ALL SAINTS' CHURCH
COPLE
BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION

Project: CP 1301

Document: 2007/112
Version 1.0

28th November 2007

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Produced for:
Bruce Deacon Architect Ltd

On behalf of
Cople Parochial Church Council

Contents

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

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Version History

Version	*Issue date*	*Reason for re-issue*
1.0	*23/11/07*	*n/a*

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Structure of the Report

Section 1 introduces the project. The methodology and a summary of the results of the fieldwork are presented in Section 2, followed by a brief conclusion (Section 3). Section 4 is a bibliography, and Appendix 1 contains an archaeological context summary.

Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CAO	Bedfordshire County Council Archaeological Officer
DAA	Diocesan Archaeological Adviser
HER	Historic Environment Record
Client	Cople Parochial Church Council
Architect	Bruce Deacon Architect Ltd
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
Procedures Manual	*Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork*, 2nd edn, 2001, Albion Archaeology

Non-Technical Summary

A condition placed on planning consent for the construction of an extension, with associated services, on the north side of All Saints' Church, Cople, Bedfordshire, led to the implementation of the programme of archaeological works described in this report.

The Diocesan Archaeological Adviser issued a Design Brief outlining the requirements for these works. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Bruce Deacon Architect Ltd, on behalf of Cople Parochial Church Council, to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation and to carry out the archaeological works.

All Saints' Church is situated at the centre of Cople, approximately 4km to the east of Bedford, on the edge of the Great Ouse river gravel terrace. The church, a Grade 1 listed building, consists of a chancel and side chapels, an aisled nave with a south porch, and a west tower. The present building was constructed in the 15th and 16th centuries, replacing a late 11th century church on the same site.

The ground-works for the development comprised the excavation of footing trenches for the extension, and two service trenches. They were undertaken between 15th and 22nd October 2007.

Excavation of the trenches revealed the remains of a medieval cemetery and a large medieval pit immediately north of the church. The graves were all aligned east–west. Evidence was found that the ground level in the churchyard had subsequently been raised by up to 0.85m. For this reason, the undisturbed natural gravel was only reached in the footing trenches, and further remains may have been preserved in situ *beneath the service trenches.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

The development comprised the construction of an extension, with associated services, on the northern side of All Saints' Church, Cople, Bedfordshire, centred on NGR TL 10317 48476 (Fig. 1).

Because of the archaeological potential of the development area, a condition had been placed on planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. The Diocesan Archaeological Adviser (DAA) issued a Design Brief (DAA 2006) outlining the requirements for these works.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Bruce Deacon Architect Ltd, on behalf of Cople Parochial Church Council, to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation as requested by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) (Albion Archaeology 2007a), and to carry out the archaeological works.

1.2 Site Location and Geology

All Saints' Church is situated at the centre of Cople, approximately 4km to the east of Bedford (Fig. 1). The church lies on the edge of the Great Ouse river gravel terrace.

1.3 Archaeological Background

All Saints' Church, a Grade 1 listed building, consists of a chancel and side chapels, an aisled nave with a south porch, and a west tower. The present building was constructed in the 15th and 16th centuries, replacing a late 11th century church on the same site. The church was subject to an extensive sequence of restoration, mainly in the later 19th century.

Extensive crop-marks have been observed in the vicinity of Cople, concentrated primarily *c*. 1km to the east and west (Albion Archaeology 2007b). These are believed to date primarily to the prehistoric and Romano-British periods.

2. METHODS AND EXTENT OF GROUND-WORKS

2.1 Introduction

The programme of archaeological investigation and recording was undertaken between 15th and 22nd October. It comprised the archaeological excavation of strip trenches for the footings of the new extension, and the monitoring of two service trenches to the north and west of the church (Fig. 1).

Detailed technical information on all the deposits and archaeological features referred to below can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2 Methodology and extent of ground-works

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with the methodology outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation.

A photographic record of the area of the church affected by the planned extension was made before any excavation took place. Photographs were taken both internally and externally, in digital and 35mm black and white format.

Topsoil was removed from the footprint of the extension using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. A 0.6m wide foundation trench was dug along the line of the extension's external wall (Fig. 2), while a 0.45m trench was excavated across the middle. These trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.2–1.4m below ground level, while the remaining area within the footprint of the building was excavated to a depth of 0.4m (Figs 3–4).

The service trenches, both 0.8m deep, were excavated using a mechanical excavator, under archaeological supervision. The sewer trench to the west of the extension was 0.35m wide, while the water main trench to the west of the church was 0.25m wide.

All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence. Archaeological features were recorded in plan at 1:20, while 1:10 plans were used for any substantially complete skeletons. A photographic record of all significant features was compiled, using digital or black and white 35mm format as appropriate.

All artefacts, including those recovered from spoil heaps, were assigned to their proper context number. Following consultation with the DAA and CAO, and in line with the guidelines *Taking Care of Human Remains*, issued by the Chancellor of the Diocese of St Albans in 2000, all human bone was left securely on site for immediate reburial.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The majority of the archaeological remains revealed by the ground-works were located within the footprint of the new extension (Fig. 2). They mostly comprised human burials, although an earlier, much larger feature was also identified. The only feature revealed by the service trenches was [42] (Fig. 2, Section 1); its size and profile suggests it may have been a grave, but only its very southern edge lay within the trench, and no human remains were exposed within it.

3.2 Topsoil, subsoil, made ground and geological deposits

The topsoil (1) that covered the entire area was uniform in character, and was 0.2m thick. Beneath this was a layer of made ground (32), up to 0.6m thick. A 0.25m thick levelling or demolition layer (3) of building rubble lay between the topsoil and (32) in the area of the extension, continuing a short distance into the service trench immediately to the west. This layer contained a large quantity of pottery dating mainly to the 12th-13th century.

Beneath the made ground survived a layer of subsoil (2) / (38), which was 0.2m thick. This overlay the undisturbed natural gravel (39), which was revealed at a depth of c. 1.2m below ground level.

3.3 Graves and other features

At least nine graves were partially revealed within the footing trenches (Fig. 2), all dug through the subsoil and sealed by the made ground (32). They were aligned east–west, with the skulls at the western end. Grave [10] appeared to contain the remains of two bodies: skull (13) was present in addition to skeleton (11), though it is possible that the skull may have belonged to an earlier grave that had been truncated by [10]. It is clear that not all the graves were contemporary; grave [20] truncated the northern edge of grave [5], while it is likely that grave [23] was later than [14].

Skeleton (27) probably represents a tenth grave; however, no grave cut was visible, and it is possible that the body was simply placed in the top of feature [28]. Feature [28] is presumed to have been a large pit, but its large size meant that most of it lay beyond the footing trench, and its base was not reached.

Only two features had been dug through make-up layer (32): possible grave [42] in the service trench; and [7] in the eastern footing trench. Although a considerable quantity of human bone was present in [7], it was only partially articulated, perhaps representing the reburial of a body.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The ground-works for the development revealed unmarked cemetery remains on the northern side of the church. Their east–west alignment is indicative of Christian burials. Only one possible grave was identified in the service trenches; however, the lesser depth to which these were excavated means that further remains could potentially have been preserved *in situ* beneath them.

In view of the cemetery's proximity to the north door of the church, and the uniformly medieval date of the pottery recovered, which shows little evidence of re-depositional abrasion, it seems plausible that the graves were connected with the original 11th century church that preceded the current building. The intercutting nature of some of the graves makes it clear that the cemetery was in use for a lengthy period of time.

Make-up layer (32) appears to indicate a deliberate attempt to raise the ground level in the churchyard. Such a practice is not uncommon, and can represent efforts to minimise disturbance of earlier burials by later ones (Steane 1985). The substantial assemblage of pottery (Appendix 2) recovered from layer (3), which sealed (32), suggests that the ground level was raised during the medieval period. The composition of (3) suggests it may have been a demolition layer, associated perhaps with the demolition of the original church.

The function of pit [28] is unknown. It was earlier than the graves, although the dating evidence from its infill and from deposits above and below it suggests that it was broadly contemporary with them. Its infill was largely sterile, indicating that it was not a charnel pit; it may have been dug in order to quarry gravel.

The assemblage of human bone from the graves, along with a small quantity of disarticulated material from the service trench and layers of made ground, was relatively small and unremarkable in nature. For this reason, no detailed analysis of the assemblage was undertaken, and the bones were left on site for immediate reburial.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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6. APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix 1: Context Summary

Area: 1
Extent (ha): 0.01
OS Co-ordinates: TL1031748476
Description: Trench for building foundations and services

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
1	**Topsoil**	**Firm dark grey brown sandy silt . 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
2	**Subsoil**	**Loose mid grey yellow silty silt . 0.2m thick**	☑	☑
3	**Make up layer**	**Compact dark grey brown sandy silt frequent small-large ceramic building material. 0.25m thick**	☑	☑
5	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: max breadth 0.55m, max depth 0.2m, max length 1.7m**	☑	☐
4	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☑
6	Human skeleton	Left side of body truncated by later grave	☑	☐
7	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min length 0.75m, max breadth 0.5m, max depth 0.52m**	☑	☐
8	Human skeleton	Semi-articulated; possibly reburied from elsewhere	☑	☐
9	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☑
10	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min length 1.2m, max breadth 0.42m, max depth 0.25m**	☑	☐
11	Human skeleton	Lower half of skeleton lay outside the trench	☑	☐
12	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☑
13	Human skeleton	Only skull was present within the grave	☑	☐
14	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min length 0.3m, max breadth 0.3m, max depth 0.2m**	☑	☐
15	Human skeleton	Only skull was present within the trench	☑	☐
16	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☐
17	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min length 0.6m, max breadth 0.4m, max depth 0.1m**	☑	☐
18	Human skeleton	Only lower half of body was present within the trench	☑	☐
19	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☐
20	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min length 0.6m, max depth 0.15m, min breadth 0.1m**	☑	☐
21	Human skeleton	Only skull was present within the trench	☑	☐
22	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☐
23	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min length 0.6m, max breadth 0.35m, max depth 0.1m**	☑	☐
24	Human skeleton	Juvenile burial. Upper part of body lay outside the trench	☑	☐
25	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☐

Area: 1
Extent (ha): 0.01
OS Co-ordinates: TL1031748476
Description: Trench for building foundations and services

28	**Pit**	**Dimensions: min length 4.2m, min breadth 3.1m, min depth 0.4m. Only one edge lay within the trench**	☑	☐
26	Fill	Firm mid orange brown clay silt	☑	☑
27	Human skeleton	No grave cut visible; apparently buried in top of [28]	☑	☐
33	Fill	Firm mid grey brown sandy silt	☑	☐
37	Fill	Loose light grey brown clay silt	☑	☐
29	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: max length 1.5m, max depth 0.2m, min breadth 0.28m**	☑	☐
30	Human skeleton	Right side of body lay outside the trench	☑	☐
31	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☐
32	**Make up layer**	**Firm mid grey brown clay silt . 0.6m thick**	☑	☐
34	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min length 0.25m, min breadth 0.15m, max depth 0.3m**	☑	☐
35	Human skeleton	Only skull lay within the trench	☑	☐
36	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☐
38	**Subsoil**	**Loose dark grey brown sandy silt . 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
39	**Natural**	**Hard light yellow orange sandy gravel**	☐	☐
40	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: min length 0.6m, min breadth 0.1m, max depth 0.4m**	☑	☐
41	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown clay silt	☑	☐
42	**Grave**	**Linear E-W profile: vertical base: flat dimensions: max length 2.05m, min depth 0.62m, min breadth 0.1m. Feature only visible in northern side of service trench**	☑	☐
43	Lower fill	Compact light yellow grey silty gravel	☑	☐
44	Upper fill	Firm dark brown silty clay	☑	☐

6.2 Appendix 2: Artefact and Ecofact Summary

6.2.1 Introduction

The archaeological works produced a sizable pottery assemblage (Table 1), the majority deriving from make-up layer (3). The material was scanned to ascertain its nature, condition and, where possible, date range.

Feature	Type	Context	Spot date*	Pottery**	Other finds
2	Subsoil	2	Early medieval	58:600	Animal bone (32g)
3	Make-up layer	3	Early medieval	265:2,336	Roof tile (41g); Fe horseshoe nail x2; worked flint (2g)
5	Grave	4	Early medieval	21:179	
7	Grave	9	Early medieval	7:38	
10	Grave	12	Early medieval	4:25	
28	Pit	26	Early medieval	21:239	Roof tile (66g); Fe strap hinge (Registered Artefact 1)
			Total	**376:3,417**	

***** spot date based on date of latest artefact in context ****** sherd count : weight in g

Table 1: Artefact summary by feature

6.2.2 Pottery

A total of 376 pottery sherds, weighing 3.4kg, were recovered. These were examined by context, and were quantified using minimum sherd count and weight. Although the sherds are small, with an average weight of 9g, they are generally unabraded and survive in good condition. Eighteen fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology on behalf of Bedfordshire County Council. Fabrics are listed below (Table 2) in chronological order.

Fabric type	Common name	Sherd no.	Context : sherd no.
Saxo-Norman			
Type B01	St Neots-type ware	**21**	(2):5, (3):16
Type B01A	St Neots-type (orange)	**2**	(2):2
Type B01B	St Neots-type (fine)	**2**	(4):1, (26):1
Type B01C	St Neots-type (mixed)	**18**	(2):5, (3):10, (26):3
Type B04	St Neots-type (coarse)	**6**	(3):2, (4):3, (26):1
Medieval			
Type B07	Shell	**76**	(2):8, (3):61, (4):2, (9):1, (12):1, (26):3
Type C01	Sand	**27**	(2):7, (3):11, (9):1, (12):2, (26):6
Type C02	Red quartz	**1**	(4):1
Type C03	Fine sand	**48**	(2):6, (3):37, (4):3, (9):2
Type C04	Coarse sand	**4**	(2):4
Type C05	Sand (red margins)	**54**	(2):5, (3):47, (12):1, (26):1
Type C18	Grimston ware	**2**	(3):2
Type C59A	Coarse sand	**42**	(2):9, (3):18, (4):9, (9):3, (26):3
Type C60	Hertfordshire-type greyware	**55**	(3):52, (4):1, (26):2
Type C71	Sand (buff-grey cored)	**4**	(2):2, (4):1, (26):1
Type C	Non-specific medieval	**2**	(2):1, (3):1
Type E01	Late medieval reduced	**11**	(2):4, (3):7
Type E01C	Late medieval reduced (vesicular)	**1**	(3):1

Table 2: Pottery type series

The pottery ranges in date from the Saxo-Norman to the late medieval periods, with the bulk of the assemblage being of 12th–13th century origin.

Saxo-Norman (13% total assemblage by sherd number)
Forty-nine Saxo-Norman sherds, weighing 475g, were recovered. They comprise shell-tempered, wheel-thrown vessels in the St Neots-ware tradition (fabric B01) and its variants (fabrics B01A/B/C and B04). A utilitarian range of forms, they include bowls with rounded and simple upright rims, everted rim jars of varying size and diameter, and a single lid-seated 'top-hat' jar. None of the sherds are decorated. The exterior surfaces of many of the jars are sooted, and several have thick internal sooty residues, indicating their use as cooking vessels. The Saxo-Norman pottery occurs as residual material in later deposits.

Early Medieval (87% total assemblage)
Medieval pottery comprises 327 sherds, weighing 2.9kg. The majority of the assemblage is of 12th–13th century date and comprises sand-tempered coarse ware sherds (fabrics C01–C05, C59A and C71) of probable local manufacture, including a number of Hertfordshire-type grey wares (fabric C60). Seventy-six sherds of shell-tempered pottery of developed St Neots-type (fabric B07) are also present. Twelve sand-tempered sherds in the late medieval reduced ware tradition, dating to the 14th–15th centuries, represent a later component of the assemblage. Two abraded sherds of possible Grimston ware, a regional import from Norfolk, are the sole fine wares recovered.

Diagnostic forms comprise everted, rounded and square rim jars of varying size, bowls with plain rounded or slightly everted rims, and a strap handle from a jug. Decorative elements are rouletted squares, finger impressions, applied strips, stabbed motifs and linear and wavy combed patterns. Evidence for vessel repair and curation is attested by a jar sherd with a hole drilled post-firing through the neck, indicating repair. As with the Saxo-Norman material, a number of sherds are heavily sooted, indicating use.

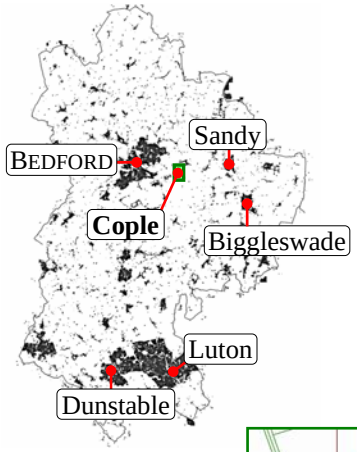
Subsoil (2) and make-up layer (3) yielded the bulk of the assemblage.

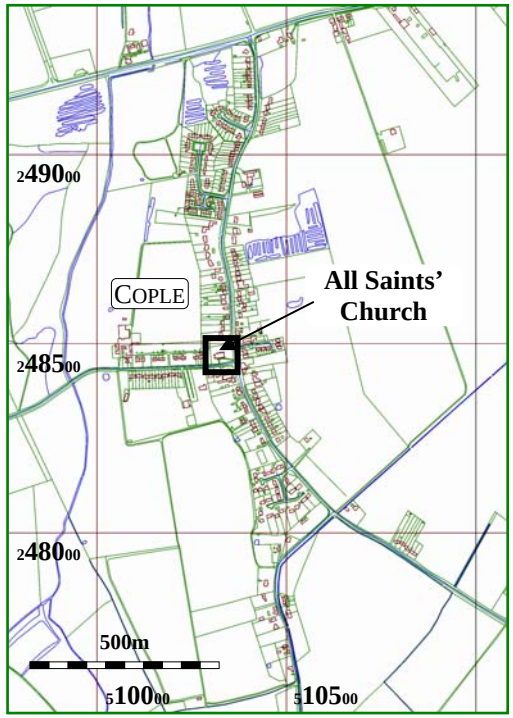
6.2.3 Other Finds

Topsoil deposit (2), in addition to 58 sherds of pottery, produced two unstratified fragments of undiagnostic animal bone (32g). Make-up layer (3) yielded a piece of medieval sand-tempered flat roof tile (41g), a broken retouched flint flake and two horseshoe nails. The flake has a diffuse bulb of percussion, suggesting it was soft-hammer-struck, and is likely to date to the early Neolithic period. Its incomplete state and post-depositional edge damage indicate it is residual. The two shoeing nails are of the expanded head with ears variety, which were in use from 1200–1350 (Clark 1995, 87 and 96).

Fill (26) in pit [28] produced two pieces of medieval sand-tempered flat roof tile (66g) and a small iron hinge with a nailed U-shaped eye. This type of hinge was used in conjunction with L-shaped hinge pivots. The hinge strap is narrow (maximum width 16mm) and tapers towards the missing terminal. Although not complete, its small size (surviving length 72mm) suggests it was used on either a small cupboard door, shutters, or perhaps a gate. A few examples of this type of

hinge are known from 9th–11th century deposits from York and Thetford, but they are more commonly found in the medieval and late medieval deposits (Ottaway 1992, 637–9).





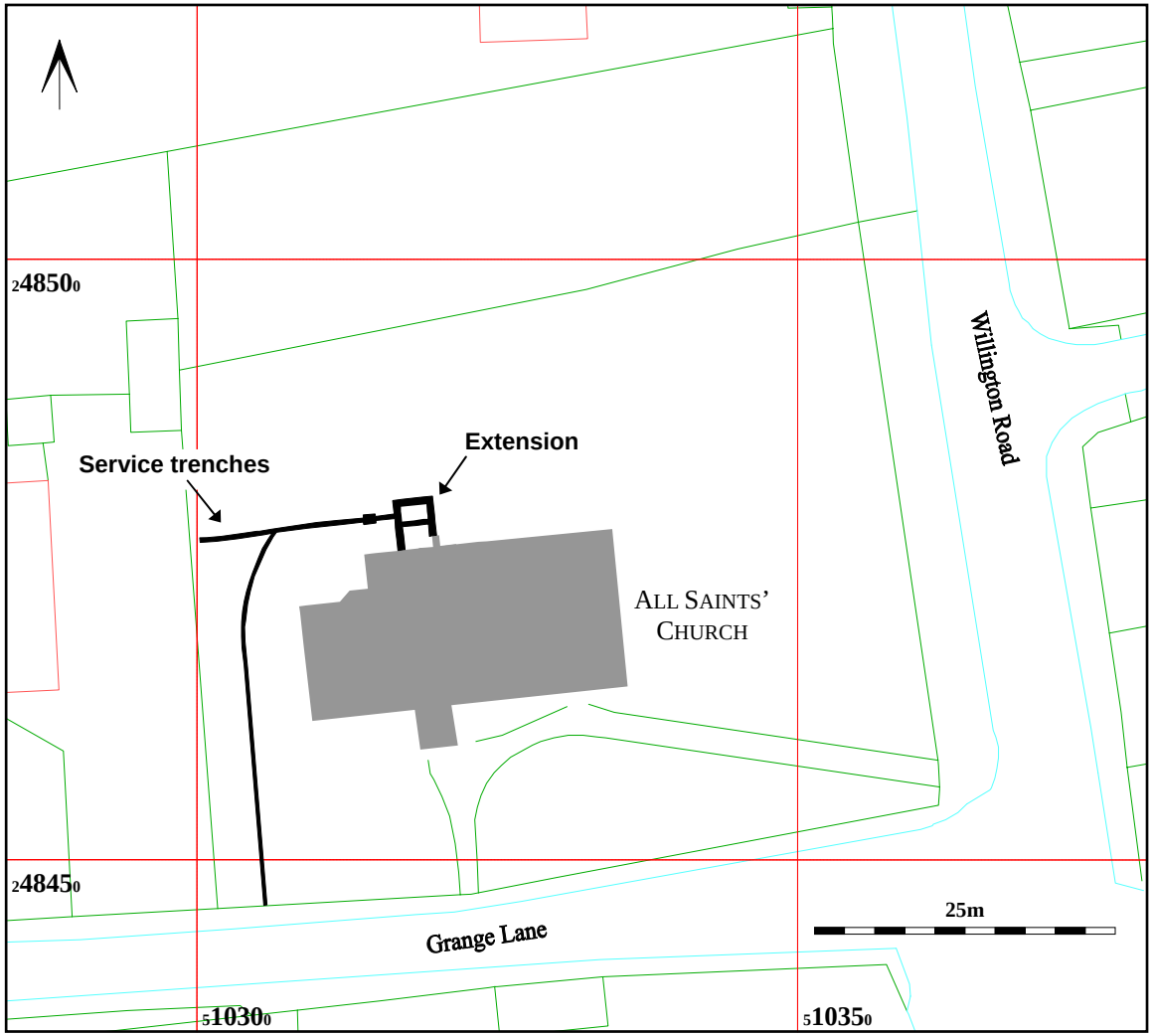
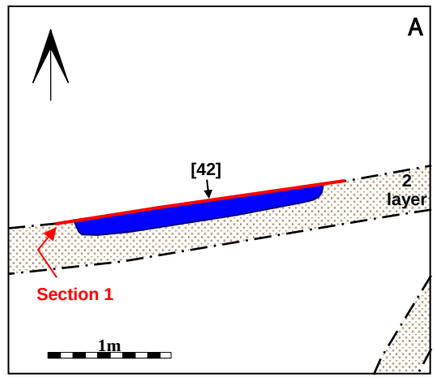
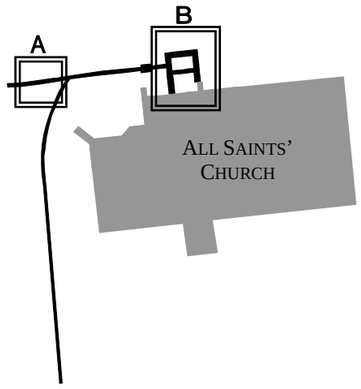
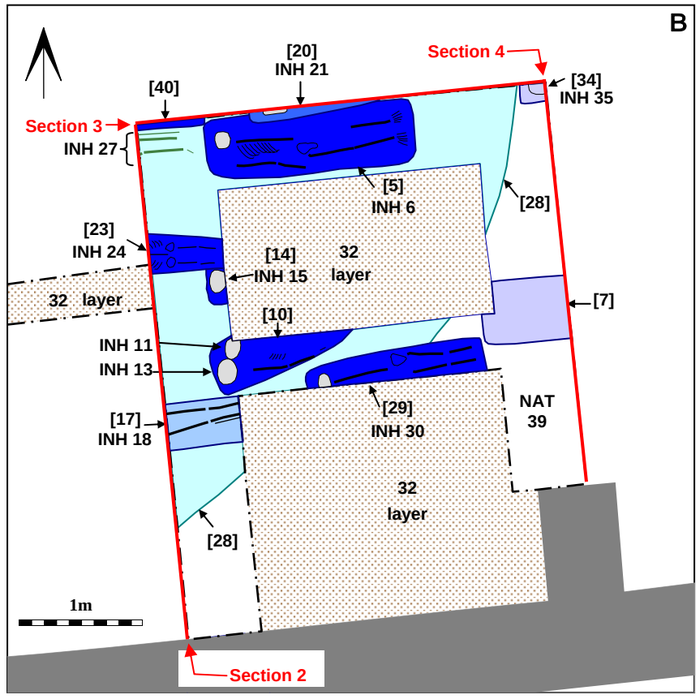
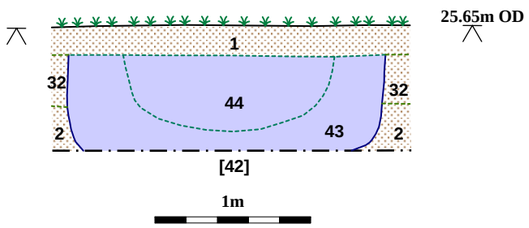


Figure 1: Site location plan









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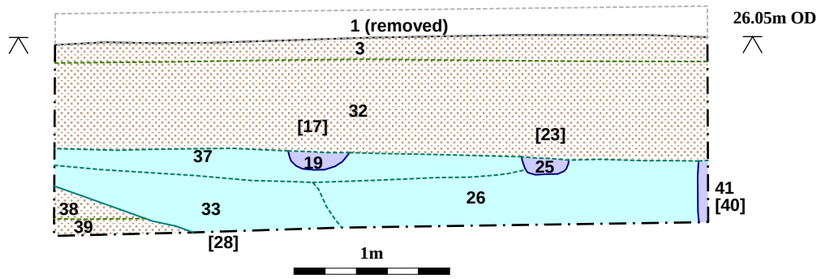

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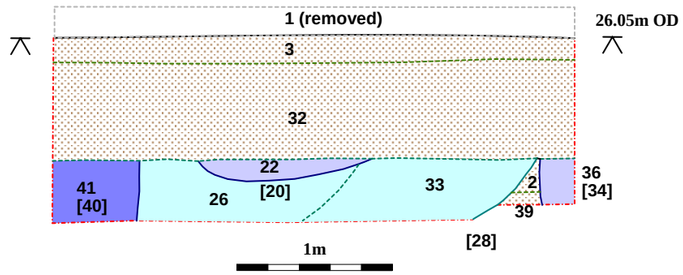

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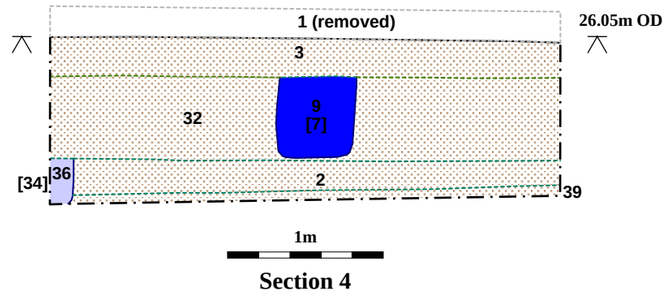

Section 4

Layer Grave Pit

Figure 2: All features

Burial [24]. Scale 0.2m

Eastern foundation trench

Figure 3: Selected photographs

Northern foundation trench

Western foundation trench

Figure 4: Selected photographs