
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**CHURCH CENTRE, CHURCHFIELDS,
WEST MALLING, KENT**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY TRIAL TRENCHING**

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski	
NGR: TQ 6780 5754	Report No: 5318
District: Tonbridge & Malling	Site Code: AS 1870
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 6763
MCI/A	Date: 20 February 2017

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Church Centre, Churchfields, West Malling, Kent</i>		
<p><i>In February 2017 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at the Church Centre, Churchfields, West Malling, Kent (NGR TQ 6780 5754). The evaluation was commissioned by Oberon Prime LLP and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the conversion of the St Marys Church Centre building to 3no residential units including extensions and alterations, demolition of a former air raid shelter and toilets, and the construction of a two bedroom detached dwelling, access and car parking.</i></p> <p><i>This site is within the outskirts of the historic medieval market town of West Malling which may have been an early medieval settlement centred around the Abbey. St Mary's Church may have been a focus for the medieval market town, dating from the 11th century, and there are indications of prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the area. Therefore the site had a potential for prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval archaeological remains.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the evaluation revealed a modern cesspit associated with the former school and church centre building.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>06-08/02/2017</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>6763</i>	Site code	<i>AS 1870</i>
Type of project	<i>An Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Site status	<i>-</i>		
Current land use	<i>Former church centre, earlier school</i>		
Planned development	<i>Residential redevelopment to 3no units and construction of two bedroom detached dwelling</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>19th C. cesspit</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>-</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Kent</i>	<i>Tonbridge & Malling</i>	<i>West Malling</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Kent HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>ME19 6RJ</i>		
Area of site	<i>1590m²</i>		
NGR	<i>TQ 6780 5754</i>		
Height AOD (min/max)	<i>c.51m</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Advice from KCC</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski</i>		
Funded by	<i>Oberon Prime LLP</i>		
Full title	<i>Church Centre, Churchfields, West Malling, Kent: An Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching</i>		
Authors	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
Report no.	<i>5318</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>February 2017</i>		

CHURCH CENTRE, CHURCHFIELDS, WEST MALLING, KENT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY TRIAL TRENCHING

SUMMARY

In February 2017 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at the Church Centre, Churchfields, West Malling, Kent (NGR TQ 6780 5754). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the conversion of the St Marys Church Centre building to 3no. residential units including extensions and alterations, demolition of a former air raid shelter and toilets, and the construction of a two-bedroom detached dwelling, access and car parking.

This site is within the outskirts of the historic medieval market town of West Malling which may have been an early medieval settlement centred around the Abbey. St Mary's Church may have been a focus for the medieval market town, dating from the 11th century, and there are indications of prehistoric and Romano-British activity in the area. Therefore the site had a potential for prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval archaeological remains.

In the event the evaluation revealed a modern cesspit associated with the former school and church centre building.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In February 2017 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Church Centre, Churchfields, West Malling, Kent (NGR TQ 6780 5754; Figs. 1 & 2). The evaluation was commissioned by Oberon Prime LLP and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the conversion of the St Marys Church Centre building to 3no. residential units including extensions and alterations, demolition of a former air raid shelter and toilets and the construction of a two-bedroom detached dwelling, access and car parking (Tonbridge and Malling Planning Ref. TM/15/03389/FL).

1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with advice from Kent County Council Archaeology Officer, Heritage Conservation (KCC) and a written scheme of investigation (specification) prepared by AS (dated 10/01/2017) and approved by KCC and the LPA. The project conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014).

1.3 The evaluation aimed to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. In particular the project aimed to identify any evidence of the medieval settlement focussed on the adjacent church and to identify any evidence of prehistoric or Romano-British

archaeology. A separate programme of historic building recording was also required by the condition, the results of which are presented as a separate report.

Planning policy context

1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.

1.5 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, with substantial harm to designated heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings, scheduled monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 West Malling is located c.7km to west of Maidstone and c.12km north-east of Tonbridge, to the south of the M20 (Fig. 1). The historic market town is on a north-eastern facing slope of the valley of the River Medway, with the villages of Leybourne and Mill Street to the north-east and east, and the modern planned settlement of Kings Hill to the south.

2.2 The site is located on the south-eastern edge of the town, at the south-eastern end of the cul-de-sac of Churchfields, which leads into the churchyard of St. Mary's Church (Fig. 2). The medieval church is located just beyond the southern end of the High Street, which forms the historic core of West Malling. The building of the former Church Centre, constructed in 1854, is located within a sub-rectangular plot, with residential properties adjacent to the west,

and open grassland and parkland associated with Douces Manor and Manor Park Country Park to the south.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The church centre is situated at c.51m AOD on the north-east facing slope of the valley of the River Medway, a loop of which passes c.3km to the north-east, while the valley slope continue to rise at a moderate gradient to the west and south, including through West Malling. A stream forming a minor tributary of the Medway passes c.150m to the south-east of the site, and has been expanded into an elongated 'lake' as it flows through the former manorial park.

3.2 The site lies on the interface of two solid geological formations, both formed in the Cretaceous Period: the Sandgate Formation of sandstone and mudstone, which extends to the east, and the Hythe Formation of sandstone and limestone, which extends to the west (British Geological Survey 1991). These are overlain by free-draining, slightly acidic soils that are base rich, but are typically leached as water drains into the nearby stream (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 West Malling first appears in the archaeological and historical record with the foundation of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary c.200m to the north-east of the site (HER TQ 65 NE 375); certainly founded as a nunnery by Gundulf, Bishop of Rochester in c.1090; but earlier foundations for a pre-existing abbey have been postulated as 688 and 944. West Malling is recorded in the Domesday Book as *Mallengetis*, with many deeds thereafter styling it as *Millinges Parva* to distinguish it from East Parling, which was the larger settlement through the period. A village or town appears to have developed around the substantial complex of abbey buildings; however in the late 12th century nearly all buildings of both areas were burnt down, after which extensive rebuilding resulted in many buildings that survive in part in the former abbey precinct today, including the Norman tower, gate house and chapel. St. Mary's Church (HER TQ65 NE8), close to the east of the site was built in c.1090, originally as part of the endowment of the abbey, and preserves an early Norman chancel and tower. The abbey was dissolved in 1538, and much of the former precinct now comprises a Scheduled Ancient Monument, however the church of St. Mary (Grade II* Listed Building) and the site are beyond the western extent of the scheduled area.

4.2 The former abbey precinct was developed into a house and grounds, while the historic core of the town preserves a high concentration of medieval, Tudor and Georgian buildings that attest to the prosperity of West Malling. St. Mary's Church is located at the southern end of the historic High Street, with the site slightly removed from this to the west, but it remains in close proximity to numerous historic buildings on that thoroughfare. The earliest comprises

134 High Street (HER TQ 65 NE 164), c.100m to the north east, a late 15th/early 16th century open hall house. Close to the east of the church are the 17th century Brome House and Tudor House (HER TQ65 NE 305-6); while extending to the north is a dense concentration of 18th century buildings including the former vicarage (HER TQ 65 NE 256), as well as numerous shops and houses (i.e. HER TQ 65 NE 116, 240, 262 & 338). The town appears to have flourished, as attested to by many early 19th century additions to properties in the High Street, including stables (HER TQ NE 3119& 72), railings (HER TQ 65 NE 152 & 186) and boundary walls (HER TQ 65 NE 120). However, the greatest indicator of wealth in the town between the late 17th to early 19th centuries is the high concentration of chest tombs in the churchyard adjacent to the east of the site, of which at least 20 examples remain extant, many with inscriptions identifying them with families known to have occupied the townhouses (i.e. HER TQ 65 NE 124, 125 179, 188, 294, 304 & 308).

4.3 The landscape to the south of the site provided a significant contrast to the town, with the large house of Douce's Manor built in c.1776 (HER TQ 65 NE 250), c.200m to the south of the site, with extensive landscaped parkland extending to the east (HER TQ 67 NE 377), now preserved as Manor Park Country Park, a site of nature conservation interest. An archaeological evaluation adjacent to the north-west of the former house recorded numerous post-medieval features and artefacts associated with the development of gardens and landscaping at Douce's Manor (HER TQ 65 NE 111-3).

4.4 The mid 19th century saw continued building of houses on the High Street to the north-east of the site (HER TQ 65 NE 254, 259, 262), as well as an oasthouse (HER TQ 65 NE 395). Development also spread around the southern end of the High Street, including Old Parsonage court to the east (HER TQ65 NE 121), a lodge to Douce's Manor to the south-east (HER TQ 65 NE 167), and most notably West Malling National School, built on the site in c.1854 (HER TQ 65 NE 414). The architect of the school is unknown and no foundation stone present, though it is listed in Kelly's Directory the following year. The roughly T-shaped building appears on the 1870 and 1885 1st edition OS maps (6" and 25" scale), labelled as 'National School – Girls and Infants'; with the complementary Boys School located on the High Street. On the subsequent 1896 and 1908 OS maps the building is simply labelled as 'School' and the south-eastern end of the building has been slightly extended. The building ceased to be a school in 1975 and was subsequently used as a parish (church) centre. Although it preserves some mid 19th to early 20th century features from at least four phases of construction/alteration, the building is of fairly plain, modest architectural quality and did not meet the criteria to be classified as a Listed Building.

4.5 The 1946, 1964 and 1983 OS maps (6" scale) depict an elongate, angled structure in the south-east corner of the site, discrete from the church centre. This building is understood to have been a Second World War air raid shelter, though it is not listed (to date) on the Historic Environment Record.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Two trenches were excavated using a small 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). Trench 1 was located within the area of the proposed new extension to the main building, and Trench 2 was located within the footprint of the proposed new dwelling. Trench 1 was relocated c.2m westwards from the proposed position due to existing live services.

5.2 Topsoil and undifferentiated overburden were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale, and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for finds and the trenches were scanned by a metal detector.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Trench 1 (Figs. 2 - 3, DP 2-3)

<i>Sample section 1A (DP 4): west end, south-south-west facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = 51.43m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.10m	L1000	Tarmac.
0.10 – 0.13m	L1001	Pale yellow, friable, silty sand with gravel.
0.13 – 0.17m	L1002	Mid brownish grey, friable, sandy silt with occasional CBM fragments.
0.17 – 0.22m	L1003	Light to mid yellow, loose, sandy gravel.
0.22 – 0.62m	L1004	Made ground. Mid brownish grey, soft and loose, silt with occasional CBM fragments and stones.
0.62 – 1.27m	L1005	Subsoil. Mid brown, firm, sandy silt with occasional stones.
1.27m +	L1006	Natural. Light to mid yellow, loose, sand with patches of yellow clay.

<i>Sample section 1B (DP 5): east end, north-north-east facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = 51.46m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.11m	L1000	Modern tarmac. As above.
0.11 – 0.60m	L1004	Made ground. As above.
0.60 – 1.17m	L1005	Subsoil. As above.
1.17m +	L1006	Natural sand. As above.

Description: Trench 1 contained Cesspit M1010.

Cesspit M1010 (1.00+ x 0.40+ x 1.40m+; DP 6) was located at the very eastern end of the trench. It was circular in plan and its upper sector (0.67m) was domed and below it had vertical sides. The cesspit was constructed using red bricks (0.225 x 0.100 x 0.065m), frequently halved, and bonded with sandy mortar. M1010 was present c.0.35m below the existing ground level. It was of 19th century date and associated with the former school building.

Trench 2 (Fig. 2, DP 7-10)

<i>Sample section 2A (DP 11): west end, south-south-west facing</i> <i>0.00 = 51.50m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.09m	L1000	Modern tarmac. As above, Trench 1.
0.09 – 0.50m	L1004	Made ground. As above, Trench 1.
0.50 – 0.88m	L1005	Subsoil. As above, Trench 1.
0.88m +	L1006	Natural sand. As above, Trench 1.

<i>Sample section 2B (DP 12): east end, north-north-east facing</i> <i>0.00 = 51.59m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.11m	L1011	Topsoil. Dark grey, loose, sandy silt over textile membrane.
0.11 – 0.45m	L1012	Buried Topsoil. Dark grey, friable, sandy silt with occasional small stones.
0.45 – 0.51m	L1013	Mid brownish yellow and grey, friable, clayey silt.
0.51 – 0.55m	L1014	Black, loose, charcoal with small stones.
0.55 – 0.79m	L1015	Made ground. Mid to dark greyish brown, firm, sandy silt with occasional CBM fragments, charcoal and stones.
0.79 – 0.99m	L1005	Subsoil. As above, Trench 1.
0.99m +	L1006	Natural sand. As above, Trench 1.

<i>Sample section 2C (DP 13): south end, east-south-east facing</i> <i>0.00 = 51.72m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.17m	L1011	Topsoil. As above.
0.17 – 0.50m	L1012	Buried topsoil. As above.
0.50 – 0.65m	L1016	Mid yellow and brown, firm, silty clay.
0.65 – 0.93m	L1015	Made ground. As above.
0.93 – 1.10m	L1005	Subsoil. As above, Trench 1.
1.10m +	L1006	Natural sand. As above, Trench 1.

Description: The trench revealed only the foundations (M1019) of the existing building.

Foundation M1019 (3.20 x 0.30+ x 0.65m+; DP 14) corresponded with the southern range of the former school building. It consisted of loosely arranged stones of varied shape with some brick fragments and sand. The foundation extended 1.00m from the building.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds.

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The majority of the site was overlain by Tarmac (L1000; 0.09 – 0.12m thick). L1000 overlay a sequence of thin levelling layers (0.15 – 0.30m thick in total). More substantial Made Ground L1004 was present and it overlay Subsoil L1005. The latter was a mid brown, firm, sandy silt with occasional stones and it was more substantial in the western part of the site (Trench 1). In the southern part of the site where the small lawn was located, a topsoil over a buried topsoil and layers of modern made ground (0.60 – 0.80m thick in total) overlay L1005.

8.2 The natural sand, L1006, was present at 0.75 – 1.40m below the existing ground level and comprised a light to mid yellow, loose, sand with patches of yellow clay.

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The site had a potential for archaeological remains in particular for prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval archaeology. Prehistoric and Romano-British archaeology have been found locally and the site is located just within the West Malling historic medieval settlement core close to St Mary's Church.

9.2 In the event the evaluation revealed only structures associated with the former school and later church centre. A 19th century cesspit was part of a drainage system. A stone foundation was recorded. No residual finds were recovered. Only modern CBM fragments were present within the made ground.

10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

10.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at the appropriate local museum, once such a repository is available. It will be held by AS pending this. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr Dmitry Govoruha of Oberon Prime LLP for funding the project and for assistance.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Ms Wendy Rogers, the Kent County Council Archaeology Officer, Heritage Conservation.

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Historic England Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, 2015, *Standards for Archaeological Work. Part 3: Fieldwork*.

Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW), 1983, *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales*. SSEW, Harpenden

APPENDIX 1 CONTENTS OF THE ARCHIVE

Records	Number
Brief	N
Specification	Y
Registers	5 (Context, Photo, Digital Photo, Drawing, Drawing Sheet)
Context Sheets	20
Site drawings A1	0
Site drawings A3	2
Site drawings A4	0
Site photographs b/w	9
Site photographs colour slides	9
Digital Photographs	24

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Former Church Centre. Looking south-west.



DP 2. Trench 1. Looking south-east.



DP 3. Trench 1. Looking east-south-east.



DP 4. Trench 1, west end. Sample section 1A. Looking north-north-east.



DP 5. Trench 1, east end. Sample section 1B. Looking south-south-west.



DP 6. Trench 1, east end. Cesspit M1010. Looking north-east.



DP 7. Trench 2. Looking west.



DP 8. Trench 2. Looking north-east.



DP 9. Trench 2, north arm. Looking east-south-east.



DP 10. Trench 2, south arm. Looking north-north-east.



DP 11. Trench 1, west end. Sample section 2A. Looking north-north-east.



DP 12. Trench 2, east end. Sample section 2B. Looking south-south-west.



DP 13. Trench 2, south end. Sample section 2C. Looking west-north-west.

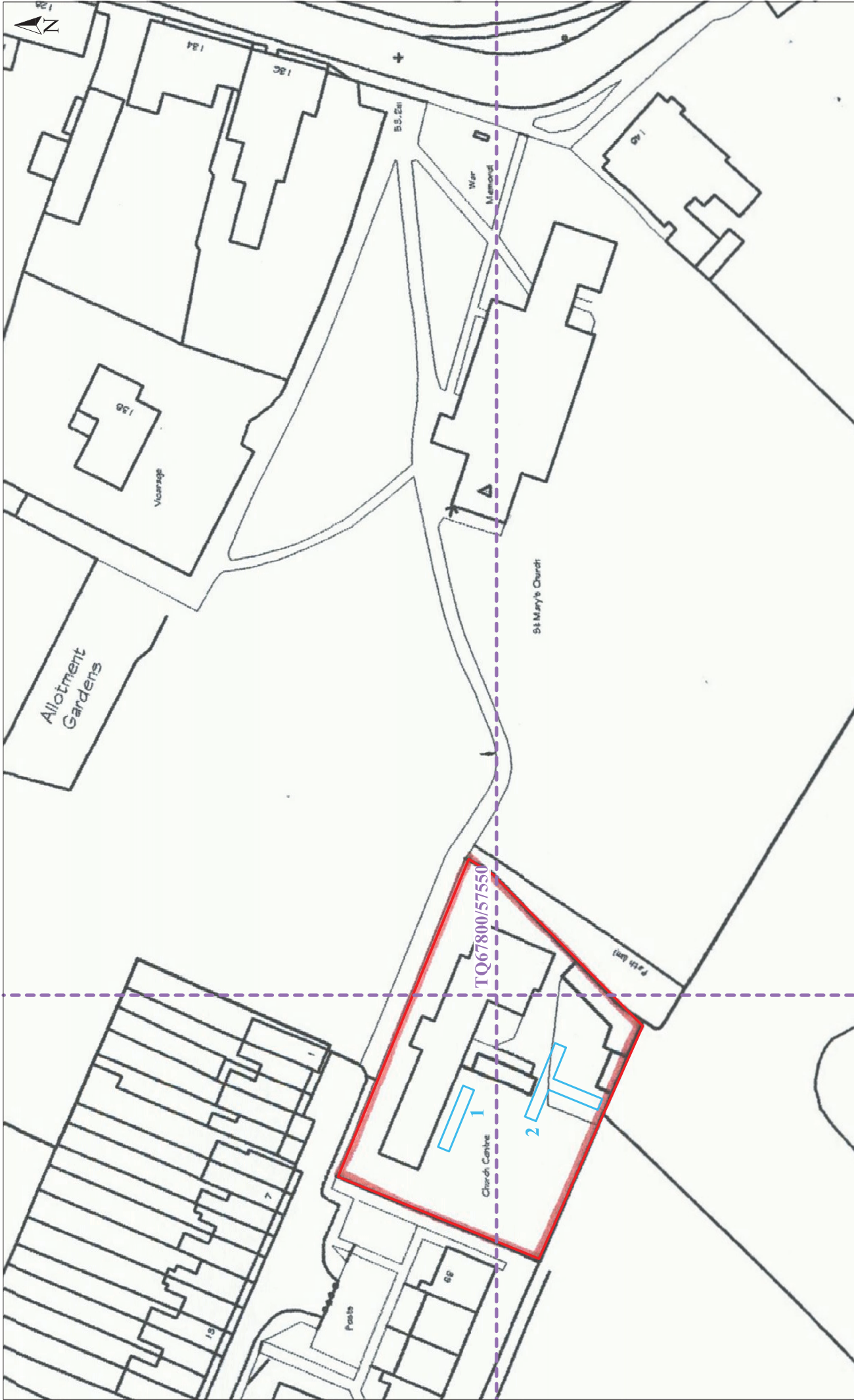


DP 14. Trench 2. Foundations of the former school building M1019. Looking north-north-west.



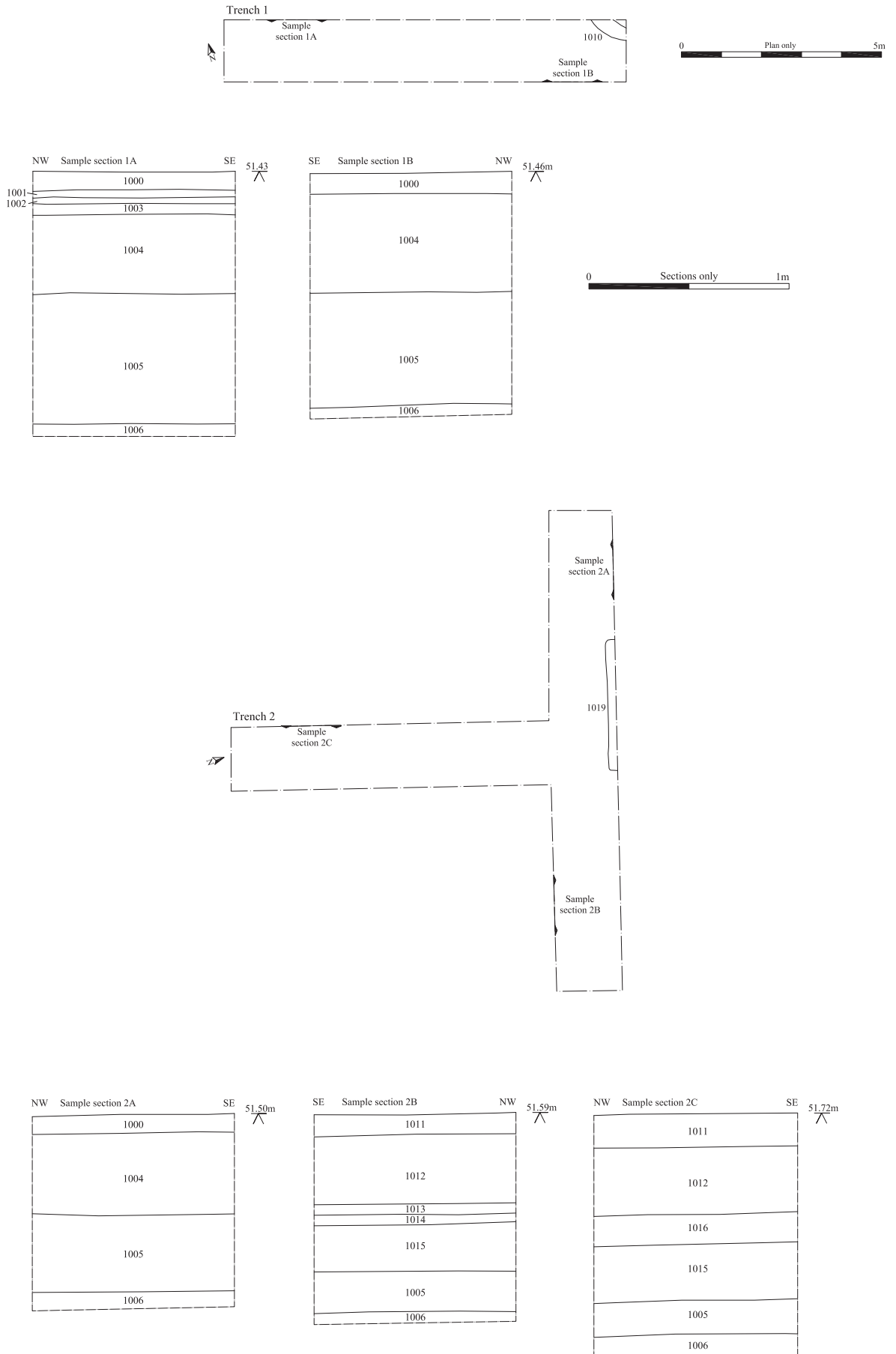
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4
 Church Centre, West Malling, Kent (P6763)



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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:750 at A4
 Church Centre, West Malling, Kent (P6763)





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Fig. 3 Trench plans and sections
 Scale 1:100 and 1:20 at A3
 Church Centre, West Malling, Kent (P6763)