

**ST MARGARET'S CHURCH
WICKEN BONHUNT
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING



**Essex County Council
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT
October 2011**

**ST MARGARET'S CHURCH
WICKEN BONHUNT
ESSEX**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

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CONTENTS

	Summary	1
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Background	3
	2.1 Location	
	2.2 Geology	
	2.3 Archaeology and History	
3.	Aims and objectives	5
4.	Method	6
5.	Fieldwork results	6
	5.1 Extension footprint	
	5.2 Drainage trench	
6.	Finds	7
	6.1 Saxon and medieval pottery	
	6.2 Other finds	
	6.3 Conclusions	
7.	Discussion and assessment of results	8
	Acknowledgements	9
	Bibliography	10

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	Context data	11
Appendix 2.	Finds data	11
Appendix 3.	Contents of site archive	12
Appendix 4.	Essex Historic Environment Record	13

FIGURES

Figure 1. Location plan and areas of archaeological monitoring

Figure 2. Location of human remains

PLATES

Plate 1. Extension footprint under excavation

Plate 2. Extension footprint and grave 3

Plate 3. Detail of Grave 3 detail

Plate 4. Detail of Grave 5

Plate 5. Drainage trench

Plate 6. Grave 12 in drainage trench section

ST MARGARET'S CHURCH, WICKEN BONHUNT, ESSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND MONITORING

Client: St Margaret's Parochial Church Council

NGR: TL 4988 3335

Planning application number: n/a

ECC FAU project number: 2451

Site code: WTSM 11

Oasis record number: 108043

Date of fieldwork: 21/7/11 to 14/9/11

SUMMARY

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit monitored the contractors' excavation of the footprint of a kitchen/toilet extension to the north-west corner of St Margaret's Church, Wicken Bonhunt, and an associated drainage trench running across its churchyard. The chancel was built in the 13th century and is all that survives of the medieval church, the nave and tower being rebuilt in the mid 19th century.

Eleven inhumations were found within in the kitchen/toilet extension footprint and two more in the drainage trench. All interments were aligned north-east/south-west, parallel to the church and buried at a relatively shallow depth, ranging from 0.25 to 0.8m below the present ground surface. Generally, there were no associated artefacts but the location and position of the skeletons suggests they were of medieval and/or post-medieval date. The only stratified find was a post-medieval/modern nail recovered from the vicinity of one of the graves. Unstratified artefacts collected from the drainage trench included a quantity of small sherds of Late Saxon St Neots-type pottery, also found at the remains of a Late Saxon manorial and chapel complex excavated at Bonhunt Farm, c.1.25km to the east. It is speculated that a contemporary manorial focus for Wicken, perhaps with its own chapel, was located in the vicinity of what became the site of the medieval church and centre of the village.

A few pieces of medieval pottery, fired clay likely dated to the same period, fragments of medieval/post-medieval peg tiles and three nails of similar age were also collected. No other archaeological remains were discovered that help determine the nature and date of land-use predating the medieval church nor of its foundation and development.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording carried out in on construction groundworks for a kitchen/toilet extension and an associated drain run at St Margaret's Church, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex. The archaeological work was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on behalf of St Margaret's Parochial Church Council. It took place in accordance with an archaeological brief (ECC HEM 2010) and a written scheme of investigation (ECC FAU 2011) and was monitored by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM).

Copies of this report will be supplied to the client, to ECC HEM, and to the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record. A summary of the project and copy of the report will be uploaded to the OASIS online archaeological record and will be accessible at <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/>. The site archive will be deposited with Saffron Walden Museum.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Location

St Margaret's church is positioned at the centre of the village of Wicken Bonhunt (TL 4988 3335), in Uttlesford District, north-west Essex.

The extension is located at the north-west corner, against the bell tower and west end of the church nave. The drainage is planned to extend from the extension south- and southeast-wards past the tower and generally alongside pathways across the graveyard to the churchyard gate and the road beyond (Fig.1). The graveyard is laid to grass, with headstones presumably denoting the presence of graves beneath. A tree stands just north of the site of the kitchen/toilet/store extension.

2.2 Geology

The underlying geology of Wicken Bonhunt consists of Lowestoft formation (chalky till, sands, gravels, silts and clays) overlying Lewes nodular and seafoad chalk formations.

2.3 Archaeology and History

The following archaeological and historical background is based on information contained in the Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) and the RCHME description of the church (1916).

The parish church of St Margaret (EHER 36849) is constructed of flint and cobbles, with a tile roof, and is a Grade 2* listed building (LB415772). The earliest parts of the building date to the 13th century. The chancel dates to this time, though its windows are apparently later restorations. The remainder of the church (nave, tower and south porch) was more-or-less rebuilt in 1858-9, in 14th century style, and the tower roof again re-built in 1939. The HER records that the eastern part of the north chancel wall is possibly of original medieval fabric.

The church originally formed part of a church and hall complex of the manor of Wicken, around which the village developed, extending along the road between Newport and Clavering (B1028). Wicken Hall survives as a 16th century house (LB 415776) with various ancillary buildings, including a 17th century barn (now residences), to the west and north-west of the church. Remains of an associated medieval moat or fishponds are also evident (EHER 3927). The original rectory was located to the north of the church and burnt down in 1590.

No formal archaeological investigations have previously been carried out in the vicinity of St Margaret's church. Potentially-medieval pits and structural remains have, however, been found in the grounds of Wicken House to the north-east (EHER 6742). A range of artefacts, comprising prehistoric worked flints, a late Saxon pot rim and medieval pottery sherds (EHER 363-5) have been collected from the vicinity of the village centre. Remains of toft boundaries, suggestive of a shrunken medieval village, are evident on the opposite side of the Newport to Clavering road (EHER 3970).

Some 1250m to the east of St Margaret's church, is the Middle Saxon settlement site at Bonhunt Farm, adjacent to the M11 motorway. Discovered in 1967 and excavated in 1971-3, the western part of a multi-phase occupation site comprising at least 28 buildings, possibly arranged around a 'village green' and enclosed by ditched boundaries, was investigated (Wade 1980). This settlement is interpreted as a probable hunting lodge, perhaps even the centre of a royal estate? In the Late Saxon period, perhaps after a period of abandonment, the site is occupied by a farm which is developed into the manorial complex of Bonhunt in the late 11th or early 12 centuries. This included the building of St Helen's Chapel. A large cemetery was excavated around the

chapel in 1974 and further parts found during subsequent M11-related development (e.g. Gilman (ed.) 1994, 245).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The PCC submitted a planning application to the Diocesan Committee in 2010 for the various works. Following PPS 5 guidance, ECC HEM advised the Committee that a full archaeological condition was required as it was likely that the construction work would disturb significant archaeological remains. The specified requirement, as set out in the brief (ECC HEM 2010) was for archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks associated with the development, with formal area excavation to be undertaken if necessary.

3.1 Aims

3.1.1 The general aim of the monitoring work was to determine the presence or absence, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any archaeological remains that may be present within the development area.

3.2 Objectives

3.2.1 The specific objectives of the investigation were:

- To identify and record structural remains relating to the development of the medieval and later church
- To identify and record the positions and dates of interments within the churchyard

3.2.2 The research objectives for the project were pursued with reference to those of relevance identified in *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research Agenda and Strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

4. METHOD

ECC FAU monitored the excavation of the new extension footprint and the drainage pipe run carried out by Cox & Sons Ltd at St Margaret's Church in Wicken Bonhunt. The exposed surface of the extension footprint was cleaned where necessary to reveal any archaeological remains present. The drainage trench was also dug by machine and cleaned by hand. The

sides of the various groundworks were examined for archaeological deposits, finds and features, and the spoil heaps were also scanned for unstratified artefacts.

The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* and the Association of Local Government Officers' *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (IfA 2008; Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU is a registered archaeological organisation with the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The ECC FAU uses its own recording system to record all archaeological deposits and features.

Human remains were encountered, but were not analysed or retained. The positions of all human bones were recorded *in situ*, then collected for reburial on-site. All other archaeologically-significant artefacts were collected and retained for further study.

5. FIELDWORK RESULTS

5.1 Extension footprint

The kitchen/toilet extension footprint was located at the northwest corner of the church, against the bell tower and the west end of the nave (Fig.1; Plate 1). It measured 9m by 5m and was excavated to a depth of 0.7 to 0.8m. The topsoil consisted of a 0.35m-deep greyish black compact clay sand, which overlaid a 0.3m-thick layer of greyish brown compact clay sand subsoil which in turn overlaid the reddish brown compact clay sand natural deposit.

The excavation of the extension's footprint uncovered eleven south/west-north/east aligned inhumations (Fig.2). The extents of grave cuts and fills could not be readily discerned/recorded due to the lack of clarity created by the contractor's machine strip (Plate 2). Most graves were located by the exposure of portions of the skeletal remains that they contained (Plates 3 and 4). It is possible that other burials were present at greater depth. The located graves were fairly evenly spaced and there were no surviving gravestones indicating their presence. The depth of the burials, ranging from 0.25 to 0.8 m, affected the preservation of the bones, which varied from very poor to good respectively. One probable coffin nail was recovered from the fill of grave 11 and a few unstratified pieces of pottery were collected during the general ground reduction of the extension footprint.

No other archaeological features were observed in this excavation, other than the brick foundations of the 19th century rebuild of the nave and bell tower.

5.2 Drainage trench

The drainage pipe trench extended southwest-wards away from the extension footprint, then around the tower and south-eastwards towards the pathway to run along it to the churchyard gate and the road beyond (Fig.1; Plate 5). It measured 43m long by 0.3m wide and 0.7-0.8m deep. The recorded stratigraphic sequence comprised 0.1m thick turf (or a layer of gravel where the trench encroached upon the footpath), sitting on top of 0.2m dark greyish brown fairly compact silty sand topsoil which overlaid 0.5m of reddish brown fairly compact silty sand subsoil - presumably a graveyard soil. The natural deposits were not reached. The trench cut through two human skulls that presumably belonged to two graves aligned parallel to the church's axis. One (Grave 12) was found immediately off the south-west corner of the tower at a depth of 0.4m (Plate 6) and the other (Grave 13) c.5m south the porch at a depth of c.0.7m (Fig.2). Relatively small amounts of disarticulated human bones and several fragments of unstratified medieval tiles were also recovered from elsewhere along the drainage trench.

The subsoil in southernmost 10m length of the trench was observed to be more gravelly, which could indicate fewer disturbances by grave cuts in this peripheral vicinity of the churchyard.

6. FINDS

A total of 51 fragments of tile, fired clay, ironwork and pottery weighing a total of 1011 grams, were recovered from one stratified and one unstratified context. All of the material has been sorted into context and recorded by count and weight. The finds are described and tabulated below (appendix 2).

6.1 Saxon and Medieval pottery by Helen Walker

A total of eleven sherds weighing 161g were collected from unstratified deposits. These have been catalogued according to Cunningham's typology of post-Roman in Essex (Cunningham 1985, 1-16). The most interesting find comprises fragments from a St Neots-type ware in-turned dish, produced in the area of St Neots in Cambridgeshire and made from clays naturally containing fossil shell. This is a Late Saxon ware produced from c.900 to the 12th century (Hurst 1976, 320-3), but at London and Colchester it dates principally to the 11th century and this may be the case here (Cotter 2000, 33; Vince and Jenner 1991, 56). In Essex, St Neots-

type ware occurs mainly, as here, in the north-western corner of the county, and along the coast, but it is not common and classic forms such as this in-turned dish tend to be rare. Quantities of St Neots-type ware, along with Middle Saxon and other types of Late Saxon pottery have been excavated from a high status site adjacent to St Helen's Chapel at Bonhunt Farm (Bradley and Hooper 1974, 44-50; Wade 1980, 96-102).

Also found unstratified were fragments from a medieval coarse ware cooking-pot with an H2 rim. This is somewhat later than the finds of St Neots-type ware, probably dating the early to mid 13th century.

6.2 Other finds

Eight fragments of unstratified Medieval to post-medieval roof tile were recovered. These consist of small relatively unabraded fragments with two examples having nail holes. Several fragments have lime mortar on their surfaces but can not be closely dated and as such could date from the 13th to the 18th century. A total of 28 fragments of fired clay were recovered from the unstratified context. These consist of many burnt fragments with some distinct surface survival and a few examples with daub-like structure. It is possible that these derive from a hearth or similar structure. The only other finds comprise iron nails recovered from stratified and unstratified contexts (1 and U/S). These are of mixed type, the shorter examples probably representing roof tile nails, the longer curved round headed nail (context 1) a more modern example of a fencing nail or perhaps coffin furniture.

6.3 Conclusion

The finds of St Neots-type ware are of interest and may indicate that this site relates to the important Saxon site at Bonhunt Farm. Otherwise, the monitoring exercise produced a limited finds assemblage that does little beyond indicating a broad date range for the site. No further work is required on any of the finds, all materials except the pottery can be discarded.

7. DISCUSSION AND ASSESMENT OF RESULTS

Although no structural remains relating to the development of the medieval and later church were encountered, the construction groundworks at St. Margaret's Church exposed thirteen inhumations, a small amount of disarticulated human bones and a quantity of mainly unstratified artefacts. Most of the interments were found in the extension footprint and only two in the drainage trench. Their close location to the church and absence of the gravestones suggests

that they were interred before the erection of the nave and tower in 1858-9. However, the cursory nature of their investigation and the lack of diagnostic artefacts in close association means that these graves can only be broadly dated to the 13th to mid-19th centuries. The finding of a post-medieval/modern nail found near skeleton 11 may indicate that at least this burial was of relatively late date.

While unstratified, the sherds of Late Saxon pottery found to the north-west of the tower, though pre-dating the construction of the oldest surviving part of the church by two centuries, are the most significant discovery of this work. Their presence may hint at a Late Saxon chapel and manorial complex being located in this vicinity, contemporary with and complementary to that at Bonhunt Farm. Indeed it is known that Wicken and Bonhunt were separate manors until their amalgamation sometime before 1237. It is presumed that both had access to the same imported commodities. Other finds of medieval and post-medieval date attest to general activity associated with the church and perhaps the wider medieval village.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ECC FAU would like to thank St Margaret's Parochial Church Council for commissioning the work and Cox & Sons for help and co-operation during the archaeological monitoring, which was undertaken by Mark Germany and Lukasz Miciak of the ECC Field Archaeology Unit. Finds were analysed by Alan Jacobs and Helen Walker. The report was prepared by Lukasz Miciak with illustrations by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Mark Atkinson and monitored on behalf of the LPA by Richard Havis of the ECC Historic Environment Management Team.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DATA

No.	Trench	Category	Description	Date
u/s	All groundworks	Finds retrieval	General collection of unstratified finds	-
1	extension footprint	Finds retrieval	Finds in close vicinity of Grave 11	-

APPENDIX 2: FINDS DATA

All weights in grams

<i>Cntxt</i>	<i>Feature</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Date</i>
U/S	-	7	104	Saxon pottery, St Neots-type ware rim and body sherds from inturned dish or bowl, zone of fire-blackening around inside of neck, patch of fire-blackening externally	?11th Century
		4	57	Medieval Pottery, coarse ware H2 cooking-pot rim and body sherds, oxidised surfaces, not Hedingham	Early to mid 13th century
		1	4	Iron nail, 60mm long, small round head, square cut.	Medieval to Post-medieval
		28	228	Fired clay, fragments, distinct shaped surface, many fragments are heavily burnt with some indications of daub like structure, possibly hearth base?	Medieval
		8	602	Peg tile fragments, coarse orange sandy fabric, two pieces with nail holes, irregular shaped some with traces of mortar.	Medieval to post medieval
		2	8	Iron nails, 52mm and 54mm long, large flat head.	Medieval to post medieval
1		1	8	Iron nail, curved, 60mm long, large round head.	Post-medieval modern
<i>Total</i>		51	1011		

APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF SITE ARCHIVE

Contained within one A4 folder:

Client report (1 bound, 1 unbound copy)

ECC HEM brief

Written Scheme of Investigation

Finds report and tables

Post-medieval pottery report and table

Trench recording sheets

Context register

Context record sheets (x5)

Levels register sheet

Site plans and sections drawings

Photographic register and thumbnail print sheet

Photographic prints (x27, from digital images)

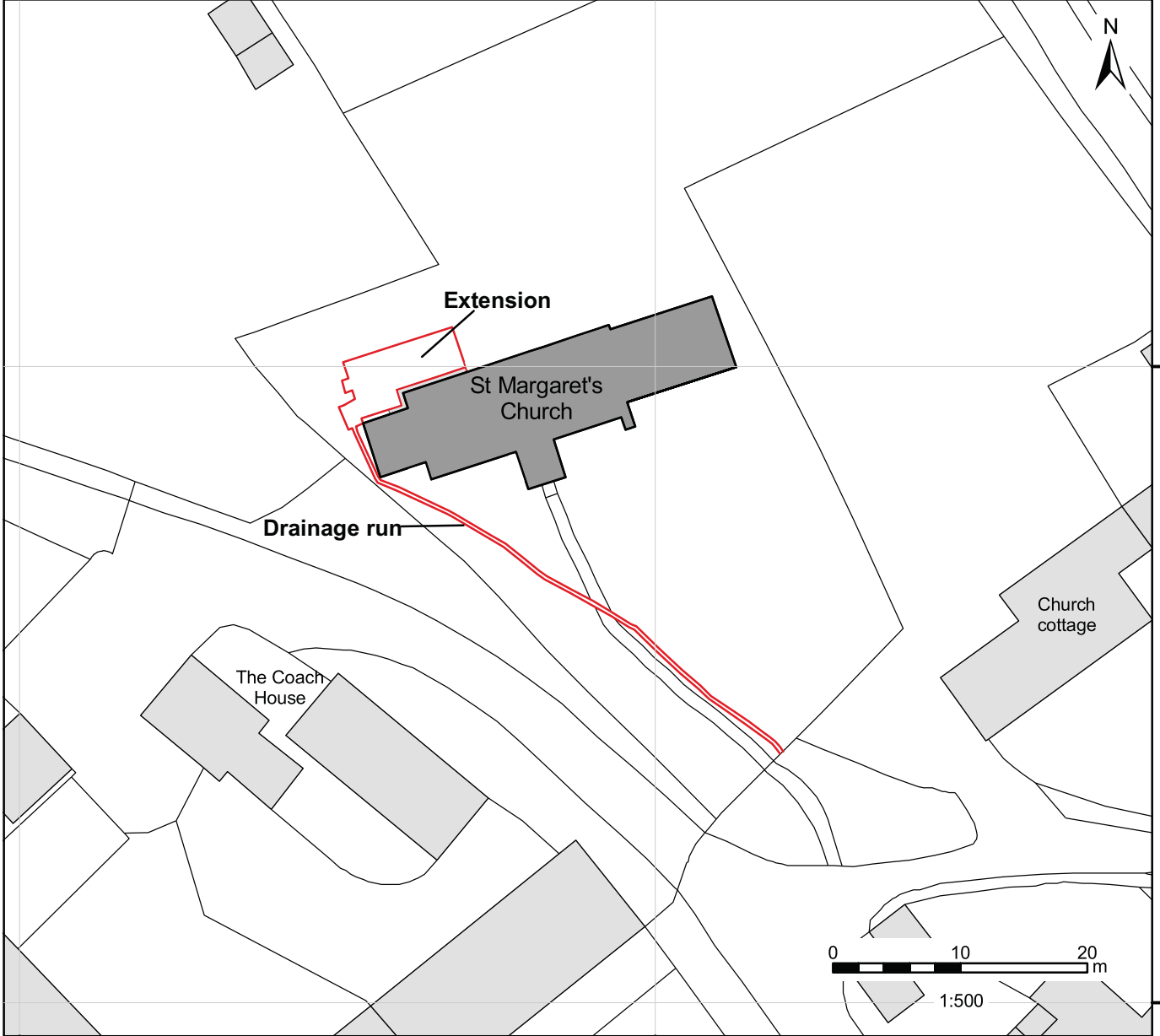
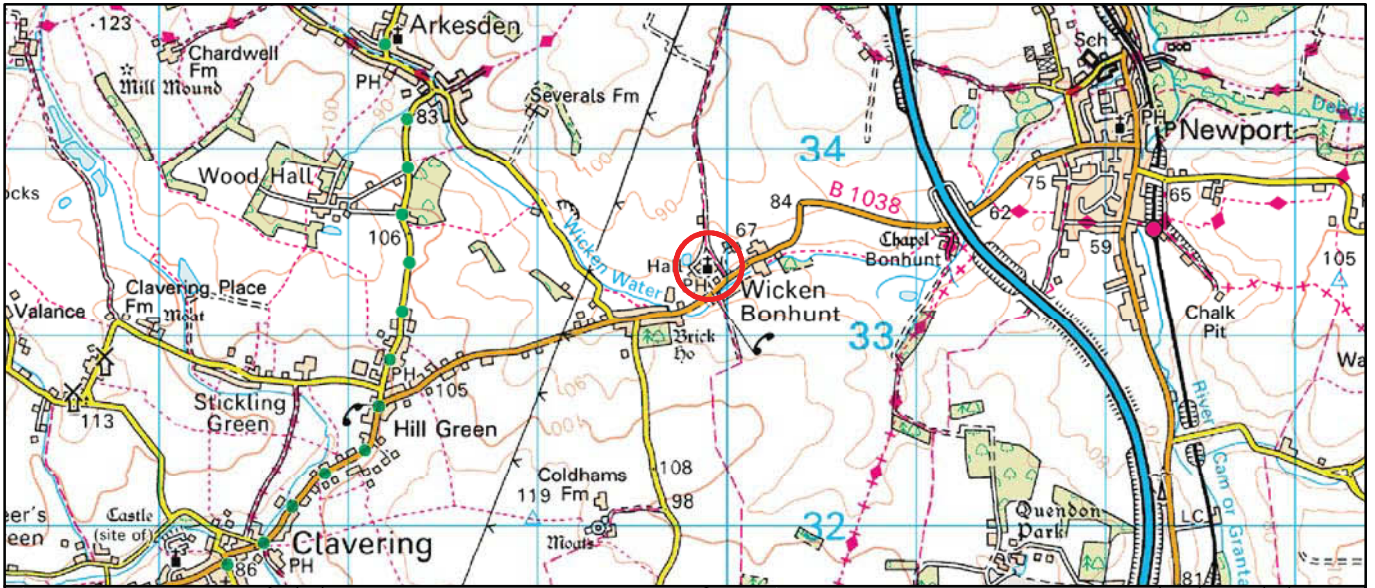
CD-Rom containing digital data (report copies, photo images, etc)

Held separate from folder:

1 bag of finds (Saxon & medieval pottery)

APPENDIX 4: ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

Site name/Address: St Margaret's Church, Wicken Bonhunt, Essex	
Parish: Wicken Bonhunt	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 4988 3335	Site Code: WTSM 11
Type of Work: Archaeological monitoring and recording	Site Director/Group: Lukasz Miciak, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
Dates of Work: 21/7/11, 25/7/11-28/7/11, 9/9/11, 13-14/9/11	Size of Area Investigated: c.55sq m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Client: St Margaret's PCC
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related HER Nos: 36849
Final Report: EAH summary	Oasis No: 108043
Periods represented: Late Saxon, Medieval, Post-medieval, modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p><i>The contractors' excavation of the footprint of a kitchen/toilet extension to the north-west corner of the church, and an associated drainage trench running across its churchyard, were monitored.</i></p> <p><i>Eleven inhumations were found within in the kitchen/toilet extension footprint and two more in the drainage trench. All were aligned north-east/south-west, parallel to the church and buried at a relatively shallow depth, ranging from 0.25 to 0.8m below the present ground surface. Due to a paucity of associated artefacts, a medieval and/or post-medieval date for these burials is assumed.</i></p> <p><i>Unstratified artefacts collected from the drainage trench included seven small sherds of Late Saxon St Neots-type pottery. It is speculated that the late Saxon/Norman Wicken manorial complex was located in the vicinity, contemporary with the manorial complex at Bonhunt Farm, c.1.25km to the east</i></p> <p><i>A few pieces of Medieval pottery, fired clay, fragments of mediievalpost-medieval peg tiles and three nails were also collected.</i></p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: none	
Author of Summary: Lukasz Miciak	Date of Summary: October 2011



549850

549900

233350

233300

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Fig.1. Location of areas of archaeological monitoring

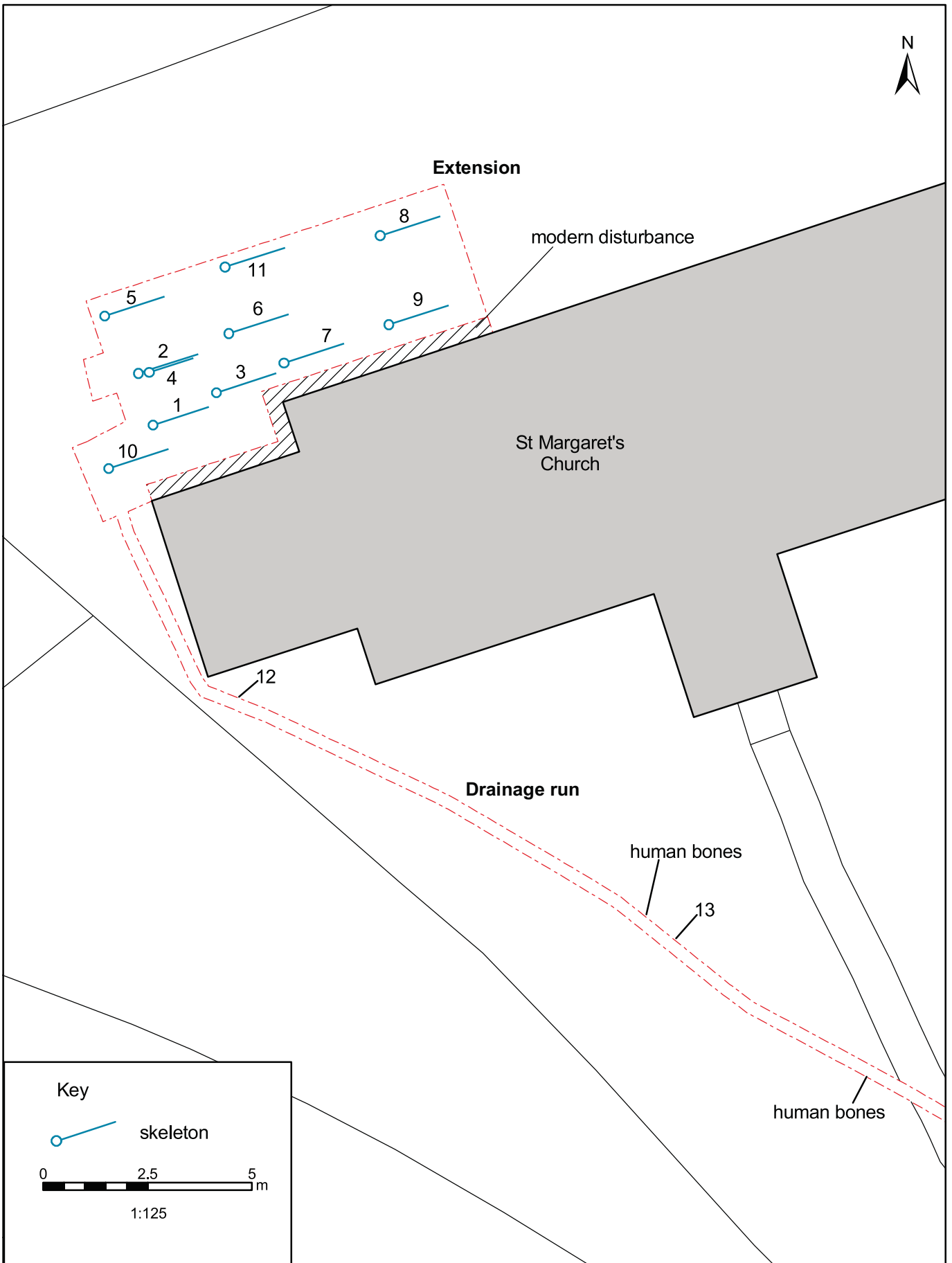


Fig.2. Location of human remains



Plate 1. Extension footprint under excavation, looking west

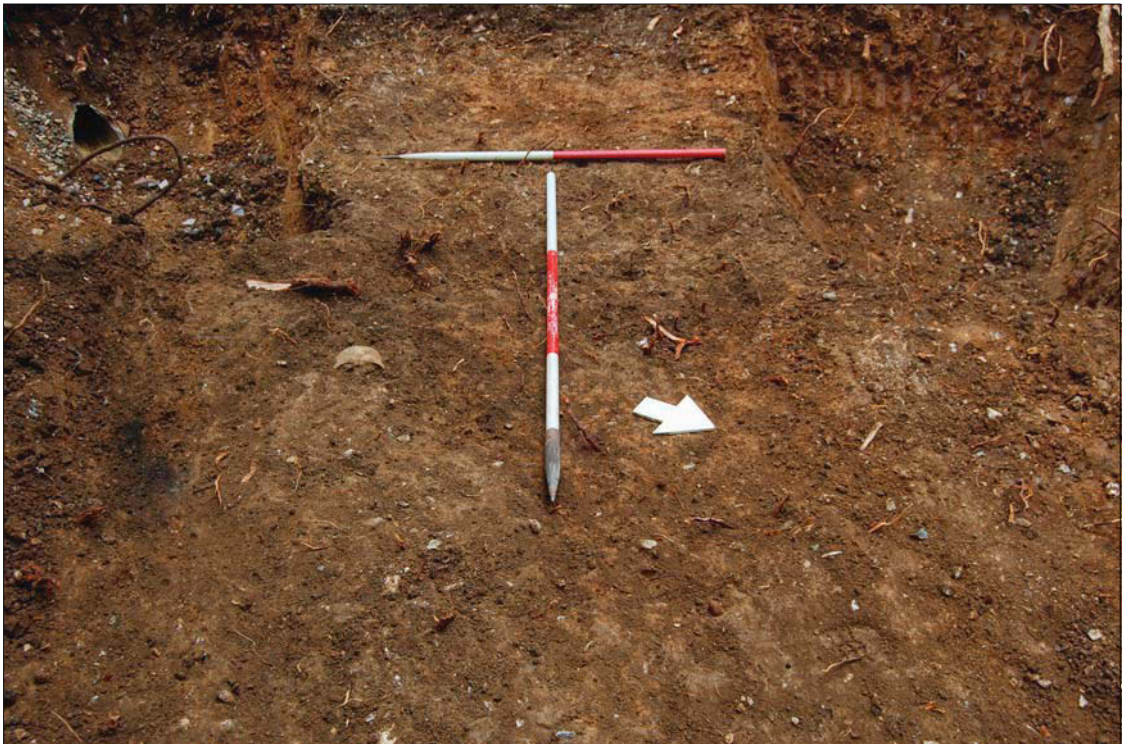


Plate 2. Extension footprint and Grave 3



Plate 3. Detail of Grave 3



Plate 4. Detail of grave 5



Plate 5. Drainage trench, looking south-east



Plate 6. Grave 12 in drainage trench section