

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT



## The Church of All Saints, Fornham All Saints FAS 035



### A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF AN EXTENSION FOR TOILET AND LOBBY

Planning Application No. SE/07/0009

NGR: TL 8375 6762

Oasis Ref: Suffolkc1-45805

Funded by: Fornham All Saints PPC

SCCAS Report no. 2008/125

## Summary

A photographic survey and monitoring of ground works was undertaken at Fornham All Saints church. The position of five burials were recorded, three of which were lifted for reburial. The shallow depth suggests that the burials pre-dated the 19th century but beyond this they were undated. The evidence of the building recording demonstrated that the windows of the north aisle had been partly re-set and that the north aisle wall post-dated the construction of the north transept.

## Introduction

A photographic survey and the monitoring of groundworks were undertaken as part of a programme of archaeological work at Fornham All saints Church. The work was a condition of planning application (SE/07/0009) to construct an extension to the north side of the nave to provide toilet facilities, and was completed in accordance with a brief and specification issued by Bob Carr of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team and the Disocean Advisory Committee (Appendix 1). The work was completed during August and September 2007, and funded by the Parochial Parish Council.

The church of All Saints lies at TL 8375 6762 at the centre of the village and lies within the projected line of the nationally important Neolithic Cursus monument. The existence of the church at Fornham All Saints is recorded in Domesday. Parts of the current building date to the 12th century, including the south door, and it has been enlarged and undergone extensive remodelling throughout the medieval period.

The proposed extension is to butt up against the north wall of the north aisle to the west of the north transept and will be accessed through an existing doorway. The extension was designed to minimise the impact on the medieval fabric and was to be built off a shallow raft footing to minimise ground disturbance.

## Methodology

The photographic survey was undertaken in advance of the start of construction work to record those parts of the church that would be obscured or visually impacted upon, and included the west wall of the north transept and the north wall of the north aisle. Surveying targets were fixed

to the wall and located using a Total Station Theodolite (TST) to enable the photographs to be accurately scaled and a mosaic image produced. The elevations were recorded using large format black and white film and high resolution digital photography.

The excavation for the raft foundation was undertaken under the supervision of the monitoring archaeologist. The positions of shallow articulated skeletons were recorded and the bones lifted, the skeletons remained on site and were reburied close to their original site. Those parts of the nave footings that were exposed by the excavation were drawn at 1:20.

The site records have been archived in the small and main stores of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service at Bury St Edmunds and with the County Historic Environment Record under the parish code FAS 035. A copy of the report has also been lodged with the OASIS on-line database (ref: suffolkc1-45805).

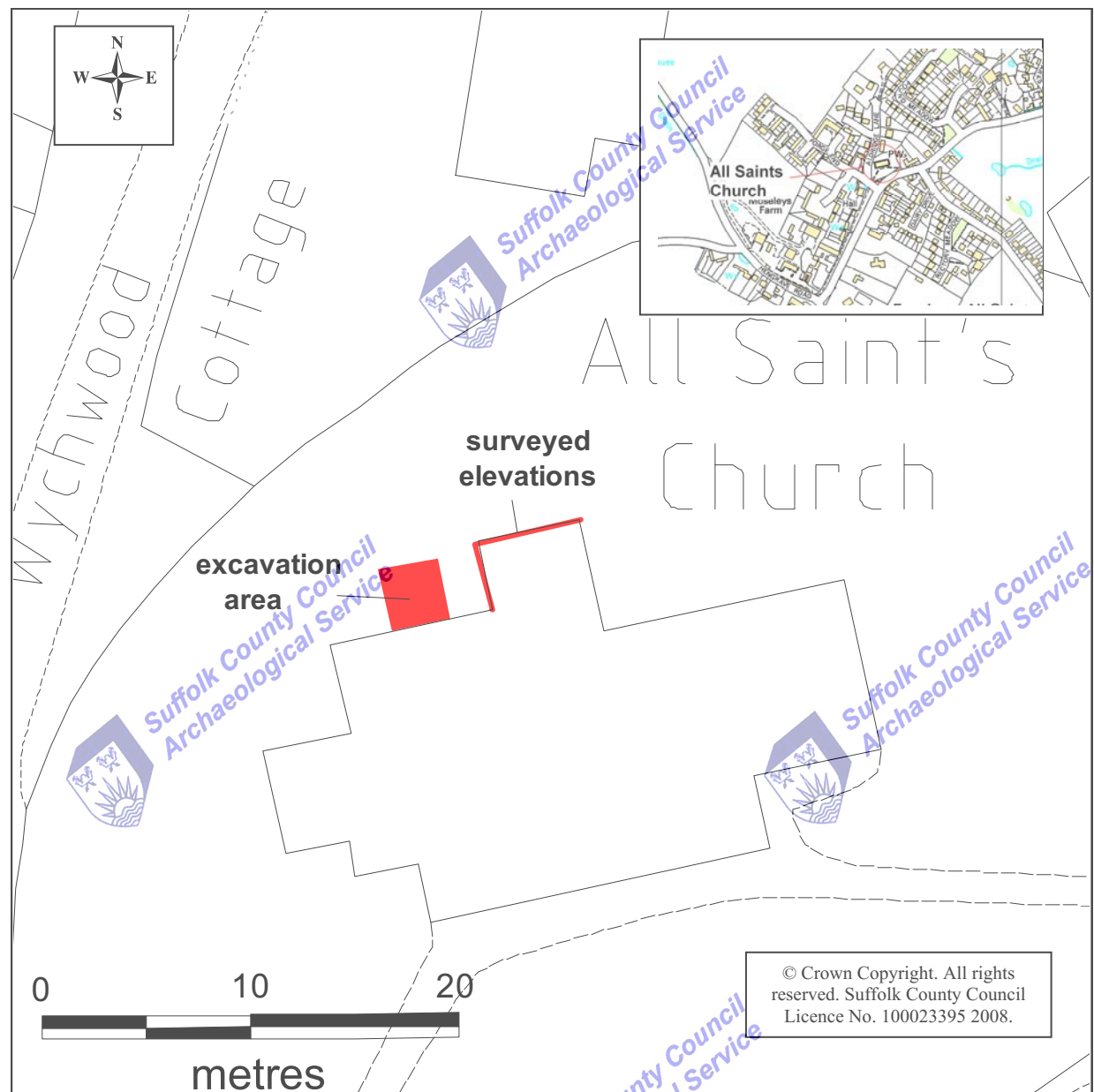


Figure 1. Site location plan

## Results

### Photographic Survey

The TST was downloaded and converted into Mapinfo tables and overlaid with the digital images to produce the elevations for the report (Fig. 2). The large format film photographs have been catalogued under the code FAS 035 and archived in the archaeological store, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

The building was restored at the end of the 19th century and the wall and the surveyed wall had been re-pointed masking some of the medieval detail. The north aisle and the north transept were constructed separately with the north aisle being the later of the two. However, within each of these two elements no other phases of build were visible. During the survey work the following observations were made:

- The north aisle is butted against the north transept west wall
- The fabric of the north aisle includes both late-medieval brick and reused lime stone in it make up. Neither of these materials appears the wall fabric of the north transept which is constructed entirely of flint.
- The upper part of the window tracery of the north aisle has been restored in the recent past (C19th?) the window to the east of the door has been reset and the surrounding wall fabric replaced.
- The stone work surrounding the door uses a variation of stone from a soft clunch (similar to the window tracery) to a harder a fine grain limestone, and the arch and the top of the east side of the door look like replacements. However the setting of stonework appears to all be contemporary and there is no visible evidence that the flintwork surrounding the door has been rebuilt. The roll moulding does not extend to the step and the base of the wall either side of the door has been rendered to mimic a stone plinth.

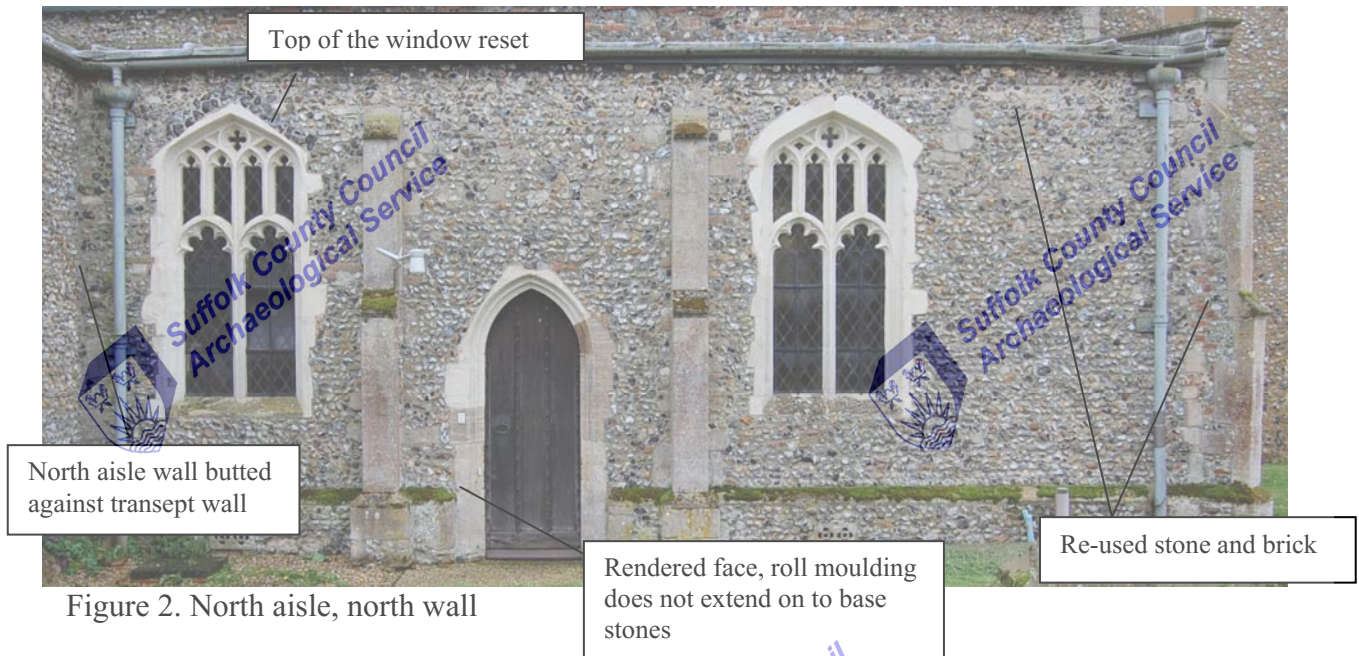


Figure 2. North aisle, north wall

### Monitoring of ground works

The excavation for the raft foundation was wholly within disturbed ground. Five un-marked burials (0003-0007) were exposed by the excavation at depths varying from 300- 450mm below the present ground surface (Fig 3). The sites of three of the skeletons were threatened by the foundation depth, these were lifted archaeologically and the bones stored on site for reburial at the end of the groundwork excavation. The burials were un-coffined, closely spaced and lay within a neat row. The non occurrence of overlapping graves suggests that the burial date for these was broadly contemporary and the shallow depth suggests that they pre-date the mid 19th



century; as it was after this date dug after the middle of the 19th century, when following the introduction of a succession of burial legislation graves a by convention were dug deeper.

In addition to the skeletons a 17th-18th century brick-lined tomb and brick-built heating duct for a now defunct Victorian heating system was found. On the surface, overlying but offset from the tomb, was a slab dated 1801 but the two were not thought to be related. The heating duct cut through skeleton 0003.

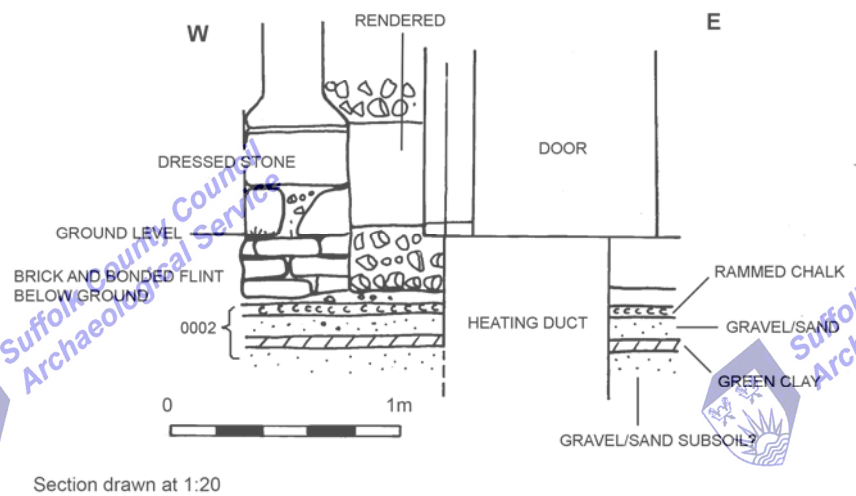
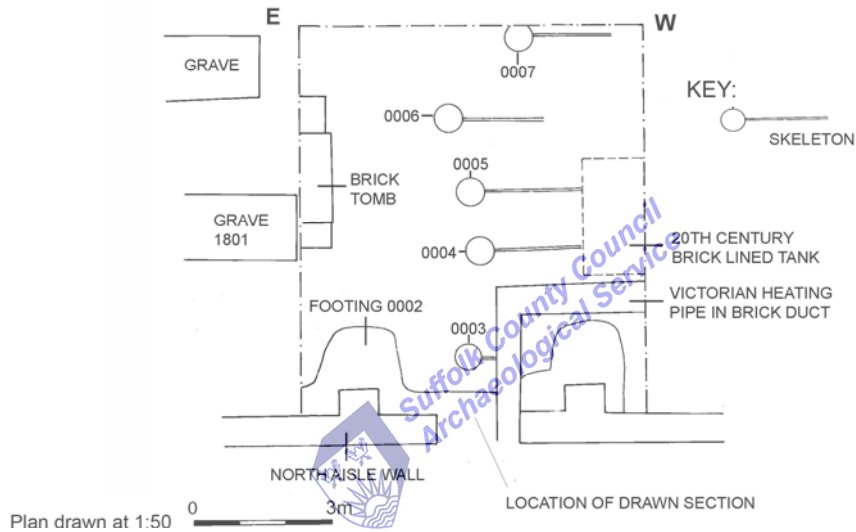


Figure 3. Plan of stripped area and section showing north aisle wall footing.

The north aisle was built off a substantial footing for a medieval building, which was sectioned and partially exposed by the current excavations. The aisle wall had a further 250mm of bonded flintwork below the current ground surface, but the buttresses either side of the door were built of brick below ground (section, Fig. 3). The bricks were handmade, using a buff/yellow firing clay and were 1 1/8" thick suggesting an early 16th century date and the interface between the bricks and the stone of the buttress proper suggests that the ground level here has remained unchanged. The bonded fabric of the church was built over a footing trench infilled with alternating thin layers of clay, gravel and rammed chalk to form a consolidated base (Fig. 3, 0002). The trench was at least 500mm deep and considerably wider than the wall, the north edge of the trench was recorded in plan and was 500mm away from the elevation.

## Conclusion

The results of the monitoring confirm that there are articulated burials close to the surface and immediately adjacent to the church north wall. The date of the burials is unknown, but because of their depth they are likely to predate the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The absence of undisturbed soil within the area suggests that they are not primary burials. The design of the extension footings ensured minimal impact to the medieval fabric and limited ground disturbance. As a consequence only archaeology dated to the later phases of the church's life (late 15 early 16<sup>th</sup> century or later) was exposed and opportunities for further investigation were not presented.

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July 2008

