

Archaeological Monitoring at St Edmund's Church, Norwich Road, Acle, Norfolk.



Prepared on behalf of the PCC

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February 2020


Report No: 136


NHES Event No: ENF146390

Job Ref: NVC18/489

OASIS ID: norvicar1-384031

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*looking SW

Archaeological Monitoring at St Edmund's Church, Norwich Road, Acle, Norfolk. NR12 9SQ.

Planning Reference	n/a	OASIS ID	norvicar1-384031
NHES Event Number	ENF146390	Grid Reference	TG 4012 1029 (church centre point)
CNF Number	CNF48179	Accession Number	NWCHCM.2020.17
Contracting Unit Ref	NVC18/489	Dates of fieldwork:	16 th & 17 th of July 2019

1.0 Introduction

Norvic Archaeology was commissioned by Christopher Codling of Peter Codling Architects on behalf of the Parish Church Council to undertake archaeological monitoring during the installation of a new drain and soakaway associated with the replacement of a boiler house with a new above-ground installation.

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a brief issued by the Historic Environment Service (HES Ref: CNF48179) on behalf of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for Norfolk. The aim of the monitoring work was to record the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains and features identified during groundworks. This report presents a brief description of the methodology followed and an archaeological interpretation of the results

On completion of the project, the site archive will be offered for long term deposition with Norfolk Museums Service (Accession No. 2020.17).

2.0 Summary of Results

Multiple burials were encountered during the archaeologically controlled excavation of the soakaway trench. A minimum of three main phases of inhumation rows were partly uncovered, which range from likely medieval to post-medieval date. All of the burials were aligned in the traditional Christian manner. The medieval burials were generally in a poorer state of preservation than the post-medieval ones, the majority of which contained evidence for coffins in the form of iron nails and fittings. Remains from a minimum of thirteen individual burials were lifted for reburial, which included three children.

The exposed remains were able to be lifted as individuals and the group was reburied together within a deeper pit excavated to a depth below the level of the modern soakaway, with a suitable blessing provided by Reverend Martin Greenland.

The northern end of the pathway which currently leads from the north porch to the east-west lane off The Street appears on the 1st Edition OS plan of 1886, although the presence of post-medieval burial rows along its route to the lane suggests that this is a relatively recent arrangement in the history of the churchyard.

Finds were small in number and include a late medieval to post-medieval copper-alloy pin, a fragment of lava quern, a piece of medieval brick and a large rim sherd from a post-medieval pancheon or bowl.

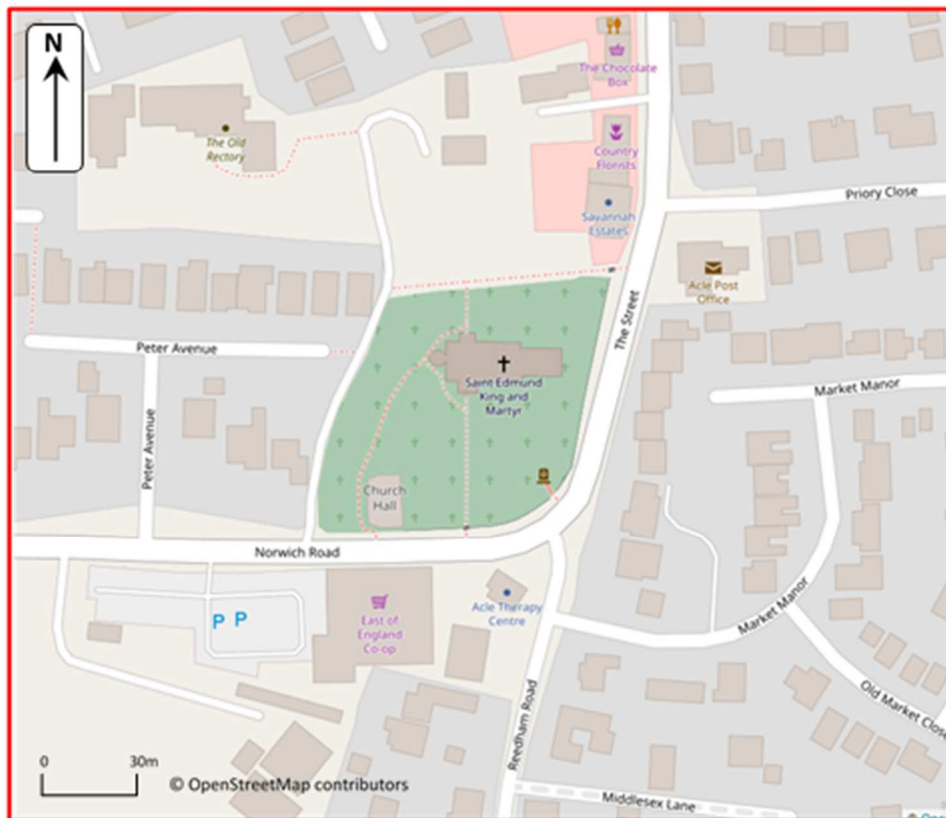
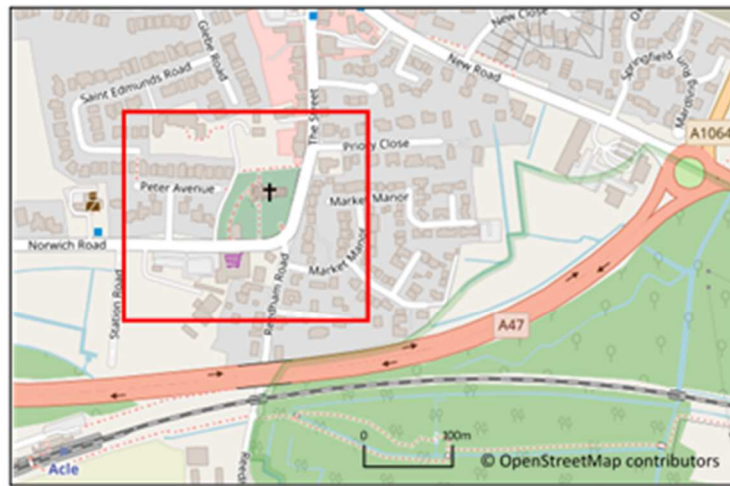


Figure 1. General Site Location Plan

3.0 Geology and Topography (Figure 1)

Acle is a small market town on the River Bure in Norfolk, close to the Broads, located roughly halfway between Norwich and Great Yarmouth. St Edmund's Church in Acle is positioned off The Street, c.1.2km south-east from the River Bure at a height of c. 9m OD.

The underlying geology is Crag, formed of banded sands and gravels in the Quaternary and Neogene periods. Superficial deposits comprise primarily of glacial sand deposits - Geology of Britain Viewer at a scale of 1:50 000 (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

The sub-surface geology of the site encountered during the fieldwork can be characterised as a mid-orange to brownish-yellow clay-sand.

4.0 Brief Archaeological and Historical Background

A parish summary of the large amount of information held for Acle's Historic Environment can be viewed on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website. The parish has generated well over 150 records which give evidence of human occupation and activity of most periods in the form of find scatters, cropmarks, listed buildings and excavated sites. The following information contains extracts from a summary of the parish's Historic Environment by Sarah Spooner (2005), available in full on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer website.

Much of the parish is situated on low-lying land adjacent to the River Bure and was once on the edge of a large estuary, which gradually silted up to become marshland in the early medieval period. There is some evidence of early occupation in the form of prehistoric surface finds. Roman finds suggest that settlement during this period was focused on the higher ground overlooking the estuary, just above the present marshes.

Settlement on the higher ground developed from this early period, and in 1086 Acle was a large royal manor, the Domesday Book records fifteen plough teams, a mill, beehives, and woodland. Acle derives from Old English meaning an 'oak clearing'. Nothing now remains of Acle Wood (NHER 12202), which was quite substantial into the post-medieval period.

During the medieval period, Acle flourished, and was granted permission to hold a market in 1253, and the nearby marshes began to be drained to create large areas of lush pasture. In 1382, the inhabitants of Acle were granted the right of turbarry, allowing them to remove turf or peat for fuel, in the park of Acle, which would have been situated on the margins of the parish, in the marshes. Peat digging on a large scale in the medieval period created the Broads, which are the flooded remains of turbarries. Medieval pottery, coins and metalwork, including medieval seal matrices and harness pendants have been found in the parish.

Weybridge Priory (NHER 8601) was founded in the early 12th century, at some distance from the centre of the village, but next to an important ford over the River Bure. The site of the Priory has sometimes been confused with that of the former manor house site in the centre of the village (NHER 8608), shown on a map of 1633 to the east of the church.

The thatched church of St Edmund (NHER 8600) dates mainly from the 14th century, but with a round tower dating from the 12th century. The church contains a 15th century font which has traces of the original paintwork, as well as a small model font, of around the same date, about 30cm high. The church was restored in the 19th century by R. M. Phipson and Ewan Christian (architects). A small number of post-medieval pottery sherds were collected during the digging of a test-pit in the north-west area of the churchyard in 2009 by volunteers of the Higher Education Field Academy as part of the Access Cambridge led project.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the drainage of the marshes around Acle became more intense with the use of wind pumps and post mills

In World War Two Acle was designated a strategic defensive point in the event of a German invasion. The complex series of surviving defences, once part of a much wider network, are of national importance, and include pillboxes, spigot mortar emplacements, weapons pits and tank traps. One pillbox was hidden under the Victoria Jubilee milestone in the village centre, whilst another was disguised as a shed at an important road crossing.

Sites in the immediate proximity or of particular relevance or interest which fall in close proximity to the site include:

The following information has been sourced from the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER)

NHER 8600: St Edmund's Church, Acle. A medieval church, dating mainly from the 14th century, but with a round tower dating from the 12th century. The building is thatched, with a 15th century font which has traces of the original paintwork, as well as a small model font, of around the same date, about 30cm high. The church was restored in the 19th century by R. M. Phipson and Ewan Christian (architects).

NHER 52977: Post-medieval pottery from Test-pit. Archaeological test pit excavated in the north-west area of the cemetery grounds by local volunteers of the Higher Education Field Academy as part of the Access Cambridge led project in 2009 recovered post medieval pottery.

NHER 52976: Roman, medieval and post medieval pottery from Test-pit Archaeological test pit excavated in the Rectory grounds by local volunteers as part of the Access Cambridge-led project in 2009 recovered Roman, medieval and post medieval pottery. [c. 30m N]

NHER 36769: Site of World War Two spigot mortar emplacement. Located south-east of the church but removed to NGR TG 39925 10125 (NHER 36770) when the estate opposite the church was built. [c. 75m SE]

NHER 52975. Post-medieval pottery from Test-pit. Test-pit excavated as part of the Access Cambridge-led project by volunteers of the Higher Education Field Academy in 2009 at the Post Office recovered post-medieval pottery. [c.75m ENE]

NHER 8608: Site of Manor House. The site of a medieval manor house shown on a map of 1633, to the east of the St Edmund's Church. A linear excavation trench dug east to west across the site here in 1999 found large amounts of medieval pottery, and medieval pottery was recovered as a casual find in 2008. This site has sometimes been confused with the site of Weybridge Priory, see NHER 8601. [c. 125m E]

NHER 52974: Medieval and post medieval pottery from Test-pit. Archaeological test pit excavated on ground at Katie's Cottage off Reedham Road by local volunteers of the Higher Education Field Academy as part of the Access Cambridge led project in 2009 recovered Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery. [c. 150m SSW]

5.0 Methodology (Figure 2)

The objective of the archaeological monitoring was to record archaeological evidence revealed during the groundworks, conducted under archaeological supervision and control.

The trench work was carried out with a 2.5-ton 360° machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Hand excavation of identified graves and the excavation and recovery of human remains for reburial was carried out by the attending archaeologist.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector (Minelab XTerra 705). All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using Norvic Archaeology *pro forma* sheets. The trench location, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and digital images were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

All levels were tied to an OS Benchmark of 9.7m OD located on the northwest corner of the church.



Plate 2. New soakaway and drain trench.
(looking SSW) [1x1m Scale]

6.0 Results (Figures 2 to 4) (Appendix 1a)

- *The drainage connection trench*

The new drain trench was machine excavated running from the front of the north porch to the position of the new soakaway, just inside the entrance to the churchyard. It measured c. 0.45m to 0.65m depth and for the majority of its length revealed only the mixed backfill of existing service trenches for gas and water pipes. Only a handful of fragmentary human skeletal remains were collected for reburial during this work. It was noted that the flagstones laid directly in front of the north porch are reused head and foot marker stones from graves of likely 17th to 18th century date, all of which appear to have been placed legend side down.

- *The soakaway trench*

The cemetery subsoils comprised of mid-yellowish-brown silty-sands (01), observed to have a depth of c. 1m in the area of the new soakaway. Surface deposits comprised only of modern make-up deposits (22) of grey silty-sands mixed with occasional late brick and mortar to a depth of c. 0.25m depth underlying the gravel path.

The soakaway trench measured c. 2.2m by 1.8m but was stepped at a depth of c. 0.55m into a deeper hole (c. 1.5m by 1.5m) to accommodate the concrete rings for the new soakaway, with a formation level of c. 2.5 below ground level. The soakaway was inserted

between gas and water pipes, with the modern water pipe temporarily disconnected to allow enough space for the soakaway.

Several burials were encountered within the confines of the soakaway trench, which were duly investigated, recorded and lifted to allow further phased reduction until the area was clear of human remains and the remaining depth for the soakaway trench could be achieved. The lowest graves were dug to the approximate interchange with the natural geology at c. 1.4m below the modern ground level, or just below. The natural was a particularly firm and dense brownish-yellow clay-sand with severe root mottling (19)

The shallowest inhumations encountered were represented by the partial remains of six post-medieval individuals (SK03, SK05, SK06, SK07, SK08 and SK09), which were uncovered at depths of between 1.10m and 1.25m below the modern ground level (see Figure 3). The grave cuts were very difficult to discern and were generally of a similar description to the cemetery subsoil (01), with occasional mortar and brick flecks and frequent roots.



Plate 3. Post-medieval burial SK03 (looking W) [1x0.5m & 1x0.3m Scales]

The lower leg and feet of SK03 were fairly well preserved and represented an adult of good stature with several coffin nails and a copper-alloy stud attached to a mineralised wood fragment recorded in positions consistent with a decayed coffin. Immediately adjacent and possibly partly truncated by this burial was the foot of another adult burial (SK05).

The legs of yet another well-preserved adult burial (SK09) may also represent a further post-medieval burial in the same row, which lay adjacent to a similarly well-preserved juvenile burial SK08 (only partly disturbed by the trench works). The feet of SK09 had been partly truncated by the head end of a second post-medieval row, with the adult SK07 also found with in situ coffin nails. The skull of a second adult burial (SK06) within this same row was also found, with a ferrous plate near the cranium from a corroded coffin fitting.

Five skeletons were revealed just below those previously described, uncovered at depths of c. 0.4m from the modern ground level (SK 12 to SK16). No coffin nails or other coffin furniture was present in any of these five graves and a medieval date seems likely for all of these individuals (see Figure 4).

The burial of two of these individuals (SK13 and SK16) had disturbed a pre-existing row of burials. SK13 was a moderately well preserved adult, with the pelvis traits usually consistent with a female and SK16 comprised the better preserved remains of another possible female, whose burial appears to have severely disturbed an earlier adult inhumation; represented only by an undisturbed tibia and fibula and several disarticulated bones placed within the backfill around the later burial.

SK12 was a very poorly preserved young child, while SK14 represented the disturbed remains of a very poorly preserved juvenile.

Some disarticulated bone and possible articulated adult limb bone remains were recovered using the machine at depths of 1.65m below the modern ground level (beyond any safe working depth), indicating the presence of at least one additional burial of uncertain date.

The edge of another post-medieval burial ([21]) (indicated by the presence of an adult skull and regularly spaced iron coffin nails) was revealed at a depth of c.1.9m below the ground surface, located in the very northeast corner of the trench.

Prior to the installation of the concrete soakaway, a machine dug hole was excavated (to a depth of 3m below the modern ground surface) to receive all of the excavated human remains and a blessing was given by Rev. Martin Greenland.



Plate 4. ?Medieval burials at a depth of c. 1.4m.
(looking W) [1x1m & 1x0.5m Scales]

7.0 Finds Analysis *(Appendix 2)*

- **Copper-alloy pin**

A single complete drawn copper-alloy pin with a spherical spiral wound head in good condition was collected from subsoil (01), weighing 0.9g. It measures 50mm in length, the relatively thick shaft is 1.5mm and tapers to a sharp point. The head has a diameter of c.4mm. The size and form suggest use as a dress pin and similar types from Norwich have been identified as late medieval to post-medieval in date by Margeson (11, 1993). Given the cemetery setting, although this pin could represent a casual loss, it may have served as a shroud pin.

- **Lava Quern**

A single abraded edge fragment of lava stone quern was collected from the subsoil (01). The fragment has a thickness of 42mm and weighs 357g. Such pieces are commonly found in Late Saxon to early medieval deposits across East Anglia. They are usually classified as Rhenish lava stone and indicate the processing of grain in the local vicinity of the site, although reused fragments do occasionally occur within the masonry fabric of churches.

- **Medieval brick**

A single abraded fragment of medieval brick was collected from the subsoil (01), weighing 303g. The brick has a thickness of 45mm and a width of 97mm and is made from an estuarine clay fired to a dark purplish-pink hue. Straw or hay marks are present on all surviving surfaces and the surfaces are also lightly sanded.

- **Pottery**

A single large rim sherd (broken into three-pieces) of a post-medieval (16th to 18th-century) lead glazed red-earthenware pancheon or bowl was collected from the subsoil (01), weighing 96g. The rim of is in a moderate abraded condition and has a projected diameter of c. 340mm.

- **Tile**

A single piece of late post-medieval knife edged plain roof tile was collected from the fill (10) of grave [11], weighing 21g.

8.0 Conclusions

Multiple burials were encountered during the archaeologically controlled excavation of the soakaway trench. A minimum of three main phases of inhumation rows were partly uncovered, which range from likely medieval to post-medieval date. All of the burials were aligned in the traditional Christian manner. The medieval burials were generally in a poorer state of preservation than the post-medieval ones, the majority of which contained evidence for coffins in the form of iron nails and fittings. Remains from a minimum of thirteen individual burials were lifted for reburial, which included three children.

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Finds were small in number and include a late medieval to post-medieval copper-alloy pin, a fragment of lava quern, a piece of medieval brick and a large rim sherd from a post-medieval pancheon or bowl.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Christopher Codling (Peter Codling Architects) and Michael Turner who commissioned Norvic Archaeology to carry out this work on behalf of the PCC. Thanks are also due to the groundworks team from Ovamills for their assistance and cooperation on site. The Reverend Martin Greenland kindly gave a blessing over the reinterred remains.

All stages of the monitoring and post-excavation analysis work were carried out by the author. NHER data was supplied by the Historic Environment Service

10.0 Bibliography

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| Margeson, S. | 1993 | Norwich Households: the medieval and post-medieval finds from Norwich Survey excavations 1971-1978. East Anglian Archaeology Vol.58 |

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Fill of	Brief Physical Description	Interpretation	Period
01	Deposit		Firm, mid-yellowish-brown silty-sand, rare p.med and late brick cbm pieces in upper level only up to 1m deep	Cemetery subsoil	<i>Medieval to Modern</i>
02	Cut		E-W, barely discernible grave cut for inhumation 03	Grave	<i>Post-medieval</i>
03	Skeleton	[02]	The leg and feet end of an adult. Fair preservation. Tibia Length 0.38m (good stature). c. 1.1m below Ground Level (GL), occ. iron coffin nails in situ	Adult inhumation	<i>Post-medieval</i>
04	Deposit	[02]	Coffin nails and small pieces of preserved wood plus a copper-alloy stud nail in relative positions indicating coffin burial. Fill is a soft mid-yellowish grey silty-sand with freq. roots, occ., mortar and cbm flecks, occ. stones	Grave fill	<i>Post-medieval</i>
05	Skeleton		Left foot of an adult exposed within trench, fair preservation. E-W. c. 1.2m below GL	Adult inhumation	<i>Post-medieval</i>
06	Skeleton		E-W. Adult cranium, moderate preservation, ferrous coffin fitting located by skull indicative of coffin burial. c. 1.2m below GL	Adult inhumation	<i>Post-medieval</i>
07	Skeleton		E-W. NB: Cranium machine damaged during discovery, head and upper torso partly exposed, mod. preservation, iron nails indicate coffin burial c. 1.1m below GL	Adult inhumation	<i>Post-medieval</i>
08	Skeleton		E-W. Legs of a juvenile partly exposed, in good preservation, no discernible grave cut. Tibia 0.24m L, 1.1m below GL.	Juvenile inhumation	<i>Post-medieval</i>
09	Skeleton		E-W. Legs of adult inhumation in good preservation, Tibia 0.34m L, bony growth on knee cap. 1.26m below GL.	Adult inhumation	<i>Post-medieval</i>
10	Deposit	[11]	soft dark-grey silty-sand with freq. roots, occ., mortar and cbm flecks, occ. stones	Grave-fill	<i>Post-medieval</i>
11	Cut		Grave cut for SK07.	Grave	<i>Post-medieval</i>
12	Skeleton		E-W. Very poorly preserved infant inhumation. Femur 0.3m L. truncated along right side by inhumation SK13. 1.45m below GL	Infant inhumation	<i>?Medieval</i>
13	Skeleton		E-W. Mod. preserved adult inhumation, well worn teeth. V.poor preservation of vert (ribs lost). Pelvis indicates high probability of female sex. 1.4m below GL.	Adult inhumation	<i>?Medieval</i>
14	Skeleton		E-W. head and torso of highly truncated juvenile inhumation in very poor preservation, skull has been partly truncated by inhumation SK15 plus collapsed along sutures. 1.45m below GL.	Juvenile inhumation	<i>?Medieval</i>
15	Skeleton		Adult inhumation represented only by left tibia and fib. (heavily truncated by SK16 (from over which several disarticulated adult bones were recovered). 1.45m below GL	Adult inhumation	<i>?Medieval</i>
16	Skeleton		Mainly left side of an adult burial exposed, good preservation, pelvis indicates possible female sex, femur 0.4m L (good stature)	Adult inhumation	<i>?Medieval</i>
17	Cut		Water/gas pipe trench running along edge of pathway c. N-S.	Service Trench	<i>Modern</i>
18	Deposit	[17]	Mix of friable mid-yellowish-grey silty-sand + mod. late brick, occ. mortar, occ. frags from a large cast iron	Service trench infills	<i>Modern</i>

Context	Category	Fill of	Brief Physical Description	Interpretation	Period
			pipe), freq. roots.		
19	Deposit		Firm/dense mid-orange to brownish-yellow clay-sand , severe root mottling, rare stones – identified within soakaway trench at c. 1.4m below ground level	Natural Geology	<i>Quaternary</i>
20	HSR		Disarticulated humans skeletal remains plus some possible articulated adult limb bones recovered using machine at depths of 1.65m below GL.	Adult Inhumation	<i>?Medieval</i>
21	Grave		Edge of a grave at 1.9m below GL, with coffin nails and an adult skull in moderate condition	Adult inhumation	<i>Post-medieval</i>
22	Deposit		Mixed deposits comprising of grey silty-sands with occ. late brick and mortar lumps observed as both service trench infill and upper levelling make-up below the gravel path. C. 0.25m deep	Make-up	<i>Modern</i>

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Medieval (1066 to 1539AD)	Inhumations	6
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Inhumations	7

Appendix 2: Finds by Context and Period

Context	Material	Qty	Wt (g)	Period
01	Ceramic building material – brick	1	303	Medieval (12th-14 th century)
01	Cooper-ally pin	1	0.90	Late medieval to post-medieval
01	Lava quern	1	357	Late Saxon to medieval
01	Pottery	1	96	16 th -18 th century
10	Ceramic building material – tile	1	21	Late Post-medieval

Appendix 3: Factual Archive summary table

Factual Type	Quantity
Site diary sheets	1
Permatrace drawing sheets	3
Context register sheets	1
Plan/Section register sheet	1
Photo Index sheets	1
Digital Images	14
Dwg. CAD file	1

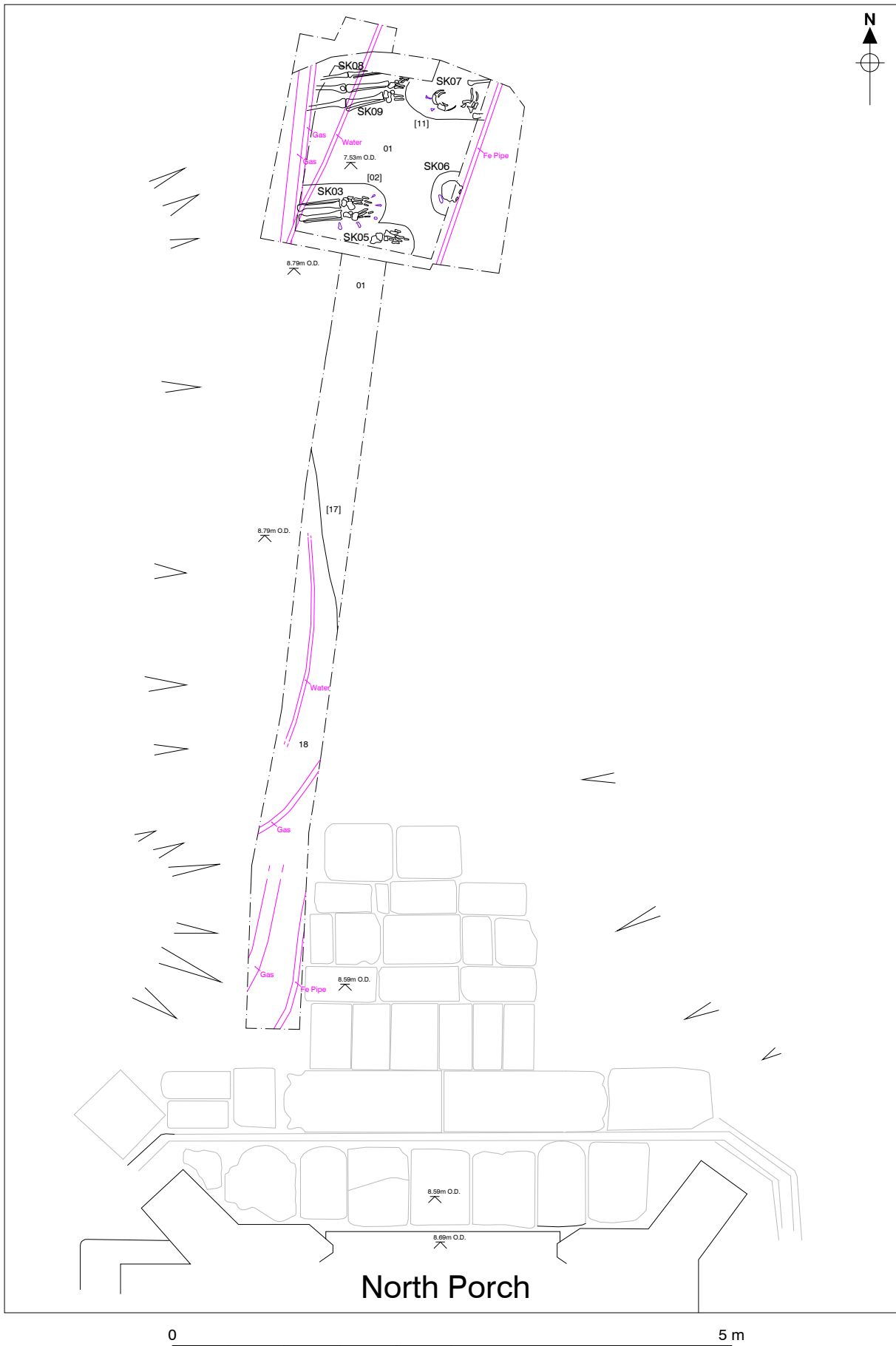


Figure 2. Groundworks plan. Scale 1:50

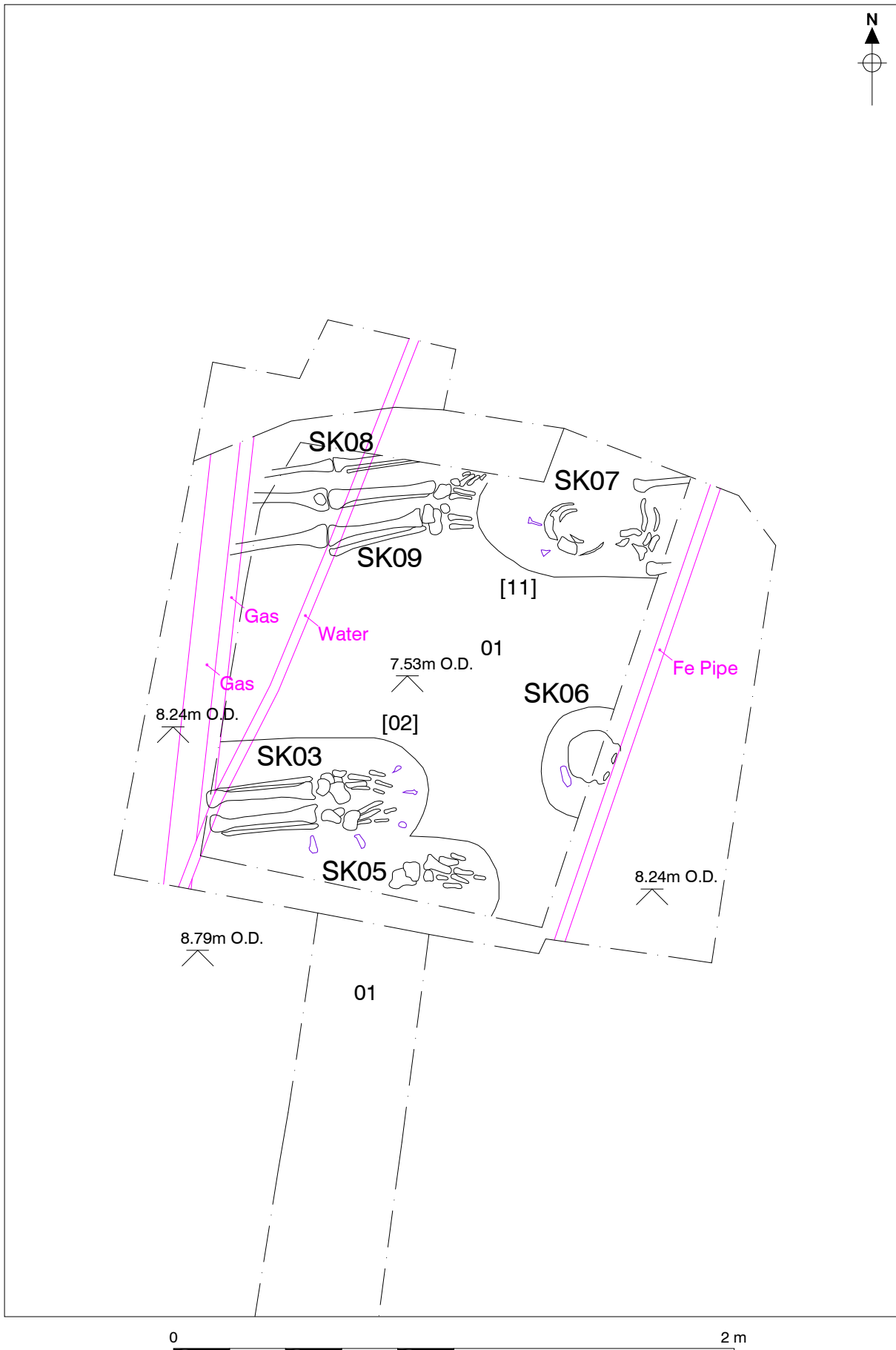


Figure 3. Soakway Trench Reduction. Plan A. Scale 1:20

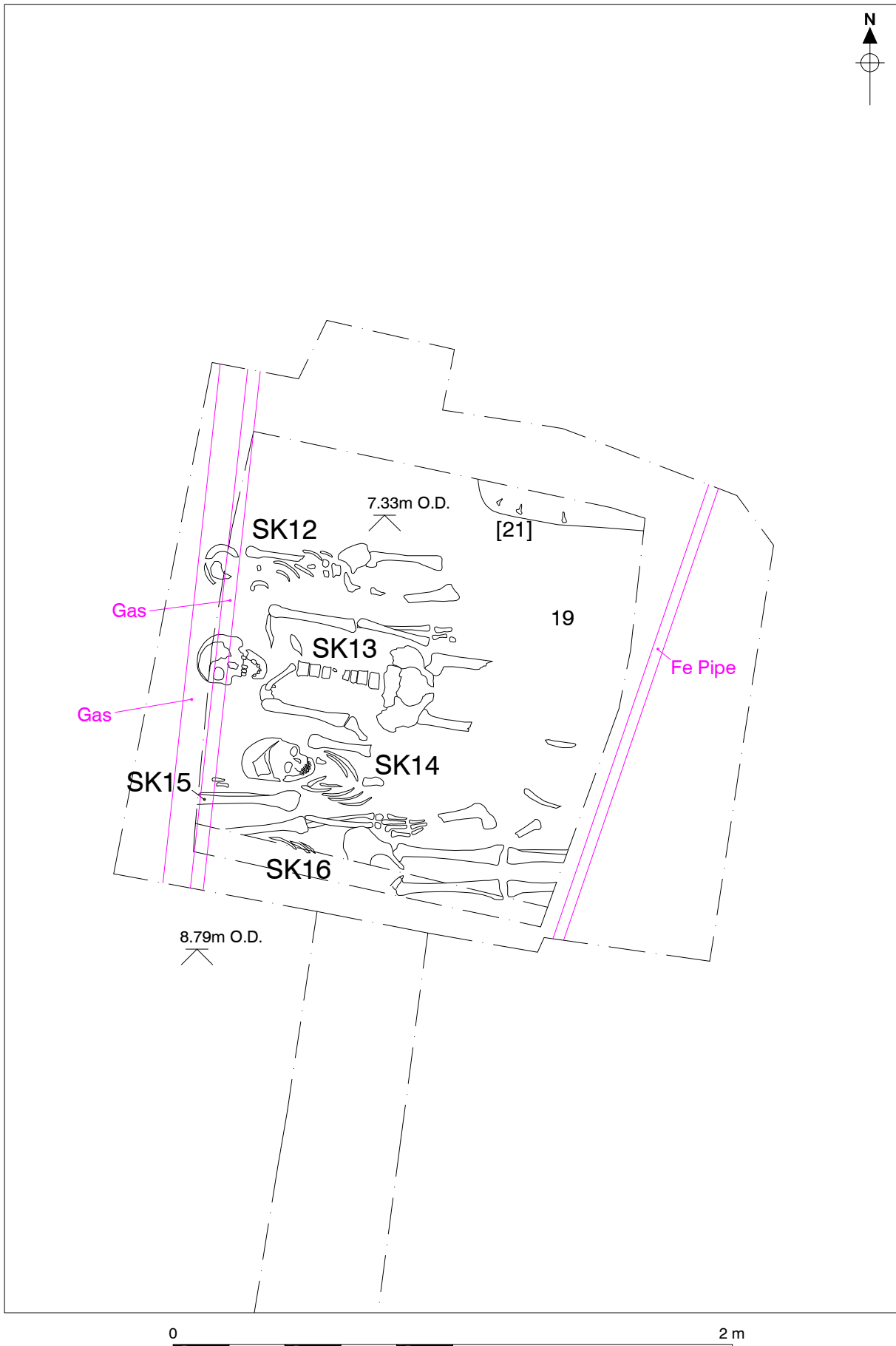


Figure 4. Soakway Trench Reduction. Plan B. Scale 1:20

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OASIS ID: norvicar1-384031

Project details

Project name	Archaeological Monitoring at St Edmund's Church, Norwich Road, Acle, Norfolk.
Short description of the project	The results of archaeological monitoring during the installation of a new drain and soakaway associated with the replacement of a boiler house with a new above-ground installation. Multiple burials were encountered during the archaeologically controlled excavation of the soakaway trench. A minimum of three main phases of inhumation rows were partly uncovered, which range from likely medieval to post-medieval date. All of the burials were aligned in the traditional Christian manner. The medieval burials were generally in a poorer state of preservation than the post-medieval ones, the majority of which contained evidence for coffins in the form of iron nails and fittings. Remains from a minimum of thirteen individual burials were lifted for reburial, which included three children The northern end of the pathway which currently leads from the north porch to the east-west lane off The Street appears on the 1st Edition OS plan of 1886, although the presence of post-medieval burial rows along its route to the lane suggests that this is a relatively recent arrangement in the history of the churchyard. Finds were small in number and include a late medieval to post-medieval copper-alloy pin, a fragment of lava quern, a piece of medieval brick and a large rim sherd from a post-medieval pancheon or bowl.
Project dates	Start: 16-07-2019 End: 17-07-2019
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ENF146390 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	NVC18/489 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	INHUMATIONS Medieval
Monument type	INHUMATIONS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM - BRICK Medieval
Significant Finds	COPPER ALLOY PIN Post Medieval
Significant Finds	LAVA QUERN Early Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM - TILE Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country England
 Site location NORFOLK BROADLAND ACLE ST EDMUND'S CHURCH, ACLE, NORFOLK
 Postcode NR12 9SQ
 Study area 0 Hectares
 Site coordinates TG 4012 1029 52.636583529482 1.549222957866 52 38 11 N 001 32 57 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Norvic Archaeology
 Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
 Project design originator Norvic Archaeology
 Project director/manager Giles Emery
 Project supervisor Giles Emery
 Type of sponsor/funding body Parish Council
 Name of sponsor/funding body Acle PCC

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient NMAS and Norvic Archaeology
 Physical Contents "Ceramics","Industrial","Metal"
 Digital Archive recipient NMAS
 Digital Contents "Survey"
 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography","Text"
 Paper Archive recipient NMAS
 Paper Contents "Survey"
 Paper Media available "Context sheet","Diary","Plan","Report","Section"

Project bibliography 1

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