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**An Archaeological Excavation at
Holy Trinity Church, Dartford, Kent.**

(TQ 5435 7405)

**by Greg Priestley-Bell, Luke Barber,
Lucy Kirk and Simon Stevens**

November 1996



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Archaeology South-East

Archaeology South-East is a division of the Field Archaeology Unit, University College London, one of the largest groupings of academic archaeologists in the country. Consequently, Archaeology South-East has access to the conservation, computing and environmental backup of the college, as well as a range of other archaeological services.

The Field Archaeology Unit and South Eastern Archaeological Services (which became Archaeology South-East in 1996) were established in 1974 and 1991 respectively. Although field projects have been conducted world-wide, the Field Archaeology Unit retains a special interest in south-east England with the majority of our contract and consultancy work concentrated in Sussex, Kent, Greater London and Essex.

Based in the local community, the Field Archaeology Unit sees an important part of its work as explaining the results to the broader public. Public lectures, open days, training courses and liaison with local archaeological societies are aspects of its community-based approach.

Drawing on experience of the countryside and towns of the south east of England the Unit can give advice and carry out surveys at an early stage in the planning process. By working closely with developers and planning authorities it is possible to incorporate archaeological work into developments with little inconvenience.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** South Eastern Archaeological Services (renamed Archaeology South-East in 1996), a division of the Field Archaeology, University College London was commissioned by Thomas Ford & Partners to undertake an archaeological excavation on land to the north of Holy Trinity Church, Dartford, Kent (Fig. 1).
- 1.2** The Church is situated to the east of the modern town centre of Dartford, immediately to the west of the river Darent. According to the British Geological Survey 1:50 000 map the underlying geology at the site consists of Alluvium.
- 1.3** Planning permission was granted by Dartford Borough Council for an extension to the existing Church Hall in 1994 (ref. DA/94/0332). As the construction of the extension would necessitate groundworks in the area, and possible disturbance of buried archaeological remains, provision was made within the permission for an archaeological evaluation of the site.
- 1.4** The evaluation of the area required for the new extension was undertaken by South Eastern Archaeological Services (SEAS) in May 1995 to a Specification provided by Kent County Council. The excavation of a trial trench revealed seven undisturbed human skeletons and evidence of at least 14 disturbed burials, all of 17th to early 19th century date. The burials overlay an occupation deposit containing early Roman pottery encountered at a depth of c.1.8m below the present ground surface. A Roman coin dated to the period 81-96AD was also recovered.
- 1.5** An extrapolation of the evaluation results suggested that a full excavation of the area would uncover between 180 and 190 post-medieval burials, as well as offering an opportunity for further investigation of the underlying Roman deposit.
- 1.6** Hence a Specification for further archaeological work was produced by the Planning Department of Kent County Council, which stated that:
- ‘The archaeological contractor appointed will excavate the entire area of the proposed extension down to the level of archaeologically barren natural subsoil or to the proposed basement formation levels whichever is the higher.’
- 1.7** Unfortunately, financial constraints on the building project led to the provision of a limited budget for the archaeological work at the site, and the original Specification was replaced with a less comprehensive plan. It was agreed that:

'the earlier Roman levels should be considered to be of greater archaeological significance than the later post-medieval burials.....Burials will only be excavated where they are present in grave cuts below 1.70m below present ground surface.'

1.8 However, on a visit to the site on 28th February 1996 Greg Priestley-Bell (Field Officer, SEAS) reported that the area had been heavily disturbed by machinery. On closer inspection it was discovered that due to a misunderstanding by the developer up to 2.40m of deposit had been removed by machine in many places. A large part of the site had already been excavated down to the 'natural' river gravel, resulting in the removal of virtually *all* human remains and much of the underlying Roman deposit. Some of the burials did remain *in situ*, concentrated in the eastern half of the site, and here the Roman deposit had also partially survived. A Roman ditch which was found to run across the area had also been truncated, and all the surviving archaeological remains at the site had suffered some degree of compaction from the weight of machinery.

1.9 After consultations with the developers and the Planning Department of Kent County Council, it was decided to excavate the surviving remains. The on-site work was undertaken during March 1996 by a team comprised of Greg Priestley-Bell (Field Officer), Simon Stevens (Field Officer), Frances Greenhalgh (Assistant Archaeologist), Louise Bashford (Assistant Archaeologist), Laura Speed (Assistant Archaeologist), Lara Band (Assistant Archaeologist) and Bernie McCluskey (Assistant Archaeologist). The project was managed by Mark Gardiner (Deputy Director) and Luke Barber (Post-Excavation Manager). + 2 artif

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The site lies immediately to the north of the projected course of Roman Watling Street, which probably runs directly under the main body of the church. The Kent County Council Sites and Monuments Record contains numerous references to Roman remains in Dartford, many in the immediate vicinity of the church:

SMR No. TQ57 SW7 410959

Early Roman pottery sherds recovered from foundation trenches in 1959 c.100 yds north-west of the site.

SMR No. TQ57 SW13 410983

Before 1892 a Roman bronze bowl was discovered in the road

at the north-west corner of the church.

SMR No. TQ57 SW177 411351 Excavations revealed the metallised surface of a Roman trackway leading off Watling Street opposite the church.

SMR No. TQ57 SW166 411340 Numerous Roman artefacts uncovered during digging of a river channel at Bridge House (directly opposite the church).

SMR No. TQ57 SW176 411350 Roman strata encountered during work at St. Saviours Car park, 100yds to the north-east of the church.

2.2 Other recorded Roman discoveries from the town, including building foundations, numerous coins and pottery (both local and imported) suggest that a Roman settlement existed in the area. Much of the material has been dated to the 1st century suggesting an early foundation at the crossing point of Watling Street over the River Darent.

2.3 The church itself is recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086, with the tower dating from before the Conquest. There are similarities between Holy Trinity and St. Peter's Church, Barton-on-Humber, the type-site for the Saxon tower church (Rodwell and Rodwell 1982). However, the main body of the church dates to the fourteenth century and lies to the south of the original tower. The extension to the church and the diversion of the road around it explains the 'kink' in the otherwise straight Watling Street/modern High Street (fig 1B).

2.4 A graveyard once existed to the south of the church, but was removed with part of the west nave to enable road widening. A probably slightly later graveyard was located to the north of the church in the area to be developed. The last burial is thought to have occurred towards the end of the 18th century (John Gilbert, Church Historian, pers. comm.)

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 As the preparatory groundworks carried out prior to archaeological recording had exceeded the maximum depth proposed in the Kent County Council Planning Department Specification, and after consultation with the County Archaeologist, it was decided to amend the methodology of the proposed archaeological excavation., accordingly.

- 3.2 The site was cleared by hand of loose soil that had accumulated during shoring work following the machine excavation. The shoring effectively prevented the sections of the excavated trench (Fig. 1C) from being archaeologically recorded and as such the deposits removed prior to archaeological excavation were correlated with those studied during the evaluation. The section from the evaluation (see Fig. 1C, S1 and Fig. 3, S1) is deemed representative of the site's stratigraphy.
- 3.3 A mixed layer of machine-compacted material covering the southern half of the site to a depth of between 20-50mm was subsequently removed by hand in order to expose the top of the surviving archaeological horizon. The northern half of the site showed a greater degree of truncation and consisted predominantly of natural sands and gravels. This area was cleaned by hand to remove intrusive materials associated with the current development.
- 3.4 The archaeological features identified were planned at a scale of 1:50 in relation to the excavation edges, while sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 showing OD heights where appropriate. Elevations were drawn and a photographic record kept as appropriate.
- 3.5 The nature and extent of all archaeological features were recorded on separate context sheets together with soil descriptions, finds summaries and stratigraphic relationships. The context numbering continued on from that of the original evaluation. General finds were recorded by context.
- 3.6 The excavation of the surviving burials involved a continuation of the methodology used during the evaluation. All skeletons were assigned an individual skeleton number and briefly recorded before lifting. A pictorial inventory of skeletal elements present, the attitude of the burial, state of preservation, associated coffin fittings and notes were all recorded on individual Skeleton Record Sheets and form part of the archive. The position and orientation of the burials were planned before lifting (Fig. 2). The skeletal numbering, which was separate from the general context numbering system, began at eight, taking into account the seven skeletons recovered during the evaluation.
- 3.7 During the main excavation C.A.Pine of the Geoarchaeological Service Facility (GSF), University College London, visited the site to assist in the interpretation of the underlying stratigraphy. A section of the northern baulk of the excavation was cleaned and a test-pit sunk into the gravels at this point to facilitate this study (Fig. 2B).
- 3.8 Following the completion of the main archaeological excavation, the site was visited a number of times in order to inspect further deep groundworks within the previously excavated area and other groundworks in the vicinity of the

trench. These visits produced more artefacts but little new data regarding the development of the site.

4.0 EXCAVATION RESULTS

The stratigraphy of the site may be considered under two headings dealing with the results of the main excavation and subsequent site monitoring visits.

4.1 Pre-cemetery

4.1.1 The underlying stratum (Context 11, Figs 2B and 3, S1) consisted of light to medium grey coarse sand with 80% flint gravel 5-100mm. This body of material, which was reached at c.3.65m AOD, appeared to be either naturally deposited alluvial sands and gravels or a dump deposit. For this reason a site visit was made by C. Pine of GSF to try to help clarify the nature of the underlying gravels and their relationship to the soil deposits resting immediately above them. The upper 450mm of the gravels was studied along with 650mm of soil deposits (corresponding roughly with Contexts 9 and 10, see below) which lay above. The top of the examined sectioned was at 4.2m AOD. A full geoarchaeological report is housed with the archive.

4.1.2 The soil deposits (corresponding with Contexts 9 and 10) showed extensive signs of having been reworked both by the inclusion of foreign material/artefacts and the soil structure. It is possible they represent buried soils, however, the degree of later disturbance was such that this could not be ascertained. The composition of the underlying gravel and the nature of its contact with Context 10, strongly suggested that it represents a naturally lain body of alluvial sands and gravels rather than a dump deposit. After consultation with the County Archaeologist, it was therefore concluded that no further hand excavation of Context 11 would be undertaken. However, limited further inspection was to be made during forthcoming deep mechanical groundworks within the gravels.

4.1.3 Inspection of these deep groundworks within the area of the main archaeological excavation revealed sands and gravels to a depth of at least 2m AOD. No archaeological features or artefacts were noted and it was concluded that the deposit represented naturally lain alluvial material, confirming the results of the geoarchaeological study.

4.1.4 A discontinuous layer (Context 10, Figs 2B and 3, S1), consisting of dark grey brown sandy silt with 1% flint pebbles (10-80mm) with occasional charcoal flecks was located resting directly on the natural gravels. The full extent of this layer was not ascertained as after the initial machining it only survived in a few places. The best preservation of this deposit was found where it occupied a few natural hollows/undulations in the gravels (Fig. 2B). The layer was shown to be some 200mm thick from the results of the evaluation

and although disturbed by burials and thus including some intrusive material, it produced a quantity of late 1st- to mid 2nd- century pottery. It is likely therefore that this layer represents the remains of a badly disturbed Roman soil horizon.

4.1.5 Resting directly above this was a further similar layer (Context 9, Fig. 3, S1). This consisted of a dark grey brown sandy silt with 0.5% sub-rounded and sub-angular flint pebbles (10-40mm), 1% chalk fragments and occasional shell. None of this layer survived for detailed study during the main excavation and it was recorded only during the evaluation. Its similarity to Context 10 is such that the two are likely to be closely related. For example, they could represent a contemporary topsoil/subsoil division.

4.1.6 A 1m wide ditch (Context 18, Figs 2B and 3, S2 and 3), in excess of 10m in length, and with a maximum surviving depth of 300mm ran north-south across the trench. The surviving profile varied considerably from being steep to shallow sloping but the base was usually flat. The degree of truncation, whether ancient or more recent, and therefore original depth of this ditch is uncertain. Although it appeared to lie to the west of Context 10 the degree of truncation or removal of 10 to the west could not be ascertained. As a result the stratigraphic relationship between the two contexts remains unknown. However, the extent of disturbance in 10 from grave-digging is likely to have masked the relationship between these two contexts even if 10 had survived. The ditch fill (Context 19), a very dark grey sandy silt with 5% flint pebbles (5-50mm), contained a small assemblage of late 1st- to early 2nd- century pottery. The full extent of this feature, whether forming part of a field boundary/drain or enclosure remains unknown.

4.2 The Cemetery

4.2.1 Three levels of burials (A-C) were located during the original evaluation. The burials recovered during the main excavation were however assigned to one of four layers A-D (the level antefixes the skeleton number on Fig. 2A). Levels C and D from the main excavation can be combined to equate with the evaluation level C. Before the main archaeological excavation began the topsoil and substantial areas of subsoil had already been removed. The result was that all the level A and most of the level B burials had been removed across the whole site. In limited areas of the excavation all level C and D had also been removed down to the natural gravel level. The excavation was therefore concentrated on the surviving lower level of burials (C/D) only.

4.2.2 A total of 47 articulated burials were recovered at three levels during the evaluation and main excavation. The burial levels were located at approximate depths of 1.10m (level A), 1.60m (level B), and 2.00m (level C/D) below the existing ground surface. However, these divisions are not necessarily chronological as in some instances, later burials were cut deeper through

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earlier ones. The deepest burials cut into the Romano-British layers (Contexts 9 and 10) and the natural gravels (Context 11).

- 4.2.3** The main burial horizons were located in a thick deposit of medium grey sandy silt with 0.5% rounded flint pebbles and occasional brick and tile pieces (Context 7, Fig. 3, S1). This deposit, which was numbered differently at various locations within the trench (Contexts 7, 13, 17 and 23), was extremely mixed due to continual grave-digging activity. The boundary with the underlying Romano-British layers was often indistinct due to the disturbance of the deeper graves (ie Context 8, Fig. 3, S1) and as a consequence a certain degree of mixing had occurred between the layers. The homogeneous nature of Context 7 was such that it was impossible to locate the grave cuts associated with individual burials. As a result it proved impossible to isolate the later burials which had been dug into an earlier burial level. Any deposits relating to the medieval church which may have been in this area, presumably stratified above the level of Context 9, would have been totally destroyed by the continued use of the area for post-medieval burial.
- 4.2.4** The state of preservation of the skeletal material varied across the site but in general, the material from the upper levels (recovered during the evaluation) were in good condition and in contrast to those from the lower levels recovered during the main excavation. The lower contexts would have been in an inconsistent environment, in contact with the fluctuating water levels of the adjacent River Darent. This may have had an adverse effect on their preservation along with the increasing pressure put on them by ever increasing ground levels.
- 4.2.5** The lower levels of burials were densely packed together with some intercutting apparent (Fig. 2A). Gaps on the plan correspond with areas already excavated down to the gravels before archaeological work began and as such need to be discounted when assessing burial density. Only two complete skeletons were recovered, the remaining 45 burials having been truncated and therefore incomplete. The quantity of disarticulated skeletal material recorded during the evaluation also suggested a large degree of intercutting, with a minimum number of fourteen individuals represented by this material as opposed to only seven articulated skeletons. None of the excavated burials could be accurately dated based on the available stratigraphic and artefactual data. No burials could be even tentatively assigned to the medieval period and it is likely, based on the coffin furniture recovered, they are all of the post-medieval period.
- 4.2.6** A brick built vault was identified on site and was recorded prior to its demolition. Details of this apparently 18th- century structure are housed with the archive. The vault, located in the centre of the site, was rectangular in plan and measured approximately 4.0m by 3.6m. It contained no in situ burials.

Following the vaults removal, seven skeletons were recovered from beneath its base although all had been badly damaged by compaction.

- 4.2.7 Due to the small and incomplete nature of the skeletal sample, the poor state of preservation of the majority of material and financial constrictions of the project, it was decided that no osteological analysis of the material recovered during the excavation or further analysis of the evaluation material would be worthwhile. However, a preliminary analysis of the seven evaluation skeletons had been made and forms part of the archive.
- 4.2.8 Above Context 7 were a series of modern layers and disturbances (Fig. 3 S1, Contexts 1-6 and 12). These were recorded during the initial evaluation and details are housed with the archive.

5.0 THE POTTERY by Luke Barber, incorporating comments by Malcolm Lyne

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The assessment and subsequent full excavation at the site yielded 717 sherds of pottery weighing 5296g. This assemblage is from eight individually numbered contexts although they only really represent three main stratigraphic units. These consist of the ditch fill (Context 19), the truncated Romano-British layer (Context 10 and probably Context 9 noted in the assessment) and the burial soil (variously divided into Contexts 7, 13, 17 and 23 but forming one stratigraphic unit). For the purposes of this report the quantification has grouped the burial soil contexts together as they represent a single large mixed group.

5.1.2 Most of the pottery is of a generally small size and many pieces show signs of abrasion, particularly the softer finewares. The extent of disturbance on the site, mainly through grave-digging activity, has meant that most contexts cannot be viewed as sealed deposits. Even the Romano-British ditch cutting the natural gravel at the base of the excavations showed evidence of intrusive material. This, combined with the difficulty in telling Fabrics 3 and M3 apart without diagnostic features, suggests that the ditch fill (Context 19) must be treated with caution. As the group is small and contains some contamination it was decided to look at the Romano-British material from the site as a whole. Some comparison with the assemblage from 19 is warranted however to see if the unstratified material accurately reflects that from the ditch.

5.1.3 The main aims of the present report are to give an indication of the range of fabrics and forms present on the site as well as an overall date range for the occupation activity.

5.1.4 The pottery was divided subjectively into fabric groups based on a visual examination of the inclusions, colouring and manufacturing technology of the sherds. This was undertaken using a x20 magnification hand-lens. Fabric quantification by sherd count and weight were done for the Romano-British material only. A breakdown of the pottery by fabric and context is given in Table 1. The full figures are with the archive. All percentages quoted in this report are for sherd weight and have been calculated using Fabric Groups 1 to 18 only.

5.2 The Fabric Groups

1. *Moderate shell temper* (24% of total Romano-British assemblage by weight)
A hand-made medium fired fabric, tempered with moderate shell to 4mm, sparse fine sand and rare iron oxide inclusions to 3mm. Colours are variable ranging from black to dull orange brown throughout. Grey cores are common. Recognised forms include bead-rimmed jars, some with a lid seating. No

decoration was apparent on any of the sherds from the present assemblage. This fabric has Iron Age origins but the present assemblage is likely to span the period 1st to mid 2nd century. Such wares are known to have been produced around the Higham Marshes. Catalogue nos 1 and 8.

2. *Profuse shell temper* (1.8%)

Only four sherds of this medium to hard-fired fabric are present. Tempering consists of abundant shell to 4mm with rare fine sand. Colours are usually dull orange brown throughout. No forms are recognisable, however, the sherds present appear to be from crude hand-made vessels. It is likely this fabric is from briquetage.

3. *Sand and shell temper* (10.3%)

A hand-made medium to high-fired fabric, tempered with moderate shell to 4mm and moderate to abundant fine to medium sand. Iron oxide inclusions to 4mm are very occasionally present. Colours are variable but generally consist of grey cores and dull orange brown surfaces. Some grey/black surfaces are also present. Recognised forms include bead-rimmed jars, some with a lid seating, and bowls. This is a problematic fabric in that some of the sherds are undoubtedly medieval. The sand and shell tempered wares of the 13th to 14th century are virtually impossible to tell from the Romano-British material unless diagnostic sherds are present. No decoration was apparent on any of the sherds from the present assemblage.

4. *Shell, sand and iron oxide temper* (1.1%)

A hand-made low to medium-fired fabric tempered with moderate shell to 2mm, sparse fine sand and sparse to moderate iron oxides to 1mm. Core colours are usually grey, with buff or dull brown surfaces. The only recognisable forms were bowls and jars. Little decoration is evident with the exception of a single cordon. Similarly to Fabric 3 some sherds within this group, even from stratified contexts, may be of medieval rather than early Romano-British origin.

5. *Medium sand with sparse shell inclusions* (12.2%)

A relatively hard-fired fabric tempered with moderate to abundant medium sand. Sparse inclusions of shell to 2mm are present along with sparse iron oxides and quartz grits to 1mm. Colours are usually dark grey to black throughout although some dull orange brown examples are present. Little decoration is apparent although some horizontal rilling is present on some surfaces. Forms include bead rim and everted rim jars as well as bowls. A late 1st- to early 2nd- century fabric of probable N.W. Kentish origin. Catalogue no. 10.

6. *Medium sandy greywares* (5.1%)

A medium to hard-fired wheel-thrown fabric tempered with moderate to abundant medium sand with occasional larger quartz or flint inclusion to 1mm.

Colours, both core and surface range through various shades of grey. Some dull orange cores are present. Decoration consists of a few cordons. Recognised forms include bowls and jars. A 2nd-century date seems likely for this fabric. Catalogue no. 9.

7. *Medium sandy blackwares* (5.8%)

This fabric is similar to Fabric 6 except for some rare inclusions of shell and chalk. Colours are usually black throughout, sometimes with a grey core. Decoration is rare but includes cordons, incised lines or rilling. Recognised forms include jars (some bead rimmed) and bowls. A late 1st- to mid 2nd-century date seems likely for this fabric. Catalogue no. 2.

8. *Medium sandy pink/off-whitewares* (8.9%)

This medium to hard-fired wheel-thrown fabric is tempered with moderate medium sand with very occasional grog inclusions to 0.5mm. Colours are usually off-white throughout although many sherds are pale pink. The only decoration noted is in the form of some external rilling. Forms include flagons and reeded-rimmed bowls. Some of this group is likely to be from Verulamium. Late 1st to mid 2nd century. Catalogue no. 4.

9. *Grog tempered* (7.3%)

Relatively few sherds of this hand-made low-fired fabric are present. Tempering consists of moderate to abundant sub-angular grey/black grog to 3mm. Colours are variable but generally greys and browns are the most common although some dull oranges are present too. Decoration is rare but some burnishing is apparent and one sherd has an applied shoulder cordon decorated with incised lines. No forms were recognisable. A late 1st-century fabric.

10. *Reduced Upchurch-type ware* (8.5%)

This fine silty, powdery fabric is well represented in the assemblage. Few inclusions are visible although some sherds have rare fine sand and mica. Colours range from light to dark grey/black. Some dull red cores and margins are apparent. Decoration consists of applied pellets and rouletting. Forms include Poppyhead beakers, biconical beakers, bowls and small jars. Late 1st to mid 2nd century. Catalogue no. 7.

11. *Oxidised Upchurch-type/London ware* (3.7%)

This fabric is similar to Fabric 10, although some sherds exhibit occasional grog inclusions to 1mm. Colours are usually dull orange throughout. Some sherds have grey cores and/or inner surfaces. Decoration includes incised lines and rouletting. Forms include small jars, bowls and beakers. Catalogue no. 3.

12. *Samian* (5.8%)

Virtually all of the Samian from the site is of South Gaulish origin. One Central Gaulish sherd is present (Context 19) along with a few abraded sherds that could originate from either source. South Gaulish Samian was located in most

contexts (see table). Forms include Dr. 27 (12 sherds), Dr. 18 (8 sherds), Dr.35/36 (2 sherds), Dr.29/37 (1 sherd), Dr. 37 (1 sherd) and D.67 (1 sherd). Only two decorated sherds are present (Dr.29/37) but are too abraded to be diagnostic of workshop. In addition the remains of two maker's stamps are present. The first is from a Dr.18 (unstratified) and reads VI[JV. This is probably VIRTV dated to between 65-80 AD (Dannell 1971, 315, No. 94). The other stamp fragment (Context 13) is too incomplete to provenance. It appears to read]MA[.

13. *Fine sand cream coloured fabric* (0.7%)

This fine medium to hard-fired wheel-thrown fabric is tempered with sparse to moderate fine sand. Some rare dull orange grog and chalk inclusions to 1mm are present. Colours are usually off-white/cream or pale orange. No decoration is apparent and the only form recognised is of a thin-walled beaker. possibly a late 1st- century Eccles fabric.

14. *Fine sand reduced ware.* (1.2%)

This is a small and slightly mixed group of fine sand tempered wares similar to those of Fabric 13. The sherds in this group however are all reduced. Colours range from grey to black although some sherds have a dull red core. Decoration includes burnishing and applied pellets. Forms are usually thin-walled types and include Poppyhead beakers and small jars. Thameside and Hardham products are likely to fall within this group. Late 1st to 2nd century.

15. *Mortaria and amphorae* (0.9%)

Only three sherds fall within this group. One is from a sparse fine sand tempered cream mortarium with rose and grey quartz truiation grits. Possibly an Oxford product (Unstratified). The remaining two pieces, both from Context 19, consist of another mortarium in an orange fabric, again possibly from the Oxford industry, and a body sherd from a Dr. 20 (?) amphora.

16. *Colour-coated wares* (0.7%)

Only a few abraded sherds are present in this group. The majority are in a dull orange fine fabric under a dull brown or brown-red colour-coat. Some have rouletted decoration. The majority of these sherds are likely to come from late 2nd- century Colchester beakers. One sherd of Nene Valley beaker is also present (Context 7).

17. *Oxidised fine sand with some mica* (0.6%)

This is a distinctive fabric, tempered with abundant fine sand, giving a slightly rough feel, some mica and rare grog to 1mm. Colours range from brick red to dull orange. Three sherds of this fabric are present in the assemblage, possibly all from the same vessel (Contexts 10, 19 and 23). The sherds are heavily decorated with incised lines (horizontal and oblique) and intricate stamping in the form of circles etc. London type stamped ware: London sub-group 2c (Rodwell 1978). Late 1st-early 2nd century. Catalogue nos 5 and 6.

18. *Hoo-type ware* (1.4%)

A low to medium-fired silty ware with sparse to moderate dull red/orange grog inclusions to 1mm. Colours consist of light grey cores with dull red or orange surfaces. Some internal surfaces are a light purple grey. The only forms recognised consist of flagons with a white external slip. Late 1st to 2nd century.

Medieval and Post-medieval

M1. *Oxidised fine sandy ware*

This group largely consists of jugs of 13th- to 14th- century date. Decoration consists of external green glaze, sometimes over a white slip.

M2. *Coarse sand temper*

Sparse to moderate ill-sorted medium to coarse milky quartz sand with rare shell inclusions to 1mm. No recognised forms but cooking pots are likely. 12th to 13th century.

M3. *Sand and shell temper*

This fabric is virtually indistinguishable from Fabric 3 without diagnostic sherds and it is likely that there has been mixing between the two. One medieval bowl is present. 13th to 14th century.

Post-medieval

Only a small assemblage of late pottery was recovered from the site. These include various earthenwares and stonewares spanning the 17th to 19th centuries. Full details are housed with the archive.

Context	U/S	7/23	9	10	19	Total
Fabric	no./gm					
1	9/76	38/467	-	31/505	19/186	97/1234
2	-	-	-	-	4/93	4/93
3	3/28	21/212	2/31	10/203	10/58	46/532
4	-	2/11	1/9	1/25	2/12	6/57
5	3/16	36/318	-	15/171	15/124	69/629
6	10/40	10/51	-	15/106	17/67	52/264
7	3/24	10/80	-	9/109	15/88	37/301
8	2/6	21/131	-	22/283	6/40	51/460
9	1/2	14/189	-	12/115	8/69	35/375
10	14/30	31/114	1/4	52/181	29/108	127/437
11	7/16	14/47	-	17/104	11/22	49/189
12	13/198	2/20	-	26/74	7/8	48/300
13	6/22	-	-	1/11	1/5	8/38
14	-	7/24	-	4/33	1/5	12/62
15	1/10	-	-	-	2/34	3/44
16	1/10	6/14	-	2/8	1/4	10/36
17	1/6	1/7	-	1/9	1/7	4/29
18	9/12	21/57	-	1/2	-	31/71
M1	1/2	11/32	-	-	-	12/34
M2	3/10	2/17	-	-	-	5/27
M3	3/22	-	-	-	-	3/22
PM	5/24	3/38	-	-	-	8/62
TOTAL	95/554	250/1829	4/44	219/1939	149/930	717/5296

Table 1: Pottery summary by sherd count and weight.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 The general date range of the Romano-British pottery from the site spans the period between 70 to 150 A.D. although some sherds fall outside this bracket. These mainly consist of late pieces such as the probable Oxford mortaria and some of the colour-coated wares. The assemblage from the burial soil (Context 7/23) closely matches the one from the ditch fill (Context 19) in the percentages of different fabrics. Exceptions to this however, include the possible briquetage (Fabric 2) which was only found in the ditch; Fabric 18 which was not present in the ditch at all and Samian ware. The latter, although present in the ditch, was only so in small quantities. This is likely to be at least partly due to differential collection of this highly visible fabric compared to the coarsewares in the unstratified/burial deposits. The ditch itself is likely to have been infilled in the late 1st to early 2nd century. However, some reworking of the ditch fill is likely and this would explain the few intrusive later sherds. Whether this reworking took place solely in the post-Roman period, or whether some took place in the late Roman period cannot be ascertained.

- 5.3.2** The presence of the few sherds of late Roman pottery is enigmatic. The main occupation activity is certainly of the mid 1st to mid 2nd century and accounts for virtually all of the Romano-British ceramics. The presence of the later sherds indicates activity was still occurring in the vicinity but on a lesser scale. It is possible that the focus of settlement shifted further away from the excavation area at this time or that rubbish disposal was not taking place where it had been previously. The absence of coarseware sherds in the small late assemblage is odd. However, this may be more due to a lack of diagnostic pieces rather than reflecting an abnormal assemblage. A larger, less abraded group of pottery would be needed from the site to address this problem.
- 5.3.3** The 1st- to 2nd- assemblage includes a wide range of coarseware and fineware fabrics. Most of these are of a Kentish origin and as such would be readily available to the site. Further reaching contacts are indicated however, by the presence of the Verulanium and Colchester fabrics. Samian is present in reasonable quantities too. However, being situated close to a main Roman road would facilitate the acquisition of more exotic goods. The presence of briquetage on the site is interesting in that much salt-working is known to have been taking place in the Kent Marshes at this time. The limited quantity found during the excavation however, would suggest the settlement was a consumer rather than a producer.

5.4 Catalogue (Figure 4)

Context 10

1. Large bead-rimmed jar. Fabric 1.
2. Bead-rimmed jar with lid seating and incised band on shoulder. Fabric 7.
3. Bowl with thickened everted rim and rouletted decoration. Fabric 11.
4. Flagon with simple rim and ring neck. Fabric 8.
5. Decorated bodysherd with stamped circles and incised lines. Fabric 17.

Context 19

6. Decorated bodysherd with stamped pattern and circles. From same vessel as no.5. Fabric 17.
7. Bowl with thickened rim. Fabric 10.

Context 7/23

8. Bead-rimmed jar with lid seating. Fabric 1.
9. Jar with inturned and thickened rim. Some reddening/scorching on all surfaces. Fabric 6.
10. Bowl with out-turned horizontal rim. Fabric 5.

6.0 THE COIN by David Rudling

- 6.1 With the exception of a number of illegible 18th/19th- copper alloy coins or tokens found during a monitoring visit (details are housed with the archive) the only coin found during the excavations was an AE As of Domitian (81-96AD). The obverse legend is illegible but the reverse reads MONETA (AVGVST). This coin was located during the evaluation (Context 10).

7.0 METALWORK by Luke Barber

- 7.1 The assessment and main excavations on the site produced 639 pieces of metalwork from nine different contexts. The majority of this is ironwork, all of which is heavily corroded. No stratified Romano-British metalwork was located and indeed no unstratified diagnostic pieces are present. Virtually all of the metalwork is from contexts disturbed by grave-digging activity and as such can only be viewed as a mixed assemblage, primarily of post-medieval coffin furniture. Some material may be medieval but this is uncertain. The only burials investigated in detail which possessed coffin furniture attributable to the burial were from the evaluation phase of the work.

Iron.

- 7.2 Virtually all of this material, which is fully listed in the archive, is coffin furniture and consists of nails, domed-headed tacks, handles and various pieces of plating. The nails are from the main construction of the coffins whereas the tacks are likely to have been used to line the coffins or for decorative purposes interior. Skeletons 6 and 7 (from the assessment) were obviously interred with these lined coffins. All the handles recovered are of drop form and are all likely to be of post-medieval date. No decoration was apparent on any of the handles or handle-plates despite close examination of the x-ray plates taken of them. With the exception of skeleton 7, which had nearly a full set of handles, most burials had very incomplete sets probably due to later disturbance: 20 unstratified handles are present in the assemblage. Many burials have no associated coffin handles suggesting plain coffins. Much of the ironwork has mineralised wood attached. The remains of the lowest level of burials, investigated in the main excavations, contained very few pieces of ironwork which could be directly attributed to any particular burial. Of these the only recognisable items were heavily corroded nails. This would suggest this level of burials was in relatively plain coffins and in some instances, no coffin at all. This is not surprising considering these are the earliest burials within the excavation and are likely to predate the establishment of a specialised undertaking trade in the later 17th century.

Non-ferrous.

7.3 The excavations produced 144 pieces of non-ferrous metalwork. These are listed in the archive. As with the ironwork, the majority consists of coffin fittings. Two main types are present: domed-headed tacks in either copper alloy or pewter-plated iron and lead alloy sheeting from external sheathing. The tacks would be for a similar function to the iron examples mentioned above and were found associated with skeletons 4, 5, 6 and 7 during the evaluation. The lead alloy sheeting fragments, which are frequently decorated with repoussée work, come virtually exclusively from skeleton 6 suggesting this burial was interred in a quality coffin. Other objects which are not associated with actual coffins include a number of tinned copper alloy pins, possibly from clothing, burial shrouds or floral decorations and a copper alloy pipe tamper in the form of a classical bust of an old man. The tamper, which unfortunately was unstratified, has a 12mm diameter foot and is likely to date to the late 17th or 18th centuries.

8.0 CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL by Luke Barber

8.1 The excavations produced a total of 47 pieces of ceramic building material weighing 864g. The vast majority of this came from unstratified or unsealed contexts. Eight fragments of Romano-British tile in a fine sand-tempered fabric with grog inclusions were recovered from Context 19. All these pieces were too small to be diagnostic of form. The only pieces of Romano-British tile diagnostic of form were two tegula fragments (unstratified and Context 7). Eighteen fragments of medieval and post-medieval tile are present. These consist of fragments of peg tile and brown glazed floor tile. All are from contexts disturbed by grave-digging.

9.0 WORKED FLINT by Tony Pollard

9.1 Only four pieces of worked flint were located at the site. Three of these were from Context 19. These consist of a core rejuvenation flake terminating in a hinge fracture with diffuse bulb; a small snapped flake with diffuse bulb and small notches along two edges and a regular narrow flake/blade with diffuse bulb and blunting retouch along the left hand edge. A single secondary flake with a medium bulb terminating in a hinge fracture was recovered from Context 23. All the flintwork from the site is undiagnostic of period but is probably of later prehistoric date. The small quantity present suggests no major activity took place in the immediate vicinity of the excavations during this time and the material is simply a background scatter.

10.0 ANIMAL BONE by Lucy Kirk

10.1 Animal bone was recovered from seven contexts: four dating to the cemetery/burial soil (7, 15, 17, 23), two Romano-British (10, 19), and one unstratified. A total of 95 animal bone fragments were collected. The cemetery contexts contained 45 animal bone fragments comprising cow, sheep/goat, pig and small mammal. These have been identified and listed for the archive.

10.2 The Romano-British ditch fill contained 23 bone fragments. Unfortunately, due to their small and fragmentary nature only four were identifiable to species and skeletal element. The identified bones represented a minimum of two cattle and one sheep/goat. Neither butchery marks nor weathering were apparent on any of the bone fragments. The lack of evidence for butchery is not conclusive as it is possible, given the fragmentary nature of the bone, that marks would not have survived well enough to be recognisable. The negative evidence for weathering, however, would suggest that the bone was buried soon after disposal.

11.0 PLANT REMAINS by Pat Hinton

11.1 A 25 litre soil sample was taken from the Roman ditch fill (Context 19). This was floated through 500 and 250 micron sieves in order to extract plant remains. The residue was duly sorted in order to extract any material of interest remaining. The small amount of floated material was subsequently searched using a binocular microscope at 7-40X magnification. It contained very few charred remains but a larger number of uncharred, and therefore probably more recent, seeds.

11.2 Charred Seeds

<i>Triticum cf aestivum</i> s.l. (bread wheat)	1
<i>Triticum</i> sp. (indet. wheats)	2
<i>Hordeum cf vulgare</i> (hulled barley)	1
<i>Agrostemma githago</i> L. (corn cockle)	1
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> sp. (vetch or vetcling)	1

11.3 Of the charred seeds only the bread wheat and barley grains are more or less intact and the short, almost square, form of the wheat is comparable to *Triticum compactum* (club wheat). The other wheat grains are two (non-matching) longitudinal halves.

11.4 The corn cockle is represented by only a fragment of its testa but the conspicuous tubercles are unmistakable, and the vetch is merely a fragment of a cotyledon from a seed which would probably have been c.3mm in diameter. Both could be cornfield weeds.

11.5 Uncharred Seeds

<i>Sambucus nigra</i> (elder)	c.200
<i>Stachys palustris</i> L. (marsh woundwort)	1
<i>Pedicularis cf palustris</i> (marsh lousewort)	1
<i>Taraxacum</i> sp. (dandelion)	1

11.6 These seeds are dry, brittle, flattened, often split and the embryos have not survived. It is obvious that they are not recent but their age is doubtful. As the sample came from a ditch the seeds may have remained in wet conditions for a time which would have postponed their decay. The woundwort and lousewort suggest damp surroundings.

11.7 Although there is no reason why the charred seeds should not be from the 1st- to 2nd- century AD the wheat and the corn cockle are somehow more suggestive of a later period. The low seed density in this 25 litre sample suggests that the charred seeds are merely chance inclusions of burned crop processing debris.

11.8 The uncharred seeds may well derive from plants growing by the ditch side. In addition to a few root fragments the sample also includes snail and slug shells and worm cocoons which indicate at least some soil disturbance and therefore the possibility of contamination from later periods.

12.0 DISCUSSION

12.1 The only evidence of prehistoric activity at the site was the four pieces of worked flint. These were all residual in deposits either above the gravel or cut into it. No worked flint was noted in the gravel itself. This negligible number of pieces suggests that no intense prehistoric activity took place within the immediate area of the site although there was some presence in the area.

12.2 Romano-British activity is well represented by both artefacts and actual deposits. This seems to have predominantly occurred in the 1st and 2nd centuries. The quantity of pottery of this period from the site suggests the presence of a close-by settlement even though no features definitely associated with such a site fell within the excavated area. The exact nature of the two Roman soil layers (Contexts 9 and 10) is uncertain. It is possible the upper (9) was an old topsoil to the lower (10) subsoil. Whether these were ever subjected to arable cultivation is uncertain due to later disturbance, however, the proximity of the river, and thus danger of flooding, may have deterred arable activity. The density of pottery in these layers is relatively high and as such it could be argued this is from manuring of arable land even though the river valley soils are likely to have been naturally fertile. However, although many of the sherds are small and abraded many are not. This

combined with the high quantities suggest the material may be the result of secondary rubbish disposal from a nearby site onto the floodplain, much of which may have been pasture. The abraded nature of many of the pottery sherds may therefore be due to periodic agitation by floodwaters.

- 12.3** The Roman ditch is somewhat enigmatic. The heavy truncation of this feature combined with the short stretch of it exposed within the excavated area make it impossible to draw any firm conclusions regarding its nature. The relationship to the soil layers 9 and 10 could not be established, however, if the ditch cut these, which seems likely, then its original depth must have been at least in the region of a metre. A number of functions may be suggested for this feature. The most likely is the ditch was related to drainage in some way. Whether this was associated with a field and thus also maintained a boundary function too is not certain. The fact that the ditch runs toward Watling street at right angles means that a further benefit obtained from this feature would be the aiding of road drainage around the fording point. Although no noticeable slope was present on the base of the ditch to suggest drainage direction this is not deemed important as the natural gravel exposed in the cut would act as a good soakaway. The other possibility is that the ditch formed one side of an enclosure, perhaps associated with a settlement. Which side of the ditch would have been on the inside of the enclosure is difficult to say, however, due to the proximity of the river, the western side seems more likely.
- 12.4** Too little was uncovered during the present excavation to draw firm conclusions regarding the nature of Roman occupation. However, a few observations can be made. The occupation in the vicinity of the excavation trench was mainly of an early date although some later activity is also attested by a few sherds of pottery. This date corresponds well with the early date of Watling Street and its associated river crossing at this point. The presence of roofing tile, even if in small quantities, hints at a building in the area. The pottery is mainly of Kentish origin although more exotic pieces are also present. This is not surprising as the location of the site on Watling Street would have placed the settlement on an important trading route. This combined with small-scale river transport would have facilitated the easy acquisition of rich goods. The presence of briquetage is interesting. It is unlikely that salt was produced at the site but it could easily have been supplied by road or water from the north Kent Marshes. The limited evidence regarding the site's economy indicates mixed agriculture. Whether this was an activity carried out from the settlement itself or produce was brought in from surrounding agricultural estates cannot be ascertained at present.
- 12.5** It is quite clear that a potentially substantial settlement existed at Dartford during the early Roman period. This is borne out by numerous finds around the town, particularly in the vicinity of the river crossing. Most of these are chance finds or small excavations and as such no settlement morphology has

been established in which the present findings can be placed. Larger scale excavations will be needed in the area in order to start forming a settlement plan and functional hypothesis.

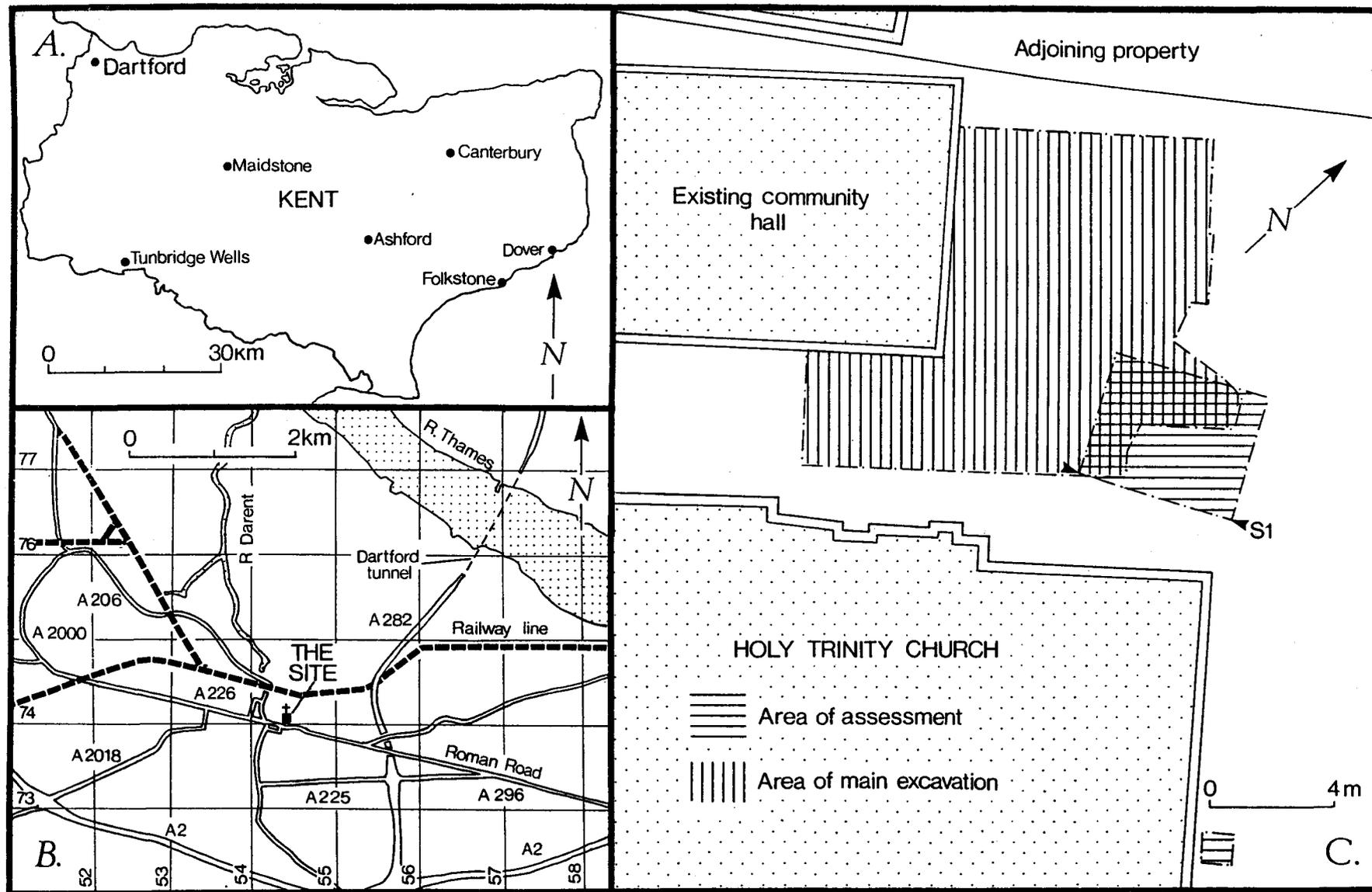
- 12.6 With the exception of a few pottery sherds and tile fragments no evidence of medieval activity was located within the trench despite its proximity to the church. It can only be concluded that either this area was left as open space or archaeological evidence of any activities has been totally removed by later grave-digging. The sparsity of medieval building materials and artefacts in general would support the former suggestion although it is always possible that some of the earliest burials within the excavation are of this early date.
- 12.7 The vast majority of the burials, if not all of them, appear to date to the post-medieval period. The density of burials appears to be great and the intercutting of graves was frequent as a result. This would suggest that in the probable 400 years the cemetery here was in use grave markers were either not used regularly or frequently removed/displaced.

Acknowledgements

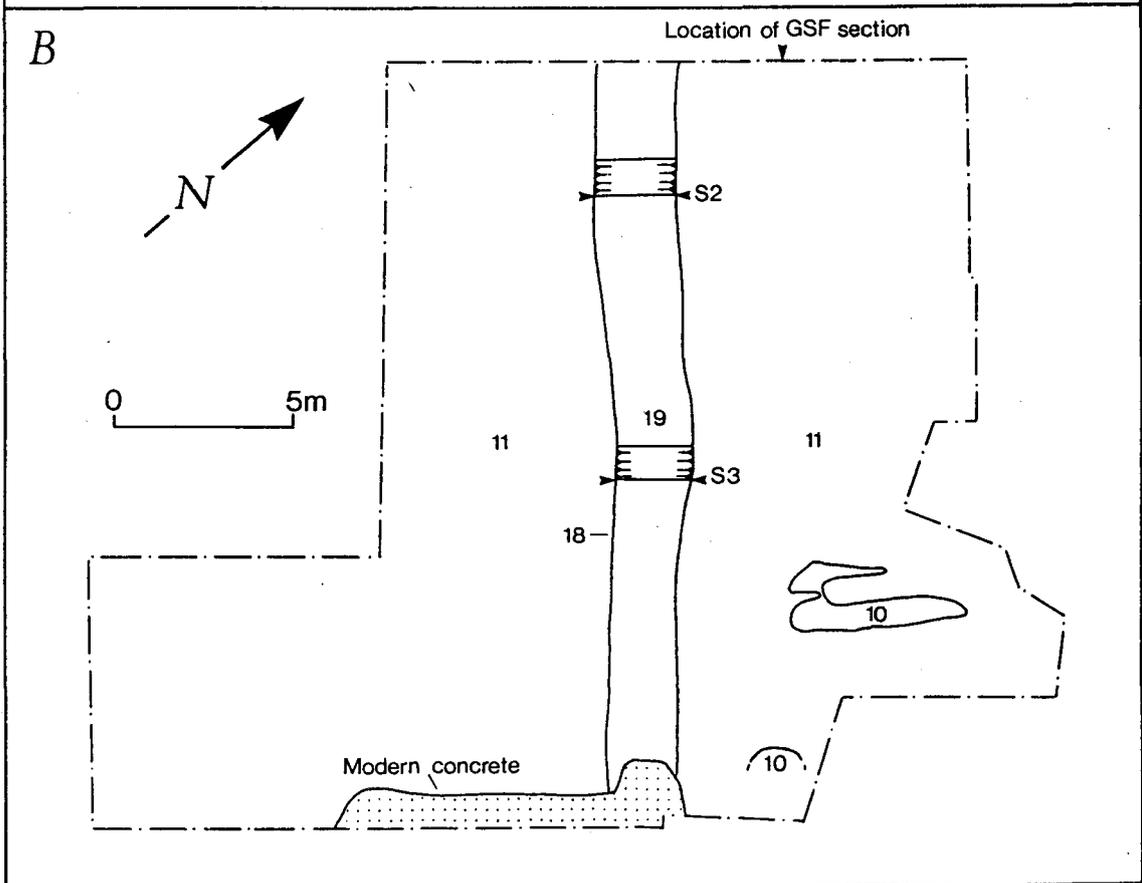
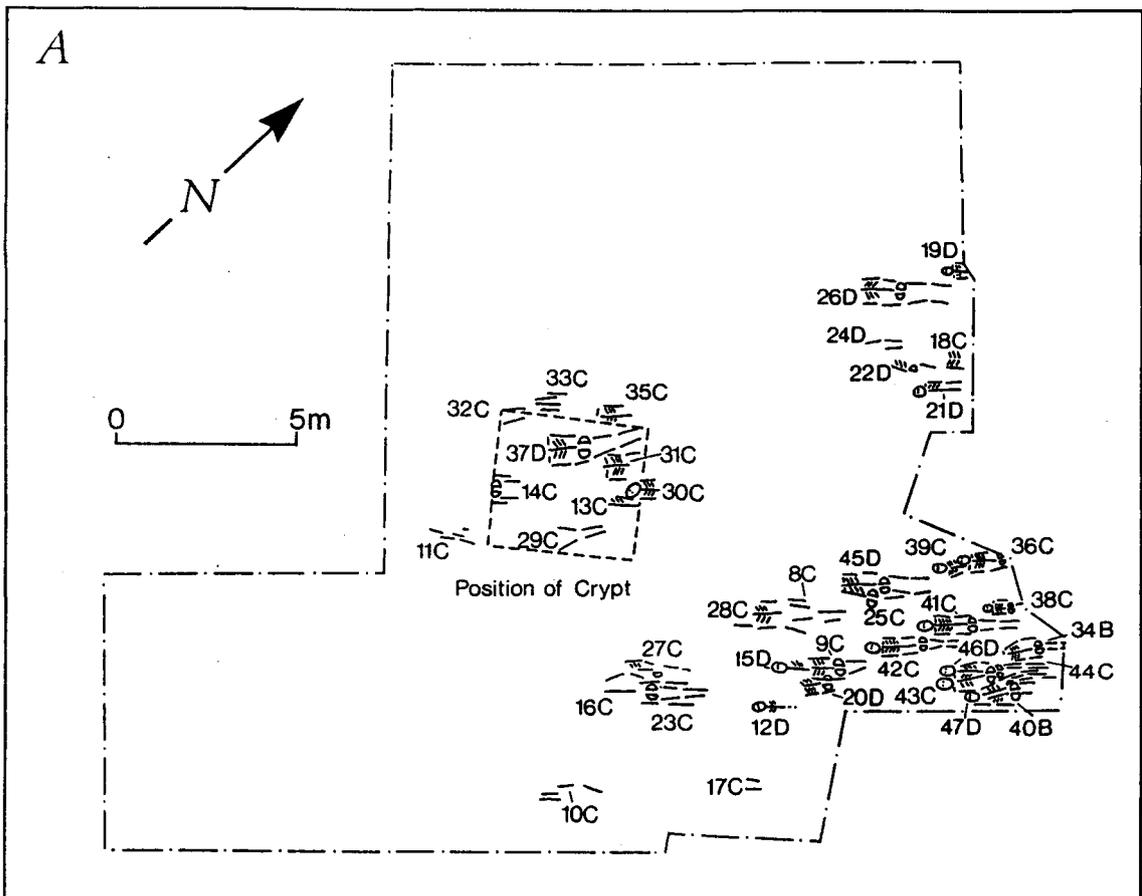
The authors would like to thank Lis Dyson and John Williams of Kent County Council for continual help and advice throughout the excavation and for providing detailed background information to the previous discoveries in the area. Thanks must also go to the developers for on-site help during the excavations and to all staff and specialists who contributed to this report.

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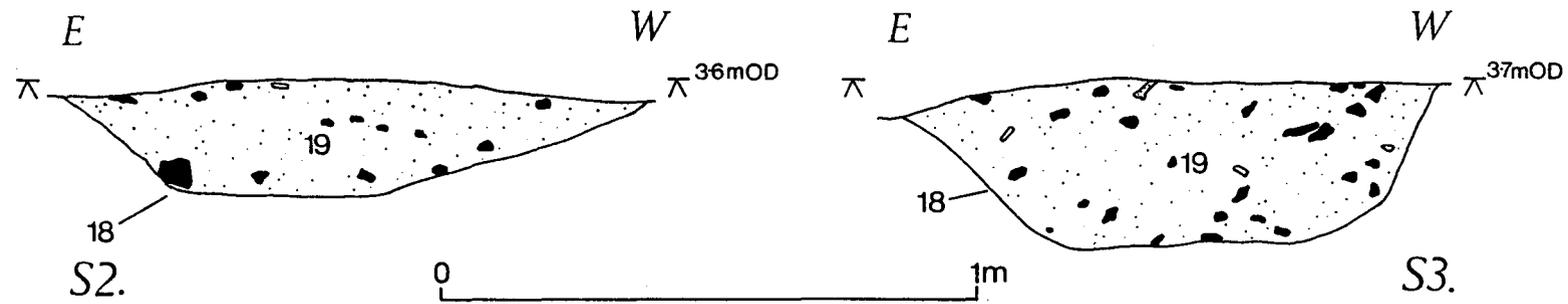
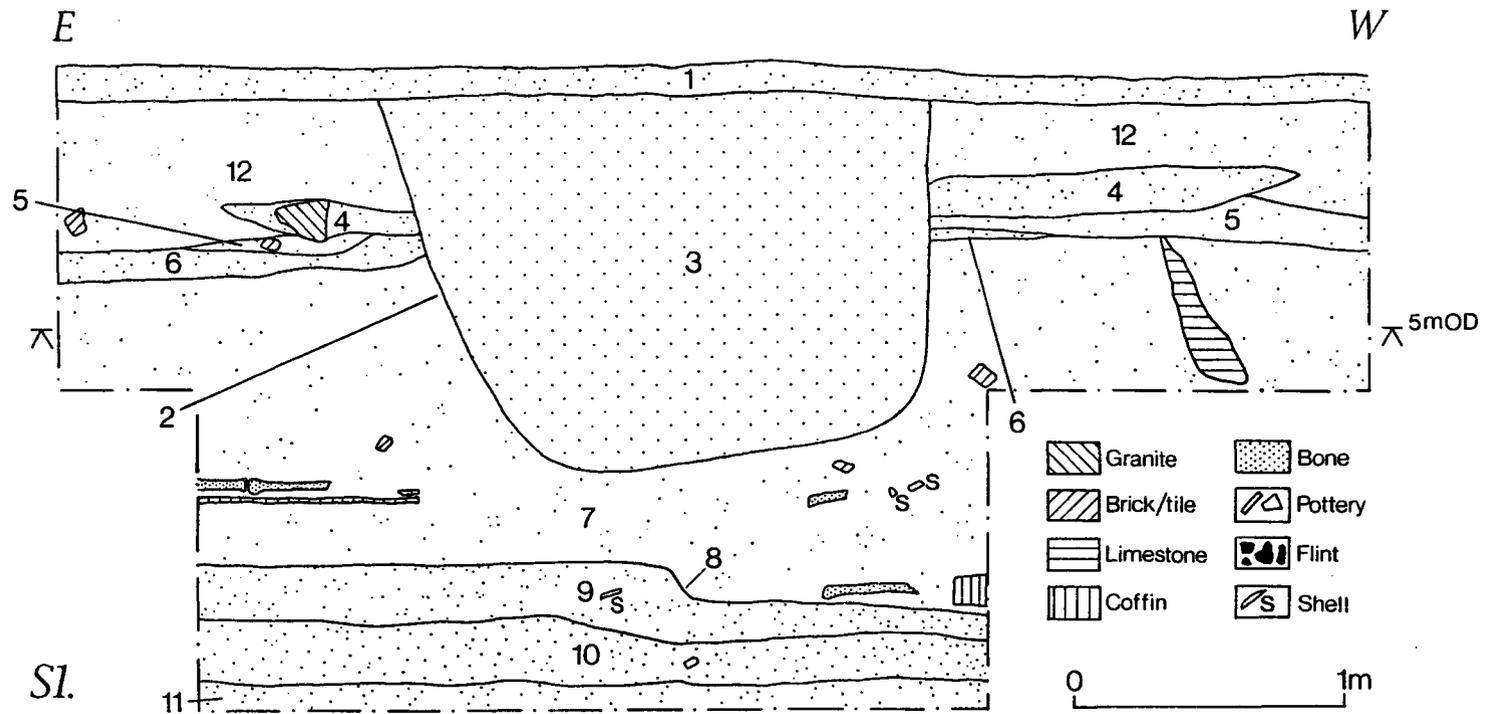
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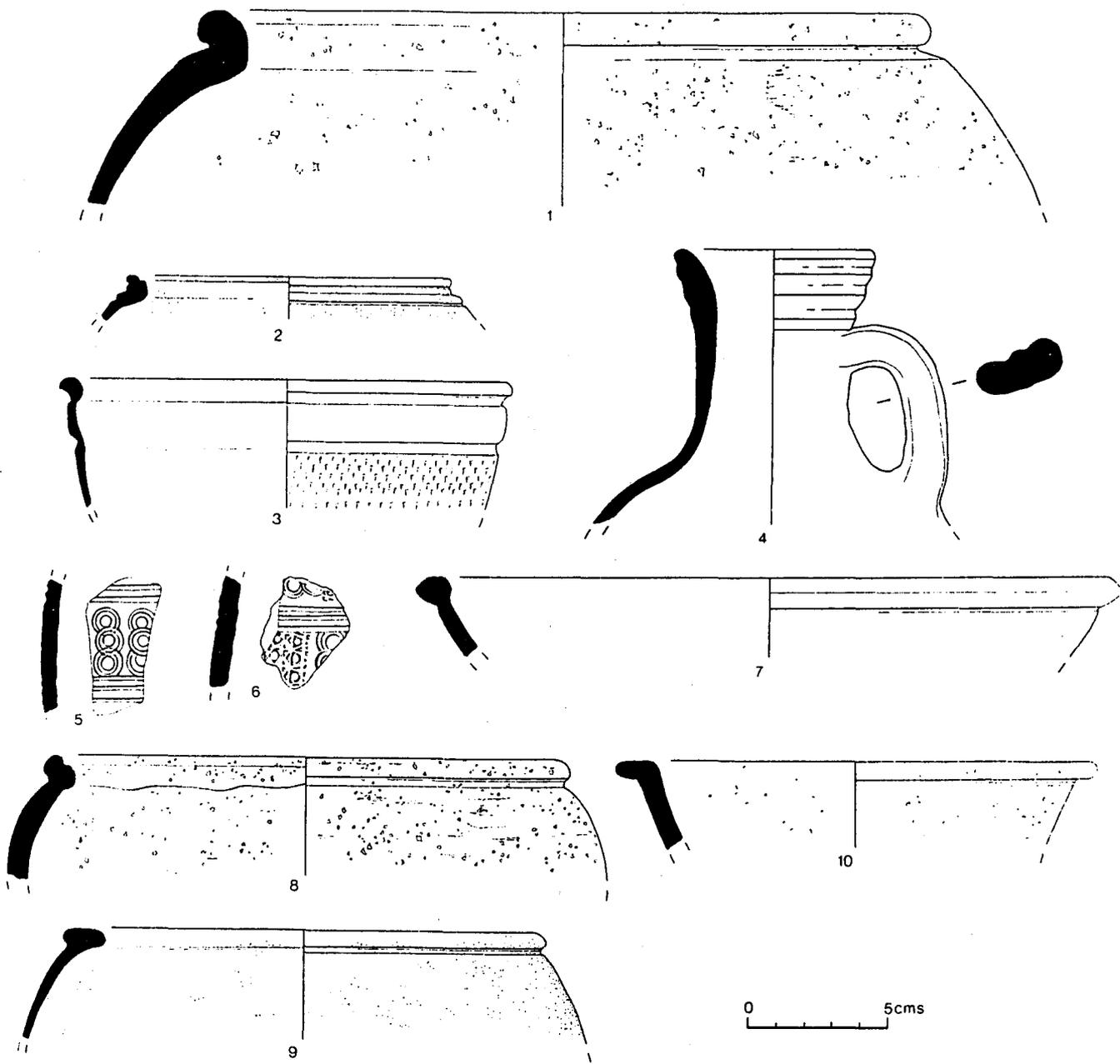
ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH-EAST	SITE Holy Trinity Church, Dartford		
I WEST STREET DITCHLING HASOCKS EAST SUSSEX BN6 8TS	TITLE Site and Trench Location Plans		
	DATE January 1997	REF 318	DRAWING NO Figure 1



ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH-EAST	SITE Holy Trinity Church, Dartford		
	TITLE Trench Plans (Cemetery, and Pre-Cemetery)		
I WEST STREET DITCHLING HASSOCKS EAST SUSSEX BN6 8TS	DATE January 1997	REF 318	DRAWING NO Figure 2



ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH-EAST 1 WEST STREET DITCHLING HASSOCKS EAST SUSSEX BN6 8TS	SITE Holy Trinity Church, Dartford		
	TITLE Sections		
	DATE January 1997	REF 318	DRAWING NO Figure 3



ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTH-EAST	SITE Holy Trinity Church, Dartford		
	TITLE Pottery		
1 WEST STREET DITCHLING HASSOCKS EAST SUSSEX BN6 8TS	DATE January 1997	REF 318	DRAWING NO Figure 4