

HERITAGE NETWORK



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, Shillington, Bedfordshire

HN592

Archaeological Monitoring Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

ALL SAINTS CHURCH
Shillington, Bedfordshire

HN592

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Shillington Parochial Church Council

by

David Kaye, BA PIFA

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Contents

	Summary	Page i
Section 1	Introduction	Page 1
Section 2	Fieldwork	Page 1
Section 3	Discussion	Page 3
Section 4	Schedule of site visits.....	Page 5
Section 5	Bibliography.....	Page 6
Section 6	Illustrations & Plates.....	following Page 6
Appendix 1	Digital Photo Log.....	Page 7
Appendix 2	Grave Data.....	Page 9
Appendix 3	Grave Details.....	Page 10

The cover photo shows the location of the pit for the septic tank, looking south

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by David Kaye, Abigail Rothwell, Geoff Saunders, Chris Turner, Alison Hudson and Mick James. The illustrations were prepared by David Kaye and Abigail Rothwell and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mike Dales, Michael Dales Partnership; the staff of K G Wright (Builders) Ltd.; John Whitehall; and David Baker, St Albans DAC, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	All Saints Church, Shillington, Bedfordshire		
County:	Bedfordshire	District:	Mid Bedfordshire
Village/town:	Shillington	Parish:	Shillington
Planning reference:	N/a	NGR:	TL 1237 3394
Client name and address:	Shillington Parochial Church Council c/o Michael Dales Partnership, 95 Sharpenhoe Rd., Streatley, Luton, LU3 3PS		
Nature of work:	Refurbishment of tower	Former land use:	n/a
Site Status:	Listed building	Reason for investigation:	Faculty jurisdiction
Position in planning process:	N/a	Project brief originator:	St Albans Diocese
Size of affected area:	c.42m ²	Size of area investigated:	c.42m ²
Site Code:	HN592	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc...	Monitoring & excavation	Archive Recipient:	Bedford Museum
Start of work	07/06/2006	Finish of work	11/09/2006
Related SMR Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Medieval & Victorian
Oasis UID	heritage1 - 19172	Significant finds:	Inhumations
Monument types:	None		
Physical archive:	Parchment pricker and eraser, coin		
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

Synopsis: In response to the requirements of a diocesan faculty, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the Shillington PCC to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring associated with the provision of kitchen and toilet facilities, and their associated drainage, at All Saints Church, Shillington. The new facilities are located in the tower, with a foul drain and septic tank located in the churchyard.

Within the tower, beneath the existing tiled floor, a fired clay surface bounded by two courses of 18th or 19th century brick was recorded. Adjacent to this a thin layer of sooty material was noted, overlying a layer of clunch and chalk. This feature may represent a setting for a free-standing heating stove.

The foul drain crossing the churchyard was approximately 23m in length. Some unstratified and disarticulated human bone was recovered, as well as fragments of brick and tile. An *in situ* grave slab was also noted.

The pit for the septic tank was located on the southern side of the churchyard in an area that was free of marked graves. It measured 6m in length, 4m in width and 3.6m in depth. A total of 38 articulated skeletons were removed in whole or in part. A significant quantity of disarticulated bone, including 20 skulls, was also collected. The burials were located between 1 and 1.5m below the existing ground level, and evidence of frequent intercutting was noted. A medieval antler parchment eraser and pricker was recovered from the unstratified material within the pit.

All the human remains have subsequently been re-interred elsewhere in the churchyard.

1. Introduction

This report has been prepared at the request of the *Michael Dales Partnership*, acting on behalf of the Shillington PCC, as part of a programme of archaeological observation and recording of groundworks in the churchyard and within the tower of All Saints parish church, Shillington, Bedfordshire. The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken as a condition of the grant of a faculty by the Diocese of St Albans and followed the provisions set out in the *Brief for Archaeological Investigation, Recording and Reporting* provided by the Diocesan Adviser on Archaeology.

The church and churchyard are situated at the south-western end of the village of Shillington, centred on NGR TL 1237 3394 (Figure 1). The present church is predominantly 14th century, built of ironstone and ashlar. The tower collapsed in 1701 and was rebuilt in brick between 1746 and 1750. The present groundworks have been undertaken to install a septic tank in the southern part of the churchyard and a foul drain linking it to the tower where a short internal trench was also excavated (Figure 2).

The aim of the monitoring and recording programme has been to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains which might have been exposed in the course of the groundworks, and to excavate such as would be likely to have been destroyed by the works.

2. Fieldwork

METHODOLOGY

The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. A number of site visits were made to monitor the groundworks, and undertake excavation as appropriate.

The septic tank pit was dug by hand up to, and through, the burial horizon. A mechanical breaker was used to loosen the very compact overburden where necessary. The level was reduced in 'spits' and any visible grave cuts were investigated prior to the next 'spit' being removed or identified burials being excavated. The foul drain trench was also dug by hand.

No *Project Design* was requested for the present project. However, all work followed the provisions of the published DAC Brief, and was carried out in accordance with current standards and guidelines published by English Heritage, the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and others.

TOWER TRENCH

The trench excavated for the services in the tower was 4.6m in length, 0.3m in width and 0.35m in depth (Figure 3). Beneath the ceramic floor tiles was a make up layer of silty gravel and chalk which was cut by two low retaining walls consisting of two courses of unfrogged bricks bonded with lime mortar, [01]. Between the walls was a concave surface of fired clay laid over a layer of stone and hardcore (Plate 1a). A thin layer of sooty material overlying a layer of chalk

and clunch 0.13m deep was observed on the southern side of the feature that was not present on the northern side or in the trench in the churchyard (Plate 1b).

CHURCHYARD TRENCH

The trench for the foul drain from the tower was routed from a point just east of the southwest buttress to the corner of the south porch, and then southwest across the churchyard to the septic tank. It was approximately 23m in length, 0.4m in width and between 0.2 and 0.5m in depth. During the course of the excavation some disarticulated, unstratified human bone was recovered and an *in situ* grave slab was noted. Some modern artefacts including ceramic building material and peg tile were also observed.

SEPTIC TANK PIT

The pit for the septic tank measured 6m in length, 4.1m in width and 3.6m in depth. The ground was reduced in 'spits' by hand, using a breaker to loosen the compacted overburden when necessary. As each grave cut was revealed it was investigated to locate articulated human remains prior to another 'spit' being removed or the identified burial being excavated, recorded and removed.

The stratigraphy of the pit consisted of 0.2m of very dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) silty clay topsoil, overlying 1.37m of dark yellowish brown (10YR 3/6) cemetery soil. Below this, the natural geology was predominantly chalk with patches of gravel.

A total of 38 complete or part burials were recovered from the septic tank pit (Figure 4). These are listed in Appendix 2 including details of depth, completeness, condition, age and sex. The depth of the burials varied from 1.02 to 1.54m below the existing ground level (Figure 5). The degree of completeness was recorded according to how much of the skeleton had decayed, whether it was truncated by a later burial, and the proportion of the grave that was located within the confines of the pit (only those parts of the burials that lay within the pit were recovered, in accordance with current guidelines). Thirty-three of the burials were identified as adult, 1 as sub-adult, 2 as children and 2 as infants. Apart from 9 of the burials, it was not possible to ascertain the sex of the individuals.

All the burials lay within a layer 0.52m in depth, and within consistent geology. Consequently it is not possible to draw a correlation between the state of preservation of the burials and their depth or their location within the pit.

A concordance between the identified graves and the presence of artefacts is listed in Appendix 3. Only two of the burials, [101] and [165], included identifiable remains of wooden coffins. A fragment of wood within grave [165] was in contact with a corroded copper alloy coin (Figure 6), located beneath the right hand of the skeleton. It appears that the wood has been preserved by the corrosion products of the coin, which was too corroded to identify or date.

One burial [210] contained a ferrous metal coffin plate, although it was too corroded to identify any lettering. Coffin nails were present in 16 graves, coffin handles in 6 and decorative studs in 6. Four burials [116], [126], [177] and [186] contained all three.

Four graves [101], [147], [165] and [177] included pressed or stamped tin lettering. Most of the lettering had a fine embossed beading delineating each letter (Plate 2a). The most complete inscription was from an infant burial [147] (Plate 2b). The individual letters “J A AGED 1 ONTHS” were recovered. Mechanically embossed lettering made from sheet metal, particularly tin, was popular between the late 18th and the mid 19th century, when the majority of coffin furniture had become mass-produced (Budd, 1993).

Few personal effects were recovered from the burials; however, a hairpiece in a ‘bun’ style was present in Grave [141] (Plate 3a). Shroud pins were recovered from two graves and shroud buttons from three.

The orientation of the grave cuts varied from a true east-west by up to 37 degrees. The majority of the burials were aligned on the church or on the path to the south door. A few were aligned on the southern boundary.

In addition to the 38 identified burials, a significant quantity of disarticulated bone, including 20 skulls, was also recovered. This would suggest that there had been at least 58 individuals interred within the study area.

During the course of the excavation a medieval parchment eraser and pricker made of antler was recovered. It was 60mm in length and rectangular in section, with a similar geometric pattern on each face (Figure 7). No clear parallel for this artefact has been identified as yet, so a precise date for it cannot be proposed.

3. Discussion

The excavation for the septic tank in the churchyard, and its associated drain trenches, has provided an opportunity to examine earlier activity within the tower, and the extent and density of burials to the south of the church.

The short length of trench excavated within the tower exposed a make up layer of silty gravel and chalk beneath the ceramic floor tiles. Two low retaining walls of 18th or early 19th century unfroged bricks bonded with lime mortar appeared to cut this layer and to bound a concave surface of fired clay overlying a layer of stone and hardcore. This has been interpreted as the setting for a free-standing heating stove. Adjacent to the south was a thin layer of sooty material which is likely to be associated with it.

The trench for the foul drain from the tower to the septic tank was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.5m. Unstratified human bone was recovered from along its length and an *in situ* grave slab was also noted but not examined.

The septic tank pit revealed 38 complete or partial articulated burials and 20 additional disarticulated skulls. This would suggest that up to 58 individuals had been interred in an area of approximately 24 square metres. A significant quantity of disarticulated and unstratified bone was also recovered, deriving from earlier disturbed graves in the vicinity. The human remains

were not considered to represent a significant demographic group, being associated merely by burial location, rather than by demonstrable family ties or date. For this reason, although a simple record of key indicators of sex and age was made in the field, no detailed examination of the skeletal material was carried out. All the human remains were given into the care of the vicar and subsequently reinterred elsewhere in the churchyard.

The cemetery soil in the area of the septic tank may have been formed through a combination of processes (Figure 8): the expansion of the church and associated landscaping, the material from the burials themselves, and the possible importation of material brought in from outside (Morris 1989).

The lack of chalk in the matrix of the cemetery soil suggests that the graves were not routinely cut into the natural geology to a significant depth. Sixteen graves were cut into the chalk (Plate 3b), and virtually all of these contained skeletons in a good state of completeness, suggesting they were of a later date, uncut by subsequent graves. The greater depth may suggest that they date to 1847 or later, when the Burial Act enforced a minimum depth of 30 inches (0.76m) between the coffin lid and the ground surface.

Although no grave markers were apparent in vicinity of the septic tank prior to the start of excavation works, parishioners have stated that they could recall wooden crosses marking some graves within the study area. This may suggest that this area of the graveyard remained in active use until the end of the 19th century. The presence of the parchment pricker, unstratified in the cemetery soil, suggests that some of the remains exhumed were medieval in date

CONFIDENCE RATING

In the course of the fieldwork, weather and ground conditions were generally good for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. There are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the present project which is less than High.

4. Schedule of Site Visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
7/6/06	GIS	7	Monitor drainage trench
8/6/06	GIS	3	Monitor drainage trench
13/6/06	GIS	3	Inspect tombstone revealed in drainage
5/7/06	DGK	7	Monitor digging of septic tank pit
6/7/06	DGK	6	Monitor digging of septic tank pit
10/7/06	DGK	9	Monitor digging of septic tank pit
11/7/06	DGK	9	Locate & remove burials
11/7/06	CT	9	Locate & remove burials
11/7/06	AR	9	Locate & remove burials
12/7/06	DGK	9	Locate & remove burials
12/7/06	AR	9	Locate & remove burials
13/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
14/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
14/7/06	AH	8	Locate & remove burials
17/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
17/7/06	AR	8	Locate & remove burials
18/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
18/7/06	AR	8	Locate & remove burials
18/7/06	MJ	8	Locate & remove burials
19/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
19/7/06	AR	8	Locate & remove burials
20/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
20/7/06	AR	8	Locate & remove burials
20/7/06	MJ	8	Locate & remove burials
21/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
21/7/06	AH	8	Locate & remove burials
24/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
24/7/06	AR	8	Locate & remove burials
25/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
25/7/06	AR	8	Locate & remove burials
26/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
26/7/06	AR	8	Locate & remove burials
27/7/06	DGK	8	Locate & remove burials
27/7/06	AR	8	Locate & remove burials

5. Bibliography

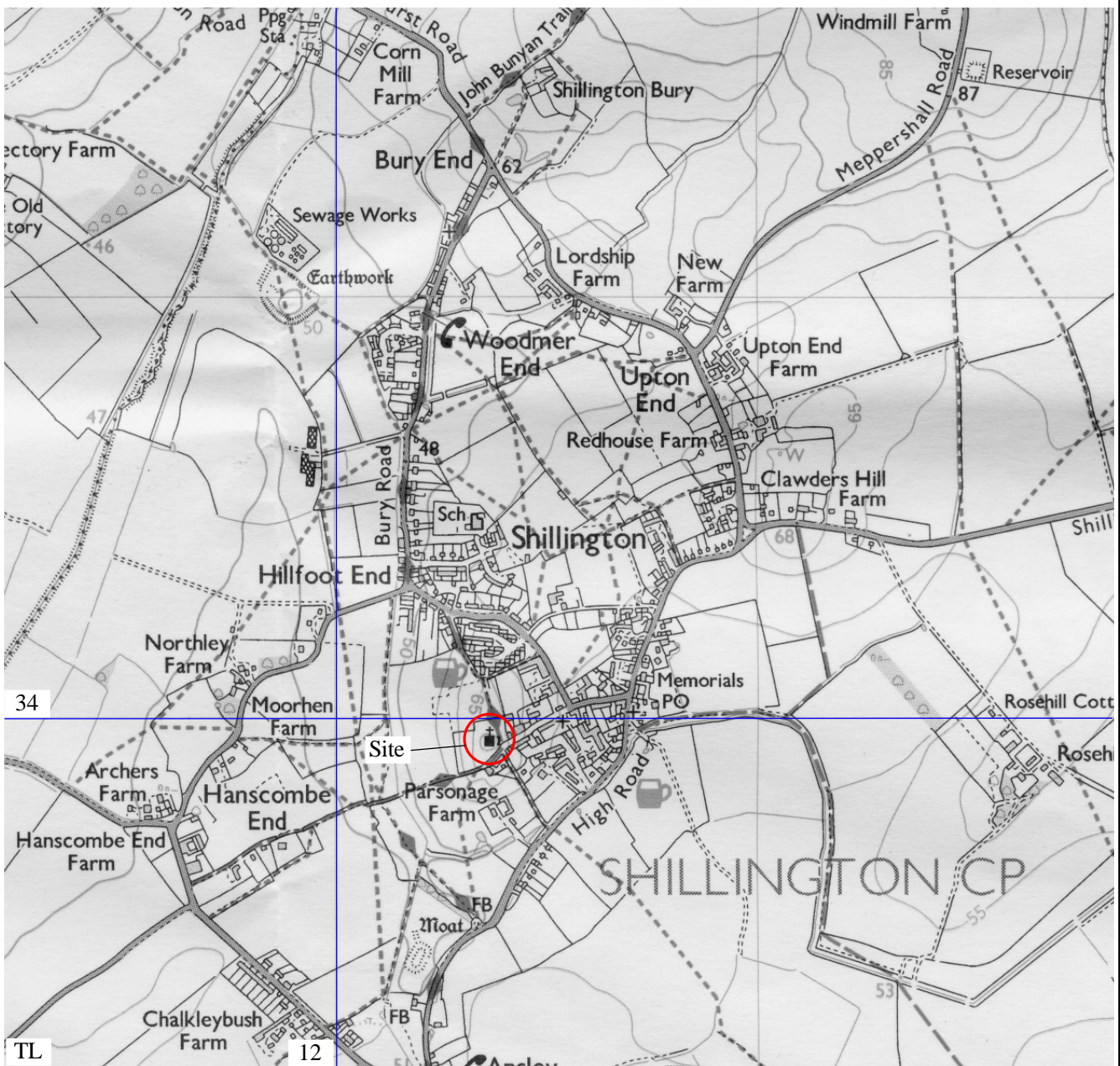
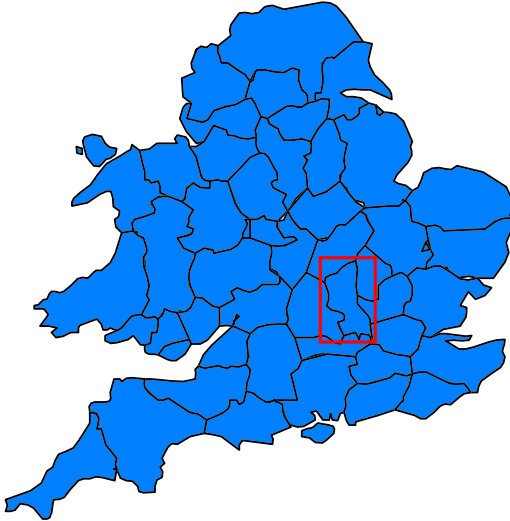
Baker, D., 2006, *Brief for archaeological investigation, recording and reporting at the church of all Saints, Shillington, Bedfordshire.*

Budd, P., 1993 “*Metallurgical analysis of a selected sample of coffin furniture*”. University of Bradford. <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/cbaresrep/pdf/085/08515001.pdf>

Morris, R., 1989, *Churches In The Landscape*, London, Phoenix Giant.

6. Illustrations & Plates

Figure 1	Site Location
Figure 2	Site Layout
Figure 3	Location of Brick and Clay Setting
Figure 4	Schematic Layout of Graves
Figure 5	Relative Levels of Articulated Burials
Figure 6	Copper Alloy Coin
Figure 7	Parchment Eraser and Pricker
Figure 8	Site Formation
Plate 1a.....	Centre of the trench in the tower facing SW
Plate 1b.....	South end of the trench in the tower facing SW
Plate 2a.....	Embossed lettering from Grave [101]
Plate 2b.....	Lettering from Grave [147], in situ
Plate 3a.....	Hairpiece from Grave [186]
Plate 3b.....	Fully excavated pit

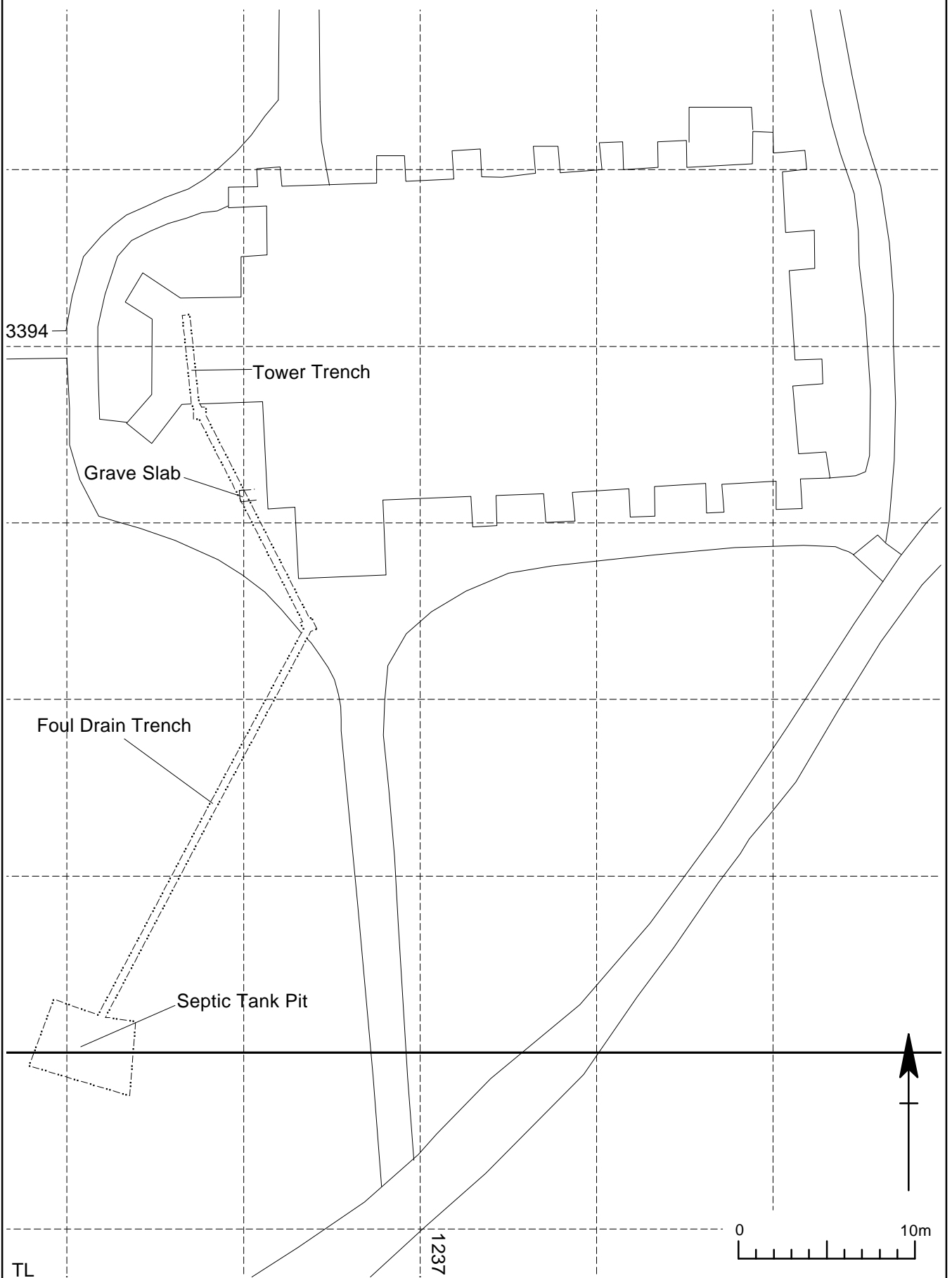


Site Location

Scale 1:15000

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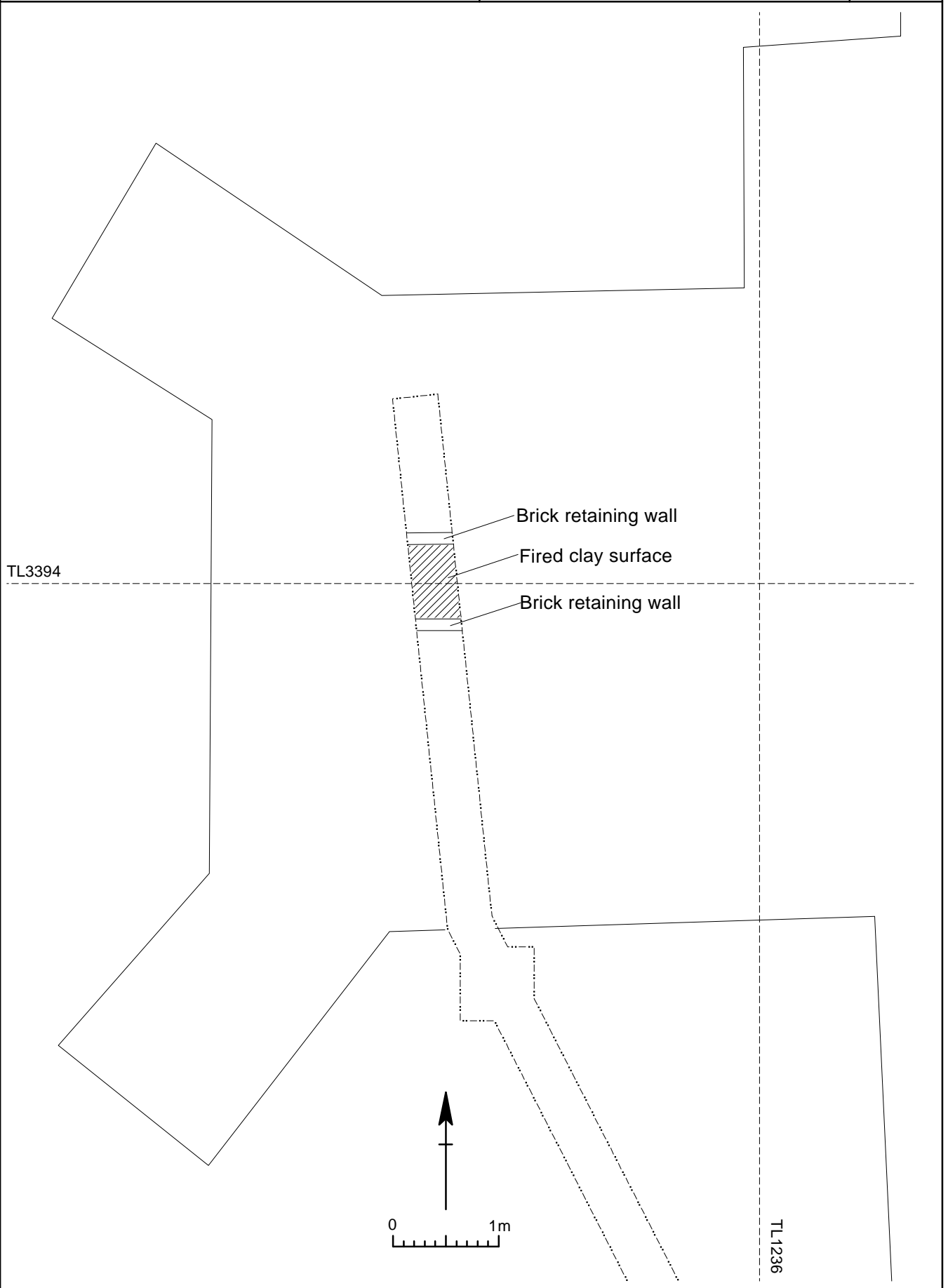
Figure 1



Site Layout

Scale 1:300

Figure 2

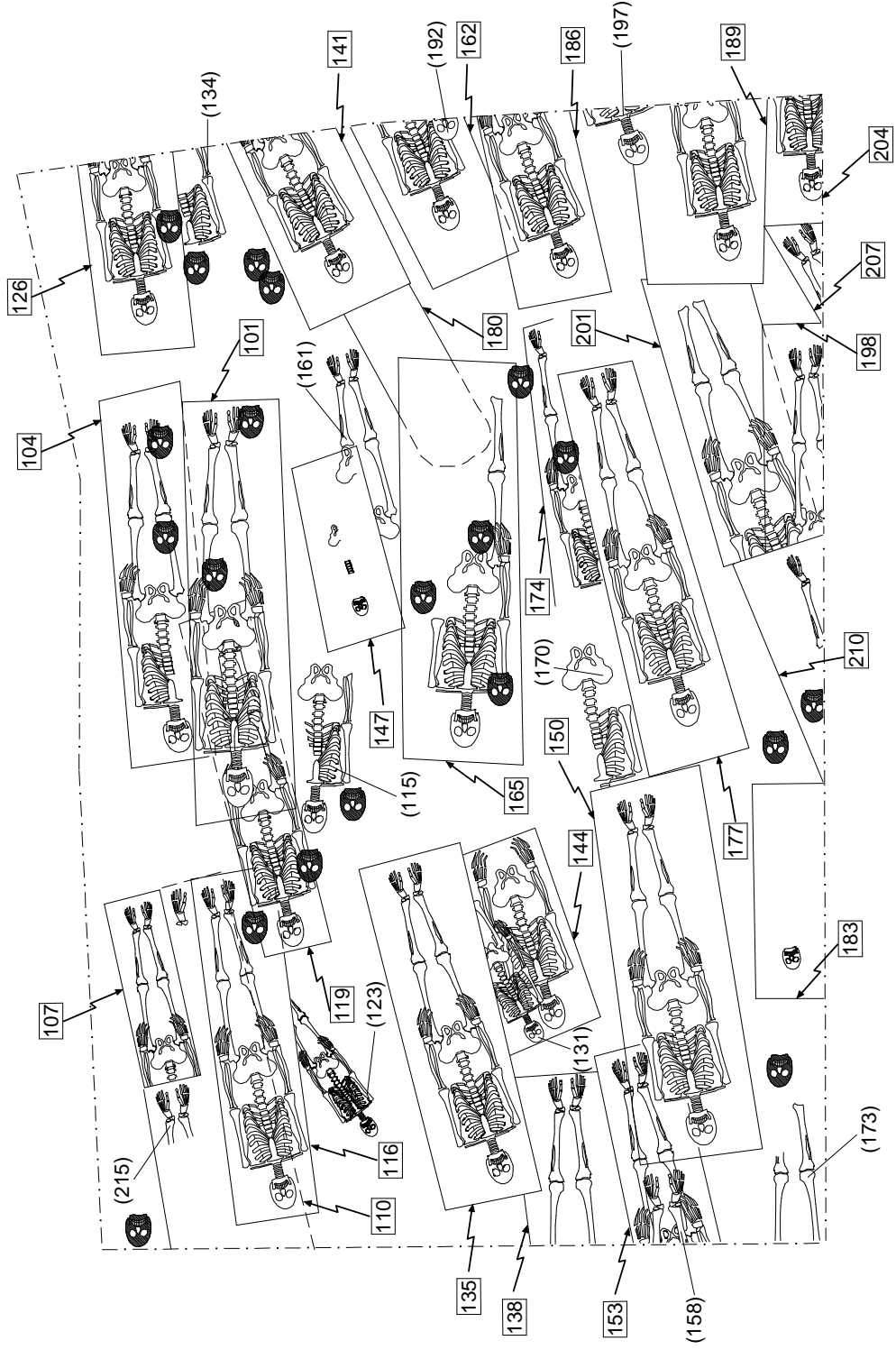



Location of Brick and Clay Setting

Scale 1:50

Figure 3

Schematic layout of graves

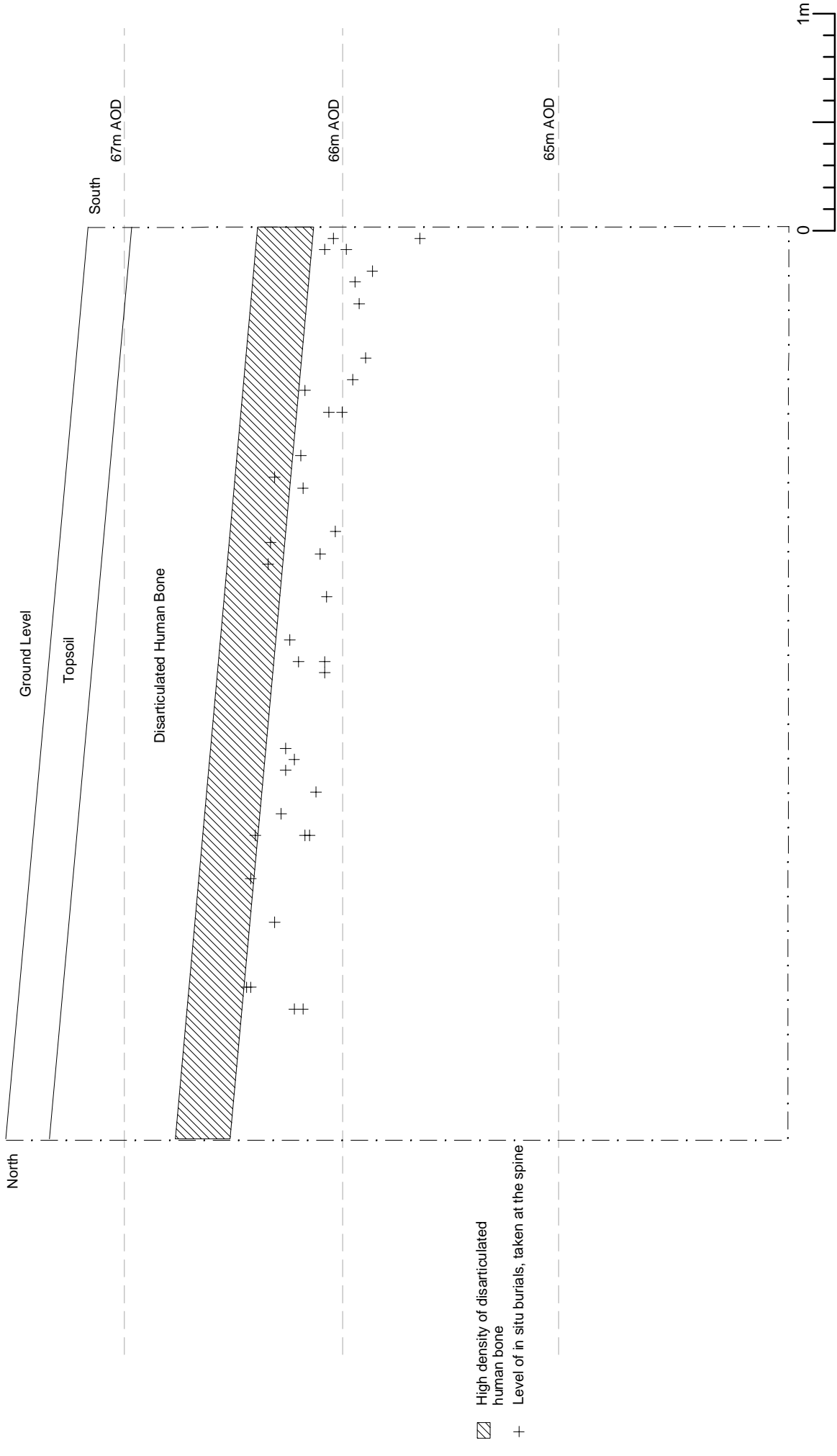


 Unstratified skull

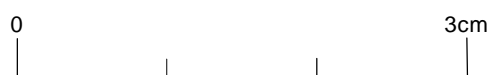
Completeness of skeletons is illustrative only

Scale 1: 25

Figure 4



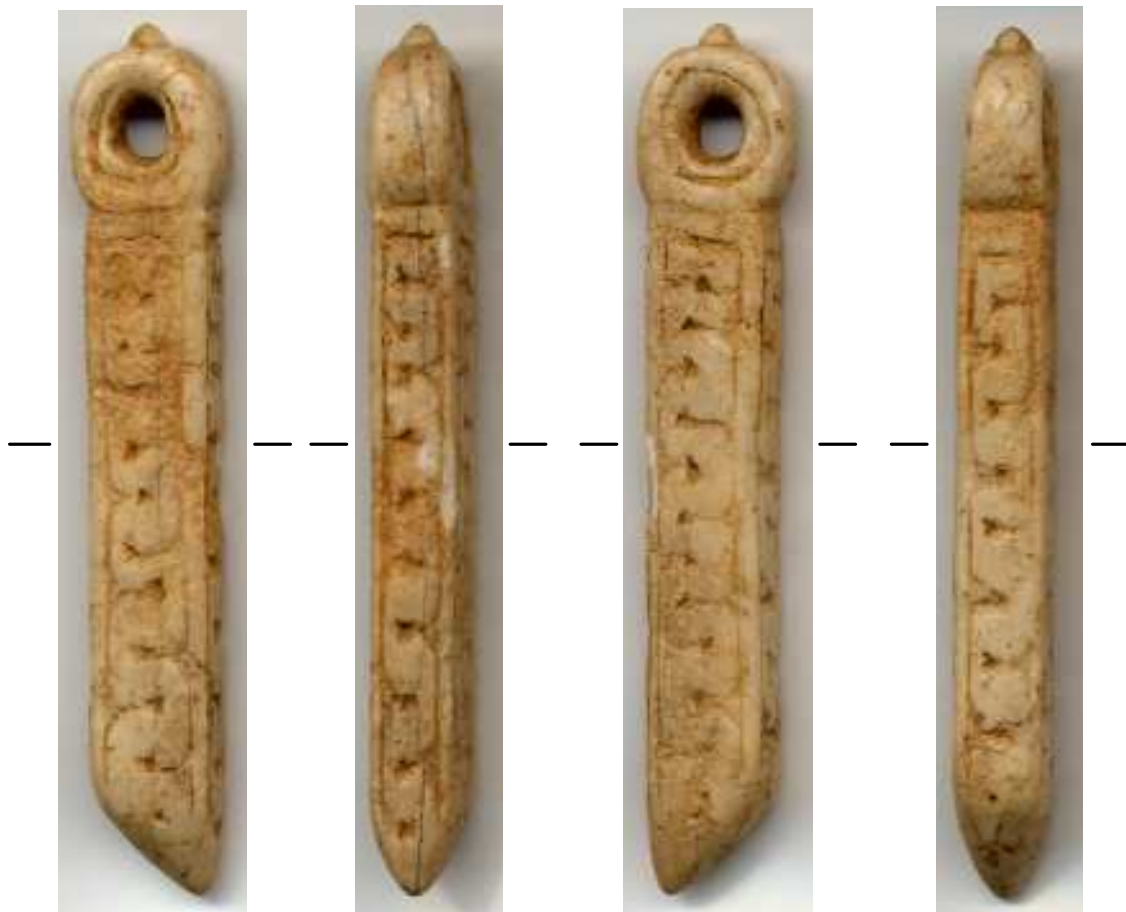
Relative levels of articulated burials



Copper alloy coin from Grave [165]

Scale 2:1

Figure 6



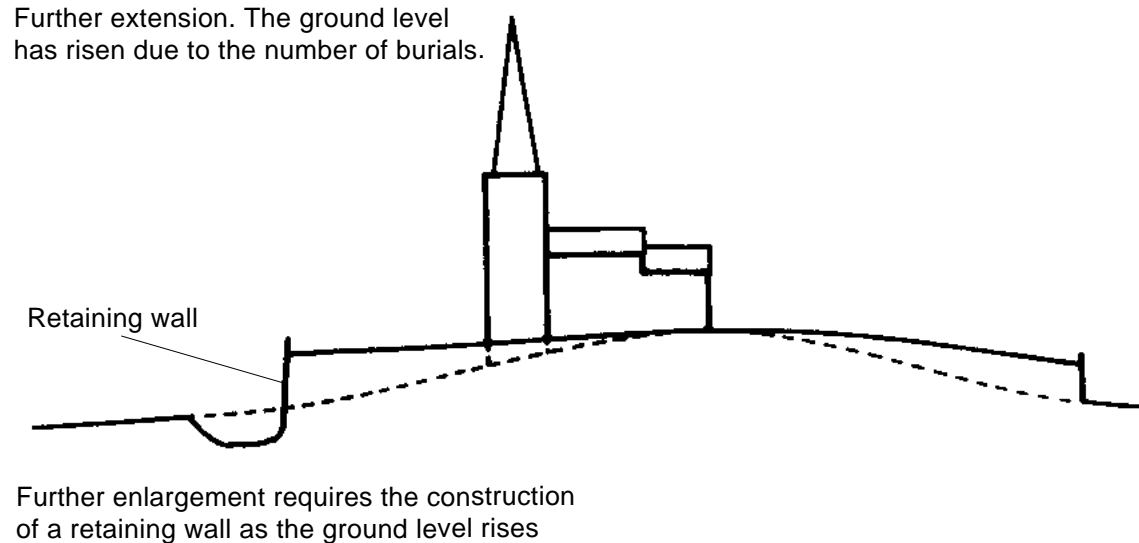
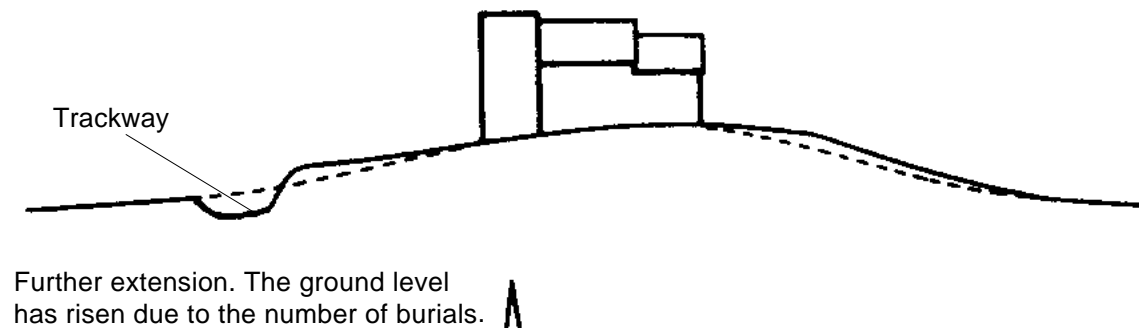
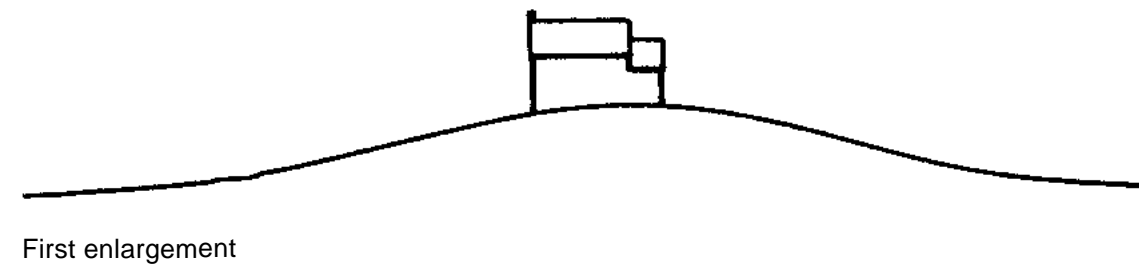
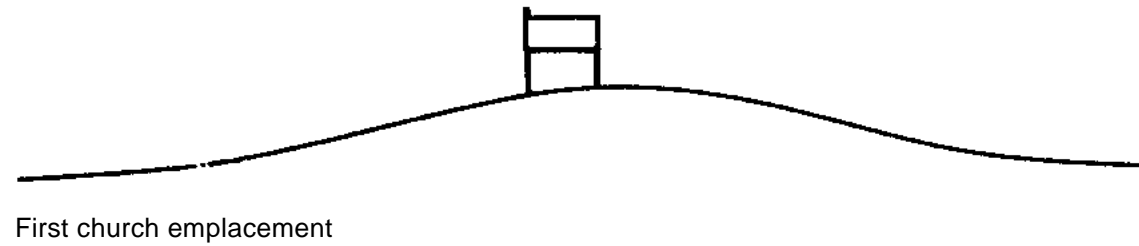
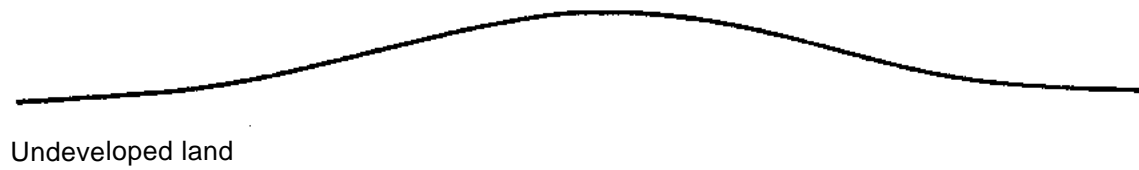
Object Profile

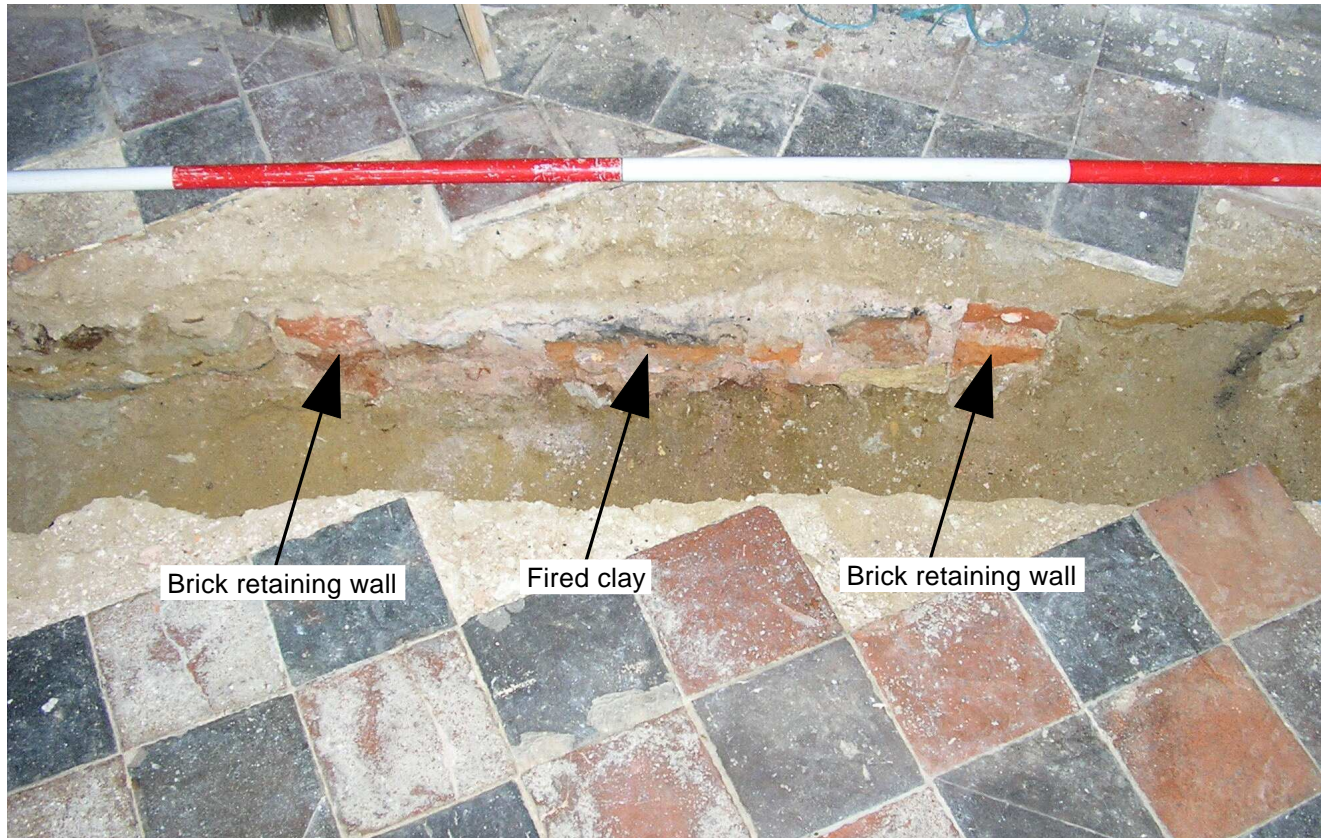


Antler parchment eraser and pricker

Scale 2:1

Figure 7



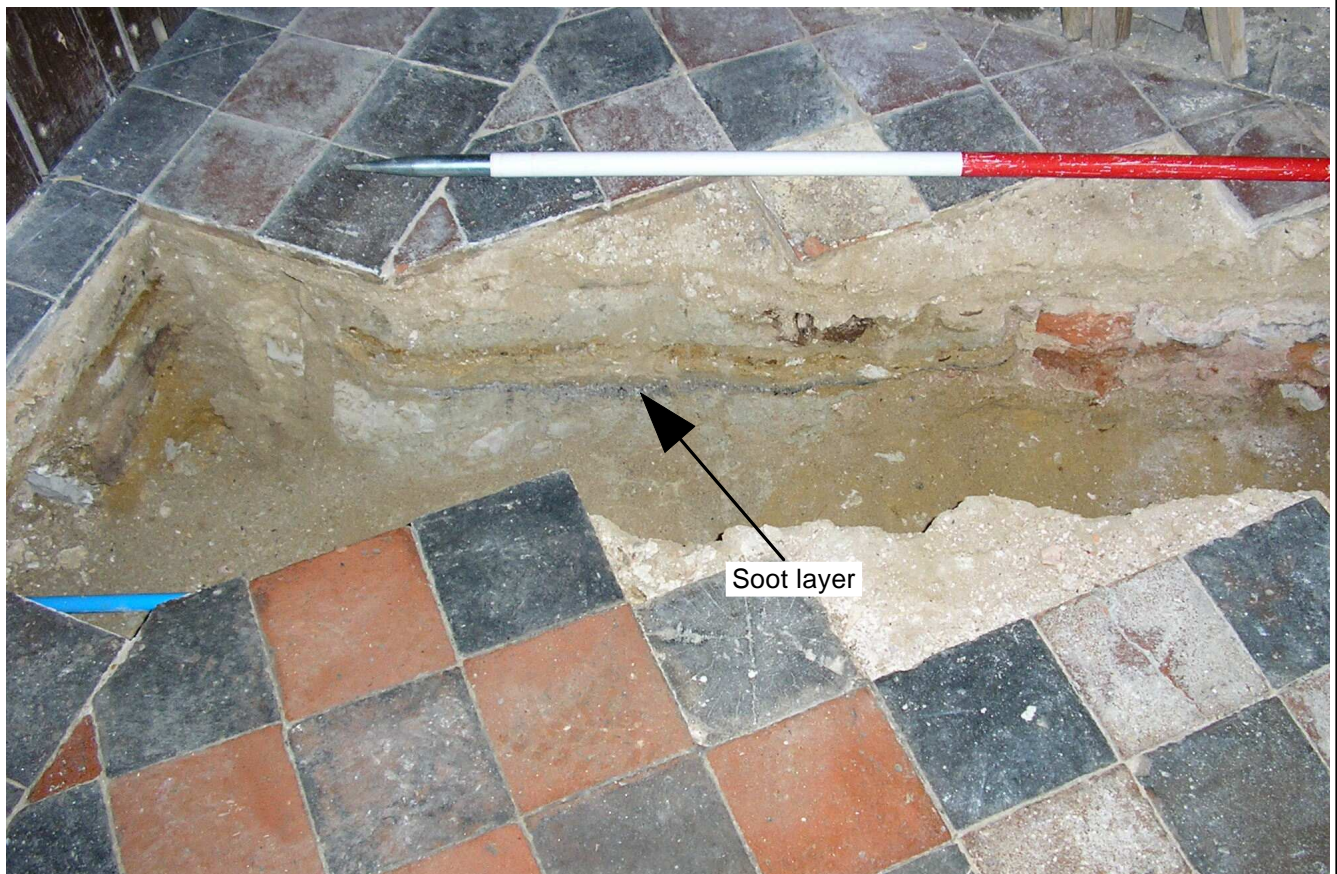


Brick retaining wall

Fired clay

Brick retaining wall

Plate 1a: Centre of the trench in the tower facing SW



Soot layer

Plate 1b: South end of the trench in the tower facing SW



Plate 2a: Embossed lettering from Grave [101]



Plate 2b: Lettering from Grave [147], in situ



Plate 3a: Hair piece from Grave [186]



Plate 3b: Septic tank pit, as excavated

Appendix 1

Digital Photographic Log

Digital Ref.	Description	Facing
HN592-001	General view	W
HN592-002	General view	S
HN592-003	General view	NE
HN592-004	General view	NE
HN592-005	General view	S
HN592-006	General view of pit	N
HN592-007	General view of pit	N
HN592-008	General view of pit	E
HN592-009	General view of pit	E
HN592-010	General view of pit	S
HN592-011	General view of pit	S
HN592-012	Man hole	N
HN592-013	Grave slab in trench	NE
HN592-014	Grave slab in trench	NE
HN592-015	Trench through churchyard	S
HN592-016	Grave 123	S
HN592-017	Grave 123	S
HN592-018	Grave 135	W
HN592-019	Grave 135	W
HN592-020	Grave 177	W
HN592-021	Grave 177	W
HN592-022	Skeleton 170	W
HN592-023	Skeleton 170	W
HN592-024	Grave 147	W
HN592-025	Grave 147	W
HN592-026	Grave 147 close up	W
HN592-027	Grave 150 close up	W
HN592-028	Grave 165	W
HN592-029	Grave 165	W
HN592-030	Embossed lettering from Grave 101	
HN592-031	Embossed lettering from Grave 101	
HN592-032	Embossed lettering from Grave 101	
HN592-033	Embossed lettering from Grave 101	
HN592-034	Embossed lettering from Grave 101 close up	
HN592-035	Embossed lettering from Grave 147 in situ close up	
HN592-036	Coffin handle and plate	
HN592-037	Coffin handle and plate	
HN592-038	Coffin handle and plate	
HN592-039	Coffin handle and plate	
HN592-040	Coffin handle and plate	
HN592-041	Coffin handle and plate	
HN592-042	Hair piece	
HN592-043	Coffin handle plate	
HN592-044	Coffin handle plate	
HN592-045	Embossed lettering from Grave 147	

Digital Ref.	Description	Facing
HN592-046	Embossed lettering from Grave 147 in situ close up	
HN592-047	Hair piece	
HN592-048	Hair piece close up	
HN592-049	Excavating Graves [104] & [107]	N
HN592-050	Excavating Graves [104] & [107]	NE
HN592-051	Excavating Grave [147]	NE
HN592-052	Excavating Grave [147]	NE
HN592-053	Skull fragments from Grave [147]	
HN592-054	General view	E
HN592-055	General view	E
HN592-056	Trench in the tower, southeast end	SW
HN592-057	Trench in the tower, centre	SW
HN592-058	Trench in the tower, northwest end	SW
HN592-059	Trench in the tower, centre, close up	SW
HN592-060	Embossed lettering from Grave 147 in situ close up	W
HN592-061	Fully excavated pit	E



HN592-001



HN592-002



HN592-003



HN592-004



HN592-005



HN592-006



HN592-007



HN592-008



HN592-009



HN592-010



HN592-011



HN592-012



HN592-013



HN592-014



HN592-015



HN592-016



HN592-017



HN592-018



HN592-019



HN592-020



HN592-021



HN592-022



HN592-023



HN592-024



HN592-025



HN592-026



HN592-027



HN592-028



HN592-029



HN592-030



HN592-031



HN592-032



HN592-033



HN592-034



HN592-035



HN592-036



HN592-037



HN592-038



HN592-039



HN592-040



HN592-041



HN592-042



HN592-043



HN592-044



HN592-045



HN592-046



HN592-047



HN592-048



HN592-049



HN592-050



HN592-051



HN592-052



HN592-053



HN592-054



HN592-055



HN592-056



HN592-057



HN592-058



HN592-059



HN592-060



HN592-061

Appendix 2

Grave Data

Grave Number	Fill Number	Skeleton Number	Depth (m AOD)	Completeness	Condition	Age	Sex
101	102	103	66.42	Fair	Poor	Adult	Male
104	105	106	66.42	Fair	Good	Adult	Female
107	108	109	66.44	Poor	Good	Sub-adult	Unknown
110	111	112	66.40	Poor	Good	Adult	Unknown
113	114	115	66.28	Poor	Poor	Adult	Unknown
116	117	118	66.17	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
119	120	121	66.15	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
123	124	125	66.22	Good	Good	Child	Unknown
126	127	128	66.22	Good	Fair	Adult	Female
129	130	131	66.34	Fair	Good	Child	Unknown
132	133	134	66.31	Poor	Fair	Adult	Unknown
135	136	137	66.07	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
138	139	140	66.10	Good	Fair	Adult	Unknown
141	142	143	66.12	Good	Good	Adult	Female
144	145	146	66.33	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
147	148	149	66.26	Poor	Fair	Infant	Unknown
150	151	152	65.95	Good	Good	Adult	Female
153	154	155	66.06	Fair	Good	Adult	Unknown
156	157	158	66.00	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
159	160	161	66.26	Poor	Fair	Adult	Unknown
162	163	164	66.20	Fair	Fair	Adult	Unknown
165	166	167	66.24	Fair	Good	Adult	Female
168	169	170	66.31	Poor	Good	Adult	Male
171	172	173	65.95	Fair	Fair	Adult	Unknown
174	175	176	66.18	Fair	Good	Adult	Unknown
177	178	179	66.17	Good	Good	Adult	Female
180	181	182	66.08	Poor	Poor	Adult	Unknown
183	184	185	65.86	Poor	Fair	Infant	Unknown
186	187	188	66.03	Good	Good	Adult	Female
189	190	191	65.89	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
192	193	194	66.08	Fair	Good	Adult	Unknown
195	196	197	66.19	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
198	199	200	66.08	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
201	202	203	65.92	Fair	Good	Adult	Unknown
204	205	206	65.98	Fair	Fair	Adult	Unknown
207	208	209	66.04	Fair	Fair	Adult	Unknown
210	211	212	65.64	Good	Good	Adult	Unknown
213	214	215	66.22	Poor	Good	Adult	Unknown

Appendix 3

Grave Details

101	102	103	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	Decorative metalwork letters identified = N N O 6 T
104	105	106	✓												
107	108	109	✓		✓										
110	111	112	✓		✓		✓								
113	114	115	✓												
116	117	118			✓	✓	✓								
119	120	121	✓												
123	124	125	✓												
126	127	128	✓		✓	✓	✓								
129	130	131													
132	133	134													
135	136	137													
138	139	140													
141	142	143	✓		✓				✓		✓				
144	145	146													
147	148	149			✓			✓						✓	Decorative metalwork letters identified = J A Aged 1? ?onths
150	151	152	✓		✓		✓								
153	154	155	✓												
156	157	158													
159	160	161	✓		✓										
162	163	164	✓		✓										
165	166	167		✓	✓								✓	✓	Decorative metalwork letters identified = E I
168	169	170													
171	172	173													
174	175	176													
177	178	179	✓		✓	✓	✓							✓	Decorative metalwork letter identified = A

180	181	182												
183	184	185				✓								
186	187	188			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			
189	190	191							✓					
192	193	194												
195	196	197												
198	199	200	✓		✓									
201	202	203			✓									
204	205	206			✓									
207	208	209												
210	211	212								✓				
213	214	215												