

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Mary the Virgin Ticehurst, East Sussex.**

**Planning Ref: RR/2006/2055/P**

**NGR: 568810 130060  
(TQ 68810 30060)**

**Project No:2820  
Site Code: SMT06**

**ASE Report No. 2009121  
OASIS id:62882**



**Sarah Porteus  
With contributions by  
Elke Raemen**

**September 2009**

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*Abstract*

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeology South-East on behalf of John D Clarke and Partners Chartered Architects during ground works and alterations to the south wall of St Mary's church Ticehurst between the 9<sup>th</sup> of May and the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2009. Some 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century repairs to the south wall and window were identified where original features had been partly replaced by brick and render. Burials within the cemetery were found to be associated only with headstone locations and respect the present day path locations; there appears to be little intercutting of burials. An older path was found beneath a present day path suggesting the layout of the churchyard has altered little. Post-medieval subterranean brick and stone tombs were located within the excavated trenches suggesting some wealthy burials.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East were commissioned by John D. Clarke and Partners Chartered Architects to undertake an archaeological watching brief at St Mary's Church, Ticehurst, East Sussex (NGR 568810 130060) (fig. 1).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

- 1.2.1 The underlying geology is Wealden Clay. The Church is located on a slight hill with the works being undertaken on a moderate south to north downwards slope.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 Planning permission was granted by Rother District Council for a single storey extension to the south of the church (Ref: RR/2006/2055/P). An archaeological condition was attached to the permission by the archaeological officers of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) in their role as advisors to Rother District Council which states:

*No development shall take place until the implementation of a programme of archaeological works has been secured in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason:

*To protect items of archaeological interest and to accord with Policy S1(j) of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011 and GD1(viii) of the Rother District Local Plan.*

- 1.3.2 It was agreed between Vivienne Coad, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA) and the planning archaeologist of ESCC that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during intrusive groundworks.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.4.1 The general aim of the works as given in the Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2008) was to monitor the ground works in order to ensure that any human remains, structural remains, grave stones, features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected by the excavations were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.
- 1.4.2 The work was to include monitoring of general ground reduction, any internal ground works and alterations to the south wall.

### **1.5 Scope of Report**

- 1.5.1 This report represents the findings of the watching brief undertaken between

the 5<sup>th</sup> of May and the 28<sup>th</sup> July 2009 by Giles Dawkes and Dylan Hopkinson (Senior Archaeologists) and Sarah Porteus and Kathryn Grant (Archaeologists). The project was managed by Neil Griffin (field work) and Jim Stevenson (post excavation).

## **2.0 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Archaeology South-East in December 2006 in the area to be affected by the works (ASE 2007). Four test pits were excavated. Small quantities of human bone were recovered with a few finds consisting of pottery, roofing slate and moulded stone. Two articulated adult burials were also encountered at a depth of 1.20metres below surface level.
- 2.2** An archaeological historical background was given as part of the evaluation report (*ibid.*) and is reproduced below with due acknowledgement.
- 2.2.1 Iron-working is known in the area from about 100BC onwards. At Frant some 7m to the west, an Iron Age hillfort (Saxonbury) was excavated in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ticehurst itself lies along a Roman road sited on an east-west ridge of land, and Roman iron bloomery settlements have been excavated at Bardown and Holbeamwood in Stonegate c. 2 miles south-west of Ticehurst (Drewe 1991).
- 2.2.2 The site lies in an area of rich historic background probably dating back to at least 1018, and Ticehurst is mentioned in the Domesday Book (*ibid.*).
- 2.2.3 The present church, with the exception of the tower which is mostly 13<sup>th</sup> century, was constructed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and is thought to overlie an earlier church, probably of wooden construction. The tracery of the four windows in the south aisle is probably of 16<sup>th</sup> century origins, though they are now filled with 19<sup>th</sup> century stained glass (*ibid.*).

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1** All intrusive groundworks were monitored by an appropriately qualified archaeologist (fig.2).
- 3.2** Where significant archaeological remains were identified machine excavation ceased and the features were excavated and recorded by hand.
- 3.3** All archaeological features were planned and sections drawn on plastic draughting film, where appropriate, to a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 as required.
- 3.4** A paper record was made of all features to an appropriate archaeological standard. Soil colours were recorded by visual inspection and not with reference to the Munsell Colour Chart.
- 3.5** A full black and white film, colour slide and digital photographic record was kept of the works.
- 3.6** The spoil from the excavations was also inspected to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest.
- 3.7** All archaeological features were levelled in relation to the church benchmark (110.90m AOD).
- 3.8** Any features other than human remains were planned photographed and recorded and excavated in order to establish date, condition and character.
- 3.9** Where human remains were uncovered these were recorded on *proforma* sheets and their location planned before removal and storage in a secure location. Disarticulated human remains (from previously disturbed burials) were noted, removed and stored in a secure location. Only human remains to be affected by the present works were removed, all others were left *in situ*. All human remains are to be re-interred within the graveyard. A home office licence for exhumation was not required as the site is under the jurisdiction of the Church of England and the authority to remove remains has been granted under ecclesiastical faculty.
- 3.10** Brick vaulted tombs encountered on the site were recorded as above.
- 3.11** The location of structural piling was designed to avoid the probable location of burials as indicated by extant headstones. During the augered piling the upcast was monitored and inspected by an archaeologist to recover any finds or remains.
- 3.12** An archaeologist was present to monitor the opening of the south wall to inspect the structure for archaeological evidence and recover any masonry of archaeological interest.

Number of Contexts	30
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	0
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	1 CD digital photographs, 1 film B&W and colour slide.
Bulk finds	1 box
Registered finds	1
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

## 4.0 RESULTS (fig. 3)

- 4.1** During the piling phase of works no human remains were recovered however a few fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) were identified in the up cast from pile holes 1 and 2 and a fragment of corroded iron nail from pile 4 may have been from a coffin.
- 4.2** Pile 5 hit solid ground at approximately 3 metres depth. Consequently, the location of this pile was changed with two piles being sunk (5a and 5b) one either side of the original location to the west and east.
- 4.3** The general stratigraphy of the site was natural yellow clay [102] overlain by a cemetery soil of mottled yellowish brown clay [101] into which a number of burials and tombs were cut. Over the majority of the churchyard cemetery soil [101] was overlain by grey brown clayish silt topsoil [100].
- 4.4** Immediately surrounding the church [101] was overlain by sandy made ground [104], directly beneath the existing concrete path [103]. Along the southern perimeter of the churchyard approximately 20 metres to the south of the church, an old path [127] was located above [101], beneath a yellowish brown silty clay deposit [128] and a modern concrete path (fig. 3c).

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Deposit Depth	Height m.AOD
100	Deposit	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.10m	108.91
101	Deposit	Subsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.30-0.60	108.81
102	Deposit	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	n/a	108.10
103	Deposit	Concrete path	Tr.	0.50	0.10	109.23
104	Deposit	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.05	109.13
127	Deposit	old path	Tr.	Tr.	0.10	106.98
128	Deposit	Deposit Overlying old path	Tr.	Tr.	0.20	107.18

Table 2: Archaeological deposit contexts excluding burial contexts

## 4.5 The burials

- 4.5.1** Very few burials were encountered during the archaeological works (fig. 3). A brief summary of findings has been outlined below, but full context details for the burials and tombs recorded can be found in the appendix.
- 4.5.2** The outlines of four graves and four subterranean vaults were uncovered but with the exception of burial [119], no human remains were encountered. Interment in vaults and tombs was popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century amongst those wealthy enough to afford such a burial, it is likely the people interred within were of wealthy status within the community.

- 4.5.3 Only a few fragments of disarticulated bone were recovered and the reason for this is uncertain. It is possible that the burial environment is not conducive to the preservation of bone, alternatively the graveyard may not have been intensively used, with little disturbance or truncation of earlier burials by later ones.
- 4.5.4 Where the excavation of services followed the line of present day paths no burials were found, suggesting that the walkways had been in existence for some time, possibly since the construction of the church.

## 5.0 THE HISTORIC BUILDING (fig. 3)

5.1 The window [129] in the south aisle (fig. 3b) removed to insert the new doorway has late Gothic style tracery of a type datable to the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The wall [130] constructed of roughly hewn sandstone of variable sizes with irregular coursing cannot be easily dated. A cavity between the external and interior walls was loosely filled with rubble, this included some fragments of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century brick. During removal of the window and the wall below it was found that the window had undergone substantial repair in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the interior window lintels had been reconstructed with brick and rendered to give the appearance of stone. Brick of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date had also been used in the exterior wall to patch gaps left by eroded sandstone.

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Thickness
129	Masonry	Window	3.00	2.30	0.30
130	Masonry	Wall	n/a	n/a	0.30

Table 3: Contexts relating to the standing building

## 6.0 THE FINDS

6.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the archaeological work. An overview is given below in Table 4. In addition, a clay tobacco pipe (CTP) fragment (wt 8g) shows maker's initials on the sides of the heel and has therefore been assigned a unique registered finds number (RF <1>).

Context	Pot	Wt (g)	CBM	Wt (g)	Stone	Wt (g)	CTP	Wt (g)	Cu. Al.	Wt (g)	Wood/ Fe	Wt (g)
101			5	640			1	6	1	4		
125					10	103						
128	4	96	2	204								
129											1	44
130			4	643								

Table 4. Quantification of the finds from the watching brief at St Mary's, Ticehurst.

### 6.2 The Pottery by Elke Raemen

6.2.1 Deposit [128] contained four sherds of glazed red earthenware. Included are rim fragments from three different bowls. Pieces date to the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 6.3 The Ceramic Building Material by Sarah Porteus

6.3.1 A total of eleven fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 7276g were recovered from the archaeological investigations.

6.3.2 The earliest fragment is a small piece of unidentified tile in a sandy fabric with fine black inclusions and white feldspar, the tile fragment is small and highly abraded but may be of Roman origin [101]. The remainder of the CBM is of post-medieval date. Peg tile in a high fired fine fabric with sparse black iron rich inclusions from context [101] are of probable 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date. Brick in a red fabric with moderate coarse black iron rich inclusions was recovered from contexts [101], [128] and [130], the brick fabric is most likely of local origin. All bricks are unfrogged and vary in thickness, the thinner bricks, context [130] and [128], are of probable 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date, with the thicker bricks, context [130] and [101], more likely of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date. A second brick fabric was identified in contexts [130] and [101], a pale orange fabric with sparse black iron rich inclusions and abundant pale orange cream silt inclusions, of probable late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

6.3.3 Brick used in the rubble core of the south wall of the church [130] is mostly reused with mortar on broken faces, one of the bricks has an abraded upper surface, suggesting it had previously been in use as flooring before being used for wall repair. Repairs undertaken to the south wall most likely took place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **6.4 The Clay Tobacco Pipe**

- 6.4.1 Subsoil [101] contained a plain stem fragment dating to the mid 17<sup>th</sup>- to early 18<sup>th</sup>-century. In addition, RF <1> contains the maker's marks "IM" on the sides of the heel. No Sussex maker's are known for this period with these initials. However, they may refer to John Maplesdon, who was working in Maidstone in 1723 (Oswald 1975, 175).

#### **6.5 The Metalwork by Elke Raemen**

- 6.5.1 A complete copper-alloy nail was found in subsoil [101]. No other metalwork was recovered.

#### **6.6 Rawl Plug by Elke Raemen**

- 6.6.1 A tapering plug was recovered from masonry [129]. The piece consists of soft wood, most likely pine (Lucy Allott pers. comm.) and still contains a complete iron hinge pivot with tapering shank. It dates to the 18<sup>th</sup>- to 19<sup>th</sup>- century date.

#### **6.7 The Stone by Elke Raemen**

- 6.7.1 Ten pieces of Wealden sandstone, probably Tunbridge Wells Sand (Luke Barber pers. comm.) was recovered from grave [124] (fill [125]).

#### **6.8 Potential and Methodology for further work**

- 6.8.1 The assemblage as it stands is too small to have any potential for further analysis. No further work is required.

## **7.0 DISCUSSION**

- 7.1** Archaeological investigations at the site of St Mary's Church, Ticehurst, have revealed evidence for alterations to the church undertaken in the 18th or 19th century. A substantial portion of the window in the south aisle, probably originally constructed in the 15th or 16th century appears to have been repaired, with a moderate amount of the stone work being replaced by brick in filling.
- 7.2** The small quantity of human remains recovered during the works suggests that the churchyard to the south has not been extensively re-used over the years and that the layout of graves in rows has not changed over time. The location of an earlier path beneath the present day path also suggests that this layout has been maintained throughout the history of the church.
- 7.3** The results of the watching brief confirm the findings of the earlier evaluation in that burials correspond with grave markers and are at a depth of between 1 and 1.2 metres below surface level. The use of subterranean stone and brick tombs has also been confirmed and all have been left *in situ* within the churchyard.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The assistance and co-operation of John D Clarke and Partners Chartered  
Architects, the staff of Payne and Sons Ltd is greatly acknowledged. The patience  
and assistance of the patrons and representatives of St Mary's Church is also much  
appreciated.

## Appendix 1: THE BURIALS

Three of the tombs are of the brick vaulted type common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, tomb [126] did not retain a vaulted ceiling and it is likely this had collapsed after burial. The fourth tomb [123] is made of limestone slabs in a cist formation with sides lined with slabs and flat capstones, some lime mortar had been used to bond the stones. The stone tomb is also most likely of post medieval date, again possibly of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A single skull was encountered during the works ([119]) but this was too fragmentary for even basic osteological analysis

Number	Type	Description	Height m.AOD (Where Applicable)
105	Cut	Cut for tomb 107, not visible	
106	Fill	Backfill over tomb 107, same as [101].	
107	Tomb	Vaulted brick tomb of post-medieval date C18th –C19th	108.43
108	Tomb	Vaulted brick tomb of post-medieval date C18th-C19th	108.80
109	Cut	Cut for brick tomb 108, not visible	
110	Fill	Backfill over tomb 108, same as [101]	
111	Cut	Cut of grave, not visible	
112	Fill	Backfill of grave 111, same as [101]	
113	Cut	Cut of grave, not visible	
114	Fill	Backfill of grave 114, same as [101]	
115	Cut	Cut of grave, cut not visible	
116	Coffin	Wooden coffin, only partly revealed during excavations covered over and left in situ.	108.00
117	Fill	Backfill of grave 115, same as [101]	
118	Cut	Cut of grave, not visible	
119	Skeleton	Skeleton in grave 118, fragmentary skull only with poor preservation. Possibly Ann Cyler relating grave to headstone removed prior to works.	108.01
120	Fill	Fill of grave 118, same as [101]	
121	Cut	Cut for tomb, not visible	
122	Fill	Backfill over tomb 123, same as [101]	
123	Tomb	Dressed limestone tomb with flat limestone capstones and side stones, traces of lime cement between slabs. Post medieval in date. Possibly Julia Susannah Corbett tomb from headstone to west.	107.20
124	Cut	Cut for tomb, not visible	
125	Fill	Backfill over tomb [126], same as [101]	
126	Tomb	Brick tomb, outline of brick end visible, possibly collapsed vault. May be tomb of Rev. George De Veled(?) from headstone to west. Post-medieval in date.	107.20

**SMR Summary Form**

Site Code	SMT06					
Identification Name and Address	St Mary's Church, Ticehurst					
County, District &/or Borough	East Sussex, Rother District.					
OS Grid Refs.	568810 130060					
Geology	Wealden Clay and Sandstone					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2820					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other Churchyard		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 5/5/09 28/7/09	Other		
Sponsor/Client	John D. Clarke and Partners Chartered Architects					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Sarah Porteus					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other Modern		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during ground works and alterations to the south wall of St Mary's church Ticehurst. 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century repairs to the south wall and window were identified, original features had been partly replaced by brick and render. Burials within the cemetery appear to respect the present day path locations and there appears to be little intercutting of burials. An older path was found beneath one of the present day paths suggesting the layout had not altered for some time. Brick and stone tombs were located suggesting some wealthy burials.</p>						

OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-62882**

Project details

Project name: An archaeological Watching brief at St Mary the Virgin Church, Ticehurst

Short description of the project:

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeology South-East on behalf of John D Clarke and Partners Chartered Architects during ground works and alterations to the south wall of St Mary's church Ticehurst between the 9th of May and the 28th of July 2009. Some 18th or 19th century repairs to the south wall and window were identified where original features had been partly replaced by brick and render. Burials within the cemetery were found to be associated only with headstone locations and respect the present day path locations; there appears to be little intercutting of burials. An older path was found beneath a present day path suggesting the layout of the churchyard has altered little. Post-medieval subterranean brick and stone tombs were located within the excavated trenches suggesting some wealthy burials.

Project dates Start: 09-05-2009 End: 28-07-2009

Previous/future work Yes / No

Any associated project reference codes SMT06 - Sitecode

Type of project: Recording project

Site status: Listed Building

Current Land use: Other 4 - Churchyard

Monument type: CHURCH Medieval

Monument type: CEMETERY Post Medieval

Monument type: BURIAL VAULT Post Medieval

Significant Finds: NONE

Investigation type: 'Watching Brief'

Prompt: Planning condition

Project location: Country: England

Site location: EAST SUSSEX ROTHER TICEHURST St Mary's Church

Postcode TN5 7

Study area: 40.00 Square metres

Site coordinates: TQ 568810 130060

Project creators

Name of Organisation: Archaeology South-East

Project brief originator: Archaeology South-East

Project design originator: Archaeology South-East

Project director/manager: Neil Griffin

Project supervisor: Sarah Porteus

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient: Local Museum

Physical Contents: 'Ceramics'

Digital Archive recipient: Local Museum

Digital Contents: 'none' Digital Media available: 'Images raster / digital photography'

Paper Archive recipient: Local Museum

Paper Contents: 'none'

Paper Media available: 'Context sheet', 'Notebook - Excavation', 'Research', 'General Notes', 'Report', 'Unpublished Text', 'Photograph'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type: Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title: An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Mary's Church, Ticehurst, East Sussex

Author(s)/Editor(s): Porteus, S.

Other bibliographic details

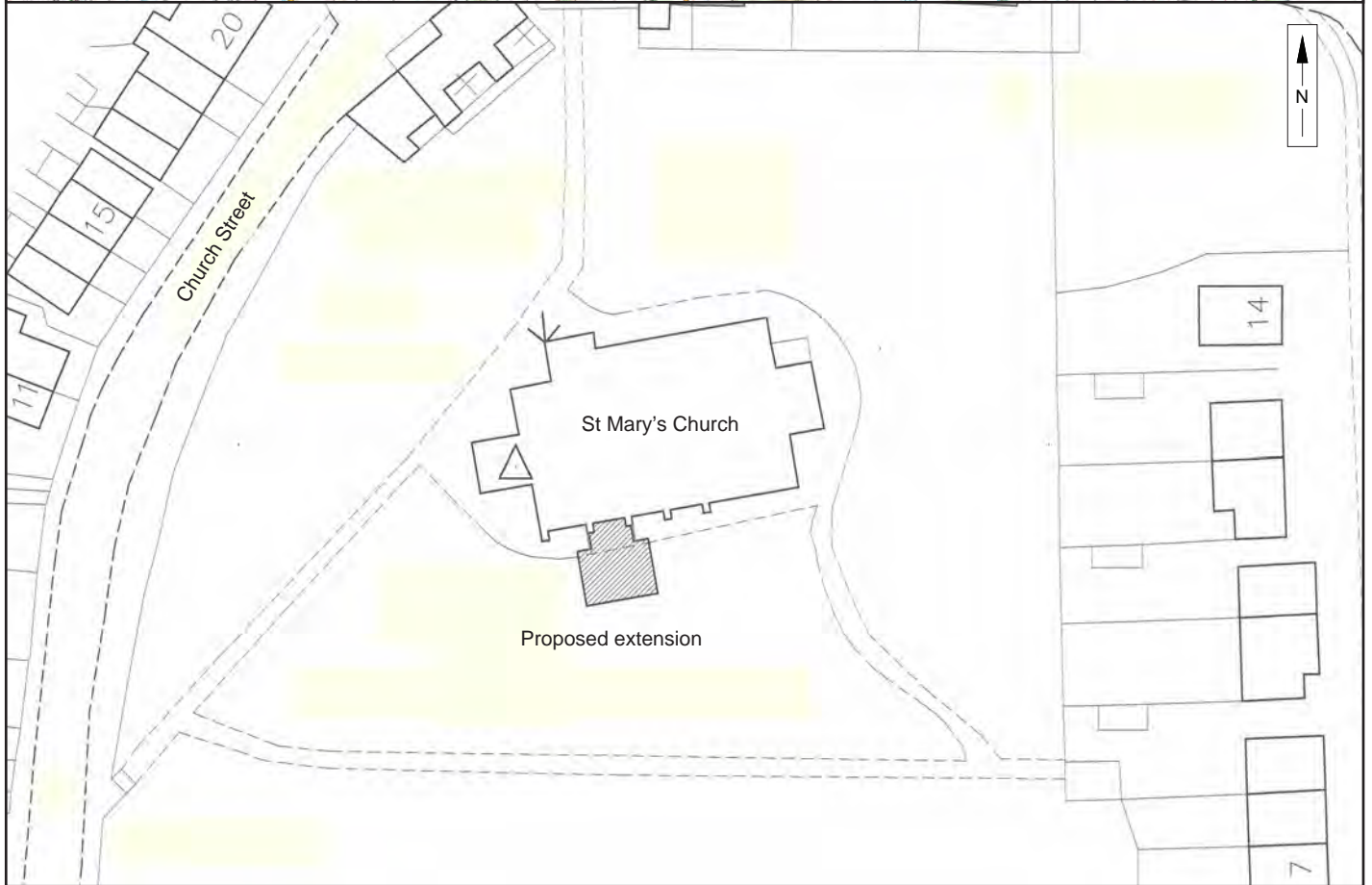
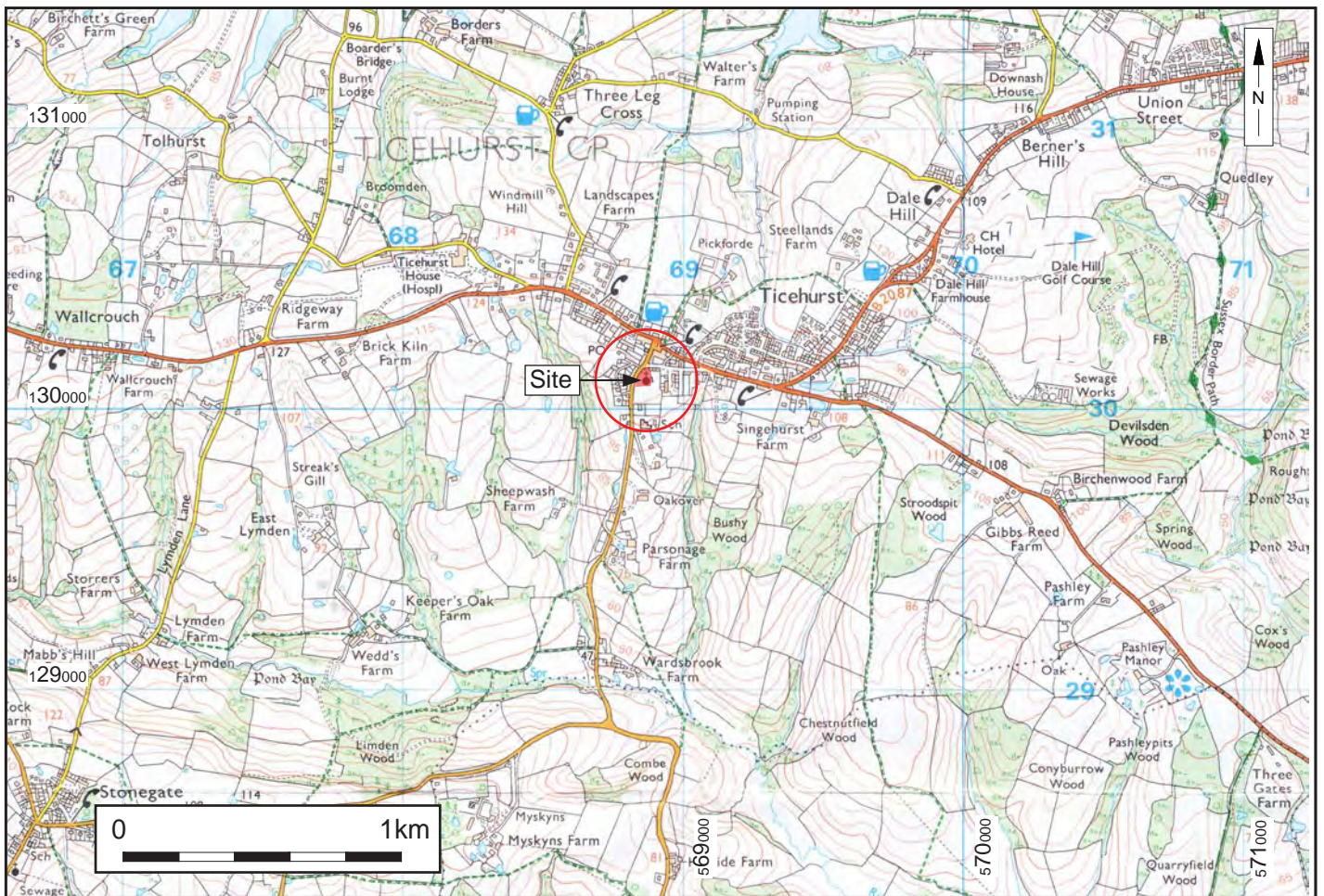
Report number : 2009121

Date: 2009

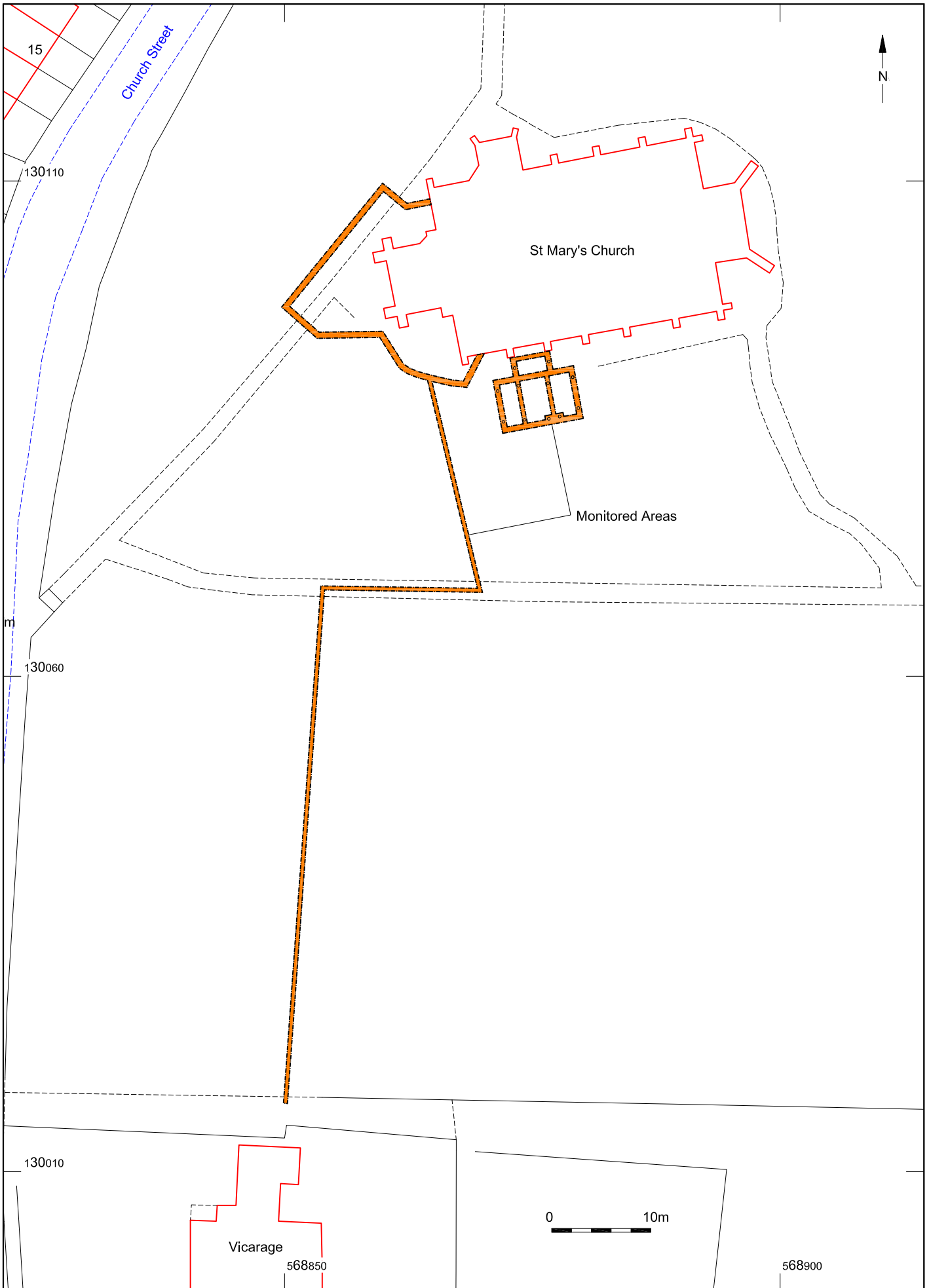
Issuer or publisher: Archaeology South-East

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Description: A4 Bound report hard copy and Pdf



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Project Ref: 2820	Sept 2009	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref: 2009121	Drawn by: DJH		



© Archaeology South-East		St Mary's Church, Ticehurst.	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 2820	September 2009	Site location showing monitored area.	
Report Ref: 2009121	Drawn by: DJH		

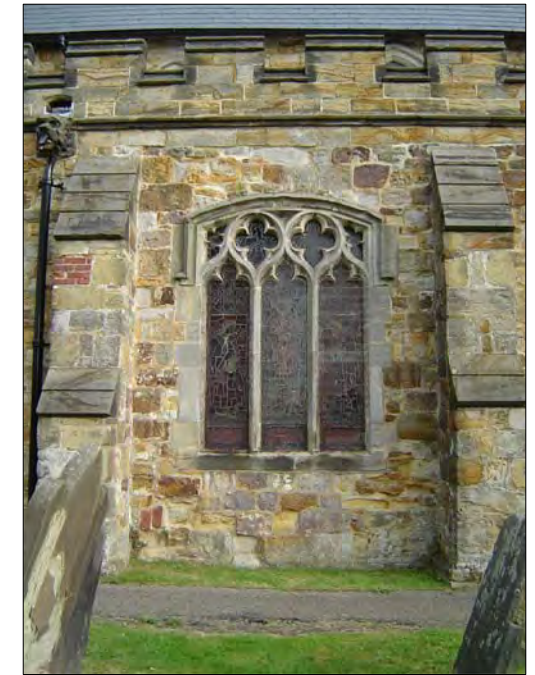


Fig. 3b: View of window and wall prior to development

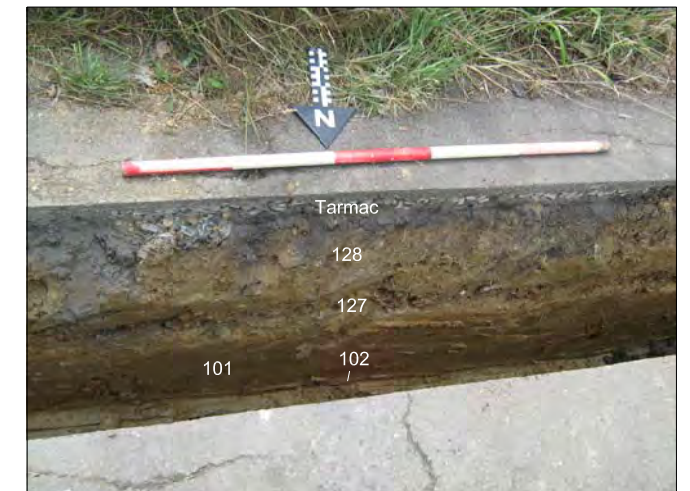


Fig. 3c: Section through path, showing earlier path surface [127]

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