

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**St Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington,  
Buckinghamshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Ellen McManus-Fry and  
Rebecca Constable**

**Site Code: PCS15/198**

**(SP 8317 4920)**

# **St Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
For St Peter's Parochial Church Council**

by Ellen McManus-Fry and  
Rebecca Constable

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PCS16/198

**January 2017**

## Summary

**Site name:** St Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington, Buckinghamshire

**Grid reference:** SP 8317 4920

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 13th-18th October 2016

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Rebecca Constable

**Site code:** PCS16/198

**Area of site:** *c.* 16 m<sup>2</sup>

**Summary of results:** Monitoring of the excavation of the tank area and toilet area recorded the presence of 7 individual inhumations, all aligned approximately east-west. Artefacts included two sherds of medieval pottery. A radiocarbon date on one skeleton proves a range in the 13th to 14th century cal AD.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course. Artefacts have been returned to the church.

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website:  
[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 27.01.17 Steve Preston ✓ 27.01.17
---

# St Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Ellen McManus-Fry and Rebecca Constable

**Report 16/198**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Peter's Church, Church Lane, Stoke Goldington, Buckinghamshire, MK16 8NZ (SP 83176 49202) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Laurence Haig, 3 Springbank Court, Stoke Goldington, MK16 8NA, on behalf of St Peter's Parochial Church Council.

Permission has been granted (16/0108/FUL) by Milton Keynes Council, and a Faculty (2016-002858) obtained from the Diocese of Oxford for the erection of a timber building for use as a disabled toilet in the grounds of St Peter's Church. The works include a rainwater soakaway, cesspool, new paths and services, and a watching brief has been requested to take place during these groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Diocese's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Julian Munby, the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser. The fieldwork was undertaken by Rebecca Constable, between 13th and 18th October 2016 and the site code is PCS16/198.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course. Artefacts have been returned to the church.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located at the Church of St Peter, to the northeast of the village of Stoke Goldington, which lies 7km north of Milton Keynes and 10km southeast of Northampton (Fig 1). The church stands at the end of Church Lane, approximately 400m northeast of the current extent of the village (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is Blisworth limestone formation (BGS 2017) and the site lies at a height of *c.* 85m aOD.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location in the grounds of a parish church which has 12th-century origins. The village of Stoke Goldington is mentioned in the Domesday Book as *Stoches* (Williams and Martin 2002). Unusually, the church lies 500m outside the centre of the modern village and it is possible that the village itself has moved from the higher ground around the church to the more sheltered location to the south-

east. The site is close to the Ouse Valley, along which numerous archaeological sites have been discovered. An early Bronze Age barrow was excavated at Ravenstone, approximately 2km north-east of Stoke Goldington, and further evidence of Bronze Age activity has been found at Gayhurst, approximately 3km to the south-east (Kidd 2010, 41 and 44). That portion of the Ouse Valley to the east of Stoke Goldington has produced a concentration of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age flint scatters (Kidd 2010, 39) while later Bronze Age fields and Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pits have been found at the north of Newport Pagnell, approximately 6.5km south-east (Kidd 2010, 45). Evidence of substantial Roman activity has been found in northern Buckinghamshire, including evidence of villas at Gayhurst, Ravenstone and Weston Underwood (Zeepvat and Radford 2010, 79 and 82; Mynard 1987, 7).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The aims of the watching brief were:

- to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks;
- to determine the extent to which human remains survive within the area of the new toilet and related services; and
- to observe the presence of graves and vaults

The areas examined are shown on Figure 2. The excavation of two areas for the toilet building and the tank area were to be observed. Excavation was carried out by a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless bucket under the supervision of an archaeologist. Archaeological deposits threatened by development were to be excavated and recorded and spoilheaps were monitored for finds. Where human remains were encountered they were to be summarily recorded, excavated as necessary (subject to the appropriate Consistory Court approval) and returned to the church for re-interment.

## **Results**

### *Tank area*

An area was excavated measuring 2m wide by 4m long to a depth of 1.8m (Plate 4). The topsoil was 0.50m deep, above 0.3m of subsoil, and contained animal bone. At a depth of 0.8m an articulated human right arm and rib fragments (SK53) were uncovered and excavation was halted until an order was received from the Consistory Court for the remains to be excavated. On receipt of this order SK53 was removed and below it, at a depth of 0.9m, the remains of three individuals were revealed: an adult (SK54), an infant (SK55) and a neonate (SK56)

(Fig. 4). These skeletons were all incomplete: only the skull, right arm and ribs of SK54 were present; the lower legs and feet of SK55 were missing and the bones of SK56 were highly degraded and disturbed. No distinct grave cuts were observed. Sherds of pottery and brick fragments were found in the grave fill (57), which was a loose, very dark grey-brown, sandy silt with frequent limestone inclusions. These remains lay above the limestone natural geology. A further skeleton (SK58) was recorded at a depth of 0.95m in the western part of the trench (Plate 1). The skull, upper arms, feet and lower legs were not present. There was no clear grave cut and the surrounding soil was a loose, dark grey-brown sandy silt with very frequent limestone inclusions (59). The well-preserved skeleton of an adult male (SK60) was uncovered at a depth of 1.0m, oriented east-west and with its lower legs and left arm extending into the side of the trench (Plate 2). Nails and wood residue indicated that the individual had been buried in a wooden coffin. At a depth of 1.5m a cluster of bones (SK61), probably a disturbed grave, was observed and lifted by machine. This group of bones was partially articulated and comprised a skull, arms, fingers, pelvis and upper legs. No further remains were observed below this depth. All human remains were returned to the church for reburial, apart from a small bone sample from the humerus of SK53 which was retained for radiocarbon dating.

#### *Toilet area*

An area measuring 2m by 4m was excavated to a depth of 0.5m (Plate 3). The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil overlying 0.3m of subsoil, which contained disarticulated bone fragments, animal bones and brick fragments. No archaeological finds or features were observed and no burials were uncovered in this area.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 2 sherds with a total weight of 9g both from the same context, [2] (57). They were recorded using the conventions of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat *et al.* 1994), as follows:

**MC1:** Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400. 1 sherd, 4g.

**PM14:** Midlands Purple Ware, AD1450-1600. 1 sherd, 5g

Both types are common finds in the region. The sherd of PM14 is in good condition, appears reliably stratified, albeit as a product of secondary deposition. A small fragment (1g) of probable medieval roof-tile in a red sandy fabric occurred in the same context.

### *Struck Flint by Steve Ford*

A single struck flint was recovered from context [1] (52). It was a simple flake patinated white. It is not closely datable and only a broad Neolithic/Bronze Age date can be suggested.

### *Animal Bone by Lizzi Lewins*

Fifteen fragments of animal bone weighing a total of 141g were recovered during the course of the watching brief (Appendix 2). The bone was in good condition with little surface abrasion or erosion noted. The bone was classified according to size (large mammal - cattle, horse; medium mammal - sheep/goat, pig, deer) and where possible to species level.

Only three fragments of bone were recovered from stratified contexts. Two loose molars from a sheep/goat were recovered, one from grave fill 1 (52) and the second close to SK60. A fragment of long bone shaft classified as a medium-sized mammal recovered from bone cluster (61) had been sliced. The rest of the assemblage was recovered from the topsoil and subsoil. A fragment of medium-sized mammal long bone shaft was recovered from the subsoil in the toilet area. A sliced rib fragment and distal tibia both from a medium-sized mammal, both bearing evidence for slicing were recovered from the topsoil/subsoil, as well as a fragment of distal humerus from a large mammal which had either been sliced or chopped. Other than the aforementioned slicing and possible chopping no further taphonomic processes were observed. No further analysis of the remains was possible given the small size of the assemblage and the lack of stratified fragments.

### **Radiocarbon dating**

A single sample of charcoal from human bone (humerus from SK 53) was submitted for radiocarbon dating to the Chrono Centre, Queens University, Belfast. The result was calibrated using Intcall13.14c (Reimer *et al.* 2013) and is quoted at 2-Sigma probability.

UBA-33165	Radiocarbon Age (BP)	Calibrated date (cal AD)	% area under curve at 2-sigma
Human bone	626 +/- 37	1288- 1401	1.000

### **Conclusion**

The excavation of two areas associated with the construction of a toilet facility was observed at St Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington. A total of seven inhumations were identified, recorded and removed (Appendix 1). None of these lay within distinct grave cuts, although iron nails and wood residue found with one (SK60)

indicated the presence of a coffin. All of the skeletons were extended, supine and oriented approximately E-W, and can reasonably be associated with the church. A sample of bone from SK53 was radiocarbon dated to 1288-1401 cal AD ( $2\sigma$ ), a relatively early date for the church. Dating evidence for the other burials was limited, although context (57), associated with skeletons SK54, SK55 and SK56, contained two sherds of medieval ceramic, and plastic buttons and the remains of a wooden coffin found with SK60 indicate a broadly later post-medieval date for this burial. The stable carbon and nitrogen isotope ratios measured alongside the radiocarbon data were  $-19.5\text{‰}$  and  $8.6\text{‰}$  respectively. Although the very small sample size and the absence of any comparative faunal data from Stoke Goldington limit what can be said, the results are consistent with stable isotope data from the medieval site of Wharram Percy (Richards *et al.* 2002), and suggest the individual consumed a diet based on terrestrial foods with no consumption of marine or freshwater fish. No other features of archaeological interest were identified.

## References

- BGS, 2016, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 203, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth.
- Farley, M (ed), 2010, *An Illustrated History of Early Buckinghamshire*, Buckinghamshire Archaeol Soc, Aylesbury
- Kidd, S, 2010, 'Prehistoric Buckinghamshire', in M Farley (ed), *An Illustrated History of Early Buckinghamshire*, Aylesbury, 27–74
- Mynard, N (ed), 1987, *Roman Milton Keynes: Excavations and fieldwork 1971-1982*, Buckinghamshire Archaeol Soc Monogr **1**, Aylesbury.
- Mynard, D C and Zeepvat R J, 1992, *Great Linford* Bucks Archaeol Soc Monogr **3**, Aylesbury
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Richards, M P, Mays, S and Fuller, B T, 2002, 'Stable carbon and nitrogen isotope values of bone and teeth reflect weaning age at the medieval Wharram Percy Site, Yorkshire, UK', *American J Physical Anthropol* **119**, 205–210
- Williams, A and Martin G H, 2002, *Domesday Book: A complete translation*, London
- Zeepvat, B and Radford, D, 2010, 'Roman Buckinghamshire AD43-410', in M Farley (ed), *An Illustrated History of Early Buckinghamshire*, Aylesbury, 75–108
- Zeepvat, R J, Roberts, J S and King, N A, 1994, *Caldecotte, Milton Keynes. Excavation and Fieldwork 1966-91* Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society Monogr **4**, Aylesbury



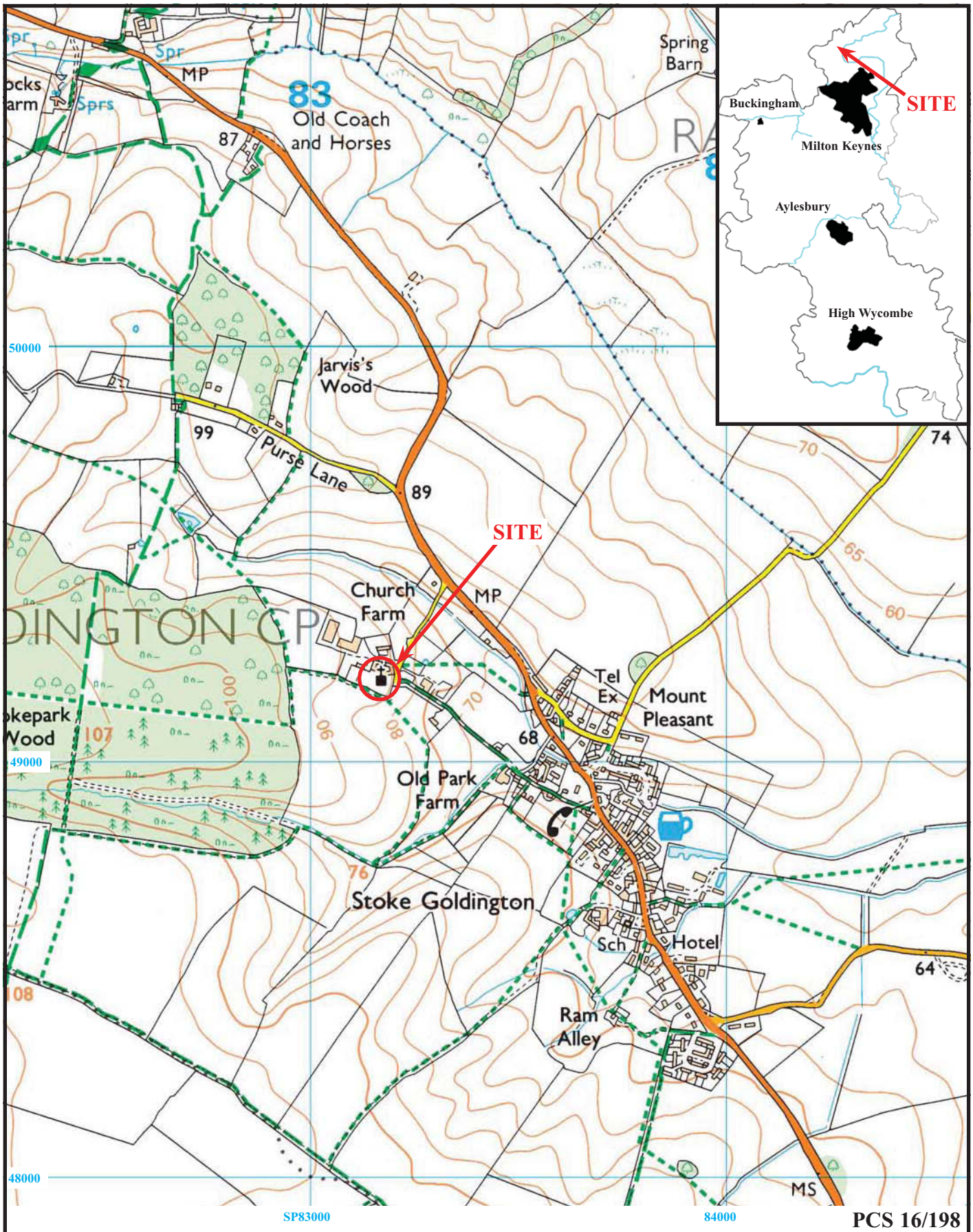
Appendix 1 - Catalogue of skeletons

<i>Skeleton no.</i>	<i>Preservation</i>	<i>Completeness</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Coffin</i>	<i>Pathology</i>
53	Excellent	10%	f	18-25	N	None
54	Good	10%	I	Adult	N	None
55	Good	40%	I	<1yr	N	None
56	Fair	10%	I	Neonate	N	None
58	Good	70%	M	40yrs+	N	Partially fused lumbar vertebrae Osteoarthritic lipping on lumbar and thoracic vertebrae
60	Excellent	75%	M	40yrs+	Y	Osteoarthritic lipping on lumbar vertebrae Antemortem tooth loss and resorption on mandible
61	Good	30%	I	Adult	N	None

Sex categories: M = male; F = female; m = possible male; f = possible female; I = indeterminate

Appendix 2 - Animal Bone Inventory

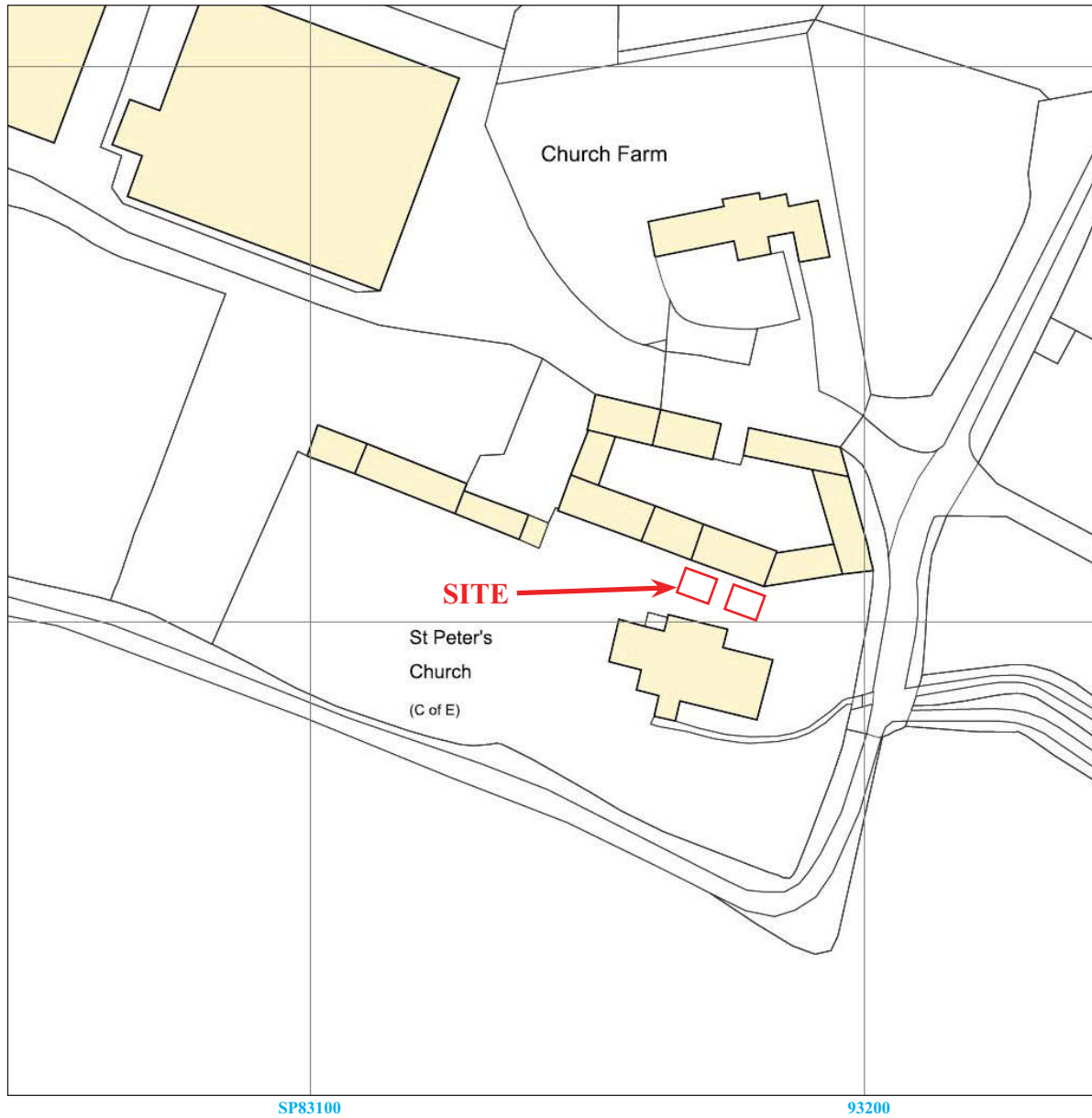
<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No. Frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Sheep/ Goat</i>	<i>Large Mammal</i>	<i>Medium Mammal</i>	<i>Unid.</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1	52	1	5	1				
	SK60	1	6	1				
	61	1	1			1		Sliced
	Subsoil	4	20			1	3	
	Unstratified	8	109		1	2	5	Sliced, Chopped?
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>141</b>					



**St. Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington,  
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 2016  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Stoke Goldington and Buckinghamshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital mapping at 1:12500  
Crown copyright reserved.



PCS 16/198



**St. Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington,  
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 2016  
Archaeological Watching Brief**  
Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping under licence.  
Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:1250

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



PCS16/198



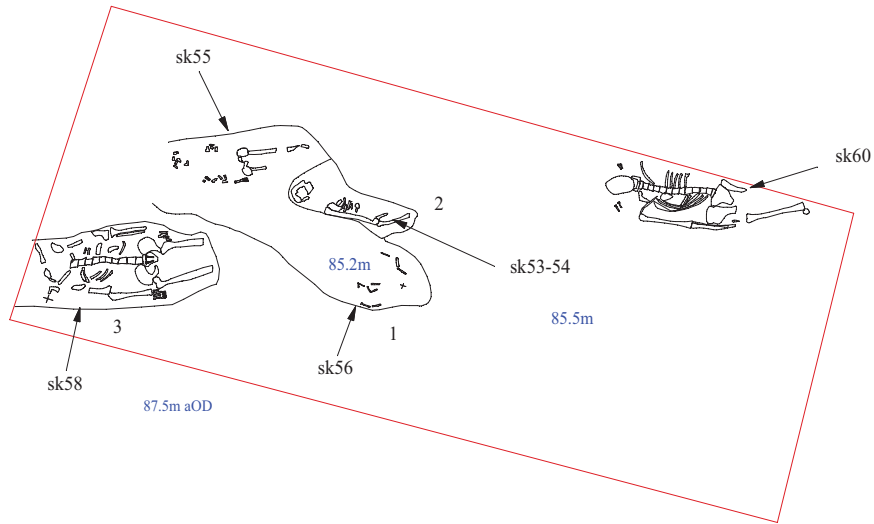
**St. Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington,  
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 2016  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES





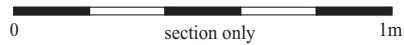
87.5m aOD

Tosoil

Subsoil

Natural geology (limestone)

Base of trench



PCS16/198



**St. Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington,  
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, 2016  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Detailed plan and section of observed area

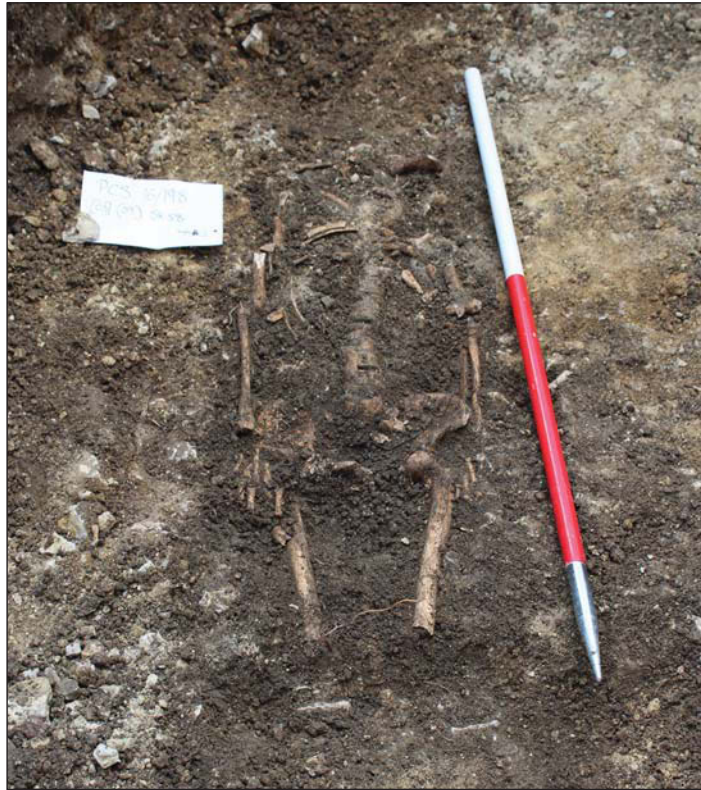


Plate 1. Skeleton 58, looking west, Scale: 1m.



Plate 2. Skeleton 60, looking north, Scale: 1m.

PCS 16/198

**St. Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington, Milton Keynes,  
Buckinghamshire, 2016**  
**Archaeological Watching Brief**  
Plates 1 - 2.

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES





Plate 3. Toilet area, looking west, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Tank area, looking east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

PCS 16/198

**St. Peter's Church, Stoke Goldington, Milton Keynes,  
Buckinghamshire, 2016  
Archaeological Watching Brief  
Plates 3 - 4.**

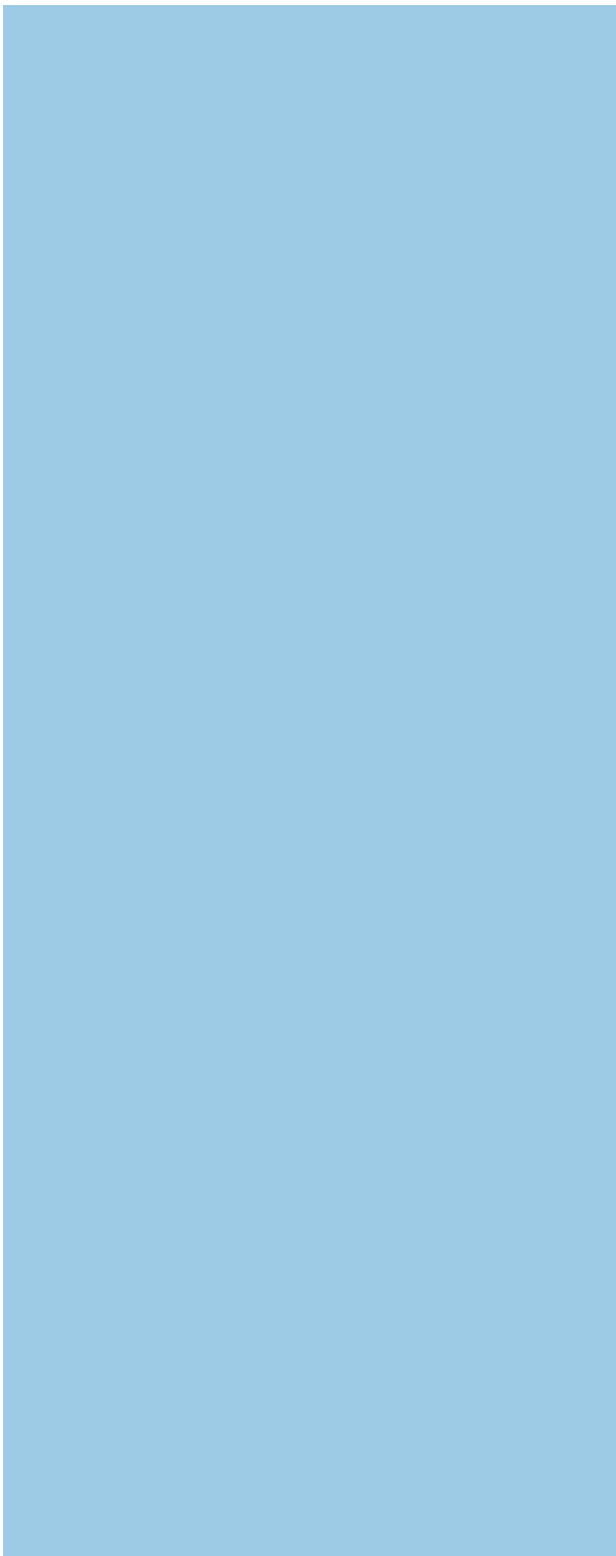
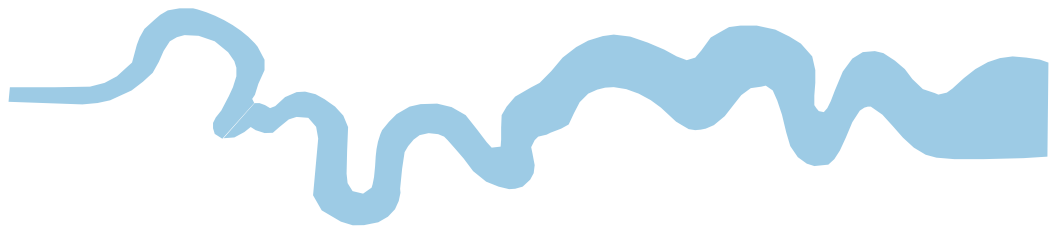
THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,  
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,  
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Fax: 0118 9260553  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**