

St Nicholas' Church
Brockenhurst, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





Wessex Archaeology

**ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH, BROCKENHURST,
HAMPSHIRE**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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QUALITY ASSURANCE

SITE CODE	73170	ACCESSION CODE		CLIENT CODE	
PLANNING APPLICATION REF.	09/94199	NGR		430525, 101760	

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* I= Internal Draft E= External Draft F= Final

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- Figure 1** Site location plan
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- Plate 1** View of groundworks in 1908 extension, taken from doorway, facing south.
Plate 2 Fragment of headstone found during groundworks.
Plate 3 Infant burial 101, facing south.
Plate 4 Adult burial 105, facing east.

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by James Lunn-Rockcliffe Architect on behalf of the St Nicholas' Church Parochial Church Council, (the Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during building works undertaken at St Nicholas' Church, Brockenhurst, Hampshire (hereafter 'the Site') centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 430525, 101760.

The watching brief was required as a condition of the planning permission granted by the New Forest National Park Authority (Planning Reference 09/94199), for a single storey side extension forming a new disabled access and toilet.

The excavation of an area of ground (previously beneath a concrete floor in an extension to the church built in 1908) was completed under archaeological supervision. The groundworks revealed the presence of post-medieval burials (three infants and four adults) as well as a large amount of disarticulated bone. The human remains were mainly below the formation level for a new solid floor and were left *in situ*. Two infant burials were above the formation level so were lifted for reburial elsewhere in the church yard, along with the disarticulated human bone.

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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by James Lunn-Rockliffe Architect on behalf of St Nicholas' Church Parochial Church Council and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to him in this regard. Thanks are also due to Frank Green (Archaeological Officer at New Forest National Park Authority) and Richard Whinney (DAC Archaeological Advisor) for their helpful advice during the project.

The watching brief was undertaken by Jon Milward, who also wrote and compiled this report. Kenneth Lymer provided the illustrations. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by James Lunn-Rockliffe Architect on behalf of St Nicholas Church (the 'Client'), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during development at St Nicholas' Church, Church Lane, Brockenhurst, Hampshire (hereafter 'the Site') centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 430525, 101760 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 The watching brief was required as a condition of the planning permission granted by the New Forest National Park Authority (Planning Reference 09/94199), for a single storey side extension forming a new disabled access and toilet.

1.1.3 Due to human error, initial excavations commenced without archaeological supervision. Following the disturbance of human remains by the Site contractor inside the 1908 extension, Wessex Archaeology were informed of the commencement of the excavations and maintained a watching brief for the remainder of the groundworks within the extension.

1.1.4 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the 11th and 12th of March 2010.

1.2 The Site, location and geology

1.2.1 The parish church of St Nicholas is located in an isolated, elevated position to the south-east of the current village. It is bounded by Church Lane to the west, by a gravel track to the east and to the north by Lymington Road (**Figure 1**). The church is positioned within an area of unimproved grassland with scattered residential developments nearby.

1.2.2 The Site is in an elevated position lying at a height of approximately 250m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). A churchyard immediately surrounds the church itself and the cemetery has been extended northwards and descends down the hillside.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A brief search for archaeological and historical sites within a 2km radius ('the Study Area') of the Site via the Archaeology Data Service (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>) indicates the presence of 9 sites, predominantly of a medieval and Post Medieval date. No Scheduled Monuments are recorded within the boundaries of the Site itself.

- 2.1.2 Prehistoric evidence is scant in Brockenhurst, with only a few stray flint implements recorded, including a Neolithic flint axe found in a garden along Sway Road to the west of the Site in 1961.
- 2.1.3 Parts of a Roman steelyard were found in 1972 in the right bank of the Lymington River.
- 2.1.4 A residential development off Mill Lane to the north of the Site, revealed evidence of medieval occupation and pottery dating to the 13th and 14th centuries. The site was interpreted as a small farmstead, and earthen banks, possibly relating to earlier enclosures were also recorded.
- 2.1.5 Although a church and settlement are recorded in Domesday at Brockenhurst, St Nicholas Church dates to the 12th century, with 13th, 16th, 18th, 19th and 20th century additions. Indeed the window to the east of the main porch and the internal woodwork to the tower entry are 16th century and indicate renovations during the reign of Mary I.
- 2.1.6 The churchyard contains a rectangular 18th century Grade II listed tomb chest and the church itself is listed Grade II*. The graves of more than one hundred New Zealand, Indian and other soldiers who died in field hospitals located in Brockenhurst during and immediately after the First World War are also located in the graveyard.

3 AIMS

- 3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were:
- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and should remains be found to be present to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard,
 - To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence,
 - To determine or confirm the approximate extent of the remains,
 - To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains,
 - To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present,
 - To prepare a report on the results of the watching brief.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1.1 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of groundworks undertaken inside the 1908 extension either by hand excavation or by a 0.5 tonne mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket. Although excavations commenced without archaeological supervision, Wessex Archaeology were in attendance for the majority of the works and once the error had been identified, maintained an archaeological presence for the remainder of the groundworks.

- 4.1.2 Archaeological remains were cleaned by hand and recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system including a drawn and photographic record. The archaeological remains have been tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid using scale drawings and local mapping.
- 4.1.3 In accordance with the WSI (Wessex 2010) human remains were left *in situ* where practical and only removed for reburial where necessary and subject to faculty approval.
- 4.1.4 All works were undertaken in accordance with the *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England* (English Heritage 2005).
- 4.1.5 The excavation of human remains was undertaken in accordance with the standards set out in IFA Technical Paper 13 *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed remains*.

5 RESULTS

5.1 1908 extension

- 5.1.1 The groundworks were undertaken within the 1908 brick-built extension to the Church (**Plate 1**). This extension enclosed an area of the graveyard to the immediate west of the 1832 extension and to the north of the bell tower, built in 1750 and extended the north-west corner of the church overall.
- 5.1.2 The groundworks were undertaken in order to lower an existing concrete floor to enable disabled access into the church, and required the reduction of the ground surface by 0.3m. This excavation exposed seven inhumation burials (three infants and four adults **Figure 2**). With the exception of two infant burials, these were found at or below the 0.3m formation level so were recorded and left *in situ*. The two burials that were above the formation level were removed for reburial within the churchyard at a later date.
- 5.1.3 The excavated soil contained disarticulated human bone which was collected during the excavation and left on Site for re-burial. The soil also contained broken fragments of headstones and building material derived from the church (**Plate 2**).
- 5.1.4 Three infant burials (**101**, **102** and **103**) were found aligned on an east to west orientation adjacent to the north wall of the bell tower (**Figure 2**). Two of these infants were probably 3-4 years of age at the time of death and both were in a supine position with the head at the east end of the grave.
- 5.1.5 Although the human remains forming part of burial **101** were well preserved, they had been partially truncated and disturbed by later burial activity. This had impacted upon the lower legs, which were absent (**Plate 3**) from the grave.
- 5.1.6 Burial **103** was only partially exposed around the pelvis and the cranium and whilst the cranium was crushed and fragmentary, the rest of the skeleton appeared to be undisturbed and in a good state of preservation. The exposed elements of burial **103** were covered over and left *in situ*.

- 5.1.7 The third infant (**102**) had been buried overlying and partially truncating burial **101**. This burial was of a young infant, probably 1-2 years of age and was not as well preserved as the other two infants. Apart from a crushed and fragmentary cranium the rest of the skeleton, other than fragments of ribs and long bones did not survive.
- 5.1.8 Archaeological excavation of two burials, **101** and **102**, was required as both were very shallow and above the construction formation level. This was undertaken once permission had been granted for their reburial.
- 5.1.9 The four adult burials were aligned north to south (**106** and **107**) and east to west (**104** and **105**).
- 5.1.10 The north-south aligned burials were only partially exposed. An exposed knee joint represented burial **104**, and was not disturbed any further.
- 5.1.11 Burial **105** was represented by an intact cranium and humerus (**Plate 4**). A small amount of cleaning around the cranium revealed the grave cut and a coffin nail. It is likely that a stratigraphic relationship exists between burials **105** and **106**, however as these burials were well below the formation level it was not possible to investigate this relationship.
- 5.1.12 The two north-south burials were found immediately adjacent to the former exterior wall of the 1832 extension. Only a few bones from the torso region and the cranium of the stratigraphically earlier burial (**107**) were exposed and recorded. This burial appeared to be beneath the footings of the 1832 extension and therefore predates this structure.
- 5.1.13 The level of disturbance caused to later burial (**106**) by the construction of the 1832 extension was not fully understood, however, the bone appeared to be in a good state of preservation. The pelvis, and upper leg bones were the only elements of this burial that were exposed and further excavation beyond the formation levels was not undertaken in accordance with the WSI (WA, 2009). An iron coffin handle was found towards the feet end of the grave.
- 5.1.14 Given the rarity of north-south aligned burials, it seems likely both graves (**106** & **107**) had been disturbed to some degree by the later groundworks. The proximity of the eastern wall of the vestry, itself located where the former aisle foundation may have been robbed out and where the existing 19th century aisle was located, indicates the burials may have been disturbed.

6 FINDS

All human bone and coffin furniture were left on Site and largely remained *in situ*. The infant burials (**101** and **102**) and disarticulated bone disturbed during the groundworks were left on Site, and were re-buried following the watching brief.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 The watching brief at St Nicholas' Church has conclusively demonstrated that the 1908 extension was built over land previously used as part of the

cemetery. All three child burials were positioned adjacent to and aligned with the church bell tower, built in 1750 and are likely to date to the period between the construction of the bell tower and the construction of the 1908 extension.

- 7.1.2 The other exposed human remains were all from adult burials, at least one of which pre-dated the 1832 church extension. The coffin furniture found with burials **105** and **106** suggested a post-medieval date. The area had been extensively disturbed by grave digging and it is highly likely that the exposed human remains represent only a sample of the total quantity of burials that exist within the footprint of the 1908 extension.

8 ARCHIVE

8.1 Oasis

- 8.1.1 An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> has been completed and will be uploaded and include .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy will also be included with the archive).

8.2 Preparation and Deposition

- 8.2.1 The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990).
- 8.2.2 The complete project archive comprises an A4 ring bound folder comprising context record sheets, photographic register, Risk Assessment and various background documentation. There is an accompanying archive of photographs in colour digital format. The entire archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology where they are held under the Wessex Archaeology project code 73170. The completed archive will be deposited with Hampshire County Museum Service at Winchester.

8.3 Copyright

- 8.3.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003.

8.4 Security Copy

- 8.4.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Archaeological Record (English Heritage), a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

Wessex Archaeology 2010 St Nicholas' Church, Brockenhurst, Hampshire, *Written scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, ref: 73170.01

10 APPENDIX 1 – OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM ENGLAND

10.1 OASIS ID: wessexar1-78638

Project details

Project name St Nicholas' Church, Brockenhurst, Hampshire

Short description of the project Wessex Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief during building works undertaken at St Nicholas' Church, Brockenhurst, Hampshire centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 430525, 101760. The watching brief was required as a condition of the planning permission granted by the New Forest National Park Authority (Planning Reference 09/94199), for a single storey side extension forming a new disabled access and toilet. The excavation of an area of ground (previously beneath a concrete floor in an extension to the church built in 1908) was completed under archaeological supervision. The groundworks revealed the presence of post-medieval burials (three infants and four adults) as well as a large amount of disarticulated bone. The human remains were mainly below the formation level for a new solid floor and were left in situ. Two infant burials were above the formation level so were lifted for reburial elsewhere in the church yard, along with the disarticulated human bone.

Project dates Start: 12-03-2010 End: 30-06-2010

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes 73170.03 - Contracting Unit No.

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Other 4 - Churchyard

Monument type RELIGIOUS RITUAL AND FUNERARY Post Medieval

Significant Finds NONE None

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Planning condition

Project location

Country England

Site location HAMPSHIRE NEW FOREST BROCKENHURST St Nicholas' Church

Postcode S042 7UB

Study area 14.20 Square metres

Site coordinates SU 305 017 50.8134821071 -1.567029922580 50 48 48 N 001 34 01 W Point

Project creators

Name of Wessex Archaeology
Organisation

Project brief Unitary Authority Archaeologist
originator

Project design Wessex Archaeology
originator

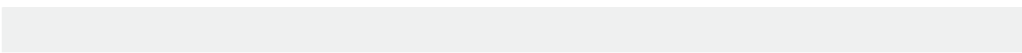
Project director/manager Sue Farr

Project supervisor Jonathan Milward

Type of Developer
sponsor/funding
body

Name of James Lunn-Rockliffe (Architect)

sponsor/funding
body



Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Digital Archive Hampshire County Museums Service
recipient

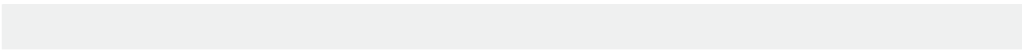
Digital Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Digital available Media 'Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'

Paper Archive Hampshire County Museums Service
recipient

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Paper available Media 'Context sheet','Drawing','Notebook - Excavation',' Research','
General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey '



**Project
bibliography 1**

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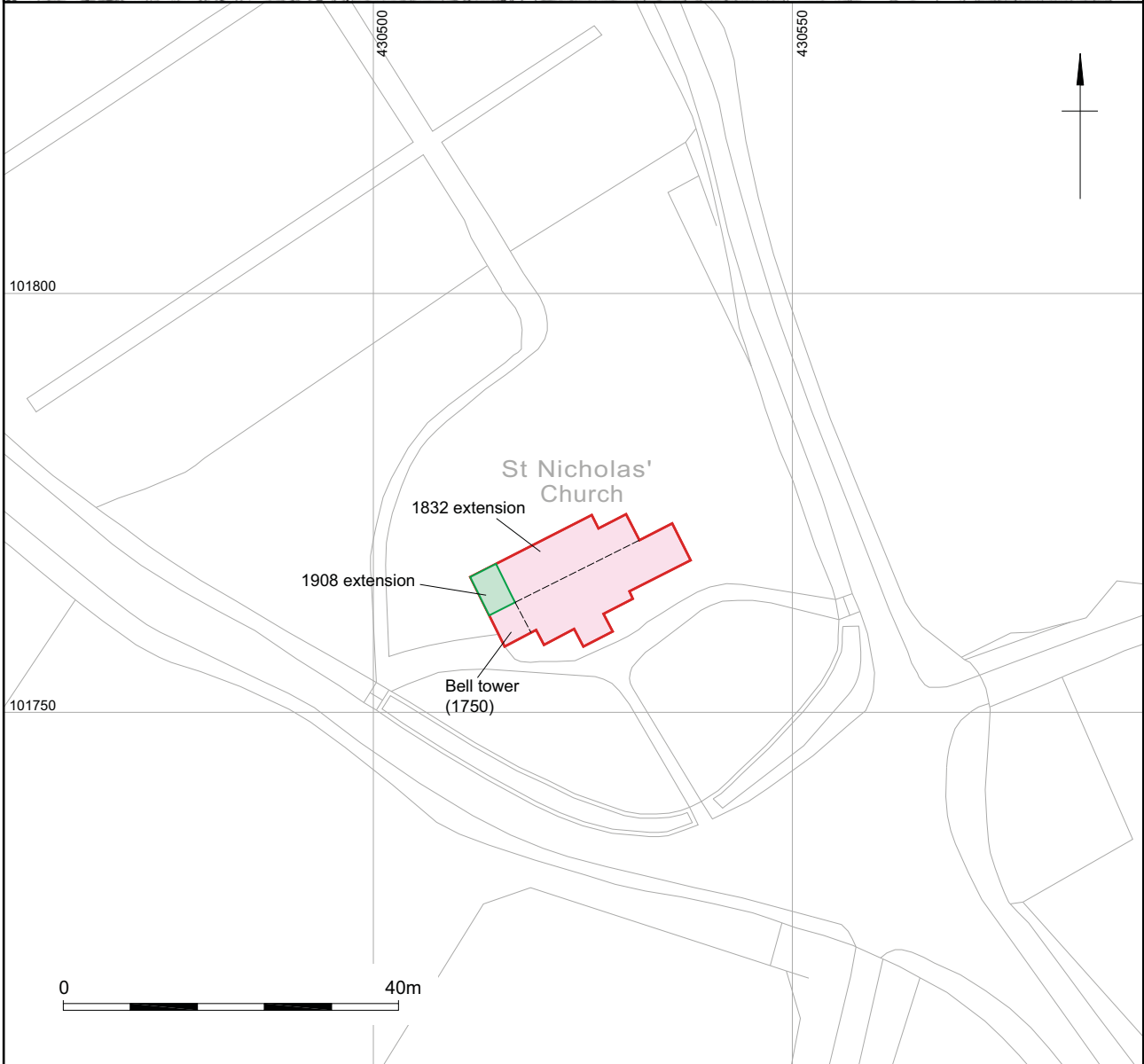
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- The Site
- Watching brief area (1908 extension)

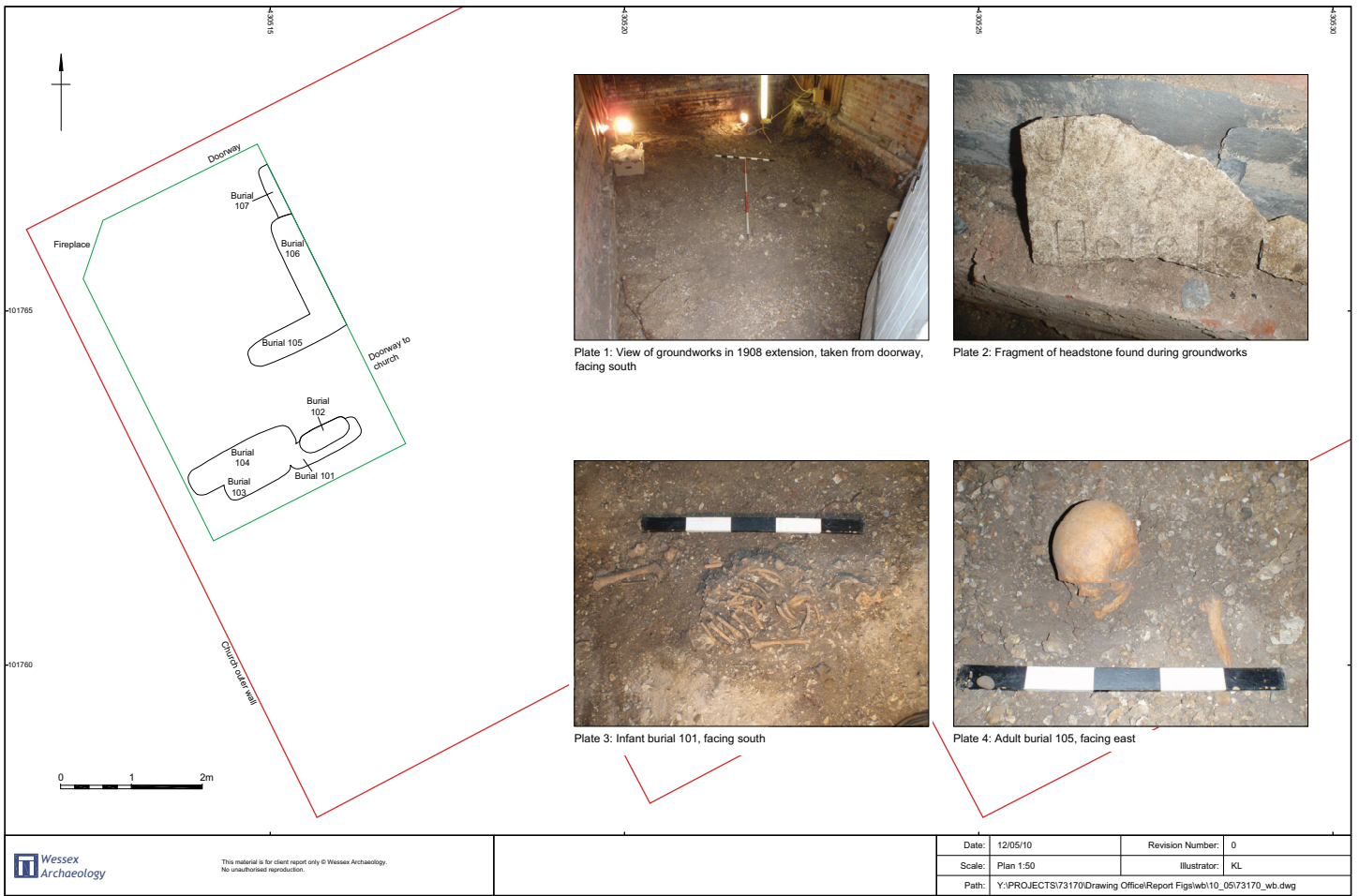


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Site location plan

Figure 1



Watching brief area

Figure 2



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