

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**St Nicholas's Church, Ickford,
Buckinghamshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Henrietta Longden

Site Code: ICH10/12

(SP 6460 0737)

St Nicholas's Church, Ickford, Buckinghamshire

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

by Henrietta Longden
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCode/CI 10/12

March 2010

Summary

Site name: St Nicholas's Church, Ickford, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP 6460 0737

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 10th–11th March 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Henrietta Longden

Site code: ICI 10/12

Area of site: 0.1ha

Summary of results: Undated inhumation burials, disarticulated and disturbed bones were observed. No finds or features of archaeological interest were recorded.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 18.03.10 Steve Preston✓ 18.03.10

St Nicholas's Church, Ickford, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Henrietta Longden

Report 10/12

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Nicholas's Church, Church Road, Ickford, Buckinghamshire, HP18 9HZ (SP 6460 0737) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Janet Front, of Alan J Frost Architects, Windmill House, Wingrave, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP22 4PD, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council.

A faculty has been gained from the Archdeaconry of Buckinghamshire to install a new lavatory at St Nicholas's Church which requires sewer trenches to be excavated in order to connect to the mains sewer system. As a requirement of the faculty an archaeological watching brief was required to be carried out during the intrusive groundworks. The fieldwork was undertaken by Henrietta Longden on the 10th and 11th March 2010 and the site code is ICI 10/12.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western edge of the village of Ickford which is *c.* 5km to the west of Thame and approximately 1km to the north of the River Thame (Figs 1 and 2). The church is at a height of 58.4m above Ordnance Datum and the natural geology is mapped as second terrace river gravel (BGS 1994). Clay was observed during the watching brief but no gravel was noted.

Archaeological background

Ickford is mentioned in Domesday Book of AD 1086 (Williams and Martin 2002, 402; 412) when it consisted of two separate small land holdings, and has late Saxon origins. Parts of the present church date back to the 12th century, with elements of later date. The village has little known archaeology, however. Roman pottery has been noted from the village, and an occupation site recorded for the parish and post-medieval windmill and fishpond constitute the few other documented finds in Ickford.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits exposed and affected by the digging of the sewer trench. The specific research aims of the project were:

To determine the extent to which human remains survive within the area of the sewer trench; and

To observe the presence of graves and vaults.

Human remains that were encountered during the groundworks would be recorded, and lifted where necessary, but not removed from the grounds. Human remains of archaeologically recent date (post-medieval) were to be returned to the incumbent for reinterment in consecrated ground. Any human remains of Medieval or earlier date were to be archaeologically recorded and excavated as necessary following receipt of the appropriate Consistory Court approval.

The proposed trenches run along the southern side of the church, from the south-west corner down to a manhole on the road at the south-east extent of the site, following the line of an established path. No graves were recorded to exist along this path although it was expected that remains would be encountered. The trenches were excavated using a 360° mini-digger with a 0.3m wide bladed bucket. Spoil heaps were observed for finds and human remains.

Results

The sewer trench was dug over the course of two days. The trench was 0.3m wide and 0.5m deep at the western end, falling to 1.4m at the eastern extent of the site where the sewer joins with existing service trenches (Pl. 1). The trench measured 40m to the edge of the site (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy encountered generally comprised 0.2m of turf and topsoil above 0.5m of mid grey/brown silty clay subsoil/grave-earth above mottled yellow/brown clay down to the base of the trench (Fig. 4). The water table was observed at depth of 0.9m at the eastern end of the trench.

The section of the trench closest to the south-west end of the church encountered the most disturbance. Three separate inhumations were encountered all aligned east-west and at depths of 0.4-0.6m below surface level. No grave cuts could be discerned. The bones were recorded *in situ* and then removed. Further away from the church, at 16m, a fourth inhumation was observed at a depth of 0.7m but was preserved *in situ* by slightly stepping up the trench at this point to protect the bones at the base. The depth was decreased from 0.78m approximately 8cm in order to preserve the skeleton. Once clear of the burial the trench continued to increase in depth towards the manhole.

The burials, apart from the fourth skeleton, were aligned across the trench, therefore only partial remains were recorded and removed. The revealed bones of skeleton 1 and 3 were the leg and feet bones only (Pl. 2), whilst the skull, ribs, vertebra and humerus were recovered from skeleton 2. The final skeleton appeared to be aligned more closely with the path of the trench, although as it was decided to step the trench up, only the leg bones had been recorded.

A small number of disarticulated bones were encountered in the disturbed subsoils between the manhole at 8m and the fourth skeleton at 16m. These single bones were not considered to be part of a complete inhumation but the result of disturbance caused by subsequent graves being dug in the area.

Far less disturbance was observed as the trench moved further away from the church (Pl. 1). No other features of archaeological interest were observed during the excavation of the trench.

The bone of the removed inhumations was in a good state of preservation, coffin nails and wood could be seen to survive in places and were recorded in section. No other finds were recovered associated with the burials so their final dating remains uncertain.

Finds

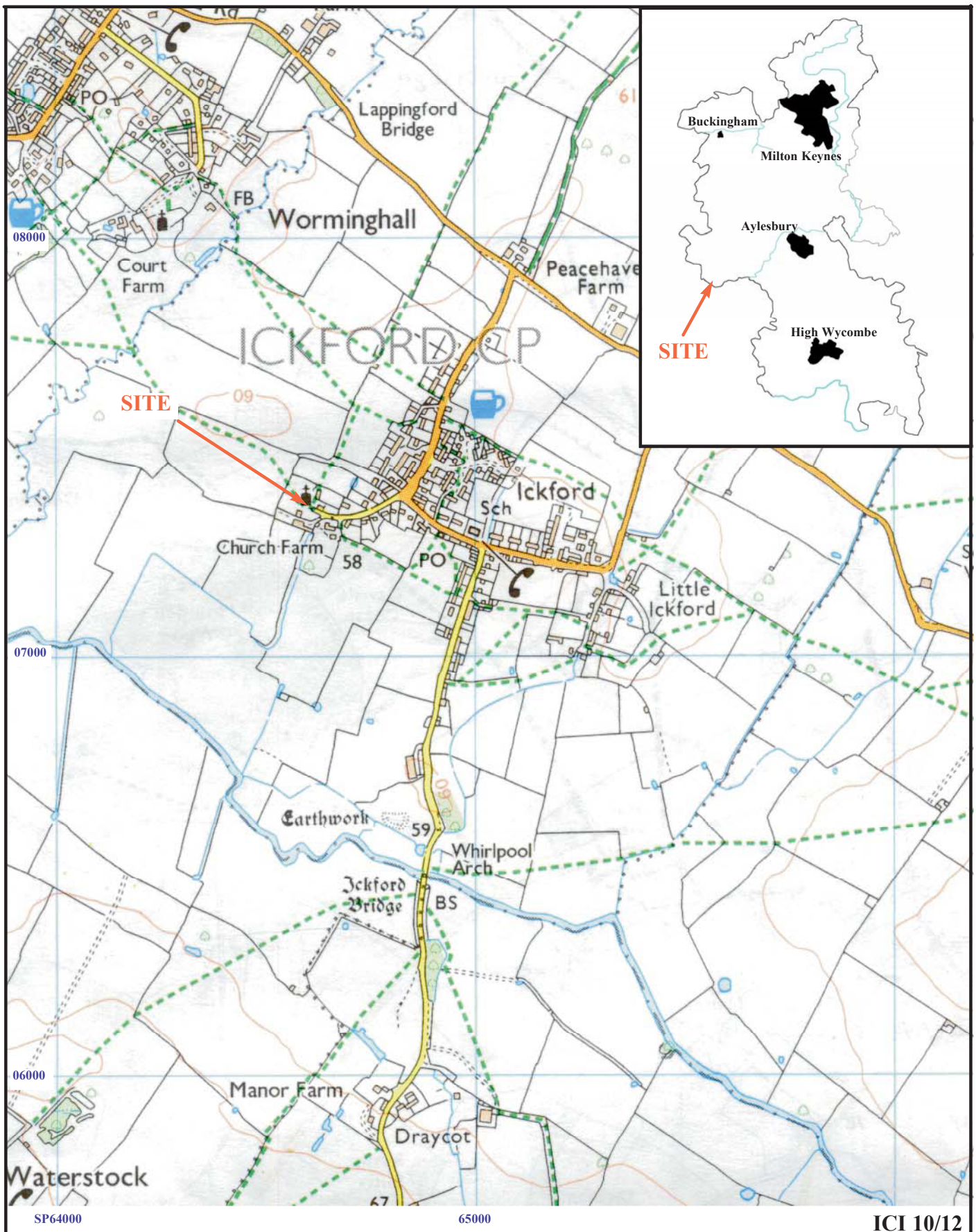
No finds were retained from this watching brief. The disinterred bone was kept at the church for reburial. Occasional ceramic building material and/or modern detritus from the disturbed topsoil were retained on site.

Conclusion

The watching brief has highlighted the presence of previously unknown burials close to the church. The relatively shallow depth of the inhumations suggests that they would predate the 1857 Burial Act but they remain otherwise undated, although the presence of coffin wood indicates that they are not of any great age. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed during the excavation of the sewer trench.

References

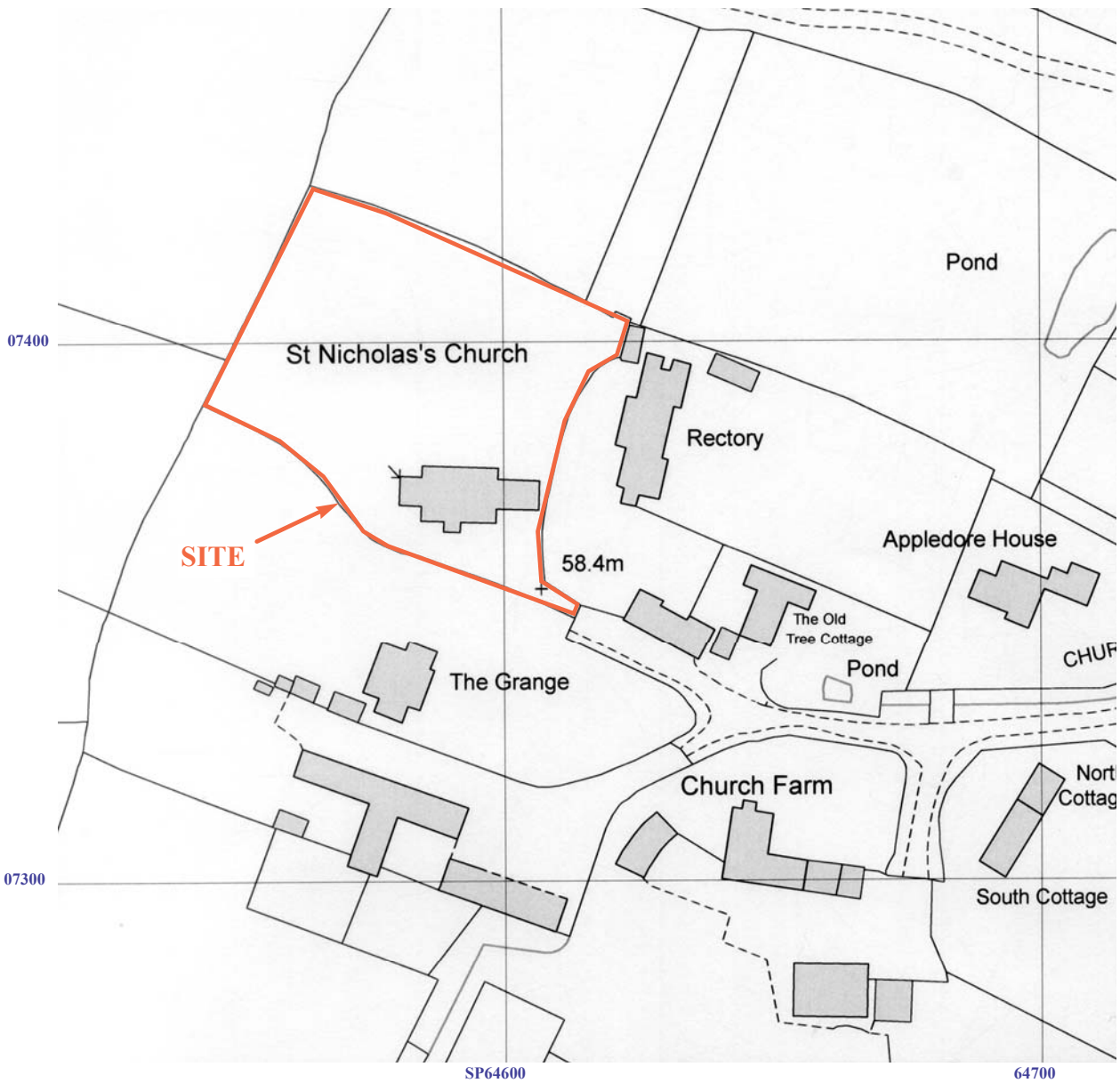
BGS, 1994, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 237, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, A complete Translation*, London



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Figure 1. Location of site within Ickford and Buckinghamshire.

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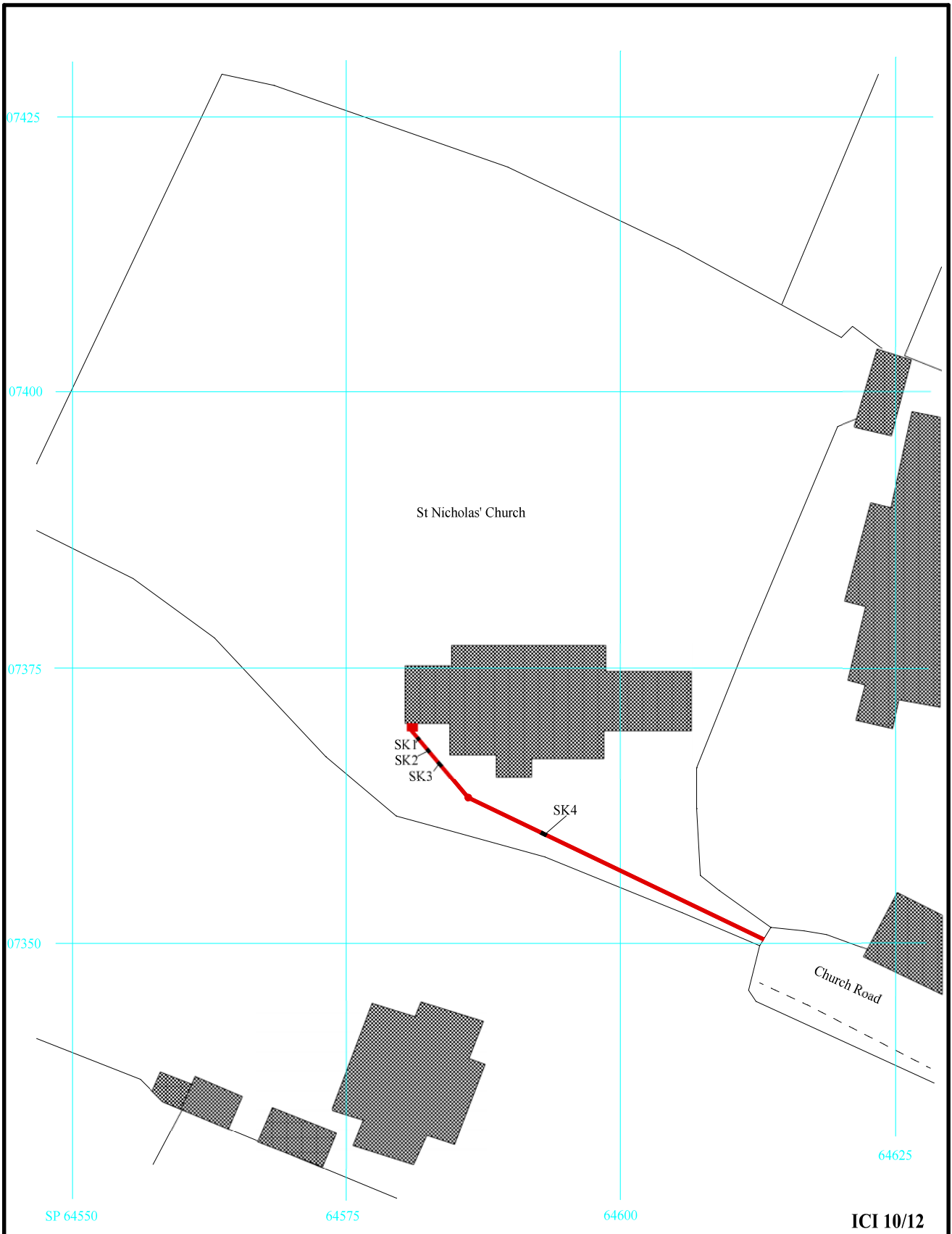


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Figure 2. Location of site off Church Road.

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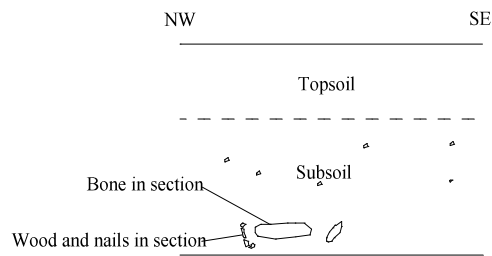
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Figure 3. Location of Groundworks





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Figure 4. Representative Section, SK2



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Plate 1. Sewer trench looking north-west, scale: 1m



Plate 2. Sewer trench, skeleton

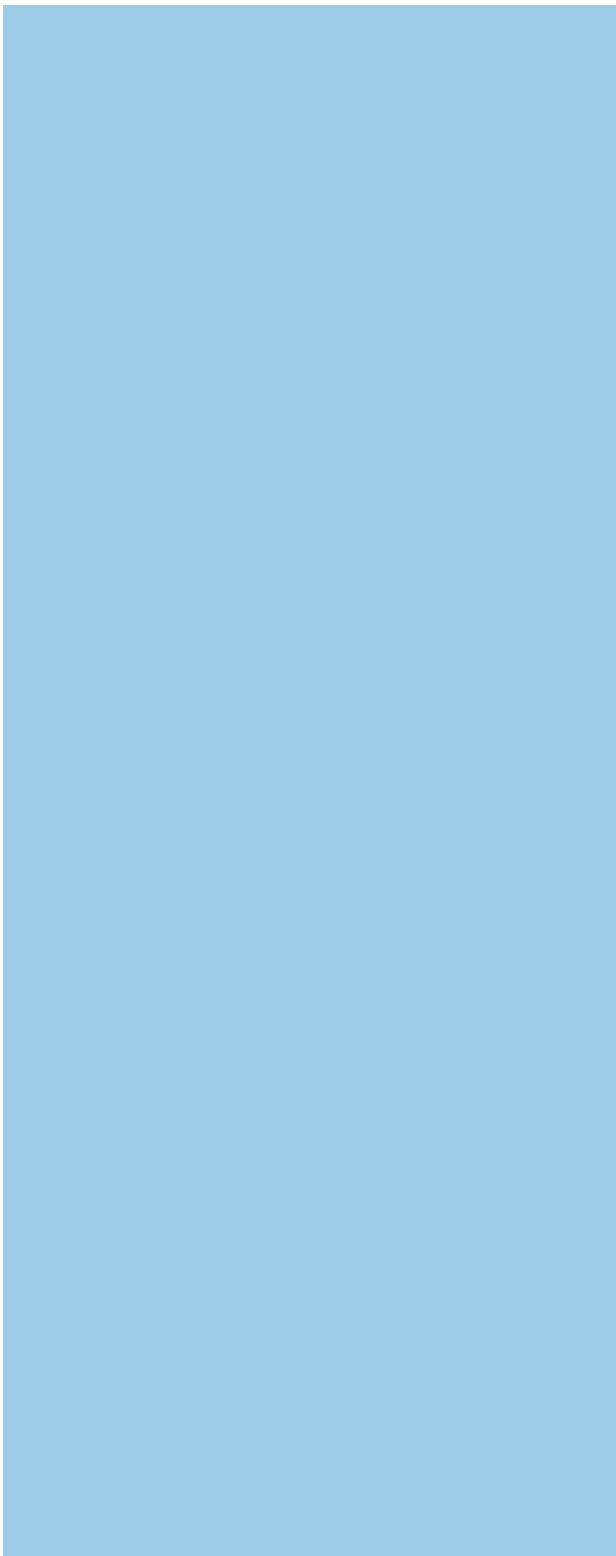
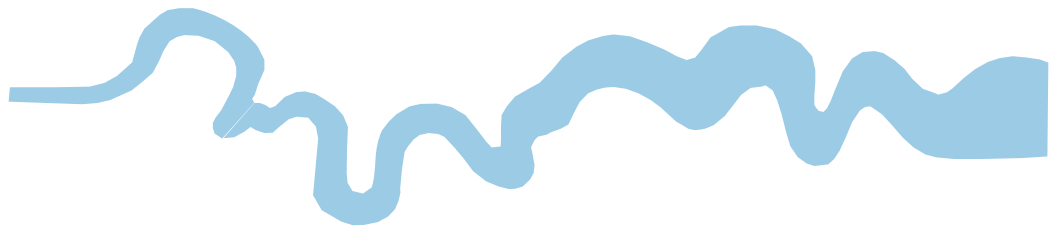
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Plates 1 and 2

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





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