

HERITAGE NETWORK



St MARY'S CHURCH Oakley, Bedfordshire

HN742

***Recording of Funerary Monuments &
Archaeological Monitoring Report***



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

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St MARY'S CHURCH
Oakley, Bedfordshire

HN742

Recording of Funerary Monuments
&
Archaeological Monitoring

Prepared on behalf of Oakley Parochial Church Council

by

Katie Watkins, BA PIFA

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The cover photo shows a view of the original position of the 14 Gravestones taken from the north-east

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project, and report preparation, were undertaken by Katie Watkins, and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mike Dales, Michael Dales Partnership and Granville Wright, K.G.Wright Builders, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	St Mary's Church, Oakley		
County:	Bedfordshire	District:	Bedford Borough
Village/town:	Oakley	Parish:	Oakley
Planning reference:	n/a	NGR:	TL 0101 5299
Client name and address:	Oakley PCC, c/o Michael Dales Partnership, 95 Sharpenhoe Road, Streatley, Luton		
Nature of work:	Creation of a Garden of Remembrance	Previous land use:	Churchyard
Site Status:	Listed building	Reason for investigation:	Faculty jurisdiction
Position in planning process:	n/a	Project brief originator:	Client
Size of affected area:	c.25m ²	Size of area investigated:	c.25m ²
Site Code:	HN742	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc	Part survey, watching brief	Archive Recipient:	Bedford Museum
Start of work	27 June 2008	Finish of work	9 July 2008
Related HER Nos:	1095	Periods represented:	Post-medieval
Oasis UID	heritage1-44846	Significant finds:	None
Monument types:	Cemetery, Gravestone		
Physical archive:	None		
Previous summaries/reports:	None		

Synopsis:

In response to a request from the architects to Oakley Parochial Church Council, the Heritage Network undertook the archaeological recording of 14 funerary monuments (gravestones) and the monitoring of the groundworks relating to the repositioning of these monuments.

St Mary's Church, was constructed in the 12th century and is recorded as a Grade I listed building (LBN 37043). The recorded gravestones were situated within the south-west of the churchyard and were positioned in pairs. All were made from granite and the majority of them were considerably weather worn. The only legible dates were the year 1785 recorded on Gravestone 3, and the year 1723 recorded on Gravestone 6.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of Michael Dales, acting on behalf of the Oakley Parochial Church Council, as part of the development of a Garden of Remembrance at St Mary's Church, Oakley, Bedfordshire. The archaeological work was carried out as part of the Specification of Works agreed with the Diocese.

1.2 The site, centred on NGR TL 0101 5299, is located to the south of the village of Oakley on the east side of Church Lane, approximately 1.5km from the A6. The church was initially constructed in the 12th century with additional construction occurring in the 13th century. The churchyard completely encircles St Mary's. The church has undergone some alteration and is a Grade I listed building. The statutory listing, dated 13th of July 1964, reads:

Church of coursed limestone rubble with old clay tile roof to chancel. The base of the West tower and the western end of the nave are late C12. The nave was originally of three bays, the east bay added later. The north arcade of two bays is early C13. The S. arcade is slightly later. The remainder is Perpendicular; the top of the tower, two storey south porch and battlements. The north chapel has a painted screen depicting Christ seated on a rainbow. There is a complete set of buttressed pews. (Website 1)

1.3 It is believed that there has been a church building on the site of St Mary's, Oakley since the Anglo-Saxon period. The history of Oakley begins with an entry in the Ramsey Cartulary to the effect that 'Alfelinus,' who died in 988, gave Oakley and Potton to the abbey. 'Alfelinus' has been identified as Ælfhelm of Wrating, a wealthy thegn of East Anglia and Cambridgeshire, who disposed of part of Potton by his extant will. This is taken from an entry in the Cartulary of Ramsey Abbey records. It has been suggested that the present church has been built on the site of the original Saxon timber church, of which nothing remains. The present church dates to the 12th century with subsequent additions in the 13th, 14th and 16th centuries (Knight 1999).

1.4 The aim of the present project has been to record the gravestones/grave markers which were to be removed and re-sited, and to monitor all new ground disturbance associated with this work. The purpose of the monitoring works has been to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which may be uncovered in the course of groundworks, and to retrieve artefactual and ecofactual elements which would allow the date, character, and significance of the site to be assessed in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000), subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality.

2. Fieldwork

Methodology

2.1 Gravestones and grave markers that were to be affected by the development works were recorded following the guidance notes for recording gravestones prepared by the Council of Scottish Archaeology (www.scottishgraveyards.org.uk). The record has included consideration of their:

- situation;
- material and design;
- inscriptions;
- condition.

2.2 All intrusive groundworks associated with the development were monitored to ensure that all archaeological features and deposits encountered were recorded, and, wherever possible, protected and preserved in situ. Particular attention was given to the possibility that structural elements or human remains might be exposed in the course of the works.

Record of Gravestones

2.3 Gravestone nos. 1 – 14 are recorded below. All were situated in the south-west corner of the churchyard, grouped in pairs and in a line running north-south. Three different styles of gravestone were noted, but dates were only legible on Gravestones 3 and 6 as all were badly weathered. The gravestones were recorded in their present positions and their removal was monitored to ensure that any additional evidence was noted.

2.4 Nothing was observed during the removal of the gravestones but it is likely that they are not in their original positions.

2.5 The repositioning of the gravestones, in their original pairs, was undertaken within the same day and the slots excavated to receive them were monitored. No articulated remains were observed but one piece of disarticulated bone was observed and reburied in the slot for gravestones 11 and 12, and two pieces of disarticulated bone were observed in the slot for gravestones 13 and 14.

2.6 The slots were all dug to an approximate depth of 45cm and the natural was not reached in any of them.

Gravestone 1	
Type / style	Plain gravestone with rounded edges situated on top corners
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Originally white, now grey with moss and lichens covering
Material / style of lettering	No visible lettering
Dimensions	Height from base 62cm Length 38cm Width 7cm
Inscription	No visible inscriptions

Gravestone 2	
Type / style	Arch headed headstone
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Originally white, now brown and weathered with lichens covering areas of the stone
Material / style of lettering	No visible lettering
Dimensions	Height from base 105cm Length 50cm Width 7cm
Inscription	No inscription present

Gravestone 3	
Type / style	Plain stone with a rippled effect on the top
Date	1785
Material	Granite
Colour	Originally white, now grey/brown and partly covered in lichens and moss
Material / style of lettering	Indented
Dimensions	Height from base Length 45cm Width 7cm
Inscription	1785 This is all that is visible of the headstone, which has been broken.

Gravestone 4	
Type / style	Arch headed headstone
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Light brown with areas of grey, moss and lichens visible
Material / style of lettering	Indented
Dimensions	Height from base 94cm Length 46cm Width 8cm
Inscription	Although an inscription is visible it is heavily weathered and not possible to read. The headstone is also considerably worn around the edges and is broken along the base suggesting it was probably taller in height originally.

Gravestone 5	
Type / style	Arch headed headstone with chamfered edges
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Brown/orange with patched areas of grey. Large areas covered in lichens were visible
Material / style of lettering	No lettering visible
Dimensions	Height from base 130cm Length 50cm Width 9cm
Inscription	No inscription was visible This gravestone had slumped forwards (along with gravestone 6).

Gravestone 6	
Type / style	Plain headstone with a rippled/ arched design on the top
Date	1723
Material	Granite
Colour	Grey/white
Material / style of lettering	Indented
Dimensions	Height from Base 109cm Length 60cm Width 9cm
Inscription	Though there is the outline of an inscription it is too faded to be read. The only visible inscription is the date.

	1723.....
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Gravestone 7	
Type / style	Plain headstone with a rippled/ arched design on the top. The central curve of the headstone has been broken and repaired with masons glue.
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Grey/white
Material / style of lettering	No lettering visible
Dimensions	Height from base 72cm Length 62cm Width 9cm
Inscription	No inscription visible

Gravestone 8	
Type / style	Arched plain headstone
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Brown and grey with lichens and moss covering it in parts
Material / style of lettering	Indented
Dimensions	Height from base 90cm Length 48cm Width 7cm
Inscription	There is an inscription present but it is too weathered to read

Gravestone 9	
Type / style	Plain headstone with a rippled/ arched design on the top
Date	Not date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Grey
Material / style of lettering	Indented
Dimensions	Height from base 58cm Length 32cm Width 4cm
Inscription	There is an inscription present but it is too weathered to read

Gravestone 10	
Type / style	Plain arched design at top
Date	No date present
Material	Granite
Colour	Brown; covered in lichens and moss
Material / style of lettering	Indented
Dimensions	Height from base 90cm Length 48cm Width 6cm
Inscription	There is an inscription present but it is too weathered to read

Gravestone 11	
Type / style	Arched middle in the top of the headstone with rounded corners and chamfered edges
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Grey with green tints and lichens
Material / style of lettering	Indented
Dimensions	Height from base 128cm Length 61cm Width 10cm
Inscription	<i>The wife of Robert.... Who Departed this life November yc 2d ..59 my In the 48 year of</i>

Gravestone 12	
Type / style	Rounded corners with a sharply pointed top
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Grey covered with lichens
Material / style of lettering	Indented
Dimensions	Height from base 96cm Length 41cm Width 7cm
Inscription	There is an inscription present but it is too weathered to read, however, there is a visible swirled pattern effect visible on the front of the headstone.

Gravestone 13	
Type / style	Arch headed headstone with chamfered edges
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Grey with lichens and covered in parts with moss
Material / style of lettering	No lettering visible
Dimensions	Height from base 107cm Length 51cm Width 9cm
Inscription	No inscriptions visible

Gravestone 14	
Type / style	Arched top with rounded projecting sides
Date	No date visible
Material	Granite
Colour	Grey with lichens
Material / style of lettering	No lettering visible
Dimensions	Height from base 72cm Length 36cm Width 6cm
Inscription	No visible inscription

3. Sources Consulted

Bibliography

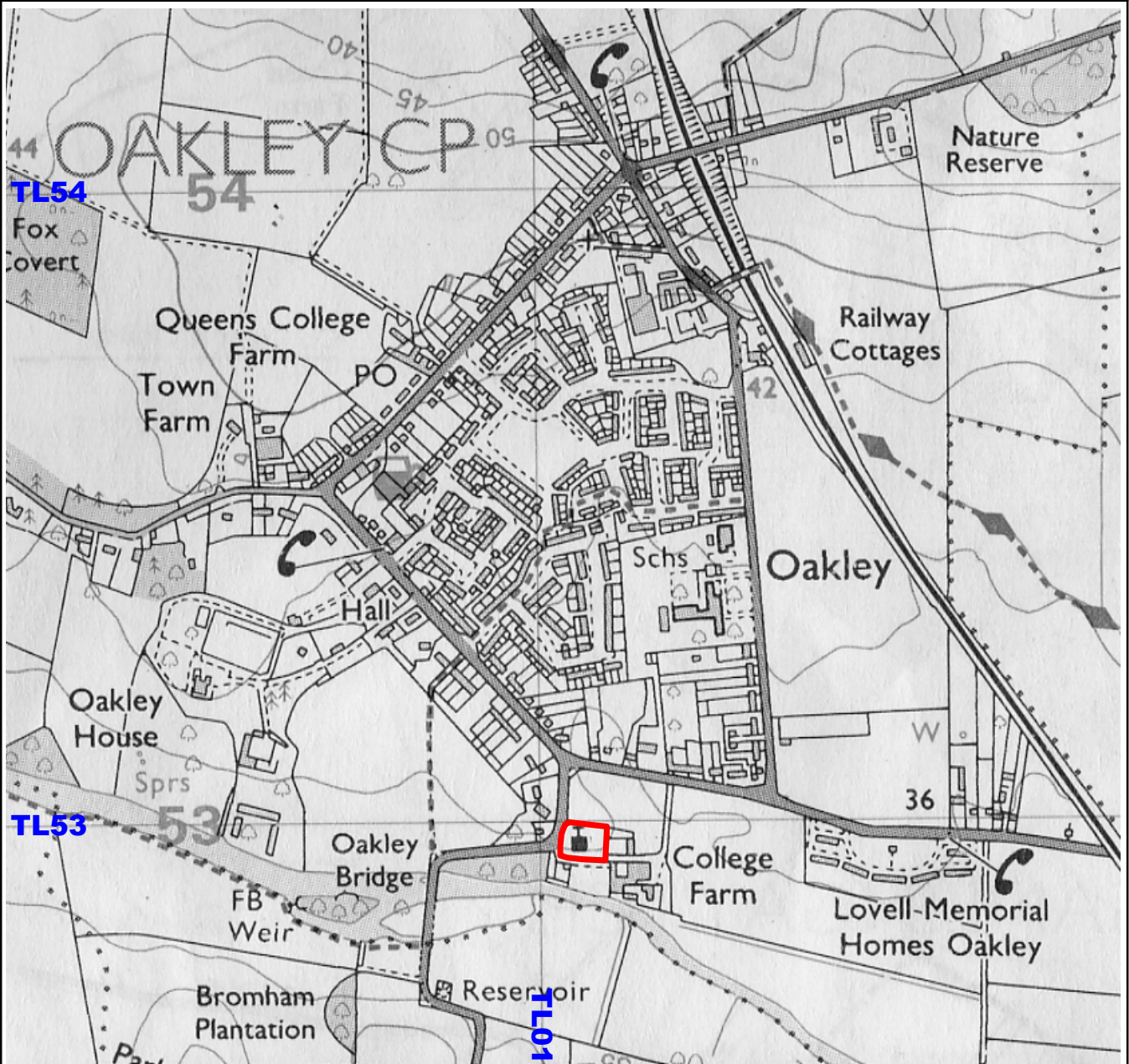
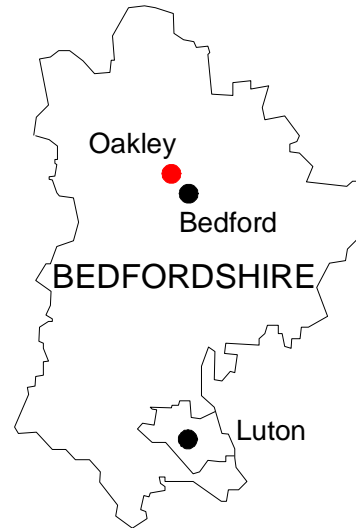
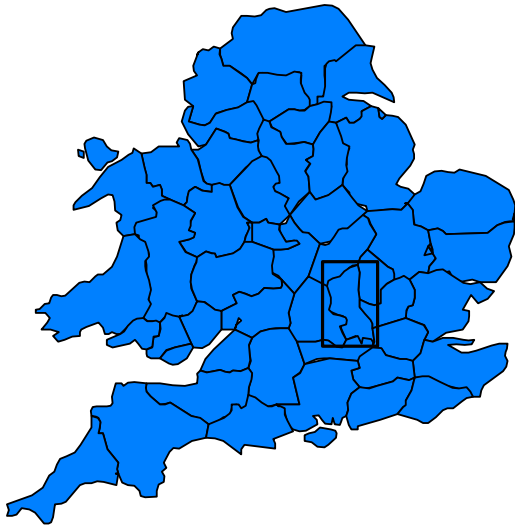
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- Glazebrook, J. (ed.) 1997 *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties, 1. Resource Management*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper No.3
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- Knight, W.S., 1999 *A Brief History of the Parish Church of St Mary, Oakley, Bedfordshire*. Oakley PCC

Other sources

Website 1: Heritage Gateway: <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results>

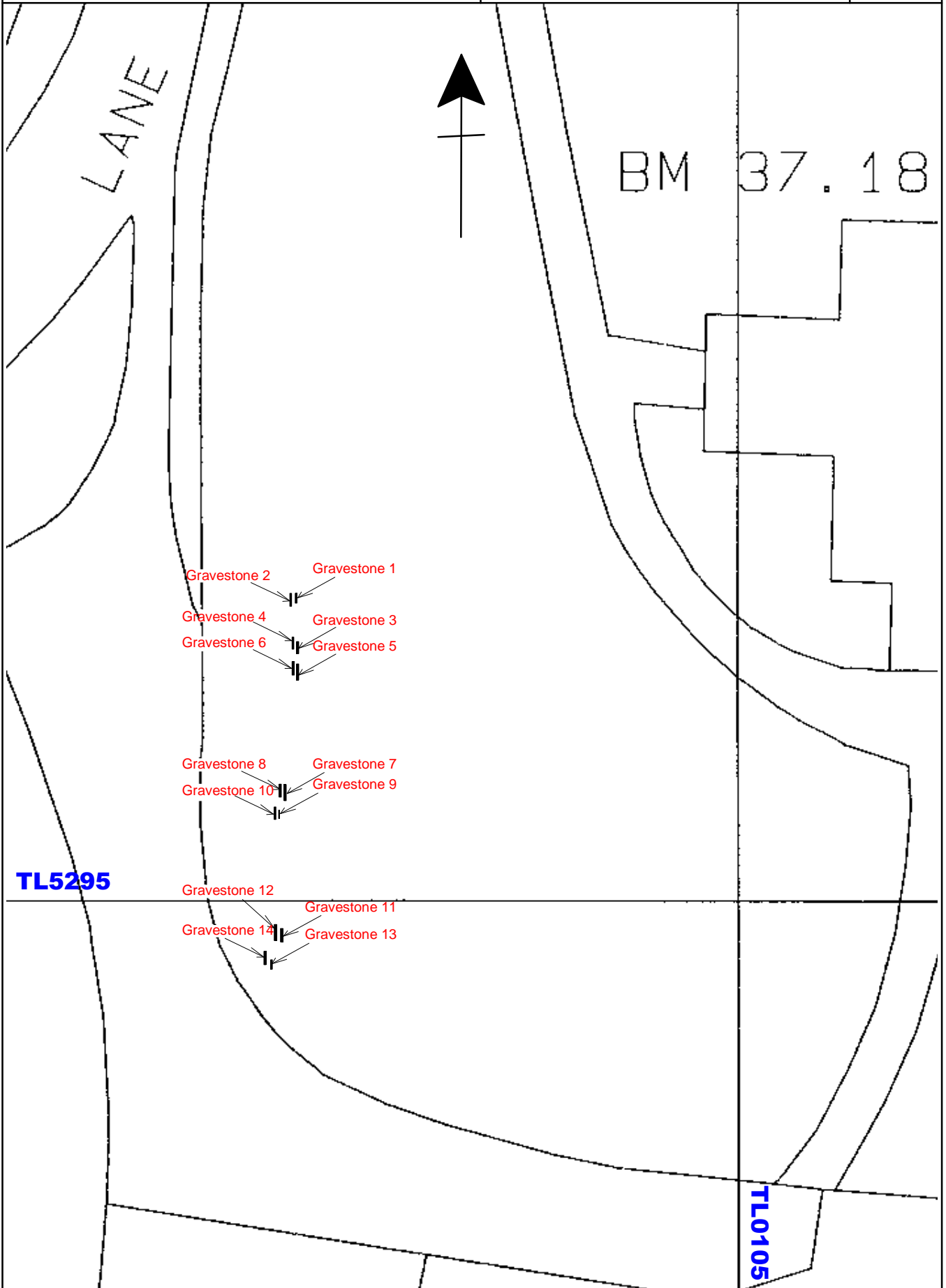
4. Illustrations

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Plate 3	Gravestones 5 and 6
Plate 4	Gravestones 7 and 8
Plate 5	Gravestone 8
Plate 6	Gravestones 9 and 10
Plate 7	Gravestones 11 and 12
Plate 8	Gravestones 13 and 14



Site Location

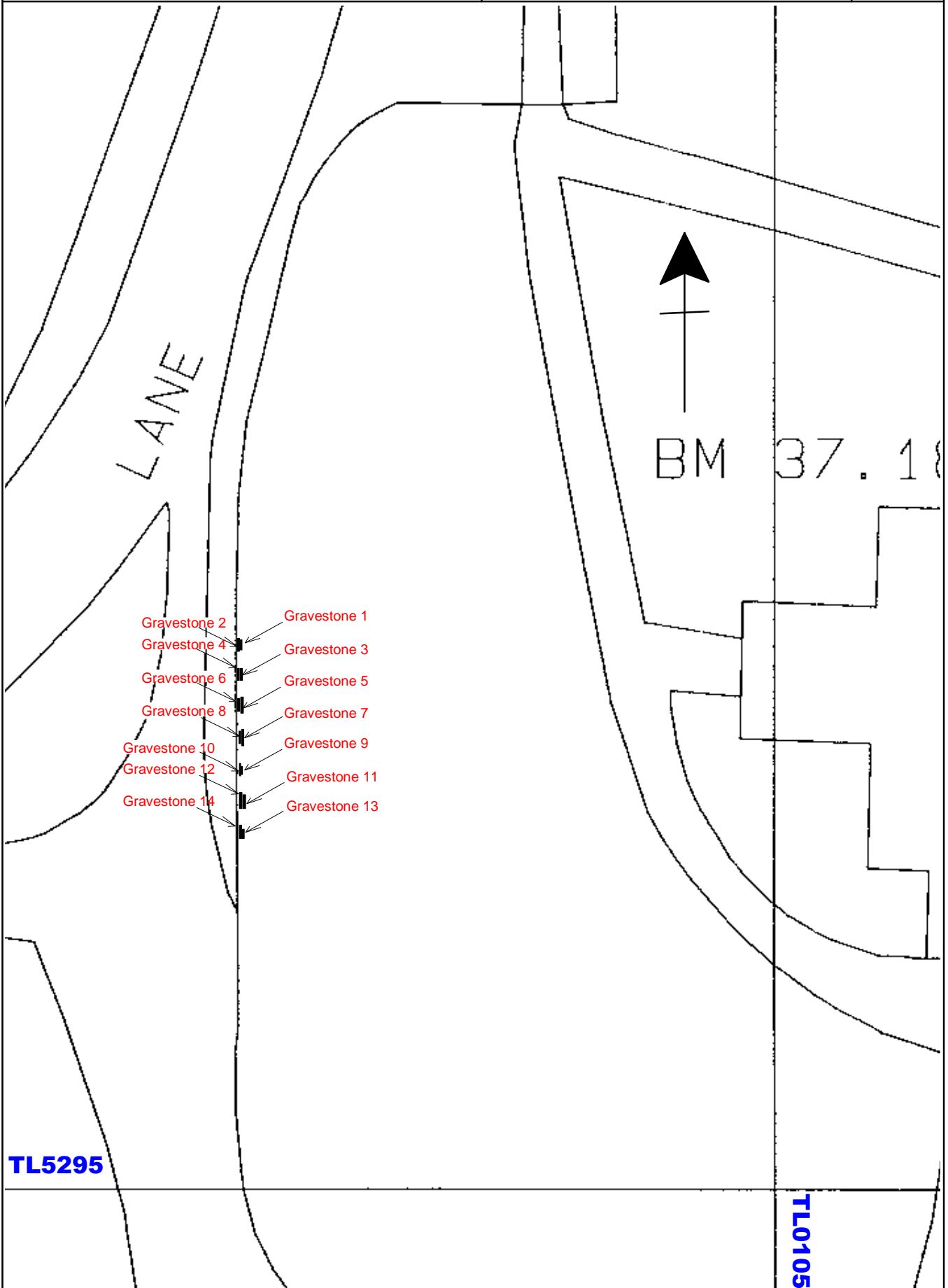
Scale 1:10000



Original Positions of Gravestones

Scale 1:200

Figure 2



- Gravestone 2
- Gravestone 4
- Gravestone 6
- Gravestone 8
- Gravestone 10
- Gravestone 12
- Gravestone 14
- Gravestone 1
- Gravestone 3
- Gravestone 5
- Gravestone 7
- Gravestone 9
- Gravestone 11
- Gravestone 13

TL5295

TL0105

New Positions of Gravestones

Scale 1:200

Figure 3



Plate 1: Gravestones 1 & 2



Plate 2: Gravestones 3 & 4



Plate 3: Gravestones 5 & 6



Plate 4: Gravestone 7



Plate 5: Gravestone 8



Plate 6: Gravestones 9 & 10



Plate 7: Gravestones 11 & 12



Plate 8: Gravestones 13 & 14

Appendix

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

OASIS ID: heritage1-44846	
Project details	
Project name	St Mary's Church Oakley Bedfordshire
Short description of the project	In response to a request from the architects to Oakley Parochial Church Council, the Heritage Network undertook the archaeological recording of 14 funerary monuments (gravestones) and the monitoring of the groundworks relating to the repositioning of these monuments. St Mary's Church, was constructed in the 12th century and is recorded as a Grade I listed building (LBN 37043). The recorded gravestones were situated within the south-west of the churchyard and were positioned in pairs. All were made from granite and the majority of them were considerably weather worn. The only legible dates were the year 1785 recorded on Gravestone 3, and the year 1723 recorded on Gravestone 6.
Project dates	Start: 27-06-2008 End: 09-07-2008
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	HN742 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	CEMETERY Medieval
Monument type	GRAVESTONE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Part Survey', 'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE BEDFORD OAKLEY St Mary's Church
Postcode	MK43 7RU
Study area	25.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 0101 5299 52.1655110892 -0.522999690995 52 09 55 N 000 31 22 W Point
Height OD	Min: 0m Max: 0m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Heritage Network
Project brief originator	Self (i.e. landowner, developer, etc.)
Project design originator	none
Project director/manager	David Hillelson
Project supervisor	Katie Watkins
Type of sponsor/funding body	Parochial Church Council
Name of sponsor/funding body	Oakley PCC
Project archives	

Physical Archive	No
Digital Archive recipient	Bedford Museum
Digital Archive ID	HN742
Digital Contents	'none'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography', 'Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Bedford Museums
Paper Archive ID	HN742
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Drawing', 'Manuscript', 'Report'
Project bibliography	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	St Mary's Church Oakley: Recording of Funerary Monuments and Archaeological Monitoring
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Watkins, K
Other bibliographic details	Report Number 489
Date	2008
Issuer or publisher	Heritage Network
Place of issue or publication	Letchworth
Description	A4 Comb Bound report 11 pages, 3 plans, 8 plates.
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