

PLATES 3 AND 4



Detail of relocated sarcophagus plinth and foundations of in-situ funerary monument.

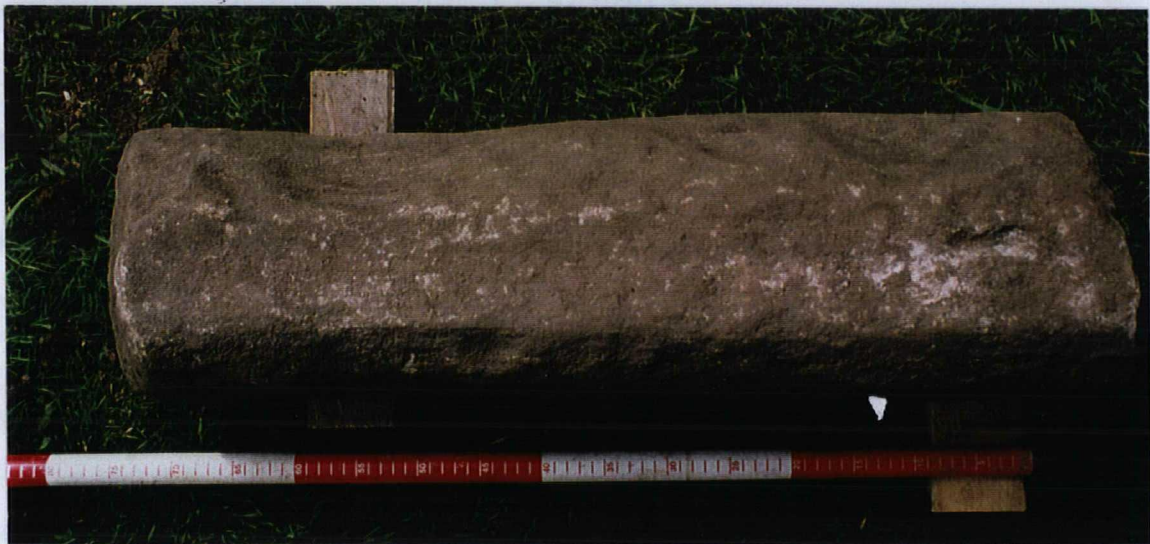


Typical stratigraphy across the site, Trench A, west facing section.

PLATES 5, 6 AND 7



General site location on completion of foundation trench excavations.



Detail of re-used dressed stone fragment from the sarcophagus plinth.



manner the stratigraphy may have been complicated by a profusion of inter-cutting grave cuts.

Natural sub soil was identified towards the base of the three trench excavations at 1.10m below the existing ground level. This yellow orange brown sand was coarse and contained a moderate quantity of inclusions dominated by water worn gravels with occasional lenses of grey blue silty sandy clay. The layer had not been previously disturbed.

The sub soil was sealed by an interface of medium brown sandy clay. The surface of this layer was identified at 0.94m below the existing ground level. The layer moist with a plastic consistency and contained a low quantity of inclusions that were well mixed throughout the layer. The layer had been cut and disturbed during the excavation of graves.

The sub soil interface was sealed by the layer of disturbed ground / grave fill. This layer of medium yellow brown silty loamy clay was moist and well compacted with a low quantity of inclusions. The layer has the overall appearance of re-deposited sub soil interface. Suspended within the layer were the majority of the articulated burials identified during the works. The layer also contained a moderate quantity of de-articulated fragments of human bone. The human remains were representative of most of the more robust areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. These small broken fragments were found to be in poor condition and water saturated. The breakages and fractures were not the result of trauma but were attributable to post mortem damage. It is likely that the excavation of the 19th century graves within the immediate area was responsible for disturbing earlier, unmarked, graves that were almost certainly representative of a more than one burial.

A 0.14m deep layer of topsoil sealed the disturbed ground. This dark brown loam was relatively dry and well compacted. The topsoil contained a low quantity of inclusions that were well mixed throughout the layer.

A drainage feature was identified within Trench A. The 0.90m deep trench had a rounded V shaped profile and was filled with a single deposit of hardcore chippings. The trench was aligned north west. It would appear that the trench has been recently excavated forming a soakaway to facilitate the discharge of top surface water from the Chapter House.

Structural Features:

It had been suspected that these works would have exposed the continuation of the surface identified within the previous works, this was not the case. Rather the structural remains were funerary monuments. Both features were identified beneath the topsoil, suggesting that they had been exposed in the 1950's.

The sarcophagus plinth measured 1.68m x 0.88m x 0.18m and was constructed out of four worked sandstone elements, two end stones and two side members. The plinth was rectangular in planform with a chamfered edge. The four elements of the structure had been arranged to form a socket or mortise. The surface of the funerary monument had a smooth dressed finish, with some indication of having been naturally weathered this had resulted in the softening of all edges. The upper surface of the structure was found to be encrusted with a 5mm deep coating of lime based mortar. The distribution of lime would suggest that the monument had been placed across the entire upper surface. It would appear that the monument had been prised off the plinth damaging the inside edge of the socket. The plinth was aligned east and its surface was sloping down to the north on a moderate gradient, with its surface being 0.10m below the existing ground level. This configuration would indicate that the plinth was not arranged or positioned in its intended location, rather it would seem likely that it had been exposed and moved during the construction of the 1955 single storey extension and thereafter allowed to settle into its recently backfilled foundation trench. In order to achieve the required depth of excavation for the proposed oversite concrete and sub base it was necessary to remove the plinth. Prior to the careful dismantling of the feature, the topsoil was excavated from the socket. It was confirmed that the joints between the four elements were filled with a lime-based mortar, and packed in places with sandstone wedges. Three of the structural elements were stylistically similar and appeared to be contemporary. However, the northern side member differed from the others in having a highly weathered inner and outer surface. Upon detailed inspection it was revealed that this element of the structure had originated from another architectural detail, possibly, a short lintol from a mullion window. Following the removal of the structure it was confirmed that the plinth had been bedded on topsoil, further supporting a recent date for its relocation.

A second structural feature was identified to the immediate south of the sarcophagus plinth. The linear arrangement of placed stones were characteristic of the foundations of a non load-bearing wall. However, on detailed inspection it was revealed to be the foundations of a funerary monument. The structure measured 1.20m x 1.50m x 0.20m. The monument was aligned east and its surface was identified at 0.13m below the existing ground level. It was confirmed that the southern side of the structure had been previously exposed during the recent exhumation of the two burials when it was interpreted as a possible paved path. The structure actually consisted of two skins of roughly dressed sandstone slabs with vertical external faces. The surface of the slabs sloped down and inwards to the wall core. Many voids were noted within the fabric. A white lime based mortar had been applied to its northern elevation and surface. In order to achieve the required depth of excavation for the proposed oversite concrete and sub base it was necessary to remove the foundations. On the removal of same it was noted that the structure was bedded on the layer of disturbed grave fill. In attempting to establish a date for the monument it was confirmed that the coarse red sand deposit identified to the immediate south of same had been cut to form the foundation. Furthermore, as the coarse red sand post dated the interment of the, above mentioned, late 18th century / early 19th century burials it would appear that the funerary monument is associated with a early to mid 19th century burial. The remains of this burial were not disturbed during these works.

During the removal of the remaining turf and topsoil, (Area B) a similar arrangement of masonry was identified 1.60m to the immediate east north east. Two sandstone slabs measuring approximately 0.90m x 0.28m x 0.11m were bedded level at 0.10m below the topsoil. The stone fragments were bedded within a lens of yellow builders sand. The sand was spread across the central and northern areas of the site, sealed by the topsoil and overlying the disturbed ground / grave fill. Whilst the size and form of these masonry fragments are comparable to the adjacent funerary monument foundations, it is suspected that their present location can be attributed to disturbance associated with the 1955 building programme.

The Burials:

In total 19 burials were encountered during the machine trench excavations. The inhumations were all identified at approximately 1.0m below the existing ground level. The burials were all aligned / facing east and arranged in the supine position. It would appear that the burials reflect a single period of interment, interpreted to be the mid 19th century. With the exception of one burial all were adults. A small number of the exhumations had been disturbed and damaged by post-mortem excavations. These disturbed burials had been intentionally grouped and arranged. This may be indicative of kinship burials. The remains were representative of most of the more robust areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. The majority of the bone was found to be in poor condition and water saturated.

Many of the burials were found together with decayed wood, iron plate, nails and cast iron coffin handles. The handles were all of one type and design, ball hinged with leaf motif and were painted black.

A small quantity de-articulated bone was identified within the surrounding disturbed ground/grave fill; it would seem likely that these remains derived from an earlier phase of burial, possibly medieval / Post Medieval.

Groundworks for the drainage trenches:

Two drainage runs were excavated. These were excavated some time after the conclusion of the foundation groundworks. As often is the case, the archaeologist was not notified of the commencement of the first of these drainage works and subsequently the excavation went unrecorded.

It has since been established that this top water drain was excavated in a south west direction, discharging into the fresh water stream that runs along the western boundary of the churchyard. I understand that this excavation was narrow and shallow and that no burials or bone fragments were encountered during its excavation.

The archaeologist monitored the excavation of the foul water drain. Due to difficulties in achieving the required invert, the line of the trench was diverted to the north west of the site. The trench measured 18m x 0.30m x 0.70m and was excavated by hand. The trench was excavated from the north west corner of the new extension towards the pedestrian gated access into the churchyard. The trench was situated adjacent to the southern kerb of the principal entrance path to the church. Every attempt was made to avoid known burials. The dates of these burials have been established from surviving headstones and range from 1775 – 1837.

The Stratigraphy:

The hand excavations exposed a simple sequence of deposits; these were dominated by a topsoil (Natural Sub soil was not encountered during these works). The dark brown sandy loam was moist and loosely compacted. The layer contained a moderate quantity of inclusions. It would appear that this layer was indigenous to the site and had not been imported onto site, in recent years, for landscaping purposes. During the excavation of this deposit, three burials were identified. The layer also contained a small quantity of de-articulated fragments of human bone. The human remains were representative of most of the more robust areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. These small broken fragments were found to be in poor condition and water saturated. The breakages and fractures were not the result of trauma but were attributable to post mortem damage. It is likely that the excavation of the 19th century graves within the immediate area was responsible for disturbing earlier, unmarked, graves that were almost certainly representative of more than one burial.

The Burials:

In total three burials were disturbed during the excavation of the foul water drain. The burials were identified between 0.42 – 0.50m below the existing ground level. Each of the burials had been previously disturbed and as such, the remains were de-articulated. The alignment and orientation of the burials could not be established. It is suspected that these remains pre date the internment of the adjacent early 19th century burials. It is likely that the 19th inhumations were responsible for displacing the earlier burials. Once again, the remains were representative of most areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. The majority of the bone was found to be in a moderate condition.

CONCLUSION

The recent archaeological watching brief conducted by Mr.K.J.Cale on behalf of St.Robert's Parochial Church Council, identified six main phases of activity on the site, namely:-

- i. The gradual accumulation and repeated disturbance of a silty loamy clay across the entire site. It would appear that this layer may have originally been the interface onto the natural sub soil, but as a result of successive burials on the site, dating back over a period of over 900 hundred years, the layer has both increased in depth and has become heavily disturbed.
- ii. Medieval / Post Medieval burials. None of which were positively identified during the recent works. However, it is likely that a significant proportion of the de-articulated bone derives from disturbed burials that date to this period.
- iii. The deposition / accumulation of topsoil within the western extent of the site.
- iv. Mid 19th century burials. These were identified across the entire study area. The majority of these inhumations appeared to have been contained within coffins. It would appear that many of these burials were marked with no more than a wooden cross. Although evidence of a single in-situ masonry funerary monument was identified.
- v. The construction of a single storey extension in 1955. The groundworks for which almost certainly resulted in the disturbance of other burials and the displacement of funerary monuments into the study area. This programme of works was also responsible for the installation of a surface water drain and the formation of the existing ground levels.
- vi. The construction of the Chapter House in 1977 resulted in the excavation of a drainage trench across the study area that functions as a soakaway for top water. The excavation of the trench impacted on the burials across the site.

The recent programme of excavation generated a moderate quantity of human bone, these were carefully removed, by hand, from the excavation trench and placed into a storage container. On the conclusion of works, on the instruction of the acting Rector of St.Robert's the remains were placed within the base of the trench excavations within immediate proximity to those remains that were left undisturbed.

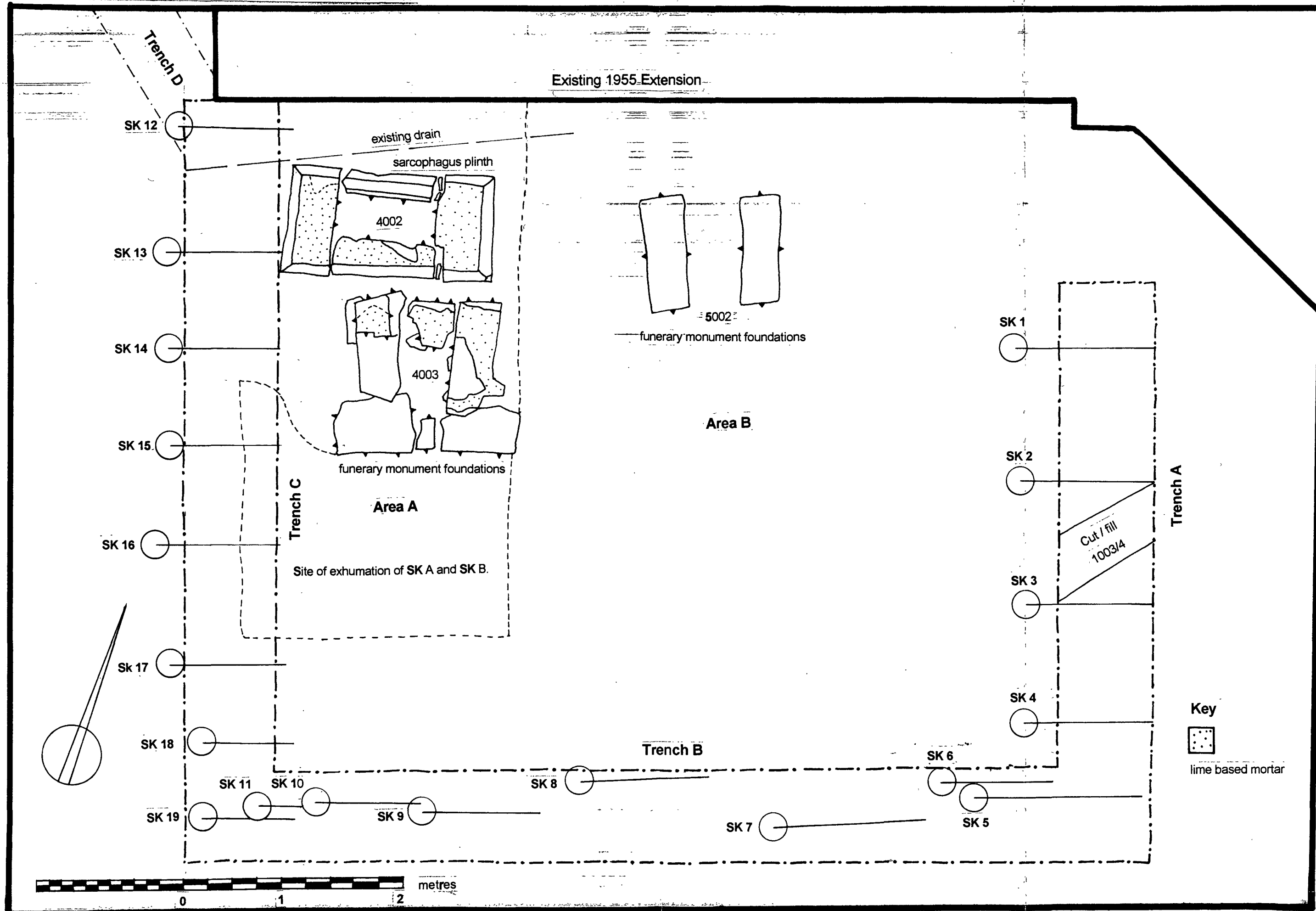
A very small quantity of finds were identified during the watching brief these included late 19th century pottery, glass and metalwork, none of which was recovered or removed from site. The metalwork from the coffins was placed in suitable containers and reburied along side the skeletal remains.

Kevin John Cale

April 2000

FIGURE 2

SITE PLAN



APPENDIX A

TRENCH EXCAVATIONS

Foundation Trench Excavations

Trench A

Type: Foundation: strip: machine
N.G.R: 43640 45170

Length: 4.3 metres
Width: 0.90 metres
Depth: 1.30 metres

Planform: Liner
Aligned: North North West
Area: 3.87 square metres

Context No's: 1000 - 1006
Plate No: 4 - 5
Fig. No: 2

The trench was excavated to contain the concrete foundations for the east elevation of the proposed extension. The existing ground levels slope very gently downwards to the south. On the removal of the turf (1000) the trench was excavated into a layer of topsoil (context 1001).

The dark brown (7.5YR4/3) layer of loam was friable, relatively dry and well drained. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions. The surface of the layer was relatively level and comparable with the fall of the existing ground level. The layer was identified along the entire length of the trench and was found to extend beyond in to Trench B (context 2001) and Trench C (context 3001). It would seem that the topsoil arrived on site as a result of a single programme of landfill / landscaping works following the construction the 1955 extension.

The base of the topsoil was reached at 94.086 metres AOD. The layer was found to seal a layer of disturbed ground / grave fill (context 1002). This layer of silty loamy clay (10YR4/4) was found to be moist and well compacted. The layer contains a low quantity of inclusions dominated by water worn pebbles, gravels, these are evenly mixed throughout the layer. The layer had been cut and disturbed during the excavation of a soakaway trench (context 1003/4). The trench had been excavated and backfilled with a single deposit of limestone chippings in order to facilitate the discharge of top water from the recently constructed Chapter House extension.

The disturbed ground / grave fill contained a moderate quantity of de articulated human remains. The remains were representative of most of the more robust areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. These small broken fragments were found to be in poor condition and water saturated. The breakages and fractures were not the result of trauma but were attributable to post mortem damage. The layer contained a small quantity of late 18th / early 19th century pottery, glass and metalwork. A small number of cast iron coffin handles were recovered from the excavations.

Five articulated human burials were identified along the trench (SK1, SK2, SK3, Sk4, SK5). The burials were identified at 93.266 m AOD. The level of the burials marked a transition in the stratigraphy. The sub soil interface (context 1005) consisted of a medium brown (10YR5/3) sandy clay. This moist, well-compacted layer contains a low quantity of inclusions. The layer was devoid of finds.

The surface of the sub soil (context 1006) was identified towards the base of the excavation. The layer of yellow orange brown (10YR5/4) sand was moist and well compacted. This coarse gritty sand contained a moderate quantity of inclusions, namely water worn cobble and pebble. The sub soil contained anaerobic lenses of blue grey silty sandy clay. The layer was devoid of finds.

Trench B

Type: Foundation: strip: machine
N.G.R: 43640 45170

Length: 7.48 metres
Width: 0.90 metres
Depth: 2.1 metres

Planform: Liner
Aligned: West South West
Area: 6.73 square metres

Context No's: 2000 - 2005
Plate No: 5
Fig. No: 2

The trench was excavated to contain the concrete foundations for the south elevation of the proposed extension. The existing ground levels slope very gently downwards to the south. On the removal of the turf (2000) the trench was excavated into a layer of topsoil (context 2001).

The dark brown (7.5YR4/3) layer of loam was friable, relatively dry and well drained. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions. The surface of the layer was relatively level and comparable with the fall of the existing ground level. The layer was identified along the entire length of the trench and was found to extend beyond in to Trench A (context 1001) and Trench C (context 3001). It would seem that the topsoil arrived on site as a result of a single programme of landfill / landscaping works following the construction the 1955 extension.

The base of the topsoil was reached at 94.126 metres AOD. The layer was found to seal a layer of made up ground (context 2002). This pink orange (5YR4/4) loamy sand was dry and well compacted. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions dominated by water worn pebbles and grit. This deposit was identified within the opposing section of the trench and measured up to 0.15m in depth. The same layer had been previously identified during the exhumation of SK A and B (06.05.99) and has been interpreted as a late 19th century footway surface or sub base.

The buried footway sealed the layer of disturbed ground / grave fill (context 2003). This layer of silty loamy clay (10YR4/4) was found to be moist and well compacted. The layer contains a low quantity of inclusions dominated by water worn pebbles, gravels, these are evenly mixed throughout the layer. The disturbed ground / grave fill contained a moderate quantity of de articulated human remains. The remains were representative of most of the more robust areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. These small broken fragments were found to be in poor condition and water saturated. The breakages and fractures were not the result of trauma but were attributable to post mortem damage. The layer contained a small quantity of late 18th / early 19th century pottery, glass and metalwork. A small number of cast iron coffin handles were recovered from the excavations.

Eight articulated human burials were identified along the trench (SK5, SK6, SK7, SK8, SK9, SK10, SK11, SK19). The burials were identified between 93.286m AOD and 93.416 m AOD. The level of the burials marked a transition in the stratigraphy. The sub soil interface (context 2004) consisted of a medium brown (10YR5/3) sandy clay. This moist, well-compacted layer contains a low quantity of inclusions. The layer was devoid of finds.

The surface of the sub soil (context 2005) was identified towards the base of the excavation. The layer of yellow orange brown (10YR5/4) sand was moist and well compacted. This coarse gritty sand contained a moderate quantity of inclusions, namely water worn cobble and pebble. The sub soil contained anaerobic lenses of blue grey silty sandy clay. The layer was devoid of finds.

Trench C

Type: Foundation: strip: machine
N.G.R: 43640 45170

Length: 6.2 metres
Width: 0.90 metres
Depth: 1.80 metres

Planform: Liner
Aligned: North North West
Area: 5.58 square metres

Context No's: 3000 - 3006
Plate No: 5
Fig. No: 2

The trench was excavated to contain the concrete foundations for the west elevation of the proposed extension. The existing ground levels slope very gently downwards to the south. The central section of the trench had been previously disturbed during the exhumation of SK A and B. The foundations of the 1955 single storey extension were identified during the excavations at 93.016 metres AOD. On the removal of the turf (3000) the trench was excavated into a layer of topsoil (context 3001).

The dark brown (7.5YR4/3) layer of loam was friable, relatively dry and well drained. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions. The surface of the layer was relatively level and comparable with the fall of the existing ground level. The layer was identified along the entire length of the trench and was found to extend beyond in to Trench B (context 2001). It would seem that the topsoil arrived on site as a result of a single programme of landfill / landscaping works following the construction the 1955 extension. The topsoil surrounded a ceramic top water drain that transected the northern extent of the trench.

The base of the topsoil was reached at 94.036 metres AOD. The layer was found to seal a layer of disturbed ground / grave fill (context 3002). This layer of silty loamy clay (10YR4/4) was found to be moist and well compacted. The layer contains a low quantity of inclusions dominated by water worn pebbles, gravels, these are evenly mixed throughout the layer.

The disturbed ground / grave fill contained a moderate quantity of de articulated human remains. The remains were representative of most of the more robust areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. These small broken fragments were found to be in poor condition and water saturated. The breakages and fractures were not the result of trauma but were attributable to post mortem damage. The layer contained a small quantity of late 18th / early 19th century pottery, glass and metalwork. A small number of cast iron coffin handles were recovered from the excavations.

Seven articulated human burials were identified along the trench (SK12, SK13, SK14, Sk15, SK16, SK17, SK18). The burials were identified between 93.416 m AOD and 93.346 m AOD. The level of the burials marked a transition in the stratigraphy.

The surface of the sub soil (context 3003) was identified towards the base of the excavation. The layer of yellow orange brown (10YR5/4) sand was moist and well compacted. This coarse gritty sand contained a moderate quantity of inclusions, namely water worn cobble and pebble. The sub soil contained anaerobic lenses of blue grey silty sandy clay and distinctive iron pans. Standing water accumulated at 92.586 m AOD. The layer was devoid of finds.

Trench D

Type: Drain - hand
N.G.R: 43640 45170

Length: 18 metres
Width: 0.30 metres
Depth: 0.70 metres

Planform: Curvilinear
Aligned: North West
Area: 5.40 square metres

Context No's: 6000 - 6001
Plate No: -
Fig. No: 1

The trench was excavated to contain the foul water drain of the proposed extension. The line of which was carefully selected by the design team to best achieve the required fall/invert level whilst avoiding impact on known and marked graves. The trench was excavated by hand from the north western corner of the proposed extension in a north western direction, following the line of the kerb that defines the southern extent of the principal footway leading to the church. The existing ground levels slope very gently downwards to the south.

The south eastern extent of the trench was excavated into the turf (6000) thereafter the trench was excavated into a single layer of topsoil (context 6001).

The dark brown (7.5YR4/3) layer of loam was friable, relatively dry and well drained. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions. The surface of the layer was relatively level and comparable with the fall of the existing ground level. The layer was identified along the entire length of the trench.

The topsoil contained a small quantity of de articulated human remains. The remains were representative of most of the more robust areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. These small broken fragments were found to be in poor condition and water saturated. The breakages and fractures were not the result of trauma but were attributable to post mortem damage. The layer contained a small quantity of late 18th / early 19th century pottery and glass.

Three disturbed human burials were identified along the trench (SK20, SK21, SK22.). The burials were identified between 93.846 m AOD and 93.766 m AOD. It would appear that the burials had been disturbed and displaced during the interment of the adjacent early 19th century burials.

Area A

Type: Area Excavation: hand
N.G.R: 43640 45170

Length: 2.80 metres
Width: 2.0 metres
Depth: 0.40 metres

Planform: Rectangular
Aligned: North North West
Area: 5.60 square metres

Context No's: 4000 - 4005
Plate No: 2, 3
Fig. No: 2

The excavation of this area was not supervised by the archaeologist and was undertaken in order to establish the location and alignment of the existing top water drain. The area was excavated within the north west corner of the study area. The existing ground levels slope very gently downwards to the south.

On the removal of the turf (4000) the trench was excavated into a layer of topsoil (context 4001). The dark brown (7.5YR4/3) layer of loam was friable, relatively dry and well drained. The layer measured up to 0.34m in depth and contained a low quantity of inclusions. The layer was identified across the entire area. It would seem that the topsoil arrived on site as a result of a single programme of landfill / landscaping works following the construction the 1955 extension.

The deposition of the topsoil concealed a number of structural features that were exposed. The structural elements included a relocated sarcophagus plinth (context 4002) and the foundations of an in-situ funerary monument (context 4003). Due to the conflict of the level of these features with the required depth of dig it was necessary to lift and move these features. It was confirmed that the sarcophagus plinth was bedded on topsoil. The in-situ funerary monument was bedded onto the surface of the disturbed ground / grave fill (context 4004), this relationship would suggest that a burial would be situated beneath this site.

To the immediate south of these funerary monuments the topsoil sealed a layer of pink orange (5YR4/4) loamy sand (context 4005). This layer was moist, loosely compacted and contained a low quantity inclusions. The layer had been previously identified during the exhumation of SK A & B and was interpreted as a mid 19th century gravel pathway. The layer had been cut by in-situ funerary monument, suggesting this burial post dated the formation of the path.

In order to achieve the required construction levels it was necessary to reduce the upper 0.04m of the disturbed ground / grave fill. This layer of silty loamy clay (10YR4/4) was found to be moist and well compacted. The layer contains a low quantity of inclusions dominated by water worn pebbles, gravels, these are evenly mixed throughout the layer.

A small assemblage of 19th century pottery, glass and metal work was identified during these groundworks. The artefacts were not removed from site.

Area B

Type: Area Excavation :machine
N.G.R: 43640 45170

Length: 6.30 metres
Width: 5.4 metres
Depth: 0.60 metres

Planform: Rectangular
Aligned: North North West
Area: 34.02 square metres

Context No's: 5000 - 5005
Plate No: 5
Fig. No: 2

The area was machine excavated. The stratigraphy identified during these works was as noted during the excavation of Area A.

On the removal of the turf (5000) the area was excavated into a layer of topsoil (context 5001). The dark brown (7.5YR4/3) layer of loam was friable, relatively dry and well drained. The layer measured up to 0.34m in depth and contained a low quantity of inclusions. The layer was identified across the entire area. It would seem that the topsoil arrived on site as a result of a single programme of landfill / landscaping works following the construction the 1955 extension.

The deposition of the topsoil concealed a structural feature. The foundations of a relocated funerary monument (context 5002) were identified to the immediate east of those similar structures that were identified within Area A. The feature consists of two slabs of sandstone. It was necessary to lift and move these features. The slabs were bedded on a layer of modern builders sand (context 5003). This relationship would suggest that the sandstone slabs were disturbed and relocated during the construction of the 1955 extension.

To the immediate south of this disturbed funerary monument the topsoil sealed a layer of pink orange (5YR4/4) loamy sand (context 5004). This layer was moist, loosely compacted and contained a low quantity inclusions. The layer measured up to 0.16m deep and sealed the disturbed ground/ grave fill (context 5005).

In order to achieve the required construction levels it was necessary to reduce the upper 0.10m of the disturbed ground / grave fill. This layer of silty loamy clay (10YR4/4) was found to be moist and well compacted. The layer contains a low quantity of inclusions dominated by water worn pebbles, gravels, these are evenly mixed throughout the layer.

A small assemblage of 19th century pottery, glass and metal work was identified during these groundworks. The artefacts were not removed from site.