

**Churchyard Wall, All Saints Church  
Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire**

HN1295

Report No.1030

<b>Site name and address:</b>	All Saints Church, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5BJ		
<b>County:</b>	Bedfordshire	<b>District:</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Village/town:</b>	Houghton Regis	<b>Parish:</b>	Houghton Regis
<b>Planning reference:</b>	n/a	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 01842 23962
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Houghton Regis Town Council, c/o Michael Dales Partnership, 95 Sharpenhoe Road, Streatley, LU3 3PS		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Churchyard wall repair	<b>Present land use:</b>	Churchyard
<b>Site Status:</b>	Listed Building	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Diocesan Faculty
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.19m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.19m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN1295	<b>Luton Museum ref.:</b>	LTNMG 1258
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.</b>	Monitoring and Recording	<b>Archive Recipient:</b>	Luton Museum
<b>Start of work</b>	05/10//2016	<b>Finish of work</b>	18/10//2016
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	HER 3585	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Medieval/Post Medieval
<b>Oasis UID:</b>	heritage1-270435	<b>Significant finds:</b>	Human Bone
<b>Monument types:</b>	Graveyard		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	None		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	None		

**Narrative:**

As part of the faculty requirements for the repair and rebuilding of part of the western churchyard wall at All Saints Church, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned to undertake a watching brief on the groundworks.

All Saints Church is located in the centre of the town, on the junction of Bedford Road and the High Street, centred at NGR TL 01842 223962 (Figure 1).

The south-western corner of the churchyard wall, adjacent to the main access gate, required attention due to health and safety concerns (Figure 2, Plate 1). This section of the wall had become bowed and there was a risk of collapse onto the public footpath.

In order to make the wall safe, four sections of the wall, totalling 19m in length, were removed by hand. The subsequent works involved cutting back the soil behind the wall, the excavation of new footings and the rebuilding of the wall.

Removal of the wall exposed a stratigraphic sequence consisting of a friable dark brown (10YR 3/3) silty sandy clay topsoil, 0.1-0.2m thick above a friable dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) silty clay cemetery soil, 0.3-0.4m thick (Plates 2 & 3). The natural substrate of friable yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) silty clay, more than 0.3m thick, was observed below the cemetery soil (Plate 4). Inspection of the exposed section suggested that the soil behind the wall had slumped forwards, forcing the wall to bow outwards. As a result, the cemetery soil layer was extremely thin in places.

Monitoring of the cutting back of the soil bank revealed no changes in the stratigraphic sequence (Plate 5 & 6). A few fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered but no articulated burials were revealed. The bone fragments were handed to the vicar for reburial,

The excavation of the new footings followed the line of the foundations for the original wall, which had previously been cut into the natural clay.

**Discussion:**

All Saints Church is a Grade I listed building in Decorated Gothic style. The current building dates predominately to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with some later additions during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and rebuilding in 1879. An earlier church is recorded on the site in the Domesday Survey of 1086.

Observation of the works during the present project revealed a standard stratigraphic sequence within churchyards, consisting of topsoil, cemetery soil and natural.

A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was encountered within the cemetery soil behind the wall. The remains were handed to the vicar for reburial. The risk of encountering disarticulated human bone was expected and no articulated remains were revealed.

No evidence for an earlier alignment of the churchyard wall was encountered and no other features, deposits or finds were recorded.

**Illustrations:**

Figure 1 Site location

Figure 2 Site layout

Plate 1 All Saints Church, showing removal of graveyard wall in foreground, looking north-east

Plate 2 Soil face of graveyard after wall removal, looking east

Plate 3 Soil face of graveyard after wall removal, looking north-west

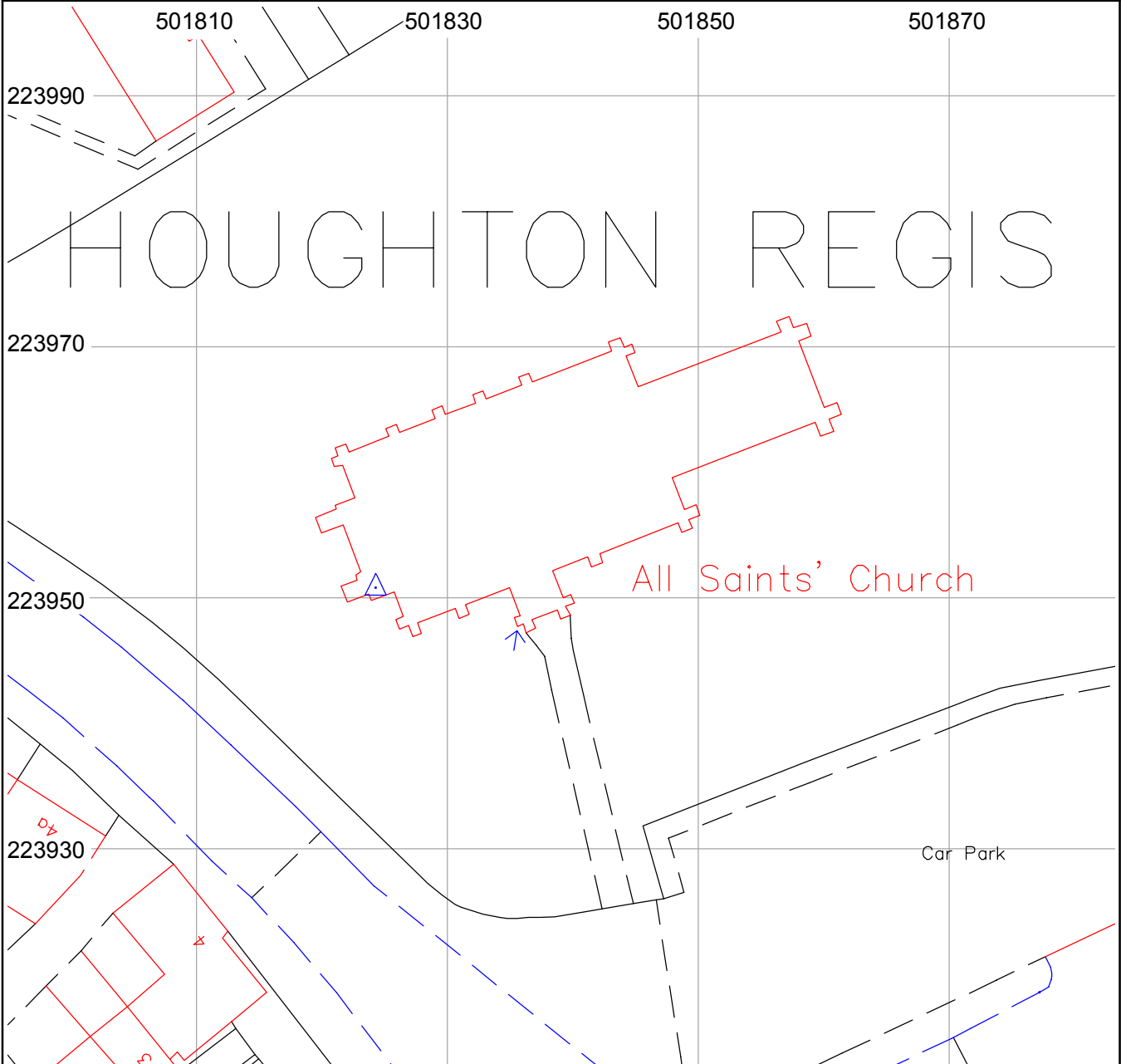
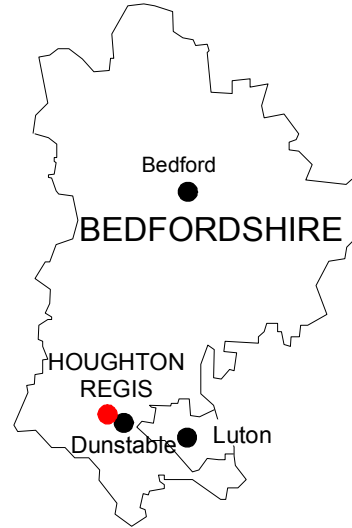
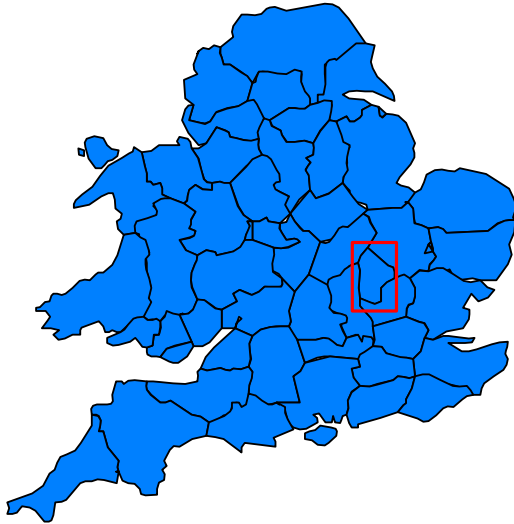
Plate 4 Section of soil face after wall removal, looking north-east

Plate 5 Cutting back of graveyard soil face, looking east

Plate 6 Section of graveyard soil face after having been cut back, looking north

Daniel Phillips

November 2016

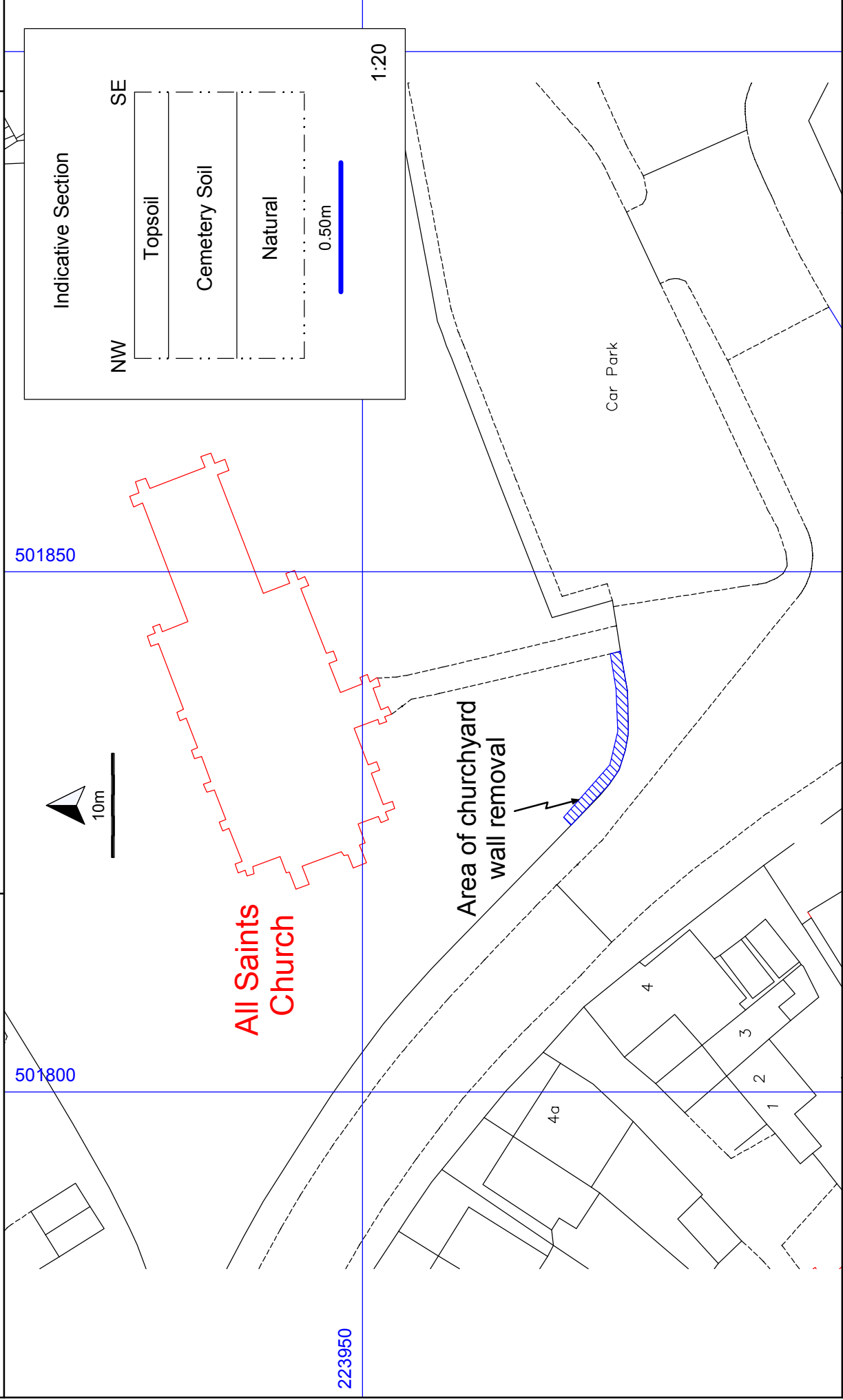


Site Location

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Scale 1:500

Figure 1



Site layout





Plate 1: All Saints Church, showing removal of graveyard wall in foreground, looking north-east



Plate 2: Soil face of graveyard after wall removal, looking east





Plate 3: Soil face of graveyard after wall removal, looking north-west



Plate 4: Section of soil face after wall removal, looking north-east





Plate 5: Cutting back of graveyard soil face, looking east



Plate 6: Section of graveyard soil face after having been cut back, looking north