

HERITAGE NETWORK



**CHURCH OF ST. LAWRENCE,  
Ardeley, Herts.**

(HN385)

*Archaeological Monitoring Report*



# THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

## CHURCH OF ST LAWRENCE Ardeley, Herts.

HN385

*Monitoring Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Ardeley Parochial Church Council*

by

Hannah Firth, MA

Report No. 189

*May 2003*

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## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was undertaken Geoff Saunders, Hannah Firth and Mark Winter under the supervision of Chris Turner. Illustrations were prepared by Karin Semmelmann and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

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## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Church of St Lawrence, Ardeley, Hertfordshire		
<b>County:</b>	Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b>	East Herts District
<b>Village/town:</b>	Ardeley	<b>Parish:</b>	Ardeley
<b>Planning reference:</b>	N/A	<b>NGR (to 8 figures):</b>	TL 3082 2714
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Ardeley P CC, c/o Marshall & Sisson Architects, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon		
<b>Nature of application:</b>	Drainage	<b>Present land use:</b>	Graveyard
<b>Size of application area:</b>	c. 12m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.12m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN385	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Type of work:</b>	Watching Brief	<b>Curating/Museum:</b>	Hertford Museum
<b>Start of work</b>	20th November 2002	<b>Finish of work</b>	2nd December 2002
<b>Related SMR Nos.:</b>	n/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Post-medieval
<b>Previous summaries /reports:</b>	n/a		

**Synopsis:** Following the requirements of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Diocese of St Albans, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council, to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording on drainage works for the Church of St Lawrence, Ardeley.

One feature was discovered during the excavation of the drainage channel to the south of the church. However there was no finds recovered from it and it was not possible to identify its form or function. Evidence for the construction trench for the south aisle was also found during the drainage works.

During the excavation of the three soakways, seven adult articulated human skeletons were discovered. All the bodies were oriented east-west, and they were cleaned, recorded and lifted before being re-buried within the churchyard. One sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the fill of one of the graves, however it was considered to be residual. A number of post-medieval coffin nails and studs and a coffin handle were also recovered. After analysis these were returned to the church to be buried with the human remains. No clear dating evidence was recovered for the burials.

# 1 Introduction

*1.1* This report has been prepared on behalf of *Ardeley Parochial Church Council*, as part of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording of groundworks at the Church of St Lawrence, Ardeley, Hertfordshire. The diocesan faculty for the groundworks was subject to an archaeological condition following the recommendations of the diocesan archaeological consultant.

*1.2* The site is located in the graveyard of the church of St Lawrence, Ardeley, in the district of East Hertfordshire, and is centred on NGR TL 3082 2714. The development proposed the lowering of the external ground levels to match the internal floor levels and the excavation of three soakaways with associated drainage trenches.

*1.3* The church of St Lawrence is a parish church ranging in date from at least the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. The nave is known to be the earliest part of the church, although there is no specific date for it. It was, however, in existence in the early thirteenth century when the chancel was rebuilt and the north aisle added.

*1.4* The aim of the archaeological investigation has been to establish the nature and date of any archaeological features and deposits revealed during the groundworks. Particular interest has been expressed in the identification of evidence relating to the history of the early church and the form of the original chancel and its successor, which was largely rebuilt in the nineteenth century.

*1.5* The present report is intended to set the site in its archaeological and historical context, and meet the archaeological requirements of the faculty.

## 2 Fieldwork

### *TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY*

2.1 The site is located on a plateau between the 12 and 125 contours to the east of Ardeley Brook.

2.2 The natural geology of the site consists of firm yellowish brown sandy clay overlying lower chalk.

### *METHODOLOGY*

2.3 The drainage trenches along the east and south side of the church, three soakaways and their related service trenches were all excavated under close archaeological supervision using a rubber tracked 360° mini-digger. This was fitted with a toothless bucket during the works against the church wall, although it was exchanged for a toothed bucket for the excavation of soakaways and related service trenches due to the ground conditions.

2.4 The ground works were divided into two stages with the drainage trenches excavated first, followed by the soakaways and their associated service trenches.

### *STRATIGRAPHY*

2.5 The topsoil in the drainage channels around the east and south side of the church was a firm, dark greyish brown slightly silt clay, ranging from between 0.15 metres and 0.25 metres in depth. This overlay a firm, brown flinty clay subsoil which was between 0.25 metres and 0.35 metres in depth. Below which was a layer of firm, dark yellowish brown clay, between 0.4 metres and 0.5 metres in depth.

2.6 In the area of the soakways the topsoil was a friable, very dark sandy silt ranging from between 0.2 metres and 0.29 metres in depth. The subsoil was a firm light olive brown clay, with moderate inclusions of small and medium rounded flint pebbles and nodules, and occasional to moderate chalk pebbles and flecks. It ranged from between 0.63 metres and 1.3 metres in depth. This overlay a firm yellowish brown sandy natural clay, which appeared at between 1.43 metres below the surface in soakaway 1, and at 0.92 metres below the surface in soakaway 2. It was not reached in soakaway 3.

2.7 The matrix of the subsoil was extremely similar to the matrix of the grave fills in all three soakaways and it was not possible to identify the grave cuts.

### *RESULTS*

Table 1: Recorded contexts

Context/ Feature	Soakaway	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Th. (m)	Depth
0 1	-	Feature	Near vertical cut through the subsoil, bottom not reached	0.4	
0 2	-	Fill	Fill of feature 0 1, loose greyish brown sandy gravel, with frequent large flint nodules	0.4	
0 3	1	Skeleton	Male adult skeleton		0.94 (fs)
0 4	1	Grave fill	Firm, light olive brown clay, with moderate medium sized rounded flint pebbles and nodules, and medium sized chalk pebbles and flecks		
0 5	1	Skeleton	Female adult skeleton		0.96 (fs)
0 6	1	Grave fill	Firm, light olive brown clay, with occasional medium sized rounded flint pebbles and nodules, and moderate small and medium sized chalk pebbles and flecks		
0 7	2	Skeleton	Partial male adult skeleton		1.0 (fs)
0 8	2	Grave fill	Firm, dark yellowish brown clay, with frequent chalk pebbles and flecks		
0 9	1	Skeleton	Partial male skeleton		1.23 (fs)
10	1	Grave fill	Firm, light olive brown clay, with moderate small to medium sized rounded and angular flint pebbles and moderate small sized chalk pebbles and flecks.		
11	2	Skeleton	Partial adult skeleton		1.16 (fs)
12	2	Grave fill	Firm, dark yellowish brown clay, with frequent small chalk pebbles and flecks		
13	3	Skeleton	Partial adult skeleton		0.9 (fs)
14	3	Grave fill	Firm, light olive brown clay, with occasional small sized rounded flint pebbles and moderate chalk flecks		
15	3	Skeleton	Partial adult skeleton		0.89 (fs)
16	3	Grave fill	Firm, yellowish brown clay, with occasional chalk flecks		
17	-	Fill	Firm, reddish brown sandy clay, with frequent gravel inclusions and occasional fragments of ceramic building materials, slate and clunch	unexcavated	0.4 (fs)

**2.8** A total of 18.2 metres of drainage channels, measuring 0.3 metres in width and between 0.4 metres and 0.6 metres depth, were dug alongside the chancel and south aisle of

the church. One feature [01], located opposite the south porch was exposed during these excavations. The construction trench (17) for the east end of the south aisle was also located. No artefacts were recovered during the excavation of the the drainage channels.

**2.9** The three soakaways were located to the south west, the north-east and north-west of the church, and these were numbered 1 to 3 respectively.

- Soakaway 1 was located at the west end of the drainage trench which ran parallel with the south aisle of the church. It measured approximately 2.4 metres in length by 2.25 metres in width and was excavated to a depth of 1.53 metres.
- Soakaway 2 was located to the north of the chancel and a drainage trench measuring 11.05 metres in length by 0.3 metres in width and 0.3 metres in depth was dug to connect it to the downpipe to the north of the chancel. The soakaway measured 1.7 metres in length and 1.7 metres in width, It was excavated to depth of 1.65 metres. Soakaway 3 was situated to the north-west of the church, and a drainage trench was dug to connect it to the downpipe against the north porch.
- Soakaway 3 measured 2.2 metres in length and 2 metres in width and was excavated to a depth of 1.5 metres.

**2.10** Seven articulated adult skeletons were recovered during the excavations of the three soakaways. One sherd of pottery was recovered from grave fill (16) and several iron coffin nails and studs, and an iron coffin handle were recovered during the reduction of soakways 2 and 3 (see table 2). No artefactual remains were found during the excavation of the soakaway drainage trenches.

### 3 Artefacts

3.1 No archaeological artefacts were recovered during the excavation of the drainage channels against the church, or the service trenches leading to the three soakaways.

3.2 A medieval jug rim sherd, weighing 50g was recovered from grave fill (16) in soakaway 3. A number of iron coffin nails and studs, and an iron coffin handle (see table 2 below) were also recovered during the ground reduction in the soakaways.

**Table 2: Iron Objects**

Context	Soakaway	Description	Date
U/S	2	24 iron coffin studs; average head diameter 17mm, shank length 8mm, shank diameter 2mm tapering to 1mm	post- medieval
U/S	2	6 iron rectangular headed coffin nails; average head dimensions 14mm x 7mm, shank length 48-50mm, shank width 6mm, shank depth 4mm tapering to 3mm	post-medieval
0 8	2	4 iron coffin studs; average head diameter 17mm, shank length 7-8mm, shank diameter 2mm tapering to 1mm	post-medieval
0 8	2	7 iron rectangular headed coffin nails; average head dimensions 14mm x 7mm, shank length 50mm, shank width 5-6mm, shank depth 4mm tapering to 3mm	post-medieval
U/S	3	2 iron rectangular headed coffin nails; average head dimensions 14mm x 7mm, shank length 50mm, shank width 6mm, shank depth 4mm tapering to 3mm	post-medieval
U/S	3	Iron coffin handle and base plate; handle dimensions: 120mm in length, 12mm in width and 15mm in depth. Base plate dimensions: 48mm -60mm in length, 23mm-32mm in width, 1mm in depth. Base plate has a square nail in the centre which is 12mm in length, 5mm in width where it meets the plate and 4mm in width at the opposite end	later post-medieval

3.3 Once the quantification was complete the nails, studs and coffin handle were returned to the church to be re-buried with the human remains.

#### ***THE HUMAN REMAINS***

3.4 A total of 7 articulated human skeletons were discovered during the ground reduction in soakaways 1, 2 and 3. After cleaning and recording the bodies, each skeleton was removed and a basic on site study was carried out in an attempt to gather information about the age and sex of each individual. The bodies were then left in the care of the Church Warden, to be re-buried once the groundworks were complete.



***Skeleton (03), Soakaway 1***

Sex: Male

Age at death: Adult (middle)

- Skeleton (03) was almost complete and the condition of the bone was generally good. However damage had been caused to the lower portion of both femurs and upper portion of both tibias and fibulas by the machine. The skull had been crushed, but the majority of it was recovered. The burial was supine with the lower arms placed behind the pelvis, it was oriented east-west.
- Due to the collapse of the skull, the only cranial indicator available for the identification of sex were the mastoid processes, which were enlarged. The pelvis was complete, but was fragmentary and the only available indicator was the sciatic notch, which was narrow. On balance this individual was probably male.
- Fusion of the epiphyses has taken place on all available long bones and in the pelvic region, suggesting that this individual had reached maturity.
- Although both the mandible and maxilla were present, the maxilla had been badly damaged and was too fragmentary for study. The lower left molars had been lost ante mortem and the mandible had been remodelled. Only the lower left second premolar remained in place, the other teeth having been lost post mortem. The second and third lower right molars had been lost ante mortem and the mandible remodelled, the lower right first molar was worn down exposing both the dentine and pulp cavity. The lower right canine and premolars remain intact, the incisors had been lost post mortem. All the remaining dentition exhibited signs of calculus build up, indicating poor dental hygiene.
- Although only a limited amount of ageing indicators were present, on the basis of the dental evidence it is probable that this individual was a middle aged.
- No palaeopathology was observed.

***Skeleton (05), Soakaway 1***

Sex: Female

Age at death: Adult (Young)

- Skeleton (05) was almost complete and was generally in good condition. A small amount of damage had been caused to the tibias and fibulas by the machine and the pelvis had suffered some damage, this was probably due to the burial environment. Skeleton (05) was buried supine with the lower left arm placed behind the pelvis. The skull was complete, although it damaged, particularly in the frontal region. This was probably caused by root action.

- The cranial indicators used to sex this individual were the mastoid processes, the brow ridges and the occipital region. Skeleton (05) had reduced brow ridges and mastoid processes and there was a marked absence of the nuchal crest. Due to the damaged state of the pelvis the only available indicator available for study was the sciatic notch, which appeared to be wide. The combination of these indicators suggests that this individual was a female.
- Fusion of the epiphyses had taken place on all the available long bones. The maxilla was too fragmentary to study. The lower left and right third molars do not appear to have erupted, and the remaining dentition was in place and appeared unworn. It is probable that this is a young adult.
- The tibiae appear slightly misshapen, however it was not possible to assess whether this was a pathological or pseudopathological change.
- A small amount of disarticulated cranial material, and a fragment of juvenile humerus was found in the vicinity of skeleton (05).

***Skeleton (07), Soakaway 2***

*Sex:*?Male

*Age at Death:* Adult

- Skeleton (07) was is fragmented but in fair condition. Only the upper half of the body of was within the excavated area, it was supine and oriented east-west. The skull had been damaged by the machine. Four iron coffin studs were found directly to the south of the skull and seven iron nails were found within the grave fill (08).
- The only cranial indicators available for the determination of sex were the mastoid processes, which were enlarged and the brow ridges which were pronounced. Both of which indicated that this individual was probably male.
- The mandible and maxilla were too damaged to study, therefore it was not possible to gain any information on age from the dentition. The only available long bone for study was the left humerus, which had fused epiphyses, and the clavicles were also fused. These indicate that skeleton (07) was an adult, however there was not enough information to give an more specific age.
- No palaeopathology was observed.

***Skeleton (09), Soakaway 1***

*Sex:* ?Male

*Age at death:* Adult

- Skeleton (09) was fragmentary, but in fair condition. The skull had been damaged by the machine. The body was buried supine, and oriented east-west, however only the

upper body was available for study as the lower limbs were beyond the eastern limits of the excavation.

- The only cranial indicator available to aid the determination of sex were the mastoid processes, which were enlarged. The pelvis was complete, although degraded and exhibited a narrow sciatic notch. The combination of the pelvic and cranial indicators suggest this individual was probably male.
- All the available epiphyses were fused, suggesting that skeleton (09) was an adult. The skull had suffered too much damage to provide any specific information about the age of the individual.
- No palaeopathology was observed.

***Skeleton (11), Soakaway 2***

*Sex:*

*Age at death:* Adult

- Skeleton (11) was fragmentary but in fair condition, it was buried in a supine position and oriented east-west. The thoracic region of the body and the pelvic bones were largely absent, and the skull and lower limbs were beyond the western and eastern limits of the excavated area.
- The available epiphyses were fused, suggesting that this individual was an adult. The absence of the the pelvic bones and the skull meant that its was not possible to gain further information on either the age or the sex of the individual.
- No palaeopathology was observed.
- There were a small number of disarticulated long bones, directly to the south of skeleton (11).

***Skeleton (13), Soakaway 3***

*Sex:*

*Age at death:* Adult

- Skeleton (13) was fragmentary and in poor condition, it appeared to have been buried supine and it was oriented east-west. The upper half of the body (from the third lumbar vertebrae upwards) was beyond the western limits of the excavation. The poor state of preservation of the bone seems likely to be a result of the high water table within the excavated area. Although the pelvis was present it was too degraded to gain any information from. There were no other skeletal indicators present to gain any information about the sex of the individual.

- The available epiphyses were fused suggesting that this individual was an adult, however no further indicators were available to be more specific about the individuals age at death.
- No palaeopathology was observed.

### ***Skeleton (15), Soakaway 3***

*Sex:*

*Age at death:* Adult

- Skeleton (15), was fragmentary and it was in poor condition. It appeared to have been buried supine and oriented east-west. Only the lower limbs were within the excavated area, and these consisted of partial left and right femurs, both patellas and the right tibia and fibula. A number of tarsals were also present. No material was available to sex the individual. The complete tibia and fibula exhibited fused epiphyses, suggesting that this individual was an adult. It seems probable that the poor state of preservation is as a result of the high water table within this area.
- No paleopathology was observed.

### ***Conclusion***

3.5 The skeletal assemblage from the present site was generally preserved in good condition, however its size is too small to provide any demographic information. The archaeological potential of the assemblage should also be considered to be quite low, as it represents an undated collection of burials recovered at random from within an known churchyard location. The most significant conclusions that can be drawn from this assemblage is that it indicates that burials are to be found more widely distributed across the churchyard than previously thought.

## ***TERMINOLOGY***

### **Bone Preservation:**

- Good - The bones are intact and there is no widespread degradation/abrasion  
 Fair - The bones are generally intact, but slightly abraded, especially around proximal and distal ends of the long bones  
 Poor - The bones are very abraded and friable

### **Completeness:**

- Almost - Over 80% of the skeletal elements are present  
 Fair - Between 50 and 80% of the skeletal elements are present  
 Fragmented - Below 50% of the skeletal elements are present

### **Age Categories: (Clavin Wells)**

Embryo	1-8 weeks
Foetus	9-40 weeks
Perinatal	around birth
Neonate	1st month after birth
Infant	birth- 1st year
Childhood	1st year- puberty
Adolescence	1st three years of puberty
Juvenile	epiphyses unfused
Subadult	does not have full dentition or full fusion of epiphyses
Young adult	17-25 years
Middle adult	26-45 years
Mature adult	45 years and over

## 4 Discussion

**4.1** The intention of the archaeological investigation in the churchyard of St Lawrence, Ardeley was to recover evidence which might provide further information about the early history of the church. It is known that the nave is the earliest part of the building, although all that is known is that it was in existence during the first half of the thirteenth century, when the chancel was rebuilt and the north aisle was added. The current research did not produce any evidence for earlier church structures.

**4.2** The monitoring of the drainage trenches alongside the church revealed evidence of one feature, context [01], located immediately south of the current south porch. This feature had been truncated by the previous drainage system and therefore only remained in section. It was filled with flint rubble, which may relate the construction of the church. However, it did not produce any dating evidence and as only a small proportion of the feature was exposed during the drainage works, its function remains unclear.

**4.3** Abutting the church wall, immediately east of the south aisle there was evidence of the construction trench for the south aisle (context 17).

**4.4** During the course of the excavation of the three soakways a total of seven articulated human skeletons were discovered. All of the bodies were adults and the burials were oriented east-west. With the exception of the residual sherd of pottery from grave fill (16), no material to securely date the burials was recovered. However, the coffin fittings found in soakaways 2 and 3 suggest that these probably date to the post-medieval period.

**4.5** The discovery of burials in areas deliberately chosen because of their absence of known cemetery plots clearly demonstrates that the churchyard has been seen extensive use throughout the later history of the church.

### *Conclusions*

**4.6** The archaeological investigation of the site has demonstrated that there is little remaining evidence of the original church structure in the immediate vicinity of the east and south side of the church, and that burials exist in areas of the churchyard which were previously assumed to be clear.

### *Confidence Rating*

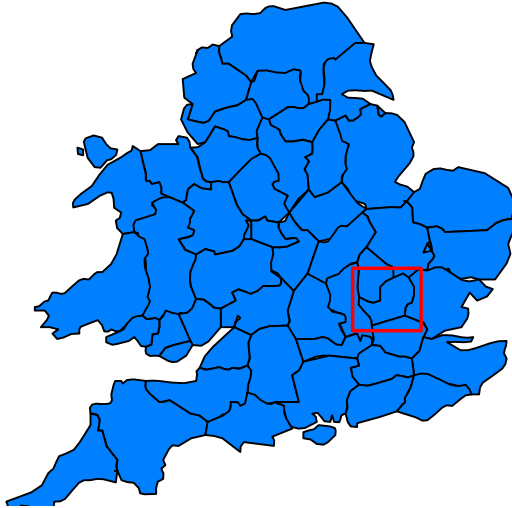
**4.7** During the course of the investigation, the conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. On this basis the confidence rating for the work can be considered to be High.

## 5 Schedule of Site Visits

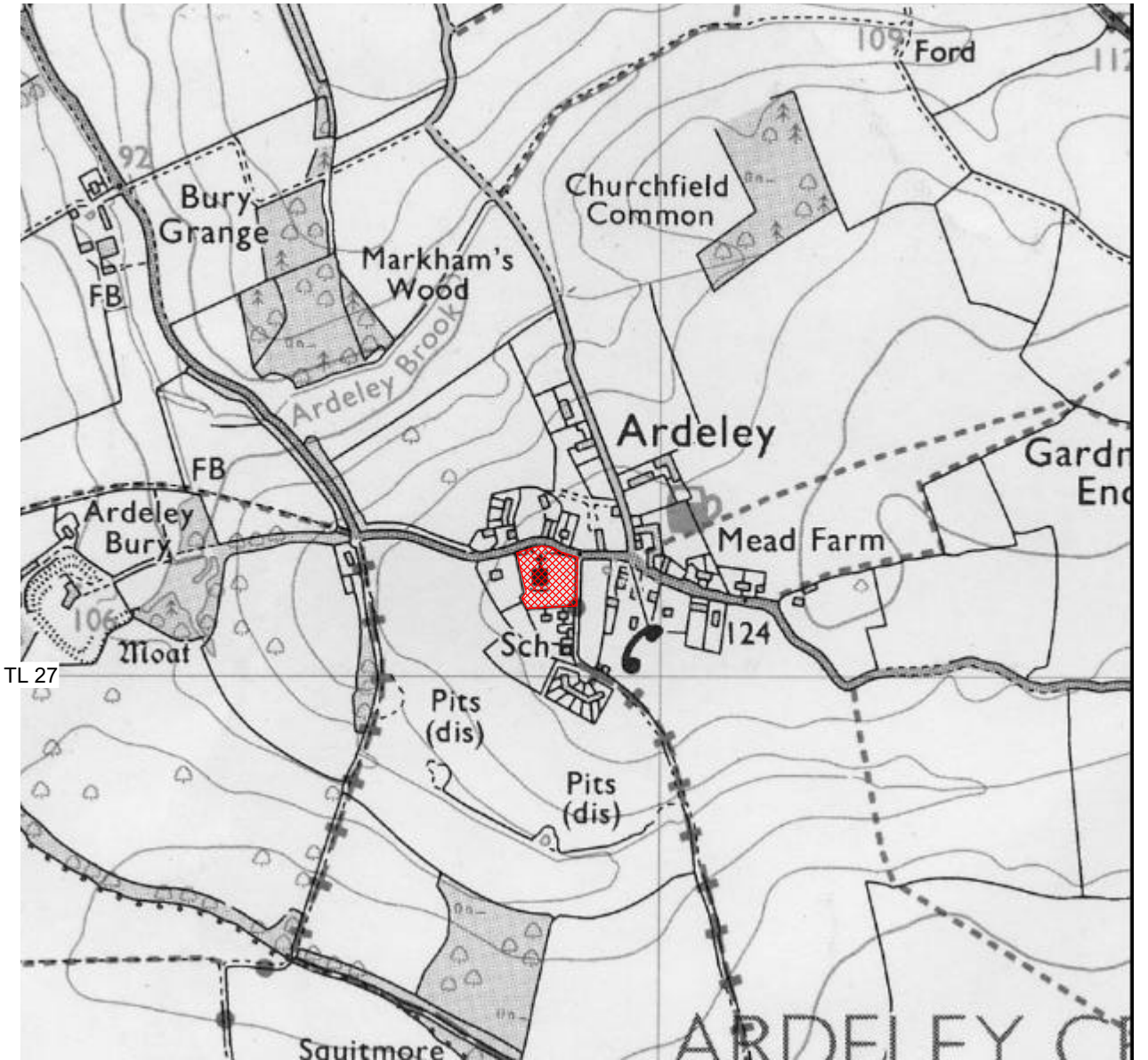
Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
20/11/02	GIS	3	Monitoring drainage trenches alongside the church
21/11/02	GIS	6	Monitoring drainage trenches alongside the church
22/11/02	GIS	2	Monitoring drainage trenches and recording
25/11/02	GIS & HF	8	Monitoring and excavation of Soakaway 1
26/11/02	GIS & HF	8	Monitoring and excavation of Soakaway 1
27/11/02	HF & MW	8	Monitoring and excavation of Soakaways 1, 2 and 3
28/11/02	HF & MW	8	Monitoring and excavation of Soakaways 1, 2 and 3
29/11/02	HF & MW	6	Monitoring and excavation of Soakaways 2 and 3
02/12/02	HF	4	Monitoring reduction of Soakaway 3

## 6 Illustrations

Figure 1 ..... Site location  
 Figure 2 ..... Site layout  
 Figure 3 ..... Human remains



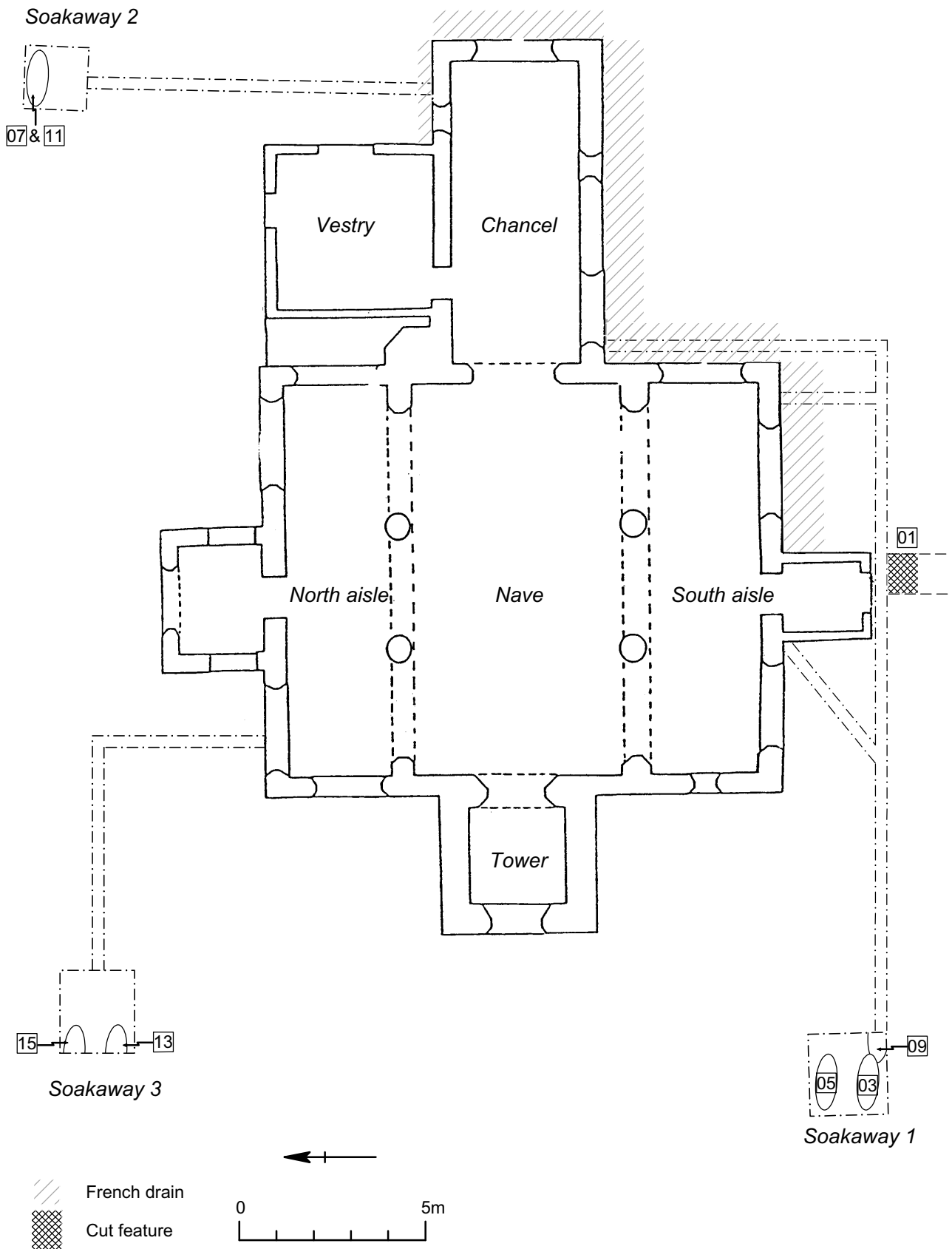
TL 31



Site Location

Scale 1:1000





Soakaway 2

07 & 11

Vestry

Chancel

North aisle

Nave

South aisle

01

Tower

15

13

Soakaway 3

05

03

09

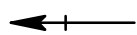
Soakaway 1



French drain



Cut feature



Site layout

Scale 1:150

Figure 2



Skeleton [03]



Skeleton [05]



Skeleton [07]



Skeleton [09]



Skeleton [11]



Skeleton [13]



Skeleton [15]

Human remains

Not to scale

Plate 1