

St. Andrew's Church, Orwell

Monitoring of Ground Works for a New Heating System



Jonathan Tabor

St Andrew's Church, Orwell, Cambridgeshire

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University of Cambridge

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Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit at St. Andrews Church, Orwell, Cambridgeshire (TL 362 504), during groundworks ahead of the installation of a new heating system. The work was carried out in response to a condition on planning consent (ref S/1937/13/FL) requiring the careful gathering and re-interment of any human remains encountered during the works.

Work was undertaken over three days between the 2nd and 10th December 2013 and involved monitoring the excavation of pipe trenches to the north and west of the church and the construction of a concrete base for a gas tank to the west of the church (see attached plan). All work was external with no disturbance to the internal floor of the church undertaken.

The existing structure of St. Andrews Church (CHER Ref: 3235) dates from the 12th century, although a Saxon gravestone in the porch suggests it may have earlier origins. Additions, including the 13th century tower, were made in the 13th-15th centuries, with renovations also undertaken in the 19th century.

Finds around the immediate vicinity of the church have included Roman pottery in Chapel Orchard (CHER: 10574A) and in a scatter of material to the east, which also included Saxon material (CHER: 03268, 03268A); and several finds and sites of a medieval date including earthworks (possibly house platforms) at Chapel Orchard (CB14639), a possible motte site to the south (CHER: 03267), and ditches, walls and pottery to the south west (CHER: 10574).

Observations and Results

Gas tank base

An area measuring 1.1 x 2.1m was hand excavated to a depth of 0.3m exposing topsoil 0.25m thick overlying a silty clay subsoil. No archaeological features were encountered although 24 small fragments of disarticulated bone (largely human), as well as a single sherd of courseware pottery of probable medieval date were collected. In addition, fragments of roof tile, again probably medieval in date, were noted within the topsoil.

Pipe trenches

Two pipe trenches were excavated in the course of the groundworks:

Firstly, a water pipe trench 0.3m wide and 8m in length, running from an existing stand pipe/tap to the west end of the church was excavated to a depth of 0.7m. The trench revealed topsoil c. 0.2m thick overlying a clayey silt sub soil. Four small disarticulated fragments of human bone were collected from the trench.

Secondly, a gas pipe trench 0.3m wide and c. 45m in length was excavated running from the site of the gas tank to the west of the church around its north aisle to the

vestry. The gas pipe trench was excavated to a depth of 0.6m. To the west of the church the trench revealed topsoil overlying a silty clay subsoil, however, to the north of the church a relatively extensive rubble deposit was encountered below the topsoil. The deposit was most substantial adjacent to the north aisle and contained post-medieval brick and tile fragments alongside earlier medieval tile fragments and occasional fragments of dressed clunch. A fragment of bottle glass and two clay pipe fragments were also recovered. Both the topsoil and rubble layer contained quantities of disarticulated human bone (*c.* 110 fragments in total), which was found to be most concentrated adjacent to the north aisle. A femur and pelvic bone located close to the vestry were the only potentially articulated/*in situ* bones encountered. Recorded in the base of the trench at a depth of 0.6m (and therefore left *in situ*) the potential bone deposit occurred within an apparently landscaped mound and had been severely truncated in the past. Within such a confined excavation (0.3m wide), however, the bones could not be confirmed as an *in situ* burial/grave, indeed given its relative height to the church (approximately at floor level), this seems in many respects unlikely.

Discussion

The presence of disarticulated human bone within the excavated trenches is to be expected and no firm evidence of *in situ* burials was encountered at the depths excavated. The rubble layer adjacent to the north aisle, which was constructed in the 19th century, appears likely to have resulted from building works/landscaping associated with its construction. The increased presence of disarticulated human bone in this area also suggests that the 19th century works may have disturbed a number of burials.

All human bone was reburied at the site following completion of the excavation with the agreement of the Revd. Felicity Couch.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Katie Reid who arranged the monitoring work on behalf of the church and the Rev. Couch for enabling the speedy re-interment of the disarticulated bone. Groundworks were carried out by Sam Meade for the Church. Observations were made by the author, graphics by Vicki Herring.

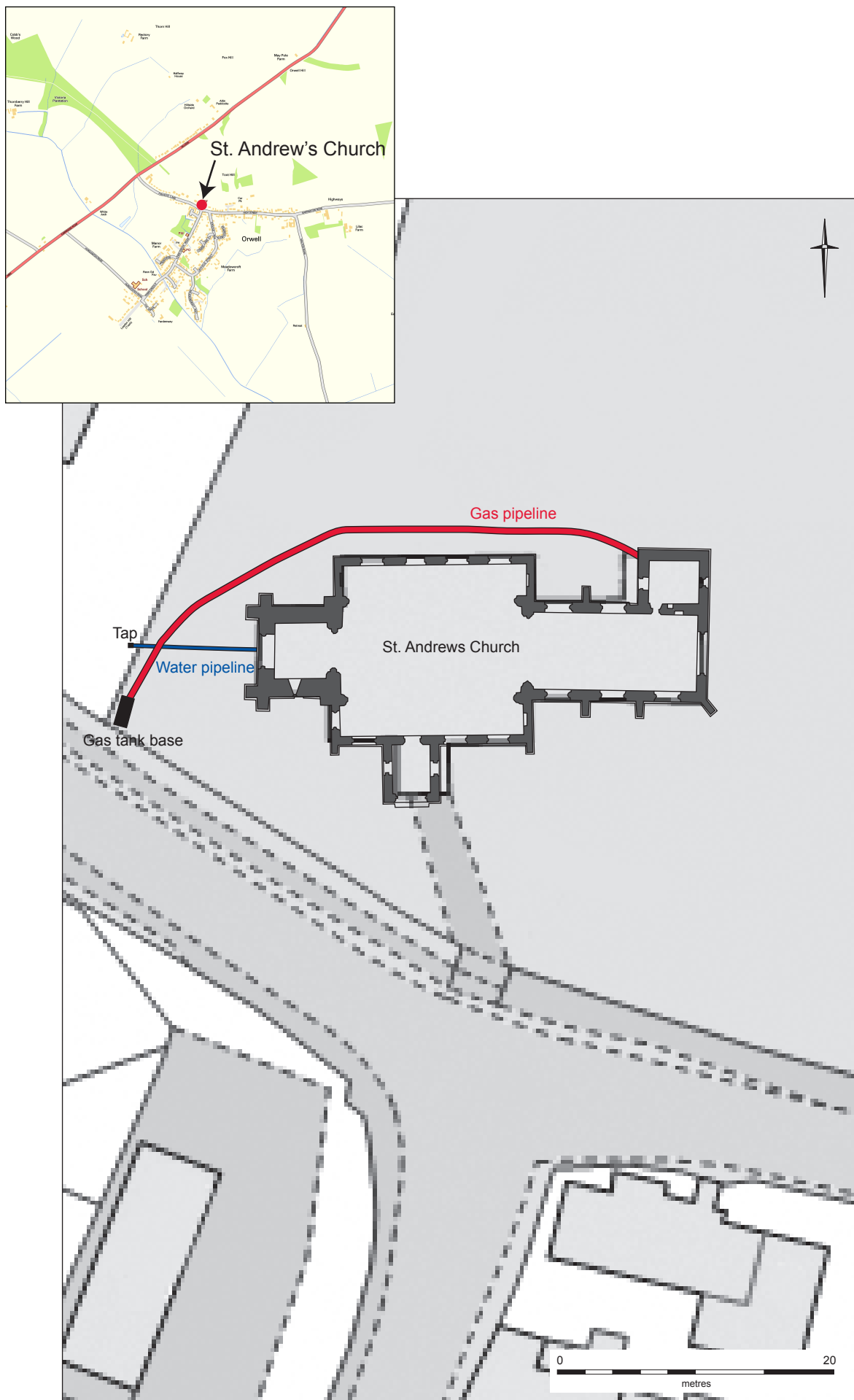


Figure 1: Site and Observation Locations

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OASIS ID: cambridg3-172440

Project details

Project name	Monitoring at Orwell Church
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit at St. Andrews Church, Orwell, Cambridgeshire, during groundworks ahead of the installation of a new heating system. No archaeological features or artefacts were observed. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was re-interred immediately on site.
Project dates	Start: 02-12-2013 End: 10-12-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4134 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	SAD13 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE ORWELL St. Andrews Church, Orwell
Postcode	SG8 5TH
Study area	260.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 36258 50503 52.1355731952 -0.00888318754626 52 08 08 N 000 00 31 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 37.00m Max: 37.50m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Parochial Church Council
Project design originator	Alison Dickens
Project director/manager	Alison Dickens
Project supervisor	Jonathan Tabor
Type of sponsor/funding body	Parochial Church Council
Name of sponsor/funding body	St. Peter's Church, Orwell

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
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Paper Media available	"Notebook - Excavation', ' Research', ' General Notes', "Report"

Project bibliography 1

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