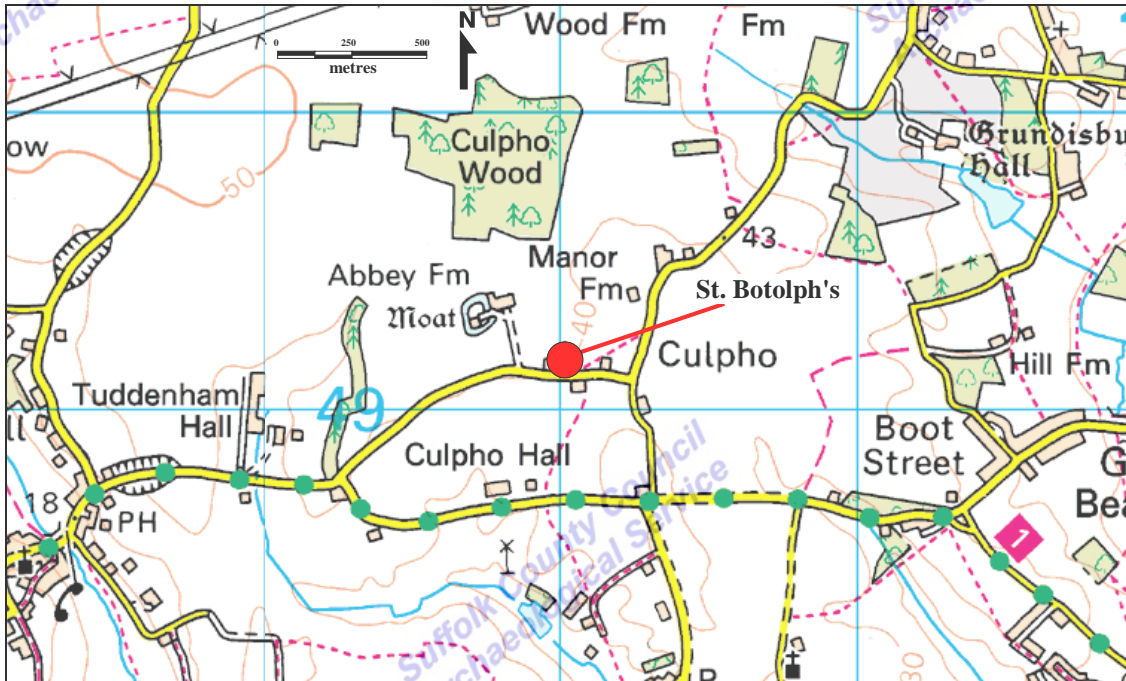


**Church of St Botolph, Culpho (CUP 003),  
A Report of Archaeological Recording  
SCCAS Rpt. No. 2005/114; Job No. CULP/CHU/001; Oasis Code suffolkc1-9275**

**Introduction**

The small parish of Culpho lies to the east of Tuddenham St. Martin (TM 2102 4913) and immediately north of Playford (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1** 1:25,000 scale OS map extract showing the location of St. Botolph's Church, Culpho

A programme of work to alleviate damp problems within the nave and chancel of the church also involved removing an existing, relatively recent, concrete drainage channel external to the building. The breaking out of this channel on the north side of the nave and chancel revealed the bottom of the extant walls and, in the case of the chancel, pulled away some of the medieval fabric where the wall had been slightly undermined. These problems led to the abandonment of the removal of the attached concrete for the remainder of the church with only the base of the drain broken out. Following a site visit, Robert Carr, the Archaeological Advisor to the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury, asked for the parish to provide for a limited amount of archaeological recording of the wall fabric on the north side of the nave and chancel. Subsequently, Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service Field Projects Team were commissioned to undertake the work which was carried out on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2005.

**Methodology**

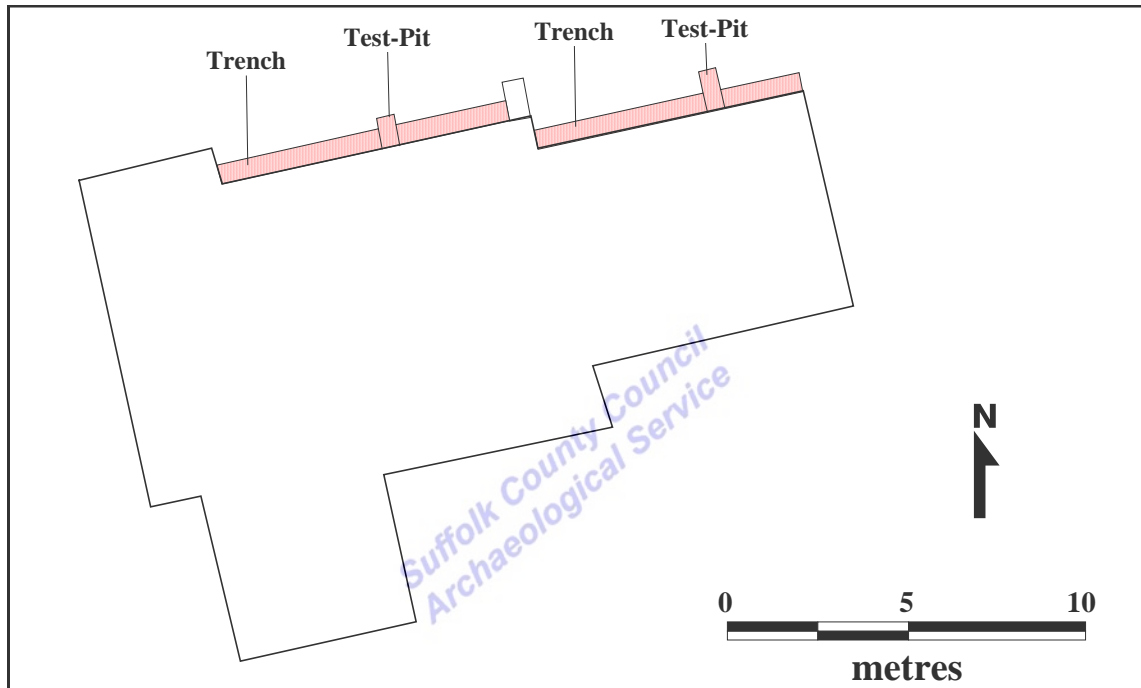
A brief description was made of the overall character of the north nave and chancel walls and observations made regarding the below ground structure revealed in the excavated trench.

Sketch sections were drawn of the west sides of the contractor's test-pits (Fig. 3).

A full photographic record was made (colour slide, monochrome print & digital) which will become part of the Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service Photographic Archive held at Shire Hall, Bury St. Edmunds.

### Results

The removal of the concrete drain had left a c.0.55 metre wide, c.0.3 metre deep trench along the base of the north nave and chancel walls (Figs. 2 & 3). In addition, two small test-pits had been excavated to just beneath the base of the below ground component of the walls.



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**Fig. 2** 1:200 scale OS map extract showing the location of the recorded trench

**Nave:** The nave wall fabric was totally covered in cement render and as a consequence, was effectively not available for inspection. Two architectural features



**Plate 1:** nave wall test-pit & stepped footing

were present, a window with Y-tracery and a blocked doorway which exhibited a similar style hood-mould to the window. While it could not be ascertained whether these features were contemporary with the wall fabric, they were similar to other architectural features (particularly windows) elsewhere in the church which clearly were

contemporary and not later insertions.

The removal of the concrete drainage channel had revealed the rendered face of the wall continuing down to the level where the wall stepped out by 5 centimetres, a point varying between 5 centimetres and 20 centimetres below the existing ground surface. The wall then continued down for approximately three courses of randomly lain flints (0.25 metres). A steep cut visible in the side of the excavated test-pit suggests that the solid, toed, footing then gave way to an excavated trench footing, apparently filled with layers of clay and mortar (Fig. 3 & Plate 1). These layers could be seen to continue down beyond the excavated base of the test-pit.

**Chancel:** The chancel wall had not been rendered, although repointing with some rough galetting had obscured detail of the original surface. Faced with relatively randomly lain mainly unknapped flints (c.75%), ferruginous sandstone cobbles (20%) and miscellaneous limestone fragments, the chancel wall had one architectural feature, a relatively wide lancet window which appeared to be contemporary with its surrounding fabric. While a feature in this style could pre-date the Y-tracery windows seen elsewhere in the church, a remarkably similar rebate



**Plate 2:** chancel, sandstone boulder in stepped footing

seen in all the windows to accommodate the glass, suggests that they belong to the same phase of construction.

Below ground the wall appeared to be broadly similar to that of the nave, although the removal of the concrete channel had also removed at least the top course of the solid toed footing. In this instance the solid footing stepped out c.8 centimetres from the above ground wall face, although this difference from the nave can be explained by the thickness of the render on the latter. The solid footing also included a large piece of sandstone (Plate 2) and a number of larger flint cobbles not seen in that of the nave. However,



**Plate 3:** chancel wall test-pit

the side of the contractor's test-pit revealed a similar vertical cut suggesting that there was again a trenched footing below the bonded wall (Fig. 3 & Plate 3). In this area the fill was more mixed and included flint cobbles with the unconsolidated mortar, sand and clay.

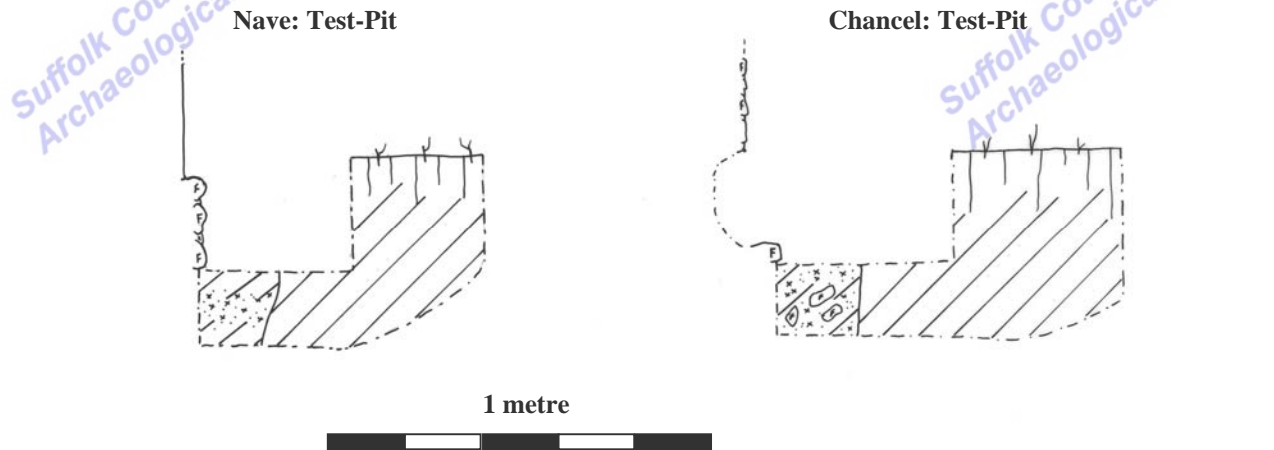


Fig. 3 1:20 scale section drawings

The removal of the upper course of the stepped out footing had given the opportunity to see into the core of the wall. It was clear that there was structural break forming the junction between the stepped out wall component and the wall fabric above with a well-defined parting in the mortar. In addition, the mortar below this break was darker and softer while that above was hard and white/cream. While it could be argued that these observations suggest that this represents the level from which a rebuild was initiated, it could also be considered to be the obvious position for a 'lift-line' in a one phase construction.

### Conclusions

A brief visual survey of the standing buildings seems to suggest that the main body of the nave and chancel belong to the same constructional phase dating to the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and that the architectural features (windows, doorways etc.) are contemporary with the walls. However, there have clearly been some major alterations including the nave east wall being replaced in brick, a new chancel arch and roof timbers. The excavated trenches provided the opportunity to record the below ground structure of the nave and chancel walls and their respective footings. While there were some minor differences, the overall character and structural makeup was similar. The two test-pits revealed that as well as having a solid, toed, below ground base, the nave and chancel walls had been constructed on a trenched footing containing a layered or mixed fill of clay, flints and unconsolidated lime mortar.

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