

## St Helen's Church, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire

HN995

Report No. 731

<b>Site name and address:</b>	St Helen's Church, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	St Albans
<b>Village/town:</b>	Wheathampstead	<b>Parish:</b>	Wheathampstead
<b>Planning reference:</b>	N/A	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 17664 14020
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Wheathampstead PCC, c/o Rev. Brian Gwinn, 32 Warwick Avenue, Wheathampstead, AL4 8QB		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Maintenance	<b>Present land use:</b>	Churchyard
<b>Site Status:</b>	Grade II* listed	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Advice of DA
<b>Position in planning process:</b>	N/A	<b>Project brief originator:</b>	N/A
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	3.5m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	3.5m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN995	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.</b>	Observation and Recording	<b>Archive Recipient:</b>	St Albans Museums
<b>Start of work</b>	21/5/2012	<b>Finish of work</b>	29/6/2012
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	HER 2877	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Medieval, Post-Medieval
<b>Oasis UID:</b>	heritage1-127195	<b>Significant finds:</b>	None
<b>Monument types:</b>	None		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	None		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	None		

**Narrative:**

Following the advice of the Diocesan Archaeologist, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the PCC to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring during underpinning works undertaken as part of the renovation of the south transept of St Helen's Church, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire.

The underpinning works initially consisted of a 0.5m wide excavation by hand into the base of the south wall of the south transept to expose the wall makeup and show the form of any wall footings. This trial excavation revealed that the wall (001) was formed of irregular un-coursed flint nodules set in a sandy lime mortar matrix and resting on a 0.05m thick levelling layer of mortar (002). Below this was a foundation of black soil and flint rubble (003). The base of the wall stood 0.05m above the existing internal floor surface.

Following the trial excavation, the decision was made that the base of the wall required support. This was achieved by cutting the wall and its foundation back by 0.30m, to a height of 0.50m above, and a depth of 0.20m below, the existing floor. A limecrete foundation was then introduced above which a brick plinth was built. The construction sequence along the length of the wall was similar to that revealed in the trial excavation, with the exception of a small area at each corner where clunch stonework was revealed.

In the centre of the wall, where a stone archway below the window apparently marks a blocked doorway, the sequence continued uninterrupted and no evidence for the former doorway was observed.

**Discussion:**

St Helen's is a 13<sup>th</sup> century church, substantially renovated in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (HER 2877). It is believed, on the basis of observations made during the 19<sup>th</sup> century renovation, that the 13<sup>th</sup> century church was built over the remains of a smaller apsidal church of 11<sup>th</sup> century date.

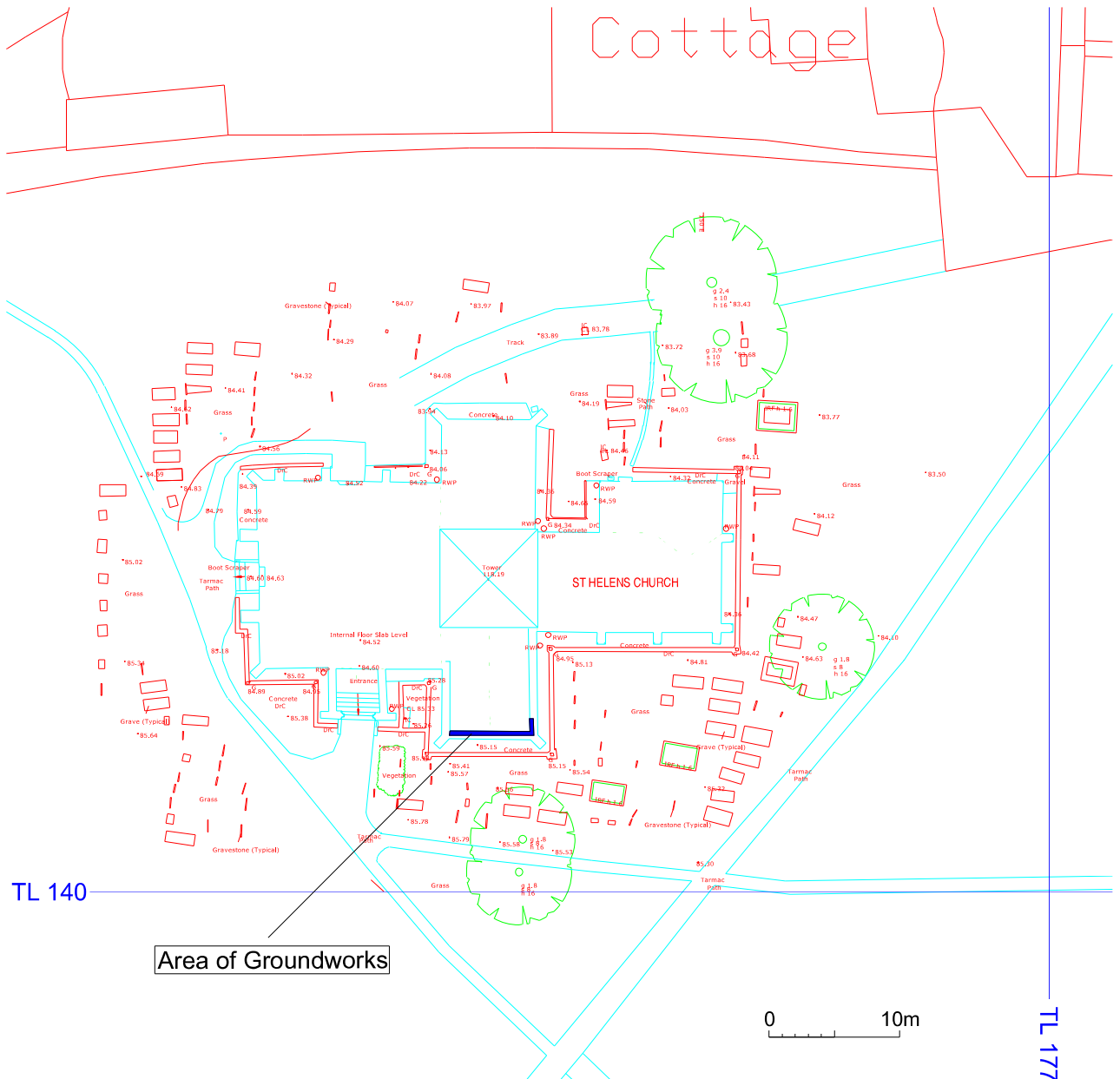
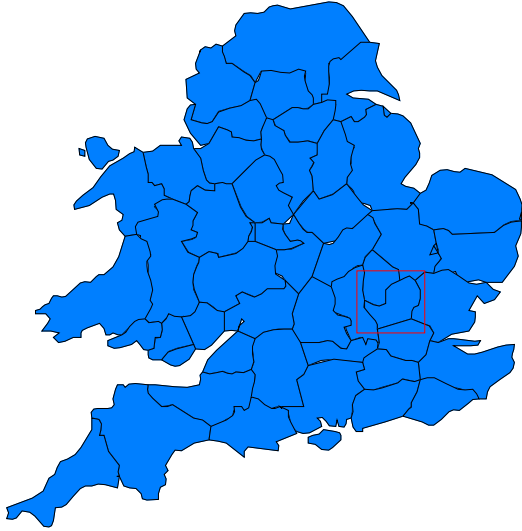
The present groundworks were located along the interior face of the south wall of the south transept and revealed that the wall was largely constructed of flint rubble in a lime mortar matrix, with clunch stonework to strengthen the corners. The wall sat on a mortar bed which rested on a foundation layer of soil and flint rubble. It was apparent that the floor of the south transept had been lowered below the base of the wall. No evidence was found for the presence of an early doorway whose location is marked by a stone archway in the wall above.

Overall the limited extent of the works, and the adoption of hand excavation by the contractor, has kept the impact on the archaeological resource to a minimum.

**Illustrations:**

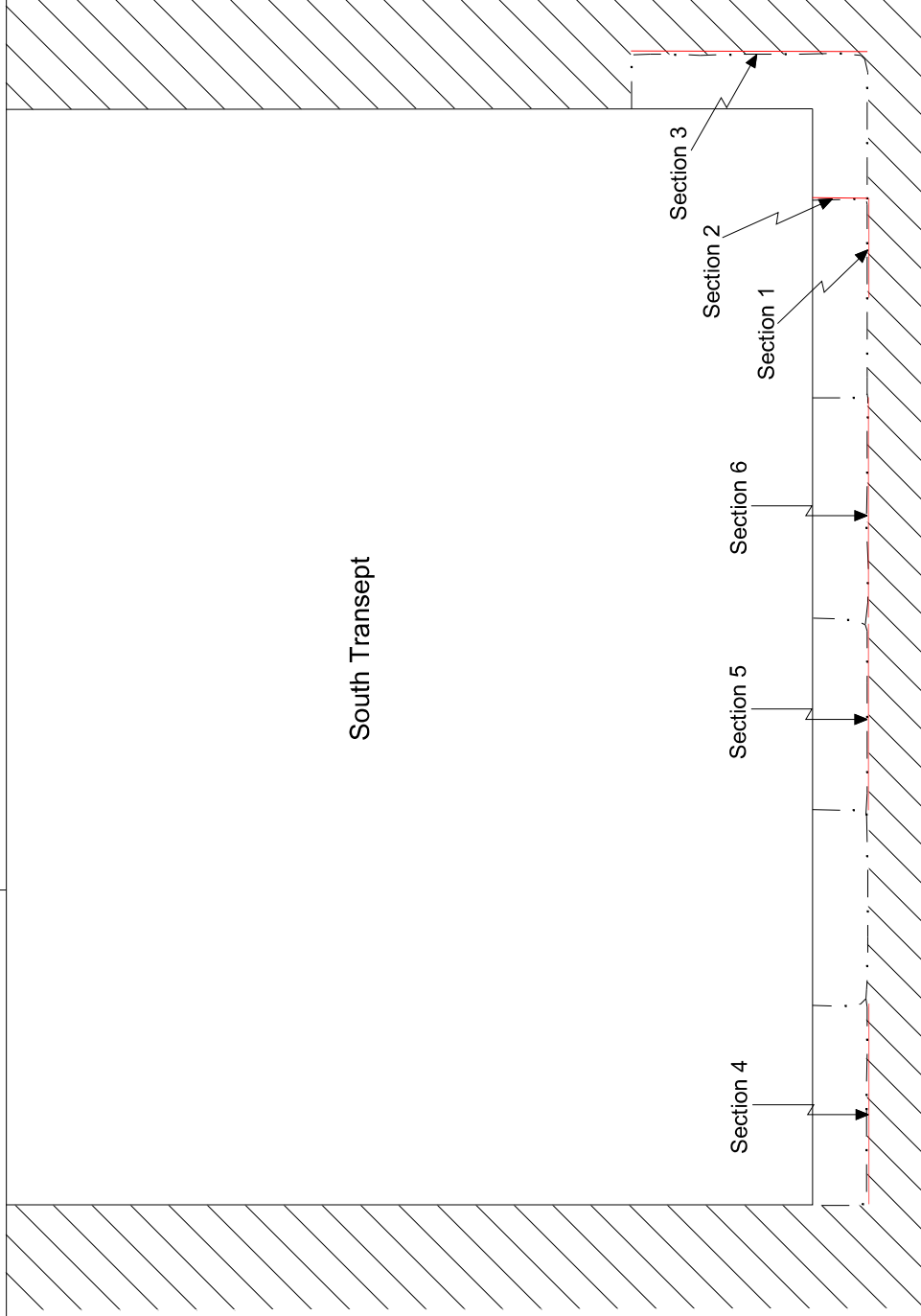
Figure 1	Site Location
Figure 2	Plan of Underpinning Works
Figure 3	Sections 1 to 3
Figure 4	Sections 4 to 6
Plate 1	Trial hole, looking north.
Plate 2	Underpinning east corner, looking southeast.
Plate 3	Underpinning west corner, looking south.
Plate 4	Underpinning under stone arch, looking south.

James Snee  
July 2012

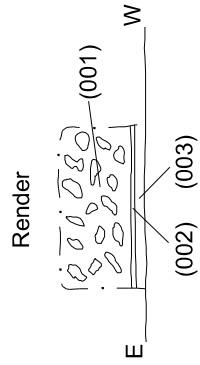


Site Location

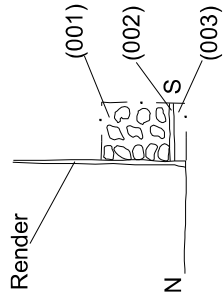
Scale 1:500



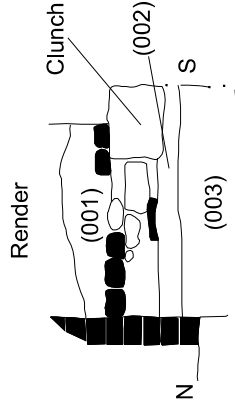
Plan of Underpinning Works



Section 1, north facing

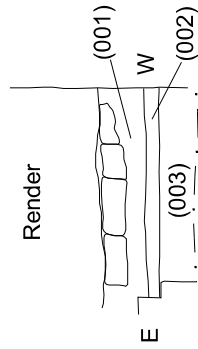


Section 2, west facing

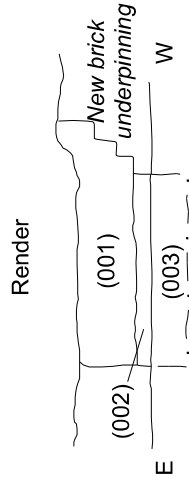


Section 3, west facing

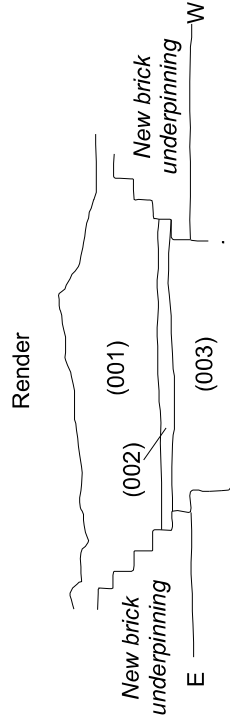




Section 4, north facing



Section 5, north facing



Section 6, north facing





Plate 1: Trial hole, looking north.



Plate 2: Underpinning east corner, looking southeast.





Plate 3: Underpinning west corner, looking south.



Plate 4: Underpinning under stone arch, looking south.