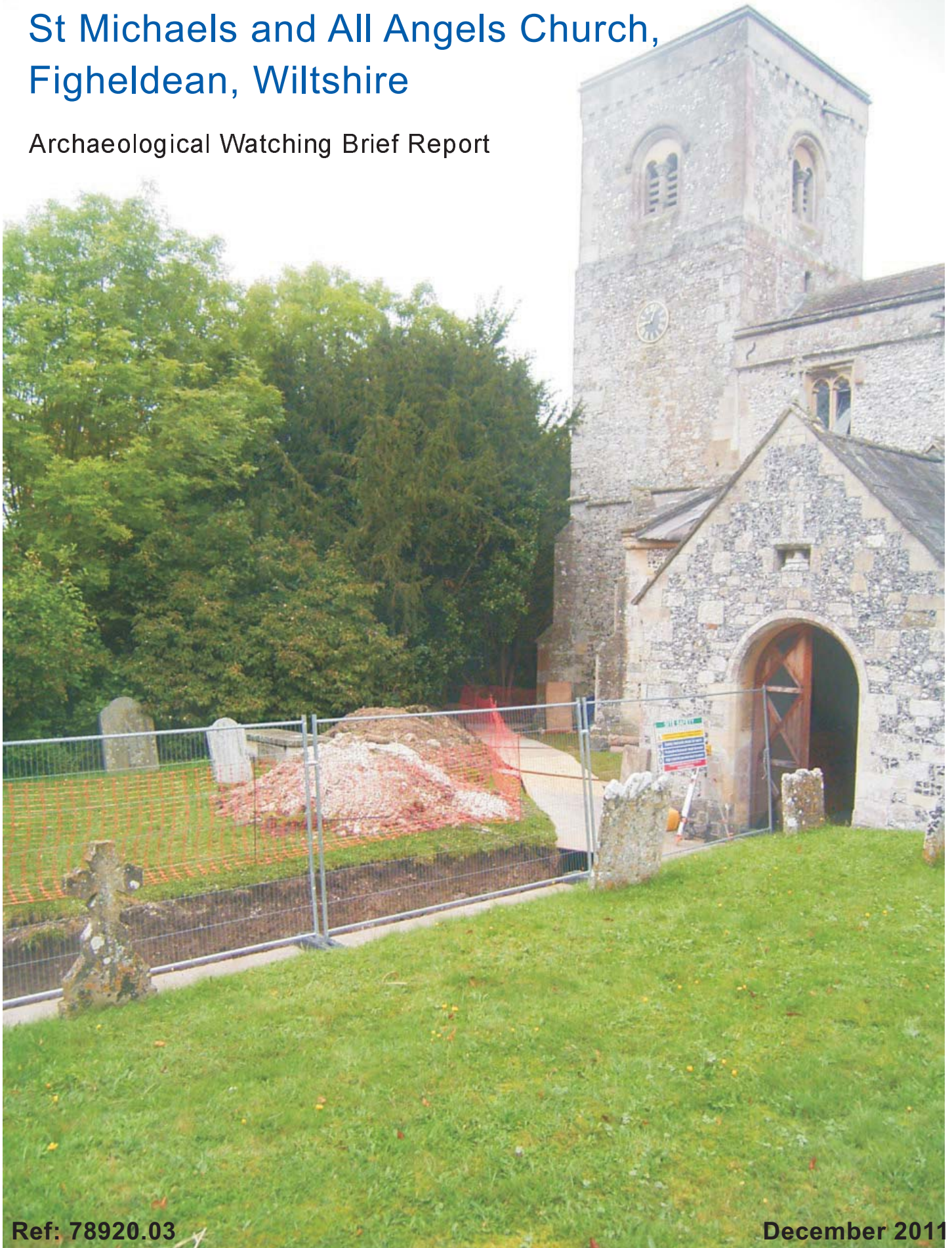




St Michaels and All Angels Church, Figcheldean, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**ST MICHAELS AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH,
FIGHELDEAN, WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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**ST MICHAELS AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH,
FIGHELDEAN, WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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**ST MICHAELS AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH,
FIGHELDEAN, WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by St Michaels and All Saints Church Parochial Church Council (PCC), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during development St Michaels and All Saints Church, Church Street, Figheldean, Wiltshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 415284, 147507.

The watching brief was required during groundworks associated with the construction of a new water closet at the rear of the church and comprised the installation of a mains water connection and a waste water pipe. The route of the pipes ran from the south of the church clock tower to the main entrance of the church, before following the line of the existing footpath southwards towards the church gate.

The watching brief was maintained during all intrusive groundworks, which comprised a machine cut trench measuring 300mm in width, approximately 64m in length and between 1m and 2m in depth.

As a result of the pipe route and the depth of the trench, a number of graves were disturbed during the watching brief. Following discussions with the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, these were subject to rapid archaeological recording and lifted for later reburial. No human remains were removed from the site. The date of the burials is uncertain and whilst a few could predate the construction of the clock tower (c. 1600s), and as such could be some of the earliest burials in the cemetery, others are more recent, and are considered to be late 18th or early 19th century in date.

The watching brief took place from 19th September to 30th September 2011.

**ST MICHAELS AND ALL ANGLES CHURCH,
FIGHELDEAN, WILTSHIRE**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Mr John Bamber on behalf of St Michaels and All Saints Church, and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to John Bamber in this regard.

The project was undertaken by Darren Baker and Jonathan Martin, with the groundwork being carried out by Chris Sheppard. This report was compiled by Darren Baker and the illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth James. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.

**ST MICHAELS AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH,
FIGHELDEAN, WILTSHIRE****Archaeological Watching Brief Report****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by John Bamber on behalf of St Michaels and All Angels Church PCC (hereafter “the Client”), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during intrusive groundworks at St Michaels and All Angels Church, Church Street, Figcheldean, Wiltshire (hereafter “the Site”), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 415284, 147507 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 Elements of the church date to the 13th century and consequently the Diocese Advisory Committee (DAC) Archaeologist based at Dorset County Council, requested that an archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks to record anything of archaeological interest.
- 1.1.3 The watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with the construction of a new water closet and comprised the machine excavation of a pipe trench for a new water main and waste water pipe, which ran from the church clock tower to the church gate.
- 1.1.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI, Wessex Archaeology 2011) was prepared which detailed the methodologies and standards to be employed during the watching brief. This was submitted to and approved by the DAC Archaeologist at Dorset County Council and the Assistant County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council prior to work commencing.
- 1.1.5 The watching brief was carried out from 19th September to 30th September 2011.

1.2 The Site, location and geology

- 1.2.1 The Site is located within the parish of Figcheldean on Salisbury Plain, 18km north of Salisbury.
- 1.2.2 The parish church of St Michaels and All Angels is located in the northern limits of Figcheldean, to the west of Church Street. The church grounds are bounded to the north and west by the river Avon and by the gardens of Figcheldean House to the south (**Figure 1**).
- 1.2.3 The underlying geology of the area is chalk.

1.3 Scope of Document

- 1.3.1 The WSI was prepared in line with guidelines set out within Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (‘MoRPHE’, English Heritage 2008) and the Institute for Archaeologists’ Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IfA 2008).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the boundaries of the church.
- 2.1.2 The parish church is Grade II* Listed. Restored in 1851, the earliest elements of the church date to the 13th century (Pevsner 1975). The church is located within the Figcheldean Conservation Area. It has been suggested that there may be Saxon origins to the church and Figcheldean itself is mentioned within the Domesday Book as *Fisgledene*.
- 2.1.3 Within the churchyard, Peters Monument is Grade II Listed and is located approximately 8m to the north of the north aisle. This 19th century pedestal monument comprises a rectangular block with cusped and inscribed sunken panels. A further Grade II Listed chest tomb is positioned approximately 15m east of the chancel and dates to the late 18th century.
- 2.1.4 A number of sites and finds are also recorded on the Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record within the wider vicinity. Robin Hood's Ball, an early Neolithic causewayed enclosure, is positioned to the west of the village and in addition there are a number of Bronze Age barrows on the downland and Iron Age field systems to the east and west of Bourne Bottom. Romano-British foundations and pottery are also recorded at Alton Parva farm.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, their location, extent, the preservation and condition of any remains and to produce a report detailing the results of the watching brief with regards to the general aims of the WSI.

4 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 All works undertaken during the watching brief were conducted in accordance with the methods and standards outlined within the Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2011), and the requirements of the Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and Guidelines for an Archaeological Watching Brief (IfA 2008), except where these are superseded by statements below.

4.2 Fieldwork

- 4.2.1 The fieldwork consisted of monitoring the intrusive groundworks along the route of the water pipes. The route of the mains water and waste water pipe ran from the rear of the church, around the clock tower and down the main church path. The route then followed the line of the existing concrete path and included an existing cable trench, located approximately 300mm below the existing ground levels.
- 4.2.2 The trench was machine excavated using a two tonne mini digger with a 300mm bucket. The machine was operated by an experienced driver and all excavation was supervised by an experienced archaeologist. When necessary machine excavation was halted to allow for hand excavation of

archaeological remains. Hand excavation was only conducted down to a maximum depth of 1.2m.

4.2.3 The machine trench measured approximately 64m long, 0.3m wide and had a depth ranging between 1m and 2m.

4.2.4 When archaeological features, including human remains (see below 4.4) were uncovered these were made clear to both the Client and the groundwork contractor, so as to allow reasonable access for excavation by the archaeologist.

4.3 Recording

4.3.1 All exposed archaeological remains were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system and sheets.

4.3.2 During fieldwork a full photographic record of any archaeological features and intrusive excavation was completed. This was undertaken using a digital camera with a 10 mega pixel image sensor. All digital images will be subjected to managed quality control and curation processes, resulting in appropriately embedded metadata within the image to ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.4 Human Remains

4.4.1 Where possible any undisturbed human remains were left *in situ* and only removed where necessary, and with approval of the Client and following discussions with the DAC Archaeological Advisor and Wiltshire Assistant County Archaeologist. Disarticulated human remains were also recovered for later reburial.

4.4.2 All work was undertaken in accordance with the guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England (English Heritage, 2005).

4.4.3 Where undisturbed graves were identified below 1.2m in depth, the remains were photographed *in situ* and recorded to a basic level. The exposed remains were collected for later reburial.

4.4.4 All remains were reburied within the excavated machine trench and are located above the waste water pipe.

4.5 Health and Safety

4.5.1 All work was carried out in accordance with Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety regulations (1992) as well as all other relevant Health and safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time of the excavations.

4.5.2 In advance of the fieldwork, a risk assessment was prepared. All staff involved with the projects fieldwork, signed and complied with this document.

5 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The intrusive groundworks unearthed a number of *in situ* graves as well as a collection of disarticulated human bone.
- 5.1.2 Only a small number of the undisturbed graves could be excavated by hand due to their depth below ground level (bgl). The reworking of the soils within the churchyard made the trench sides unstable and as a result, entry and egress into the trench was considered unsafe at depths greater than 1.0m.
- 5.1.3 Two modern features, a cable trench and a ceramic storm drain were also exposed during the watching brief.

5.2 Stratigraphic Sequence

- 5.2.1 The stratigraphic sequence recorded throughout the pipe trench was reasonably consistent and comprised a well-developed topsoil, reworked graveyard soil and chalk natural.
- 5.2.2 The topsoil was recorded at a depth of between 0.07m and 0.15m bgl. The mixed graveyard soil varied in thickness, and was recorded to a depth of between 1m and 1.5m around the clock tower (**Plate 1**). This became shallower further south along the line of the path where it was recorded to a maximum depth of 0.5m, indicating less disturbance in this area of the churchyard.
- 5.2.3 The natural chalk was located immediately below the graveyard soil. As a result a number of the deeper grave cuts were visible within the chalk natural.

5.3 Modern activity

- 5.3.1 Previous intrusive activity within the churchyard included a modern cable trench located along the current footpath which measured approximately 0.3m wide, 0.25m deep, and was capped with a sand, stone and brick matrix.
- 5.3.2 A ceramic storm drain was also discovered during the trench excavation. This ran along the southern edge of the church and was partially visible in the trench section. In one area the drain had been blocked through years of silt and leaked into the graveyard causing the trench to partially collapse.

5.4 Human Remains

- 5.4.1 A total of 41 graves were located during the course of the watching brief. Of these only 25 could be excavated by hand and recorded; the remaining 16 being too deeply buried to be recorded and lifted by hand. Digital photographs were taken where possible, however given the trench depth and narrow width, any remains were difficult to observe. The majority of the skeletons were located along the southern side of the clock tower.
- 5.4.2 All of the graves were on a west-east alignment, with the remains lain in a supine position. Most of the 25 undisturbed graves were cut into the natural

chalk geology and were located close to, or along the line of, the present footpath. Three undisturbed graves (skeletons 5, 6 and 9) were partially exposed adjacent to the south-western corner of the clock tower. Of these, skeletons 5 (**Plate 2**) and 6 were located at a depth of 1m bgl in chalk cut graves; no coffin furniture was associated with these remains and the position of the arms and legs may suggest that they were buried in shrouds. Furthermore the projected line of the inhumations suggests that they predate the construction of the current clock tower.

- 5.4.3 Skeleton 9 was located at a depth of 0.5m and several pieces of coffin furniture were recovered from around the remains including a handle plate. Several mother of pearl buttons were also found in association with this burial, and were located around the neck and shoulder area.
- 5.4.4 A group of four chalk cut burials (skeletons 12, 17, 20, 23) were located to the south-west of the church porch before the trench turned to follow the line of the footpath and were all located at a depth of 1.2m bgl. As with skeletons 5 and 6 all appeared to have been buried in shrouds and are likely to predate the construction of the current porch.
- 5.4.5 All other excavated graves were located along the line of the path and under the path and as such predate the existing footpath and entrance for the church. All are chalk cut graves; the level of the chalk in this area having risen to approximately 0.5m (**Plates 3 & 4**). The average depth of remains in this area was approximately 1m below the level of the footpath.
- 5.4.6 Several previously disturbed burials were also uncovered; one was located above the ceramic storm drain and positioned along the south-eastern side of the clock tower. The second was located to the side of the cable trench and may have been disturbed during the installation of the cable.
- 5.4.7 All remains were lifted due to the depth requirements of the waste water pipe, with the exception of skeleton 5 which was located at a sufficient depth to remain *in situ*.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL

- 6.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were noted during the course of the watching brief.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 The watching brief at St Michaels and All Angels Church has provided a valuable, albeit keyhole insight into the historic development of the churchyard.
- 7.1.2 The human remains excavated may represent some of the earliest burials within the churchyard. The majority identified are likely to predate the construction of the current porch, footpath and possibly part of the main body of the church. The relatively undisturbed chalk natural in these areas may also suggest that these remains relate to an earlier arrangement of the churchyard.

- 7.1.3 The positions of skeletons 5 and 6 suggest they predate the construction of the clock tower, thought to have been built in the 1600s. The depth of both burials and the condition of the bone, may suggest that they are of a similar age and phase to the remains located along the path.
- 7.1.4 The remaining burials all appear to be much more recent, all being buried in previously disturbed graveyard soil. Nevertheless, these burials are most likely to predate the construction of the ceramic storm drain.

8 ARCHIVE

- 8.1.1 Arrangements will be made with the local museum for the deposition of the archive.
- 8.1.2 On the completion of the report, the archive will be cross-referenced and made internally consistent before deposition. The archive will include copies of all photographs and paper records produced during the watching brief.
- 8.1.3 The completed archive will be prepared in accordance to guidelines outlined in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment ('MoRPHE', English Heritage 2008) and Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage (Walker 1990).

9 REFERENCES

- English Heritage, 1991: *Management of Archaeological Projects*.
- English Heritage, 2005: *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England*
- IfA, 2008: *Standards and Guidelines for an Archaeological Watching Brief*.
- IfA: *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed remains*. Technical Paper 13
- Pevsner, N. and Cherry, B. 1975: *The Buildings of England*
- Walker, K. 1990: *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage*. UKIC Archaeology section.
- Wessex Archaeology 2011: *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief; St Michaels and All Angles Church, Figheldean, Wiltshire*. Report Reference. 78920.01

APPENDIX 1: TABLE OF EXCAVATED CONTEXTS

| Context | Cut/Fill | Description | Filled with/Fill of |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Fill | Topsoil | |
| 2 | Fill | Graveyard Soil | |
| 3 | Cut | Grave Cut | 4+5 |
| 4 | Fill | Grave Fill | 3 |
| 5 | Fill | Skeleton | 3 |
| 6 | Fill | Skeleton | |
| 7 | Cut | Grave Cut | 8+9 |
| 8 | Fill | Grave Fill | 7 |
| 9 | Fill | Skeleton | 7 |
| 10 | Cut | Grave Cut | 11+12 |
| 11 | Fill | Grave Fill | 10 |
| 12 | Fill | Skeleton | 10 |
| 13 | Fill | Chalk Natural | |
| 14 | Fill | Skeleton | |
| 15 | Cut | Grave Cut | 16+17 |
| 16 | Fill | Grave Fill | 15 |
| 17 | Fill | Skeleton | 15 |
| 18 | Cut | Grave Cut | 19+20 |
| 19 | Fill | Grave Fill | 18 |
| 20 | Fill | Skeleton | 18 |
| 21 | Cut | Grave Cut | 22+23 |
| 22 | Fill | Grave Fill | 21 |
| 23 | Fill | Skeleton | 21 |
| 24 | Cut | Grave Cut | 25+26 |
| 25 | Fill | Grave Fill | 24 |
| 26 | Fill | Skeleton | 24 |
| 27 | Cut | Grave Cut | 28+29 |
| 28 | Fill | Grave Fill | 27 |
| 29 | Fill | Skeleton | 27 |
| 30 | Cut | Grave Cut | 31+32 |
| 31 | Fill | Grave Fill | 30 |
| 32 | Fill | Skeleton | 30 |
| 33 | Cut | Grave Cut | 34+35 |
| 34 | Fill | Grave Fill | 33 |
| 35 | Fill | Skeleton | 33 |
| 36 | Cut | Grave Cut | 37+38 |
| 37 | Fill | Grave Fill | 39 |
| 38 | Fill | Skeleton | 36 |
| 39 | Cut | Grave Cut | 40+41 |
| 40 | Fill | Grave Fill | 39 |
| 41 | Fill | Skeleton | 39 |
| 42 | Cut | Grave Cut | 43+44 |
| 43 | Fill | Grave Fill | 42 |
| 44 | Fill | Skeleton | 42 |
| 45 | Cut | Grave Cut | 46+47 |
| 46 | Fill | Grave Fill | 45 |
| 47 | Fill | Skeleton | 45 |
| 48 | Cut | Grave Cut | 49+50 |
| 49 | Fill | Grave Fill | 48 |
| 50 | Fill | Skeleton | 48 |

| Context | Cut/Fill | Description | Filled with/Fill of |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 51 | Cut | Grave Cut | 52+53 |
| 52 | Fill | Grave Fill | 51 |
| 53 | Fill | Skeleton | 51 |
| 54 | Cut | Grave Cut | 55+56 |
| 55 | Fill | Grave Fill | 54 |
| 56 | Fill | Skeleton | 54 |
| 57 | Fill | Skeleton | |
| 58 | Cut | Grave Cut | 59 |
| 59 | Fill | Grave Fill | 58 |
| 60 | Fill | Skeleton | |
| 61 | Cut | Grave/Ditch cut | 62 |
| 62 | Fill | Grave/Ditch Fill | 61 |
| 63 | Cut | Grave Cut | 64+65 |
| 64 | Fill | Grave Fill | 63 |
| 65 | Fill | Skeleton | 63 |
| 66 | Cut | Grave Cut | 67+68 |
| 67 | Fill | Grave Fill | 66 |
| 68 | Fill | Skeleton | 66 |
| 69 | Cut | Grave Cut | 70+71 |
| 70 | Fill | Grave Fill | 69 |
| 71 | Fill | Skeleton | 69 |
| 72 | Cut | Grave Cut | 73 |
| 73 | Fill | Grave Fill | 72 |
| 74 | Cut | Grave Cut | 75+76 |
| 75 | Fill | Grave Fill | 74 |
| 76 | Fill | Skeleton | 74 |
| 77 | Cut | Grave Cut | 78 |
| 78 | Fill | Grave Fill | 77 |

APPENDIX 2: OASIS RECORD FORM

St Michaels and All Angels, Figheldean, Wiltshire - Wessex Archaeology

OASIS ID - wessexar1-116247

Versions

| View | Version | Completed by | Email | Date |
|-------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| View 1 | 1 | S Farr | s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk | 22 December 2011 |

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| Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | 1/1 |

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| Details | Location | Creators | Archive | Publications |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| No | No | No | No | 0/1 |

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Images submitted? No

Boundary file submitted? No

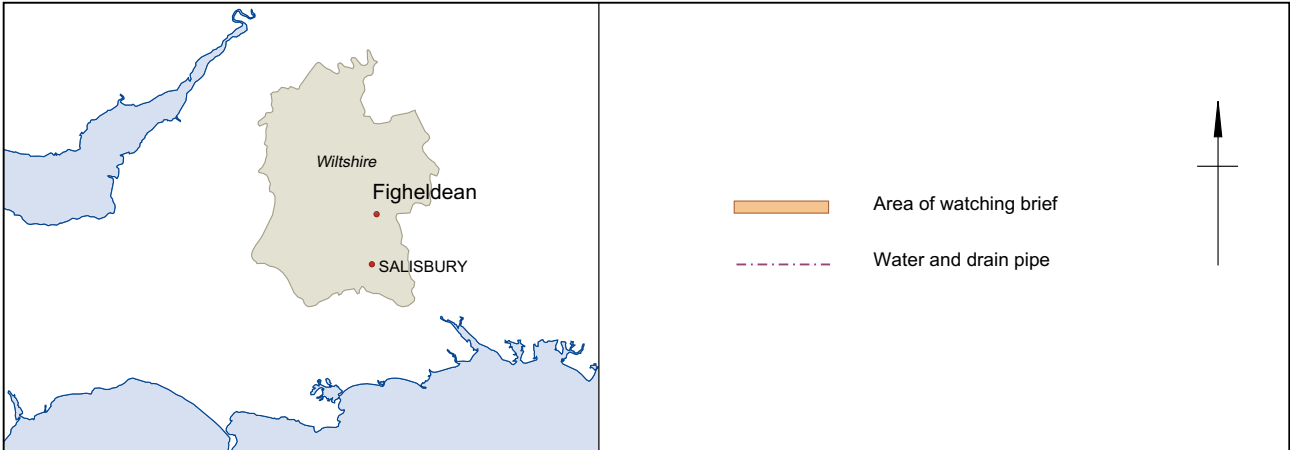
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Site location showing area of watching brief

Figure 1



Plate 1: South-east facing trench following excavation



Plate 2: Partial skeleton (sk5) exposed within pipe trench



Plate 3: North facing photograph of pipe trench



Plate 4: South facing trench following excavation



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