

Church of Upwell St Peter, Small Lode, Upwell, Wisbech (ENF156656)

An Archaeological Watching Brief



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Archaeological Monitoring Interim Statement

Church of Upwell St Peter, Small Lode, Upwell, Wisbech (ENF156656)

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Location: TF 50672 02856
Site Code: ENF156656
Event Number: ENF156656
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PROJECT DATA

Site name	Church of Upwell St Peter
OS Grid Ref.	TF 50672 02856
Client	Church of Upwell St Peter
Consultant	Ashley Courtney
Planning ref.	N/A
Brief issued by	Dr. Tim Reynolds
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SUMMARY

Archaeological monitoring of drainage works was undertaken by the CAU on the 31st of May and the 3rd and 26th of June in the cemetery of the Church of Upwell St Peter, Upwell, Wisbech. The Church proposed to improve drainage for existing surface water for the south aisle, north aisle and north porch (including the tower and nave). Much of this involved the reworking of extant drains and the construction of two new soakaways. These works involved either disturbing the deposits associated with the construction of earlier drains or the excavation of undisturbed deposits within the new soakaways. The latter had the potential to encounter both articulated human remains and archaeological deposits.

Two soakaways, one 1x1m at 2m depth and a 2x2m at 1.20m depth were excavated in the north and south end of the cemetery to make room for the placement of drainage works. The 2x2m soakaway had to be relocated due to the presence of a cholera grave marker dating to an 1832 outbreak.

The investigations revealed a homogenous sequence of cemetery soils, filled with occasional disarticulated human remains and assorted debris: bricks, pottery etc. A burial was encountered in the 1x1m soakaway at a depth of 1.2m, composed of the lower half of a skeleton and fragments of coffin material. The 2x2m soakaway was identical in its sequence and revealed two possible grave cuts at a depth of 1.20m, but no definite burials were encountered. The material culture found within the sequences likely dates from the post-medieval era.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The drainage works were undertaken by the Parochial Parish Council and overseen by Ashley Courtney. We are grateful to the Church of Upwell St Peter and Spectrum Stone Ltd for their friendly help and interest during the works.

The Written Brief was prepared by Dr Tim Reynolds, Diocesan Archaeologist. The CAU is grateful for their advice and interest throughout the project.

The Project Manager was Ricky Patten, and the monitoring was undertaken initially by Dr Oscar Aldred and then David Matzliach. Project administration and logistics was provided by Samantha Smith, Claudia Miranda Rodrigues and Fabrizio Canu. Photography was taken by David Matzliach with Graphics prepared Bryan Crossan. The Survey data was taken by David Matzliach and processed by Jordan Paddison.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Archaeological Monitoring covered two areas at the Church of Upwell St Peter, Wisbech.
- 1.1.2 The Church of Upwell St Peter is located at 15 Small Lode road in the centre of Upwell, adjacent to the River Nene (Old Course). The investigation lies within the north-western and south-western end of the cemetery, with one a 1x1 soakaway in the north-west (TF 50581 02794) and a 2x2m soakaway in the south-west (TF 50583 02756).
- 1.1.3 The areas encompass grave plots bounded by brick walls to the north, south and west and the church itself is located between both areas. Both the church and cemetery are still in use, however the grave plots surrounding the church itself date to the 19th century and earlier with more recent graves located at the east end of the cemetery.
- 1.1.4 A planning condition was placed on the development by the Diocese of Ely requiring archaeological monitoring of the site. Written Briefs outlining the archaeological requirements were issued by Dr Tim Reynolds, Diocesan Archaeologist (2023).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The bedrock comprises mudstone of the Ampthill Clay Formation. It is overlain by clay and silt belonging to the Tidal Flat Deposits. (British Geological Survey website, <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/> ; accessed 1 August 2024).
- 1.2.2 The PDA at the Church of Upwell St Peter lies off Small Lode Street at c.3.7 m AOD.
- 1.2.3 With possible origins dating to the Roman period, the current church has stood in the centre of Upwell since at least the 13th century and is a Grade I Listed Building.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Previous investigations in the PDAs

- 2.1.1 The Norfolk HER lists no investigations which have taken place within the footprint of the soakaways, likely due to the area being a long-standing church and cemetery with most activity limited to grave digging, landscaping and phases of rebuilding and refurbishment of the church.

Prehistory

- 2.1.2 Evidence of prehistoric activity is limited, likely due to the heavily waterlogged state of the area before drainage. A scatter of worked flints (NHER 37156) and a possible Neolithic scrapper (NHER 49032) were discovered in 2006 from metal detecting.
- 2.1.3 A Bronze Age spear head was discovered pre 1850 during peat extraction works (NHER 28067) and aerial photographs from the 1940s recorded cropmarks, ring ditches and a possible barrow in this area (NHER 2477).
- 2.1.4 No Iron Age objects have been documented in Upwell. A large number of features mapped from aerial photography in the 1970s includes ring ditches and circular enclosures which may be of prehistoric origin but have not been examined (NHER 2489, NHER 4221, NHER 35497).

Roman

- 2.1.5 Possible Roman roads (NHER 11869, NHER 36719) as well as potential areas of settlement (NHER12855) have been documented via aerial photography and the Roman Fen Causeway (NHER 2796) which runs roughly east to west, cutting the parish across the middle. There is extensive evidence of salt production with briquetage and other types of material culture having been recovered across Upwell (NHER 25065, NHER 24387, NHER 24388), with potential settlement evidence such as floors (NHER2481) and human remains (NHER 2474) also having been discovered. This has been in addition to coins (NHER 4216, 31929, 31837), pottery sherds (NHER 41358) and a Roman or Early Saxon military buckle (NHER 25843). A Roman ceremonial lead hammer (NHER 29193) and fragments of a copper alloy bowl (NHER 12612) have also been found.

Anglo-Saxon

- 2.1.6 Archaeological investigations in a small area near to the River Nene (NHER 40128) revealed a number of ditches and pits of possible Late Saxon date. Pottery sherds (NHER 41359), brooches (NHER 41358) and other metal objects (NHER 29193) have also been recovered, alongside a 7th century enamelled hanging bowl (NHER 31929).

Medieval

- 2.1.7 The Church of Upwell St Peter (NHER 4225) dates to at least the 13th century, with the tower being the most intact original feature of the building. There are fragments of Roman tesserae in the fabric of the church.
- 2.1.8 There have been various ecclesiastical buildings in Upwell, including a chapel to St Botolph (NHER 25840) and the Marmont Priory building, both lost, and a small Gilbertine priory or chantry that was founded in 1203 (NHER 25832).

- 2.1.9 Of particular note is Welle Manor Hall (NHER 22171), originally a late 14th century hall house constructed largely from brick, with two octagonal late 15th century brick towers in the grounds.
- 2.1.10 In addition to these structures are a number of landscape features thought to date to the Medieval period, including ring ditches for the possible draining of haystacks (NHER 36708, 36723, 36709). There is also the Wall Creek canal, built sometime before the 13th century and the New Podyke constructed in 1422.
- 2.1.11 Objects belonging to the Medieval period include pottery sherds (NHER 37156, 29193), complete vessels (NHER17406), metal objects (NHER 49081, 44622) and coins (NHER 49047, 44622).

Post-medieval and Modern

- 2.1.12 There are over twenty buildings listed as of architectural interest by English Heritage, including the 16th century Ralingham Hall and the 18th century red brick Hall Lodge on Town Street (NHER 47091).
- 2.1.13 There are also a large number of post-medieval monuments in the cemetery of St Peter's (NHER 4225), of which fifty-eight are listed by English Heritage. Inside the church is a monument to the victims of a Cholera outbreak in 1832 which reads '*why hast though been spared? To what purpose has thou been left until now?*'
- 2.1.14 Sites of various drainage mills have been recorded (NHER 14511, NHER 25834) as has the site of the more recent North District Pumping Station (NHER 40094), a drainage pump initially run by a steam engine. Associated with all of these are the water courses of Popham's Eau (NHER 4223) built by Sir John Popham in the 17th century and London Lode (NHER 29549) also constructed in the 17th century by the London Merchants.
- 2.1.15 More recent in date are two pillboxes (NHER 32358, 32362) and two anti-tank emplacements (NHER 32357, 32361) alongside a Cold War Observer Corps site (NHER 35432). Of particular note is Pingle Bridge (NHER 43177), which was built in 1936, one of the earliest examples of this form of a reinforced concrete structure.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance to an archaeological watching brief prepared by the Diocesan Archaeologist (Dr Tim Reynolds 2023) approved by the Parochial Church Council prior to commencement of works. The excavation was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (CIFA 2014, updated 2020) and Code of Conduct (2014).
- 3.1.2 Monitoring was undertaken on the 31st of May and the 3rd & 26th of June
- 3.1.3 Soakaway 1 was hand-excavated by Spectrum Stone Ltd. to a size of 1x1m and depth of 1.20m, with an archaeological intervention due to the discovery of a burial, where after excavation continued to a depth of 2m.
- 3.1.4 Soakaway 2 was excavated by a 360 mini-excavator to a size of 2x2m and stopped at a depth of 1.20m, where upon the archaeologist attended to investigate the presence of any burials before drainage works could begin in the soakaway.
- 3.1.5 The deposits encountered during the monitoring were recorded using the CAU recording system and located via a Leica GPS system.
- 3.1.6 Photographs were taken of all features using a high resolution digital camera and sections were hand-drawn at an appropriate scale (either 1:10 or 1:20).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Soakaway

1

Figures 1-5

- 4.1.1 Soakaway 1 was 1x1m and located within the north-western area of the cemetery, adjacent to a row of headstones. During excavation several pieces of disarticulated human remains and various elements of debris including bricks, clay pipes and pottery sherds were discovered, with the human remains separated for reburial. An articulated burial was discovered at a depth of 1.20m, consisting of the lower half of a skeleton and fragments of decayed coffin material. The remains were cleaned, photographed, hand-planned and finally lifted and stored away in the church for reburial. The soakaway dimensions and location were then planned with a Leica GPS system and excavated to a final depth of 2m with no further burials discovered.

Depth (m)	Deposit		Material Culture
1.20	Cemetery Soil	Brown silty clay with occasional disarticulated human remains (BN), fragments of bricks (CBM), pottery (PT), clay pips (CP), small rounded & sub-angular gravels and frequent rooting.	PT (Post-Med), CBM (Post-Med), CP (Post-Med)

Table 1: Soakaway 1

4.2 Soakaway 2

Figures 1-5

Soakaway 2 was 2x2m and located within the south-western area of the cemetery, set between two rows of headstones. As with Soakaway 1, several pieces of disarticulated human remains and various elements of debris including bricks, clay pipes, pot sherds and coffin nails/wood were discovered, with the human remains separated for reburial. Excavation stopped at a depth of 1.20m with no burials encountered, however, two possible grave cuts were noted. The Soakaway was cleaned, photographed, hand-planned and then surveyed with a Leica GPS system.

Depth (m)	Deposit		Material Culture
1.20	Cemetery Soil	Brown silty clay with occasional disarticulated human remains (BN), fragments of bricks (CBM), pottery (PT), clay pips (CP), small rounded-sub-angular gravels and frequent rooting.	PT (Post-Med), CBM (Post-Med), CP (Post-Med)

Table 2: Soakaway 2

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Soakaway 1

5.1.1 Works at the first Soakaway revealed the presence of an articulated human burial at a depth of 1.20m, overlain by a homogenous sequence of cemetery soil. The lack of multi-phased archaeological or geological deposits are likely due to the nature of this area having served as a cemetery since at least the 13th century until the modern day, with only light landscaping and grave digging having taken place in the meantime. Although the remains have not been certifiably dated, given the dates on the surrounding headstones and the preservation of decayed coffin material, the individual was likely interred sometime in the 18th or 19th century.

5.2 Soakaway 2

5.2.1 Whilst the works at the second Soakaway did not reveal any articulated burials, the discovery of the two possible grave cuts at a very similar depth to the first soakaway perhaps indicates a 'horizon' of inhumations within this part of the cemetery.

6. SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The monitoring of drainage works at the Church of Upwell St Peter allowed for the recording, preservation and reburial of an interred individual likely dating to the 18th or 19th century, alongside the remains of multiple disarticulated individuals discovered in both soakaways.

7. REFERENCES

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8. APPENDIX 4: ARCHIVE

8.1.1 The archive is currently held in the CAU's Cambridge facilities.

8.2 Standards

8.2.1 The project archive will be prepared and deposited in line with the MoRPHE guidelines (Historic England 2006, reissued 2015), ClfA Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2014, updated 2020), the ClfA Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation (2014, updated 2020), the United Kingdom Institute for Conservators Conservation Guidelines No. 2 (2012).

8.3 Archive, discard, and transfer of title agreement

8.3.1 There was no physical archive.

8.3.2 The digital archaeological archive will be deposited with the University of Cambridge Apollo Repository, a CoreTrustSeal accredited repository

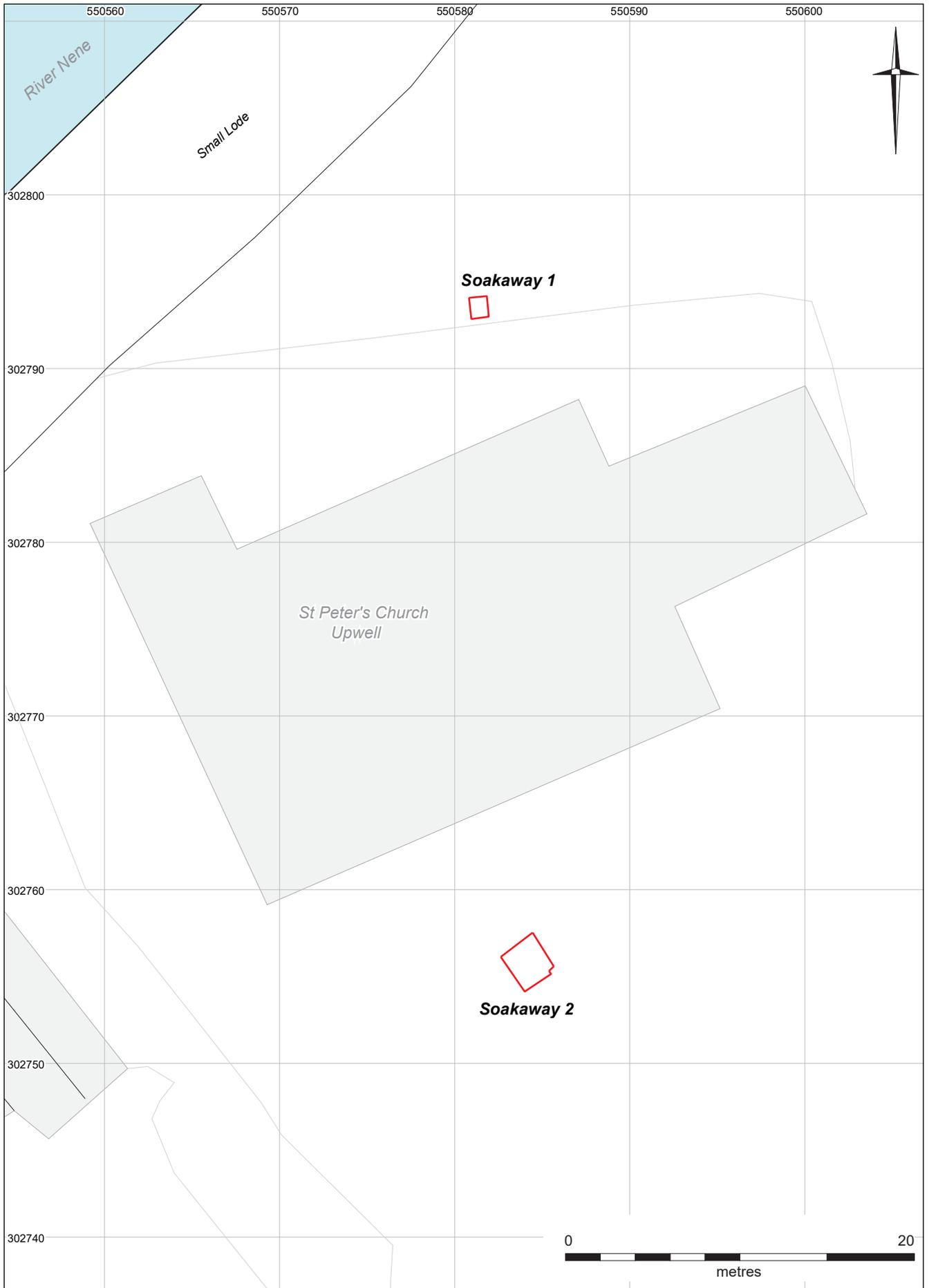
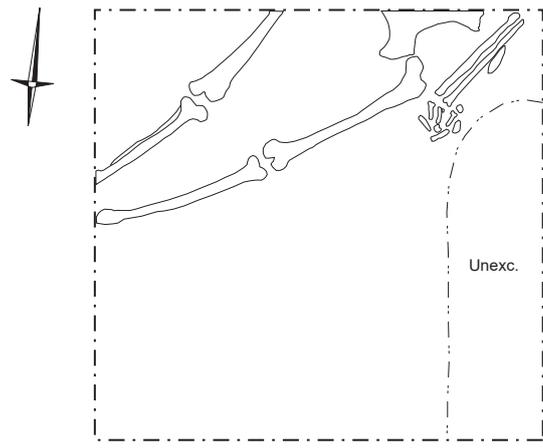
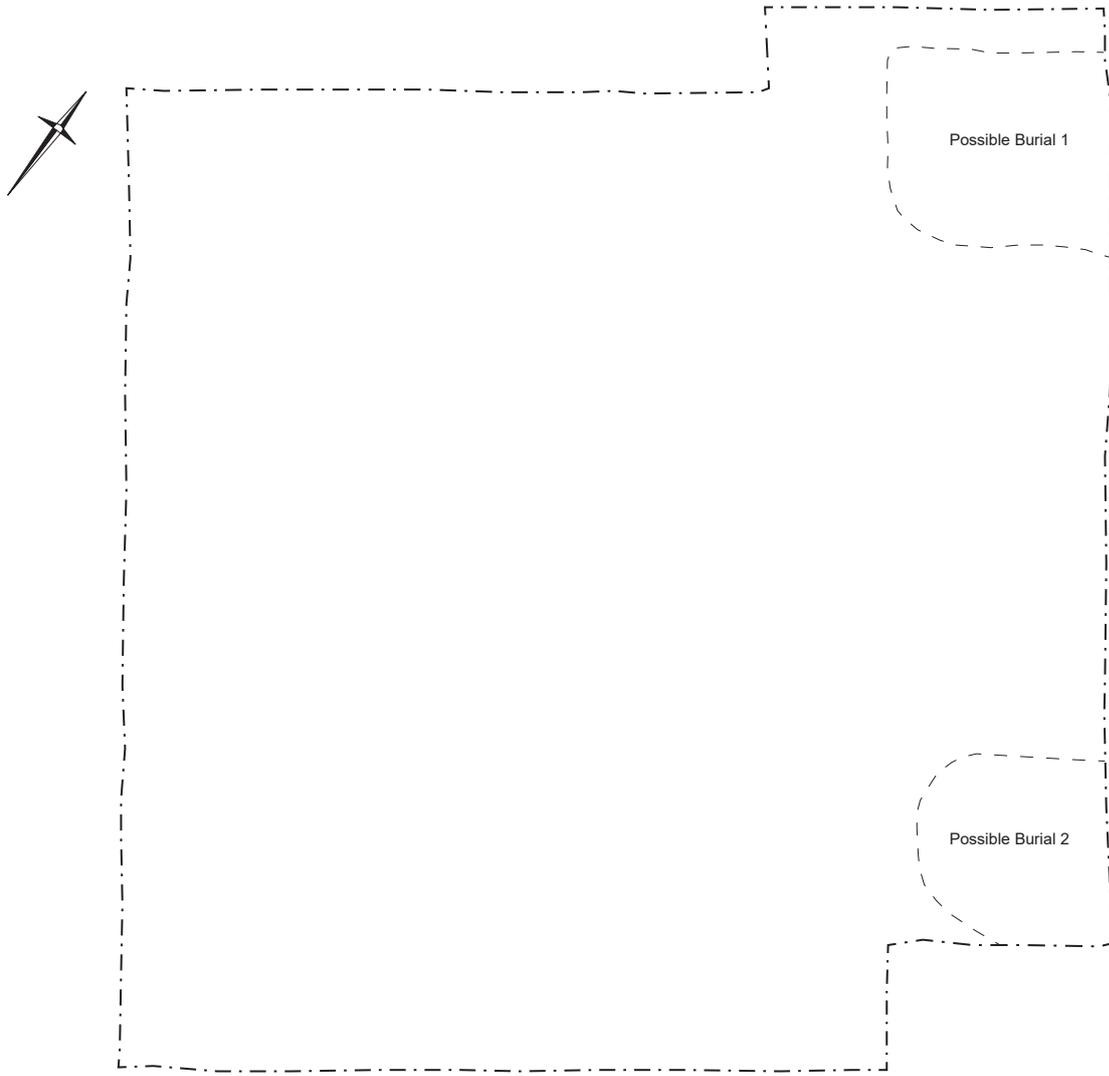
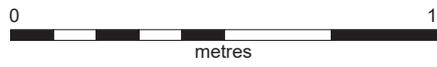


Figure 2. Plan of Soakaways 1 and 2



Soakaway 1



Soakaway 2

Figure 3. Detailed plans of Soakaways



Figure 4. Photographs of Soakaway 1 (looking south) and Soakaway 2 (looking south-east) with *in situ* skeleton



Figure 5. Photographs showing location of Soakaway 1 (top) and Soakaway 2 (bottom)

OASIS Summary for cambridg3-531016

OASIS ID (UID)	cambridg3-531016
Project Name	Church of Upwell St Peter, Small Lode, Upwell, Wisbech
Sitename	Church of Upwell St Peter
Sitecode	ENF156656
Project Identifier(s)	ENF156656
Activity type	Field Observation (monitoring)
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Planning requirement
Organisation Responsible for work	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project Dates	31-May-2024 - 26-Jun-2024
Location	Church of Upwell St Peter NGR : TF 50580 02776 LL : 52.60190898228452, 0.222017289162088 12 Fig : 550580,302776
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Norfolk Local Authority District : King's Lynn and West Norfolk Parish : Upwell
Project Methodology	Archaeological monitoring of drainage works was undertaken by the CAU on the 31st of May and the 3rd & 26th of June in the cemetery of the Church of Upwell St Peter, Upwell, Wisbech. The Church proposed to improve drainage for existing surface water for the south aisle, north aisle and north porch (including the tower and nave). Much of this involved the reworking of extant drains and the construction of two new soakaways. These works involved disturbing the deposits associated with the construction of earlier drains and the excavation of undisturbed deposits within the new soakaways. The latter had the potential to encounter both articulated human remains and archaeological deposits. Two soakaways, one 1x1m at 2m depth and a 2x2m at 1.20m depth were excavated in the north and south end of the cemetery to make room for the placement of drainage works. The 2x2m soakaway had to be relocated due to the presence of a cholera grave marker dating to an 1832 outbreak.
Project Results	<p>The investigations revealed a homogenous sequence of cemetery soils, filled with occasional disarticulated human remains and assorted debris: bricks, pottery etc. A burial was encountered in the 1x1m soakaway at a depth of 1.2m, composed of the lower half of a skeleton and fragments of coffin material. The 2x2m soakaway was identical in its sequence and revealed two possible grave cuts at a depth of 1.20m. The material culture found within the sequences likely dates from the post-medieval era.</p> <p>The monitoring of drainage works at the Church of Upwell St Peter allowed for the recording and preservation of an interred individual likely dating to the 18th or 19th century for reburial, alongside the remains of multiple disarticulated individuals discovered in both soakaways</p> <p>The monitoring of drainage works at the Church of Upwell St Peter allowed for the recording and preservation of an interred individual likely dating to the 18th or 19th century for reburial, alongside the remains of multiple disarticulated individuals discovered in both soakaways.</p>

Keywords	Church - MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	Religious body Church of Upwell St Peter
HER	Norfolk HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Ricky Patten
HER Identifiers	HER Event No - ENF156656
Archives	Documentary Archive - to be deposited with Norfolk Museums Service; Accession Id(s): ENF156656 Digital Archive - to be deposited with Cambridge University Archives; Accession Id(s): ENF156656

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