

**CHURCH OF ST MARY
CARLTON
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION
INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING**

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Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Adam Lodoen	Robert Wardill	Drew Shottliff

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Parochial Church Council
Church of St Mary
Carlton
Bedfordshire



1. INTRODUCTION

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council to carry out archaeological observation and recording of drainage works at the Church of St Mary, Carlton, Bedfordshire.

The church is located approximately 400m to the southwest of the village, on the north side of Turvey Road, and is centred on grid reference SP 95178 54852 (Figure 1).

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

All work was carried out in accordance with a design brief issued by the DAA.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St Mary's Church comprises a 2-bay chancel, 3-bay nave, north and south aisles, a south porch and west tower. Its construction is of coursed limestone rubble with clay tile roofs.

There are some remains of Anglo-Saxon work in the north wall of the chancel and the base of the tower. The north and south aisle were added in the 14th century, and the chancel was extended eastwards. A clerestorey was added in the 15th century. The chancel screen and the top stage of the tower are also 15th century. Most of the pews and the pulpit are Jacobean.

3. DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING WORKS

The building works comprised the installation of trench arch drain, manhole and associated pipes connecting the drain to new toilet and kitchen facilities located in the tower (Figure 2).

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

The groundworks that required archaeological monitoring and recording took place from 30th September -7th October.

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. In accordance with the DAA brief and *Taking Care of Human Remains* (2000) issued by the Chancellor of the Diocese of St Albans, all human bone was left securely on site for 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, and details of the project will be submitted to the online OASIS archaeological database.



5. RESULTS

The groundworks comprised machine excavations for the installation of the trench arch drain, manhole and pipes west and south of the tower, and the hand excavation of a pipe trench west of the tower (Figure 2).

The trench arch drain excavation measured 1m wide, 10m long and 0.75m deep and was aligned E-W. A broken undecorated limestone sarcophagus (105) orientated N-S was uncovered beneath the topsoil, 3.30m from the west end of the trench. The cut for the sarcophagus extended beyond the northern edge of the excavation. The revealed remains of the sarcophagus comprised one large fragment (Figure 3) and a number of other smaller pieces; no lid was present. The large fragment was tapered and contained a quantity of semi-articulated and disarticulated human remains, all presumably from the same individual.

The excavation for the manhole measured 1m square and 1.80m deep. An approximately E-W orientated grave [108] was partially exposed extending out from the eastern edge of the excavation, at a depth of 0.95m below ground surface. The grave contained an articulated human skeleton, with skull to the west and all but the lower leg and foot bones exposed within the excavation. No grave cut or coffin was visible but undisturbed geological deposits were encountered 1.10m below the ground surface beneath the human remains, as opposed to 0.60m below ground surface on the south side of the excavations. This is probably an indication of the grave cutting into natural geology.

The machine dug pipe trench was 0.45m wide and 0.50m deep and around 8m long. No archaeological remains were observed in this trench. Likewise, the hand dug trench was of a similar or slightly shallower depth and contained no archaeological remains.

6. CONCLUSION

Archaeological remains were discovered in two locations during the archaeological observation of the drainage works.

The circumstances of the sarcophagus and associated human remains found in the trench arch drain excavations, i.e. fragmented, shallow depth and orientated north-south, indicate it is a redeposition of a significantly disturbed burial. The sarcophagus is characteristic of a medieval tomb but no other evidence was recovered that would provide insight into its origin.

The burial found within the manhole excavation was *in-situ*. The absence of a coffin indicates that is not a recent inhumation but the lack of associated finds limit further assessment of its date and significance.



7. APPENDIX: CONTEXT SUMMARY



Area: 1

Extent (ha):

OS Co-ordinates: SP9517854852

Description: Excavations for trench arch drain, manhole and pipes

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Dark grey brown clay silt . Depth 0.25m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay silt moderate small stones. Depth 0.20m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Mid grey brown silty clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Pit	Rectangular N-S	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Coffin	Limestone sarcophagus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Backfill	Mid grey brown clay silt . Backfill of grave	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Human skeleton		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Grave	Grave cut imperceptible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109	Backfill	Mid grey brown clay silt . Backfill of grave	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
110	Human skeleton		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

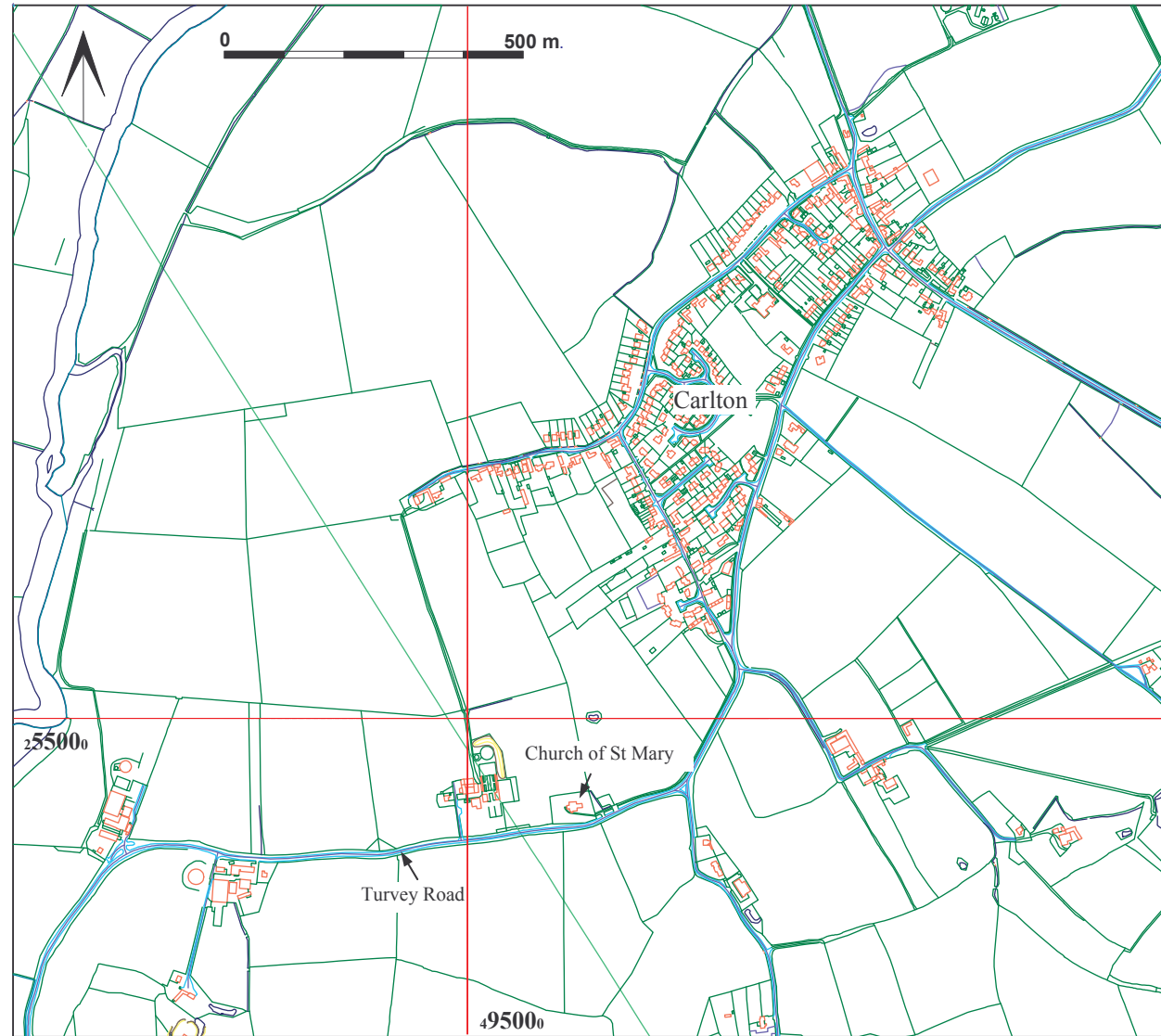
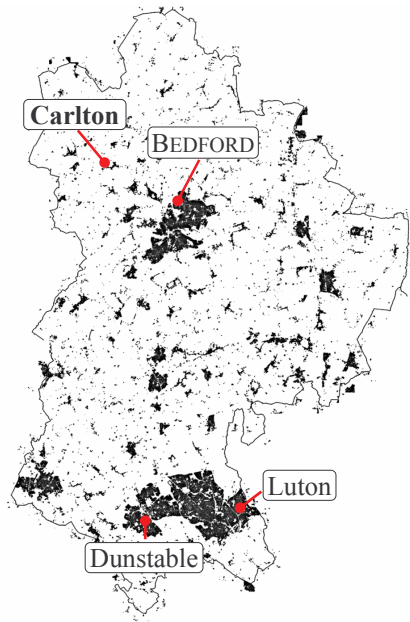


Figure 1: Site location map

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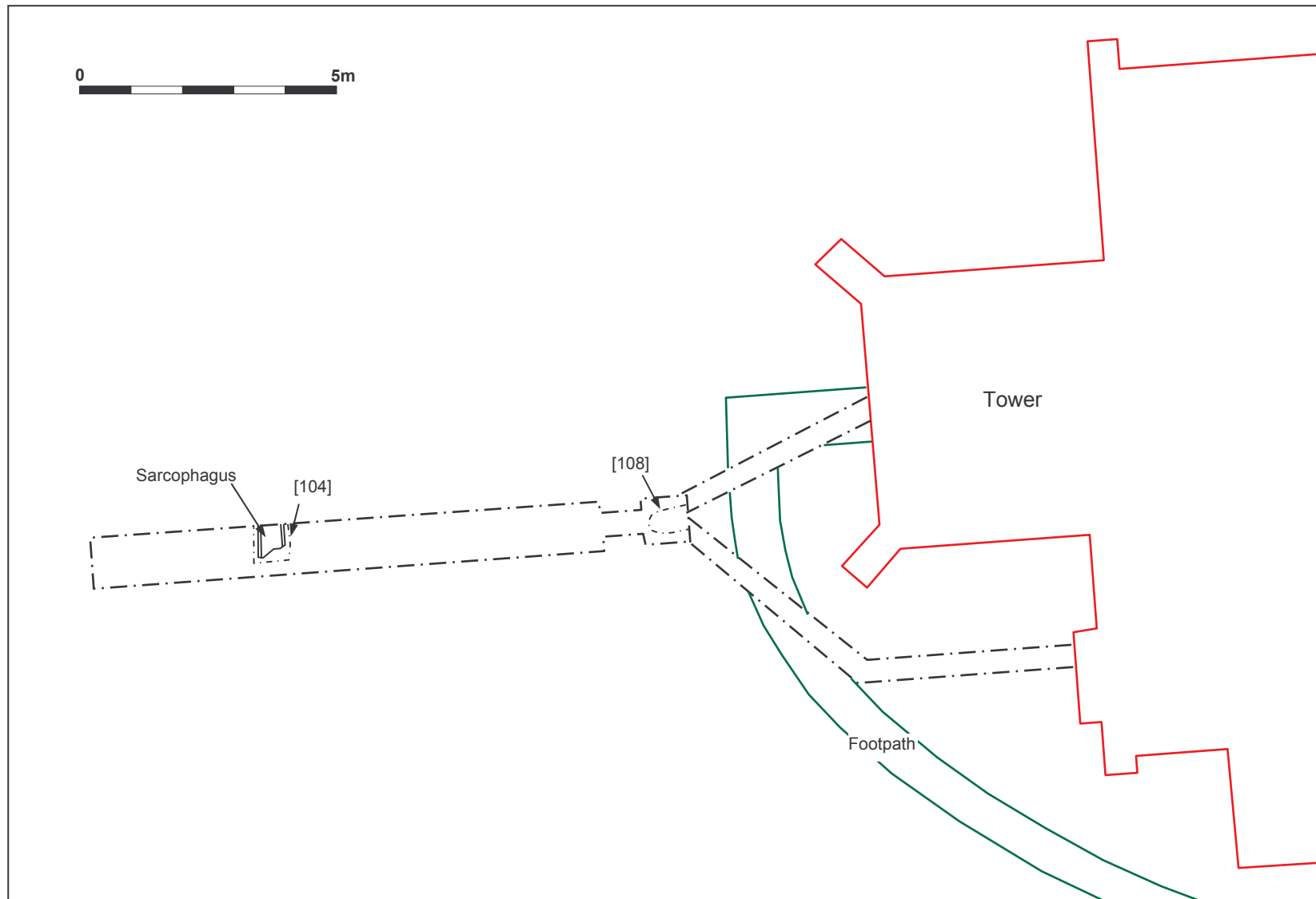


Figure 2: Site plan



Figure 3: Large fragment of sarcophagus