



**Archaeological observation, investigation  
recording and analysis at  
All Saints Church, Little Billing  
Northampton  
July-September 2013**

Report No. 14/30

Author: Chris Chinnock

Illustrator: Amir Bassir



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Other finds: Tora Hylton

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>Oasis No. molanort - 170781</b>	
Project title	Archaeological investigation at All Saints Church, Little Billing, Northamptonshire, July 2013		
Short description	Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology, now trading as MOLA, at All Saints Church, Little Billing, Northampton on the footprint of a proposed extension and along associated service trenches. The extension is adjacent to the north wall of the church, towards the western end. Multiple burials were encountered at varying depths, confirming the presence of unmarked burials in this area. Many of the burials relate to the late-medieval and post-medieval usage of the graveyard, but two burials had stones placed around the head, an early medieval burial practice that is likely to pre-date the Norman Conquest, perhaps broadly contemporary with the stone carved Anglo-Saxon font standing in the church today. Burials were also found along a service trench with some lying beyond the churchyard boundary in the garden of an adjacent house, indicating that the graveyard had contracted sometime prior to the late 19th century.		
Project type	Archaeological watching brief and excavation		
Site Status	Consecrated ground		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Churchyard		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Medieval to post-medieval		
Significant finds	Human remains, coffin furniture, medieval stonework		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Church Lane, Little Billing, Northampton		
Post code	NN3 9ED		
OS co-ordinates	NGR 480440 261780		
Area (sq m/ha)	c 12 sq m		
Height aOD	58.86m aOD (Church datum point)		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology, now trading as MOLA		
Project brief originator	Quinton Carroll (Diocesan Archaeological Advisor)		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology		
Director/Supervisor	Chris Chinnock, Anne Foard-Colby		
Project Manager	Adam Yates		
Sponsor or funding body	Little Billing Parochial Church Council		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	09/07/2013		
End date	17/09/2013		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	NA store	Pottery, Small Finds, Animal Bone	
Paper	LBC13	Site records (1 small archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis at All Saints Church, Little Billing, Northamptonshire, July 2013		
Serial title & volume	14/30		
Author(s)	Chris Chinnock		
Page numbers			
Date			

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION  
RECORDING AND ANALYSIS AT ALL SAINTS CHURCH  
LITTLE BILLING, NORTHAMPTON**

**Abstract**

*Archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology, now trading as MOLA, at All Saints Church, Little Billing, Northampton on the footprint of a proposed extension and along associated service trenches. The extension is adjacent to the north wall of the church, towards the western end. Multiple burials were encountered at varying depths, confirming the presence of unmarked burials in this area. Many of the burials relate to the late-medieval and post-medieval usage of the graveyard, but two burials had stones placed around the head, an early medieval burial practice that is likely to pre-date the Norman Conquest, perhaps broadly contemporary with the stone carved Anglo-Saxon font standing in the church today. Burials were also found along a service trench with some lying beyond the churchyard boundary in the garden of an adjacent house, indicating that the graveyard had contracted sometime prior to the late 19th century.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Little Billing parochial council to carry out an archaeological observation, investigation, recording and analysis prior to the construction of a small extension and associated services at All Saints Church, Little Billing, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 80440 61780; Fig 1).

The site lies within an area of significant archaeological potential and sensitivity. As a result a programme of archaeological investigation within the affected areas was implemented to meet the requirements of an archaeological brief issued by the Archaeological Advisor to the Diocese (Carroll 2013) and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2013).

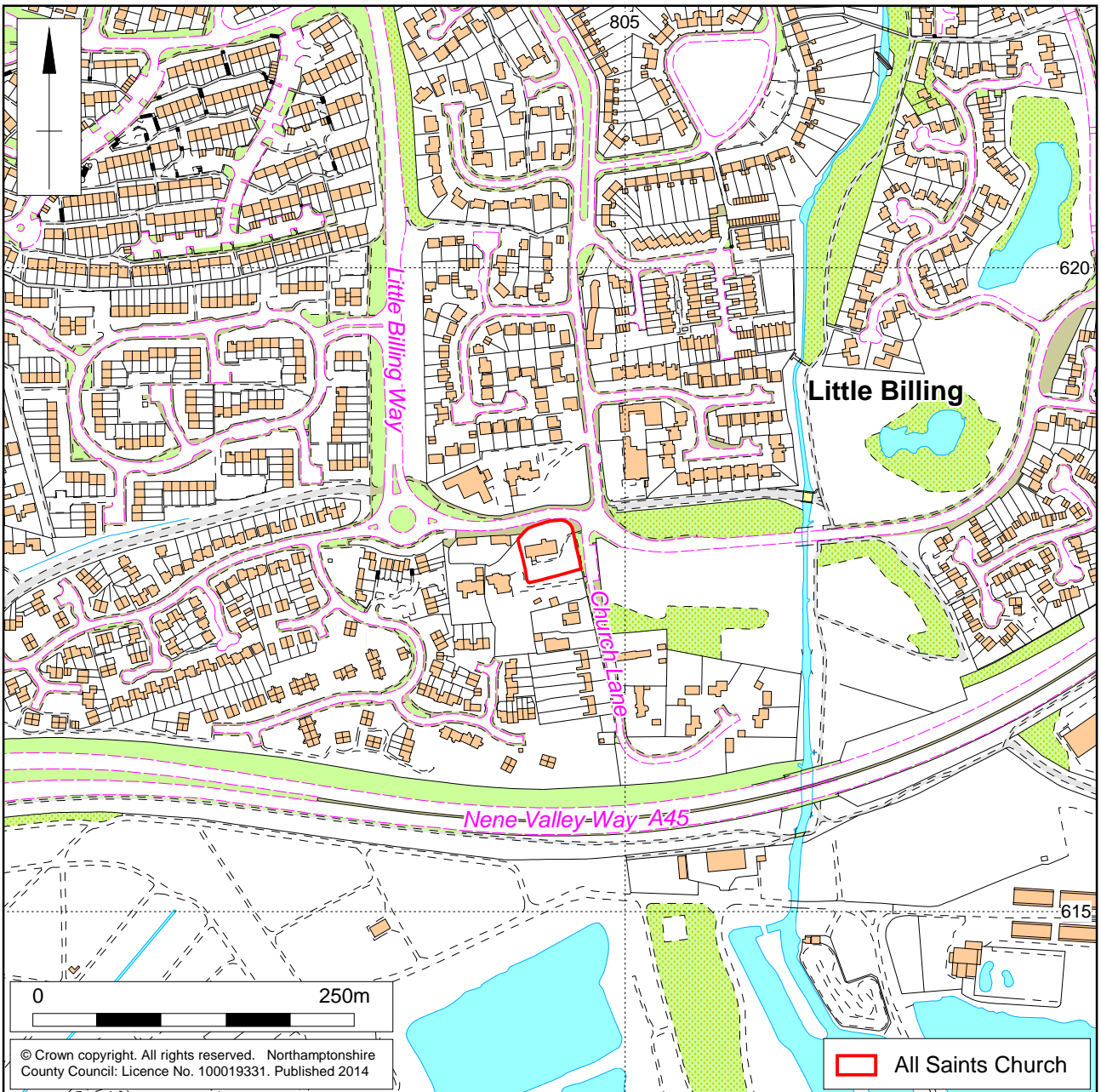
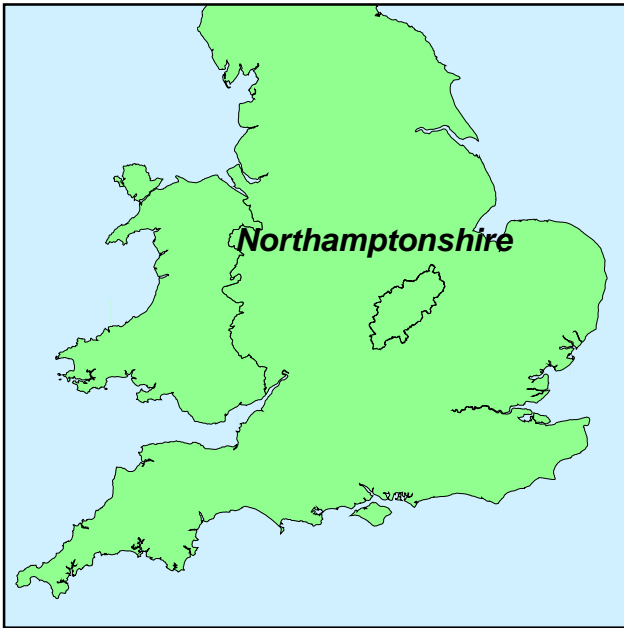
The proposed development site comprised c 12 square metres of land, lying on the north-west side of the church (Fig 2). The site is within the limits of the current churchyard apart from a short stretch of service trench which extended into Hastings Cottage immediately to the west. The excavation of the main area was carried out between July and September 2013 and the watching brief on the service trenches in September.

**2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the work was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The aims of the investigation were to:

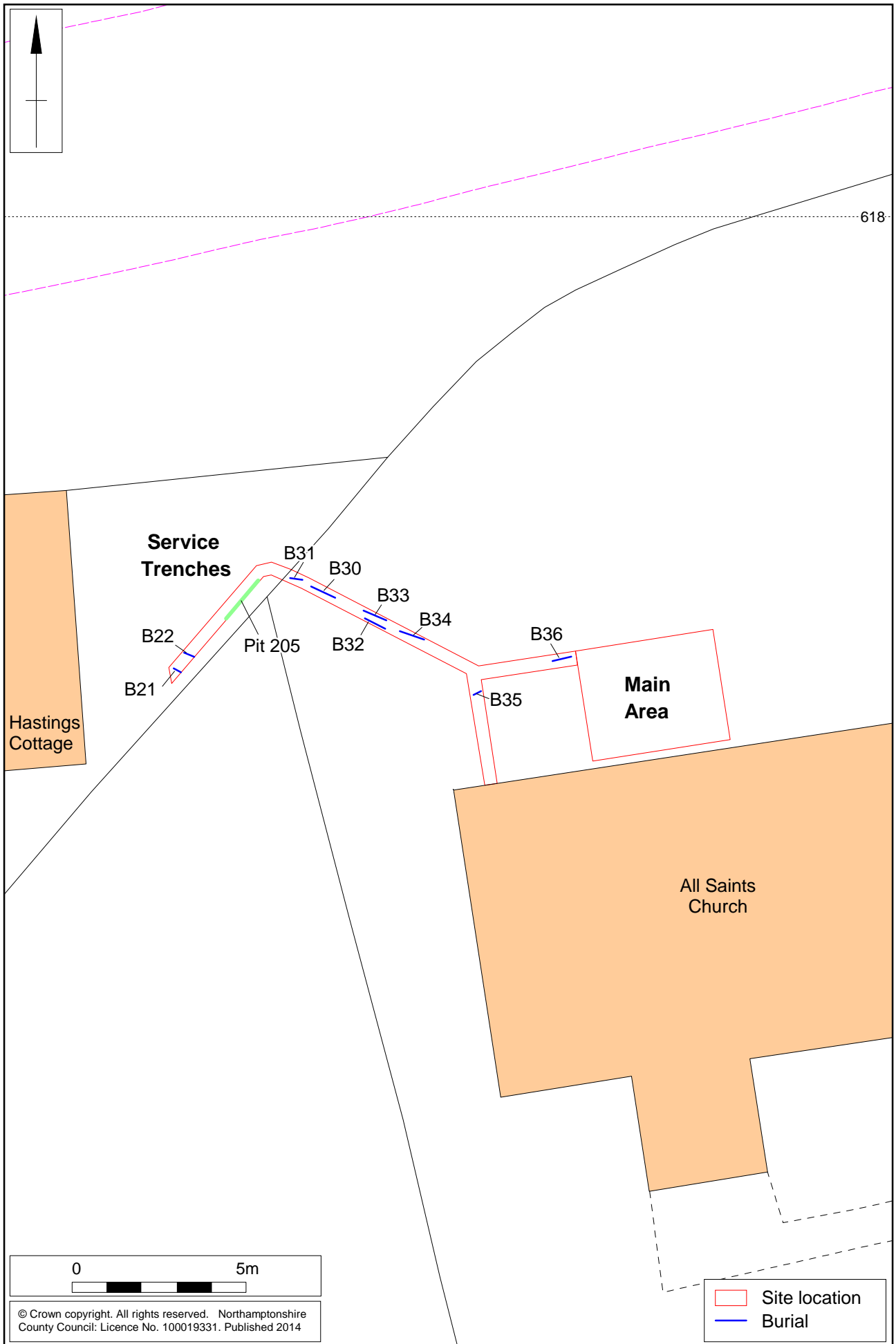
- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the groundwork's for the development area;
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits.



Scale 1:5,000

Site location Fig 1





Scale 1:150

Excavated areas Fig 2

One area, measuring 4m by 3m, was excavated covering the footprint of the proposed development. The area was laid out using tapes and tied into the layout of Ordnance Survey National Grid by measurements to current field boundaries and fixed points on the church.

Topsoil was removed by a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological instruction to reveal the uppermost level of the burials. The area was gradually excavated by hand down to a predetermined level in order to accommodate a raft foundation for the proposed extension to the church. Most of the burials in the excavation area were truncated by either later burials, pits, drains or they ran under the limit of excavation. Every effort was made to avoid instances where only part of the burial could be removed, though where necessary partial individuals were left unexcavated beyond the trench edges.

Artefacts and ecofacts were collected by hand and retained, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site, in line with procedures outlined in *First Aid for Finds* (UKIC 1998). Unstratified animal bones and modern material was not collected. Human remains excavated from the proposed area for development were kept on-site at all times as instructed by the Archaeological Advisor to the Diocese and will be reburied in due course. Human remains uncovered beyond the current church boundary were removed under licence 13-0131 from the Ministry of Justice.

The character, composition and general depositional sequence of stratification was recorded on Northamptonshire Archaeology watching brief and daily record sheets. All recording followed the guidelines detailed in the Northamptonshire Archaeology *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (2011). A photographic record was maintained, consisting of digital images and black and white photographs. All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive site archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (1991).

Work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008). All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the brief issued by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (Carroll 2013) and the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2013).

### **3 BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Topography and geology**

All Saints Church is located within the village of Little Billing, approximately 2 miles east of Northampton. The church is situated within a churchyard, bounded to the north by Manorfield Road, to the east by Church Lane and to the west by the Old Rectory (Fig 2).

The church datum point indicates a level of 58.86m aOD. The underlying geology is recorded as Whitby Mudstone Formation with overlying superficial river terrace deposits of sand and gravel (BGS Geotitles <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geotitles>)

### 3.2 Historical background

The early history of Little Billing Church (MNN141062) is confused due to the multiplicity of entries in the Domesday Book of 1086 (RCHME 1985). Between 1107 and 1123 the church was obtained by St Andrew's Priory, Northampton. A tub-shaped carved Saxon stone font is of great interest because of its Latin inscription and early date (Pevsner 2013). The earliest surviving fabric dates from the 14th century, comprising the chancel and north chapel (RCHME 1985). The west part of the church was rebuilt c1500AD, prior to which the pattern of arches in the east wall suggests it comprised a nave and north aisle. In the post-medieval period a timber arcade was inserted, probably to help support the roof. In 1849 the north chapel was heavily restored by Lewis Lloyd, the remainder of the building was much rebuilt by E. F. Law between 1852-4 (Pevsner 2013). This included the removal of the bell turret and timber arcade and the addition of the north tower, in addition the nave gables were heightened and a steep pitched-roof added.

The cartographic evidence available indicates that Hastings Cottage, immediately to the west of the churchyard, was constructed sometime after 1742. The boundaries for the churchyard do not seem dramatically different between the 1742 tithe map (Fig 3) and the 1885 Ordnance Survey map (Fig 4). However, it is likely that the current churchyard wall is not original and therefore the burial ground may extend into the rear garden of Hastings Cottage.



1742 Tithe map showing the church (Br) and surrounding land

Fig 3



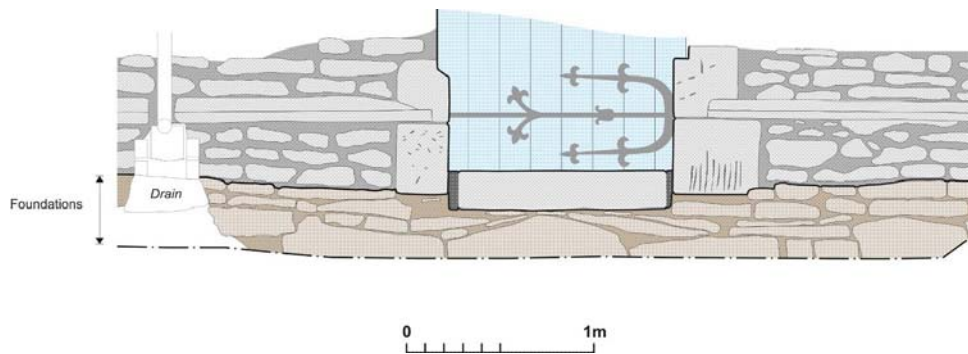
1885 1:2500 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of Little Billing

Fig 4

#### 4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

There were two areas of archaeological investigation. A rectangular area measuring 4m by 3m was excavated over the footprint of the church extension. This area was excavated to a depth of 0.4m, below the level of the church floor, to accommodate the new foundations. Any burials identified below this level were left unexcavated. The second part of the investigation was a Watching Brief along the length of the new service trench which ran roughly north-west across the churchyard and into the rear garden of Hastings Cottage.

As a result of the main excavations it was possible to observe and record an elevation of the north face of the nave and part of the foundations (Fig 5). The door was a Victorian addition and the doorway is now blocked on the inside. As part of the proposed development this doorway will be opened and used as access into the extension.



Elevation: north wall of the church Fig 5

#### 4.1 Main area

This area was stripped initially with a mechanical excavator. Loose dark brown-black organic loam topsoil, roughly 0.30m thick was removed (101). This directly overlay the subsoil (102), which may be more accurately described as grave-earth. This comprised a loose mid brown sandy loam with disarticulated human remains present throughout. Approximately 0.30m of this context was removed by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision before it became necessary to continue by hand. At its lower level the grave-earth was slightly more orange with a higher percentage of small gravel throughout (132) although the boundary between the upper and lower levels was indistinct. The natural substrate (168) was recorded amongst the lowest excavated series of burials at a depth of approximately 57.00m above ordnance datum (aOD), a depth of 1m below the present ground level (Fig 6). The natural comprised mid yellow-red sands, gravels and flints.

As a result of the high density of burials in this small area, grave cuts in most cases could not be seen against the grave-earth (102). The exception was the lowest observed level where graves could clearly be seen against the yellow sand and gravel natural (Fig 6). The area was reduced by hand with burials excavated, recorded and lifted as they were encountered. The burials were recorded at four levels (Figs 6, 7, 8 and 9). At least 24 burials and large charnel deposits were identified in this area. Many of the burials were heavily truncated and only partial individuals.

Two drains, one Victorian [111] and the other modern [158], cut across the excavation area (Figs 6, 7, 8 and 9). Both were still active and remained *in situ* throughout the excavation. Upon removal, at the end of the excavation, any loose human bone in the pipe trench fills was collected and reburied with the rest of the material.

##### **Level 1**

This level existed at 57.00m aOD, approximately 1m below the present ground surface. This was the limit of the excavation in order to accommodate the raft foundation for the proposed extension to the church. None of the graves identified at this level were excavated. Unlike the subsequent levels the graves were clearly visible against the natural (168). At least six graves were recorded at this level (Fig 6), with human bone present in at least three [182], [185] and [175]. One feature [177] is particularly wide and possibly represents a double burial or two separate burials, one truncating the other.

**Level 2**

This level was recorded at a height of 57.13m aOD, approximately 0.87m below the present ground surface. At least seven burials were identified at this level as well as a large pit [167] filled with charnel material (Fig 7).

Burial 14 [147] was of particular interest as the individual was buried with rough, angular limestone slabs framing the skull, a practice characteristic of early burial traditions (Figs 7 and 21). One fragment of early-mid Saxon pottery was also recovered from the fill surrounding this individual. Pit [167] which truncated Burial 14 was filled with a large amount of disarticulated human remains, probably a charnel deposit; no dateable evidence was recovered from the fill. Burial 19 [164] could be seen to truncate the charnel deposit though, again, no dating evidence was present.

Burial 17 [156] was very well preserved and it was notable that many of the bones had moved or rotated slightly, especially the skull which had rolled to one side (Figs 7 and 24). This perhaps indicates that this individual was buried in a coffin allowing the individual bones to move before the coffin structure had fully decomposed. A cast iron grip, possibly a coffin handle was discovered in close association with this individual, further suggesting a coffin burial rather than a shroud burial as was common throughout the medieval period.

Burial 15 [150] was an extremely young individual; the tightly clustered and loosely articulated bones were well preserved but delicate (Figs 7 and 22). It is likely that this individual died at or soon after birth.

**Level 3**

This level was recorded at a height of 57.25m aOD, approximately 0.75m below the present ground surface. At least four burials were identified at this level (Fig 8).

Burial 10 [135] had two rough, angular limestone slabs supporting the left side of the skull, much like Burial 14, probably indicating an earlier burial tradition. The burial was truncated mid-thigh by later grave-cutting.

In the north-west corner of the excavation, the area was extended slightly in order to fully recover the whole skeleton within Burial 12, rather than leave the left arm *in situ* (Figs 8 and 20).

**Level 4**

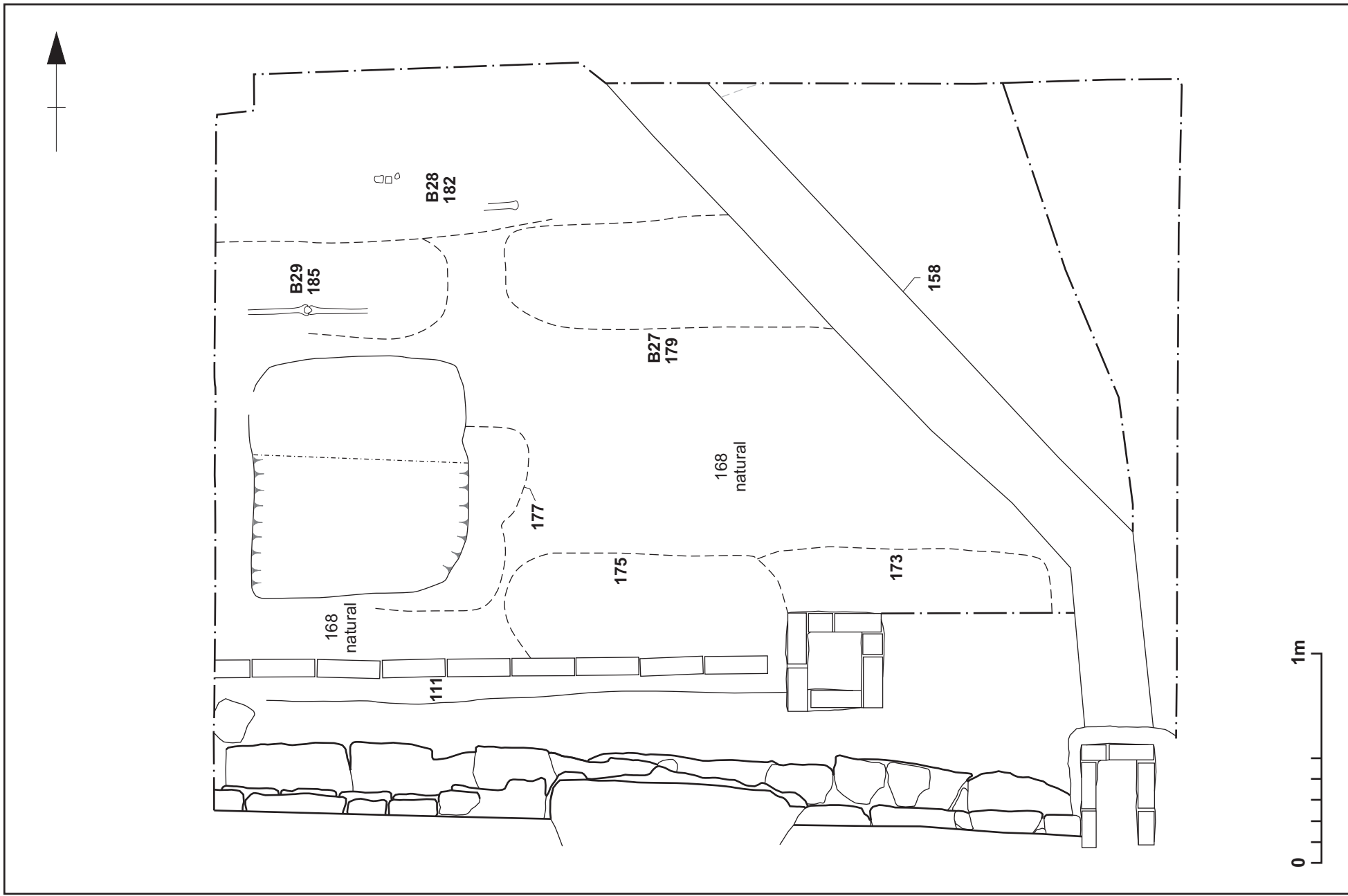
This level was recorded at a height of 57.55m aOD, approximately 0.45m below the present ground surface. At least seven burials were recorded at this level (Fig 9). Interestingly, all of the individuals recorded in this latest phase of burial can be categorised as juvenile or sub-adult, perhaps representing a division of space in the churchyard at this time. The individuals are organised into two neat rows aligned east-west with four recorded in the eastern row and three in the western row (Fig 9).

Coffin nails were recovered from Burials 1 [128] and 5 [120]. The nails were largely recovered around the perimeter of the skeleton, resting largely in place after the wooden coffin structure had decomposed.

Burial 6 [117] contains the remains of a young child and was largely truncated by a modern water pipe [158] running across the excavation area (Figs 9 and 16). A large skull fragment from another juvenile individual (Burial 8 [126]) was recorded in close association with Burial 6. It is possible that the skull fragment was disturbed during the digging of the grave and re-deposited as part of the fill.

Burials 1 and 2 were truncated by a large pit [105] on the western side of the excavation area. A further burial immediately to the south of Burial 1 was truncated by a Victorian drain aligned east-west, across the southern edge of the area.

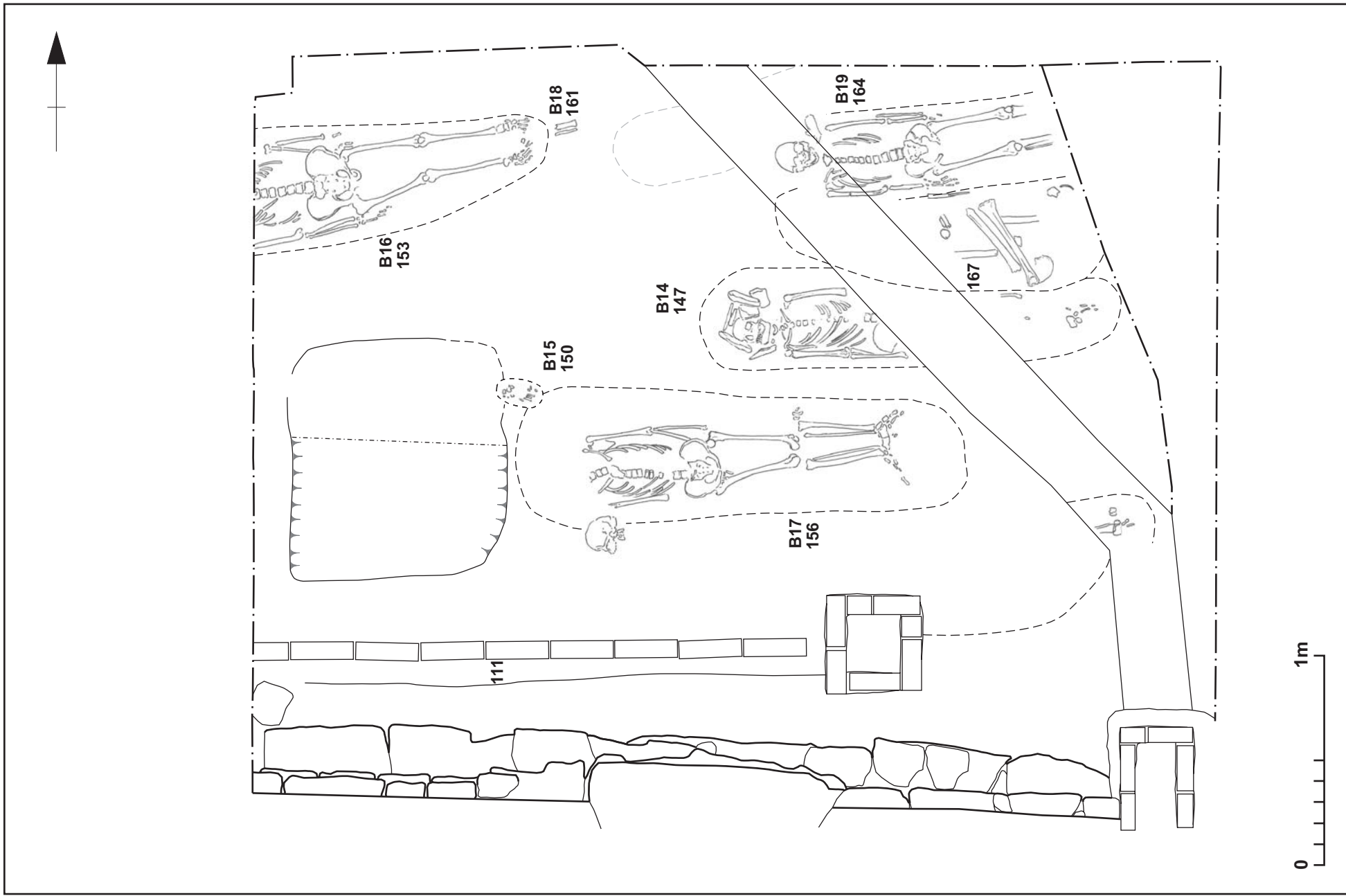
Pit [105] was 1.1m in diameter. At a depth of 0.61m there was a deposit of disarticulated human remains from both adult and sub-adult individuals (Figs 9 and 13). The back-fill of the pit (103) comprised re-deposited mid-brown grave earth with a significant amount of ironstone throughout with ceramic material and glass dating to the post-medieval period. The pit appears to have been one of the latest features in the main area. As the charnel material lay below the level of the raft foundation, the pit was back-filled to the required level and the bones left in-situ.



Scale 1.25

Main area: Level 1 Fig 6

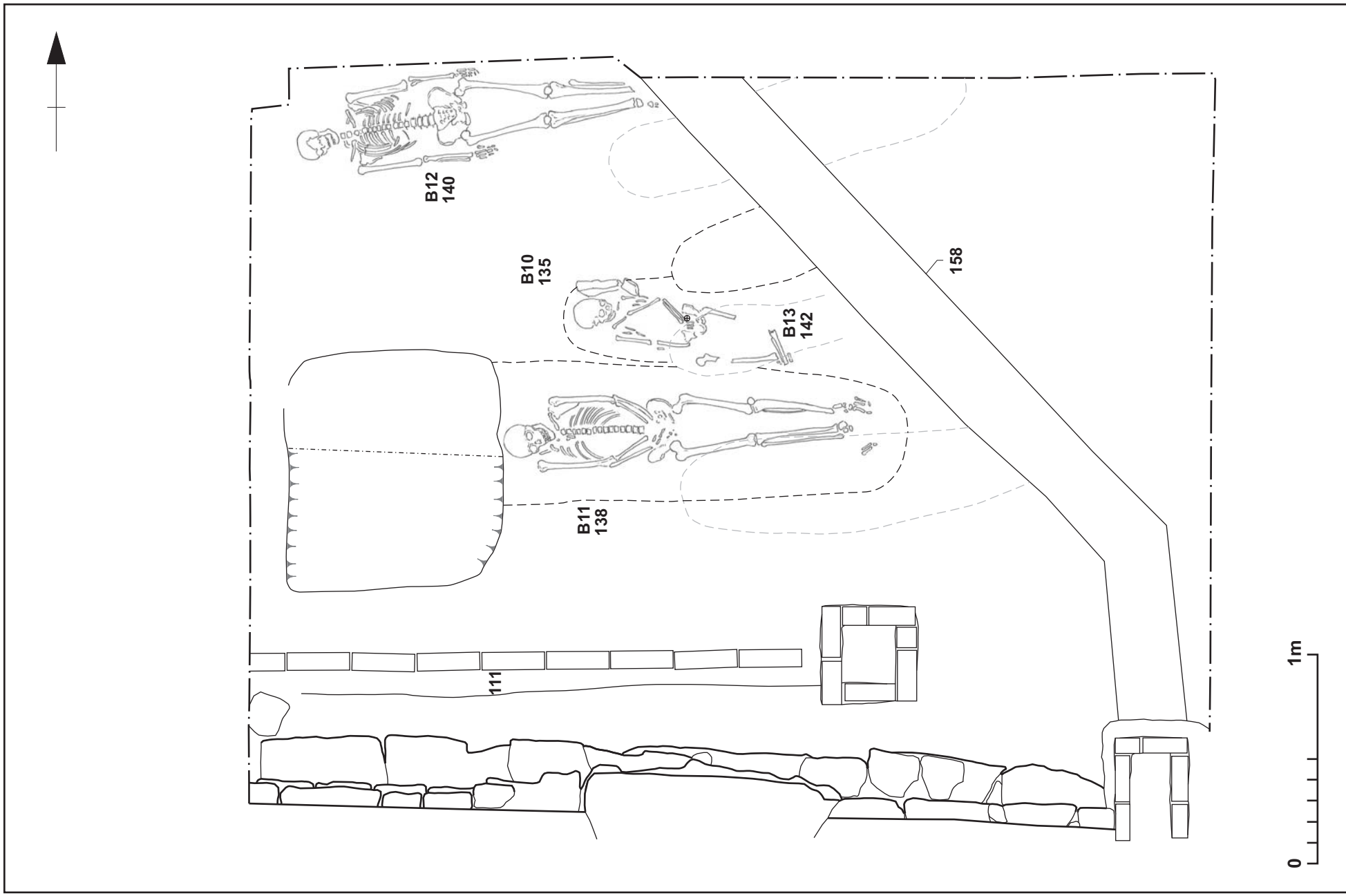




Scale 1:25

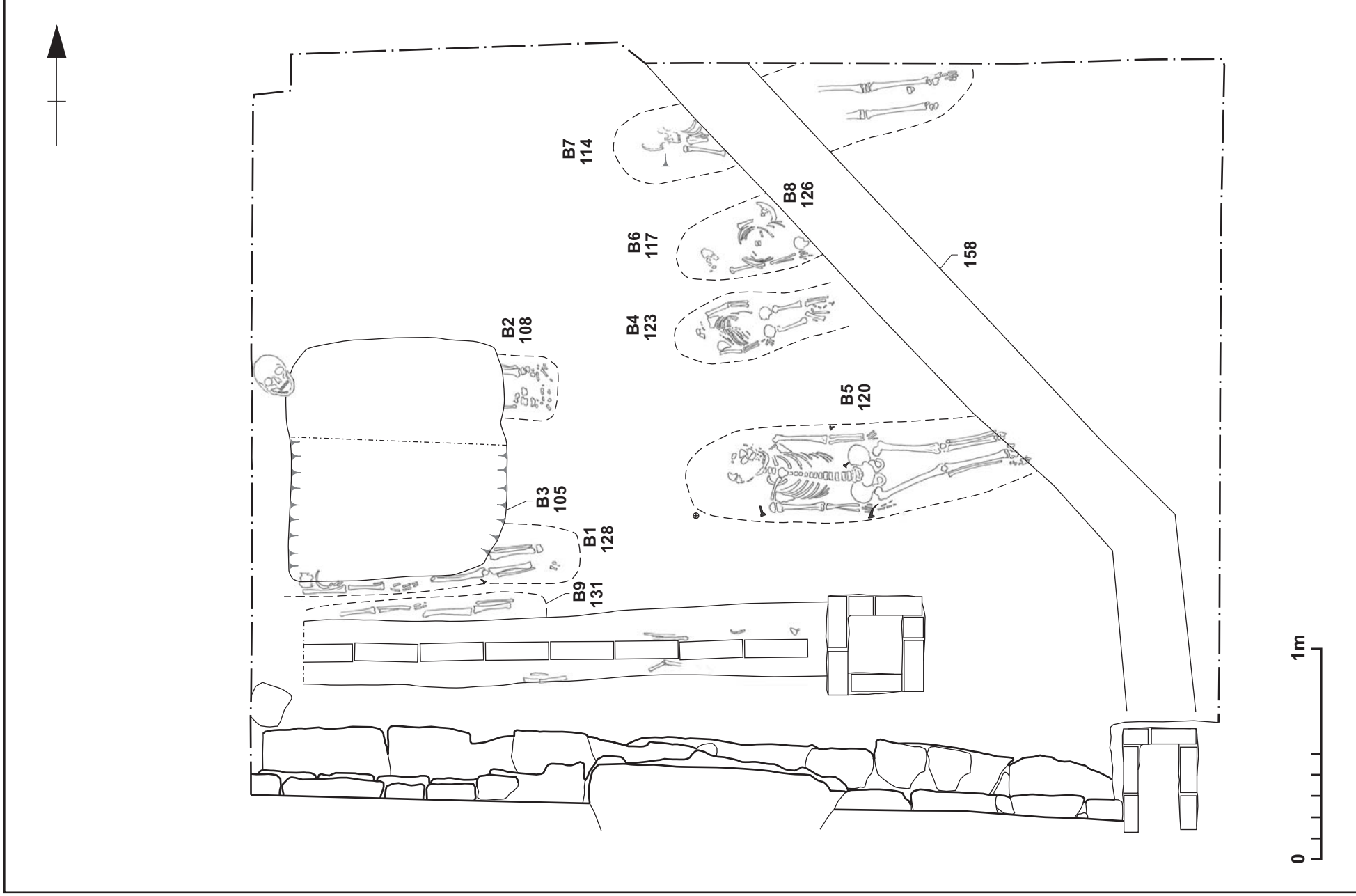
Main area: Level 2

Fig 7



Scale 1:25

Main area: Level 3 Fig 8



Scale 1:25

Main area: Level 4 Fig 9

## 4.2 The service trenches

The trench excavated to accommodate the services from the proposed development extended from the north-west corner of the main excavation area for approximately 8m across the churchyard and a further 4m through the rear garden of Hastings Cottage where it linked with existing service access (Fig 2). The trench was excavated with a mechanical excavator to an approximate width of 0.35m and depth of 1.5m. A further shorter trench was excavated parallel to the main excavation area, linking the new service trench to the north-west corner of the church (Fig 2). This trench was 0.35m wide by approximately 1.0m deep.

A further nine burials were encountered during the excavation of these trenches. The size and depth of the trenches precluded full excavation and recording though photographs and notes were taken. Most of the burials were adult individuals occurring at depths of between 1.1m and 1.5m. However, Burial 35 and 36 were both juvenile individuals. They occurred much closer to the surface (0.7m deep) and closer to the church reflecting the demographic observed in the latest phase (level 4) of burial in the main area (Fig 9).

A possible pit [205] was observed in the south section of the service trench excavated through the rear garden of Hastings Cottage. The pit was approximately 1.40m wide and 0.80m deep and contained several sherds of post-medieval pottery, glass, floor tile and animal bone. The fill (204) comprised mid orange-brown sandy loam with medium-large fragments of limestone throughout.

## 5 THE FINDS

### 5.1 Flint by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray

Twelve pieces of worked flint were recovered as residual finds from medieval contexts. The flint comprised eight flakes, three blades, and one fragment (Table 2).

*Table 2: Quantification of worked flint*

Description	Whole	Fragment	Total
Flake	1	7	8
Utilised blade	-	1	1
Blade	-	2	2
Fragment	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>

The condition of the assemblage was moderate. The flint showed post-depositional damage in the form of frequent irregular nicks to the edges and breakages. The raw material comprised of light to dark grey and brown coloured opaque and vitreous flint. The quality of the raw material was good. Cortex was typically mid to dark brown in colour with a generally smooth, rolled and weathered surface. The raw material was likely to have been derived from local river gravel deposits.

The assemblage comprised eight flakes, of which all but one was broken. The three blades were all broken; one blade had also been possibly utilised bladelet. Also a fragment was recovered.

The technological characteristics of the assemblage are not directly dateable, however, a broad Neolithic to late Neolithic/early Bronze Age date with an early element can be suggested. The utilised blade is probably late Mesolithic/early Neolithic.

### 5.2 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprises 35 sherds, weighing 355g. It comprises a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and later pottery which suggests that there has been activity at the site from the early/middle Saxon period (5th-mid 9th century) until the present day.

There is small assemblage of early/middle Saxon pottery.

F1: Fine Quartz. Sparse to moderate sub-angular quartz up to 0.5mm, most less than 0.2mm. Rare calcareous material. 3 sherds, 19g.

The late Saxon and later pottery was quantified using the chronology and coding system of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS), as follows:

- F100: T1 (1) type St. Neots Ware (AD850-1100), 1 sherd, 20g
- F200: T1 (2) type St. Neots Ware (AD1000-1200), 1 sherd, 3g
- F330: Shelly Coarseware (AD1100-1400), 11 sherds, 67g
- F319: Lyveden/Stanion 'A' ware (AD1150-1400), 2 sherds, 12g
- F329: Potterspury Ware (AD1250-1600), 2 sherds, 26g
- F322: Lyveden/Stanion 'D' ware (AD1400-?1500), 1 sherd, 14g
- F401: Late Medieval Oxidized Ware, (AD1450-1550), 3 sherds, 40g
- F403: Midland Purple ware (AD1400-1600), 3 sherds, 74g
- F404: Cistercian Ware (AD1470-1600), 1 sherd, 3g
- F415: Creamware (1740-1820), 1 sherd, 5g
- F426: Iron-Glazed coarsewares (late 17th – 18th century), 4 sherds, 45g
- F1000: Misc 19th and 20th century wares, 2 sherds, 27g

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

All the fabric types are typical finds in the region. The early/middle Saxon pottery is undecorated, and thus cannot be dated other than to within the broad period. The Anglo-Saxon and medieval pottery is all slightly abraded, and the mean sherd size quite small. Additionally, all the sherds appear to be from different vessels, suggesting very strongly that most, if not all the pottery is the product of secondary deposition. It is worthy of note that very little usually common medieval pottery of 13th-14th century date was present, probably as a result of use as a graveyard throughout this period. Given that all the pottery from the graves dates to the 12th century or earlier, and is secondary or residual, it seems the latter is the most likely reason.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type

Fabric Fill/cut	E/MS		F100		F200		F330		F319		F329		F329 Date/ century
	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	No	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	
102 subsoil	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	29	-	-	-	-	12th
118 Burial 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	mid12th
118 Burial 6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	12th
124	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	12th
132 grave- earth	2	12	-	-	1	3	2	7	-	-	-	-	12th
139	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	-	12th
145	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Early/mid Saxon
151	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	1	10	-	-	mid 12th
157	-	-	1	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10th
201 topsoil	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	18	-	-	2	26	u/s
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>26</b>	

Fabric Fill/cut	F322		F401		F403		F404		F426		F415		F1000		Date/ century
	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	No	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	
103/pit 105	1	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	35	1	5	-	-	mid 18th
110/ pipe trench	-	-	2	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	mid 15th
201 topsoil	-	-	1	5	3	74	1	3	1	10	-	-	-	-	u/s
204/pit 205	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	27	19th
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>27</b>	

### 5.3 Building material by Pat Chapman

#### ***Ceramic floor tiles***

There are 18 floor tile sherds, weighing 1.2kg. Twelve sherds are from topsoil (201), with four from fill (103) of pit [105], and one each from the fill (110) of a Victorian pipe trench and the fill (204) of pit [205]. All the tiles are made from fine sandy orange clay with a medium grey core, and have chamfered edges for setting into a floor. The tiles are 22mm thick except for one 18mm thick. The only measurable tile is 123mm (4¾ inches) long on one side, which is typical for the standard square medieval floor tile. One sherd had been scored corner to corner before firing and broken afterwards to make a triangle. There are remnants of green glaze on 13 of the tiles and one sherd still has a small area of slip surviving. All the sherds have been heavily worn, so there is no indication of whether they were plain glazed tiles or decorated.

#### ***Architectural stone***

Two small fragments of worked architectural stone were recovered (Fig 10). A fragment of white limestone from pit fill (103) and a smaller fragment in a different geology from topsoil (201).



Architectural stone fragments (Scale 50mm)

Fig 10

#### ***Ceramic roof tiles***

There are seven roof tile sherds, weighing 343g. Five sherds come from pit fill (103) with three, 18mm thick, made from fine sandy orange clay, similar to the floor tiles. A better quality tile, 9mm thick, made from a silty sandy orange-brown clay with a black core is green glazed. There is also a pointed pyramidal crest made in fine silty buff clay with a green glaze that has come from a ridge tile. The two sherds from fill of grave (211) are 12mm thick. One is made from silty pale orange-brown clay and the other from coarse buff clay with black surfaces. The crest and tiles from pit fill (103) are probably 14th to 16th century in date, while the other two tiles from grave (211) could date up to the 18th century.

Both Potterspurty to the west and Lyveden and Stanion to the north-east near Corby were producing roof tiles as well as pottery throughout the medieval period.

### ***Limestone roof tiles***

One almost complete limestone roof tile and the fragments of four others were recovered from pit fill (103). The almost complete tile is missing one corner and the very top, it is 205mm long, 90mm wide at the top and 160-170mm wide at the base, 20mm thick and the remnant perforation is 8mm in diameter. A fragment in a similar type of limestone is 20mm thick with a perforation 10mm in diameter. Two fragments in a very shelly limestone are 10mm thick with perforations 10mm in diameter. The smallest fragment has a perforation 8mm in diameter.

#### **5.4 Slag** by Andy Chapman

From fill (103) of pit [105] there is a small piece of fluid ferrous slag, weighing 5g.

#### **5.5 Other finds** by Tora Hylton

##### ***Metal finds***

With the exception of a small group of unstratified finds recovered from topsoil and subsoil deposits overlying the main area, most of the finds were recovered from grave earth associated with Burial 6. The assemblage includes a possible iron coffin grip and a range of nails.

The cast iron grip was recovered from grave [154], it comprises a parallel-sided strip with curved profile, which flattens out towards rounded terminals which are pierced by a centrally placed iron rivet. Coffin grips would have been placed at intervals around the coffin, normally three on each side.

Nine nails were recovered, four from the subsoil (102), four from Burial 6 and one from Burial 1. It is difficult to be sure if any of the nails originate from coffins, as they are all so different and most are incomplete. Two masonry nails measuring up to 83mm in length were recovered from subsoil deposits (102), but of particular interest is the presence of a horseshoe nail from Burial 6, which typological dates to the 13th/14th century (Clarke 1995, Fig 66, a).

##### ***Glass***

Eleven fragments of decaying window glass were recovered from deposits overlying the main area (102) and the service trenches (201) and from stratified features within the main excavation area (103, 110). The shards range from small miniscule fragments to pieces measuring up to 33 x 18mm and 1.5mm thick. Much of the assemblage displays the characteristics of dehydration, the surfaces are iridescent and the 'weathering' crust has started to laminate/flake. The only piece of note is a small fragment (22 x 14mm) recovered from fill (103) of pit [105]. It is covered in an iridescent 'weathering' crust and on one side a vestige of a possible grozed edge is visible, suggesting that the piece is part of a quarry light originating from a leaded window.



## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The excavations in advance of the church extension have confirmed the presence of unmarked burials in this northern area of the churchyard comprising several periods of inhumation. It is also clear that the current churchyard wall does not accurately represent the limit of the burials. The presence of inhumations in the rear garden of Hastings Cottage, immediately to the north-west of the churchyard, puts the boundary at least 3-4m beyond its current position, probably more. A building likely to be Hastings Cottage or its immediate predecessor can be seen on the 1885 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map, this date could be regarded as *terminus ante quem* for the burials in this area.

Whilst the burials were planned at four different levels within the main excavation area, these are merely arbitrary and do not reflect any sequence of burial. It appears that the churchyard was used intensively prior to its closure in April 2007. Whilst orderly rows of east-west graves (as can be seen in the uppermost juvenile burials) was the norm, overcrowding and repeated truncation of graves has made placing the burials in any accurate order largely impossible. The predilection of post-medieval deep grave digging further complicates and destroys earlier burial sequences (Rodwell 1989, 158).

Two large pits [105] and [167] with associated charnel material indicate that at some point parts of the medieval churchyard were re-organised and cleared of burials to allow continued use of the burial ground. 'While the disturbance of corpses in a partially decomposed [or skeletonised] state might seem repugnant to us, it was clearly a common occurrence, certainly down to the middle of the last century' (Rodwell 1989, 158), and churchyard clearances are still common today.

The use of limestone slabs adjacent to the head in two of the burials (10 and 14) may indicate a much earlier burial tradition than most of the others within the excavation area. Similar practices were present in burials at Raunds Furnells where stone arrangements of rough irregular limestone occurred in more than half of the burials (Boddington 1996). Some examples show stones encasing the skull, almost identical to those observed in Burial 10. Dating from Raunds Furnells suggests that this tradition dates to between the 10th and mid 12th centuries, but is most likely to occur in burial pre-dating the Norman conquest (Auduoy and Chapman 2009). When describing Anglo-Saxon mortuary practices, Lucy (2000, 101) suggests that 'sometimes burials are found to have stone, either as grave covers or forming a lining to the grave'.

'By the eighth century clothed burials had virtually disappeared for everyone except clerics, and burial in a shroud in the style of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world was almost universal style, based on the gospel description of Christ's burial' (Taylor 2001, 174). This tradition continued through much of the medieval period. The lack of coffin furniture and the well articulated, tightly packed presentation of most of the burials suggest that most were buried in this fashion. There are three exceptions to this; burials 1 and 5 had coffin nails associated with the skeletal remains. Also a possible cast iron coffin handle was recovered from Burial 17. This indicates that at least three individuals were interred in coffins. The loosely articulated appearance, splayed foot bones and disarticulated skull in Burial 17 further suggest that this individual was buried in a coffin. These burials may date to a slightly later period, possibly the 18th-19th centuries though accurate dating is not possible.

Overall it can be said that the majority of the burials observed date to the post-medieval period with the two charnel deposits possibly representing a clearance or

re-organisation of earlier medieval burials. The presence of exclusively sub-adult or juvenile individuals in the uppermost burials suggests that in its last phase this area close to the church was reserved for children. The occasional survival of burials with earlier mortuary traditions hint at an earlier origin to the church and churchyard. The Saxon stone font which stands in the church today adds credence to this possibility.

The recovery of several pieces of worked stone, stone roof tile and medieval window glass may be evidence of building debris relating to the extensive remodelling of the church in 1849 by Lewis Lloyd and 1852-4 by E.F Law.

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**Maps**

1742 tithe map showing the church and surrounding land, courtesy of Northamptonshire Record Office

1885 1:2500 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of Little Billing, courtesy of Northamptonshire Record Office

**APPENDIX: THE BURIALS**

None of the skeletal material was taken off-site. Both the burials excavated from the main area and the human remains retrieved during the excavation of the service trenches were deposited within the church and later reburied. As the remains did not leave site, they were not available for full cleaning and analysis under lab conditions. A trained osteoarchaeologist was available to make these assessments though interpretations were kept as broad as possible and by no means reflect a full and proper analysis. Estimation of age at death was limited to juvenile or adult (Scheuer and Black 2000, 469) unless teeth were available for a more accurate and quick estimation. Sex was estimated where possible and any obvious trauma and pathology was noted. Due to the restricted observations, no metric analysis was undertaken.

**Burial 1**

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Right shoulder: 57.43m

Right foot: 57.41m

The individual was largely truncated by a large pit [105] (Fig 11). The right arm, right leg, lower left leg and a few right ribs survived. The remaining skeletal elements are well preserved with minimal weathering and >75% of the cortical bone surviving. The size of the bones and lack of fusion of most epiphyses indicates these are the remains of a juvenile individual. No obvious trauma or pathology was observed on any of the bones. The skull was missing entirely thus precluding a more accurate estimation of age.



Burial 9, 1 and pit [105], looking west Fig 11

**Burial 2**

Probably a supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Top of skull: 57.36m

Feet: 57.39

The inhumation had been almost entirely truncated by a large pit [105] (Fig 12). A skull present at the western edge of the pit is thought to relate to feet at the eastern edge of the pit. The remaining skeletal elements are well preserved with minimal weathering and >75% of the cortical bone surviving. The individual was probably in his or her mid-late teens based on dental eruption. No obvious trauma or pathology was noted.



Burial 2 and pit [105], looking west Fig 12

**Burial 3**

Charnel material observed toward the bottom of pit [105] (Fig 13). Several individuals, both juvenile and adult, are represented. The skeletal elements in this pit were left *in situ*, recorded and reburied as they would not be affected by the development. The highest point of the charnel material was recorded as 56.94m aOD.



Burial 3, charnel material (104) in large pit [105], looking north Fig 13

#### Burial 4

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Base of skull: 57.54m

Pelvis: 57.54m

Feet: 57.54m

The majority of the individual was present (>75%), though the right foot was missing and only a few fragments of the skull had survived (Fig 14). The bone is in an excellent state of preservation. The skull was not available for assessment of the dentition, however, the size and stages of fusion of other skeletal elements indicate that these are the remains of a juvenile individual less than 10 years of age. No obvious trauma or pathology was noted.



Burial 4, looking west      Fig 14



### Burial 5

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Base of skull: 57.56m

Pelvis: 57.52m

Feet: 57.51m

The individual was well represented with almost all of the skeletal elements present. The left foot has been lost as a modern drain [158] cut across the burial obliquely at this point (Fig 15). The bone surface is in an excellent state of preservation. The skull seems to have been damaged post-mortem, probably crushed by the weight of the soil above. Some of the dentition has survived though formation/eruption could not be easily assessed as the mandible and maxillae are severely damaged. The size and stages of fusion of other skeletal elements suggest this is a juvenile individual in his or her early to mid teens. No obvious trauma or pathology was noted.



Burial 5 cut by drain [158], looking north Fig 15

### Burial 6

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Base of skull: 57.55m

Pelvis: 57.55m

The skeletal remains for this individual are in very good condition. Unfortunately, the inhumation was truncated from the pelvis down by a modern drain [158] (Fig 16). The delicate skull had been crushed by the weight of the soil post-mortem and only small fragments remained. The bones were loosely articulated and look to have displaced slightly, this may suggest that this individual was buried in a coffin. The individual, based on size and formation of the bones was a juvenile, less than 10 years old.

Fragments of another burial were closely associated with this inhumation (Fig 16). A large fragment of skull and other small fragments of bone were assigned a separate burial number (Burial 8) though they probably represent residual material in the grave earth which has fallen in as the coffin decomposed.



Burials 6 and 8 truncated by drain [158], looking west Fig 16

### Burial 7

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Top of skull: 57.54m

Feet: 57.46m

The skeletal remains in this burial are very well preserved. A modern drain [158] cut through the middle of the inhumation leaving roughly 50% of the individual in place (Fig 17). Some deciduous teeth were noted, this along with other erupting teeth and lack of fusion for several skeletal elements indicates that this was a juvenile individual. No obvious trauma or pathology was noted.



Burial 7 cut by drain [158], looking west Fig 17

**Burial 8**

See Burial 6

**Burial 9**

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Left shoulder: 57.41m

Left ankle: 57.46m

This individual lay immediately to the south of Burial 1 and had been largely truncated by a Victorian drain [111] (Fig 11). Only the left arm and left leg remained and the bone was in excellent condition. The skull was not present though the size and fusion of the remaining skeletal elements indicate a juvenile individual. No obvious trauma or pathology was noted.

**Burial 10**

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Left shoulder: 57.41m

Left ankle: 57.46m

The skeletal remains are in good condition. Much of the lower limbs were missing apart from the upper two thirds of the left femur (Fig 18). It is likely that this burial was truncated by another later burial. The dentition and skeletal fusion indicate this is a juvenile individual. The straight break on the femur can probably be attributed to a grave digger's spade rather than pre/peri-mortem amputation of the leg. No other trauma or pathology was noted. Rough limestone slabs were present around the left side of the skull, indicating an earlier burial tradition.



Burial 10, looking west      Fig 18

### Burial 11

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Top of skull: 57.29m

Pelvis: 57.20m

Feet: 57.29m

The skeletal remains are in excellent condition, >75% of the bones were present and unbroken (Fig 19). All of the observable epiphyses were fully fused and the third molars had erupted with minimal wear present on the occlusal surfaces of the teeth. These remains represent a young adult. The sex of the individual was estimated as male based on the skull and pelvic morphology. No obvious trauma or pathology was noted.



Burials 11 and 13, looking west Fig 19

## Burial 12

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Top of skull: 57.35m

Pelvis: 57.21m

Feet: 57.26m

The skeletal remains in this burial are in excellent condition, >75% of the individual was present and most bones are complete with no breaks (Fig 20). Assessment of the remains suggests this individual was an adult male. The sternal end of the clavicle was noted as being only partially fused suggesting the individual was probably in their late twenties to early thirties. One peg incisor was noted in the individuals dentition but otherwise no trauma or pathology was noted.

Some disarticulated adult skull and long bone fragments were found with this burial, and were presumed to be residual rather than evidence for another individual or secondary burial.



Burial 12, looking west Fig 20

### Burial 13

Burial 13 comprised a small amount of fragmented and displaced human bone present at a height of 57.27m aOD. The bones present seem to represent most of the left leg of one juvenile individual. Only the tibia looks to be *in situ* with the other fragments of femur and fibula loosely in the correct position though clearly disturbed. It seems probable that this indicates a burial largely truncated by subsequent burials (Burial 10 and 11) (Fig 19).

### Burial 14

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Top of skull: 57.17m

Pelvis: 57.08m

Feet: 57.12m

This individual is one of the surviving burials from the early medieval period, as indicated by the stone slabs encasing the skull (Fig 21). The skeletal material is in excellent condition with >75% of the individual present. Some epiphyseal lines were visible at the time of excavation; the mandibular third molars were partially erupted. This individual is likely to have been in their late teens to early twenties. The individual was categorised as a probable male based on the skull morphology. Severe supra-gingival calculus was noted on the lower incisors. No other obvious trauma or pathology was noted.



Burial 14, looking west Fig 21



**Burial 15**

Well preserved juvenile remains, aligned west-east, recorded at 57.07m aOD.

The bones were extremely delicate with at least having disintegrated (Fig 22). The small size and stage of growth evident, indicates that this individual probably died at or soon after birth.



Burial 15, looking west Fig 22

**Burial 16**

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Pelvis: 57.08m

Feet: 57.12m

This burial extended beyond the limit of excavation, the individual was visible from the lumbar region down (Fig 23). The bones were very well preserved with few breaks and most of the individual represented. From what was visible in the trench, the individual was described as an adult male, based on the pelvic morphology. No obvious trauma or pathology was noted.



Burials 16 and 18, looking west Fig 23

### Burial 17

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Top of skull: 57.13m

Neck: 57.05m

Pelvis: 57.07m

Feet: 57.08m

The skeletal remains from this burial are very well preserved with few breaks. Almost the entire individual is present. Some displacement of bones was evident, particularly the head and feet, suggesting the individual was buried in a coffin rather than wrapped in a shroud (Fig 24). The skeletal remains are described as those of a probable male, based on skull and pelvic morphology. The individual was an adult as indicated by the dentition and the stage of development across the skeleton. Severe supra-gingival calculus was noted on several teeth. The left maxillary molar was impacted, erupting at an improper angle causing irregular wear patterns its occlusal surface and those of adjacent teeth. No other obvious trauma or pathology was noted.



Burials 17 and 14, looking west Fig 24

### **Burial 18**

This burial comprised the distal left tibia and left foot of one individual present at 57.08m aOD. This grave has been almost entirely truncated by Burial 16 (Fig 23). The remains probably belong to an adult individual. No obvious trauma or pathology was noted.

### **Burial 19**

A supine inhumation, aligned west-east, recorded at the following heights (aOD):

Pelvis: 57.14m

Knee: 57.15m

This skeleton of this individual was largely obscured by a modern drain [158] and the limit of excavation. Upon removal of the modern drain, the upper part of the skeleton was exposed, recorded and removed (Figs 7 and 25). Based on dental eruption and epiphyseal fusion, the remains are probably those of a young adult. A quick assessment of the pelvis and skull suggested the remains may have been those of a female.



Burials 19 and 20, looking west Fig 25

### **Burial 20**

Charnel material (163) visible in a pit [164] partially visible in the north-east corner of site (Fig 25). The skeletal material comprised disarticulated remains from several juvenile and adult individuals. At least two complete adult skulls were present. Some of the charnel material was removed to accommodate that raft foundation, though much was left preserved *in situ*.

### **Burials 21 and 22**

Two individuals retrieved during the excavation of a new service trench in the rear garden of Hasting Cottage, immediately north-west of the churchyard. Both individuals were described as adult when recovered and are likely to represent at least two supine inhumations aligned east to west (Fig 2). The bones are fragmented but in good condition.

### **Burial 23**

These remains were recorded after a modern drain [158] was removed at the end of the excavation (Fig 7). They comprise part of the right and left foot of one individual. They were heavily disturbed; several skeletal elements were missing though the bone remained in relatively good condition. Neither ageing nor sexing was possible and no obvious trauma or pathology was noted.

### **Burials 24-29**

These graves were observed at the lowest level of excavation in the main trench (Fig 26). None of the graves were excavated as they existed below the level of the proposed raft foundation.



Burials 24-29, looking east Fig 26

### **Burials 30-36**

These burials were recovered during the excavation of new service trenches within the boundary of the current churchyard (Fig 2). The majority represent adult individuals and exist at a depth of between 1.10m and 1.50m below the current ground surface. The two exceptions are Burial 35 and Burial 36 which are juvenile individuals and are approximately 0.70m below the current ground surface. All parts of skeletons recovered were observed to have been supine on an east to west alignment.



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