

6.85m west of the south-east corner of the south aisle there was seen in the base and north-facing section of the trench, a mixture of light brown mortar, pinkish-brown mortar and mid reddish-brown sandy silt containing large pieces of limestone (2032; Pl. 3). The nature and position of this deposit, coupled with pictorial evidence, suggests that this deposit may represent the robbed foundations of another buttress with a maximum width of 1.4m. Both of these robbed buttresses can be seen on one of the few surviving images of the church, before its major rebuild, and offer further evidence of its original form.



Plate 3 Eastern robbed buttress (2032), looking north-west

Between the remains of the buttresses, approximately 7.7m west of the south-east corner of the south aisle wall a pair of articulated feet (2030) was observed in the north-facing section of the drain trench. They appeared to belong to a burial aligned east-west with its head to the west. Parts of an articulated skeleton were seen in the north facing side of the drain trench at approximately 9.2m from the south-east corner of the south aisle wall. Much of this lay beyond the edge of the trench but most of the right arm, leg and foot (2033) was recorded as well as part of the pelvis which suggested that it was a female body. These are all parts of the same person. A possible grave backfill was identified. It was a loose, friable, reddish-brown sandy silt (2031). Fragmentary remains of the coffin from this burial indicated that it had been decorated with a series of copper alloy tacks. Comparable coffin furniture is seen in the first half of the 18th century. At roughly 9.7m west of the south-east corner of the south aisle wall two superimposed skulls (2034) were observed in the north-facing side of the new drain trench. The upper skull had been badly crushed, probably by the construction of the

drain under replacement. It was not possible to ascertain whether these skulls were in-situ but their proximity may suggest at least one of them is not.

At the junction of the east porch wall and the south aisle wall the foundations were observed in some detail. The south aisle wall foundations (2037), of mortared gritstone, were stepped out by c.0.1m in the first below ground course and by an extra c.0.15m in the second. Within these foundations was a re-used carved and plastered stone (2041) of indeterminate form. The porch foundations (2038), also of mortared gritstone, were stepped out c.0.45m in two below ground steps and it was clearly seen that they butted the south aisle wall. At least two other stone blocks adjacent to the porch / south aisle may have been part of the foundations but this could not be clearly demonstrated.

The latest deposit seen, in the north-facing side of the new trench, was the current modern ground surface which was composed of dark, slightly reddish, brown sand with occasional stone fragments, slate, brick and mortar capped with grass (2040).

5.3 The South-Western Soakaway, Drain Run and Gutter Replacement (Fig. 4)

The soakaway was located c.5m south-west of the south-west corner of the porch. Originally it was to be circular in plan, c.2m across, but this was not possible due to the presence of a stone-flagged path at the desired soakaway location. It was therefore made rectangular, c.1.8m x 1.6m but this was later extended to c.1.8m x 2.15m. The maximum depth was c.0.7m in the main part of the excavation and c.0.6m in the extension. In all cases where articulated human remains were encountered it could be shown or inferred that, unless stated, the skeleton had been aligned east-west and the head lay to the west.

The earliest deposit seen in the soakaway was a firm, mid to dark reddish-brown sandy silt (3000), possibly the natural subsoil. Although no grave cuts were positively identified, the remains of two human skeletons were noted at this level. Towards the northern corner of the excavation were the legs and feet of an adult (3019). The lower legs had been cut away by a later modern service trench and the feet had also been partly truncated by another feature. Towards the western corner of the trench were the legs and part of the pelvis of a possible juvenile (3022), also truncated by the service trench. Both inhumations appeared to be extended and supine.

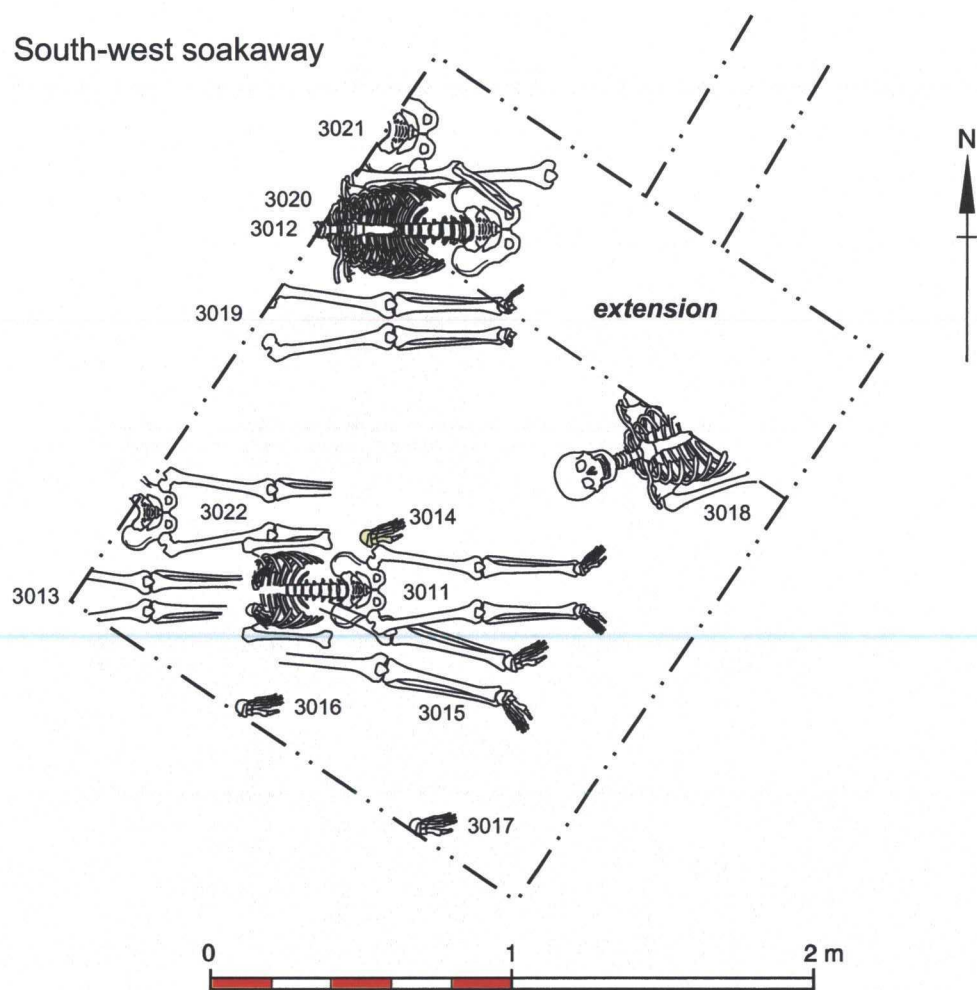


Fig. 4 Burials in the south-western soakaway

Both 3019 and 3022 were probably sealed by a disturbed accumulation deposit of graveyard soil, a firm, mid, slightly reddish, brown sandy silt with occasional flecks of white mortar (3001). Probably over 3001 was the articulated upper part, ribs, spine and skull of an extended supine burial (3018) aligned east-north-east / west-south-west. It lay towards the eastern corner of the trench and may have been an adult male. Some damage to the skull was noted, possibly a result of root action. There was also evidence for iron coffin handles, probably of 18th century date or later, implying a coffin but no trace was seen. Possibly later than 3018, and protruding from the south-west side of the trench, was an articulated foot (3017) believed to belong to an adult. Approximately 0.5m north-west of 3017 was another articulated foot (3016). Although approximately contemporary with 3017, and probably belonging to an adult, the distance between them suggested that they belonged to separate burials.

Probably later than 3016 and 3017 was a partial skeleton consisting of the articulated thigh bones, lower legs and feet (3015) of an adult. It had been truncated by a modern service trench but appeared to have originally been an extended supine burial. Possibly slightly later than 3015 was an isolated, but articulated, adult foot (3014). Any more of this particular burial seemed to have been removed during the excavation of modern service trenches. Thought to be slightly later than 3014 was a pair of articulated lower legs and feet (3013) located in the west corner of the trench. Probably later than 3013, and situated in the northern corner of the soakaway was a partial burial consisting of an articulated spine and ribs (3012). Much of this burial lay beyond the trench edges but enough was seen of it to suggest a supine extended body. Possibly contemporary with 3012, and seen in the north-eastern extension of the soakaway and disappearing into the north-west limit of excavation was an articulated spine and ribs with a pelvis (3020). The lower part of this inhumation appears to have been completely removed by modern services. Possibly contemporary with 3020, and possibly 3012 in the original area of the soakaway, was a right leg bone (3021) of an adult. No more of this was seen since excavation ceased at this level in the extension to the soakaway. Probably the latest burial to be encountered was a juvenile (3011), badly disturbed by a modern service trench. The skull and upper chest were missing but most of the rest of this burial was recorded indicating that it was supine and extended.

As noted, Burial 3011 and many of the earlier inhumations, had been truncated or disturbed by a modern service trench (3005) of uncertain shape and size, but aligned north-east / south-west. It was probably c.0.25m across and 0.6m deep. In the base of it were two modern metal pipes (3006), one c.15mm in diameter and the other c.50mm in diameter. The trench they were in had been backfilled with a mid reddish-brown sandy silt with occasional mortar (3007). Probably, but not definitely, earlier than 3005 was another linear cut (3002) also aligned north-east / south-west. Again it was not possible to be certain of its size and shape, but it was at least 0.2m wide and 0.35m deep. Within the base was a ceramic field drain pipe (3003). The backfill was a firm, mid reddish-brown sandy silt (3004). Above these backfilled features was a disturbed accumulation deposit of mid-brownish-red sandy silt with frequent roots and occasional lenses of mid grey silt (3008). Overlying 3008 were a number of patches or spots of pale brown cement (3009) which formed the bedding deposit for the uppermost context in this area, the pathway of gritstone slabs (3010), each 60 – 80mm thick.

The drain run connecting the soakaway to the new gully along the west side of the church porch was c.0.3m wide and c.0.5m deep. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted during the digging of the drain run which went through somewhat disturbed mid reddish-brown sandy silt containing occasional disarticulated bone (3023).

Prior to the insertion of a new gutter immediately to the west of the porch two test holes were dug to locate services, one at the south-west corner of the porch and the other at the junction between the west wall of the porch and the wall of the south aisle. Each was c.0.5m x 0.5m and up to 0.6m deep. Little was found within these holes except that the foundations of the church in this area appeared to be the same as to the east of the porch and that the area close to the church walls had been very badly disturbed by the insertion of modern services and possibly other activity. The new gutter, immediately adjacent to the west porch and south aisle walls was c.0.6m wide and 0.6m deep. Little of significance was encountered along its length the material excavated being a friable, mid-brownish-grey sandy silt with moderate amounts of stone rubble and small fragments of brick and occasional lumps of mortar/cement (3024). This seemed to confirm that the area had been very heavily disturbed in relatively recent times.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The work described above encountered a large number of burials, many of which were heavily disturbed burials. They appeared to range in date from the 12th century through to the 19th century. The earliest may be of similar date to the latest burials found nearby in the NAA excavations at Village Farm in June and July 2001. In this case there may for a period have been two active burial grounds locally, although it is likely that the church cemetery came into use as the Village Farm cemetery was abandoned. The earliest fabric in the church is, as noted above, 12th century, but it is not known if there was an earlier church on the present site. The most remarkable burial feature was a stone coffin (2035) against the south wall of the nave, a location fitting for an inhumation of high status. The form of the coffin suggests this burial was probably 13th century in date and may give an indication of the date of the original, medieval south aisle against which it was placed. The relatively high status of other burials south of the church may be indicated by the presence of wooden coffins.

It was immediately apparent that the rebuild of the nave and aisles in 1855 had caused a great deal of disturbance to the earlier church structure, but the location of the site of two robbed buttresses has added a little evidence to knowledge of it and confirms evidence in early views.

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