

HERITAGE NETWORK



HOLY TRINITY CHURCH **Weston, Hertfordshire**

(HN386)

Archaeological Evaluation & Monitoring Report



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Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH Weston, Herts.

HN386

Evaluation and Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of Weston Parochial Church Council

by

Hannah Firth, MA

Report No. 188

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Acknowledgements

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

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Stuart Morris, Morris & Weatherall, Architects; Adrian Havercroft, Diocesan Archaeological Consultant and K. G. Wright (Builders) Ltd. for their co-operation and assistance.

Summary

Site name and address:	Holy Trinity Church, Weston		
County:	Hertfordshire	District:	North Hertfordshire
Village/town:	Weston	Parish:	Weston
Planning reference:	n/a	NGR:	TL 2660 2995
Client name and address:	Weston PCC, c/o Morris and Weatherall, 3 Maiden Street, Weston, Hitchin		
Nature of development:	Drainage works	Present land use:	Churchyard
Size of study area:	c 57m ²	Size of area investigated:	18m ²
Site Code:	HN386	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network Ltd	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Evaluation & Monitoring	Curating Museum:	N Herts. Museums
Start of work	26 September 2002	Finish of work	6th December 2002
Related SMR Nos.:	4322	Periods represented:	Lt saxon?/ post med
Previous summaries/reports:	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 for Weston, to carry out an archaeological evaluation, followed by a programme of monitoring and recording of ground reduction and the installation of new drainage pipes in the grounds of the Holy Trinity Church.

The work revealed evidence for activity on or near the site dating to the late pre-Roman Iron Age, as well as at least one burial which pre-dates the 15th century construction of the south aisle of the church.

1 Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of *Weston Parochial Church Council*, as part of a programme of archaeological evaluation and monitoring of drainage works at the Holy Trinity Church, Weston, 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 churchyard of Holy Trinity Church, Weston in the district of North Hertfordshire, and is centred on NGR TL 2660 2995. The development proposed the installation of a new french drain around the northern, western and southern perimeter of the church and the excavation of three soakaways with associated drainage trenches.

1.3 Holy Trinity Church lies within Archaeological Area 161, as defined in the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan, which encompasses the church and approximately 8ha to its south. The discovery of Medieval pottery, coins and building materials to the south and west of the church suggest the presence of a medieval manorial site in the vicinity. While the discovery of a Romano-British burial in the area also indicates continuity of settlement over a long period.

1.4 The church itself is believed to have its origins in the 12th century, with the earliest surviving part of the building being the north transept. The nave and south aisle date to the 15th century. The Norman tower and crossing were rebuilt, and the chancel and vestry were added in the 19th century.

1.5 The aim of the archaeological investigation has been to establish the nature and date of any archaeological features and deposits revealed during the drainage works. Particular interest has been expressed in the identification of any structures contemporary with or earlier than the existing church.

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

2 Fieldwork

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site is located at approximately 135 metres OD on ground sloping down to the south and the west. The natural geology of the site consists of firm olive brown clay overlying lower chalk.

METHODOLOGY

2.2 In accordance with the DAC Brief the drainage trenches along the south, west and north sides of the church, the three soakaways, and their associated drainage channels were dug by hand.

EVALUATION

2.3 A total of nine test pits, measuring approximately 1 metre in length and 0.5 metres in width were located adjacent to the outside church walls. Three of the test pits (1-3) were located to the north of the church, two to the west (4-5), one to the west of the porch (7) and a further three (6, 8 and 9) to the south side of the church. Test pits 1 to 3 were excavated to an approximate depth of 0.45 metres, test pits 4 and 5 to a depth of 0.35 metres, test pits 6 and 7 to 0.43 metres and test pits 8 and 9 to 0.21 metres.

RESULTS

Recorded contexts:

Context	Context Type	Test Pit	Description	Max. Depth (m)
0 1	Layer	1 - 9	Friable, very dark greyish brown clayey sandy silt, with frequent inclusions of small to medium flint pebbles	0.3
0 2	Layer	1 & 2	Compact, natural olive brown clay	0.11
10	Layer	1	Fairly compact, yellowish brown clayey silt, with frequent medium to large flint pebbles and chalk fragments, which seem more frequent towards the bottom of the fill	0.35
20	Layer	2	Friable, greyish brown gravely silt	0.05
21	Layer	2	Fairly compact, light olive brown clayey silt, with moderate medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.15
22	Layer	2	Firm, light olive brown silty clay, with moderate small to medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.19
30	Layer	3	Fairly compact, mid brown clayey silt, with frequent medium to large flint pebbles, chalk fragments and occasional medium charcoal flecks and box charcoal	0.2
31	Layer	3	Compact, light yellowish brown silty clay, with occasional small to medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.25

40	Layer	4	Fairly compact, olive brown silty clay, with frequent small to medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.35
50	Layer	5	Fairly compact, olive brown silty clay, with moderate small to medium flint pebbles, chalk fragments and occasional roots	0.3
51	Skeleton	5	Partial articulated child skeleton, oriented east-west, lower limbs extended beneath the west wall of the church. Left in situ	-
60	Layer	6	Compact, olive brown silty clay, with frequent small to medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.43
70	Layer	7	Friable, pale yellow silty sand, with frequent small to medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.12
71	Layer	7	Compact, light olive brown silty clay, with medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.31
80	Layer	8	Fairly compact, dark greyish brown sandy clayey silt, with frequent small to medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.22
90	Layer	9	Fairly compact, dark grey sandy clayey silt, with frequent small to medium flint pebbles and chalk fragments	0.21

2.4 The only archaeological remains discovered during the excavation of the test pits consisted of an articulated child's skeleton in test pit 5. The lower limbs extended beneath the west end of the church and the skull and upper torso were located beyond the limits of the excavated area to the west. Due to the nature of the investigation no evidence for a grave cut was found and, as the remains were below the impact level of the drainage works, they were recorded and left in situ.

2.5 No other archaeological features were discovered during the excavation of the test pits.

FINDS CONCORDANCE

	Pottery		Tile		Mortar		Animal bone		Human bone		Iron nails		Slag		Clunch		Clay Pipe		Slate	
Context	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No
10			110	3													2	1	55	2
40	30	1																		
50	5	1	135	6							10	2	10	1			2	1		
60			245	3																
70			30	2	10	1									120	2				
71	35	3					25	2	355	21										
80									35	4										
90			420	5																
Totals	75	6	940	19	10	1	25	2	390	25	10	2	10	1	120	2	4	2	55	2

2.6 All the artefacts recovered from the test pits came from the subsoil layers. The building materials assemblage is dominated by post-medieval peg tile fragments, the clunch fragments show a degree of working, however their recovery is unsurprising as it was one of the materials used during the construction of the church. The nails from context (50) may relate to a coffin associated with skeleton (51), but it was not possible to investigate this any further.

2.7 The recovery of disarticulated human bone fragments from test pits 7 and 8 in the vicinity of the porch, may indicate the presence of burials which were disturbed during the later phases of the church construction. It should be noted, however, that in a churchyard context the recovery of human bone is common occurrence.

2.8 The fragments of pottery from test pits 4, 5 and 7 represent two sherds of late pre-Roman Iron Age material (contexts 40 and 71) and three sherds of Medieval material (contexts 50 and 71). One of the sherds, dated to between the 10th and 12th centuries was recovered from context 50 and may provide any indication as to the date of the child's burial. However due to the size and condition of the sherd and the nature of the context within which it was found it is also possible that it material is residual.

2.9 Given the history of the church the presence of Medieval pottery is unsurprising. The late pre-Roman Iron Age material, although small and abraded, does however provide further evidence to support the notion of continuity of settlement within the immediate area.

OBSERVATION AND MONITORING

2.10 A programme of monitoring was implemented following the completion of the evaluation phase of the project. The ground reduction in the area of the french drain varied from approximately 0.1m on the northern side of the church, 0.25m on the western side of the church and from between 0.05m and 0.1m on the southern side of the church. No archaeological remains were observed during this phase of the work.

2.11 Three soakaways were located to the south-west, the south and the north of the church and they were numbered 1 to 3 respectively. A series of drainage trenches were then dug to connect the soakaways to the french drain alongside the church.

RESULTS

Context	Context Type	Soakaway	Description	Max Depth (m)
0 01	Topsoil	1-3	Fairly firm, black silty clay	0.18
100	Layer	1	Fairly firm, very dark grey silty clay	1.03
200	Layer	2	Fairly firm, very dark grey silty clay	0.88
201	Coffin	2	Partially exposed wooden coffin, 0.5 m by 0.5 m	-

300	Layer	3	Fairly firm, very dark greyish brown silty clay, with moderate inclusions of chalk and ceramic building material fragments	0.32
301	Layer	3	Fairly firm, olive brown silty clay, with moderate inclusions of chalk and ceramic building material fragments	0.78
302	Layer	3	Fairly firm, olive brown silty clay, with occasional inclusions of chalk and ceramic building material fragments	0.16
303	Wooden plank	3	Wooden plank, exposed length 1.1 m, wider at west end measuring 0.13 m, east end 0.06 m	0.2
304	Wooden plank	3	Wooden plank, exposed length 1.1 m, wider at west end measuring 0.36 m, east end 0.13 m	0.2
305	Wooden plank	3	Wooden plank, exposed length 1.1 m, exposed width at the east end 0.25 m	0.2

2.12 Soakaway 1 measured approximately 1.0 metres in length by 1.0 metres in width and was excavated to a depth of 1.20 metres. Two skull fragments were visible in the north-western half of the soakaway at the base, and a long bone fragment was visible in the western section at a depth of 0.17 metres from the ground surface. All the fragments were left in situ.

2.13 Trench 1, which measured 5.85 metres in length, 0.43 metres in width and 0.55 metres in depth was positioned to connect soakaway 1 with the french drain on the south-west side of the church. No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

2.14 Soakaway 2 measured approximately 1.3 metres in length by 1.0 metre in width and it was excavated to a depth of 1.05 metres. A number of disarticulated human bones, three possible coffin handles and two coffin fragments were recovered during the excavation. In the south-western corner of the soakaway, at depth of approximately 0.9 metres a portion of coffin was revealed (context 201). A dark area of staining was also noticed in the south-eastern corner of the soakaway at a depth of approximately 1.0 metre, however it was not investigated as the ground was waterlogged at this depth. The area in which the coffin was found was left undisturbed and the remaining area was reduced by approximately 0.15 metres.

2.15 Trench 2 was located between soakaway 2 and the french drain to the east of the porch on the south side of the church. It measured 4.3 metres in length, 0.38 metres in width and 0.45 metres in depth. No archaeological features were observed in trench 2.

2.16 Soakaway 3 was located on the northern side of the church and measured approximately 1.2 metres in length and 1.1 metres in width, it was excavated to a depth of 1.15 metres. A fragment of moulded stone measuring 0.3 metres by 0.1 metres, with bolster marks on one side, was recovered from a depth of 0.7 metres. At depth of approximately 0.82 metres a fragment of leg bone was observed in the east facing section.

2.17 Three wooden planks (contexts 303, 304, 305, north to south), oriented east-west, were discovered a depth of 1.15 metres below the ground surface. The northern two planks (contexts 303 and 304) appeared to be tapering towards the east, while the southern plank (context 305) seemed to be tapering towards the west. All the planks exceeded 0.2 metres in depth and it was not possible to identify a base for the remains. There were a few small disarticulated fragments of human bone associated with the planks, although investigation was hampered by the waterlogged nature of the matrix.

2.18 Trenches 3, 4 and 5 were dug to connect soakaway 3 to the french drain on the northern side of the church. Trench 3 measured 3.80 metres in length, 0.4 metres in width and 0.45 metres in depth. Trench 4 measured 8.45 metres in length, 0.4 metres in width and from between 0.7 and 1.1 metres in depth. Trench 5 measured 1.1 metres in length, 0.4 metres in width and 0.7 metres in depth. No archaeological features were observed during the excavation of these drainage trenches.

3 Discussion

3.1 The intention of the archaeological investigation in the churchyard at Holy Trinity Church was to investigate the presence of any archaeological remains likely to be affected by the drainage works. Of particular interest was the possible presence of any structures earlier than, or associated with the church.

3.2 During the evaluation phase of the project the remains of a child (skeleton 51) were discovered in test pit 5. The remains were oriented east-west and the lower limbs were found to extend beneath the west wall of the church, which was known to have been built during the 15th century. Although one sherd of 10th to 12th century pottery was also recovered from test pit 5 it is not possible to establish a more exact date for the burial. Further disarticulated remains recovered in test pits 7 and 8 to the west of the south porch further support the possibility of an earlier burial ground extending beneath the existing church.

3.3 The date of the finds recovered from the test pits range from late pre-Roman Iron Age to the Post-medieval period. None of the material came from sealed archaeological contexts, although it does indicate activity on the site which ranges over a long period of time, and it concurs with other evidence found in the vicinity of the site.

3.4 The monitoring phase of the project revealed evidence of a coffin (context 201) in soakaway 2, which was not investigated further as it was not directly impacted by the works. Three planks (contexts 303-305) were also uncovered in soakaway 3, although due to the waterlogged nature of the ground it was not possible to gain any information as to their function.

Conclusions

3.5 The archaeological investigation of the site has demonstrated that there was probably activity on the site as early as the pre-Roman Iron Age. At least one burial dating to before the construction of the 15th century portion of the church was recorded, as well as the location of previously unknown burials to the south of the church.

Confidence Rating

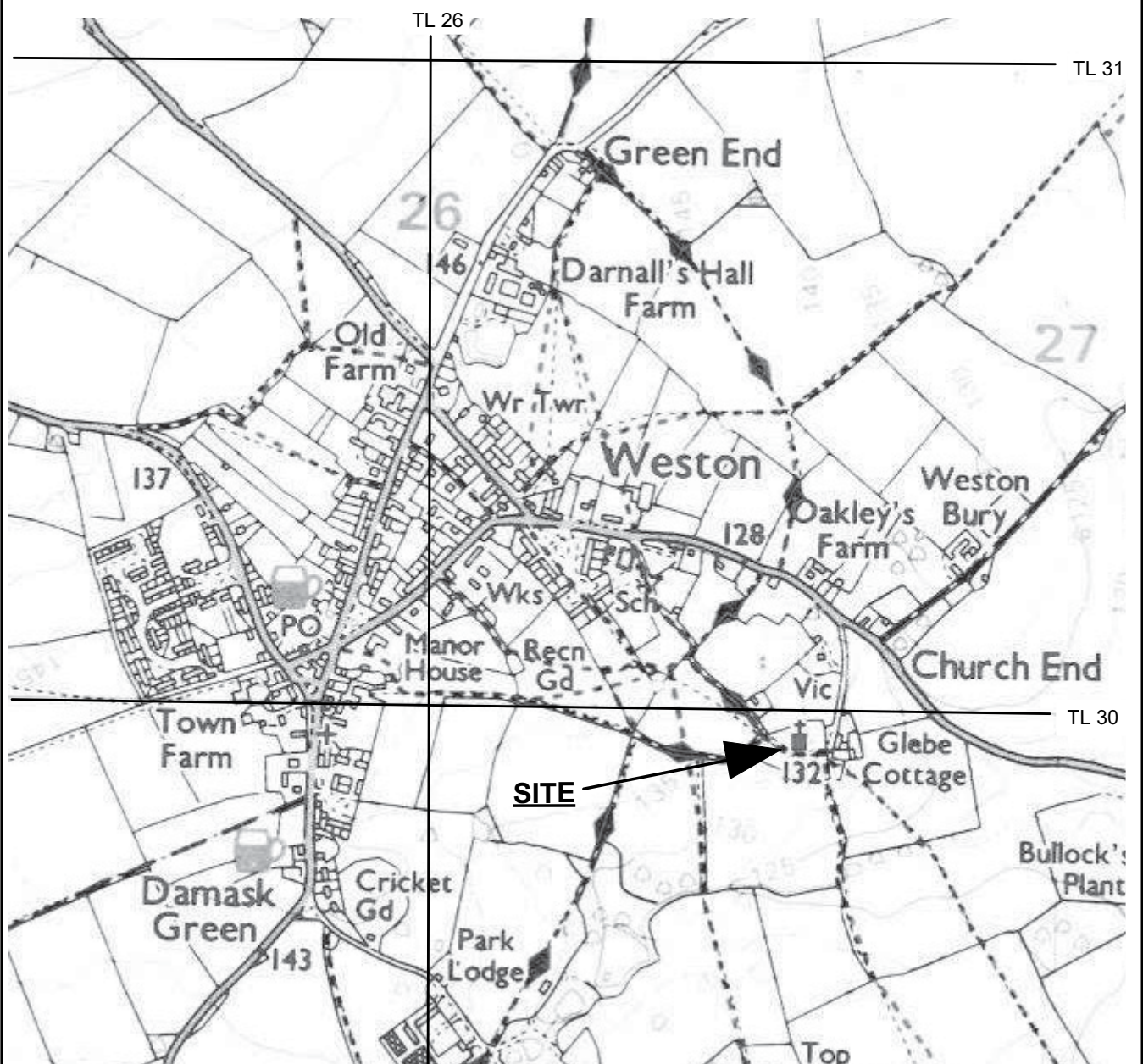
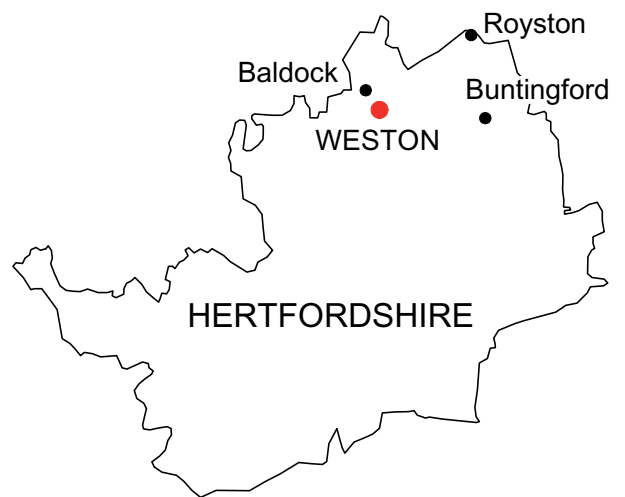
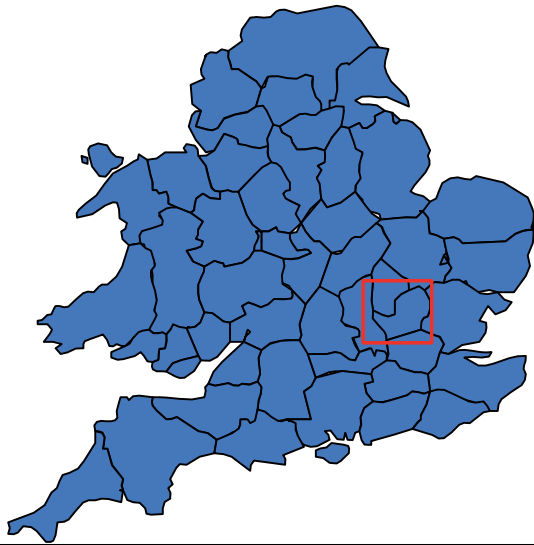
3.6 During the course of the investigation, the conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. On this basis the confidence rating for the work can be considered to be High.

4 Schedule of Site Visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
26/09/02	CT & HF	9	Excavation of the first four test pits
27/09/02	CT, HF & GIS	10	Excavation and recording of the remaining test pits
20/11/02	HF	2	Observation of the french drain reduction
21/11/02	HF	4	Observation of the french drain reduction
22/11/02	HF	2	Observation of the french drain reduction
27/11/02	KS	4	Observation of the soakaway excavation
28/11/02	KS	7	Observation of the soakaway excavation
29/11/02	KS	4	Recording of the soakaways
02/12/02	KS	1	Inspection of the drainage trenches
06/12/02	KS	2	Inspection of the drainage trenches

5 Illustrations

Figure 1	Site Location
Figure 2	Location of the groundworks
Figure 3	Test pit sections
Figure 4	Plan & sections

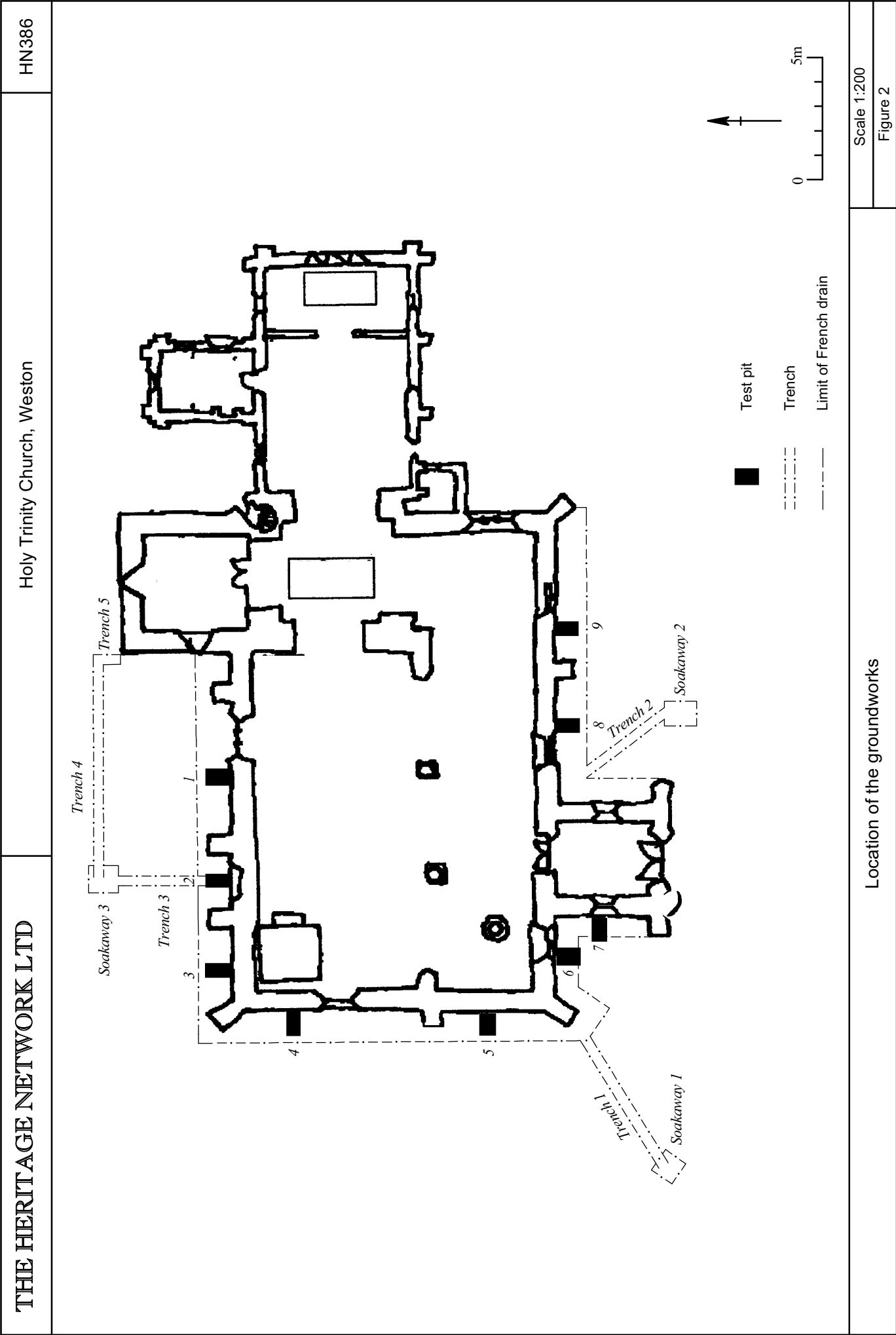


Site Location

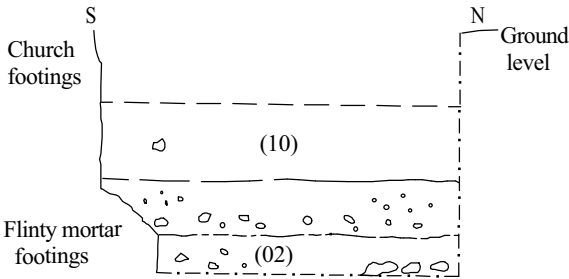
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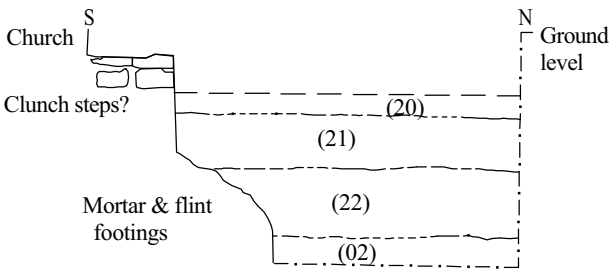
Figure 1



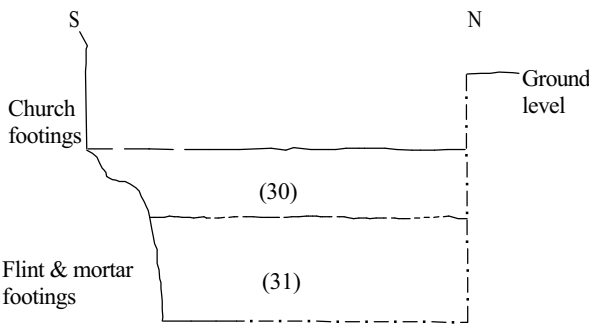
East facing section of Test Pit 1



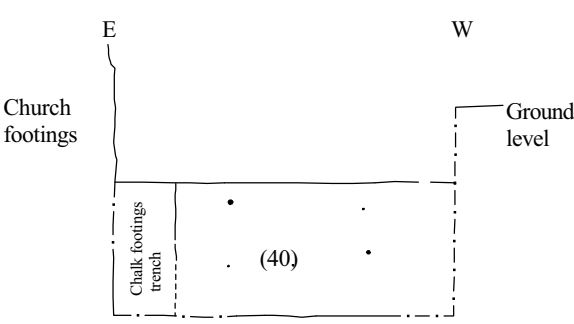
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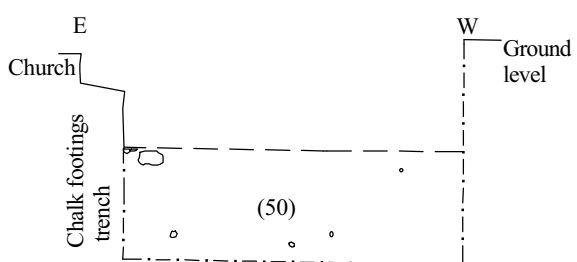
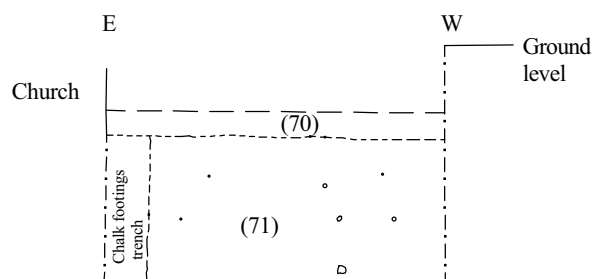
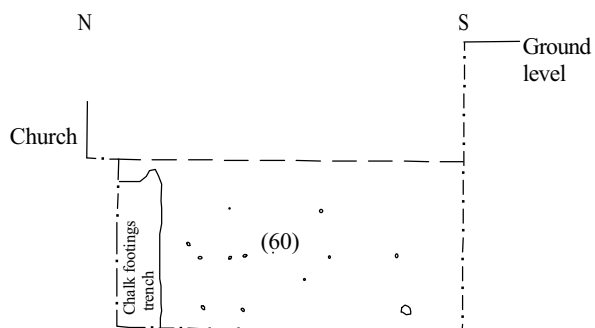
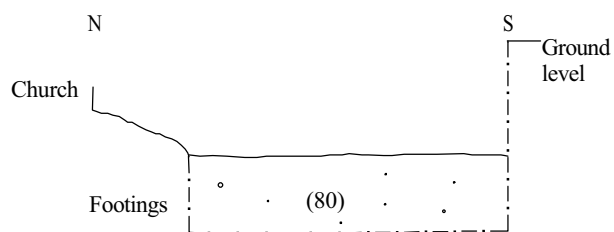
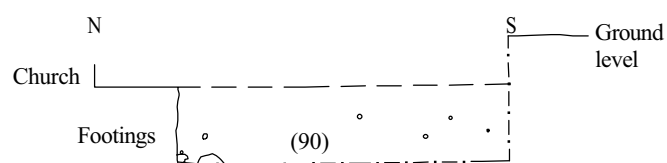
East facing section of Test Pit 3



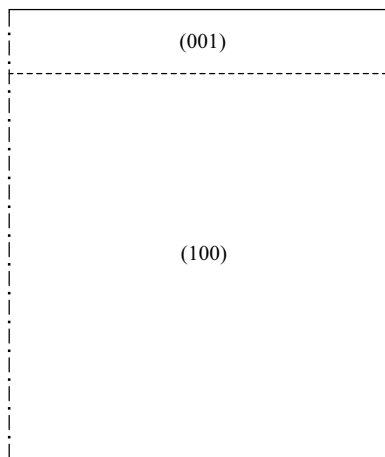
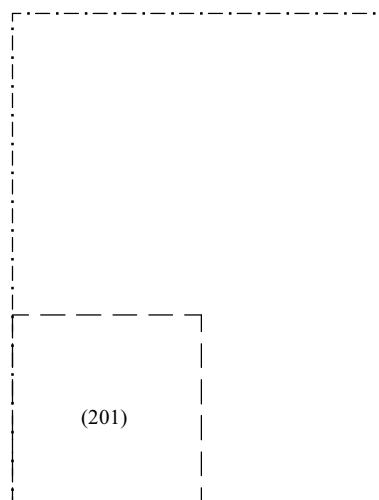
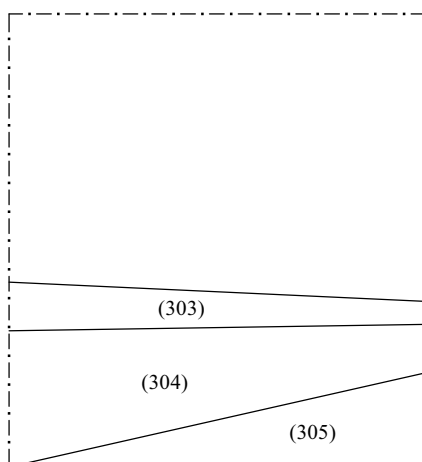
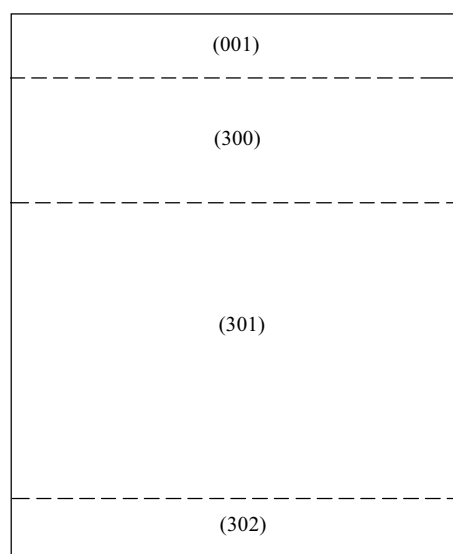
North facing section of Test Pit 4



0 30cms

North facing section of Test Pit 5*North facing section of Test Pit 7**West facing section of Test Pit 6**West facing section of Test Pit 8**West facing section of Test Pit 9*

0 30cms

*North facing section of
Soakaway 1**Plan of Soakaway 2**Plan of Soakaway 3**South facing section of
Soakaway 3*

0 30cms