



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological investigation at
6 Church Walk, Bozeat, Northamptonshire
January 2011



Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire
County Council

Andy Chapman

Report 11/06

January 2011



OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	6 Church Walk, Bozeat	
Short description	Following recovery of a skull by builders, small scale excavation located further <i>in situ</i> remains and also remains of a second <i>in situ</i> burial, running beneath the house wall, and disarticulated remains of further individuals. It is likely that they had once lain within the corner of the adjacent churchyard, with this area taken into the present property by or before the 19th century.	
Project type	Excavation	
Site status	House is Grade II listed	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	House	
Future work	None	
Monument type/ period	Churchyard	
Significant finds	Human remains	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	6 Church Walk, Bozeat	
Study area	10sq.m	
OS Easting & Northing	SP 90649 59178	
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator		
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Andy Chapman	
Project Manager	Andy Chapman	
Sponsor or funding body	House owner/Northamptonshire Police	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	January 2011	
End date	January 2011	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content
Physical	NA	Human bone
Paper	NA	Site records
Digital	NA	Report
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	Archaeological investigation at 6 Church Walk, Bozeat, Northamptonshire: January 2011	
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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		12/01/11

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION	2
	Burial 1	
	Burial 2	
	Disarticulated remains	
3	CONCLUSION	7
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	8

Figures

Front Cover: Looking towards St Mary's Church, with 6 Church Walk to the right

Fig 1: Location of burials at 6 Church Walk, Bozeat

Fig 2: The skull of Burial 1, as photographed on site by the builders (from C&E 2010)

Fig 3: The burials lay beneath the floor of the garage, to the far left

Fig 4: Looking east, showing the north-east corner of the garage where the burials lay

Fig 5: Sketch plan showing burials beneath the garage floor

Fig 6: Looking north-east, showing Burial 1, left, and the disturbed area, the pit, containing bricks, to the right

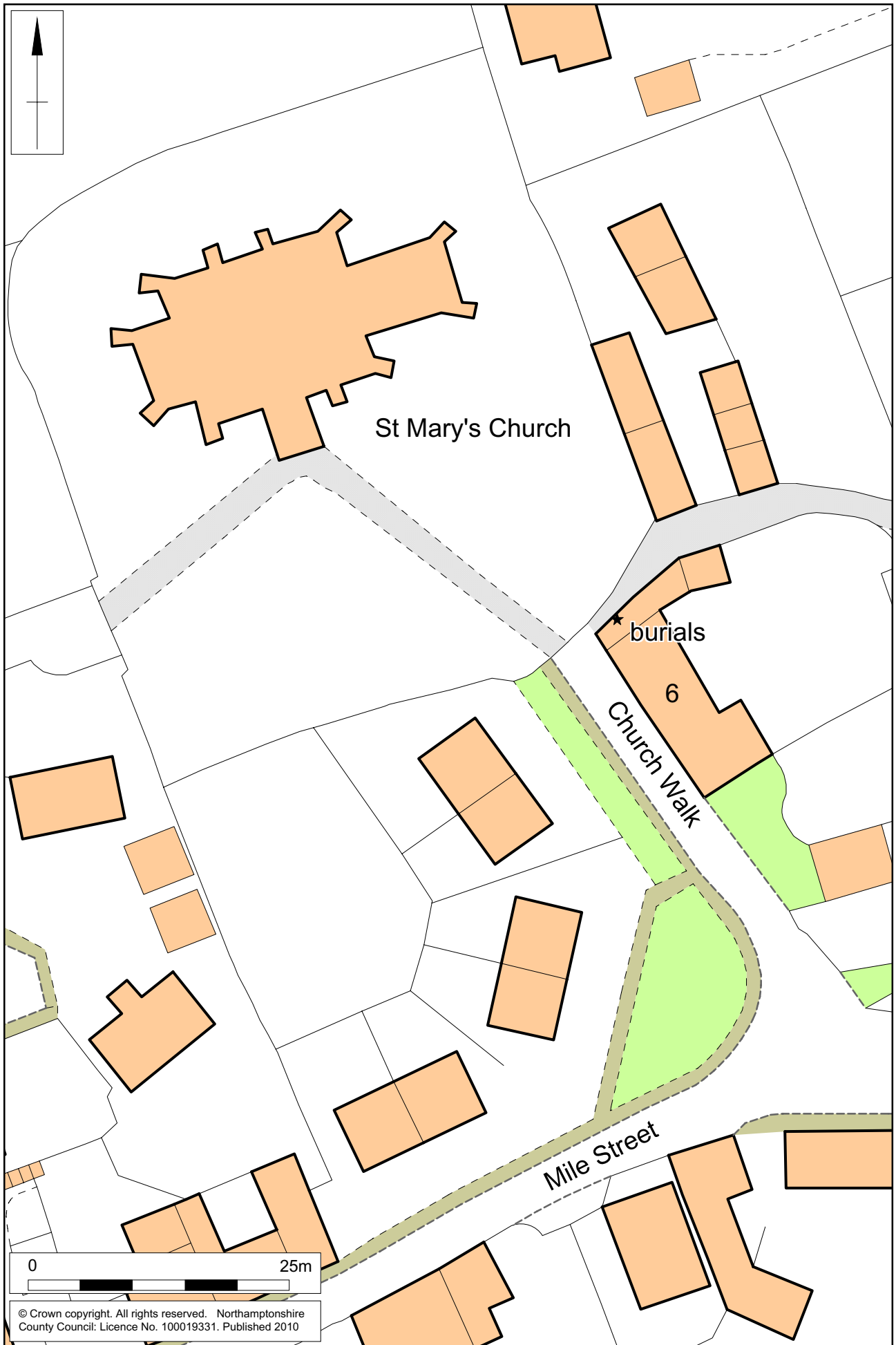
Fig 7: Looking west, showing surviving upper torso of Burial 1 and disarticulated femur within fill over Burial 2, to the right

Fig 8: Disarticulated human bone within fill over Burial 2, right, and showing the partially excavated later pit, bottom left, which had removed the lower body of Burial

Fig 9: Burial 2, looking north-east, showing *in situ* leg and foot bones

Fig 10: Burial 2, showing *in situ* leg and foot bones lying 120mm below the bottom course of the adjacent stone wall

Back cover: the doors to the garage beneath which the burials were found



1:500

Location of burials at 6 Church Walk, Bozeat Fig 1

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION AT
6 CHURCH WALK, BOZEAT, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
JANUARY 2011**

ABSTRACT

At the request of the owner through Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out a small-scale investigation to define and recover human remains following the unearthing by builders of a human skull beneath the floor of a house undergoing renovation. Excavation recovered the in situ remains of two individuals, with associated disarticulated remains from further burials. The remains lay within graves aligned roughly west-east and consistent with the alignment of the adjacent churchyard. It is suggested that these burials had once lain within the south-east corner of the churchyard, and that this area had later been taken into the property of 6 Church Walk, at the latest in the 19th century when the extension beneath which the burials were found was added to the existing building. A single sherd of pottery from beneath one of the burials is probably of medieval date.

1 INTRODUCTION

In December 2010 builders working on the renovation of 6 Church Walk, Bozeat, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 90649 59178; Fig 1), unearthed a human skull (Fig 2). The find was made whilst digging out beneath the floor of the garage, prior to underpinning, at the northern end of the two-storey extension (Fig 3 and back cover), which is separated from the churchyard wall by a narrow lane.

No. 6 Church Walk is listed Grade II (Images of England, Number 233280). The original central range is recorded as dating to the mid-18th century, while the additional range to the north, beneath which the burials lay, is dated to the 19th century.

Following examination of the remains, and reporting to the coroner, it was agreed that the remains were more than 100 years old and therefore not subject to further police investigation. In January 2011, Northamptonshire Archaeology were contacted by Northamptonshire Police acting on behalf of the owner, and it was agreed that a small scale excavation should be carried out to determine whether further human remains were present. This investigation was carried out on Monday, 10 January 2011.



The skull of Burial 1, as photographed on site by the builders (from C&E 2010) Fig 2



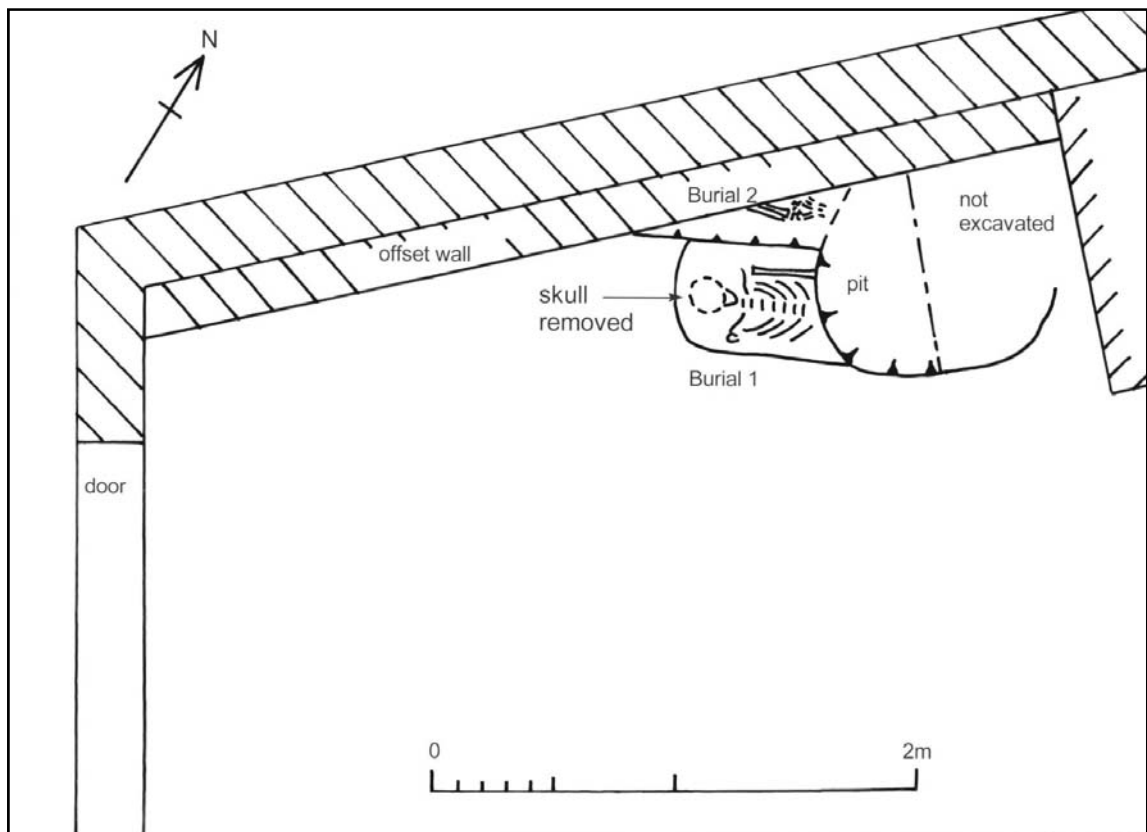
The burials lay beneath the floor of the garage, to the far left Fig 3

2 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

The builders indicated that the skull had been recovered closely adjacent to the upright wooden post, which supported the inner end of the sliding garage door (Fig 4). Attention was therefore focused on the strip of ground adjacent to the northern wall of the building, including the area where the skull had been recovered. Cleaning showed light-coloured natural to the west of the post, indicating that no burials lay in this area, although cleaning was not continued to the very western end of the room. To the east, a southern edge was located, leaving the north-east corner of the room containing darker soils, possibly grave fill. Across the southern half of the room, the exposed surface appeared to be a light coloured natural, showing no signs of major disturbance, as would be expected if graves had been cut through it, although it is possible that trampling may have obscured such detail. This area was not examined any further.



Looking east, showing the north-east corner of the garage where the burials lay Fig 4



Sketch plan showing burials beneath the garage floor Fig 5

Burial 1

Excavation adjacent to the wooden post located *in situ* human remains that relate to the skull previously recovered (Figs 5 & 6). These remains comprised the lower jaw and the upper torso: shoulder blades, collar bones, ribs and vertebrae. Most the left upper arm (humerus) survived, although the lower end had been lost, but only the joint at the top of the right upper arm (humerus) survived (Fig 7). The missing right arm might account for the other bones recovered by the builders, but not retained.

The grave was rectangular, 0.70m wide, with a slightly rounded western end, and was flat-bottomed. There was a little soil, 10-20mm, beneath the bones and the base of the grave, which survived to a maximum of 50mm deep. A single sherd of pottery from this soil is a medieval shelly coarseware, which was in use up to 1500AD. The body had been laid on its back, supine, with the arms at the side and the head to the west; the posture expected in a churchyard burial.

An initial examination has been made of the bones of Burial 1. This individual was of slight build, and the obtuse angle of the lower jaw is characteristically female. The lack of fusion of the cranial sutures, and presence of an epiphyseal scar on upper humerus and un-fused epiphyses on the collar bone are all consistent with an age of death in the late teens or early twenties (Brothwell 1972; Schaefer *et al* 2009; White & Folken 2005).

Further excavation showed that the remainder of the body and the lower limbs to the east had been removed at some time in the past by the digging of a sub-rectangular pit (Fig 5, pit). This had a loose fill containing fragments of limestone and mortar, suggesting that it belongs with the building of the house or later. The fill above this to the

east was clayey and contained bricks. This pit was partly excavated adjacent to the burials, to demonstrate that no *in situ* bones lay in this area, but it was not excavated adjacent to the wall at the eastern end of the room.



Looking north-east, showing Burial 1, left, and the disturbed area, the pit, containing bricks, to the right Fig 6



Looking west, showing surviving upper torso of Burial 1 and disarticulated femur within fill over Burial 2, to the right Fig 7



Disarticulated human bone within fill over Burial 2, right, and showing the partially excavated later pit, bottom left, which had removed the lower body of Burial 1 Fig 8

Burial 2

In uncovering Burial 1 some pieces of disarticulated human bone from another individual were recovered, and a disarticulated length of femur lay embedded in soil to the north of Burial 1. Once the bones of Burial 1 had been lifted and the underlying soils had been taken down to natural, it was evident that further dark soils lay between Burial 1 and the north wall of the building. The southern edge of this grave lay beneath the northern edge of the grave containing Burial 1, indicating that Burial 1 was later in date.

The grave containing Burial 2 had a straight near-vertical southern edge and a flat bottom, and was 0.20m deep. The eastern end of the grave had been removed by the same pit that had removed the lower body and limbs of Burial 1.

Disarticulated bones were scattered through the grave fill and, at the bottom, a length of femur, the longest of the disarticulated bones recovered, had been placed against the side of the grave (Fig 8), an action that is commonly found in cemeteries when disturbed bones have been deliberately replaced within a later grave.

At the base of the grave there was a tight cluster of ankle and toe bones *in situ*, with the right lower leg (tibia and fibula) also *in situ* and continuing under the adjacent stone wall (Fig 9). Upon lifting the foot bones, the exposed lengths of the right leg bones were also removed, and the ends of the left tibia and fibula were seen in section beneath the wall.

With Burial 2 little can be said about this individual when only the foot and the partial lower leg bones (tibia and fibula) are available. However, the absence of even an epiphyseal scar at the end of the tibia indicates that this was an adult, and a little extra

bone growth on the tibia and some of the ankle bones would suggest that they were mature but not old, perhaps mid-twenties to mid-thirties (Brothwell 1972; Schaefer *et al* 2009; White & Folkens 2005).

The north wall of the building was built in limestone and stood on foundations that were 0.35m deep, comprising two or three courses of limestone, with a 200mm offset between the standing wall and the foundations. In section, the base of this wall stood some 120mm above Burial 2, resting on the grave fill (Fig 10). This suggests that the remainder of this burial may remain intact beneath the wall. There was no evident construction trench for the wall, which appeared to directly abut the grave fills, although numerous plant roots ran along the buried wall face.

Disarticulated remains

The human bone recovered disarticulated within the grave of Burial 2 is from at least one further individual. That it is not from disturbance of Burial 2 itself is demonstrated by the presence of the lower end of a tibia and of an ankle bone, the talus, both of which are present *in situ* with Burial 2. The majority of the material comes from the lower torso and upper legs, including much of two matching femurs, and the accompanying bones of the pelvis and part of the sacrum. These bones are all from a mature adult (Brothwell 1972; Schaefer *et al* 2009; White & Folkens 2005). There are also some ribs, vertebrae and the lower end of a radius. However, a length of disarticulated femur recovered during the excavation of Burial 1, but probably in the fill above Burial 2 (Fig 7, lying to the right of Burial 1), is part of a third femur, indicating that the disarticulated material comes from a minimum of two individuals.



Burial 2, looking north-east, showing *in situ* leg and foot bones Fig 9



Burial 2, showing *in situ* leg and foot bones (right of base of scale) lying 120mm below the bottom course of the adjacent stone wall Fig 10

3 CONCLUSION

The excavation demonstrated the presence of two graves, both aligned west-south-west to east north-east, with the heads at the west end. In addition, the deeper grave had also disturbed a previous burial(s). A disturbed length of femur, the longest of the disarticulated bones recovered, had been carefully placed against the side of the new grave and other bones were scattered through the fill.

All of these characteristics would be expected to occur within a well used parish churchyard, as occurs in England from the late Saxon period onward. The alignment of the graves is also very similar to the alignment of the boundaries of the adjacent churchyard, while they are at an oblique angle to the north wall of the house. As the legs of one of the burials have been shown to continue beneath the house wall, it has been demonstrated that the burials pre-date this building, which dates to the 19th century. A single sherd of pottery found beneath one of the burials is of medieval date.

The most likely explanation for the presence of these burials is that the south-east corner of the adjacent churchyard was once square, with the excavated burials lying in the corner of that churchyard. This corner was later cut off, perhaps even specifically to allow for the addition of the north range of the house in the 19th century. As the house was then held by the church, an extension into a corner of the churchyard would not have been a problem.

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