonable according to the nature and value of the data, and that this restriction on sharing should be based on simple, clear principles. This time period is expected to be six months from completion of the project however Aeon Archaeology reserves the right to extend this period without notice if primary data research dictates.

8.13 Restrictions or delays to sharing, with planned actions to limit such restrictions

Restriction to data sharing may be due to participant confidentiality or consent agreements. Strategies to limit restrictions will include data being anonymised or aggregated; gaining participant consent for data sharing; and gaining copyright permissions. For prospective studies, consent procedures will include provision for data sharing to maximise the value of the data for wider research use, while providing adequate safeguards for participants.

8.14 Regulation of responsibilities of users

External users of the data will be bound by data sharing agreements provided by the relevant organisation or directly through Aeon Archaeology.

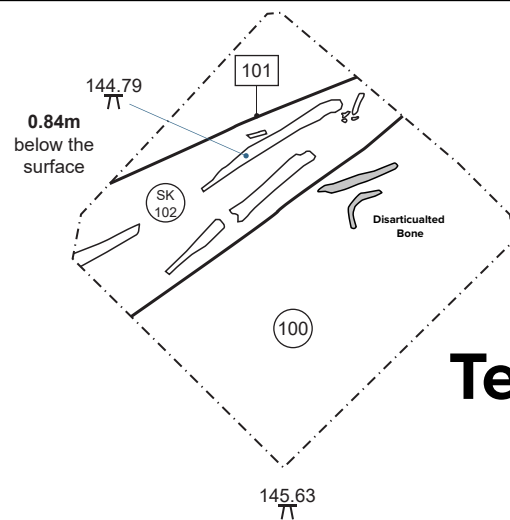
8.15 Responsibilities

Responsibility for study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be through the Senior Archaeologist (Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA) at Aeon Archaeology when concerning data generation and early/mid-term storage. Upon deposition with digital depositories the study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be the responsibility of the specific organisations' themselves. Once deposited, responsibility transfers to the receiving repository (ADS for digital, Shropshire Archives or HER for physical).

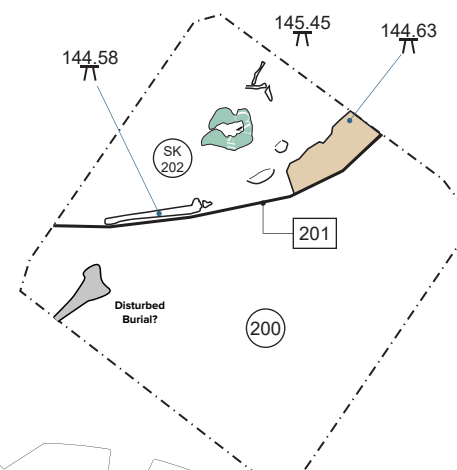
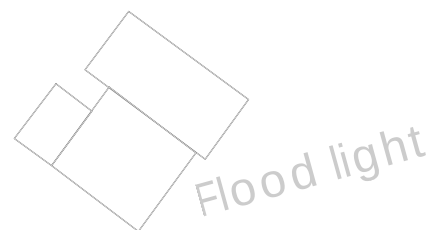
8.16 Organisational policies on data sharing and data security

The following Aeon Archaeology policies are relevant:

- Aeon Archaeology Archive Deposition Policy 2025
- Aeon Archaeology Quality Assurance Policy 2025
- Aeon Archaeology Conflict of Interest Policy 2025
- Aeon Archaeology Outreach Policy 2025
- Aeon Archaeology Digital Management Plan 2025



Test Pit 1



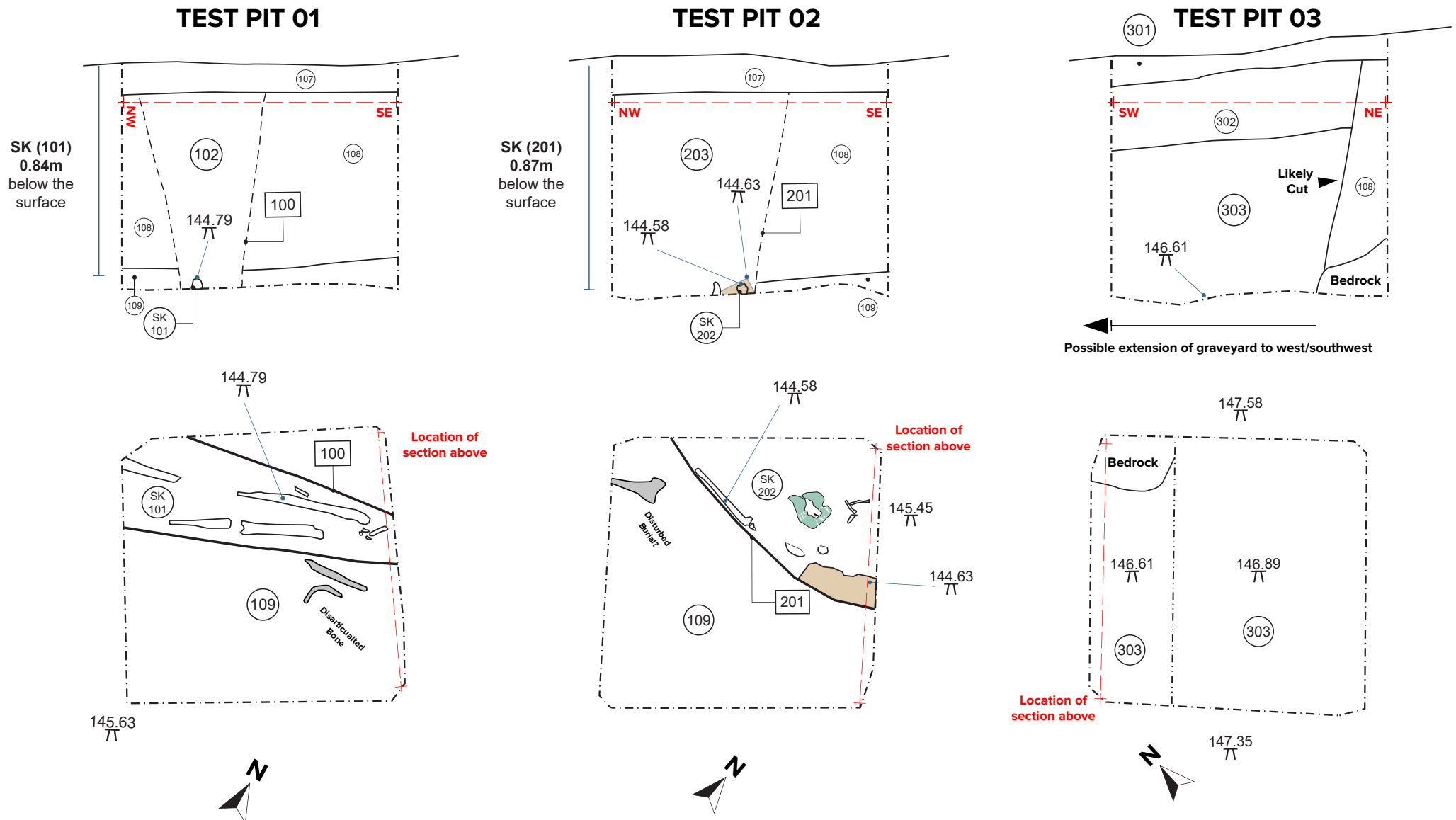
Test Pit 2

1:50



Figure 04: Plan showing location test pits 1 & 2 with burials SK (101) & SK (202), St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS. Scale 1:50 @ A4.

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9.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

9.1 Overview (Figures 04-05)

The archaeological evaluation was maintained by Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA, Andrea Cooke BSc MSc, and Josh Dean BA ACIfA, on behalf of Aeon Archaeology. The works were undertaken between the 8th and 10th of September 2025. Weather conditions across the three days were changeable but generally overcast, with bouts of sunshine interspersed by squally showers. All excavation was carried out by hand, using trowels and spades, with no mechanical assistance employed at any stage.

Three test pits were opened within the churchyard of St Swithun's, Cheswardine, located in the north-western part of the burial ground close to the western boundary wall. The pits were positioned to investigate the depth of burial soils in relation to proposed development and to establish the presence or absence of human remains within the areas affected. Each trench was excavated stratigraphically, with deposits recorded in accordance with CIfA standards, and all human remains encountered were left in situ. What follows is a description and discussion of the specific phases of excavation, with a detailed stratigraphic account of each test pit, alongside observations concerning burials and associated finds.

9.2 Test Pit 1 (Plates 01-04)

Test Pit 1 was located in the north-western part of the churchyard, with its north-west corner positioned 0.90 m south of the path leading to the tower entrance and 3.70 m east of the western perimeter wall (approx. SJ 71900 29900). The pit measured approximately 1.00 m² in area and was excavated entirely by hand.

The stratigraphic sequence commenced with 0.17 m of firm, dark brown-grey topsoil (107), heavily root-disturbed, which lay above 0.68 m of stony mid brown-grey backfill (108). This layer was friable and contained a mixed assemblage of small to medium rounded and sub-rounded stones. At a depth of 0.85 m, an east-west aligned adult skeleton (101) was encountered. The burial lay supine in the traditional manner of a Christian interment, and only the lower legs were exposed within the confines of the test pit. The bone preservation was notably poor, attributed to the loose sandy matrix of the grave backfill and the extensive disturbance by root activity. Trabecular bone elements such as the knees and ankles were almost entirely dissolved, and surviving cortical bone was soft and spongy.

The skeleton (101) was situated within an ovoid grave cut [100], which was vertical-sided with a flat base and extended beyond the limits of excavation. The cut measured 0.87 m in depth, 0.40 m in width and greater than 1.00 m in length. It was filled by the grave fill (102), a loose mid brown-grey clay-silt-sand with abundant small to medium riverine cobbles (ranging between 0.01 m and 0.15 m in diameter) and occasional small flecks of lime mortar. The backfill had compressed and distorted the surviving skeletal elements, further exacerbating their condition.

Although only the lower legs of (101) were revealed, articulation confirmed that the burial had been interred supine and extended, head to the west, in accordance with Christian practice. No coffin nails, fittings, or other structural evidence were identified. No grave goods were present, and the preservation of bone did not allow for the identification of sex, age or pathology. The remains were left undisturbed, re-covered after recording.

In addition to the articulated burial (101), disarticulated fragments were recovered within (102), including part of a humeral shaft and a redeposited calvarium, both of which lay to the south of the articulated remains. These are likely to represent disturbed elements of earlier interments, displaced during historic grave-digging. Further to this, a single tibial shaft was visible in the north-western edge of the pit, interpreted as belonging to a second burial beyond the excavated area.

In summary, Test Pit 1 revealed a poorly preserved east–west aligned adult skeleton (101) within grave cut [100], sealed by (102). Preservation was very poor due to soil conditions and biological activity, with articulated remains limited to the lower legs. Disarticulated cranial and post-cranial elements, together with a probable adjacent long bone in section, confirmed that the graveyard has undergone multiple episodes of burial and disturbance over time.



Plate 01: Test Pit 01, Post Excavation, Plan Shot, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire - from the north/northwest - scale at 0.50m



Plate 02: Test Pit 01, Post Excavation, Section Shot, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire - from the east/northeast - scale at 0.50m



Plate 03: SK (101) in Test Pit 01, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire - from the south/southeast - scale at 0.50m



Plate 04: SK (101) in Test Pit 01, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire- from the south/southeast - scale at 0.50m

9.3 Test Pit 2 (Plates 05-10)

Test Pit 2 was located to the south-east of Test Pit 1 and north-west of Test Pit 3 (approx. SJ 71903 29897). The trench measured approximately 1.00 m² in area and, like Test Pit 1, was excavated entirely by hand using spades and trowels.

The stratigraphic sequence began with 0.13 m of firm to soft, dark brown-grey sand-silt topsoil (107). This layer exhibited heavy root activity from nearby trees and shrubs and represented the turf and topsoil horizon across this part of the churchyard. Beneath (107) lay 0.70–0.72 m of friable, light red-brown silt-sand subsoil (108). This deposit was characterised by very frequent (30–40%) rounded and sub-rounded pebbles of small to large size, together with occasional fragments of lime mortar. The deposit is interpreted as generic graveyard backfill and was comparable in both appearance and depth to the subsoil recorded in Test Pit 1. Below (108), natural geology was encountered, consisting of firm to soft mid brown-red sand (109) extending for greater than 0.40 m in depth. The natural material overlay red to yellow sandstone bedrock at an undetermined depth.

Cut into (108) and extending into (109) was a grave cut [201]. This feature was visible in the north-east section of the trench and was ovoid to sub-rounded in plan with steep, vertical sides and a concave to flat base. The grave cut measured greater than 0.90 m in length, more than 0.40 m in width, and at least 0.42 m in depth, continuing beyond the base of excavation. It was aligned east–west in accordance with Christian burial custom.

Within grave cut [201] lay skeleton (202), an adult individual interred supine and extended with the head positioned to the west. The burial was contained within a coffin, evidenced by surviving iron fittings, coffin nails, and the partial collapse of the coffin lid, which obscured the pelvis region. Of particular note was the survival of a copper-alloy coffin nameplate with cursive script, provisionally dated to the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The individual was left undisturbed, but sufficient observation confirmed that bone preservation was excellent: cortical bone remained intact, and trabecular elements showed no evidence of dissolution. Joints were well preserved, and no identifiable pathology was observed. Based on bone size and development, the burial is considered to represent an adult with a minimum skeletal age of 21–25 years, though the collapsed coffin lid prevented full observation and assessment.

The skeleton (202) was sealed by grave fill (203), which was a friable, dark red-brown silt-sand with very frequent (30–40%) rounded and sub-rounded pebble inclusions and abundant flecks of white lime mortar. This material measured greater than 0.42 m in depth and is interpreted as deliberate grave backfill.

In summary, Test Pit 2 revealed a well-preserved adult skeleton (202) within grave cut [201], sealed by grave fill (203). The burial was supine, extended, east–west aligned, and interred within a coffin furnished with iron fittings and a copper-alloy nameplate. The survival of coffin furniture and the excellent state of preservation distinguish this burial from that encountered in Test Pit 1, although the stratigraphic sequence of topsoil (107), subsoil (108), and natural (109) remained consistent across the two excavated areas.



Plate 05: Test Pit 02, Post Excavation, Plan Shot, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire- from the southeast - scale at 0.50m



Plate 06: Test Pit 02, Post Excavation, Section Shot, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire- from the southeast - scale at 0.50m



Plate 07: SK (202) in Test Pit 02, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire - from the south - scale at 0.50m



Plate 08: SK (202) in Test Pit 02, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire - from the south - scale at 0.50m



Plate 09: SK (202) in Test Pit 02, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire - from the south - scale at 0.10m



Plate 10: SK (202), nameplate in Test Pit 02, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire - from the south - scale at 0.10m

9.4 Test Pit 3 (Plates 11-13)

Test Pit 3 was located to the south-east of Test Pit 2, close to the western boundary wall of the churchyard (approx. SJ 71905 29891). The trench measured approximately 1.00 m² in area and was excavated entirely by hand with trowels and spades.

The stratigraphic sequence commenced with 0.20 m of soft, dark brown-grey sand-silt topsoil (301), which exhibited abundant root activity from adjacent vegetation. This deposit represents the turf and active soil horizon across this part of the graveyard. Below (301) lay 0.28 m of firm, mid grey-brown silt-sand subsoil (302). This deposit contained a very high density of inclusions, with approximately 60% small rounded to sub-rounded pebbles, together with occasional fragments of mortar and stone. Artefacts from (302) included a single sherd of lead-glazed blackware pottery, provisionally dated to the eighteenth or nineteenth century, and two fragments of partially dressed sandstone masonry. These latter pieces are likely to be associated with the nearby western boundary wall of the churchyard, indicating either disturbance or redeposition during construction or repair.

Beneath (302) lay natural deposits (303), consisting of firm to soft mid red-brown sand, extending for greater than 0.37 m in depth. Evidence of root activity was also present at this level. The natural sand (303) overlay red to yellow sandstone bedrock, which was not reached within the base of the trench but is consistent with the underlying geology observed across the site.

On the western side of the trench, stratigraphy suggested a more complex sequence. Here, deposits (301) and (302) appeared to overlie a softer, mid grey-brown silt-clay-sand deposit (304), comparable in composition to the subsoil (108) recorded in Test Pits 1 and 2. The relationship between (302) and (304) suggests that (301) and (302) may represent levelling or dumping material deposited against an earlier ground surface (304/108), potentially associated with a westward extension of the churchyard and the corresponding adjustment of the adjacent roadway. The stratigraphic evidence therefore supports the interpretation that this part of the churchyard may have been subject to modification and extension at some stage, although the precise date remains uncertain.

No articulated burials were encountered within Test Pit 3. However, the presence of redeposited pottery sherds, masonry fragments, and dense pebble-rich deposits indicates that this area of the graveyard has undergone significant disturbance, likely associated with landscaping or boundary work. The absence of skeletal material in this trench contrasts with Test Pits 1 and 2, where articulated remains were present, further supporting the interpretation of a different depositional and use history in the western margin of the churchyard.

In summary, Test Pit 3 exposed topsoil (301), a dense pebble-rich subsoil (302) containing pottery and masonry, natural sand (303), and evidence of an underlying deposit (304/108) correlating with the generic graveyard backfill observed in other trenches. No in situ burials were present, but the stratigraphy indicates that this area may represent a later extension or modification to the graveyard rather than part of the primary burial ground.



Plate 11: Test Pit 03, Post Excavation, Plan Shot, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire- from the west/southwest - scale at 0.50m



Plate 12: Test Pit 03, Post Excavation, Section Shot, St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire- from the south/southeast - scale at 0.50m



Plate 13: Partially dressed (discard) red sandstone masonry from context (302) within Test Pit 03, at St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire - scale at 0.50m

9.5 Interpretation

The three test pits excavated within the north-western part of St Swithun's churchyard provide valuable insight into the depth, character, and distribution of burial deposits across this area. Test Pits 1 and 2 confirmed the presence of articulated adult burials interred in the traditional east-west alignment, consistent with Christian practice from the medieval period onwards. Test Pit 1 revealed a poorly preserved skeleton (101) truncated by root activity and stony backfill, with disarticulated cranial and post-cranial elements also present. This suggests a high level of disturbance within this zone, likely caused by successive grave-digging and natural processes. In contrast, Test Pit 2 exposed a coffin burial (202) of exceptional preservation, complete with iron fittings and a copper-alloy nameplate, highlighting variation in burial practice and survival even within a small area of the yard.

Test Pit 3 differed markedly in its results. No articulated remains were observed, and instead the stratigraphy comprised dense pebble-rich deposits containing pottery sherds and fragments of masonry, overlying natural sand. The sequence is consistent with ground-raising or levelling associated with a westward extension of the churchyard, potentially linked to the modification of the boundary wall and adjacent roadway. The absence of in situ burials here may reflect either deliberate exclusion of this zone from active interment during earlier phases, or later landscaping works that truncated or obscured earlier deposits.

Together, the three trenches indicate that the burial horizon lies between 0.80 m and 0.90 m below present ground level in this part of the churchyard, and that burials extend into the natural subsoil (109/303). Preservation is variable, ranging from poor dissolution of trabecular bone in Test Pit 1 to excellent survival of coffin and skeletal remains in Test Pit 2. Stratigraphic differences between Test Pit 3 and the other trenches suggest a degree of spatial complexity in the development of the graveyard, likely reflecting its long history of use and periodic expansion.

10.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aeon Archaeology was commissioned by Lupiae Architecture and Conservation on behalf of St Swithun's Church, hereafter 'the Client', to carry out an archaeological evaluation within the churchyard of St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (NGR SJ 71923 29910), hereafter 'the Site'. The programme of archaeological work was undertaken under the authority of a faculty licence (620498) and comprised the excavation of three test pits, each measuring 1 m by 1 m, in the north-western part of the churchyard. The evaluation was required in advance of a wider proposal for an external access ramp system [separate faculty application 2023-083734], with the aim of establishing the depth, character, and extent of burial soils and confirming the presence or absence of human remains.

The works were conducted between 8th and 10th September 2025 by Aeon Archaeology staff (Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA, Andrea Cooke BSc MSc, and Josh Dean BA ACIfA). All excavation was undertaken by hand, in accordance with the approved Project Design (PD), which had been submitted to and approved by the DAC Archaeology Adviser. The PD fulfilled the requirement for a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) as stipulated by the proviso attached to the faculty application.

The evaluation confirmed that articulated burials survive at depths of approximately 0.82–0.90 m below present ground level. In Test Pit 1, an adult skeleton (101) was encountered within grave cut [100]. Only the lower legs were exposed, with preservation extremely poor owing to soil chemistry and root disturbance. Additional disarticulated remains, including a humeral shaft and cranial fragment, were observed within the grave fill (102), together with a tibial shaft protruding from the north-western section, indicating the presence of further burials beyond the trench limits.

In Test Pit 2, an exceptionally well-preserved adult burial (202) was encountered within grave cut [201]. The individual lay supine and extended in the traditional east–west alignment and had been interred within a coffin. Surviving coffin furniture included iron nails, fittings, and a copper-alloy nameplate with cursive script. The coffin lid had collapsed, obscuring the pelvis, but bone preservation was otherwise excellent, and no pathology was observed. This burial is consistent with post-medieval interment practices and likely dates to the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

In Test Pit 3, no articulated burials were observed. Instead, stratigraphy comprised a sequence of topsoil (301), overlying a dense pebble-rich deposit (302) that contained an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century sherd of lead-glazed blackware and fragments of dressed sandstone masonry, likely derived from the adjacent western boundary wall. Beneath lay natural sand (303). Stratigraphic relationships suggest that deposits (301) and (302) overlie a softer silt-clay-sand horizon (304/108), equivalent to the subsoil observed in Test Pits 1 and 2. This sequence is consistent with a phase of ground raising or levelling, probably associated with a westward extension of the churchyard. On the basis of historical context, it is plausible that such an extension coincided with the mid- to late nineteenth-century refurbishment of the church, though further research would be required to confirm this.

The orientation of the burials was east–west and conformed to Christian tradition. Variation in preservation between Test Pit 1 (poor) and Test Pit 2 (excellent) illustrates the influence of soil conditions, root activity, and coffin use on survival. Test Pit 3, by contrast, provides important evidence for the development of the churchyard itself, suggesting modification to its western limit and raising the possibility that this area was not intensively used for burial.

At no point during the evaluation were human remains lifted or exhumed. All skeletal material was recorded in situ and re-covered following observation. The evaluation adhered fully to the conditions of the faculty licence, to the guidance of the DAC Archaeology Adviser, and to professional standards, including the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2023) and the *Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England* (APABE & Historic England 2017).

In conclusion, the evaluation has established two key outcomes. First, burials were identified at depths of c.0.82–0.90 m below present ground level, particularly in the north and north-west of the churchyard close to the tower pathway. Second, stratigraphy observed in Test Pit 3 indicates that the churchyard was extended or modified to the west, most plausibly during the nineteenth century, although the precise phasing will require further documentary or archaeological investigation. This suggests that there may be a reduced likelihood of burials in this western area, but it remains prudent that any future works are subject to archaeological monitoring and recording (formerly referred to as a watching brief). These findings provide a clear evidential baseline for the management of subsequent works within the churchyard and should be fully considered in the planning and design of the proposed access ramp system.

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APPENDIX I: PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



æon archaeology

**St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street,
Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS
(620498)**

**Project Design for Archaeological
Evaluation**

June 2025 v1.0



Project Code: A0545.1
Faculty Ref: 620498



St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS

June 2025 v1.0

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Aeon Archaeology has been commissioned by Lupiae Architecture and Conservation on behalf of St Swithun's Church, hereafter 'the Client', to provide a project design (PD) for carrying out an archaeological evaluation in the graveyard of St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (NGR SJ 71923 29910), hereafter 'the Site' (figures 1-3).

The programme of archaeological work will be undertaken under the authority of a faculty licence (620498) and comprise an archaeological investigation of 3 test pits, each measuring 1m x 1m x 1m, in the churchyard, to inform the wider proposal for an external access ramp system [separate faculty application 2023-083734]. The following proviso has been assigned to the faculty application:

[Provisos] • A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the archaeological test pits should be submitted (via the DAC Secretary) for written approval by the DAC Archaeology Adviser prior to work commencing on site. [Reasons] • In relation to which, the DAC Archaeology Adviser has commented: This Faculty application follows on from informal consultation with the DAC regarding the proposed access ramp [separate faculty application 2023-083734], and with the DAC Archaeology Adviser regarding the need to evaluate the extent to which burials and human remains might be present at this location within the churchyard. It is understood that the PCC's architect has consulted with the archaeological contractor, and they have also checked and agreed the scope of the evaluation (i.e. number and size of the trail pits) with the DAC Archaeology Advisor. On this basis, the DAC Archaeology Adviser is satisfied to recommend this application subject to the recommended proviso.

This PD fulfils the requirement for an archaeological WSI as requested by the above condition. It is a requirement that this PD is approved by the Diocesan Archaeologist prior to the implementation of the archaeological evaluation at the Site.

If any human remains become exposed or are otherwise encountered during the course of the work:

- All work in the vicinity must stop immediately.
- The remains must be lightly covered with soil.
- The Diocesan Registrar (or in their absence the Secretary to the Diocesan Advisory Committee) must be notified.
- The directions of the Diocesan Registrar must be followed.

The work will adhere to the guidelines specified in *Standard for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023) and the *Universal Guidance for Field Evaluation* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023).

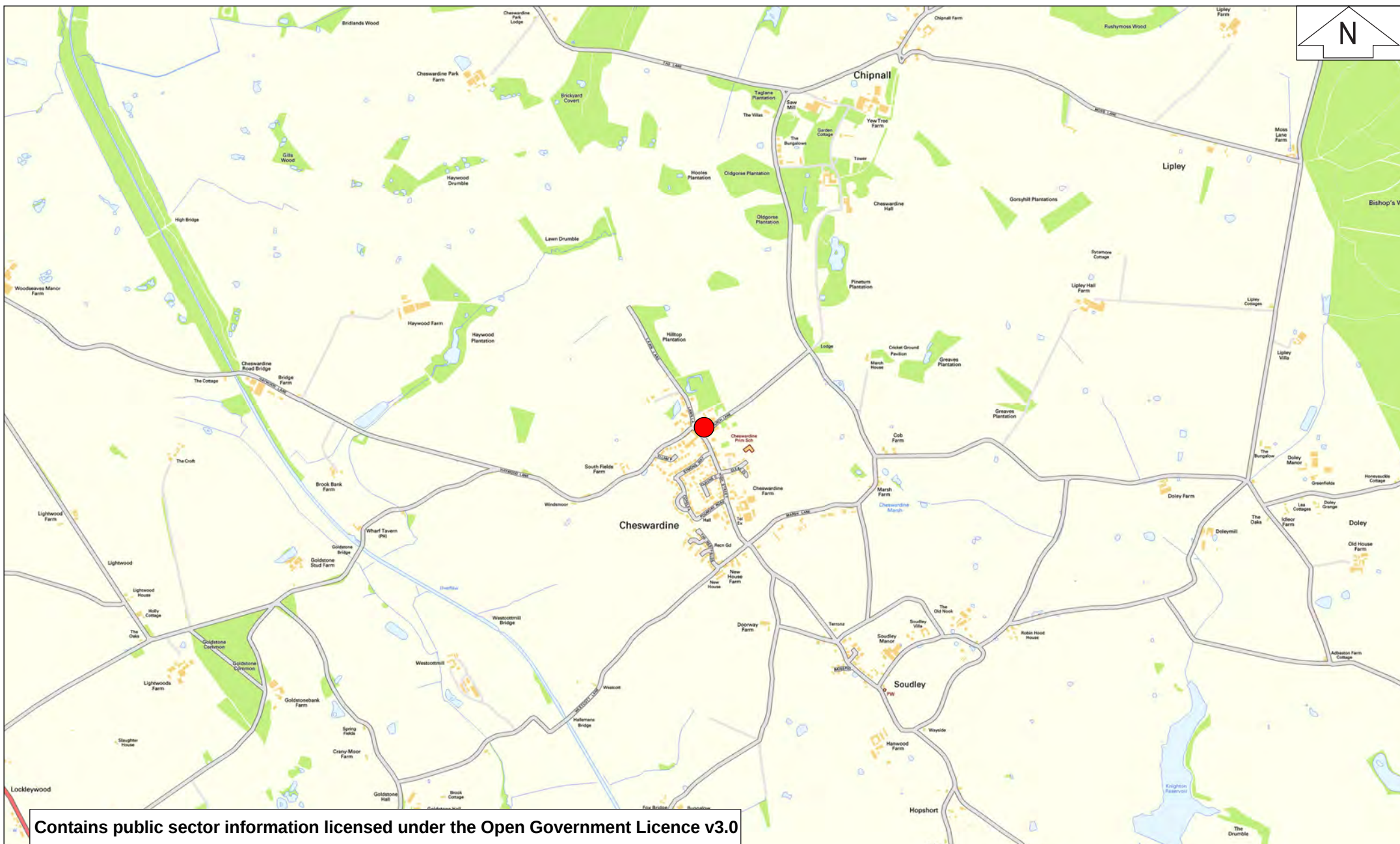


Figure 01: Location of St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (SJ 71923 29910). Scale 1:20,000 at A4.



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Figure 02: Location of St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (SJ 71923 29910). Scale 1:5,000 at A4.

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2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St Swithun's Church in Cheswardine occupies a prominent, elevated position at the head of the village's main street and lies within the designated conservation area. The church is a Grade II* listed building, notable for its red sandstone construction and its 15th-century tower, which has served as a landmark across the North Shropshire landscape since around 1470. The current building, completed in 1888, replaced a poorly constructed and short-lived predecessor and incorporates the historic St Katherine's Chapel. Additional heritage features within the churchyard include a Grade II listed set of stone steps leading to the south porch and a Grade II listed chest tomb located north-west of the tower.

In response to the church's ongoing commitment to inclusive access, the Parochial Church Council (PCC) has commissioned the design of a new external ramp to provide dignified, step-free access for all worshippers and visitors. The ramp is essential to ensure equal access to the main south porch, which currently can only be reached by a stepped approach. The proposed design comprises five ramped sections ascending approximately two metres from the western boundary wall to the south porch entrance.

Following pre-application discussions with the Diocesan Advisory Committee and Shropshire Council, it was identified that archaeological investigation would be required to assess the impact of groundworks associated with the ramp—particularly where excavation will take place adjacent to the Grade II listed boundary wall and within sensitive areas of the churchyard. An initial design was revised to reduce potential harm to a protected yew tree and to align the new ramp more closely with the existing network of footpaths, thereby reducing disruption to the churchyard's layout and heritage assets.

The ramp has been reconfigured to avoid building up soil within the root protection zone of the yew tree. Instead, levels will be raised only along existing gravel paths—where previous compaction and material types limit the risk to root ventilation. Only one area, in front of the tower, will be reduced in level by approximately 500mm to facilitate a transition and protect the medieval footings, which will be clearly marked and respected within the final design.

To support the planning and Faculty application, a programme of archaeological trial trenching has been agreed in consultation with Shropshire Council's Diocesan Archaeologist. Three 1m x 1m x 1m test pits will be excavated along the boundary wall and within the path network to assess the archaeological sensitivity of the proposed development area.

3.0 EVALUATION - ARCHAEOLOGICAL AIMS

Before evaluation commences an agreed programme of excavation timing, siting, duration, surface reinstatement and health and safety protection measures will be agreed with the Client and the Diocesan Archaeologist.

The size, location and orientation of the evaluation trenches will be agreed in advance so as to best target areas that may contain human burials within the proposed development footprint – however the intention is to excavate 3 x evaluation pits measuring 1m by 1m by 1m.

The aims of the evaluation are:

- To allow, within the resources available, the opportunity to gain information about and record the presence/absence, nature and date of archaeological remains on the Site affected by excavations and groundworks, the presence and nature of which could not be established with sufficient confidence in advance of works which may disturb them.
- To provide the facility to signal to the relevant authorities, before irreversible impact to remains that an archaeological and/or historic find has been made for which the resources allocated to the development itself are inadequate to support their treatment to an adequate and satisfactory standard.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are:

- To observe and recover any artefacts of archaeological significance.
- To record the location, dimensions and nature of any deposits, features, structures or artefacts of archaeological significance.
- To recover samples of any deposits considered to have potential for analysis for palaeoenvironmental data should the opportunity arise.
- To recover and record any disarticulated human remains prior to reburial on site.
- To clean, record and remove any articulated human remains situated within the evaluation pits and to oversee their reburial on site.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

If archaeological deposits and /or human remains are identified, subject to the aims of the evaluation, they will be manually cleaned, excavated and recorded to determine extent, function, date and relationship to adjacent features.

Contingency provision will be made for the following:

- Additional excavation of up to 100% of any given feature should the excavated sample prove to be insufficient to provide information on the character and date of the feature.
- Expansion of excavation trench limits, to clarify the extent of features equivalent to an additional 20% of the core trench area.

The archaeological works will be surveyed with respect to the nearest Ordnance Survey datum point and with reference to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The excavation area, deposits, features and structures within them will be accurately located on a site plan prepared at most appropriate and largest scale.

A written record of the trench content and all identified features will be completed via Aeon Archaeology pro-formas.

Any subsurface remains will be recorded photographically, with detailed notations, measured drawings, and a measured survey. The photographic record will be maintained using a digital SLR camera (Canon 600D) set to maximum resolution (72dpi) with photographs taken in RAW format and later converted to TIFF format for long-term storage and JPEG format for presentation and inclusion in the archive. Photographic identification boards will also be used.

The excavation area will be opened by hand.

All excavations, where required, will be backfilled with the material excavated and upon departure Aeon Archaeology will leave the site in a safe and tidy condition. Aeon Archaeology has not been requested to re-lay turf/lawn surface.

5.0 EVALUATION REPORT

5.1 Post-evaluation Assessment

A report on the results of the evaluation, in accordance with the recommendations in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment Project Manager's Guide (English Heritage 2006; 2015); and in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Universal Guidance for archaeological field evaluation (2023) will be required to be produced upon conclusion of the archaeological fieldwork. The report will be completed within a maximum of two to four weeks of completion of work on site (depending on the results of further analysis) and may include examination and quantification leading to the identification of function, form, date, method of manufacture, material/fabric type, source, parallels, attributes and condition of artefacts; of the exploitation of wild or domesticated resources; the reconstruction of environments; and the nature of human populations.

Full analysis of the results of the project, including: dating and interpretation of excavated features; pottery and other finds analysis; analysis of industrial residues by an appropriate specialist or specialists; analysis of samples for environmental data (including pollen, plant macrofossils and beetles) by an appropriate specialist or specialists; radiocarbon dating; discussion of the results in their local, regional and national context, including relating the excavated features and palaeoenvironmental data to evidence from nearby sites, and discussion of the results in their local, regional and national context may be required.

5.2 Post-evaluation Report

Following completion of the stages outlined above, a report will be produced that will include:

- A non-technical summary.
- A table of contents.
- An introduction with acknowledgements, including a list of all those involved in the project and the location and description of the site.
- A statement of the project aims.
- An account of the project methodology undertaken, with an assessment of the same to include a statement on preservation bias and the means of data collection and sampling strategies.
- A factual summary of the history, development and use of the site.
- A statement setting out the nature, quantity and condition of the material archive (artefacts and ecofacts) including commentary on any bias observed due to collection and sampling strategies and commentary on long-term storage requirements.
- A statement setting out the nature and quantity of the documentary archive (notes, photographs, drawings, digital data).
- A general site plan indicating the position and size of the areas subject to evaluation and the locations of archaeological deposits identified and recorded during the works.
- Plans and sections at appropriate scales, augmented with appropriate photographs. All plans and sections will be related to the Ordnance Survey datum levels and to the National Grid.
- Other maps, plans, drawings, stratigraphic matrices and photographs as appropriate.
- A discussion of the location, extent, date, nature, condition, quality and significance of any archaeological deposits and finds identified during the project.
- A discussion of any research implications arising from the archaeological work.
- A bibliography of sources consulted.
- An updated Data Management Plan (DMP) and an archive content list with updated archive Selection Strategy will be included.

6.0 DIGITAL DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 Type of study

Evaluation at St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS (NGR SJ 71923 29910).

6.2 Types of data

- Photographs (RAW)
- Context sheets (paper)
- Photographic register (paper)
- Drawings (drafting film)
- Misc registers (paper)
- Compiled report

6.3 Format and scale of the data

Photographs taken in RAW format and later converted to TIF format for long term archiving and JPEG format for use in the digital report, converted using Adobe Photoshop. All photographs renamed using AF5 freeware with the prefix (project code_frame number) and a photographic metadata created using Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) or Access (.accdb).

Compiled report (including figures and plates) as .PDF files.

6.4 Methodologies for data collection / generation

Digital data will be collected / generated in line with recommendations made in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives (2014. Rev 2020). Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 are relevant:

3.3.1 Project specifications, research designs or similar documents should include a project specific Selection Strategy and a Data Management Plan.

3.3.3 Project designs or schedules of works etc should outline the methodology used in recording all information, in order to demonstrate that all aspects of archive creation will ensure consistency; for instance in terminologies and the application of codes in digital data sets, highlighting relevant data standards where appropriate

6.5 Data quality and standards

Consistency and quality of data collection / generation shall be controlled and documented through the use of standardised procedure as outlined in the PD. This will include the use of standardised data capture file formats, digital proformas, data entry validation, peer review, and use of controlled vocabularies.

6.6 Managing, storing and curating data.

All digital data will be organised into Aeon Archaeology proformae project file systems and backed up to the cloud using *Acronis Cyber Protect* with additional copies made to external physical hard drive.

6.7 Metadata standards and data documentation

Digital metadata created using Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) or Access (.accdb) of all photographic plates.

Paper metadata created from Aeon Archaeology proformas for contexts, artefacts, environmental samples, archaeological monitoring and recording day sheets, trench sheets, and basic record sheets and then scanned to create digital .PDF copies.

6.8 Data preservation strategy and standards

Long term data storage will be through the submission of digital (.PDF) reports to the regional Historic Environment Record (HER); submission of digital (.PDF) reports and a project completion form to the Oasis database; and retention of copies of all digital files at Aeon Archaeology on physical external hard drive and uploaded to Acronis Cyber Protect.

6.9 Suitability for sharing

All digital data will be placed within the public realm (through the channels in 5.8) except for where project confidentiality restricts the sharing of data. All data sets will be selected / discriminated by the Senior Archaeologist at Aeon Archaeology and written permission will be sought from all project specific Clients prior to the sharing of data.

6.10 Discovery by potential users of the research data

Potential users of the generated digital data (outside of the organisation) will be able to source the data and identify whether it could be suitable for their research purposes through access granted via the Oasis website. Requests can also be made for data through the regional HER's and directly to Aeon Archaeology (info@aeonarchaeology.co.uk).

6.11 Governance of access

The decision to supply research data to potential new users will be via the associated website request (Oasis, HER) or via the Senior Archaeologist when made directly to Aeon Archaeology.

6.12 The study team's exclusive use of the data

Aeon Archaeology's requirement is for timely data sharing, with the understanding that a limited, defined period of exclusive use of data for primary research is reasonable according to the nature and value of the data, and that this restriction on sharing should be based on simple, clear principles. This time period is expected to be six months from completion of the project however Aeon Archaeology reserves the right to extend this period without notice if primary data research dictates.

6.13 Restrictions or delays to sharing, with planned actions to limit such restrictions

Restriction to data sharing may be due to participant confidentiality or consent agreements. Strategies to limit restrictions will include data being anonymised or aggregated; gaining participant consent for data sharing; and gaining copyright permissions. For prospective studies, consent procedures will include provision for data sharing to maximise the value of the data for wider research use, while providing adequate safeguards for participants.

6.14 Regulation of responsibilities of users

External users of the data will be bound by data sharing agreements provided by the relevant organisation or directly through Aeon Archaeology.

6.15 Responsibilities

Responsibility for study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be through the Senior Archaeologist (Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA) at Aeon Archaeology when concerning data generation and early/mid-term storage. Upon deposition with digital depositories the study-wide data management, metadata creation, data security and quality assurance of data will be the responsibility of the specific organisations' themselves.

6.16 Organisational policies on data sharing and data security

The following Aeon Archaeology policies are relevant:

- Aeon Archaeology Archive Deposition Policy 2025
- Aeon Archaeology Quality Assurance Policy 2025
- Aeon Archaeology Conflict of Interest Policy 2025
- Aeon Archaeology Outreach Policy 2025
- Aeon Archaeology Digital Management Plan 2025

7.0 FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS DESIGNS (FAWDs)

The discovery of substantial archaeological remains and/or features during the archaeological works may result in the requirement for an extended programme of archaeological mitigation. This may require the submission of revised quotes to the client as well as a new specification which will be required to be approved by the Diocesan Archaeologist prior to implementation.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

Relevant archaeological deposits will be sampled by taking bulk samples (a minimum of 10.0 litres and maximum of 30.0 litres) for flotation of charred plant remains. Bulk samples will be taken from waterlogged deposits for macroscopic plant remains. Other bulk samples, for example from middens, may be taken for small animal bones and small artefacts.

Bulk environmental samples will also be taken from any fills, deposits or structures which yield archaeological artefacts, charcoal flecks/ fragments, bone, or any other historic remains.

Advice and guidance regarding environmental samples and their suitability for radiocarbon dating, as well as the analysis of macrofossils (charcoal and wood), pollen, animal bones and molluscs will be obtained from Oxford Archaeology.

For guidance purposes the following volume criteria represent the minimum feature sampling requirements:

- 50% of each discrete feature (e.g. pits and postholes)
- 25% of the exposed areas of each linear feature and all terminals/intersections
- 50% of structural features (e.g. beamslots, ring-ditches)
- 50%-100% of domestic/industrial working features (e.g. hearths and ovens)

9.0 HUMAN REMAINS

During the evaluation thorough inspection of removed soils will take place and all disarticulated bone collected and catalogued. All disarticulated bone will remain securely stored on site and will be reburied within the test pit prior to backfilling.

If articulated human remains are encountered all work in the vicinity must stop immediately and the following undertaken:

- The remains must be lightly covered with soil.
- The Diocesan Registrar (or in their absence the Secretary to the Diocesan Advisory Committee) must be notified.
- The directions of the Diocesan Registrar must be followed.

If articulated remains are encountered an Osteoarchaeologist will be commissioned to attend site and provide osteological analysis of the remains. If removal is necessary it will take place under appropriate regulations and with due regard for health and safety issues. All articulated remains will be cleaned, recorded photographically, and drawn plans produced at 1:10 scale before being carefully removed and securely stored on site, prior to reburial. There will be a presumption against chasing articulated remains beyond the limits of excavation.

10.0 ARTEFACTS

See Appendix I

All artefacts and ecofacts will be retrieved for identification and recording and will be treated in accordance with Guidelines for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2020).

All artefacts are the property of the landowner but it is recommended that finds are deposited with the rest of the project archive within an appropriate museum. Furthermore, the client agrees to granting access to all artefacts recovered by Aeon Archaeology for analysis, study and publication as necessary. All finds would be treated according to advice provided within *First Aid for Finds* (Rescue 1999). Aeon Archaeology staff will undertake initial identification, but any additional advice would be sought from a wide range of consultants.

The recovery policy for archaeological finds will be kept under review throughout the archaeological works. Any changes in recovery priorities will be under guidance from an appropriate specialist and agreed with the Diocesan Archaeologist. There will be a presumption against the disposal of archaeological finds regardless of their apparent age or condition.

All finds will be collected and processed including those found within spoil tips. Their location and height will be plotted; finds numbers attributed, bagged and labelled as well any preliminary identification taking place on site. Where specialist advice is required provision will be made to do so at the earliest possible convenience.

After processing, artefacts which are suitable will be cleaned and conserved in-house. Artefacts requiring specialist cleaning and conservation will be sent to the relevant specialist. All artefacts will then be sent to a specialist for analysis, the results of which will then be assessed to ascertain the potential of the finds assemblage to meet the research aims of the project. The value of the finds will also be assessed in terms of the wider educational and academic contributions.

Depending upon the material of the remains the following experts will be consulted regarding the conservation of waterlogged material:

- Organic material: Mr Phil Parkes, Cardiff Conservation Services (tel: +44(0)29 2087 5628)
- Non-organic material: Mr Phil Parkes, Cardiff Conservation Services (tel: +44(0)29 2087 5628)

Depending upon the material of the remains the following experts will be consulted regarding the conservation and analysis of artefacts:

- Bone: Nora Bermingham
- Glass: Hilary Cool, Barbican Research Associates.
- Metal artefacts: Phil Parkes, Cardiff Conservation Services, Cardiff.
- Slag, burnt clay, hammerscale: Dr. Tim Young, Geoarch, Cardiff.
- Stone artefacts: George Smith, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Bangor.
- Wood artefacts: Jane Foley, Foley Conservation, Builth Wells.
- Leather: Quita Mould, Barbican Research Associates.
- Environmental Material: Dr Mike Allen, Allen Environmental Archaeology.
- Numismatics: Peter Guest, Barbican Research Associates.
- Ceramics: Dan Garner

If well preserved materials are found it may be necessary to employ additional staff. Furthermore, it may be necessary to suspend work within a specific region of the site, or across the whole site, while conservation and excavation/recording takes place.

Upon written approval from the Client all finds will be offered to the Shropshire Museums Service for archiving.

11.0 UNEXPECTED DISCOVERIES: TREASURE TROVE

Treasure Trove law has been amended by the Treasure Act 1996. The following are Treasure under the Act:

- *Objects other than coins* any object other than a coin provided that it contains at least 10% gold or silver and is at least 300 years old when found.
- *Coins* all coins from the same find provided they are at least 300 years old when found (if the coins contain less than 10% gold or silver there must be at least 10. Any object or coin is part of the same find as another object or coin, if it is found in the same place as, or had previously been left together with, the other object. Finds may have become scattered since they were originally deposited in the ground. Single coin finds of gold or silver are not classed as treasure under the 1996 Treasure Act.
- *Associated objects* any object whatever it is made of, that is found in the same place as, or that had previously been together with, another object that is treasure.
- *Objects that would have been treasure trove* any object that would previously have been treasure trove, but does not fall within the specific categories given above. These objects have to be made substantially of gold or silver, they have to be buried with the intention of recovery and their owner or his heirs cannot be traced.

The following types of finds are not treasure:

- Objects whose owners can be traced.
- Unworked natural objects, including human and animal remains, even if they are found in association with treasure.
- Objects from the foreshore which are not wreck.

All finds of treasure must be reported to the coroner for the district within fourteen days of discovery or identification of the items. Items declared Treasure Trove become the property of the Crown.

The British Museum will decide whether they or any other museum may wish to acquire the object. If no museum wishes to acquire the object, then the Secretary of State will be able to disclaim it. When this happens, the coroner will notify the occupier and landowner that he intends to return the object to the finder after 28 days unless he receives no objection. If the coroner receives an objection, the find will be retained until the dispute has been settled.

12.0 ARCHIVING

A draft copy of the report will be produced within two months of the completion of the fieldwork and sent to the Client and the Diocesan Archaeologist for comment prior to finalisation of the report and dissemination. Digital copies of the report will be sent to the regional HER, and the Oasis online database for long term archiving. Furthermore, a summary of the project will be sent to a relevant journal for publication if required.

13.0 PERSONNEL

The work will be managed and undertaken by Richard Cooke BA MA MCIfA, Archaeological Contractor and Consultant at Aeon Archaeology.

14.0 MONITORING AND LIAISON

Regular liaison and site monitoring meetings will take place during all stages of work. The Diocesan Archaeologist will be informed of the start date and of discreet subsequent stages.

15.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Aeon Archaeology has a Health and Safety Policy Statement which can be supplied upon request. Furthermore, site-specific Risk Assessments and Method Statements are compiled and distributed to every member of staff involved with the project prior to the commencement of works.

16.0 INSURANCE

Liability Insurance

Employers' Liability: Limit of Indemnity £10m in any one occurrence

Public Liability: Limit of Indemnity £2m in any one occurrence

Legal Defence Costs (Health and Safety at Work Act): £100,000

The current period expires 07/09/25

Professional Indemnity Insurance

Limit of Indemnity £500,000 any one claim

The current period expires 07/09/25

APPENDIX I - ARTEFACT SELECTION STRATEGY

Aeon Archaeology Artefact Selection Strategy	
Project:	St Swithun's Church, 8 High Street, Cheswardine, Shropshire TF9 2RS
Location:	SJ 71923 29910
Client:	St Swithun's Church
Curator:	Shropshire Diocesan Archaeologist
Receiving Institution:	Shropshire Museums Service
Landowner:	St Swithun's Church

Stone		
Period	Retain	Dispose
<i>Prehistoric</i>	Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy for specific knapping debitage, encompassing all collections, whether stratified or not, that enhance our understanding of prehistory or lithic technology.	Unstratified artefacts
<i>Roman</i>	Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy for stratified assemblages.	Selected elements of common unstratified material.
<i>Early medieval</i>	All stratified and unstratified.	None
<i>Medieval</i>	Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy for stratified assemblages.	Selected elements of common unstratified material.
<i>Early Post Medieval or Later Post-Medieval and Industrial</i>	Only rare or unusual examples.	Majority.
<i>Modern</i>	Only rare or unusual examples.	Majority.
Ceramic		
<i>Prehistoric</i>	All stratified and unstratified.	None.
<i>Roman</i>	Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy for stratified assemblages.	Selected elements of common unstratified material.
<i>Early medieval</i>	All stratified and unstratified.	None

<i>Medieval</i>	Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy for stratified assemblages.	Selected elements of common unstratified material.
<i>Early Post Medieval or Later Post-Medieval and Industrial</i>	Only rare or unusual examples.	Majority.
<i>Modern</i>	Only rare or unusual examples.	Majority.
Construction Material (CBM)	Building	
<i>Prehistoric</i>	Not usually retained. Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy.	Majority.
<i>Roman</i>	Not usually retained. Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy.	Majority.
<i>Early medieval</i>	Not usually retained. Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy.	Majority.
<i>Medieval</i>	Not usually retained. Consultation with both a museum curator and an expert will be undertaken to devise a selection strategy.	Majority.
<i>Early Post Medieval or Later Post-Medieval and Industrial</i>	Usually not retained.	Majority.
<i>Modern</i>	Usually not retained.	Majority.
Metal		
<i>Prehistoric</i>	All.	None.
<i>Roman</i>	All.	None.
<i>Early medieval</i>	All.	None.
<i>Medieval</i>	All.	None.
<i>Early Post Medieval or Later Post-Medieval and Industrial</i>	Only rare or unusual examples.	Majority.
<i>Modern</i>	Not normally retained.	All.
Glass		
<i>Prehistoric</i>	All.	None.
<i>Roman</i>	All.	None.
<i>Early medieval</i>	All.	None.
<i>Medieval</i>	All.	None.
<i>Early Post Medieval or Later Post-Medieval and Industrial</i>	Only rare or unusual examples.	Majority.
<i>Modern</i>	Not normally retained.	All.

Bone, antler and ivory		
<i>Prehistoric</i>	All.	None.
<i>Roman</i>	All.	None.
<i>Early medieval</i>	All.	None.
<i>Medieval</i>	All.	None.
<i>Early Post Medieval or Later Post-Medieval and Industrial</i>	Only rare or unusual examples.	Majority.
<i>Modern</i>	Not normally retained.	All.
Wood		
<i>Prehistoric</i>	All.	None.
<i>Roman</i>	All.	None.
<i>Early medieval</i>	All.	None.
<i>Medieval</i>	All.	None.
<i>Early Post Medieval or Later Post-Medieval and Industrial</i>	Only rare or unusual examples.	Majority.
<i>Modern</i>	Not normally retained.	All.

