

Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at the Church of St. Mary and St. Laurence, Bolsover



For Peter Rogan Associates

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Report Number: 100/2016

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Summary

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was contracted by Peter Rogan Associates to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the Church of St. Mary and St. Laurence, in Bolsover.
- The archaeological watching brief covered all intrusive groundwork comprising the hand excavation of five drainage trenches and three soakaways, all within the confines of the church yard.
- The aims of the watching brief were to record the location of any intact burials, especially any that might relate to the Medieval period, and to note the details of any exposed structural foundations in order to improve upon our previous knowledge of the church, including date, phasing and construction methods.
- Two intact burials were observed in Areas 1 and 3 but the depth at which they were revealed strongly suggested a post-Medieval date for their deposition. Disarticulated human remains were encountered in all of the excavated areas. These were left with the appropriate church authorities for reburial. No human remains were removed from the site.
- No finds were revealed as a result of the excavation that would assist in dating any of the recorded layers.

Contents

<i>DISCLAIMER</i>	2
Summary.....	5
1. Introduction.....	7
2. Background.....	7
3. Topography and Geology.....	7
4. Objectives.....	8
5. Methodology.....	9
6. Results.....	9
6.1 Area 1 soakaway (Fig. 2, Fig.3).....	9
6.2 Area 2 Soakaway (Fig. 2, Fig. 4).....	9
6.3 Area 3 Soakaway (Fig. 2, Fig. 5).....	10
6.4 Area 4 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2).....	10
6.5 Area 5 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2).....	11
6.6 Area 06 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2).....	11
6.7 Area 7 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2).....	11
6.8 Area 8 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2, Plate 7.).....	12
6.9 Human Remains.....	12
7. Conclusion.....	12
8. Bibliography.....	13
Appendix 1: Context Register.....	14
Appendix 2: Plates.....	15
Appendix 3: Figures.....	17
Appendix 4: Oasis Form.....	22

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) was contracted by Peter Rogan Associates to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the church of St Mary and St Laurence, Bolsover, Derbyshire. The site was centred at SK47447 70303 and the work consisted of the monitoring of intrusive groundworks associated with new drainage around the base of the church and through the churchyard. The intrusive groundwork was comprised of excavations for several drainage trenches and soakaways (Figure 2).
- 1.2 The new drainage scheme formed part of a Heritage Lottery funded programme of repairs and conservation works.
- 1.3 The programme of archaeological attendance and provisions was undertaken over a period of two days: May 24th and May 25th 2016.

2. Background

- 2.1 The settlement of Bolsover was mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Belesovre' or 'Belsevore'. The second element in the name, 'over' or 'ofer', is a reference to a slope or edge, possibly the sharp escarpment approximately half a mile to the west of the church; the first element 'beles' is more obscure, possibly meaning 'bullock- pasture'(Ekwall 1951, 49). The church itself is not recorded in Domesday but is mentioned in the transcripts of a property transfer from the younger William Peveral to the Abbey of Darley during the reign of Henry II (1154-1189) (www.heritagegateway.org.uk).
- 2.2 Some of the fabric of the current structure dates to the 13th century, particularly the west tower with its broach spire. However, much of the church was gutted by fire in 1897 and again in 1960 leading to extensive rebuilding and repairs (www.heritagegateway.org.uk).
- 2.3 The church is a Grade II* Listed Building (No. 1054045) and is currently within the Bolsover Conservation Area. Historic England has placed it on the register of "Heritage at Risk" (2016), due to the building having been damaged by fires in the 1890's and 1960's, and the c1990 underpinning of the tower being in a state of deterioration (the structure has suffered from subsidence due to its location over a geological fault line) (www.heritagegateway.org.uk).

3. Topography and Geology

- 3.1 The Church of St. Mary and St. Laurence sits at 172m AOD on a magnesium limestone plateau that forms a small but distinctive feature of the geology of north-east Derbyshire.
- 3.2 This area, which stretches from Whitwell in the north to Pleasley in the south and continues east into Nottinghamshire, has a very different character to the landscapes of both the coal measures sandstone of the Rother valley immediately to the west and the gritstone moorlands further west again, which separate this part of Derbyshire from the Peak District (BGS 2016; VCH Explore 2016).

4. Objectives

4.1 The objective of the archaeological attendance and recording was:

- To ensure preservation by record of any archaeological finds, features or deposits prior to their destruction through necessary construction works.

4.2 Within the limitations of the proposed groundwork, the excavation also aimed to resolve, where possible, a number of significant questions in relation to the use of the church site over time, including:

- Determining the existence of any activity pre-dating the known medieval origins of the site
- Identifying the presence of archaeological deposits relating to any earlier structural remains
- Clarifying the chronological structural phases for the existing church fabric that may be evident within any exposed foundations
- Identifying, where possible, the presence of early burials including those that may lie beneath the existing church walls
- Determining the presence of any below-ground burial monuments including stone or lead coffins, brick burial vaults etc.
- Of further consideration are elements of the East Midlands Research Agenda (2012) including:
 - 7.5.1 Can we identify additional pre-conquest church...sites?
 - 7.5.4 Can we shed further light upon the distribution and development of early churches or chapels and the origins and growth of the parish system?

5. Methodology

- 5.1 All intrusive groundworks were excavated by hand under continuous archaeological supervision.
- 5.2 All sections of drainage trenches and soakaways were recorded by digital photography and, where appropriate, by measured drawing at a scale of 1:20. All contexts were given a unique identifying number and any finds were given a unique finds code.
- 5.3 All disarticulated human remains were collected together and placed in the charge of the appropriate church authorities for reburial. Intact burials were recorded in situ, their position marked on the site plan and recorded by scale drawing and digital photography. Once any intact burials had been identified and recorded they were then left in situ without any further disturbance.

6. Results

6.1 Area 1 soakaway (Fig. 2, Fig.3)

- 6.1.1 A soakaway 1.7m x 1.7m x 1.4m in size was hand excavated within Area 1. The recorded stratigraphy was as follows: the area was sealed by topsoil (0100), a dark greyish brown loam to a depth of 200mm which overlaid subsoil (0101) comprising yellowish brown silty clay to a depth of 500mm. Below (0101) a layer of yellow clay (0102) was revealed to a minimum depth of 1000mm.
- 6.1.2 At the base of the excavation a human skull was revealed. There was no clearly visible grave cut but the skull has been interpreted as part of an intact burial and was not subjected to any further disturbance.
- 6.1.3 There were no artefacts or other datable material revealed as a result of the excavation.

6.2 Area 2 Soakaway (Fig. 2, Fig. 4)

- 6.2.1 A soakaway 1.9m x 1.9m x 1.5m in size was hand excavated within Area 2. Topsoil (0200), a dark greyish brown loam to a depth of 100mm, overlaid subsoil (0201) which was comprised of a grey friable loam with limestone inclusions to a depth of 100mm. Beneath this a layer of yellow sandy silt (0202) 420mm in depth and containing limestone fragments was observed. (0202) overlaid a deposit of grey silty loam (0203), which was interpreted as buried topsoil 190mm in depth. Below (0203) was a layer of yellowish brown silty clay (0204) which was 640mm in depth and which in turn overlaid (0205), a deposit of yellow sand with limestone inclusions with a minimum depth of 80mm.
- 6.2.1 The exposed sections of Area 2 revealed a stratigraphy that showed signs of significant landscaping. This is probably related to ground levelling associated with aligning the churchyard boundary with the current road immediately to the east of the church. This is particularly evidenced by the position of (0203), a layer of buried topsoil, in the stratigraphic sequence.

6.2.2 A coffin board was uncovered 80mm from the base of (0204). There were no other coffin fragments or fittings observed and no indications of an intact skeleton associated with the board. It is likely that this is a redeposited artefact resulting from ground disturbance in the immediate area.

6.2.3 There were no artefacts or other datable material revealed as a result of the excavation.

6.3 Area 3 Soakaway (Fig. 2, Fig. 5)

6.3.1 A soakaway 1.9m x1.9m x 1.5 m in size was hand excavated in Area 3. The recorded stratigraphy was as follows: topsoil (0300), a dark greyish brown loam 400mm in depth, overlaid (0301), a friable greyish brown loam subsoil 100mm in depth. Beneath this was a layer of yellowish brown sandy clay (0302) 600mm in depth overlaying (0306), a yellowish brown silty loam. At the base of the excavation a layer of decayed limestone, (0307) was revealed to an observed depth of 400mm.

6.3.2 In the southern extent of the excavation part of a grave ([0303]) was observed. Within this an upper fill (0305) comprising a soft black loam overlaid (0304) a brown silty loam. There was no sign of a skeleton associated with [0303] and the likelihood is that the excavation disturbed only the edge of a grave, leaving the remainder of its contents undisturbed.

6.3.3 There were no artefacts or other datable material revealed as a result of the excavation.

6.4 Area 4 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2)

6.4.1 A drainage trench was hand excavated for a length of approximately 26m on the north side of the church, oriented north-east to south-west. Its north-easterly extent connected with the soakaway in Area 1.

6.4.2 The trench was excavated to an average depth of 350mm. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil (0401), a dark greyish brown loam with an average depth of 200mm which overlaid subsoil (0402), comprised of a yellowish brown silty clay of which a minimum depth of 150mm was observed.

6.4.3 There were no artefacts or other dating material revealed as a result of the excavation.

6.5 Area 5 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2)

6.5.1 A drainage trench was hand excavated for approximately 30m along the south side of the church, oriented east to west. Its eastern extent connected with the Area 3 soakaway.

6.5.2 The trench was excavated to an average depth of 400mm. The stratigraphic sequence consisted of a dark greyish brown loam topsoil (0500) with an average depth of 230mm which overlaid subsoil (0501), composed of yellowish brown silty clay. At the western extent of Area 5 burnt layer (0502) was observed situated between the topsoil (0500), and the subsoil (0501). This layer probably represents the occasions in the 19th and 20th centuries when the church was badly affected by fire.

6.5.3 There were no artefacts or other dating material revealed as a result of the excavation.

6.6 Area 06 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2)

6.6.1 A drainage trench oriented north-east to south-west was hand excavated between the eastern corner of the nave and the southern corner of the chancel over a distance of approximately 12m.

6.6.2 The trench was excavated to an average depth of 430mm. At the south-western extent of Area 6 the following stratigraphy was recorded. The trench was sealed by topsoil (0600) which consisted of a dark greyish brown loam 200mm in depth. This overlaid (0601), a yellowish brown silty clay with a minimum depth of 230mm.

6.6.3 At the north-eastern extent of Area 6 the excavations impacted upon the backfill of a modern drainage pipe. The backfill, (0602), comprised a well-mixed deposit of both (0600) and (0601) containing inclusions of brick and mortar rubble.

6.6.4 There were no artefacts or other dating material revealed as a result of the excavation.

6.7 Area 7 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2)

6.7.1 A drainage trench 21m in length and oriented east to west was hand excavated within Area 7. At its eastern extent it connected with the Area 2 soakaway.

6.7.2 The trench was excavated to an average depth of 450mm. Topsoil (0700), a dark greyish brown loam with an average depth of 230mm overlaid subsoil (0701) which consisted of a yellowish brown silty clay observed to a minimum depth of 270mm.

6.7.3 There were no artefacts or other dating material revealed as a result of the excavation.

6.8 Area 8 Drainage Trench (Fig. 2, Plate 7.)

6.8.1 A drainage trench 19m in length and oriented north to south was hand excavated along the eastern wall of the chancel.

6.8.2 The trench was excavated to an average depth of 420mm. The following stratigraphy was recorded: Topsoil (0800), a dark greyish brown loam 200mm in depth overlaid the subsoil (0801) which was comprised of a brownish yellow silty clay to a minimum depth of 220mm.

6.8.3 There were no artefacts or other dating material revealed as a result of the excavation.

6.9 Human Remains

A quantity of disarticulated human remains was recovered from each area of the excavation. These were collected together and left with the appropriate authorities for reburial. No remains were removed from the site.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The monitoring of the intrusive ground works associated with the drainage scheme offered only limited opportunities for the observation and recording of archaeological deposits and features.

7.2 None of the groundwork was close enough to the fabric of the church to reveal the below-ground construction of the building, or to allow any observations to be made regarding its phasing or the existence of earlier structures on the site. Similarly there was no opportunity to observe the existence or otherwise of graves below the current church walls.

7.3 Two possible intact burials were recorded in Area 1 and Area 3. Both of these are likely to date to the post-Medieval period. No remains were uncovered that appear to relate to the Medieval period.

7.4 Disarticulated human remains were recovered from every area of the excavations. These are likely to have originated in graves that had been disturbed by later inhumations and/or previous drainage works in the churchyard.

8. Bibliography

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Appendix I: Context Register

Context	Depth	Description
0100	200mm	Topsoil: grey-brown loam
0101	500mm	Subsoil layer: yellow-brown silty clay
0102	600-1000mm observed	Subsoil layer: yellow clay
0200	100mm	Topsoil: grey-brown loam
0201	100mm	Subsoil layer: grey loam
0202	600mm	Subsoil layer: yellow sandy silt with >60% limestone fragment inclusions
0203	200mm	Subsoil layer: grey silty loam
0300	200 – 400mm	Topsoil: grey brown loam
0301	100mm	Subsoil layer: grey loam
0302	600mm	Subsoil layer: yellow brown sandy clay
0303	n/a	Cut of grave fill (0304) (0305)
0304	200mm	Fill: brown silty loam
0305	200mm	Fill: black loam
0306	100 – 400mm	Subsoil layer: brown loam
0307	200 – 400mm observed	Subsoil layer: yellow sand with limestone fragment inclusions
0400	200mm	Topsoil: grey-brown loam
0401	100mm	
0402	n/a	Cut of grave fill (0403)
0403	1000mm observed	Fill: brown-yellow clay
0404	n/a	Cut of grave fill (0405)
0405	1100mm observed	Fill: brown-yellow clay
0406	300mm	Subsoil layer: yellow-brown sandy clay
0407	900mm	Subsoil layer: yellow clay

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 1: Area 1 soakaway showing the human skull at the base

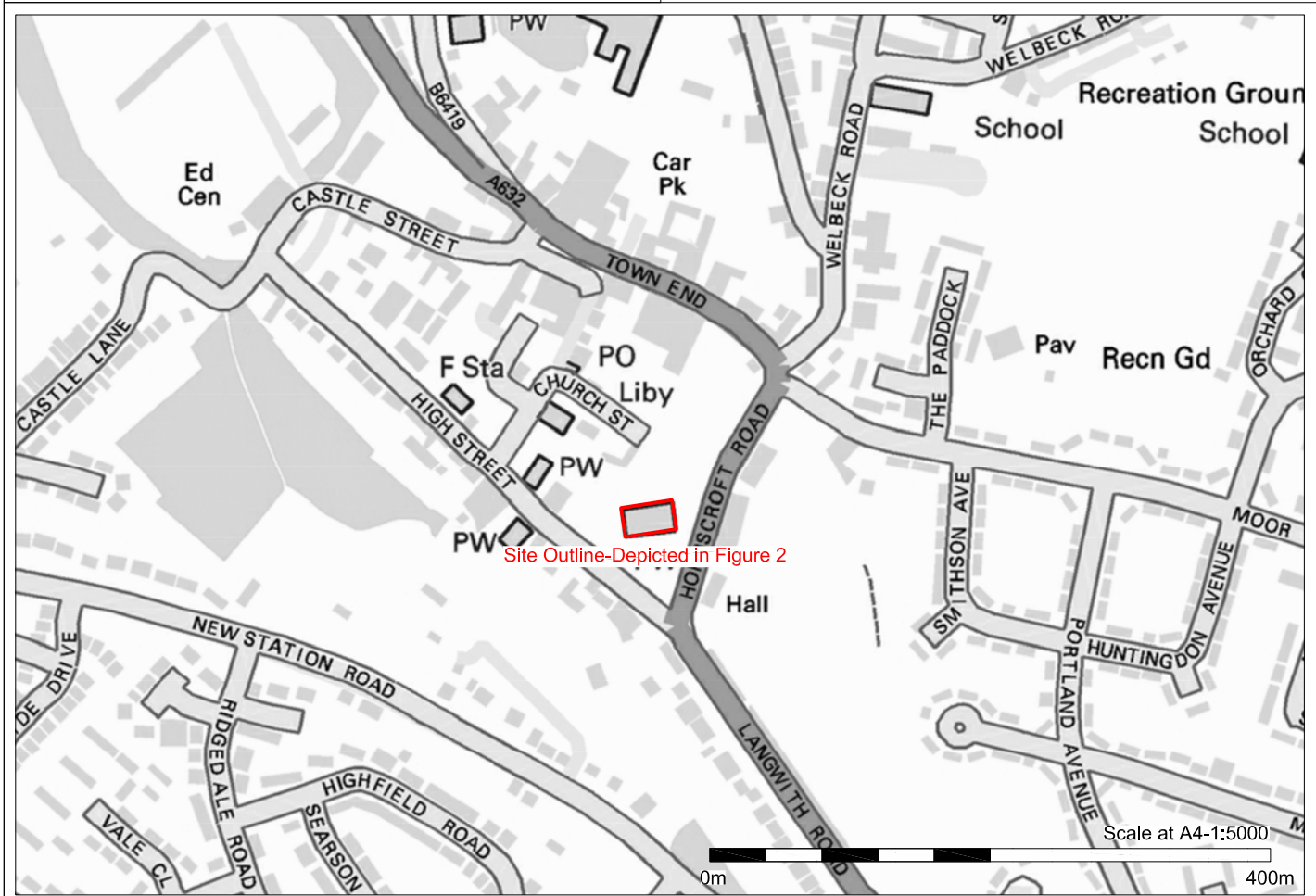
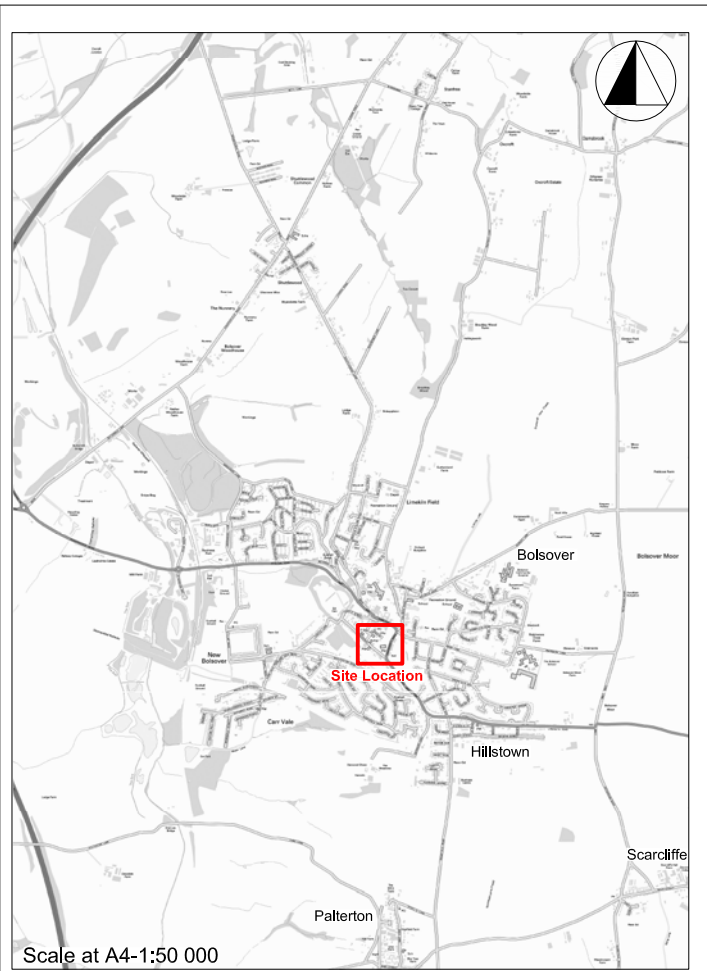
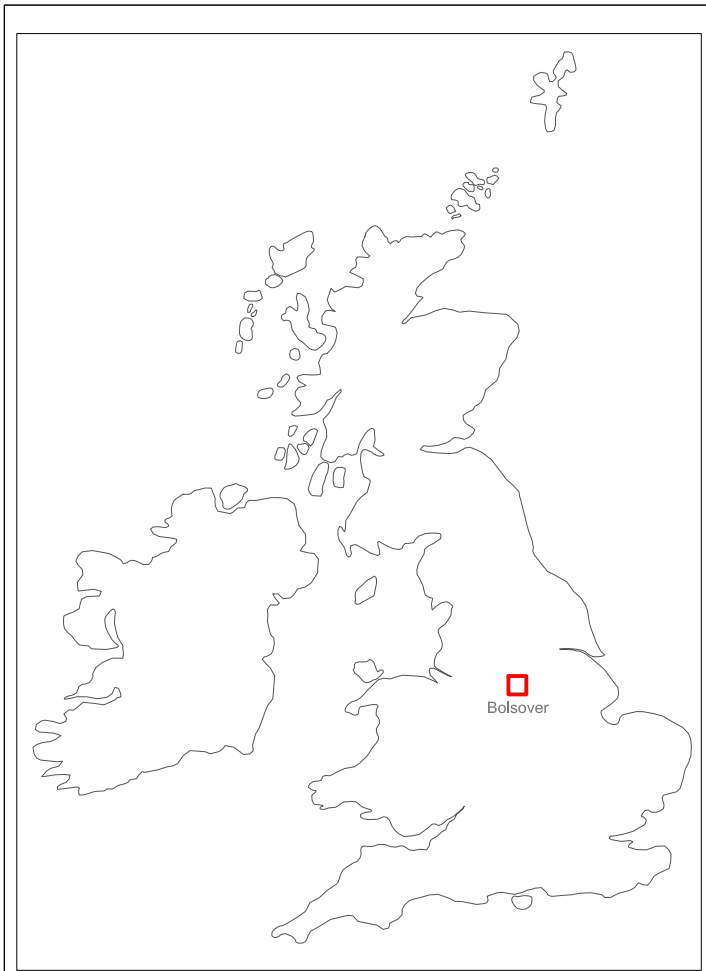


Plate 2: Area 2 showing the coffin board visible within the section



Plate 3: View of the drainage trench running alongside the church

Appendix 3: Figures

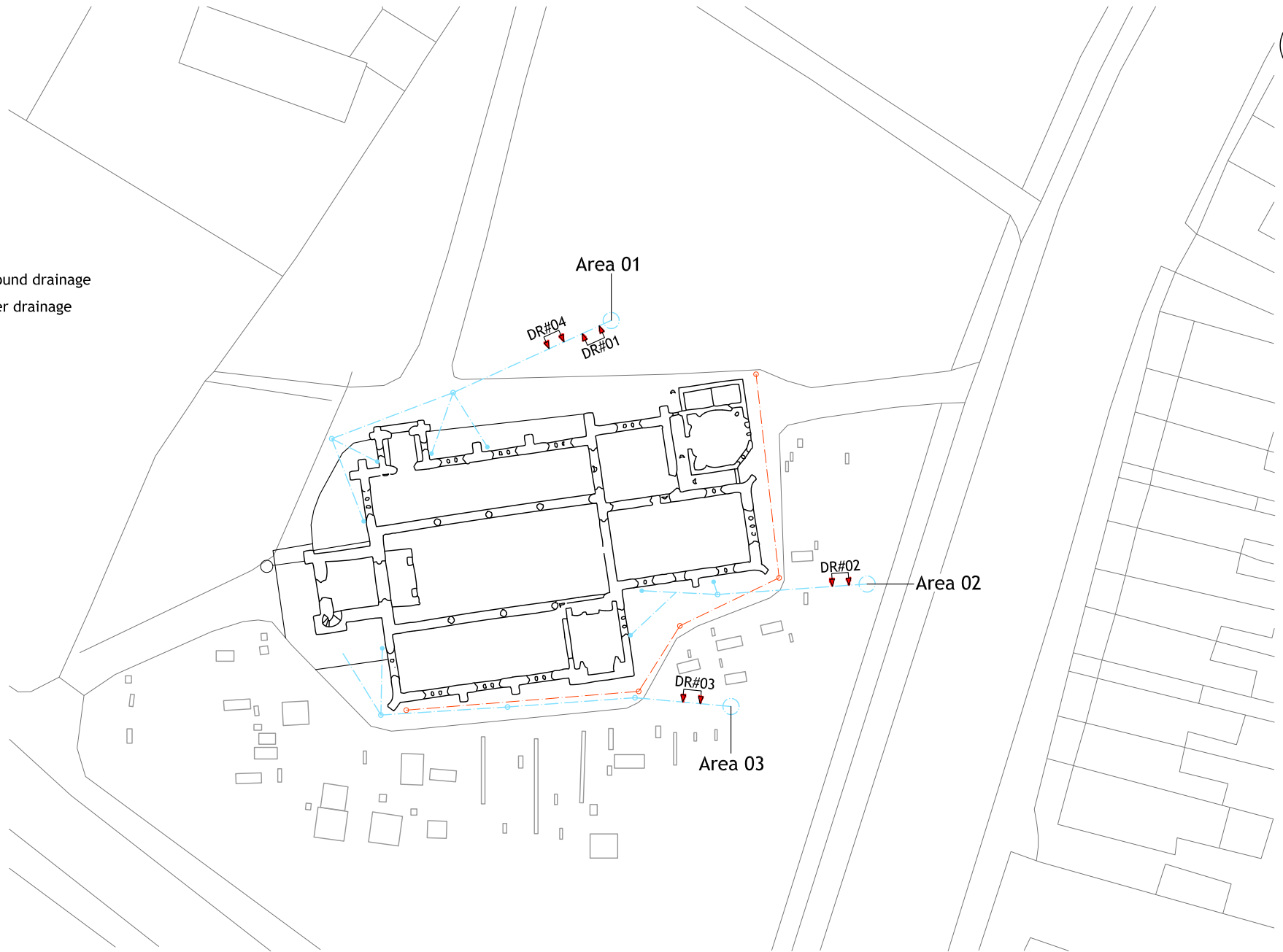




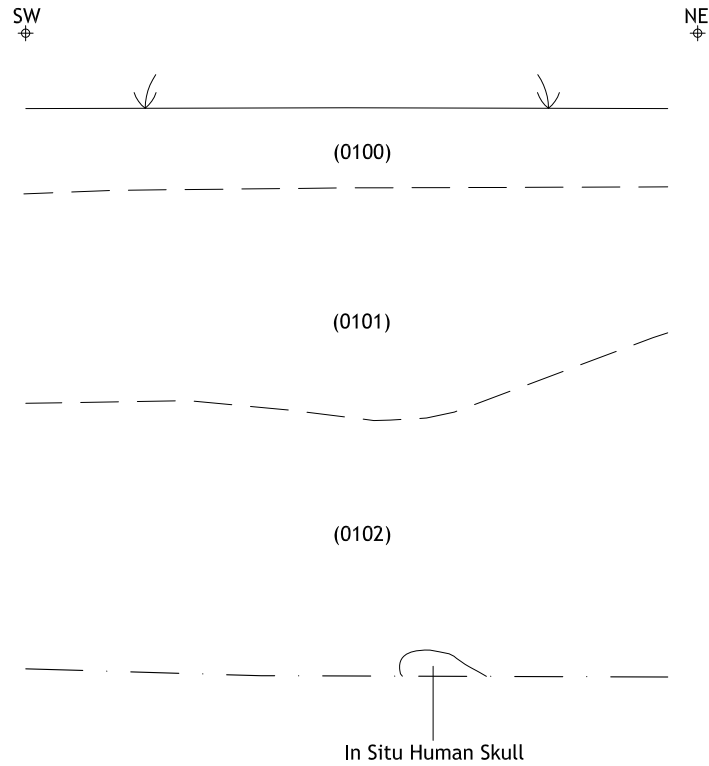
Key:

--- Below ground drainage

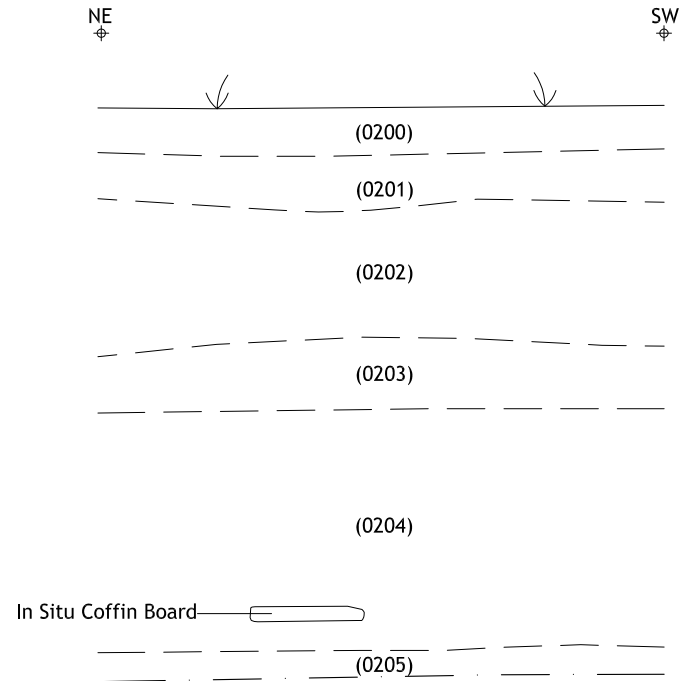
--- Foul water drainage



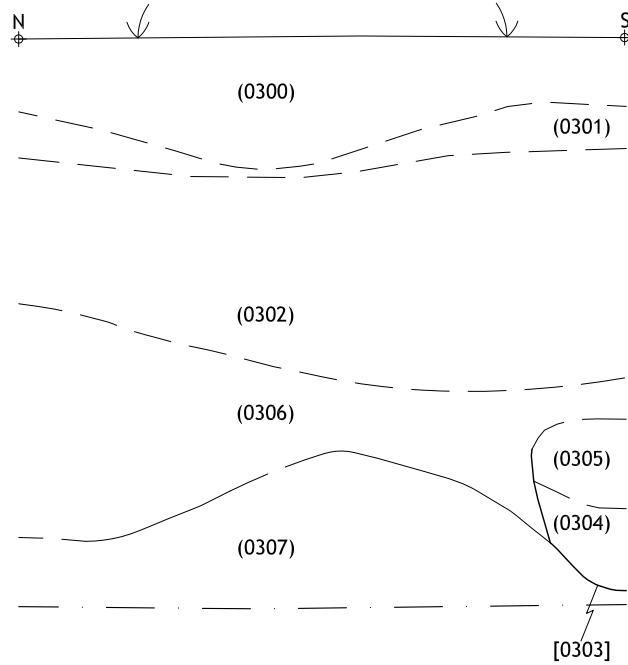
DR #01
South East Facing Section of Area 01



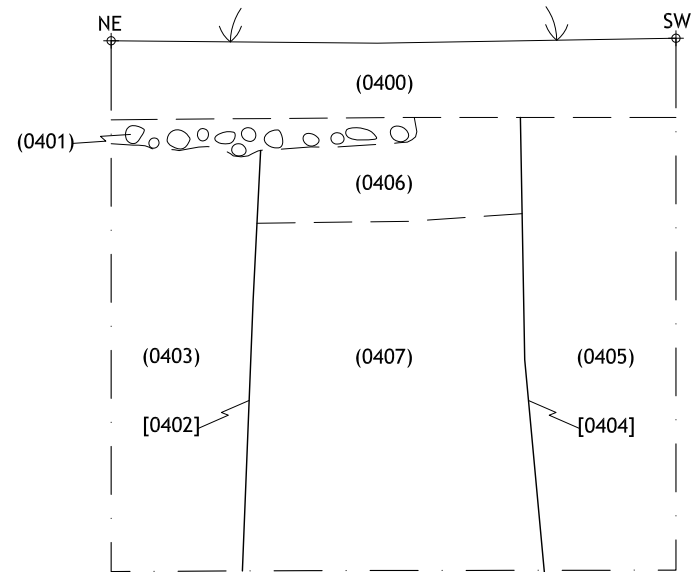
DR #02
South West Facing Section of Area 02



DR #03
South West Facing Section of Area 03



DR #04
South West Facing Section of Area 01



Appendix 4: Oasis Form

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OASIS ID: trentpea1-274349

Project details

Project name	Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at the Church of St. Mary and St. Laurence, Bolsover
Short description of the project	Trent and Peak Archaeology was contracted by Peter Rogan Associates to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the Church of St. Mary and St. Laurence, in Bolsover. The archaeological watching brief covered all intrusive groundwork comprising the hand excavation of five drainage trenches and three soakaways, all within the confines of the church yard. Two intact burials were observed in Areas 1 and 3 but the depth at which they were revealed strongly suggested a post-Medieval date for their deposition. Disarticulated human remains were encountered in all of the excavated areas. These were left with the appropriate church authorities for reburial. No human remains were removed from the site. No finds were revealed as a result of the excavation that would assist in dating any of the recorded layers.
Project dates	Start: 24-05-2016 End: 25-05-2016
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	MLB1 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	100/2016 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	CHURCH Medieval
Significant Finds	HUMAN REMAINS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	COFFIN Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Listed Building Consent

Project location

Country	England
Site location	DERBYSHIRE BOLSOVER OLD BOLSOVER The Church of St. Mary and St. Laurence, Bolsover
Postcode	S44 6HB

Study area 0 Square metres
 Site coordinates SK 47447 70303 53.227366060179 -1.289187476967 53 13 38 N 001 17 21 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Trent and Peak Archaeology
 Project brief originator Development Control Archaeologist
 Project design originator Laurence Platt
 Project director/manager Edmund Taylor
 Project supervisor Laurence Platt
 Type of sponsor/funding body Diocese

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient Derbyshire HER
 Digital Contents "none"
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 Paper Archive recipient Trent and Peak Archaeology
 Paper Contents "none"
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