

**ALL SAINTS' CHURCH  
SUTTON  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION  
AND RECORDING**

Project: SC1286

Document: 2008/86  
Version 1.0

16<sup>th</sup> September 2008

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Produced for:  
Parish of All Saints' Church  
Sutton  
Bedfordshire



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Albion Archaeology was invited by the Parochial Church Council to carry out archaeological observation and recording of improvement and drainage works at All Saints' Church, Sutton, Bedfordshire. The church is located on the north side of Church Road, to the west of the present village, and is centred on grid reference TL 21908 47530 (Figure 1).

The attendance of an archaeologist had been requested by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor as a precaution against the discovery of archaeological remains during the building works.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

All Saints' Church comprises a chancel, nave, north and south aisles, a south porch and west tower (Figure 3). Its construction is mainly of coursed cobblestone and ironstone rubble with the tower being dressed with ashlar.

The chancel, nave and south aisle date to the 13th century. Significant remodelling occurred during the 14th century, at which time the north aisle was constructed, and 15th century, when the south porch and tower were added. Significant repairs occurred to the tower during the 17th century with the majority of the roofs being replaced in the 19th century.

## 3. DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING WORKS

Internally, the improvement works to be archaeologically monitored comprised preparations for the installation of a toilet and kitchen in the ground floor of the tower. This involved the removal of loose plaster and render from the walls and ceiling and then removal and levelling of the existing floor. A hole was also to be drilled through the west wall of the tower for the connection of drainage for the new facilities.

Externally, the building works comprised the installation of a French drain adjacent to the west and north walls of the tower which would be connected to a new soakaway located approximately 4.5m to the west (Figure 2). A soil drain was also to be installed to the west of the tower to connect the new facilities to the existing sewer located in the road to the south of the church.

## 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

The external building works that required archaeological monitoring and recording took place from 6th -10th June with internal works occurring between 15th and-16th July 2008.

Methods employed during the project complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (1999), English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991), and Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* (2001).

A plan and digital photographic record was made of all significant features. All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence, and all artefacts were assigned to their proper context number. Following consultation with the DAA, 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.



A copy of this report and the project archive, which comprises all written and photographic records, will be stored at Albion Archaeology premises until an appropriate site for deposition is agreed. A copy of the report will also be forwarded to the Historic Environment Record at County Hall, Bedford; an electronic copy will be placed on OASIS.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 External Works

The groundworks for the installation of the French drain adjacent to the west and north wall of the tower comprised the hand excavation of a trench approximately 0.45m wide and 0.55 deep (Figure 4). The soil profile comprised *c.*0.20m of topsoil (103) which overlay brown sandy silt subsoil (104).

The exposed tower foundations comprised two courses of large, mainly sandstone, blocks (102) with the largest being around 0.90m long and 0.25m thick. The face of the foundation wall was patched in places with brick, mortar and cement. At the eastern end of the northern trench was an apparent cut through the foundations (106). It was roughly arched, approximately 0.23m wide and infilled with mortared pieces of stone (Figure 5).

The trench excavations did not extend below subsoil level therefore geological natural was not encountered. However, in the northern trench, the removal of overburden revealed a deposit of compacted brick and stone rubble (105) in the base of the trench (Figure 2).

The excavations for the soakaway measured 1.4m x 1.0m in area and 1.2m deep. The trench connecting it to the French drain measured 0.30m wide and 0.50m deep. Top and subsoil profiles were as previously encountered with natural geological deposits (112) comprising orange sand being located at a depth of around 0.65m below ground level in the soakaway excavations.

The trench for the soil pipe connecting the tower to the sewer network measured 0.45-0.60m wide and 0.55-0.60m deep (Figure 6). Topsoil (100) and subsoil (101) deposits were as described above but there was considerable root disturbance present in excavations located towards the boundary of the churchyard, in the vicinity of some mature trees.

No diagnostic finds were found in any of the external excavations. Some very small pieces of disarticulated human bone were found in the soil pipe trench in the vicinity of the tower and these were left on site for reburial.

### 5.2 Internal Works

Removal of loose render and plaster from the walls of the tower revealed two roughly carved inscriptions along with some other fainter markings on the north wall (Figure 7). The clearest of the two inscriptions appears to read "JOHN GREN is MY NAM" and is dated 1657. The other main inscription comprises four principal letters or symbols, the meaning of which is not clear.

The floor of the tower comprised brick and tile of various sizes (108) and this was removed to reveal a lime mortar bedding layer (109) which overlay a layer of brown silty



sand containing brick, tile and stone rubble (110). Within this deposit were fragments of clay tobacco pipe and some small pieces of disarticulated human bone. The latter were left on site for reburial. Overall, material was removed from the tower floor to a depth of around 0.35m below the previous floor level. The removal of this material revealed the remnants of a wall constructed of rough lumps of sandstone and cobblestone stretching between, and keyed into, the exposed footings lying beneath the arch columns of the tower.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The archaeological observation of the improvement works at All Saints' Church identified a number of features indicative of the development of the building. Inside, the remnants of a rubble wall stretching between the tower archway are likely to be the remains of the west wall of the nave which would have been demolished during construction of the tower in the 15th century.

The external works revealed a deposit of brick and tile rubble adjacent to the northern wall footings of the tower. This material may represent attempts to support or reinforce the foundations of the tower and it, along with other apparent brick patching of the footings, are possibly evidence of repairs to the tower known to have taken place in the 17th century. Similarly, the isolated inscriptions found within the tower may also be associated with this significant episode of building works.

Overall, few finds were identified in the excavations located within the churchyard. This is most likely due to the limited nature of the works and the general narrowness of the excavated trenches.



## 7. APPENDIX: CONTEXT SUMMARY



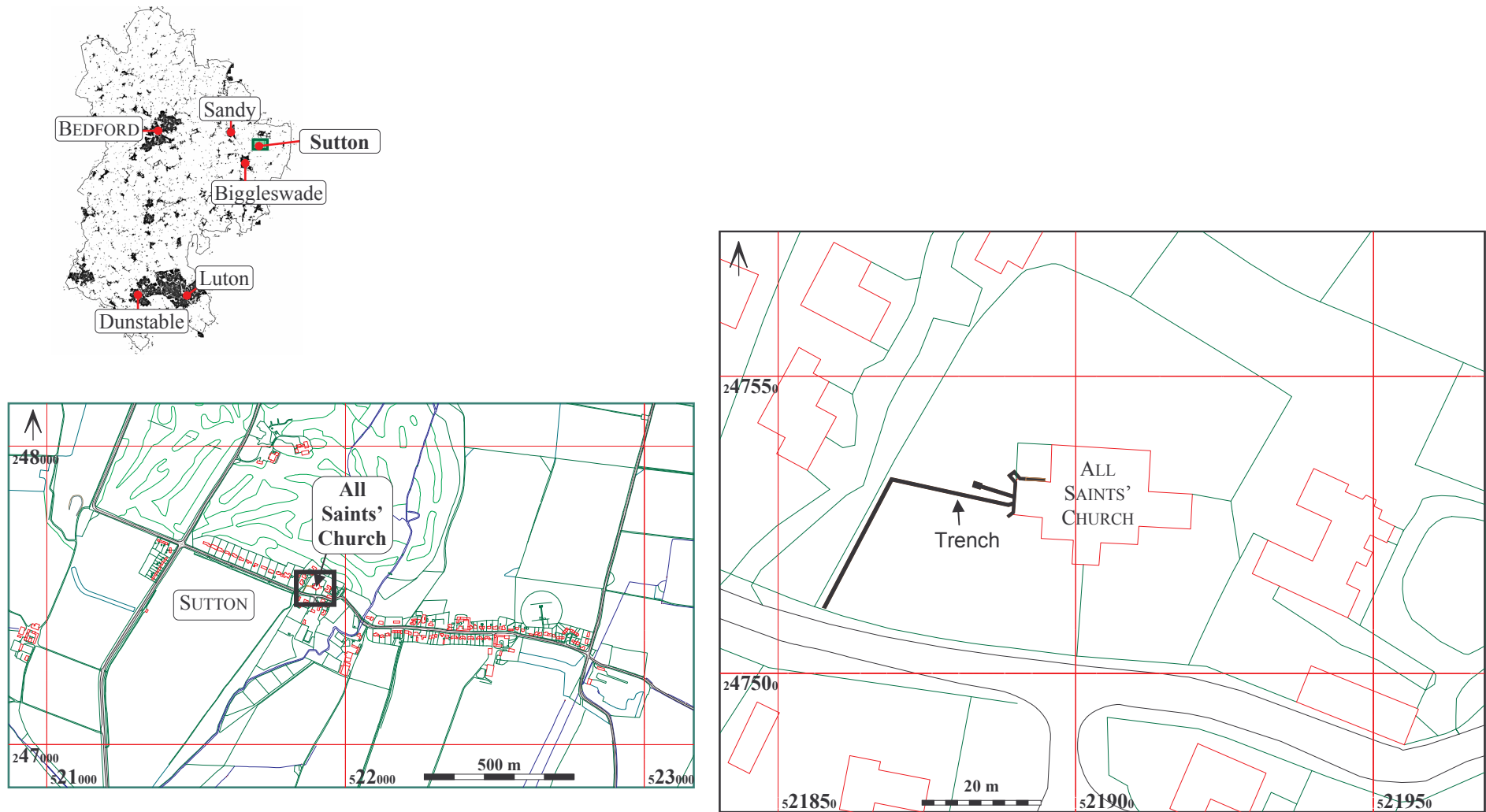
Area: 1

Extent (ha):

OS Co-ordinates: TL2190847530

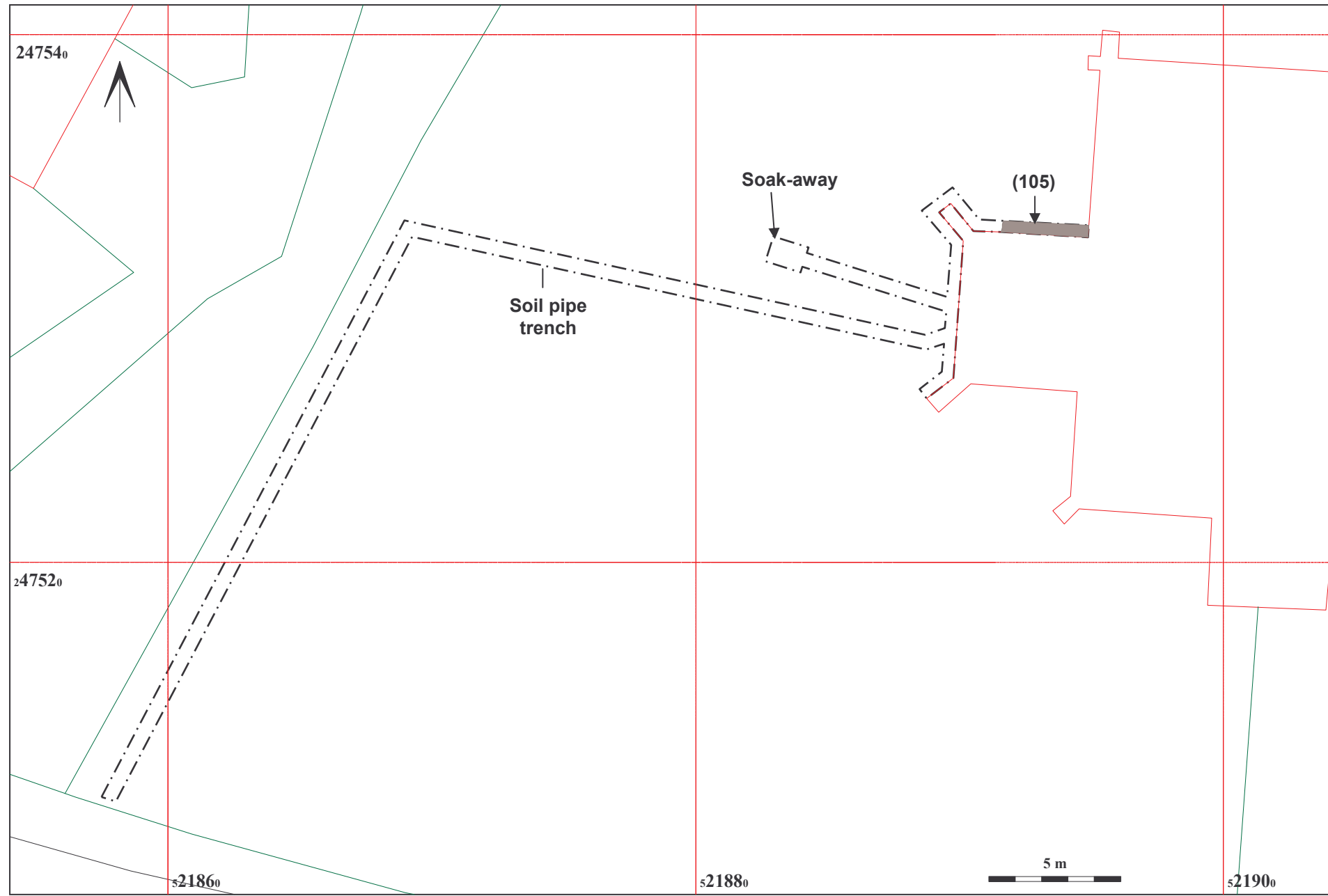
Description: Monitoring of improvements to drainage and installation of new facilities

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Firm dark grey clay silt . Topsoil of graveyard and soakaway. Rooty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Subsoil	Brown red clay silt occasional large stones. Subsoil. Occasional large fragmented flat stone, occasional human bone.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Foundation	Sandstone dressed blocks. West Tower foundations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Topsoil	Firm dark grey clay silt . Topsoil. As (100), for West Tower trench	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Subsoil	Subsoil. As (101), for West Tower trench. Occasional human bone.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Brick rubble	Rubble . Loose stones / bricks, friable, no frogs on bricks. Dimensions 0.12 x 0.04 x 0.11m to 0.11 x 0.03 x 0.22m. Ordinary red bricks = 0.1 x 0.07x 0.1m.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Drain	Dimensions: max breadth 0.23m, max depth 0.5m. Drain cut?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107		Protruding stone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Floor	Brick / tile floor of tower. Brick dimensions generally 0.10 x 0.19 x 0.06m, Tile dimensions generally 0.10 x 0.22 x 0.04m, although there is a great variety of sizes. Surface of tiles / bricks dull grey (lead glaze?) (for walking on).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109		Spread of lime mortar. Foundation for floor.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
110	Make up layer	Friable light brown silty sand frequent medium-large ceramic building material. Contains clay pipe.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
111		Single layer of roughly hewn / squared sandstone blocks. Keyed into archway (i.e. contemporary with arch). Ashlar bond. Line of stones aligned N-S	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
112	Natural	Friable orange sand . Natural geology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Figure 1: Site location plan**

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**Figure 2 Site plan**

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**Figure 3: All Saints' Church**





**Figure 4:** Excavations for French drain adjacent to west wall of tower



**Figure 5:** Infilled arched opening (106).





**Figure 6:** Excavations for soil pipe viewed from the tower.



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// JOHN  
CRENIGST  
IS MY NAM

**Figure 7:** View and interpretation of carved inscriptions located in the tower