

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
St Mary's Church,
Ticehurst, East Sussex**

NGR 568810 130060



Project No. 2395

**by
Dan Swift BA(Hons) MIFA
With contributions by Elke Raeman and Neil Griffin**

January 2007

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
St Mary's Church,
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Rother District Council Planning Reference: RR/2006/2055/P

Site Code SMT 06

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Summary

Four test pits were hand-excavated by ASE archaeologists in the churchyard to a maximum depth of 1.20m. The test pits were located to the south of the church, adjacent to the south aisle.

Test Pit (TP) 1 was excavated immediately against the south aisle wall and buttress with the purpose of defining the base of structural foundations; Test Pits 2 to 4 were excavated within the footprint of the proposed development with the purpose of determining the depth of burials.

Small quantities of disarticulated human bone, animal bone, ceramic building material (CBM), pottery, roof slate, clay tobacco pipe, iron slag, glass and one small fragment of moulded stone, possibly window tracery, were recovered. With the exception of finds from TP 1 these were reburied at the base of excavations upon backfilling of the test pits.

Archaeology South-East

Archaeology South-East is a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit. The Institute of Archaeology at UCL is 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.

UCL 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, Archaeology South East 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.

Drawing on experience of the countryside and towns of the south east of England, Archaeology South-East 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.

Archaeology South-East, as part of UCL Field Archaeology Unit, is a registered organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists and, as such, is required to meet IFA standards.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit (UCLFAU) was commissioned by John D Clarke and Partners to undertake an archaeological evaluation within the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Ticehurst, East Sussex (NGR 568810 130060) (Fig. 1).

1.2 The church lies on the west side of Church Street, with a large churchyard mostly surrounded by residential development.

1.3 The drift geology of Ticehurst is predominantly deep clay and overlies sandstone rock¹.

1.4 An application for construction of a single storey extension to the south of the church tower (Fig. 1) has been approved by Rother District Council (RR/2006/2055/P). Condition 7 of this consent states that:

No development shall take place until the implementation of a programme of archaeological works has been secured in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect items of archaeological interest and to accord with Policy S1(j) of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011 and Policy GD1 of the Rother District Local Plan.

1.5 Following discussions between Neil Griffin of ASE and East Sussex County Council's archaeologists (Dr Andrew Woodcock and Casper Johnson) and the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (Vivienne Coad), a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by Dan Swift describing the appropriate methodology for an archaeological evaluation at the site. The WSI was approved by ESCC and the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor prior to the commencement of work at the site.

1.6 The on-site work was undertaken during December 2006 by Dan Swift (Senior Archaeologist), Dave Atkins and Jim Webster (Archaeologists). The project was managed by Neil Griffin (fieldwork) and Louise Rayner (post-excavation).

¹ F. Drewe, *Ticehurst, Stonegate and Flimwell* (1991), p. 1

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL and HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Iron-working is known in the area from about 100BC onwards. At Frant some 7m to the west, an Iron Age hillfort (Saxonbury) was excavated in the early part of the 20th century. This site seems to have become Roman after the conquest². Ticehurst itself lies along a Roman road sited on an east-west ridge of land, and Roman iron bloomery settlements have been excavated at Bardown and Holbeamwood in Stonegate c. 2 miles south-west of Ticehurst³.
- 2.2** The site lies in an area of rich historic background probably dating back to at least 1018, and Ticehurst is mentioned in the Domesday Book⁴.
- 2.3** The present church, with the exception of the tower which is mostly 13th century, was constructed in the 14th century and is thought to overlie an earlier church, probably of wood. The tracery of the four windows in the south aisle is probably of 16th century origins though they are now filled with 19th century stained glass⁵.
- 2.4** No known previous archaeological work has been conducted at the Church of St Mary's, Ticehurst.

² Sussex Archaeological Collection, vol. VIII, p. 26

³ F. Drewe, *Ticehurst, Stonegate and Flimwell* (1991), p. 2

⁴ Ibid, pps. 2–8

⁵ Ibid, pps. 19–28

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** Four test pits were located within the footprint of the proposed extension, positioned in areas free from gravestones. TP 1 was excavated immediately against the south aisle wall and buttress with the purpose of defining the base of structural foundations; TPs 2 to 4 were excavated within the footprint of the proposed development with the purpose of determining the depth of burials. The locations of all of the test pits were checked with a CAT scanner for the presence of buried services. The test pits were then excavated manually.
- 3.2** The excavation was taken down to a maximum depth of 1.2m below the current ground surface or to the top of burials, whichever was the higher, as outlined in the WSI. Care was taken not to damage the uncovered human remains.
- 3.3** All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded according to accepted professional standards, using standard Archaeology South-East context record sheets. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart. As stipulated in the WSI, all encountered disarticulated human bone, and associated artefacts (e.g. coffin fittings) were bagged and reburied in plastic bags within the test pits, with the exception of the finds from TP 1 which were retained for any possible further analysis.
- 3.4** All test pits and grave-stones within the footprint of the proposed development were surveyed-in using a total station and leveled to the Ordnance Datum located on the porch of the church (110.90m AOD). The levels of archaeological deposits were reduced from ground surface using topographical data retrieved in the survey.
- 3.5** A full photographic record of the archaeological work, and of all grave-stones within the footprint of the proposed development, has been made and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held at the Archaeology South-East office in Ditchling and will be offered to the Barbican House Museum, Lewes in due course.

4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1** TP 1 was excavated immediately against the south aisle wall and buttress (Fig. 2). The purpose of TP 1 was to ascertain the depth and nature of the foundations of the south aisle wall and buttresses and to establish whether archaeological deposits were present. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.20m below existing ground level (108.87mAOD) and the foundations of both elements of masonry were seen to continue below the limits of excavation (107.67mAOD), although the buttress foundations appeared to be coming to an end at this depth (Fig. 3). In this test pit a clayish dark grey-brown topsoil [1/2] c. 0.40m thick containing occasional fragments of CBM overlay a c. 0.30m thick layer of dirty clay [1/3] that contained occasional fragments of pottery, roof slate, CBM, iron slag and a small piece of molded stone –probably window tracery. This deposit overlay a light brown clay [1/4] with frequent flecks of charcoal at 0.70m below ground surface (108.17mAOD). This final deposit continued below the limit of excavation in TP 1 at 107.67mAOD.
- 4.2** TP 2 (Fig. 2) was excavated to a depth of 1.10m below existing ground level (108.68mAOD). The uppermost deposit was a clayish topsoil [2/2] c. 0.20m thick with occasional fragments of CBM. This overlay mid-yellowish clay [2/3] with occasional fragments of disarticulated human and animal bone and CBM, which continued to the base of the limits of excavation. At the base of the test pit (107.58mAOD), the articulated remains of a small individual were partly exposed –namely pelvis, right leg and feet. The remains were poorly preserved and lay within a barely discernable grave cut, the backfill of which was not distinguished from the surrounding matrix. Jutting out from the south section of TP 2 was what appeared to be a broken-off gravestone (Plate 1).
- 4.3** TP 3 (Fig. 2) was excavated to a depth of 1.20m below existing ground level (108.75mAOD). Clayey topsoil [3/2] c. 0.20m thick overlay light-brown clay [3/3] containing occasional disarticulated human bone, iron slag and CBM. This deposit continued below the limit of excavation (107.55mAOD). At the base of the test pit a badly preserved timber coffin was recorded (Plate 2). No grave cut was visible.
- 4.4** TP 4 (Fig. 2) was excavated to a depth of 1.20m below existing ground level (108.65mAOD). Clayey topsoil [4/2] c. 0.15m thick overlay clean mid-orangey brown clay [4/3] containing occasional CBM, disarticulated human bone, clay tobacco pipe and a lump of ferrous material. At the base of the test pit (107.45mAOD) the partial remains of two poorly preserved adult burials were recorded. The first individual, in the northern half of TP 4 lay with the head to the west, with bones of upper body to just above the knee exposed. The

second individual lay with the head to the east, with only the leg bones exposed (Plate 3). No grave cut was detected in either burial.

5.0 THE FINDS by Elke Raemen

5.1 The evaluation produced only a small assemblage of finds. Those from TP 1 [1/3] were retained and are quantified below in Table 1.

Context	Pottery	Weight (g)	CBM	Weight (g)	Stone	Weight (g)	Fe	Weight (g)
[1/3]	2	38	1	326	5	374	2	20

Table 1: quantification of the finds from the evaluation at St Mary's Church, Ticehurst

- 5.2** The pottery consists of two conjoining fragments of the base of a cooking pot. The sherds are medium sand tempered ware with some shell inclusions, dating to the later 13th to early 14th century.
- 5.3** One piece of ceramic building material was recovered: a floor tile with dull green/brown glaze and slightly beveled edges. This tile has a medium fired, abundant sand tempered fabric with a few clay pellets to 2 mm and occasional quartz inclusions to 1 mm. This tile can at the very earliest be attributed to the 14th century, but will more likely date to the 15th to early 16th century.
- 5.4** The context produced five pieces of stone. Three of these are Wealden sandstone and one is a shelly limestone, burnt orange. In addition a piece of West Country slate was recovered.
- 5.5** One piece of iron smelting slag (tap slag) was recovered. This is likely to be of medieval date. One piece is too small to interpret, and one would expect a lot more of this material if production were taking place on or close to the site. Metalwork consists only of one general purpose nail fragment, heavily encrusted with corrosion products.
- 5.6** This assemblage is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis. It is recommended that pottery and the ceramic building material are retained and the remainder discarded. No further work is required.

6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1** The findings within TP 1 have identified very well made and deep foundations of the south aisle and buttress. The depth and quality of the foundations are no doubt a reflection of likely subsidence issues given that the land falls away to the south of the church, and that the subsoil is of clay. There was no sign of a possible earlier doorway in the location of TP 1. The artefacts retrieved from this test pit add little to the known history of the church and surrounding settlement. The floor tile is likely to be the result of refurbishment works undertaken in the late medieval or early post-medieval period.
- 6.2** The evaluation has established that human remains associated with extant grave markers are present at between 1.10m – 1.2m below existing ground level. Of the articulated remains, some attempt has been made to link the individuals to specific identifiable grave-stones, although as is often the case the burials correspond poorly to the grave-markers and it has been impossible to positively identify the interred. It should be noted therefore that human remains may be encountered even if new foundations are specifically designed to avoid the likely location of human remains based upon grave-stone location.
- 6.3** Additionally, the occasional disarticulated human bone encountered in Test Pits 2, 3 and 4 do imply that this area of the churchyard was in use for the burial of human remains prior to the existing 18th and 19th century gravestones and that earlier burials could well survive *in situ*, as well as in a disturbed, disarticulated form.

7.0 MITIGATION STRATEGY by Neil Griffin

7.1 The purpose of the mitigation strategy is to state how the archaeological resource of the site can be accommodated within the proposed development, either by preservation *in situ* or by record (i.e. through excavation, recording and publication). A site meeting took place between Richard Crook (John D. Clarke and Partners), Stephen Harkness (HTP Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers), Casper Johnson (County Archaeologist, ESCC) and Neil Griffin (Project Manager ASE). It was established at this meeting that the proposed development would not be refused on archaeological grounds, but it would be necessary to undertake an archaeological watching brief during certain elements of the development and to ensure that adequate time and resources are available to undertake all necessary archaeological recording and publication of the results in accordance with Condition 7 of the planning consent (see Section 1.4 above) and Section 1.6 of the approved Written Scheme of Investigation dated November 2006.

7.2 External Ground Works

7.2.1 Based on the excavations undertaken in the churchyard it has been possible to create a predictive model for grave locations in relation to extant grave markers (Figure 4). It should be stated however, that as the exposed burials corresponded poorly to the grave-markers this information should only be taken as a guide and takes no account of the likely presence of earlier internments and disarticulated human remains. The predictive model will be made available to HTP Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers to aid the design of the pile locations. It is anticipated that the pile design will be established in consultation with the County Archaeologist and Diocesan Archaeological Advisor. If augured piles are used, it would also be appropriate for these to be archaeologically monitored so that disturbed human remains may be recovered for reburial. Archaeological monitoring will not be required if driven piles are utilised.

7.2.2 It will also be appropriate to monitor any other external ground works (e.g. drainage) to ensure that there is adequate provision for the recovery of disarticulated human remains so that these may be re-interred elsewhere within the churchyard.

7.3 Internal Ground Works

7.3.1 An archaeological watching brief will be maintained during intrusive internal alterations. It is understood that the existing timber floor of the south aisle will be removed and the ground level reduced. There is a possibility that important archaeological remains (*inter alia* earlier

structural remains and evidence of burials) will be encountered during such works.

7.4 *Alteration to the South Aisle Wall*

- 7.4.1** A new opening is to be formed through the south aisle wall to allow access into the new extension. It will be necessary for the deconstruction of the masonry to be monitored in order to establish whether earlier elements of the church are present (either masked by later wall facings or concealed beneath the line of the existing wall). It is understood that the affected window in the south aisle will be carefully dismantled by specialists and as much as possible of the masonry and stained glass will be incorporated into the new structure. It will be necessary to maintain a photographic record both internally and externally prior to and during the dismantling process. The photographic record will also be supplemented by a brief textual description of the work undertaken. This will also make reference to the surviving matching windows so that the similarities in design are noted. Archaeology South-East will liaise with the specialist masons and stained glass conservators/consultants to ensure that the entire window is recorded to the appropriate standards mentioned above and that there is no unnecessary repetition of such recording work.

7.5 *Reporting*

- 7.5.1** It is anticipated that the results of archaeological watching brief will be synthesised into one final report which will also summarise and draw on the results of the evaluation. The report will be submitted to the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor and County Archaeologist ESCC for approval prior to final versions being issued to all concerned parties as appropriate.

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1** Archaeology South-East would like to thank Richard Crook (John D. Clarke & Partners), Vivienne Coad (Diocesan Archaeological Advisor) and Casper Johnson (East Sussex County Council) for their assistance on this project.

SMR Summary Sheet

Site Code	SMT 06					
Identification Name and Address	St Mary's Church, Ticehurst, East Sussex					
County, District &/or Borough	Rother District Council					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 568810 130060					
Archaeology South-East Proj. No.	2395					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. ✓	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other ✓ Churchyard		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	John D. Clarke and Partners					
Project Manager(s)	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Dan Swift					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED ✓	PM ✓	Other		

100 Word Summary.

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Appendix 1 – OASIS Data Collection Summary Form

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: archaeol6-24142

Project details

Project name	St Mary's Church, Ticehurst
Short description of the project	Four test pits were hand-excavated by ASE archaeologists in the churchyard to a maximum depth of 1.20m. The test pits were located to the south of the church, adjacent to the south aisle. Test Pit (TP) 1 was excavated immediately against the south aisle wall and buttress with the purpose of defining the base of structural foundations; Test Pits 2 to 4 were excavated within the footprint of the proposed development with the purpose of determining the depth of burials. Small quantities of disarticulated human bone, animal bone, ceramic building material (CBM), pottery, roof slate, clay tobacco pipe, iron slag, glass and one small fragment of moulded stone, possibly window tracery, were recovered. With the exception of finds from TP 1 these were reburied at the base of excavations upon backfilling of the test pits.
Project dates	Start: 11-12-2006 End: 14-12-2006
Previous/future work	No / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	2395 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	SMT 06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Significant Finds	COFFIN Post Medieval
Significant Finds	FLOOR TILE Medieval
Significant Finds	HUMAN REMAINS Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Test Pits'
Development type	Extension to Church
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location	EAST SUSSEX ROTHER TICEHURST St Mary's Church, Ticehurst
Postcode	TN5 7AB
Study area	100.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 68810 30060 51.0444786192 0.408427904388 51 02 40 N 000 24 30 E Point
Height OD	Min: 109.00m Max: 109.10m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Dan Swift
Type of sponsor/funding body	Diocese
Name of sponsor/funding body	The PCC of Ticehurst Church

Project archives

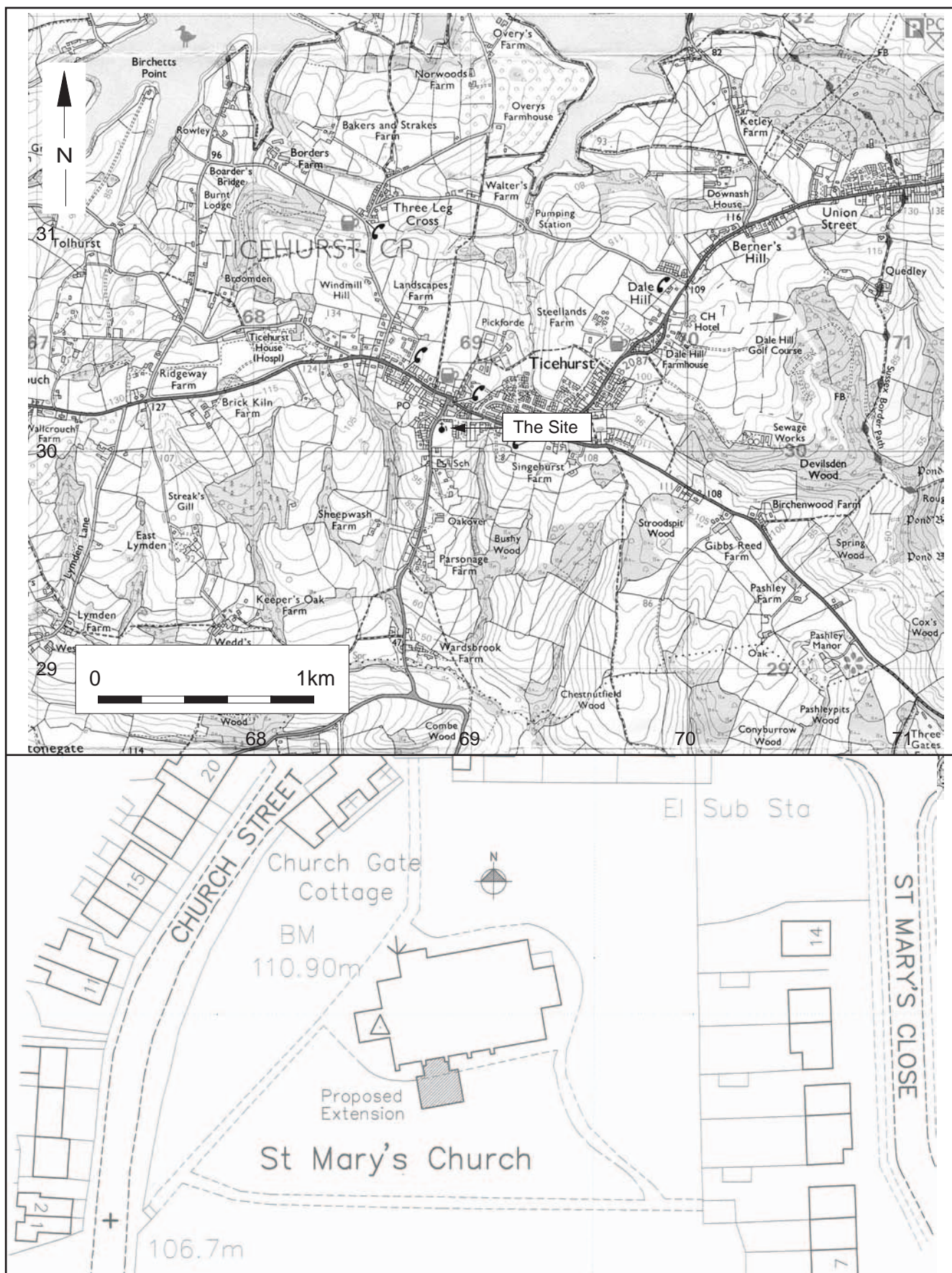
Physical Archive recipient	Local Museum
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Contents	'Ceramics'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Drawing','Miscellaneous Material','Notebook - Excavation','Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Evaluation at St Mary's Church, Ticehurst, East Sussex, TN5 7AB
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Swift, D., Raeman, E., Griffin, N
Other bibliographic details	Report Number 2395
Date	2007

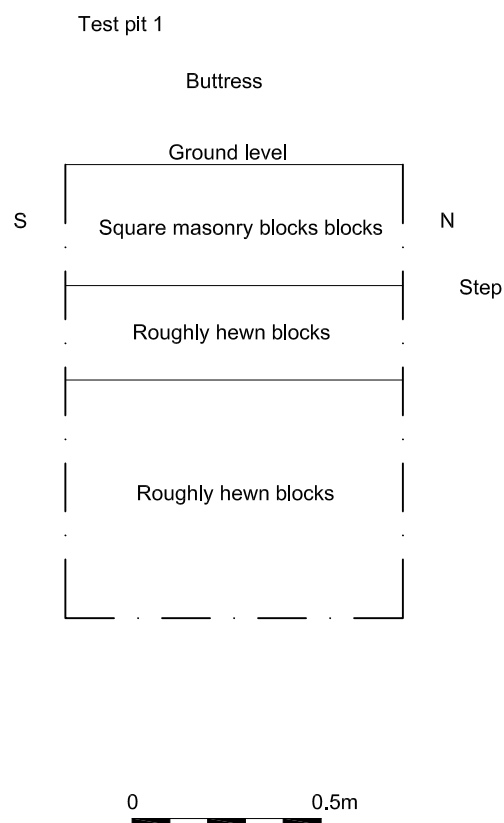
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South-East
Place of issue or publication	Archaeology South-East
Description	Bound A4 report
Entered by	Neil Griffin (n.griffin@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	22 February 2007

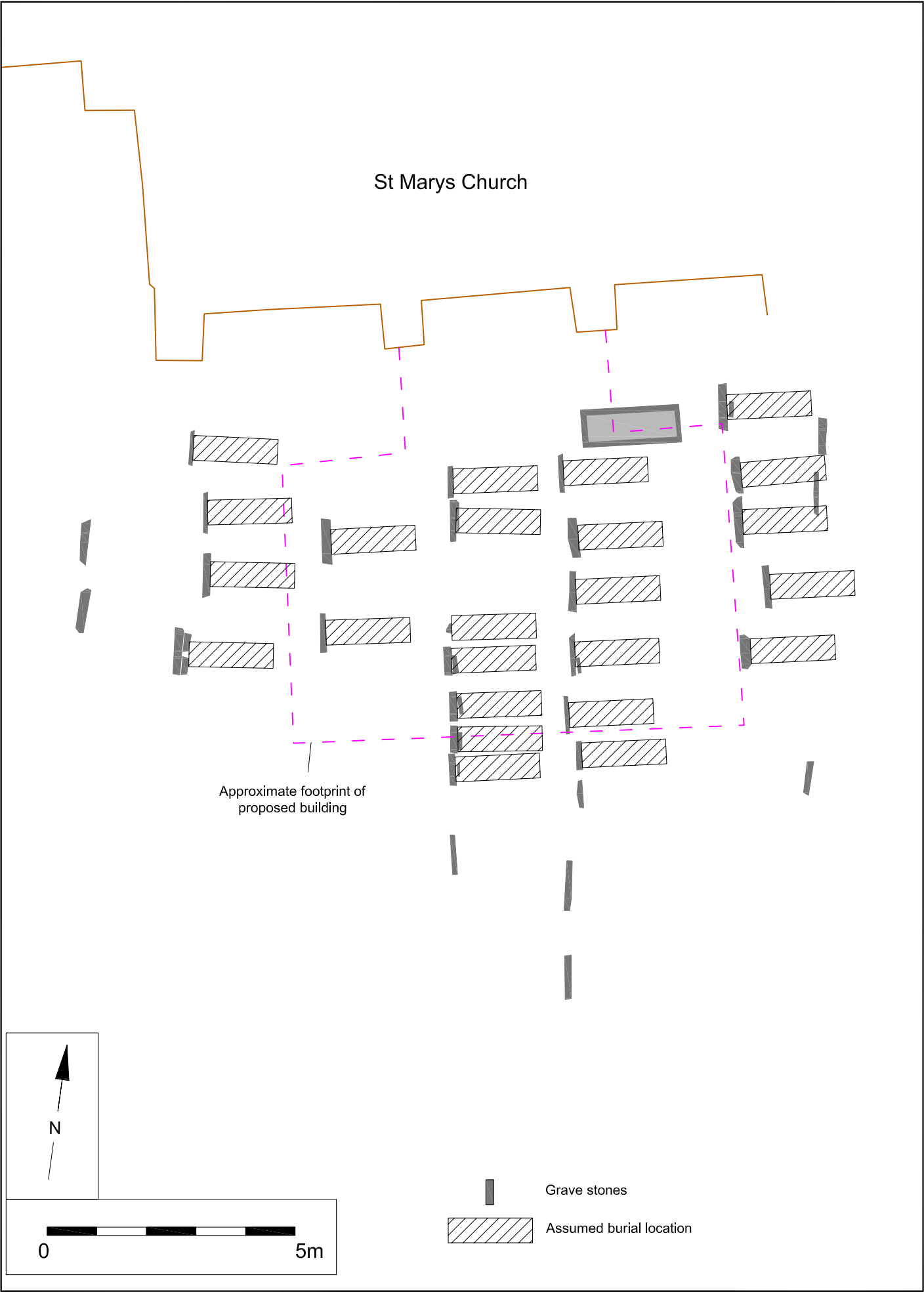
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February 2006
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© Archaeology South-East			St. Mary's Church, Ticehurst	Fig. 1
Ref: 2395	Jan 2007	Drawn by: JLR	Site Location Plan	







© Archaeology South-East			St Mary's Church, Ticehurst	Fig. 4
Ref: 2395	Jan 2007	CAD and SURVEY: MST	Predictive model showing assumed burial locations	



Plate 1: Test pit 2



Plate 2: Test pit 3



Plate 3: Test pit 4