

Desk Based Assessment

Christ Church Hall
Montpellier
Gloucester

NGR SO 83173 17998

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1. Non Technical Summary

- Cartographic and documentary records show that, before the early 19th century, the site of the burial ground attached to Christ Church was located within Rigney Stile Grounds, an extensive area of enclosed meadows to the E of the road to Bristol (present day Southgate Street).
- This area was a major focus of activity during the 1643 siege of Gloucester and it is possible that archaeological evidence relating to the Civil War siege might be encountered.
- Documentary records show that Christ Church Brunswick Square and the burial ground to the rear opened in 1823 with the burial register showing a total of 213 burials up to 1889 with a single solitary burial in 1924.
- It appears that the gravestones within the burial ground remained *in situ* until 1949 when Parish Council put forward proposals for the levelling of the burial ground and the relocation of the gravestones, these proposals being evidently connected with the construction of the present Church Hall in 1950.
- This clearance does not appear to have been complete with no confirmatory appropriate records.
- A number of stones within the burial ground were reported as being *in situ* until as late as 1975 and it is thus entirely possible therefore that a number of residual burials remain within the area of the burial ground.
- It should thus be assumed that human remains exist within the proposed development footprint, grave indentations being clearly visible.

2. Introduction

Border Archaeology was instructed by Mr Mark Broady of Markey Builders (Gloucester) Ltd. to undertake this Desk-Based Assessment with regard to the proposed demolition of Christ Church Hall, to the rear of Christ Church, Brunswick Square, Gloucester.

Copies of this report will be sent to our client, Gloucester City Council and the regional Sites and Monuments Record.

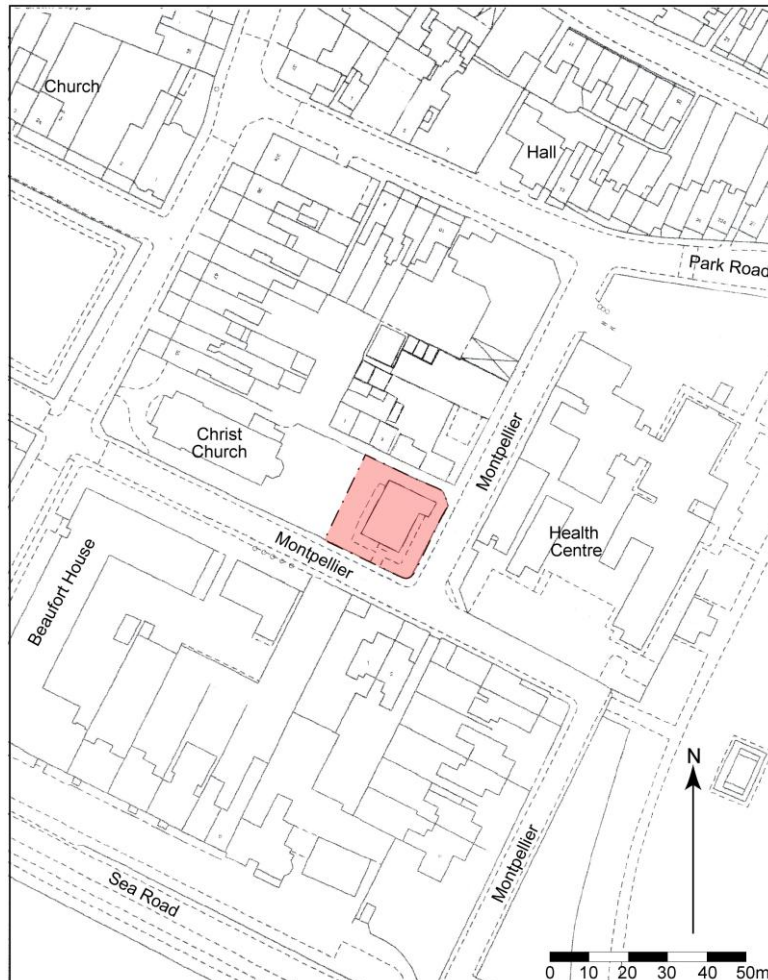


Figure 1: Site Location Plan showing extent of development area

2.1 Soils & Geology

The study area lies within a heavily urbanized and industrialized suburb of Gloucester, and has not been surveyed in the Soil Survey of England and Wales. Consequently, no information is available regarding the geology of the specific study area

3. Methodology

3.1 Desk-Based Assessment

The research carried out for this DBA consisted of the following elements:

3.1.1.1 *Evaluation and study of archaeological databases*

The Gloucester City Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) held at Gloucester Museum and the National Monuments Record (NMR) at Swindon were both consulted, and lists were obtained of all known archaeological sites, listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments in the study area, and any relevant backup files.

3.1.1.2 *Evaluation and study of cartographic and other pictorial evidence*

A detailed map regression analysis of the study area was carried out, examining all available editions of the Ordnance Survey (from the 19th century to the present), 17th-19th c. historic maps of the city of Gloucester and its suburbs (including Hall & Pinnell's map of 1780 and Cawston's 1843 map of Gloucester). This information was obtained from the Gloucestershire Record Office and the Gloucestershire County Library.

3.1.1.3 *Evaluation and study of primary written evidence*

Original written and cartographic records relating to the study area were consulted at the Gloucestershire City Library and the Gloucestershire Record Office including the records of Christ Church Brunswick Square (burial register 1823-1889, Churchwardens accounts, Vestry minute books).

3.1.1.4 *Evaluation and study of secondary (published) sources*

All published works relating to sites and structures of archaeological and historical interest within the study area were evaluated, including published and unpublished archaeological reports, local and county histories and appropriate archaeological and historical journals, including the Victoria County History of Gloucester, *Glevensis*, the *Proceedings of the Cotswold Naturalists Field Club* and the *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*.

3.1.2.4 *Site Visit*

A site visit was carried out on August 23rd 2007 to assess the potential for extant archaeology on the site. The site was walked over in a systematic manner and a detailed photographic record of key vantage points across the site was taken.

4. Historical and Archaeological Background

4.1 Prehistoric and Roman

To date, no archaeological evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity has been identified in the immediate vicinity of the specific study area (ie. the former burial ground), although recent archaeological work on the N side of Brunswick Square has found evidence for burial activity possibly associated with the Barton Roman cemetery, lying to the S of the Roman *colonia* (urban settlement) of Glevum.

4.2 Medieval (5th-16th centuries)

During the medieval period, the study area formed part of Llanthony Manor, a substantial estate to the S of the medieval walled town of Gloucester, which was granted to the Priory of Llanthony Secunda by its founder, Miles of Gloucester in 1136. There is little documentary or archaeological evidence for settlement activity in this area during the medieval period.

4.3 Post-medieval (16th century to present)

Documentary records for the 16th-18th century attest to the gradual break up of the Llanthony estate after its dissolution in 1540 and the gradual development of outlying hamlets to the S of Gloucester. Three of these hamlets, Littleworth, North Hamlet and South Hamlet, had formed part of Llanthony Manor and were classed as extra parochial until the middle of the 19th century, and consequently no tithe maps are available for these areas. The study area lies within the South Hamlet, a large irregular area extending S of Littleworth along the Bristol Road towards the village of Tuffley, with substantial outlying portions extending SW to Sud Meadow and Hempstead village (Herbert, 1988, 382-83).

The southern suburbs of Gloucester, particularly the South Hamlet area to the E of the Bristol Road, figured prominently during the siege of Gloucester in August-September 1643. The Royalist forces established an artillery battery at Gaudy Green (present day Brunswick Square) and launched a major attack on the SE defences of the City (Atkin & Laughlin, 1992, 80; Herbert, 1988, 289). However, no archaeological evidence of Civil War fortifications or other military activity has been found to date in the immediate vicinity of the study area.

From the early 19th century onwards, there was a significant expansion in suburban and industrial development to the S of Gloucester, which was partly stimulated by the construction of the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal basin, begun in the 1790s and completed in 1812 (Herbert, 1988, 161). This expansion was further encouraged by the establishment of a tramroad for horse-drawn wagons between Gloucester and Cheltenham in 1811, the route of which is still traceable along Albion Street, Old Tram Road, Park Road and Brunswick Square (Herbert, 1988, 162).

At about the same time as the growth of Gloucester Docks, the discovery and exploitation of medicinal springs on Rigney Stile Grounds to the E of the road to Bristol (present day Southgate Street) resulted in significant residential development in this

area during the 1820s (Herbert, 1988, 165). The owner of the land on which the springs were found in 1814, Sir James Jelf, sank wells, built a pump room with hot and cold baths, and laid out walks and rides.

The spa was opened to subscribers in 1815. Shortly afterwards Jelf was made bankrupt, but the potential importance of the spa to the city was already evident and a group of shareholders raised £6,500 to buy it. They added to the amenities, sold off the adjoining land for building, and in 1818 built a hotel and developed Beaufort Buildings at the east end of Spa Road (then known as Great Norfolk Street).

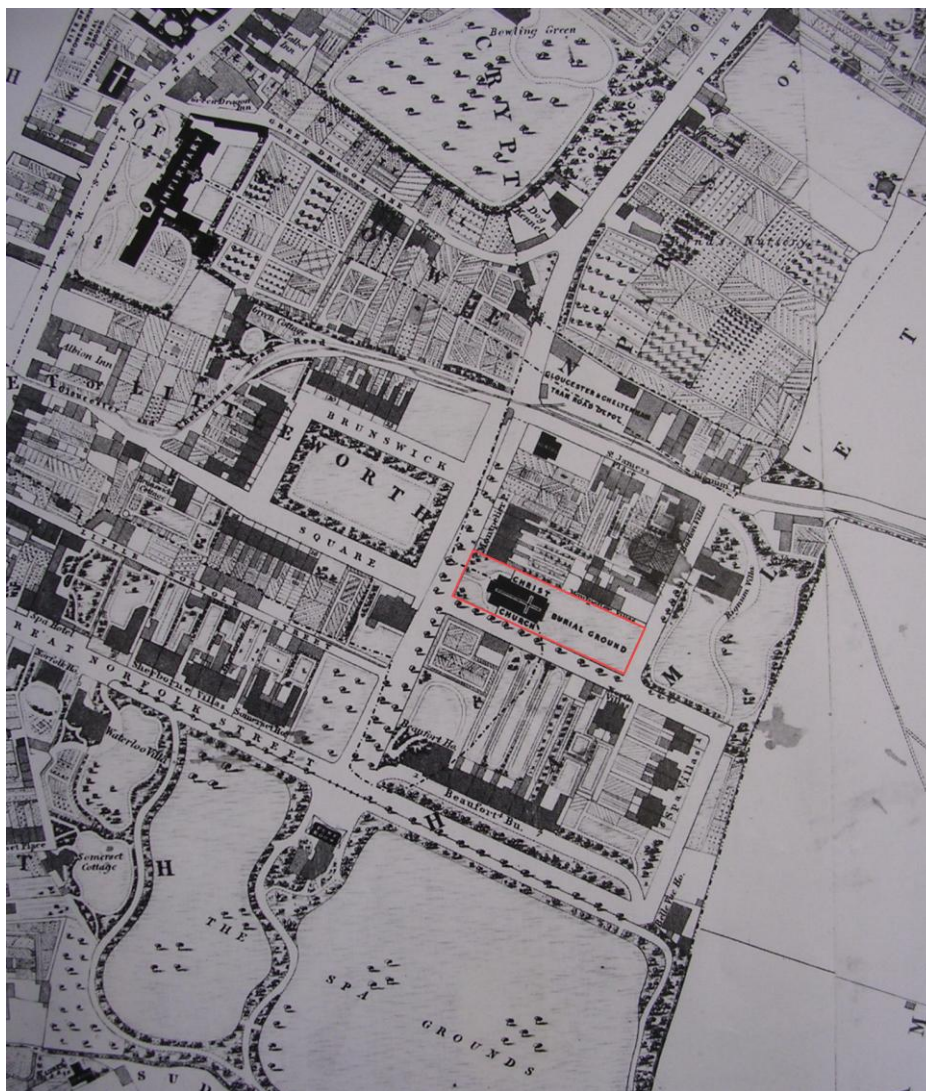


Figure 2: Extract from Cawston's Map of Gloucester (1843) showing the site of Christ Church Brunswick Square and the tree-lined burial ground to the rear.

The Spa also stimulated building on land adjoining the plots sold off by the spa company. On the close called Gaudy Green a residential development, later named Brunswick Square, was laid out from 1822 by a local ironmonger, Thomas Reece. Nineteen houses in terraces had been built around it by 1825 when the owners agreed to preserve the central area as a garden. Near the NE corner of the Spa company's development a short terrace called Rignum Place was begun beside the tramroad in 1821 and the following year the City Corporation built a new road (later called Park

Road) alongside the tram road to connect the spa to Barton Street (Herbert, 1988, 165-66).

Gloucester Spa was at its most popular in the early-mid 1820 but its popularity had already begun to decline by about 1830, being increasingly overshadowed by the growth of the fashionable health resort of Cheltenham. The spa's attractions, already in decline, were noticeably diminished by the construction of a railway along the south side of the spa grounds in 1848 (following the course of the modern Trier Way). The extent of the Gloucester Spa development is shown on Cawston's Map of Gloucester dated 1843 (**Figure 2**). Although a certain amount of modern building has taken place, most notably the building of the Rikenel Centre to the E of the site, a large part of the original Spa development remains intact (including 41 listed buildings of Grade II and Grade II* status) and consequently the Spa has been designated as a Conservation Area.

5. Site Specific Analysis (including Map Regression)

The evidence of the earliest map to show the area in any detail, Hall and Pinnell's 1780 plan of Gloucester, shows that the area lay within an irregular oblong enclosure of meadow, forming part of an area known variously as Regnum, Rignall or Rigney Stile Grounds. Documentary references to Rigney Stile Grounds have been found dating back to the mid 17th century; during the siege of Gloucester in August 1643, the besieging Royalist forces attempted to fill in a ditch at Rignall Stile that formed part of the SE corner of the City defences (Atkin & Laughlin, 1992, 80-81).



Figure 3: Extract from Hall & Pinnell's Plan of 1780 showing the site of the burial ground originally located within an enclosed meadow forming part of Rigney Stile Grounds

The precise location of this ditch is unclear, but a version of Hall & Pinnell's 1780 map of Gloucester (**Figure 3**) shows the plan of proposed defences for the City following the siege of 1643 which shows the outline of a triangular bastion extending SE from the old City Walls into Rigney Stile Grounds, to the NW of the site of the Christ Church burial ground. It is possible that archaeological evidence of activity relating to the Civil War siege of Gloucester might be encountered in the vicinity of the study area.

References in later 18th century deeds show that the Rigney Stile Grounds comprised six pieces of enclosed meadow, and this appears to have remained the case until the early 19th century, when a substantial amount of new building development in the area took place, associated with the creation of the Gloucester Spa in 1814-15. Closely associated with this development was the building of Christ Church Brunswick Square, a proprietary church built for the residents of the Spa in 1822-23 at a cost of £3,900 met by private subscription (Herbert, 1988, 312). The original church was built in a plain Neo-Classical style by the architects Thomas Rickman and Henry Hutchinson and comprised a small chancel, nave and west bell turret (Verey & Brooks, 2002, 446) (**Plate 1**).



Plate 1: Photograph of c.1890 showing the original Neo-Classical W front of Christ Church, Brunswick Square before its substantial reconstruction in 1899-1900
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Gloucestershire Record Office)

Alterations to the fabric of the church were carried out in 1865, when the chancel was enlarged and a north vestry added, in 1882-83, when the interior of the church was reordered, and in 1899-1900, when the church was remodelled and the present west front in brick with roughcast and vermillion terracotta dressings was added (**Plate 2**),

built in an elaborate Southern French Romanesque style by the architects Prothero and Phillott (Herbert, 1988, 312; Verey & Brooks, 2002, 446).



Plate 2: Photograph of the present W front of Christ Church, Brunswick Square, built in 1899-1900

The burial ground to the rear of the parish church was consecrated in 1823 and its boundaries appear to have remained well defined since that date, defined by Christ Church immediately to the W, Montpellier to the E and S, Montpellier Mews to the N. It is marked as a burial ground on Cawston's map of 1843, the Board of Health plan of Gloucester dated 1852 (**Figure 4**) and the OS 1st edition 25 inch map of 1881 (**Figure 5**). Cawston's map shows the N, S and E perimeter of the burial ground as defined by a line of regularly planted trees; by 1852, however, several trees were planted within the burial ground itself and this number had apparently grown by 1881, perhaps indicative of the increasingly overgrown state of the burial ground by that date.

The burial register for Christ Church contains records of 213 burials, all but one of which took place between 1823 and 1889, with the solitary exception of the burial of Mary Jane Shipton, aged 94, on June 4th 1924 (GRO Ref. P154/3 IN 1/11). An examination of the burial register shows that the average number of burials yearly within the graveyard was quite small, usually being restricted to about five or six burials per annum. Most of the persons buried were clearly residents of the Spa district, hailing from Brunswick Square, Montpellier or Spa Villas, although a small number of persons from London Road and a number of families from Cheltenham are also recorded.

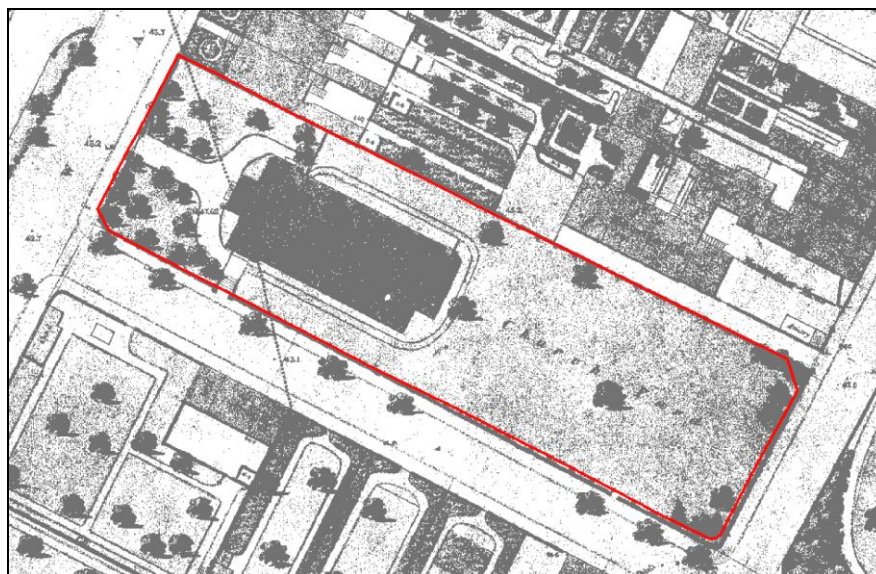


Figure 4: Extract from Board of Health plan of Gloucester dated 1852 showing trees planted within the burial ground to rear of Christ Church Brunswick Square

The highest number of recorded burials, eleven, took place in 1851; however by the early 1860s the numbers had decreased to about two or three yearly and by the 1870s-80s had declined even further; no burials were recorded for 1874-75 and 1882-83, 1885 or 1887. This decline is probably attributable to the opening of the Gloucester Municipal Cemetery at Tredworth in 1857 (Herbert, 1988, 269).



Figure 5: Extract from OS 1st edition 25 inch map of 1881 showing increased number of trees within burial ground

With the exception of Mary Jane Shipton's burial in 1924, no new burials are recorded at Christ Church after 1889, indicating that the burial ground was, for all intents and purposes, closed after that date. Significantly, the area is not marked as a burial ground on the OS 2nd edition 25 inch map of 1902 or subsequent historic maps (**Figure 6**). The Churchwardens accounts and PCC minutes for Christ Church contain records for its continued maintenance by the parishioners and it appears that the gravestones within the burial ground remained *in situ* at least until 1949, when it was proposed at a Vestry meeting that an application be made to the appropriate Authority for a Faculty to level

the Churchyard by removing the Gravestones and arranging them in some other suitable place' (GRO Ref. P154/3 VE 2/4). However, no evidence has been found in the Gloucester Diocesan Records for the granting of a faculty allowing the removal of the gravestones or the re-interment of those buried in the churchyard.

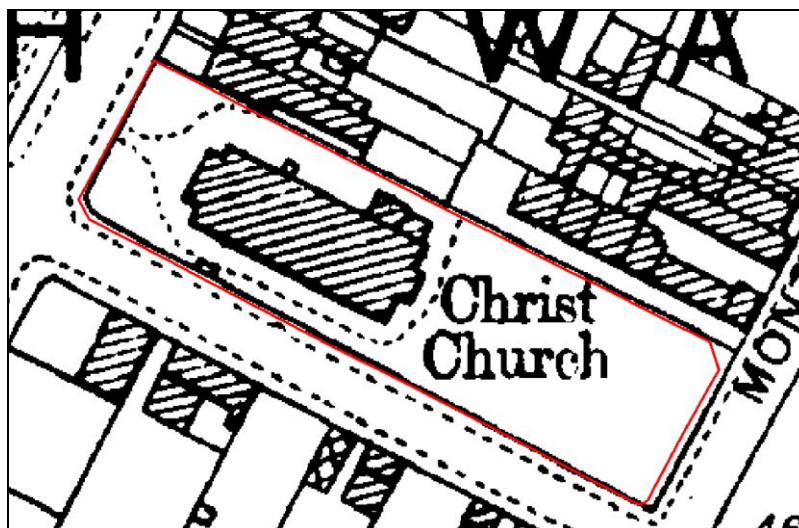


Figure 6: Extract from OS 2nd edition 25 inch map of 1902 showing area to rear of Christ Church no longer marked as burial ground

The levelling of the burial ground and removal of the gravestones was evidently connected with plans for the construction of the Church Hall, which was opened in July 1950. The cost of erecting and equipping the building amounted to no less than £5000 (GRO Ref. P154/3 VE 2/4). The present Church Hall, located at the E end of the former graveyard is a single storey gabled structure of brick with a corrugated copper roof, built in a plain, utilitarian style typical of the late 1940s-1950s (**Plate 3**).



Plate 3: View looking E showing W front of Christ Church Hall, opened in July 1950

Documentary records show that an agreement was made in 1954 by which the City Council agreed to pay the sum of £5 per annum to the Parish Council for the maintenance of the disused burial ground; however this arrangement had lapsed by 1967, by which time it had fallen into considerable disrepair. In particular, the boundary walls of the burial ground were in a bad state, requiring urgent repairs amounting to £221 17s (GRO Ref P154/3 CW 3/5).

In 1964, an unsuccessful application was made for the conversion of the disused burial ground for use as a car park for the nearby local tax office. Further correspondence between the Parish Council and the City Council shows that the burial ground was still in a relatively poor state during the 1970s, with complaints concerning the removal of several 'rotten' yew trees and it would appear that at least some of the gravestones within the churchyard were still *in situ* until as late as 1975 (GRO Ref P154/3 CW 3/5).

Little recent archaeological work has been undertaken in the vicinity of the study area. A watching brief carried out in 1993 at the junction of Park Road and Montpellier revealed the remains of a brick culvert capped by sandstone slabs aligned N-S at a depth of 1.2m, underlying 19th century street levels (Donel, 1995, 68), while the results of another programme of archaeological observation carried at No. 1 Park Road in 2005 revealed no deposits or features of archaeological significance (King, 2005).

6. Account of Site Visit

A visit was carried out on August 23rd 2007 by Neil Shurety and Stephen Priestley to determine the potential for extant archaeology on the site of the Church Hall and disused burial ground to the rear of Christ Church Brunswick Square. The site was walked over in a systematic manner and a detailed photographic record taken.



Plate 4: View looking NE showing shallow depressions aligned E-W, located on the grass lawn immediately W of Church Hall

Within the grass lawn area immediately to the W of the Church Hall building, a series of shallow rectilinear depressions aligned E-W were observed which may well indicate the presence of burials, although it is also possible that these depressions merely represent the outline of the former grave cuts, the actual remains having been removed and re-interred elsewhere (**Plates 4 & 5**) with the tape line visible in the foreground denoting the approximate extent of the proposed development.



Plate 5: View looking S showing grass lawn immediately W of Church Hall

The gravestones removed from their original *in situ* positions in 1949-50 were also noted, having been moved to their current location adjoining the E end of the church (**Plate 6**).



Plate 6: View looking W showing gravestones from the disused burial ground located at E end of the church

7. Conclusion

This desk-based assessment, based on the combination of an examination of the available documentary and cartographic sources and a visual inspection of the site, has examined the development area, specifically the Church Hall and adjoining curtilage to the W, occupying the E end of the disused 19th century burial ground that lay to the rear of Christ Church Brunswick Square.

Before the early 1820s, the site of the burial ground lay within a meadow enclosure forming part of Rigney Stile Grounds, an extensive area of enclosed meadows to the E of the road to Bristol (present day Southgate Street). This area was a major focus of activity during the 1643 siege of Gloucester and it is possible that archaeological evidence relating to the Civil War siege might be encountered.

Significant building activity took place in this area during the 1820s-30s, closely associated with the development of Gloucester Spa. Documentary records show that Christ Church and the burial ground to the rear were opened in 1823 and that the burial ground remained in use until 1889 when it was finally closed.

The burial register for Christ Church shows that 213 burials took place in the cemetery between 1823 and 1889 after which date the burial ground was, for all intents and purposes, closed, excepting a single solitary burial in 1924. The parish registers show that the number of burials declined significantly from the early 1860s onwards and very few burials occurred from the late 1870s onwards.

It appears that the gravestones within the burial ground remained *in situ* until 1949 when Parish Council put forward proposals for the levelling of the burial ground and the relocation of the gravestones. These proposals were evidently connected with the construction of the present Church Hall, which was opened in 1950.

The clearance of the gravestones does not appear to have been complete, however, since a number of stones within the burial ground were reported as being *in situ* until as late as 1975. It is therefore a serious possibility that a number of residual burials remain within the area of the burial ground affected by the proposed development, this being attested during the site visit which identified a number of shallow depressions in the grass lawn (associated with burial activity) immediately W of the Church Hall.

8. Copyright

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9. Bibliography

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Census Returns for Gloucester: 1841-1901

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P154/3 SP 3/5 Copies of burial fees and sentence of consecration of burial ground - 1823

P154/3 IN 1/11: Register of Burials at Christ Church - 1823-1889

P154/3 CW 2/3: Churchwardens' accounts - 1899-1918

P154/3 CW 2/4: PCC Accounts - 1923-43

P154/3 CW 2/5: PCC Accounts – 1944-61

P154/3 VE 2/4: PCC minutes – 1949-73

P154/3 CW 3/5: Papers relating to church property and maintenance including correspondence relating to disused burial ground; school premises; grant from Historic Buildings Commission towards repair of church -1954-1980

P154/3 CW 3/6: Architects Reports – 1962 & 1969

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10. Cartography

(All maps were obtained from Gloucester Sites and Monuments Record and Gloucestershire Records Office unless otherwise stated)

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Hall & Pinnell's Map of Gloucester -1780 (and 2nd edition 1796)

GRO Ref. Q/RI 70 Enclosure Map of Gloucester - 1799

OS 1st edition 1 inch map of Gloucester - 1830

Dawson's Map of Gloucester taken from the Ordnance Survey - 1837

Cawston's Map of Gloucester - 1843

Board of Health Map of Gloucester - 1852

OS 1st edition 25 inch map Gloucestershire 33. 12 - 1881

OS 2nd edition 25 inch map Gloucestershire 33. 12 - 1902

Os 3rd edition 25 inch map Gloucestershire 33. 12 - 1924

OS 1st edition 6 inch map Gloucester 33 NW - 1887-90

OS 3rd edition 6 inch map Gloucester 33 NW - 1924