

**An Archaeological Watching Brief Report
The Holy Cross, Bignor Road, Bignor
Pulborough, West Sussex**

**NGR: 498257 114662
SU 98257 14662**

Planning Application Reference: BG/10/01433/FUL

**ASE Project No: 4715
Site Code: HCB 11**

**ASE Report No: 2012120
OASIS ID: archaeol6-127158**



**By Kathryn Grant BA MSc AIFA
With contributions by Trista Clifford
and illustrations by Antonio Reis**

June 2012

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**Archaeology South-East
Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex
BN41 1DR
Tel: 01273 426830
Fax: 01273 420866
Email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
website: www.archaeologyse.co.uk**

Abstract

Between 1st and 17th May 2012 Archaeology South East was commissioned by Nicholas Symes Associates on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at The Holy Cross, Bignor, West Sussex during groundwork for the construction of an extension to the church building and associated services.

Thirteen of the fifteen grave cuts encountered during the excavations contained partially articulated skeletal remains and those which were impacted by the groundwork were recorded and lifted for reburial within the churchyard. The depth of the cemetery deposit (0.8-1.0m) in addition to considerable truncation and the intercutting of graves in the area of the new-build, demonstrates that this part of the churchyard was used for burial over a long period of time. No graves were datable. A red-brick vault revealed during the excavations was recorded and preserved in-situ. All disarticulated human bone fragments were recovered from the cemetery soil and re-interred in the cemetery.

Natural Greensand geology was encountered at 53.99m AOD in the north of the site (foundation trenches for new build), sloping gradually downhill to 53.34m AOD in the south (storage/cess tank pit). No evidence of burial activity was uncovered in the south of the site where the natural horizon was recorded directly beneath a c. 300mm thick layer of topsoil.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London (UCL), was commissioned by Nicholas Symes Associates on behalf of the Parochial Church Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief at The Holy Cross, Bignor, West Sussex (centred NGR 498257 114622; Figures 1 and 2) hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

1.2 Planning Background

1.2.1 An application for planning permission for the erection of a single storey side extension to provide disabled toilet facilities, flower room and store was been granted by Chichester District Council (Planning ref. BG/10/01433/FUL; Figure 3). Although no archaeological condition was attached to this consent, the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) has requested that the intrusive ground works associated with the scheme are monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist and undertaken in accordance with an appropriate *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI).

1.2.2 Accordingly, a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2012) outlining the requirements of the watching brief was prepared by ASE with reference to communications between ASE, Nicholas Symes Associates, the Chichester District Archaeological Officer (James Kenny) and DAC Archaeological Advisor (Vivienne Coad). This document was submitted to the aforementioned parties for approval in advance of commencement of ground works. All work was carried out in accordance with the WSI (*ibid.*) unless otherwise specified below and with the relevant Standards and Guidance of West Sussex County Council (WSCC 2007) and the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2000, 2001).

1.3 Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 The general aim of the archaeological watching brief was to monitor ground works in order to ensure that any human remains, features, artefacts, medieval masonry or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the excavations were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.

1.4 Scope of the Report

1.4.1 This report presents the findings of the watching brief which was undertaken between 1st and 17th May 2012 by Nick Garland, Catharine Douglas, Liz Chambers and Rob Cole. The project was managed by Neil Griffin (fieldwork) and Dan Swift (post-excavation).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Site Location, Geology and Topography

- 2.1.1 The village of Bignor is a classic small Downland hamlet located in the Chichester District of West Sussex (Figure 1), within six miles of Arundel, Petworth and Pulborough.
- 2.1.2 Bignor Village follows the route of the Roman Road, Stane Street where it ascends the escarpment of the South Downs. The village is particularly noted for its picturesque Downland scenery and important Roman Villa on historic Stane Street.
- 2.1.3 The underlying geology at the site is recorded as Upper Greensand (BGS Sheet 317/332 Chichester/Bognor, 1:50,000 Solid and Drift Edition).

2.2 History of the Church and its Surrounds

- 2.3.1 The Holy Cross is an Anglican Parish church with a largely 13th century structure (when it was reconstructed). The church is mentioned in the Domesday Book with the chancel arch and font surviving from the 11th century. The Domesday Book also records the presence of a manor at Bignor (Bigeneure) and two mills (Morris 1976, 11).
- 2.3.3 The church is situated at the historic village centre and evidence of earlier secular settlement activity might also be encountered. A single sherd of probable Saxon pottery was recovered from the churchyard around the middle of the previous century (James Kenny, *pers. comm.*; SAC 90, lii).
- 2.3.4 The current church is Listed Grade I (LBS Number: 300339). Little evidence of a Saxon church is evident in the current building since it was rebuilt in the 13th century. However, the chancel arch and perhaps the north and south doorways and font may be of Saxon origin (Fisher 1970, 40). Surviving Norman features are restricted to the chamfers of the jambs of the north and south doorways (*ibid.*). A restrained restoration was undertaken between 1876 and 1878 under the guidance of the eminent architect George Edmund Street (Symes 2010). The mid-19th century plan of the church is shown on the 1843 Bignor Tithe map (Figure 4).
- 2.3.5 The building was restored between 1876 and 1878 under the guidance of George Edmund Street, the famous ecclesiastical architect of the Arts and Crafts period. It was one of the last churches to be restored by this eminent architect before his death in 1881 (<http://www.bignorchurch.org/welcome.htm>).
- 2.3.6 It is possible that below ground structural remains associated with the Saxon and Norman church or unmarked graves may be encountered during intrusive ground works associated with this development.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Groundwork (Figures 2 and 3)

3.1.1 The groundwork consisted of the excavation of trenches for the extension to the church building, the excavation of service trenches and soakaway as well as a pit which was excavated for the reburial of all the recovered skeletons. The original drainage layout was adapted to minimise the risk of disturbing more graves.

3.2 Fieldwork Methodology

3.2.1 All ground reduction was carried out under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist. While a mini-digger was initially used during the groundwork the majority of trench excavations were carried out using hand tools. Where archaeological features or deposits, grave cuts or articulated human remains were revealed, work was stopped and excavation was continued by the archaeologist. All spoil was scanned for the presence of any artefacts or disarticulated human remains. Where disarticulated human remains were encountered these were collected and later reburied

3.2.2 All archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded in accordance with accepted professional standards (EH 1991, IFA 2000 & 2001, WSCC 2007) and with the approved *Written Scheme of Investigation* (ASE 2012), using *pro-forma* record sheets. Adequate time was made available for appropriate archaeological investigation and recording of the remains within the limits of the works.

3.2.3 Archaeological features and deposits were planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50. Deposit colours were verified by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart. Contexts revealed during the watching brief were numbered sequentially from 001. A photographic record of the work was made in monochrome, colour transparency and digital formats and is included in the site archive. Since the main deposits uncovered at the site comprised variations in cemetery soil, no environmental samples were collected.

3.2.4 Any *in-situ* articulated human remains encountered during the works were carefully cleaned with small hand tools, recorded, drawn as appropriate and photographed. The hand excavation and recording of buried individuals was undertaken with due respect and care.

3.2.5 Since the works were undertaken within a consecrated Christian graveyard for which a faculty was granted, it was agreed that any recovered human remains were to be re-interred in a different consecrated place of burial. After appropriate recording, human remains were lifted and were later reburied within a pit excavated for the purpose of reburial. *In-situ* human remains (and associated coffin furniture) were bagged and clearly marked in order to prevent mixing of individuals. Disarticulated human bone was collected and bagged separately before being reburied. No detailed skeletal analysis was carried out as part of this project.

3.3 The Site Archive

3.3.1 The site archive is currently held at offices of ASE and will be offered to a suitable museum in due course.

3.3.2 The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Number of Contexts	47
No. of files/paper record	1 file
Plan and sections sheets	4
Bulk Samples	None
Photographs	55
Bulk finds	1 box

Table 1: Quantification of the project archive

4.0 RESULTS (Figures 5 and 6)

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 A list of the recorded contexts has been tabulated below:

Context Number	Context Type	Context Description	Height m AOD
001	Deposit	Topsoil (200-350mm thick)	53.64-55.19
002	Deposit	Cemetery Soil (c.0.8-1m thick)	
003	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [004]	-
004	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/upper skeleton only	54.36
005	Fill	Grave backfill in [003]	-
006	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [007]	-
007	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/upper skeleton only	54.35
008	Fill	Grave backfill in [006]	-
009	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [010]	-
010	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)	
011	Fill	Grave backfill in [009]	-
012	Deposit	Natural Geology	
013	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [014]	-
014	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/lower legs truncated by services?	54.37
015	Fill	Grave backfill in [013]	-
016	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [017]	-
017	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/almost complete (skull missing)	54.55
018	Fill	Grave backfill in [016]	-
019	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [020]	-
020	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/lower torso + pelvic area only	-
021	Fill	Grave backfill in [019]	-
022	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [023]	-
023	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown) (poss. same as Sk. [023])	
024	Fill	Grave backfill in [022]	-
025	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [026]	-
026	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/complete	-
027	Fill	Grave backfill in [025]	-
028	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [029]	54.62
029	Skeleton	Possible juvenile skeleton (sex unknown) (frequent coffin nails)	
030	Fill	Grave backfill in [028]	-
031	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [032]	-
032	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/torso only/arms crossed over chest	54.39
033	Fill	Grave backfill in [031]	-
034	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [035]	-
035	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/right side beyond baulk (lower legs truncated by [037])	54.39
036	Fill	Grave backfill in [034]	-
037	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [038]	-
038	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown)/torso only (truncated by services?)	
039	Fill	Grave backfill in [037]	-
040	Masonry	Red brick-built vault within service trench Preserved <i>in-situ</i>	--
041	Cut	Grave cut – no skeleton revealed	-
042	Fill	Grave backfill in [041]	-
043	Cut	Grave cut – no skeleton revealed	-
044	Fill	Grave backfill in [043]	-
045	Cut	Grave cut for Sk. [047]	-
046	Fill	Grave backfill in [045]	-
047	Skeleton	Adult skeleton (sex unknown) (poss. same as [023])	-

Table 2: List of recorded contexts from archaeological watching brief

4.1.3 A total of 47 contexts were recorded during the monitored excavations. The majority of these refer to individual burial sequences as described below in 4.4. A brick-built vault [040] was also uncovered during the excavation of the service trench.

4.1.4 Thirteen burials containing articulated skeletons were revealed during the groundwork.

4.2 The Groundwork (Figures 2, 3 and 5)

4.2.1 The foundation trenches for the extension to the church building measured c.600mm wide with a maximum depth of 1m and were excavated by ground workers using hand-tools. The ground covering the main foundation area within the footing trenches was reduced by 300mm by mini-digger fitted with a flat-bladed bucket. Service trenches were hand-excavated to a depth of 500mm with a width of 300-400mm. A single storage/cess tank (Figure 5.5), measuring 4.7m by 1.2m, was also hand-excavated down to the natural horizon (c.350mm deep). A small pit (c.700m²) intended for a water pump was hand-excavated along the route of the northernmost foundation wall for the extension (Figure 5.1). The pit intended for the reburial of recovered human remains was excavated by mini-digger (Figures 5.4 and 5.6).

4.2.2 A brick vault [040] was partially revealed during the excavation of a service trench (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Both the head and foot stones were observed for this, but no grave cut was observed at the level of excavation. The head stone suggests a double burial which could indicate that the vault contained stacked burials as no adjacent burial was revealed. The vault consisted of fired-red bricks, which were mortar bonded. It was preserved *in-situ* within the service trench so although this was revealed it was not directly impacted by the groundwork.

4.2.3 Several modern service pipes were seen crossing the excavated trenches approximately 300mm below ground level (BGL).

4.3 Stratigraphic Summary

4.3.1 Natural Greensand geology [012] was encountered at 53.99m AOD in the north of the site (foundation trenches for new build), sloping gradually downhill to 53.34m AOD in the south (storage/cess tank pit). In the northern part of the site (where the new-build was located), the natural horizon was revealed beneath cemetery soil at a depth of c.1.2m. No evidence of burial activity was uncovered in the south of the site where the natural horizon was recorded directly beneath 300mm thick layer of topsoil.

4.3.2 The archaeological watching brief revealed that the northern part of the churchyard was utilised for burial activity. A loose, friable greyish brown silty loam cemetery soil [002] was revealed overlying natural deposits with a thickness of c.0.8-1.0m. The cemetery soil [002] contained frequent sub-angular sandstone fragments and frequent disarticulated human bone fragments. Numerous disarticulated human bones were retrieved during the ground works; these were bagged separately and re-interred elsewhere. The

artefacts encountered during the archaeological investigations were typical of

those found in a repeatedly used burial ground, with the digging of graves over a lengthy period resulting in the disarticulation of human bone and the scattering of coffin fittings (in this case only evidenced infrequently by nails) and sporadic ceramic building materials (usually related to reconstruction work associated with the church building) within the graveyard soil.

- 4.3.3 The cemetery soil was overlain by a 200-350mm thick layer of mid brown silty topsoil containing frequent sandstone fragments.

4.4 Burial Summary (Figure 3)

- 4.4.1 Fifteen grave cuts were recorded during the monitored works within the foundation trenches, the reduced area and the small pit excavated for a water pipe [003, 006, 009, 013, 016, 019, 022, 025, 028, 031, 034, 037, 041, 043 and 045]. Thirteen of these graves contained partially articulated skeletons at the monitored levels [003, 006, 009, 013, 016, 019, 022, 025, 028, 031, 034, 037 and 045]. Graves [003, 006, 009, 013, 016, 022, 025, 028, 031, 034 and 037] were revealed within the foundation trenches for the extension to the church. Grave [019] was encountered during ground reduction in the area of the new foundations at a depth of 300mm BGL. Graves [041, 043 and 045] were observed within a small pit excavated for a water pump.

- 4.4.2 Due to the mixed nature of the cemetery soil, the grave cuts were difficult to see clearly, although some were recognised by either the dark staining left behind after coffin decay or the slightly browner backfill. As undisturbed natural geology was clearly distinguishable from the grave fills and general cemetery soil, areas could be excavated with a high certainty that no further burials were present.

- 4.4.3 All of the articulated burials were assigned grave cut and fill context numbers. Where possible, articulated skeletons were left *in-situ*; this was only practicable when the excavation in that area had ceased (e.g. optimum depth/formation level had been reached) so that the burial would not be disturbed. Human remains were only removed from their resting place if they were above the level of the required ground reduction or within the excavation.

- 4.4.4 All burials were aligned roughly east-west with the body in a supine position and the head at the west in traditional Christian manner. Many of the burials were inter-cutting and truncated each other which suggest that this part of the graveyard was used over a long period of time. The result of this continuous grave-digging, in addition to the limited area of excavation for the development, was that only partial skeletons (e.g. one arm or an articulated foot/spinal column) were uncovered during the watching brief. It was also clear that some skeletal elements had been deliberately relocated as a result of disturbance during grave-digging. The level of this intercutting meant that phasing the burials was impracticable; however some ordering of the burials into rows is discernible from the plans.

- 4.4.5 Due to the quantity of human remains uncovered, the level of intercutting and the condition of the remains on site, the skeletal assemblage did not warrant

more detailed post-excavation analysis.

5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 Ceramic Building Material (CBM) by Trista Clifford

5.1.1 A single un-frogged brick of probable 17th to mid-18th century date was recovered from brick vault [040]. The brick is well-fired and uniform and measures 55mm thick x 210mm long x 113mm wide and weighs 2208g. Attached was some grey-cream coloured lime mortar which contained fine sand.

5.2 Registered Finds by Trista Clifford

5.2.1 A single iron coffin grip or handle <RF1> was recovered from context [005]. The grip is similar in form to Spitalfields Type 2a and dates to the 18th-19th century.

6.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The articulated burials at risk of disturbance by the groundwork were recorded and excavated. These remains were then carefully reburied within a specifically excavated area so as not to be impacted by further work. The extent of intercutting and truncation of burials suggested continuous use of this part of graveyard over a long period of time. The graves encountered during the excavations were typical Christian burials on an east-west alignment with the body in a supine position and the head at western end. No grave goods or pillow stones were revealed during the groundwork.
- 6.2 Frequent disarticulated skeletal remains were also found during the excavations and these were also bagged for reburial. Many of the artefacts encountered during the archaeological investigations were typical of those found in a repeatedly used burial ground, with the digging of graves over a lengthy period resulting in the disarticulation of human bone and the scattering of coffin fittings (in this case nails) and sporadic ceramic building materials (usually related to reconstruction work associated with the church building) within the graveyard soil.
- 6.3 The works only uncovered a small number of partial skeletons that did not warrant more than the basic on-site recording undertaken during the works. With no analysis of the skeletal material it was not possible to determine any pattern or spatial zoning within the cemetery. There is some evidence on the plans to suggest that the inhumation burials are arranged in rows as is usual in Christian burial grounds.
- 6.4 No burials were uncovered during the excavation of the storage/cess tank or the reburial pit. The lack of a cemetery deposit within this area and the presence of the natural horizon 300mm below ground level suggest that this part of the churchyard is unlikely to have been used for burial.
- 6.5 It is difficult to accurately date the burials within the churchyard at The Holy Cross, due to the absence of headstones and burial records and because of the very mixed and unstratified nature of finds recovered from the mixed cemetery deposit.
- 6.6 The red brick-built vault was largely preserved *in-situ* within the service trench. This was the only grave with a marker in the form of a gravestone. The fourteen other graves identified during the groundwork were all unmarked.
- 6.7 No archaeological remains predating the church were encountered during the monitored ground works.

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Web Source 1 – Bignor Church - <http://www.bignorchurch.org/welcome.htm> (accessed 22/05/2012)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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HER Summary Form

Site Code	HCB 11					
Identification Name and Address	The Holy Cross Bignor					
County, District &/or Borough	Chichester District					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR: 498257 114662					
Geology	Greensand					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4715					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other Churchyard		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 1/5/12 – 17/5/12	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Nicholas Symes Associates					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Nick Garland and Cat Douglas					
Period Summary	Palae	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM Graves	Other		
<p>Between 1st and 17th May 2012 Archaeology South East was commissioned by Nicholas Symes Associates on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at The Holy Cross, Bignor, West Sussex during groundwork for the construction of an extension to the church building and associated services.</p> <p>Thirteen of the fifteen grave cuts encountered during the excavations contained partially articulated skeletal remains and those which were impacted by the groundwork were recorded and lifted for reburial within the churchyard. The depth of the cemetery deposit (0.8-1.0m) in addition to considerable truncation and the intercutting of graves in the area of the new-build, demonstrates that this part of the churchyard was used for burial over a long period of time. No graves were datable. A red-brick vault revealed during the excavations was recorded and the preserved <i>in-situ</i>. All disarticulated human bone fragments were recovered from the cemetery soil and re-interred in the cemetery.</p> <p>Natural Greensand geology was encountered at 53.99m AOD in the north of the site (foundation trenches for new build), sloping gradually downhill to 53.34m AOD in the south (storage/cess tank pit). No evidence of burial activity was uncovered in the south of the site where the natural horizon was recorded directly beneath 300mm thick layer of topsoil.</p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-127158

Project details

Project name	The Holy Cross, Bignor
Short description of the project	Between 1st and 17th May 2012 Archaeology South East was commissioned by Nicholas Symes Associates on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at The Holy Cross, Bignor, West Sussex (centred NGR 498257 114622) during groundwork for the construction of an extension to the church building and associated services. Thirteen of the fifteen grave cuts encountered during the excavations contained partially articulated skeletal remains and those which were impacted by the groundwork were recorded and lifted for reburial within the churchyard. The depth of the cemetery deposit (0.8-1.0m) in addition to considerable truncation and the intercutting of graves in the area of the new-build, demonstrates that this part of the churchyard was used for burial over a long period of time. No graves were datable. A red-brick vault revealed during the excavations was recorded and the preserved in-situ. All disarticulated human bone fragments were recovered from the cemetery soil and re-interred in the cemetery. Natural Greensand geology was encountered at 53.99m AOD in the north of the site (foundation trenches for new build), sloping gradually downhill to 53.34m AOD in the south (storage/cess tank pit). No evidence of burial activity was uncovered in the south of the site where the natural horizon was recorded directly beneath 300mm thick layer of topsoil.
Project dates	Start: 01-05-2012 End: 17-05-2012
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HCB11 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	BG/10/01433/FUL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	GRAVES Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction

Project location

Country	England
Site location	WEST SUSSEX CHICHESTER BIGNOR The Holy Cross. Bignor

Postcode RH20 1PQ

Site coordinates SU 98257 14662 50.92248407 -0.601886527805 50 55 20 N 000
36 06 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 53.34m Max: 53.99m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Archaeology South-East

Project brief originator Diocesan Archaeologist

Project design originator Chichester District Council

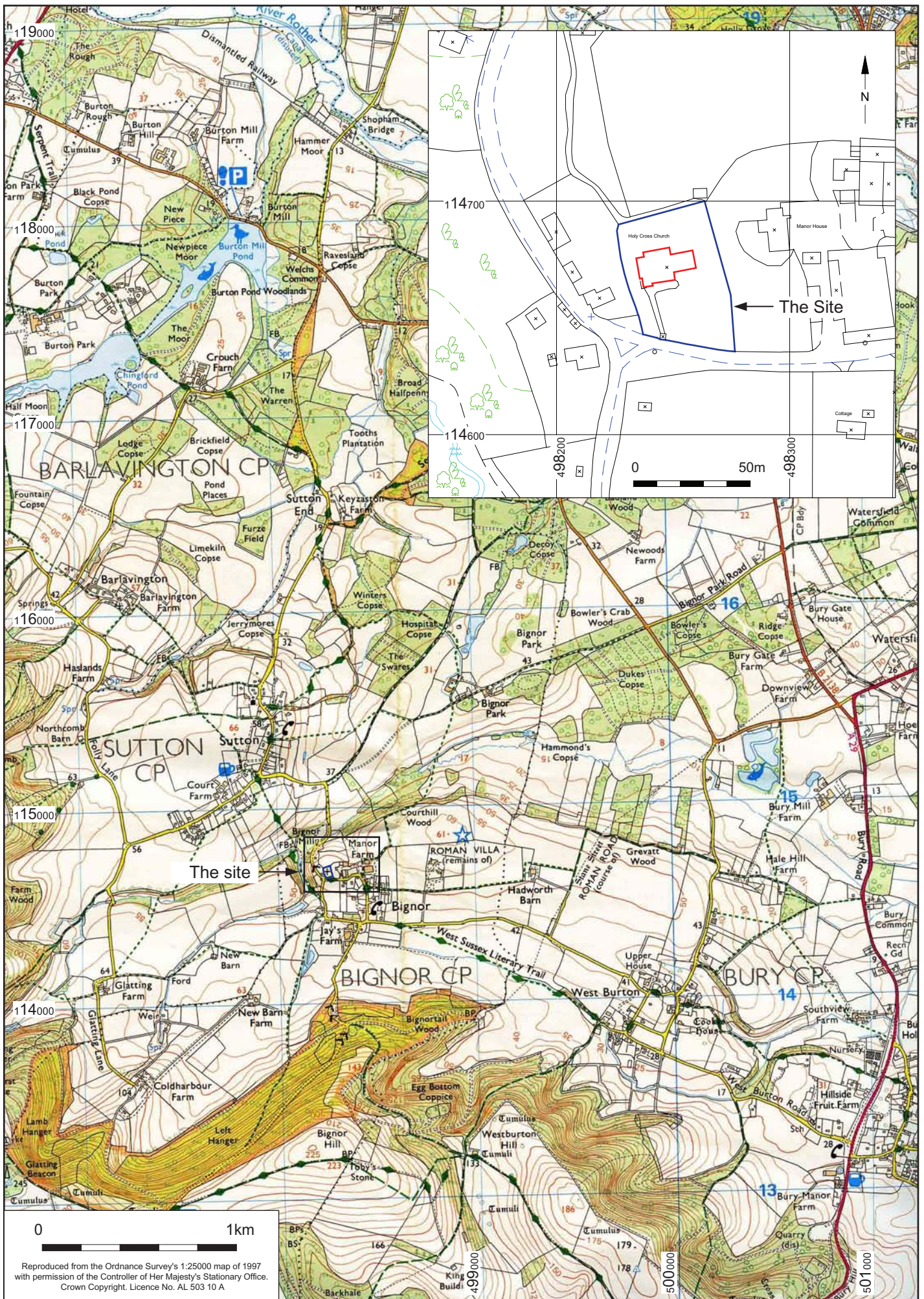
Project director/manager Neil Griffin

Project supervisor Nick Garland

Type of sponsor/funding body Diocese

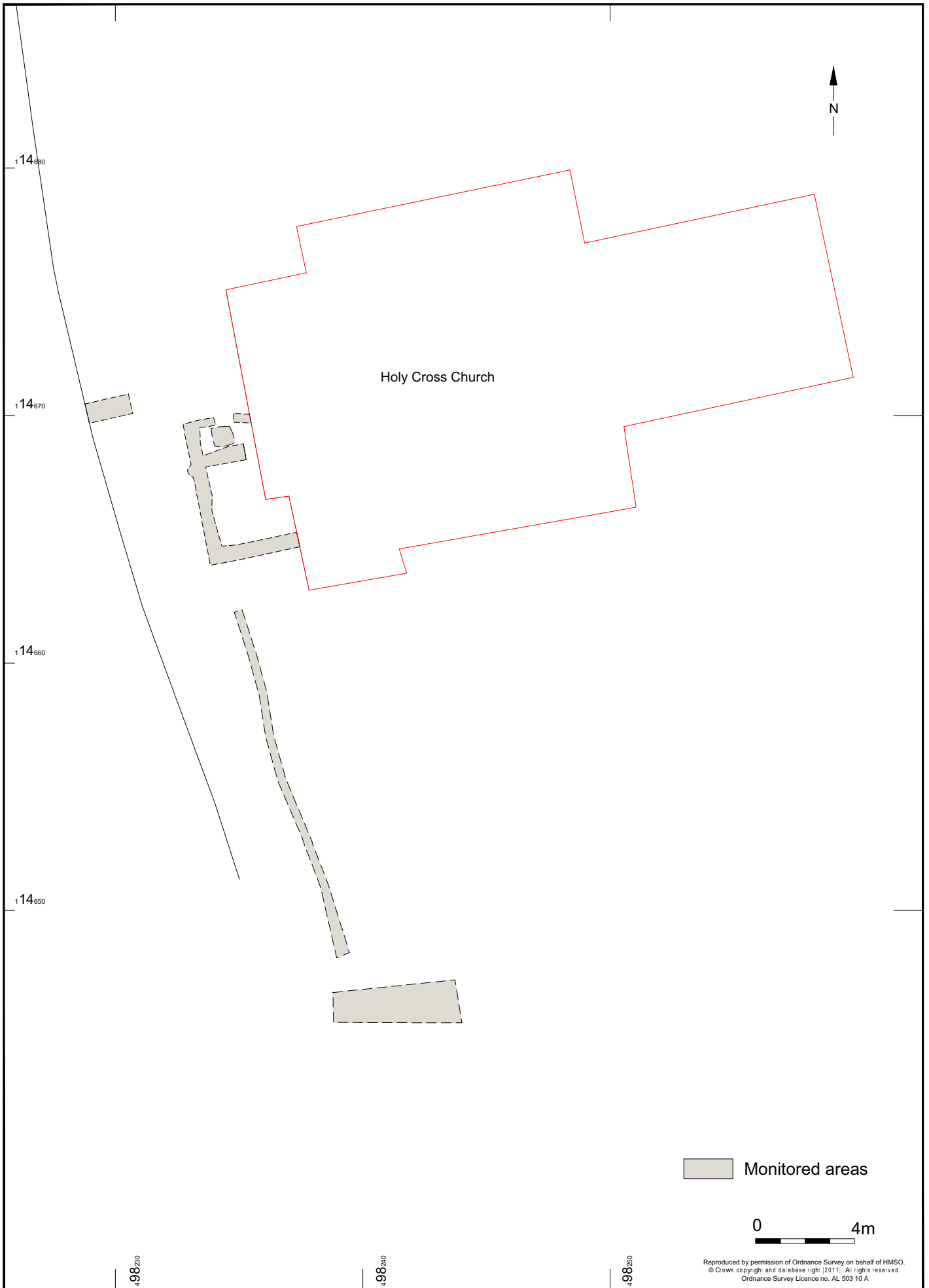
Entered by Kathryn Grant (KATHRYN.GRANT@UCL.AC.UK)

Entered on 24 May 2012

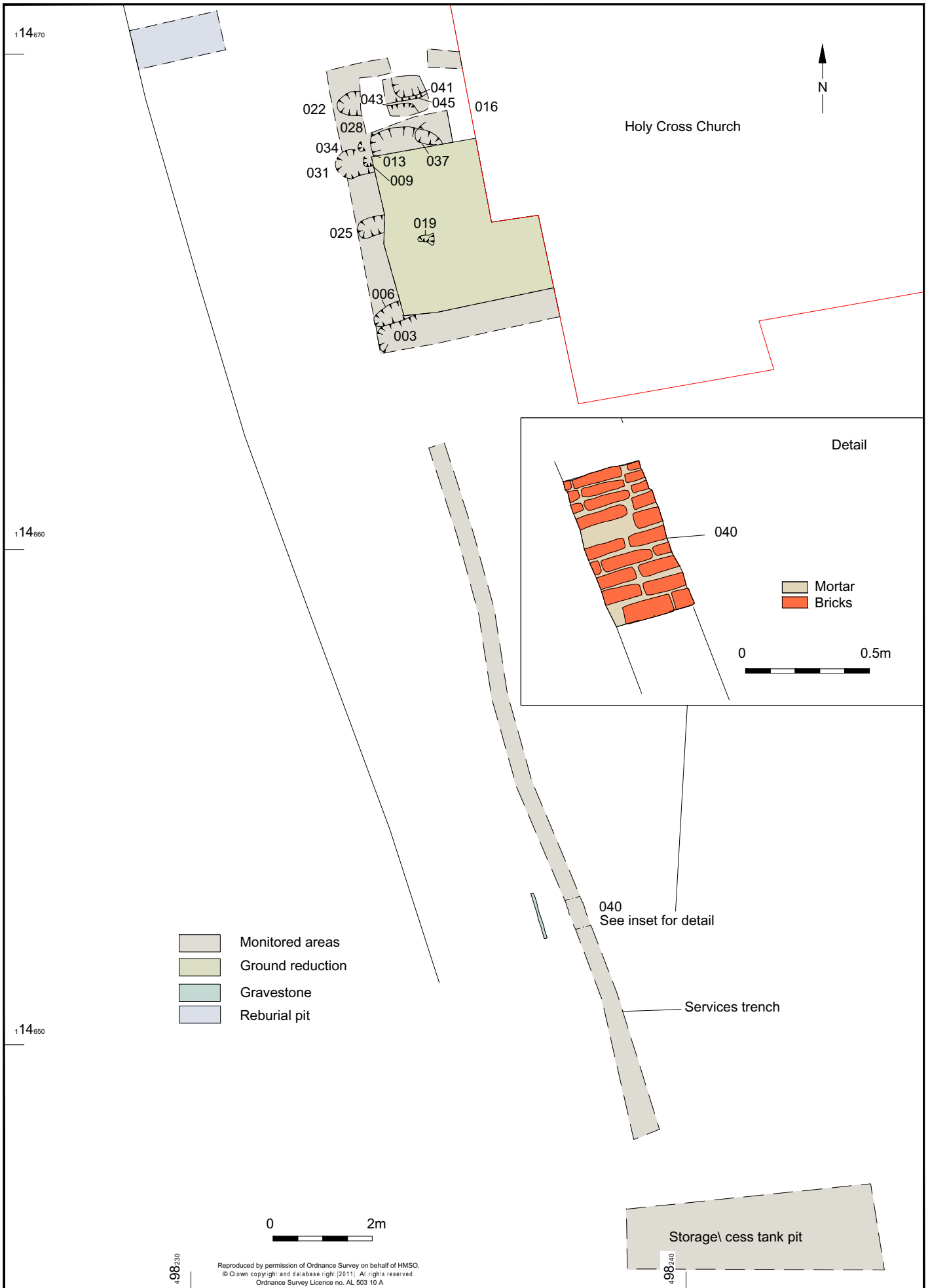


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© Archaeology South-East		The Holy Cross, Bignor		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 4715	May 2012	Site location		
Report Ref: 2012120	Drawn by: AR			



© Archaeology South-East		The Holy Cross, Bignor		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4715	2012	Location of monitored areas		
Report Ref: 2012120	Drawn by: AR			



© Archaeology South-East		The Holy Cross, Bignor	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 4715	May 2012	Plan of monitored ground work and archaeological features	
Report Ref: 2012120	Drawn by: AR		



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The Holy Cross, Bignor

1843 Bignor Tithe Map

Fig. 4



Fig. 5.1: Water pump pit



Fig. 5.2: Brick vault facing west



Fig. 5.3: Brick vault



Fig. 5.4: Machine excavated grave for reburial of human remains



Fig. 5.5: Storage/cess tank pit



Fig. 5.6: Machine excavated grave for reburial of human remains

Head Office
Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex BN41 1DR
Tel: +44(0)1273 426830 Fax: +44(0)1273 420866
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
Web: www.archaeologyse.co.uk



London Office
Centre for Applied Archaeology
Institute of Archaeology
University College London
31-34 Gordon Square, London, WC1 0PY
Tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778
Fax: +44(0)20 7383 2572
Web: www.ucl.ac.uk/caa

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