

St. Andrew's Church, Oakington, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Monitoring January 2017



Dave Webb & Alison Dickens

**ST ANDREW'S CHURCH,
OAKINGTON
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:**

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Summary

The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook the archaeological monitoring of works for a new drain and soakaway at Saint Andrew's Church Oakington, Cambridgeshire. The monitoring took place on 30th January 2017. The works identified a single articulated burial and indications of two others, disturbance of all was avoided in completion of the works. A background level of disarticulated human remains was observed within the churchyard.

Introduction

The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook archaeological monitoring of excavation works for a new drain and soakaway at Saint Andrew's Church Oakington, Cambridgeshire. No planning condition for archaeology had been placed on the works by South Cambridgeshire District Council, but the faculty (dated 3rd November 2016) required that monitoring take place during groundworks. The work was commissioned by Brian Page on behalf of Oakington PCC.

The monitoring of the works took place on 30th January 2017. The works were required to provide a drain and soakaway for the newly refurbished roof over the east end of the church, with the drain to serve the south side of the new roof.

Location and Topography

The church of Saint Andrews (CHER: 05557) is located at TL41493, 64805 on the east side of the High Street. The church is listed Grade II* and includes builds of the early and late 13th, 15th and 19th centuries.

The village of Oakington lies on a low lying ridge around a mile north east of the line of the former Roman road *Via Devana* and about 7 miles from Cambridge. The ancient parish of Oakington covered 1,692 acres (685 ha) with the *Via Devana* marking its south-western boundary with Dry Drayton. The Beck Brook separated it from Westwick to the north and Histon to the east, and field boundaries divided it from Longstanton to the north-west, and Girton to the south. The church sits at about 13m OAD overlooking part of the Beck Brook valley, some 5m below it.

The local geology is Woburn Sands formation, overlain with sands, 4th terrace gravels and alluvium in places, themselves overlying Gault clay (British Geological Survey 1981).

Archaeological background

Finds of various periods are recorded within 250m of the church. Little is known in the way of prehistoric remains, but Roman finds and features are recorded from the vicarage immediately to the east (CHER:05175), and around the manor which lies to the west (CHER: 05176). Further away Roman features are recorded at Coles Lane (MCB16820) and there are likely others based on aerial photography. A large and important Saxon cemetery has been investigated about 250m southeast of the church (CHER:10912). Evidence of settlement has also been found in the investigations and in test-pitting across the village, including single sherds of early and middle Saxon pottery on the churchyard (Mortimer 2009: 6). The interpretation is that the churchyard lies within this early area of village settlement.

In 2009 a watching brief was carried out on the area of the then new Church Meeting Room, approximately 20m south east of the present location (Mortimer 2009). In the main hall footprint loose bone from disturbed burials was recovered for reburial and

the upper levels of in situ burials were uncovered in part, though without further disturbance. The base of that trench lay entirely within the burial soil and no earlier deposits or features were recorded. In the service trench, running from the road to the new hall, articulated burials and disarticulated bones were recorded. At the west end, closest to the road, three ditches crossed the line of the trench, dated by the excavators to the 12th or 13th centuries, likely indicating changes in the churchyard boundary over time (Mortimer 2009: 10).

Methodology

The objective of the monitoring programme was to identify the presence and character of any surviving archaeological remains occurring within the area of investigation, and to observe the presence of human remains. In accordance with current guidelines to recover any disturbed disarticulated human remains for immediate reburial and to identify the location of intact burials so that they could be avoided (Mays 2005; Brickley and McKinley 2004 - nb: both these guidelines were updated in 2017 but neither was published at the time of this recording, Mays 2017; Mitchell & Brickley 2017).

The excavation by mini digger and by hand was carried out by operatives from Hibbetts under archaeological supervision by CAU staff. Recording was carried out following the CAU modified MoLAS system of archaeological site recording (Spence 1994). All work was carried out in accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of FAME (Allen & Holt 2010). In total an area of approximately 5.50 square metres was monitored.

Results

A pipe trench and a single soakaway pit were excavated and monitored, the results are as follows:

Pipe Trench

Dimensions: Length 7m x width 0.30m maximum depth 0.30m orientated north-northwest to south-southeast.

The pipe trench commenced at a point approximately one metre south of the east end of the church at a point that served the downpipe coming from the south side of the roof.

0.00-0.10m: The topsoil comprised of a very dark grey sandy clay loam with a moderate frequency of small to medium sub—angular gravel inclusions, poorly sorted.

0.10-0.30m: The underlying subsoil and redeposited grave soil, very dark grey sandy clay with a moderate frequency of small to medium sub—angular gravel inclusions, poorly sorted.

No articulated human remains were encountered in the pipe trench.

Soakaway Pit

Dimensions: Length 2.10m x width 1.40m depth 0.80m, orientated roughly east to west.

The pit was located at the southern end of the pipe trench, close to the churchyard path.

0.00-0.10m: The topsoil was comprised of a very dark grey sandy clay loam with a moderate frequency of small to medium sub—angular gravel inclusions, poorly sorted.

0.10-0.30m: Subsoil and redeposited grave soil; very dark grey sandy clay with a moderate frequency of small to medium sub-angular gravel inclusions, occasional disarticulated human remains, poorly sorted..

0.30-0.80m: Subsoil and redeposited grave soil, dark yellowish grey sandy clay with a moderate frequency of small to medium sub—angular gravel inclusions, occasional disarticulated human remains, poorly sorted.

Human Remains

At a depth of 0.70m articulated human remains were partially exposed in the southeast corner of the soakaway pit. Excavation revealed the lower torso, pelvis and upper leg bones of an adult skeleton in a supine position with arm bones aligned parallel to the body aligned in a west - east direction. The skeleton was moderately well preserved.

At this point deeper excavation was discontinued to avoid further disturbance of any *in situ* burials and the pit was extended westwards to the same depth. Gentle probing of the ground revealed further articulated remains to the west and north of the uncovered remains suggesting the likely presence of further intact burials.

The soakaway pit was extended horizontally at a sufficient depth that would avoid any further disturbance of burials and achieve the specified volume for the function of the soakaway. The exposed remains were covered with a protective material and the grave fill replaced. No articulated burials were disturbed.

Discussion

As excavation was stopped at the point of exposing articulated remains, detailed examination of the graves and remains was not possible. Given the long history of burial in the churchyard it is also not possible to state what period these burials might belong to.

The small amount of disarticulated bone arising was immediately reburied.

No other archaeological features were observed.



Figure 1: Location of St Andrew's Church in Oakington (contains Ordnance Survey data (c) Crown copyright and database right 2018)

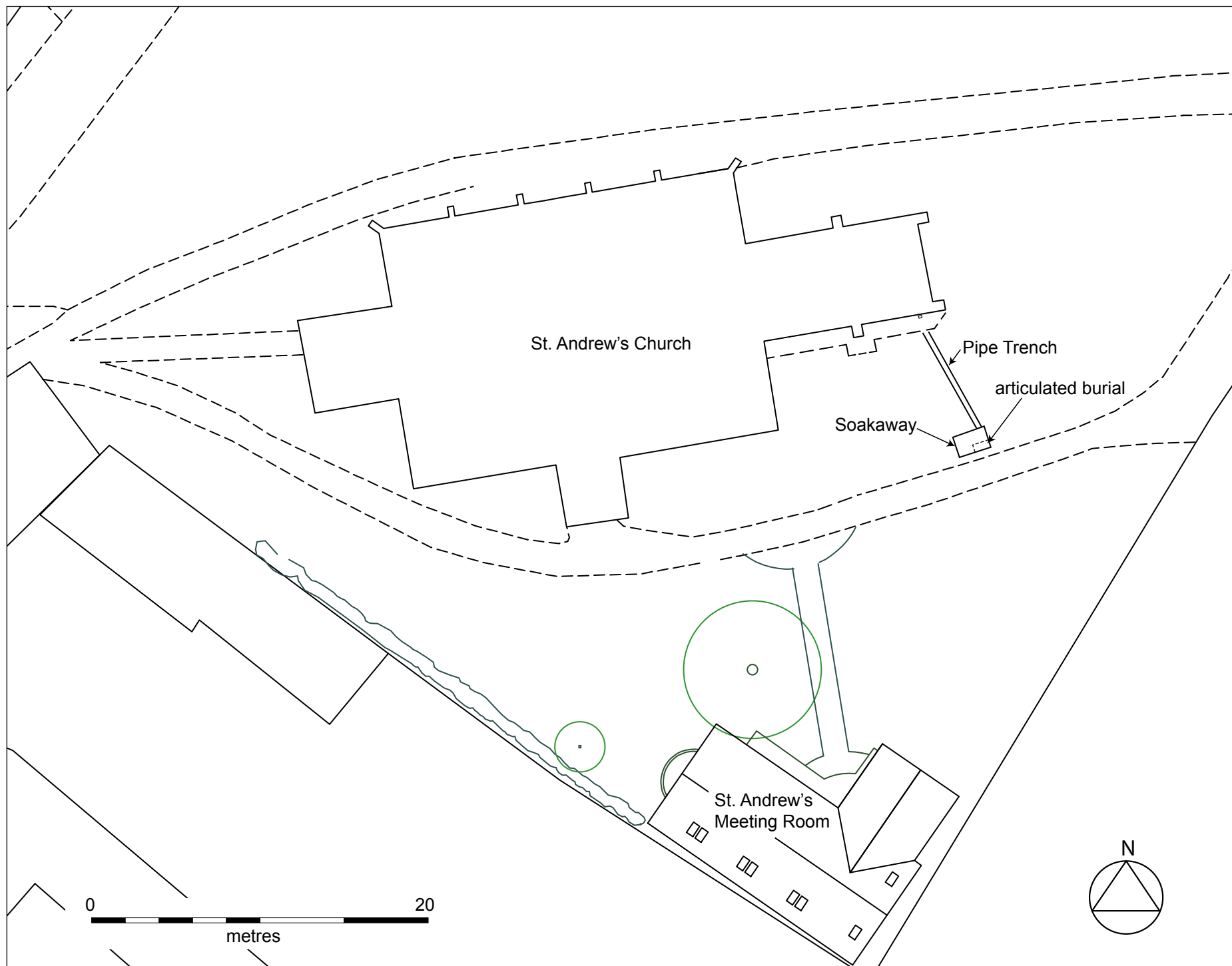


Figure 2: Pipe Trench and Soakaway Location (base data from survey provided by Brian Page)



Figure 3: Backfilled Pipe Trench from North



Figure 4: Expanded Soakaway Completed

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Project details

Project name	Achaeolgical Monitoring at St Andrew's Church, Oakington
Short description of the project	The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook the archaeological monitoring of works for a new drain and soakaway at Saint Andrew's Church Oakington, Cambridgeshire. The monitoring took place on 30th January 2017. The works identified a single articulated burial and indications of two others, disturbance of all was avoided in completion of the works. A background level of disarticulated human remains was observed within the churchyard.
Project dates	Start: 30-01-2017 End: 31-08-2019
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ECB5983 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Field observation","Recorded Observation"
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE OAKINGTON AND WESTWICK St Andrew's Church, Oakington
Postcode	CB24 3AN
Study area	5.5 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 41493 64805 52.262765396961 0.073536583749 52 15 45 N 000 04 24 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 13m Max: 13m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Parochial Church Council
Project design originator	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project director/manager	Alison Dickens
Project supervisor	David Webb
Type of sponsor/funding body	Parochial Church Council
Name of sponsor/funding body	Oakington PCC

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
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Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
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