

St. Mary's Church, Storrington, West Sussex
Report on the Archaeological Works
January 2008



The excavated area, looking south-east.

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Archaeological works carried out in the churchyard of St. Marys Church, Storrington, uncovered the remains of 61 inhumation burials to the north of the church. This archaeological fieldwork was carried out during trenching works associated with the construction of an extension to the church. All the remains were re-interred elsewhere within the graveyard.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

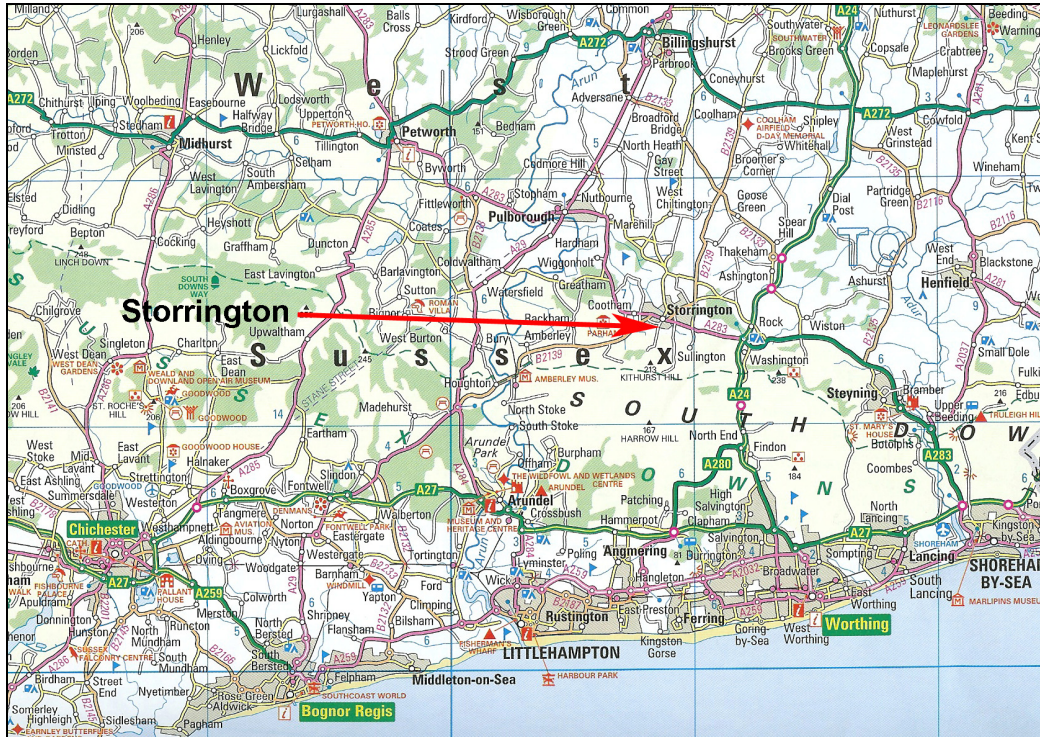


Figure 1 Map showing the location of the village Storrington © Crown copyright.
All rights reserved. License no: AL100036068.

1. St. Mary's Church lies on the south side of the village of Storrington, West Sussex, on the corner of School Lane and Church Street. The village is situated approximately 9 miles to the north of Worthing, just to the west of the junction of the A24 and A283. The church sits at 40m aOD, OS grid reference TQ 0855 1410. The underlying geology of the site is Lower Greensand, here tending to red in colour.
2. The PCC of St. Mary's Church, Storrington, obtained planning permission (DC/06/2916) for the reconstruction and extension of the north porch to provide an enlarged lobby, flower/boiler room and disabled persons toilet facilities. A condition of the associated Diocesan Faculty required for archaeological work to be undertaken should remains of archaeological interest be uncovered. West Sussex Archaeology Ltd. was appointed by the PCC to undertake these works.
3. The archaeological fieldwork took place on the 18th, 19th, 30th & 31st of July 2007. The results from this fieldwork are detailed below. The project archive will be deposited with West Sussex Records Office.

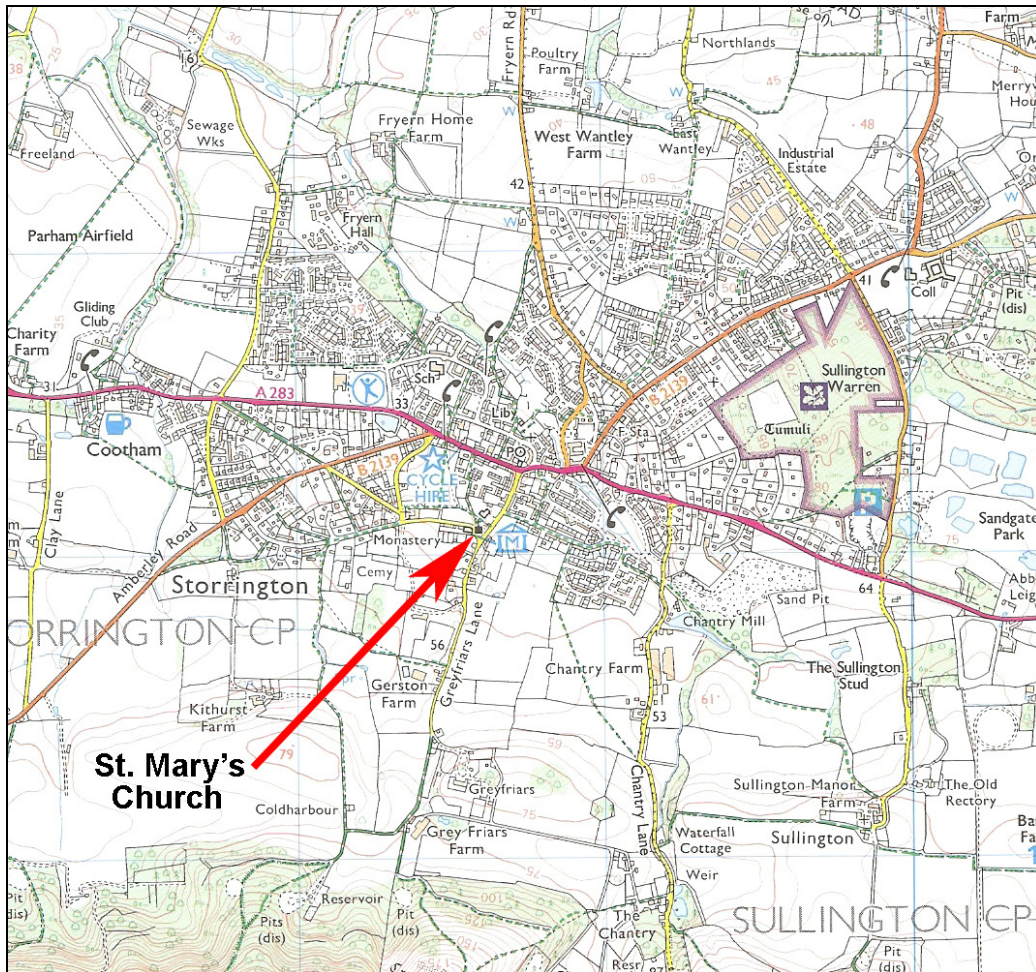


Figure 2 Map showing the location of St. Mary's Church © Crown copyright.
All rights reserved. License no: AL100036068.

HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1. The north aisle of the church of St. Mary dates to the Norman period, when it formed the original nave and chancel. The addition of a new nave and chancel to the south probably occurred in the 13th century, with further significant re-workings in the 1750's and 1870's. In 1876 the present south aisle was added.
2. No previous archaeological investigations have taken place in the vicinity of the church

RESULTS

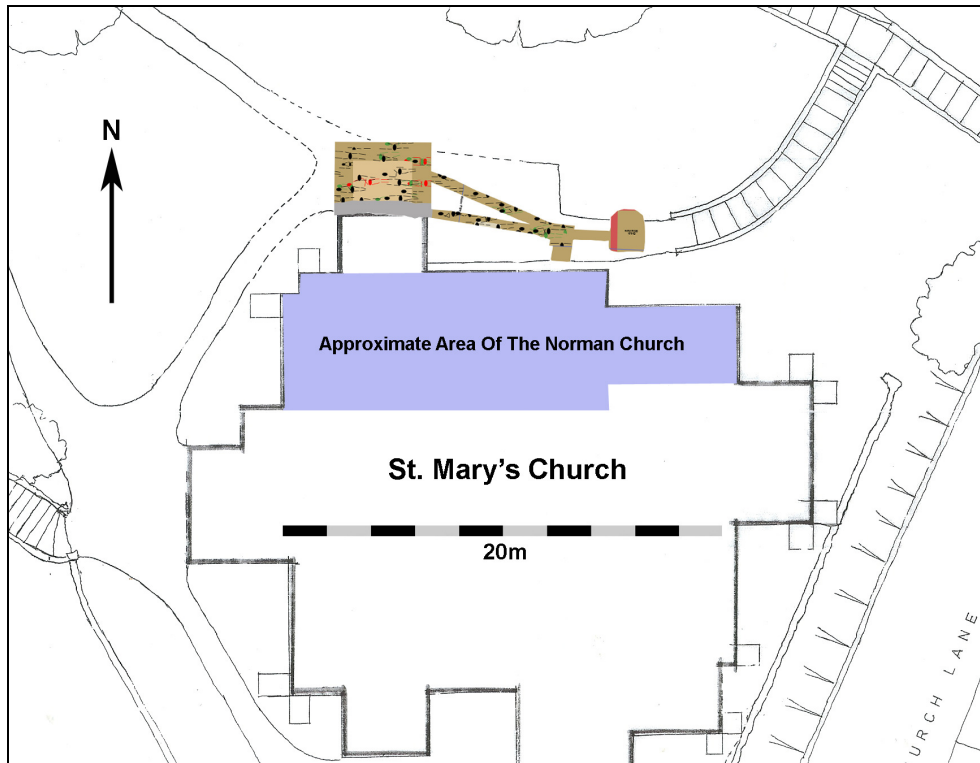


Figure 3 Plan of St.Mary's Church, showing the location of the excavated area.

Methodology

1. The wording of the condition attached to St.Marys' faculty allowed for building works to commence without an attendant archaeologist. It was only when remains were uncovered that West Sussex Archaeology (WSA) was contacted. WSA was to remain on site for the remainder of the groundworks as in total 61 skeletons were exposed, recorded and removed for re-burial.
2. All excavation was carried out by hand by the building contractors, A & F Pilbeam Ltd and George Anelay of WSA. Once a skeleton, whether complete or incomplete, was identified, the principal bones were exposed in order to identify its position. These were: the skull, the arms, the pelvis and the legs. The skeleton was then recorded by the archaeologist. The upper 0.5 – 0.6m of deposits in all the excavated trenches was composed of disturbed soil and sand. Below this the undisturbed Lower Greensand was encountered, with few burials lying below its surface.
3. Each skeleton was first photographed, accompanied by a suitable scale. The position of each skeleton was then indicated on a plan at 1:50 such that its location in relation to other burials was recorded and the arrangement of the principal bones was shown. A level was then

taken on the skeleton, placed in the pelvis if present, otherwise centrally to the remains. Notes were taken of any significant individual details of the burial, such as height, any direct relationships to others and presence of coffin furniture or grave goods. The height was calculated by measuring from the top of the skull to the ankle and then adding 12cm for the feet and any loss from soft tissue decay. It is acknowledged that this is only an approximate measurement. In the event few heights were measured due to the limited size of the excavated trenches.

- Individual loose bones were not recorded, but simply gathered for re-burial. Disarticulated bones were common across the site due to the number of succeeding burials. All the bones were then collected together for re-burial elsewhere within the churchyard.

The Burials

- The table below lists all the identified burials. The burial number refers to those on the plan. The column headed “remains” indicates if the burial was of an adult or child, or gives a reason as to why this was not known. The identification as adult, child or infant is done simply on the size of the bones, obviously this method is approximate and it would be hard on this basis to distinguish between a large child and a small adult. The final column indicates the depth of the burial.

Burial No.	Remains	Height	Coffin fittings	Depth (cm)
1	cut by later			35
2	adult	5ft 4in		30
3	Cut by later			35
4	arm later than leg			40
5	Cut by later	6ft (estimated)		20
6	Cut by later			45
7	Part outside trench			50
8	child	4ft		30
9	Cut by later			30
10	Cut by later			40
11	Child?	4ft 10in		30
12	Cut by later			25
13	adult	5ft 6in		30
14	Part outside trench			10
15	Part outside trench			45
16	Part outside trench			40
17	Part outside trench			35
18	Cut by later			60
19	Cut by later			35

20	Part outside trench			80
21	Part outside trench			35
22	Part outside trench			45
23	Cut by later			25
24	Cut by later			30
25	Cut by later			40
26	cut by later			50
27	Cut by later			40
28	child - part outside trench			40
29	Part outside trench			20
30	Part outside trench			60
31	Part outside trench			60
32	Cut by later			45
33	Cut by later			35
34	Adult - legs of 36	5ft 8in		60
35	Part outside trench			70
36	Adult - top of 34	5ft 8in		60
37	Part outside trench			70
38	Cut by later			65
39	Cut by later			75
40	Adult, Part outside trench	5ft 8in	handle	80
41	Part outside trench			55
42	Cut by later			75
43	Adult, head of 48	6ft 9in		45
44	Part outside trench			75
45	Part outside trench			80
46	Cut by later			40
47	Adult	5ft 6in		40
48	Adult, body of 43	6ft 9in		35
49	Cut by later			50
50	Cut by later			65
51	Part outside trench			25
52	Part outside trench			35
53	Part outside trench			60
54	Part outside trench			75
55	baby, mostly decayed			-
56	Cut by later			55
57	Part outside trench			30
58	Part outside trench			50
59	Cut by later			30
60	Cut by later			40
61	Cut by later			45

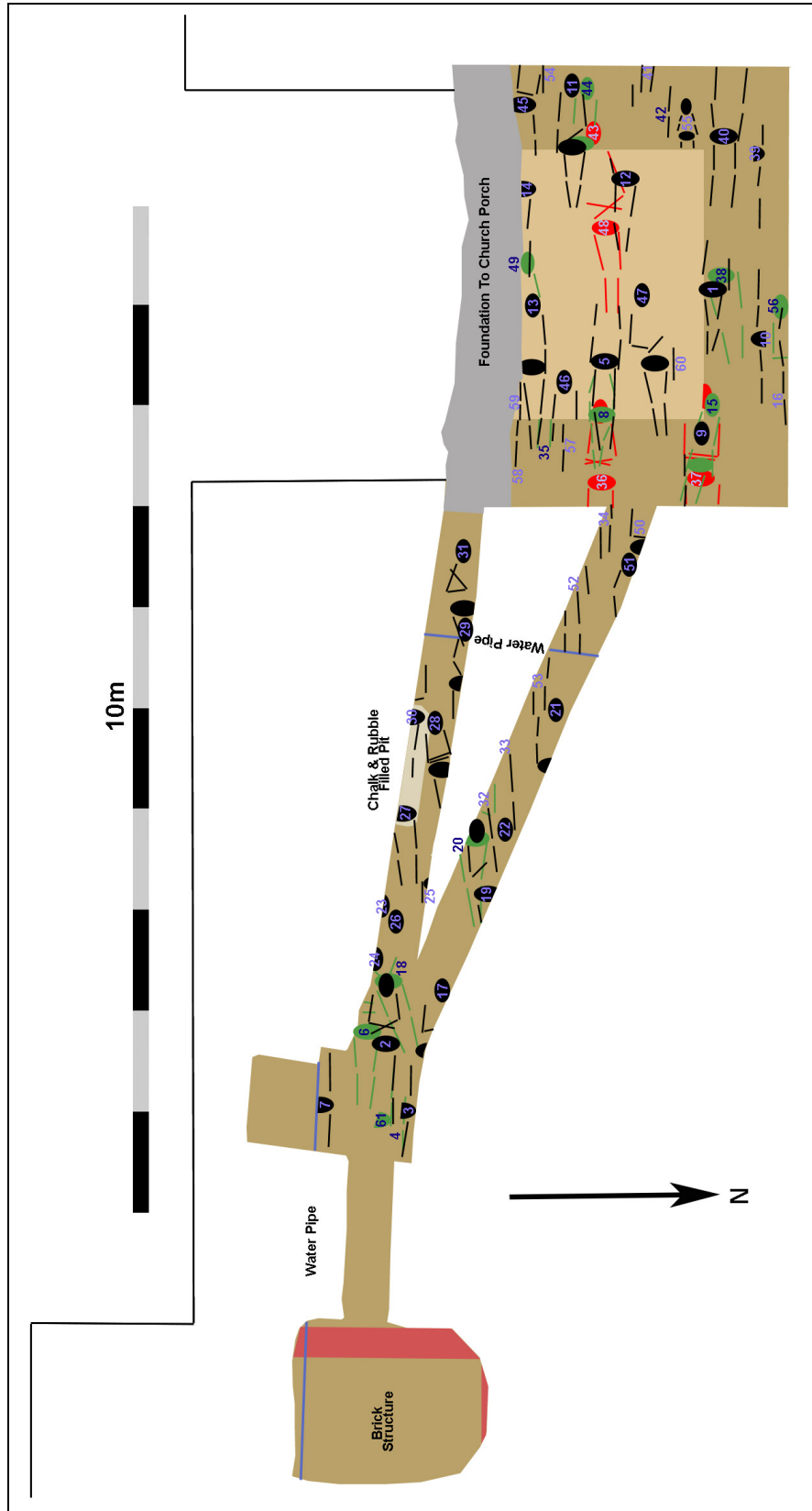


Figure 4 Plan of the burials.

CONCLUSION

1. There is only a limited amount that can be garnered from the 61 burials revealed by these excavations. Dating the graves could only be done on the basis of any coffin furniture or grave goods recovered. Only one burial showed any sign of a coffin, number 40, where a coffin handle was found of probable 18th or 19th century date. The lack of any wood remains or staining created by a decayed coffin is probably a result of the sand geology. The absence of coffin handles with the remaining burials suggests either poverty or an earlier date. The latter appears the more likely explanation when taken together with the shallow depth of all the burials. It seems probable that this area of the graveyard became disused in the 18th century, possibly due to the pathway round the church still in use.
2. The only other burial of note is number 43/48, due to its unusual height, although some caution should be exercised over the way the measurement was calculated.
3. Part way along the southern of the two service trenches a large pit was revealed, which had been backfilled with chalk and rubble. This had burials both beneath it and dug into its backfill. This indicates that it was excavated after the area became a burial ground, but before it was abandoned. It is not known what purpose it served.



Figure 5 Photograph of the brick structure, looking north-west. The scale is 1m.

4. At the extreme eastern end of the excavated trenches, at a point where a larger hole was needed for a waste tank, a brick structure was uncovered. Only two of its walls were exposed, but these suggested it was at least over 1.7m square. One wall had a niche set into it. Upon disuse it had been backfilled with rubble. The brickwork was not early and it is likely to be a late 18th or 19th century structure, possibly a boiler room.

5. A number of artefacts were recovered from amongst the disturbed soil in the trenches. These included fourteen sherds of pottery dating from the medieval to post-medieval period, a stray coffin handle, a small copper alloy bell, a copper alloy button and two Nuremberg jettons. These last were manufactured by Hans Krauwinckel in Nuremberg between c.1580 and 1600 and were widely used in England as reckoning counters at the time. The presence of reckoning counters and pottery sherds in a churchyard is not to be thought of as surprising, in earlier periods the churchyard formed the focal place for much village activity.