

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
Church of St Mary the Virgin  
Church Lane, Chessington  
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames**

**NGR: 518456 163479**



**Project No: 5146  
Site Code: MAV11**

**ASE Report No: 2012030  
OASIS id: archaeol6-118418**

**By Giles Dawkes**

**January 2012**

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**Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Thomas Ford & Partners, on behalf of St Mary's Church Chessington PCC, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during new drainage works at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane, Chessington, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.*

*The watching brief did not identify any burials or disarticulated human bone, archaeological features or finds. The absence of disarticulated human bone from a watching brief in a cemetery is surprising but is probably best explained by the status of St Mary's as a chapel-of-ease which often had no right of burial.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA) at the Institute of Archaeology (IoA) University College London (UCL) was commissioned by Thomas Ford & Partners, on behalf of St Mary's Church Chessington PCC, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during new drainage works at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane, Chessington, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (NGR 518456 163479; Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 The works comprised of the excavation of 5 new soak aways, associated drainage runs and the deepening of the existing drainage gully around the base of the church walls (Figure 2).
- 1.1.3 The church is located in the centre of Chessington, immediately north of the junction of Church Lane, Garrison Lane and Green Lane. It sits within an original semi-circular churchyard enclosure, later extended to the north-west, and is bounded by roads to the south and east, the Vicarage to the west and St Mary's Hall to the north. The church is a Listed Building (Grade II; Ref. 1080093).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

- 1.2.1 The church occupies a prominent position on the north-eastern end of a low ridge above the Hogsmill Valley, with slopes falling away on all sides apart from the south-west. It lies at an altitude of 56m AOD. According to the British Geological Survey the natural geology of the site is Claygate Member, a sandy sub-unit of London Clay.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 The drainage works were authorised by the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Guildford on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2011. A Desk-based Assessment (ASE 2011) and the archaeological watching brief were undertaken in the interests of best practise.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.4.1 The general objective of the archaeological work was to monitor all excavations associated with the development, including ensuring that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the excavations are recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.
- 1.4.2 As the groundworks were being undertaken in a cemetery, a specific objective of the watching brief was to ensure the appropriate recording and storage of any human remains encountered.

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

- 1.5.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during November 2011 by Giles Dawkes and Simon Stevens. This report has been prepared in accordance with the relevant *Standards and Guidance* of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).
- 1.5.2 The fieldwork was managed by Andy Leonard and Jon Sygrave (Project Managers) and the post-excavation analysis by Jim Stevenson (Project Manager).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Overview**

2.1.1 The following is reproduced from the Desk-Based Assessment (ASE 2011).

### **2.2 Period Summaries**

2.2.1 Prehistoric activity on the ridge-top is limited to a small number of Iron Age pottery sherds found during the construction of the Royal British Legion Club in 1963 (MLO19570), suggesting some small-scale occupation of the ridge-top site at this period. Earlier material, comprising various find-spots of flint artefacts, including arrowheads and axes, and spanning the entire prehistoric period from the Mesolithic to the Middle Bronze Age, is known from further afield in the district, but tends to be characteristic of hunting or other transient activities rather than any evidence for significant settlement. This is typical of areas with clayey soils, and it has traditionally been suggested that such areas remained wooded throughout much of the prehistoric period.

2.2.2 No evidence of Romano-British occupation is recorded in the area, and only two isolated finds of (single) Roman coins are known from further afield. The impression given by these limited discoveries is that the ridge saw little significant pre-medieval settlement, although this may be due to a lack of modern excavation in the area.

2.2.3 Some settlement in the early medieval (Anglo-Saxon) period is suggested by the place-name Chessington, derived from 'Cissa's hill' although this is first recorded in Domesday Book in 1086 as *Cisendune*. Two manors were recorded, held by Richard de Tonbridge (ancestor of the de Clare family) and Miles Crispin. While the latter held his land in hand, Richard's estate was sub-tenanted to Robert de Watteville. The entry relating to Richard records half a mill – this would have been a watermill shared with another manor, and suggests that his estate stretched down to the stream in the vicinity of Castle Hill, a defended site across the valley to the east of the Church.

2.2.4 This manor was usually attached to Malden and was granted by charter to Merton College, Oxford who retained it into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, apart from a period between 1578 and 1707 when, after the forceful intervention of Elizabeth I, it was ceded to the Earl of Arundel and leased to the Goode family whose attempts to evade the terms of the leasehold prompted the College to recover the estate. Crispin's manor, known as Fream, descended with the honour of Wallingford until 1428 when it was granted to Boxley Abbey in Kent until the Reformation. It subsequently passed to a succession of families, finally being linked to Chessington manor in the late- 16<sup>th</sup> century. The manorial centre was at Chessington Hall, renamed from Fream in c.1800.

#### *Church of St Mary the Virgin*

2.2.5 The earliest reference to the church is late 12<sup>th</sup> century. Merton Priory records (covering the period 1174-1189) confirm the advowson (the right to nominate the priest) of '...the Chapel of Chissenden'. This reference to chapel indicates that the church originated as a subsidiary chapel-of-ease to the mother-church of St John the Baptist, Malden; a status it appears to have formally

retained until 1938, although it appears to have functioned as a *de facto* independent parish from 1656. Its status as a chapel-of-ease indicates that the locality retained either enough of a population (albeit scattered around in a dispersed settlement pattern, as reflected in later historic mapping), or a manorial lord with enough leverage to acquire this concession. Chapels-of-ease often had no right of burial.

- 2.2.6 The earliest fabric is dated variously to the 12<sup>th</sup> or early- 13<sup>th</sup> century (GLHER MLO88202; listed building description), and comprises the chancel and the north wall of the nave, with several lancet windows and the priest's doorway in the north wall of the chancel. The original form of the structure appears to have been a nave and a smaller chancel, separated by a chancel arch. A belfry was attached to the western end of the nave, accessed through another pointed arch. A tiny sketch of the church on an estate map of 1796 shows this layout, with a porch attached to the south wall of the nave, as does Cracklow's sketch of 1821 which also shows a doorway in the western end wall of the nave.
- 2.2.7 By 1845, a small transept had been built onto the east end of the nave's southern wall – Brayley included a print showing this in his *History of Surrey* published in that year in which he referred to the transept as being 'recently built'. The print shows it as a tall and narrow structure with a large two-light lancet window beneath a prominent drip-mould. The Chessington Tithe map of 1839 shows a wide but shallow extension on the south side of the nave wall, but it would be unwise to place too much reliance on this as accurate architectural survey was unlikely to have been part of the surveyor's brief. Further works took place in 1854 by the architect R. Hesketh, when the nave was extended to the west, removing the belfry arch, and a small vestry was attached to the north wall of the chancel. In addition, a great deal of internal restoration took place.
- 2.2.8 The next key date in the development of the church is 1870, when the architect T.G. Jackson added an aisle on the south side of, and almost as big as, the nave, completely removing the old porch and south transept in the process – this included a boiler room possibly under the chancel (*pers. comm.* Rena Pitsilli-Graham, Thomas Ford & Partners) which may have been accessed by an external staircase situated in the external corner between the chancel and the south aisle and now covered by a recumbent headstone. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of 1884 does not show this new extension, although this is explained by the fact that the Surrey sheets were actually surveyed in 1861-71. Subsequent mapping shows the church conforming to its present outline, apart from the vestry, which was enlarged in 1911.



### 2.3 Recent Archaeological Investigation

2.3.1 A search of a radius of 500m centred on the Church of the GLHER produced five results (Figure 1):

Number on Figure 1	HER number	NGR Location	HER Description
1	MLO19570	1851 6355	20 Iron Age sherds found during the construction of the British Legion club in 1963
2	MLO88202	18456 63479	Church of St Mary the Virgin, 13 <sup>th</sup> century origin
3	MLO10535	1822 6347	Chessington Hall, Tudor origin, rebuilt in 19 <sup>th</sup> century, demolished 20 <sup>th</sup> century
4	MLO99526	18546 63659	two post-medieval field boundaries found during excavations at St Mary's Primary School in 2008;
5	MLO19569	1842 6346	'a paving of cobble stones at a depth of 3 feet' found during the construction of a water pipe trench at some point in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century

Table 1: Summary of HER data

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Fieldwork Methodology**

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken over 3 days: the 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2011. The excavation of the new drainage gully around the base of the church wall was undertaken on the first day and it quickly became apparent that the new drainage would either be located within the existing late 20<sup>th</sup> century drainage channel or would be too shallow (less than 0.3m deep) to impact on significant archaeological remains. Accordingly, the watching brief was not maintained on this area and concentrated on the excavation of the new soak away pits and associated drainage trenches.
- 3.1.2 As the new drainage around the church base was limited to a shallow and already disturbed area, there was no opportunity to examine the potential presence of the aforementioned subterranean chamber located at the internal corner of the aisle and chancel (pers. comm. Rena Pitsilli-Graham).
- 3.1.3 Excavation was by a combination of hand and mechanical digging.
- 3.1.4 All spoil removed from the excavations was inspected visually and also scanned with a metal detector for the presence of any stray, unstratified artefacts and human bone.
- 3.1.5 All encountered deposits were recorded according to accepted professional standards (IfA 2008) and in accordance with standard ASE working practise on *pro-forma* recording sheets.
- 3.1.6 A photographic record was kept (including monochrome prints, colour slides and digital images), and forms part of the site archive which is quantified in Table 1.
- 3.1.7 ASE informed the Museum of London prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited with the Museum of London in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 2).

Number of Contexts	6
No. of files/paper record	4
Plan and sections sheets	0
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	15
Bulk finds	0
Registered finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 2: Quantification of site archive

## 4.0 RESULTS

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Max. Length m</b>	<b>Max. Width m</b>	<b>Max. Deposit Thickness</b>
01	Layer	Topsoil	Trench	Trench	0.2m
02	Layer	Gravelly silt	Trench	Trench	0.08m+
100	Layer	Topsoil	Trench	Trench	0.3
101	Layer	Graveyard soil	Trench	Trench	1.1m
102	Layer	Natural	Trench	Trench	N/A

Table 3: List of recorded contexts

### 4.1 Drainage trenches around the base of the church monitored on 14/11/11

4.1.1 At the east end of the church the topsoil [001] at 57.2m AOD was excavated by machine and subsoil [002] was exposed. No finds or features were identified.

### 4.2 Drainage trenches and soak away pits monitored on 21/11/11 and 22/11/11

4.2.1 The four soak away pits and associated drainage trenches revealed a similar sequence of deposits: brown sandy clay natural [102]; with overlying grey silt graveyard soil [101] up to 1.1m thick; and topsoil [100] above. No finds or features were identified.

**5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The watching brief did not identify any burials or disarticulated human bone, archaeological features or finds.
- 5.2 The absence of disarticulated human bone from a watching brief in a cemetery is surprising but is probably best explained by the status of St Mary's as a chapel-of-ease which often had no right of burial.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

ASE 2011 *Desk-based Assessment at Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane, Chessington, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames*, unpublished report

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008 (revised ed.), *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ASE would like to thank Thomas Ford & Partners for commissioning the work on behalf of their clients St Mary's Church Chessington PCC. Illustrations for this report are by Justin Russell

**HER Summary Form**

Site Code	MAV11					
Identification Name and Address	St Mary's Church, Church Lane/ Garrison Lane, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 2LB					
County, District &/or Borough	London Borough of Kingston					
OS Grid Refs.	518456 163479					
Geology	London Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	5146					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief√	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban √	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 14-22/11/2011	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Thomas Ford					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Giles Dawkes					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other		
<p>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Thomas Ford &amp; Partners, on behalf of St Mary's Church Chessington PCC, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during new drainage works at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane, Chessington, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.</p> <p>The watching brief did not identify any burials or disarticulated human bone, archaeological features or finds. The absence of disarticulated human bone from a watching brief in a cemetery is surprising but is probably best explained by the status of St Mary's as a chapel-of-ease which often had no right of burial. Natural sandy clay was encountered at 52.1m OD.</p>						

## OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-118418**

### Project details

Project name Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane, Chessington, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Short description of the project Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Thomas Ford & Partners, on behalf of St Mary's Church Chessington PCC, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during new drainage works at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane, Chessington, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The watching brief did not identify any burials or disarticulated human bone, archaeological features or finds. The absence of disarticulated human bone from a watching brief in a cemetery is surprising but is probably best explained by the status of St Mary's as a chapel-of-ease which often had no right of burial. Natural sandy clay was encountered at 52.1m OD.

Project dates Start: 14-11-2011 End: 22-11-2011

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference MAV11 - Sitecode codes

Any associated project reference 5146 - Contracting Unit No. codes

Type of project Recording project

Site status Listed Building

Current Land use Other 4 - Churchyard

Monument type TOPSOIL Uncertain

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Voluntary/self-interest

### Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON KINGSTON UPON THAMES  
CHESSINGTON Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane,  
Chessington, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Postcode KT9 2LB

Study area 0.10 Hectares

Site coordinates TQ 518456 163479 50.9259992766 0.160858893569 50 55 33  
N 000 09 39 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 52.00m Max: 53.00m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation Archaeology South-East

Project originator brief Thomas Ford and Partners

Project originator design Archaeology South-East

Project director/manager Neil Griffin/Jim Stevenson

Project supervisor Giles Dawkes

Type of sponsor/funding client body

Project archives

Physical recipient Archive Museum of London

Digital recipient Archive Museum of London

Paper recipient Archive Museum of London

Paper available Media 'Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title An Archaeological Watching Brief at Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane, Chessington, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Author(s)/Editor(s) Giles Dawkes

Other bibliographic details 2012030

Date 2012

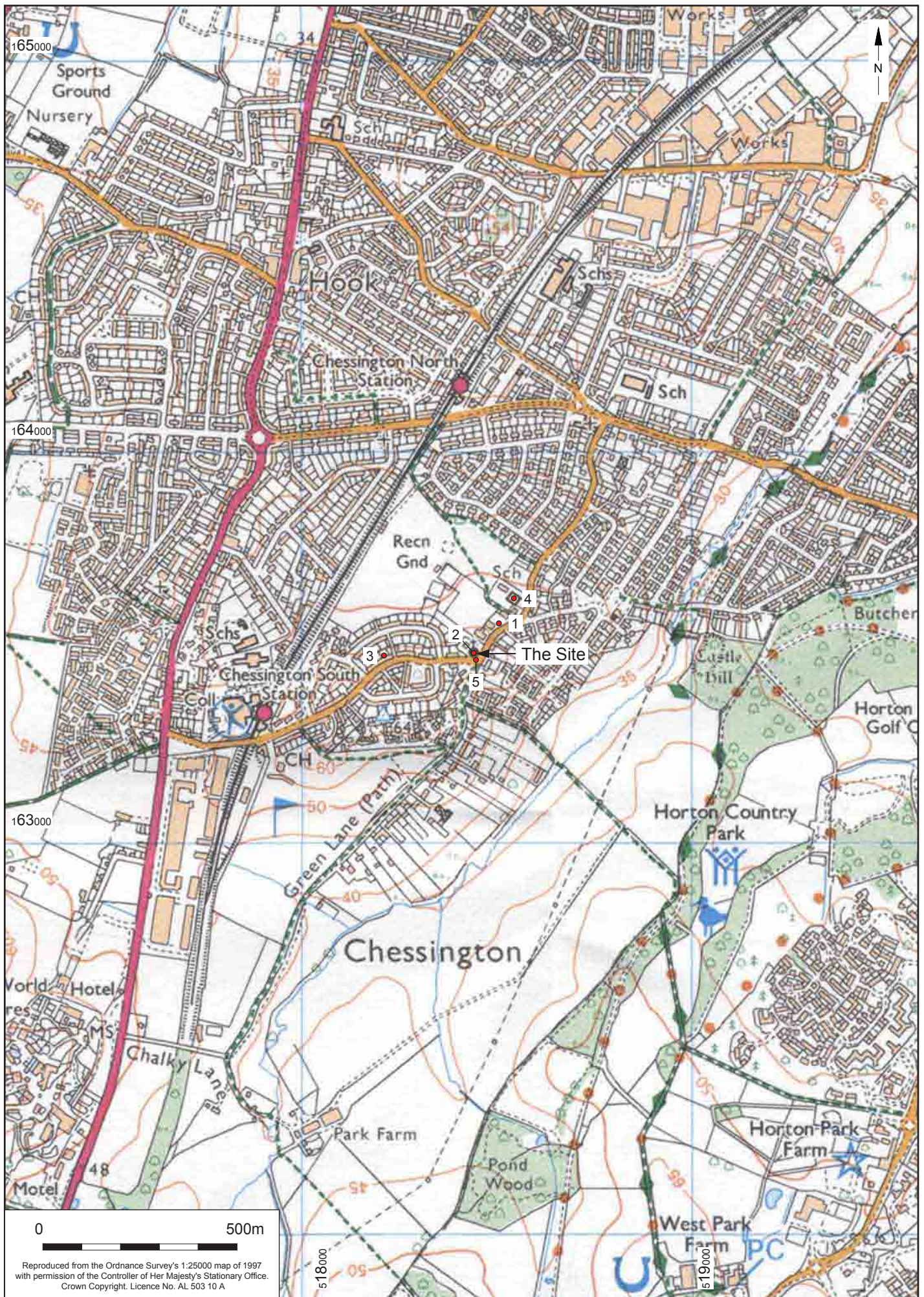
Issuer or publisher Archaeology South-East

Place of issue or publication Portslade

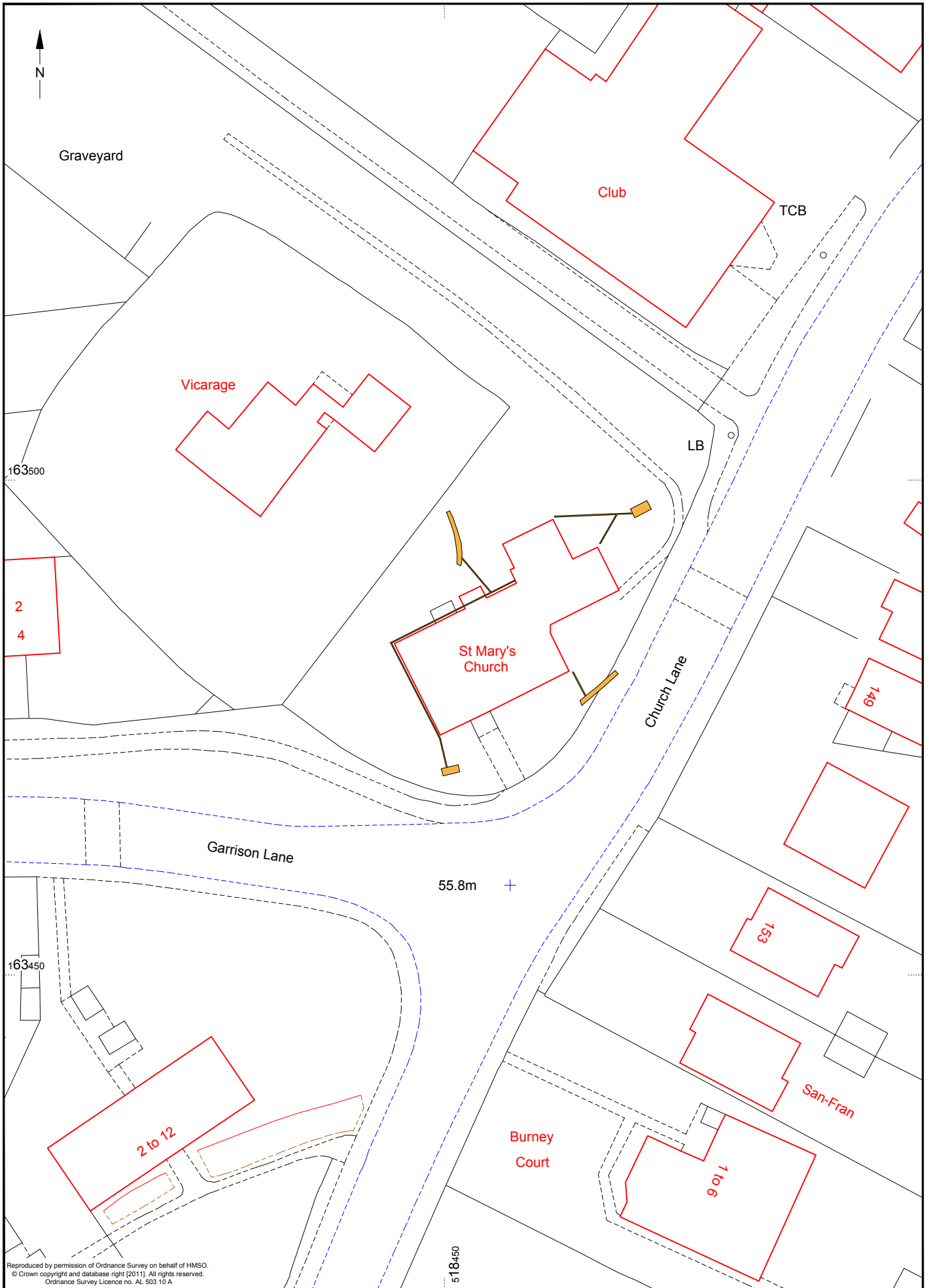
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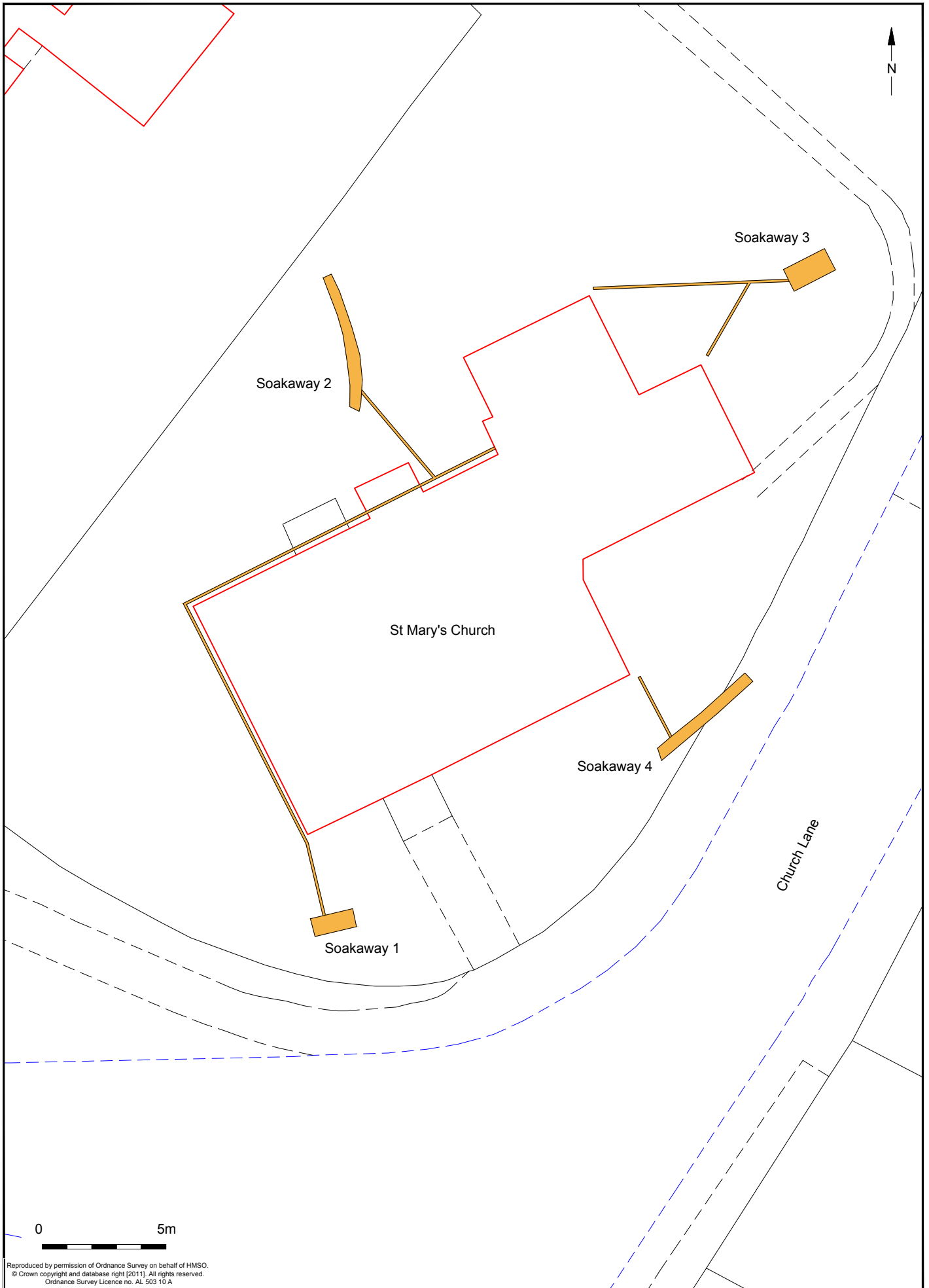


© Archaeology South-East		St Mary's Church, Chessington	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 5146	Jan 2012	Site location	
Report Ref: 2012230	Drawn by: JLR		



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Project Ref: 5146	Jan 2012	Site plan		
Report Ref: 2012030	Drawn by: JLR			



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© Archaeology South-East		St Mary's Church, Chessington	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 5146	Jan 2012	Plan of monitored areas	
Report Ref: 2012030	Drawn by: JLR		

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