

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**St John the Baptist Church,  
Penshurst, Kent**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Daniel Bray and James McNicoll-Norbury**

**Site Code: JPK11/25**

**(TQ 5273 4385)**

**St John the Baptist Church,  
Penshurst, Kent**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
For The Parish Church Council of St John the Baptist**

by Daniel Bray and James McNicoll-Norbury  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code JPK 11/25

**September 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** St John the Baptist Church, Penshurst, Kent

**Grid reference:** TQ 5273 4385

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 7th March to 28th July 2014

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Daniel Bray, James McNicoll-Norbury, Andy Taylor, Daniel Strachan

**Site code:** JPK 11/25

**Summary of results:** The excavation of a drainage trench and ground reduction was observed. The drainage trench revealed a single inhumation which was undated and no grave cut was identified. The ground reduction revealed one possible grave cut but this was not investigated and was left undisturbed and *in-situ*. The watching brief produced a large amount of disarticulated bone as well as three sherds of medieval pottery and two jetons.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading except the human remains which were retained by the church for reburial. The archive will be deposited at a local approved museum in due course.

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# **St John the Baptist Church, Penshurst, Kent An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Daniel Bray and James McNicoll-Norbury

**Report 11/25**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St John the Baptist Church, Penshurst, Kent, TN11 8DB (TQ 5273 4385) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Sharrock, Partner at Thomas Ford and Partners Chartered Architects and Surveyors, 177 Kirkdale, Sydenham, London, SE26 4QH, on behalf of the Parish Church Council.

Planning permission (SE/12/02184/FUL) has been gained from Sevenoaks Borough Council for an extension to the church building with associated drainage, adjacent to the west tower. Due to the potential for deposits of archaeological interest being disturbed by the groundworks, an archaeological watching brief had been requested by Kent County Council (ref.656303WB), advisers to the Borough Council on matters relating to archaeology within the planning process. This watching brief would monitor all groundworks, and involved including observation of foundation trenches, ground reduction and drainage trenching.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Wendy Rogers, Senior Archaeological Officer at Kent County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Bray, James McNicoll-Norbury, Daniel Strachan and Andy Taylor with the site code JPK 11/25.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading except the human remains which were retained by the church for re-burial. The archive will be deposited at a local approved museum in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located within the village of Penshurst which lies to the west of Tonbridge and south of Sevenoaks, in Kent (Figs 1 and 2). The village is located in a valley close to the confluence between the River Eden and the River Medway. The natural geology is mapped as Ashdown Beds (BGS 1971). The site lies at a height of 39m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from the location within the churchyard of St John the Baptist, which is of medieval construction with a phase of renovation in the 19th century. Although there are no marked graves in the area affected by the proposal, it was assumed that there would be burials in that part of the site. More generally, the site is adjacent to Penshurst Place, a manor house dating to the 1340s, within the manor of Penchester ('Penecestre') which is of at least 12th-century origin. The house is set within Penshurst Park, which is a Grade 1 Registered Park. A watching brief carried out in 2004, 70m to the south-west of the site, revealed features comprising an undated ditch and a gully, and two (possibly four) pits of medieval date. Residual finds from these included three worked flint flakes of Neolithic or Bronze Age date (Wallis 2004). More broadly, the site is in an area of archaeological potential for various periods, with a Roman cremation burial found some 400m to the north-west.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This would involve the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks and include observation of ground reduction, foundations, drainage and service trenches.

An area of ground reduction for the new extension was observed as well as the drainage trench and pit to locate the existing drainage pipe (Fig. 3). These were initially hand dug. A small 360° type machine was used towards the end of the project. All excavation was archaeologically monitored.

## **Results**

### *Ground Reduction*

An area of ground reduction for the new extension was observed on the north-western corner of the church (Fig 3, Pl. 1). The area was reduced by 1.05m and the stratigraphy comprised of 0.15m of topsoil above 0.50m of mid grey brown clayey gravel silt containing ceramic building material and disarticulated human bones. Below this was 0.40m of silty gravel with more disarticulated bone (Fig. 4). A single 1580- 1630 copper Jeton was recovered and a possible grave orientated east-west was left undisturbed and *in situ*.

### *Drainage Pipe and Pit*

A pit measuring 0.70m square was excavated to the north-west of the reduced area in order to find the location of the current drainage. This measured 0.70m deep and comprised the same stratigraphy as the ground reduction area. Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the bottom silty gravel layer along with disarticulated human bone.

A drainage trench was excavated from this pit along the length of the northern and eastern sides of the church (Pl. 3 and 4). This pipe trench was 0.60m wide and of varying depths to create a level base. The trench was excavated across the Victorian drainage and the current graveyard to create a vertical face 1.20m deep which was then battered back to make safe. A half penny Jeton was recovered and one adult skeleton (50) in good condition was identified lying in a supine position orientated east-west (Pl. 2). No grave cut could be discerned. Large amounts of disarticulated human bone were also recovered in the northern trench with very little seen in the trench to the east of the church.

A further trench 0.20m wide and 0.30m deep was excavated along the length of the pipe trench. The stratigraphy of the pipe trench was the same as that observed in the ground reduction area.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Malcolm Lyne*

The two sherds (23 g) of pottery from the pipe test hole by the church appear to be from the same vessel and are in a black carbon-soaked fabric with profuse <0.30 mm. multi-coloured quartz-sand and sparse angular red ironstone filler. One of the fragments shows that the vessel was a medieval cooking-pot with sagging base and can be dated to c.1250-1350.

### *Jetons by Susan Porter*

A single copper alloy rose/ orb type Nuremberg jeton, or reckoning counter was recovered from the ground reduction area north of the tower. It was 22mm in diameter and weighed less than 0.5grams. The obverse depicts three crowns alternate with three lis arranged around a central rose and has a complete surviving legend: HANNIS KRAVWINCKEL IN NVR. The reverse carries the imperial orb and cross within tressure of three arches and three angles (trefoil) and bears the legend; GOTES SEGEN MACHT REICH, (Gods blessing brings riches). The obverse legend gives the name of Hanns Krauwinckel II, Master between 1580 and 1635.

A second jeton, a half penny token type, was recovered from the pipe trench, this was 17mm in diameter and weighed 1.5 grams. It is a copper alloy half penny token, the obverse depicts a double arched crown with two central crosses, with the legend \*H[.....]CDA[.]T[.....]OE[.....]. The reverse bears the words H[IS] HA[L]F PENY with the date stamp 1569 and carries the legend \*E[... ]NNVRSTY[.....]MERCER. Mercer is a family name found on later Jetons of the 17th century, this Elizabethan example is very early for a jeton of this type, however the date stamp is very clear and it does not seem to be a copy or counterfeit.

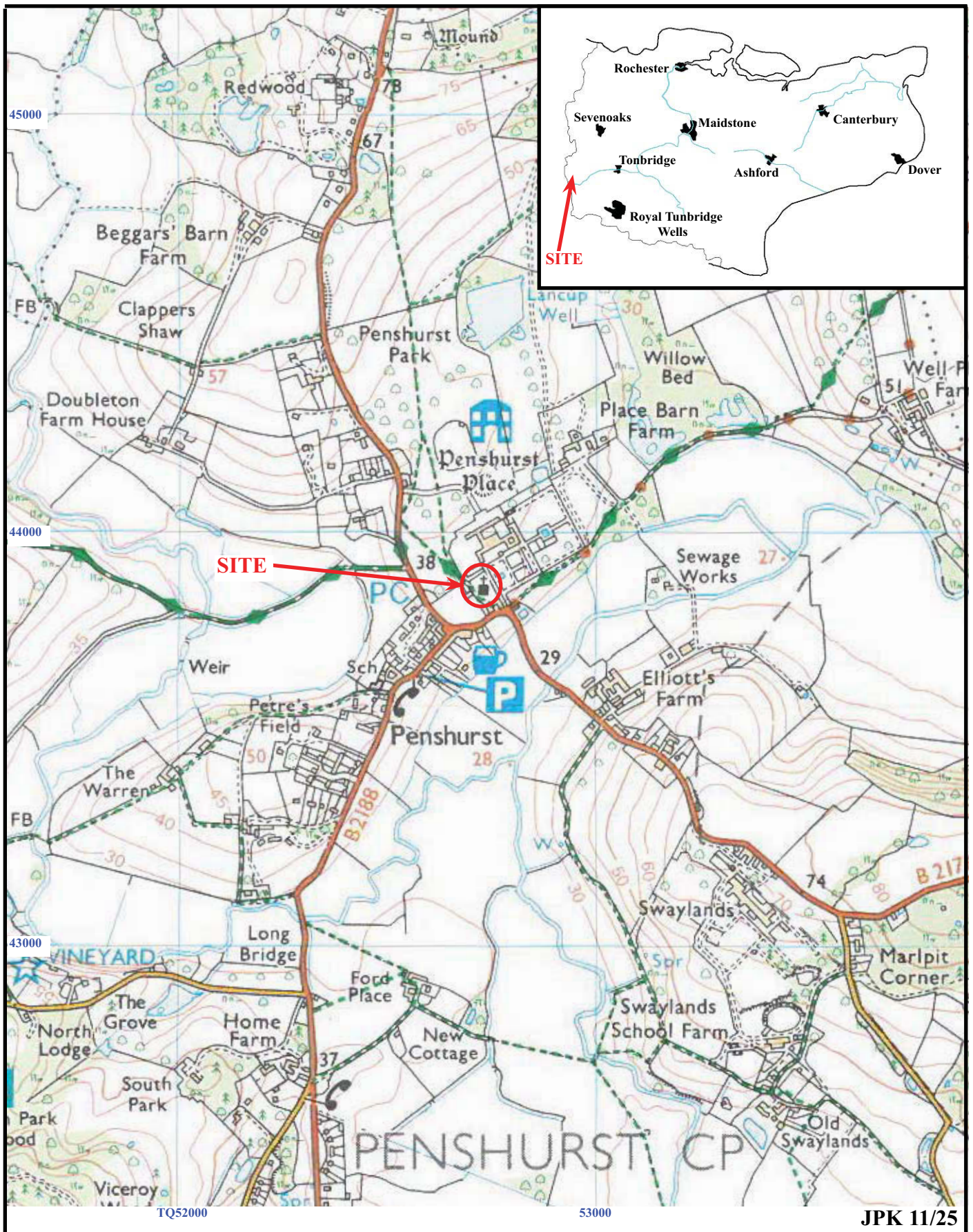
Jetons have their origins in the middle ages and were used as counters on a chequerboard to perform calculations, they tend to be die struck and modelled on official coinage of the time. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries jetons struck in Nuremberg, Germany became increasingly prolific in England as the use of Roman numerals was replaced by Arabic numbers (Cuddeford 2013) and those from the workshop of Hanns Krauwinckel II form common site finds. The use of Nuremberg jetons in England appears to have died out as regal farthings were introduced, suggesting that they fulfilled a secondary use as small change.

## **Conclusion**

The excavation of a drainage trench and ground reduction during extension works within the churchyard of St John the Baptist Church revealed human burials and a large amount of disarticulated human bone. One adult skeleton revealed during the excavation of the pipe trench was orientated east-west with no discernible grave cut. As there was no headstone the date of the burial is unknown. Another possible grave cut was identified during the ground reduction to the north of the tower. This was also orientated east-west but was left undisturbed and *in-situ*. The large amount of disarticulated human bone revealed during the watching brief is most likely the result of Victorian disturbance of the graveyard during construction of drainage around the church. Two sherds of medieval pottery and two jetons are also likely to have been residually deposited during these previous works.

## **References**

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 287, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth  
Cuddeford, M, 2013, *Coin Finds In Britain: A collectors guide*, Shire, Oxford  
NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London  
Wallis, S 2004, 'The New Rectory, Penshurst, Kent: an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 03/73, Reading



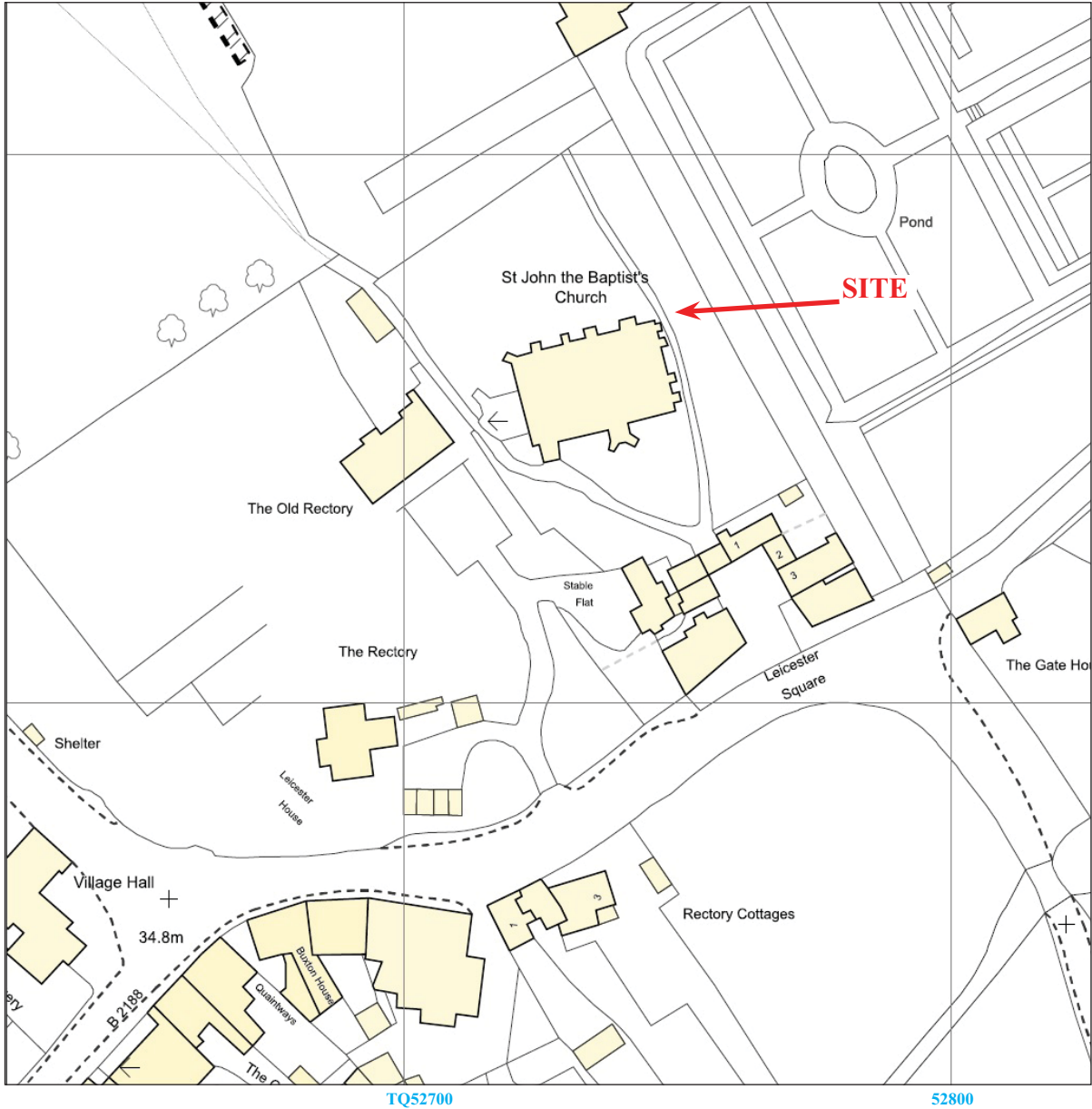
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Figure 1. Location of site within Penshurst and Kent.

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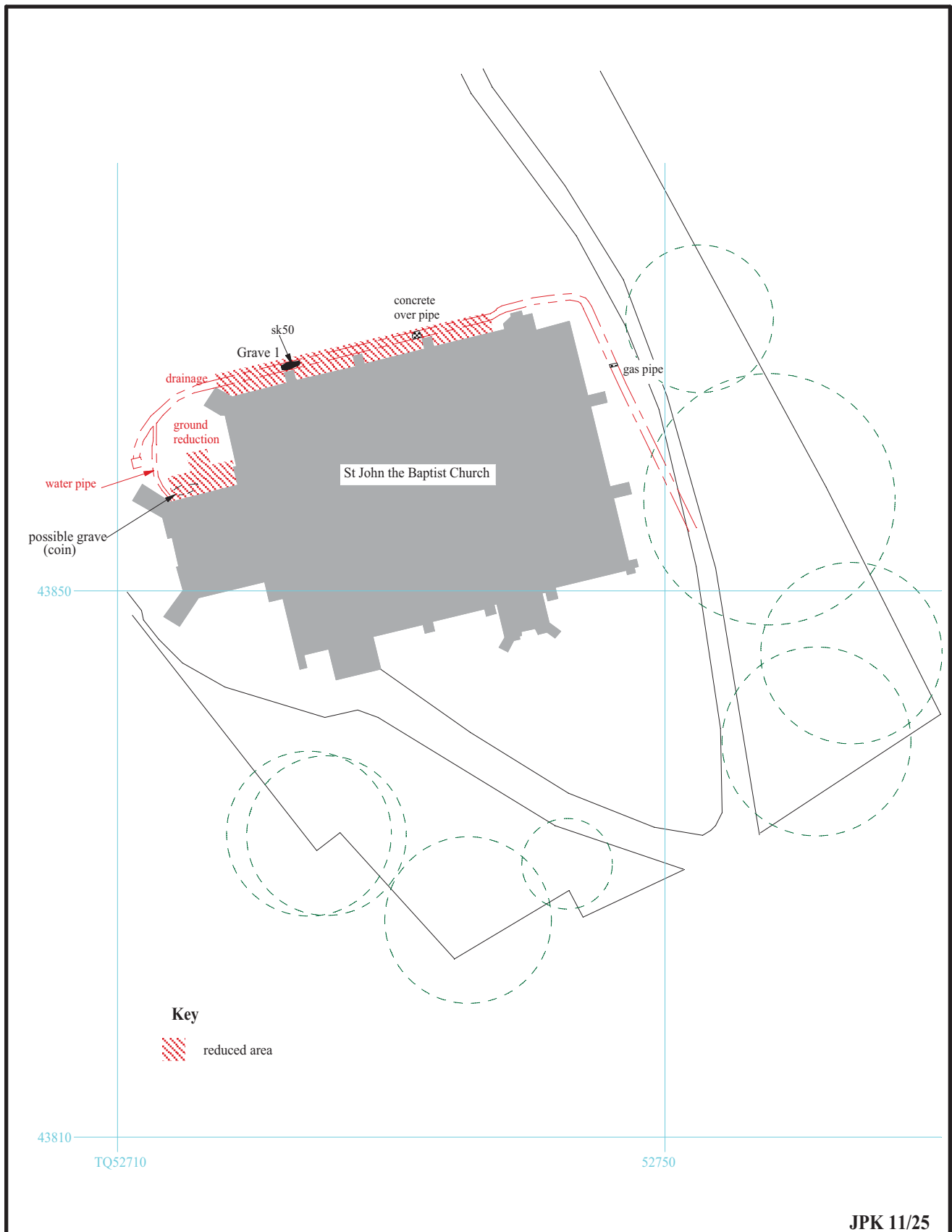


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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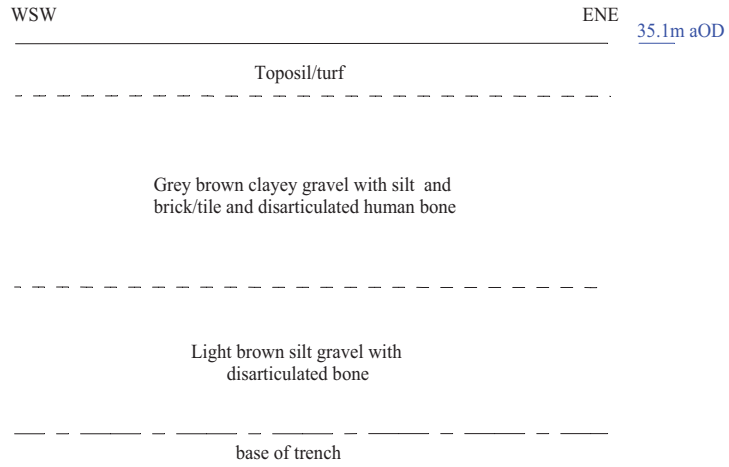


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Figure 3. Location of trenches observed.



**Ground reduction**



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Figure 4. Representative section.





Plate 1. Church foundation in area of ground reduction looking south.



Plate 2. Grave 1, skeleton 50, looking west, Scale: 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Ground reduction on northern side of Church, Scales: horizontal 2m, vertical 1m..



Plate 4. Pipe trench in east, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m, vertical 1m.

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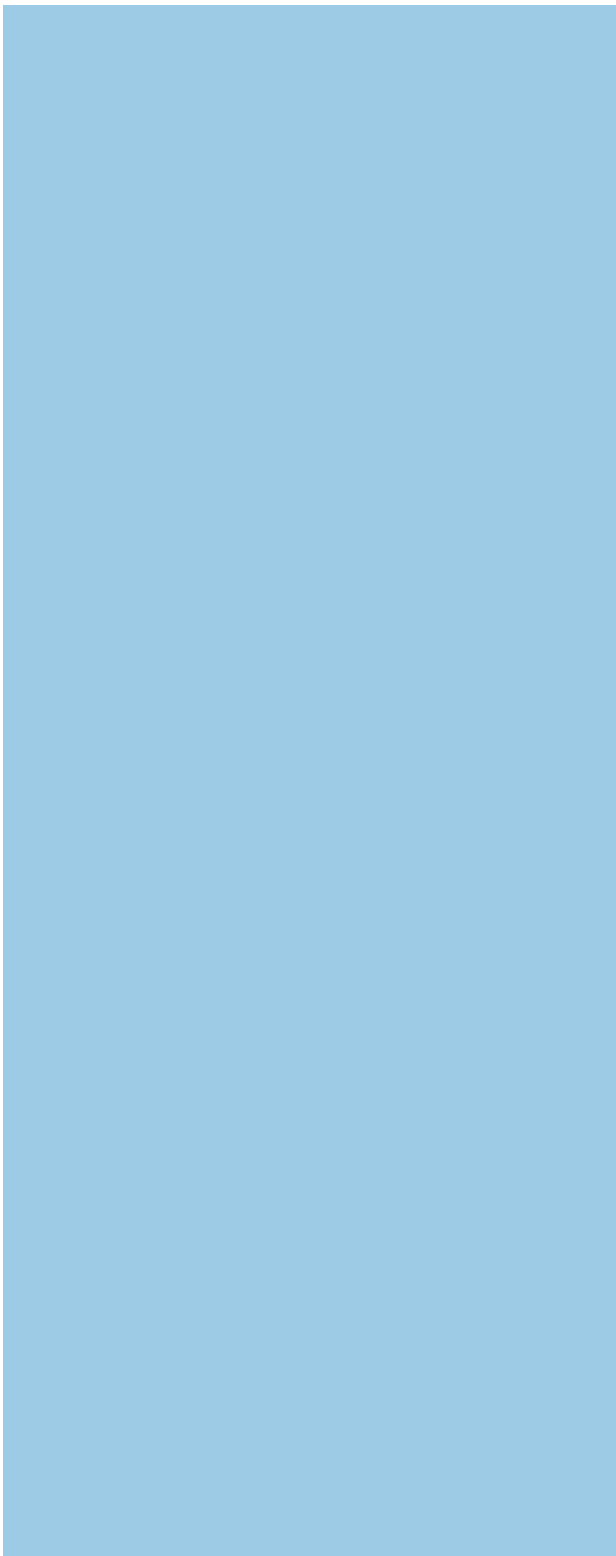
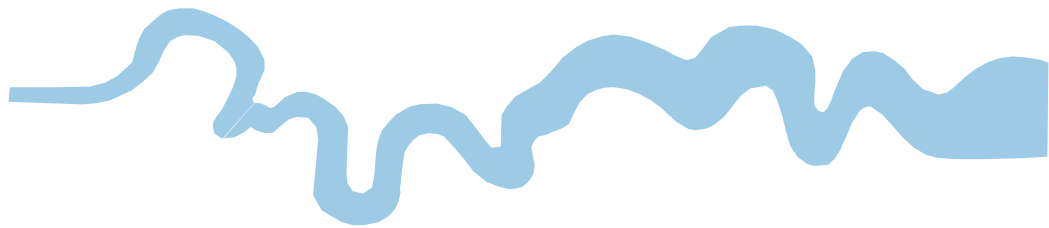
Plates 3 - 4.

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## TIME CHART

	<b>Calendar Years</b>
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late -----	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle -----	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early -----	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late .....	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early .....	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late .....	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early .....	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper .....	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle .....	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower .....	2,000,000 BC





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