

# An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Church of St Peter and St Paul, West Newton, Norfolk



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



December 2013

**Client: Sandringham Estate**

OA East Report No: 1562

OASIS No: oxfordar3-168862

NGR: TF 6962 2759

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Church of St Peter and St Paul, West  
Newton, Norfolk**

*Watching Brief*

*OA Site Code:* XNFWNC13  
*NHER No.* ENF132671  
*Date of Works:* 11/11/2013  
*OASIS Record No:* oxfordar3-168862  
*Report No:* 1562  
*Excavator:* John Diffey  
*Client:* Sandringham Estate  
*Report Date:* December 2013

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## Summary

*On the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013, OA East carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Church of St Peter and St Paul, West Newton, Norfolk (TF 6962 2759). The monitoring was carried out during ground reduction work associated with the installation of a new oil tank.*

## 1 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.1.1 The British Geological Survey Describes the underlying geology of West Newton as “Carstone Formation - Sandstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 100 to 112 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow seas.” On Site the Natural Geology (001) was encountered below 0.7m of overburden at a height of 29.92mOD and comprised a mid brownish red silty sand.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The village of West Newton is located within the parish of Sandringham, the village was purchased by the Prince of Wales in the late 19th century as part of the Sandringham Estate.
- 2.2 Norfolk Historic Environment Service (NHES) provided a full Historic Environment Record (NHER) report dated 20th December 2013. This lists fifteen records within 500m of the site at West Newton Churchyard, including the Sandringham estate park (NHER 30486) and the church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul itself (NHER 3278). The church has early 14th century elements (notably within the tower dating to possibly as early as 1300), along with 14th century arcades and doors, 15th century windows and porch. The church was in a poor state of repair by the 19th century and underwent almost complete restoration under the patronage of the Prince of Wales (after the estate was purchased by him) and the direction of architect Blomfield in 1881. These works included the rebuilding of the north aisle, renewal of the nave roof and widening of the windows of the south aisle. Close to the church are several historically interesting 18th-century buildings, some also repaired and refurbished under the Prince of Wales patronage. They include; the Old Rectory (NHER 49841) 115m to the north east, a row of cottages (NHER 49842) 50m to the north, Church cottages (NHER 49843) 80m east-north-east of the site, Chapel cottage (NHER 49844) 100m to the west so called because of the local (unsubstantiated) belief that the end wall, of large flints, is the gable wall of a Methodist chapel demolished around 1980 and West Newton Club (NHER 12535) 80m to the east-south-east and Sandringham and West Newton C of E primary school (NHER 57264) 175m north-north-east which were newly built under the Prince of Wales ownership in the later 19th century and are typical of this period of estate building. The NHER also lists a windmill (NHER 19083) built in 1824 and demolished sometime in the late 19th century that was situated just 120m north-west of the church. Previous archaeological work in the village include a small watching brief carried out in 2010 at Farm Cottage 400m east-north-east of the church which recorded a sherd of 17th to 18th century pottery with animal bone and bricks (NHER 53867).
- 2.3 Excavations carried out 300m to the east of the church between 1949 and 1951 revealed part of a 3rd – 4th century Roman villa and bath house (NHER 3254). Evidence for another probable villa (NHER 3253), or possibly further buildings associated with NHER

3254 has been recorded slightly closer to the church at West Newton Farm, while Roman pottery (NHER 3255) has been found in a field 500m to the south of the church and cropmarks of unknown date (NHER 29832) identified south of the villa site. The NHER also lists the B1440 which runs north-south along the eastern edge of the village as a possible Roman road (NHER 3496 conjectural evidence based).

### 3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 Norfolk Historic Environment Service issued a Generic Brief for the Monitoring of Works Under Archaeological Supervision and Control. The objective was to record as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.
- 3.1.2 The Brief required that all ground breaking works associated with the installation of a replacement oil tank within the churchyard be monitored by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist specifically the monitoring of a 1.6 x 4.5m area to be excavated by up to 0.7m depth to provide a firm foundation for the new oil tank.
- 3.1.3 The area of investigation was located immediately adjacent to the church building north of the northern chancel wall and east of the eastern vestry wall.
- 3.1.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 3.1.5 Site conditions were good.

### 4 RESULTS

#### 4.1 Ground Reduction for Concrete Oil Tank Base

- 4.1.1 Excavation on site took place in an area 1.6 x 4.5m north of the northern chancel extension wall and east of the eastern vestry wall immediately adjacent to an open brick collector drain that runs around the periphery of the building. The excavation cut through a 0.4m high bank that slopes down to this drain resulting in a ground reduction of 0.3m at the base of the slope against the drain itself and a reduction of 0.7m on the northern side of the excavation where the ground was cut from the top of the bank. The natural geology was just reached at the base of the excavation at a level of 29.92mOD.
- 4.1.2 Cutting the natural geology at the base of the excavated area was a 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramic drain pipe running west-north-west to east-south-east across the area from just north of the eastern wall of the vestry to the northern chancel wall.
- 4.1.3 Overlying the natural geology was a layer of material (002) thought to be associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration of the church. The material comprised a mid reddish brown silty sand containing large amounts of building materials and domestic waste. This layer covered the whole of the excavated area with a depth of 0.4m along the northern and eastern extent thinning with the slope of the bank toward the south and west. This context contained demolition rubble comprising large flint stones some still joined with light cream lime mortar and also construction materials including pieces of shell carstone and pieces of blue engineering brick matching the materials used in the construction of the brick drain surrounding the building. This context also contained

domestic waste most likely from the workers carrying out the restoration, including occasional oyster shells and butchered cattle bones. From the materials found within this context it has been dated to the restoration works carried out in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- 4.1.4 Overlying layer (002) was a 0.3m layer of what is thought to be an imported top soil this material comprised a mid brownish grey sandy silt the sharp lower horizon and lack of inclusions compared to the demolition/construction debris below would suggest that this layer was imported to top-dress the layer below, most likely at the time of the 1881 restoration.

## 4.2 Sondage for pipe run through Northern Chancel Wall

- 4.2.1 On completion of the foundation pad for the new oil tank a small single spade width sondage 0.3 x 0.6m x 0.24m was dug against the northern edge of the drain that skirted the northern chancel extension wall with a view to digging beneath the drain to allow a pipe to be drilled through the adjacent wall. During excavation of this sondage two bones identified on site as human arm bones, specifically the ulna and radius, were disturbed by digging. Careful cleaning of the sondage revealed a human pelvis and lower ribs still in situ in section (see plate 2). The burial was situated immediately against the northern wall of the chancel below the late 19<sup>th</sup> century drain and only 0.1m below the ceramic 19<sup>th</sup> century drainpipe that ran across the excavated area. From the small section of skeleton visible it was possible to deduce that the burial is situated along the wall in a supine position with the head toward the west as is typical of Christian burial. No clear grave cut was identified and the material surrounding the remains appeared to be redeposited material from the natural geology in which the grave must have been cut. The bones appeared in good condition and the burial appeared to be in tact despite the close proximity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century drain and pipe overlying it. No material culture was identified as relating to the burial to allow dating of the remains. The likely extent of the burial has been marked on Plan 1 (Fig.2) while section 1 shows the position of the remains beneath the 19<sup>th</sup> century drain and pipe. On completion of recording the disturbed ulna and radius were reinterred adjacent to the insitu remains and the sondage was backfilled with plans to route the new oil pipe approximately 0.3m above the burial through the brick drain.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Site Overview

- 5.1.1 The majority of the archaeological contexts and materials encountered on site unsurprisingly relate to the major renovation works carried out on the church building in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century including the drains, the demolition/construction layer (002) and the top-dress of imported topsoil (003).

### 5.2 Burial

- 5.2.1 The burial however must pre-date these renovation works because of its position below the 19<sup>th</sup> century surface drain and pipe. Although the date of this burial is unknown it can be said to be typical of Christian burial practice laid east-west in a supine position. The positioning of the body against the northern chancel extension wall is also of interest. The positioning of burials within a medieval cemetery has been greatly debated and numerous conflicting examples of folklore relating to hierarchical burial

positioning are sited when discussing the subject. However it is commonly accepted that more desirable positions in graveyards were of greater financial worth and therefore are more likely to be held by those able to afford them. Christopher Daniell 1997 states that a medieval church can be described as a series of concentric rings. The most holy area was the high altar at the east end; the holiness lessening towards the west end and into the churchyard. Although this applied more so within the building itself where the religious community and the churches benefactors were buried this desire to be buried close to the altar extended out into the churchyard and as such this individual burial against the wall of the northern chancel would have been in a sought after position. Interestingly Daniell also writes of a desire to be buried beneath the eaves drip of the church where the rainwater that had been sanctified by the church roof would fall. The burial found at west newton therefore appears to hold a desirable position within the churchyard which may in turn indicate an individual of higher social and financial standing within the local community.

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1.1 The author would like to thank The Sandringham Estate who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. Thanks also to Anj Beckham of the Norfolk Heritage Environment Service who supplied the HER report. The project was managed by Aileen Connor.
- 6.1.2 The brief and advice for the archaeological works was provided by Kelly Powell of Norfolk Heritage Environment Service.

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Compiled by A. Beckham 20th Dec 2013. Norfolk County Council HER Monument Full Report *NHER Data: Sites within a 500m radius of TF 6962 2759, West Newton Churchyard*.

## APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

### Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-168862		
Project Name	Replacement Oil Tank at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, West Newton, Norfolk		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	11-11-2013	Finish	11-11-2013
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	No

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	XNFWNC13	Planning App. No.	NA
HER No.	ENF132671	Related HER/OASIS No.	NA

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

### Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
burial	Uncertain		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

### Project Location

County	Norfolk	Site Address (including postcode if possible) St Peter and St Pauls Church, West Newton, Norfolk	
District	West Norfolk		
Parish	Sandringham		
HER	Norfolk		
Study Area	10 sq metres	National Grid Reference	TF 6962 2759



### Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Kelly Powell, Norfol Historic Environment Service
Project Design Originator	Aileen Connor, OA East
Project Manager	Aileen Connor, OA East
Supervisor	John Diffey, OA East

### Project Archives

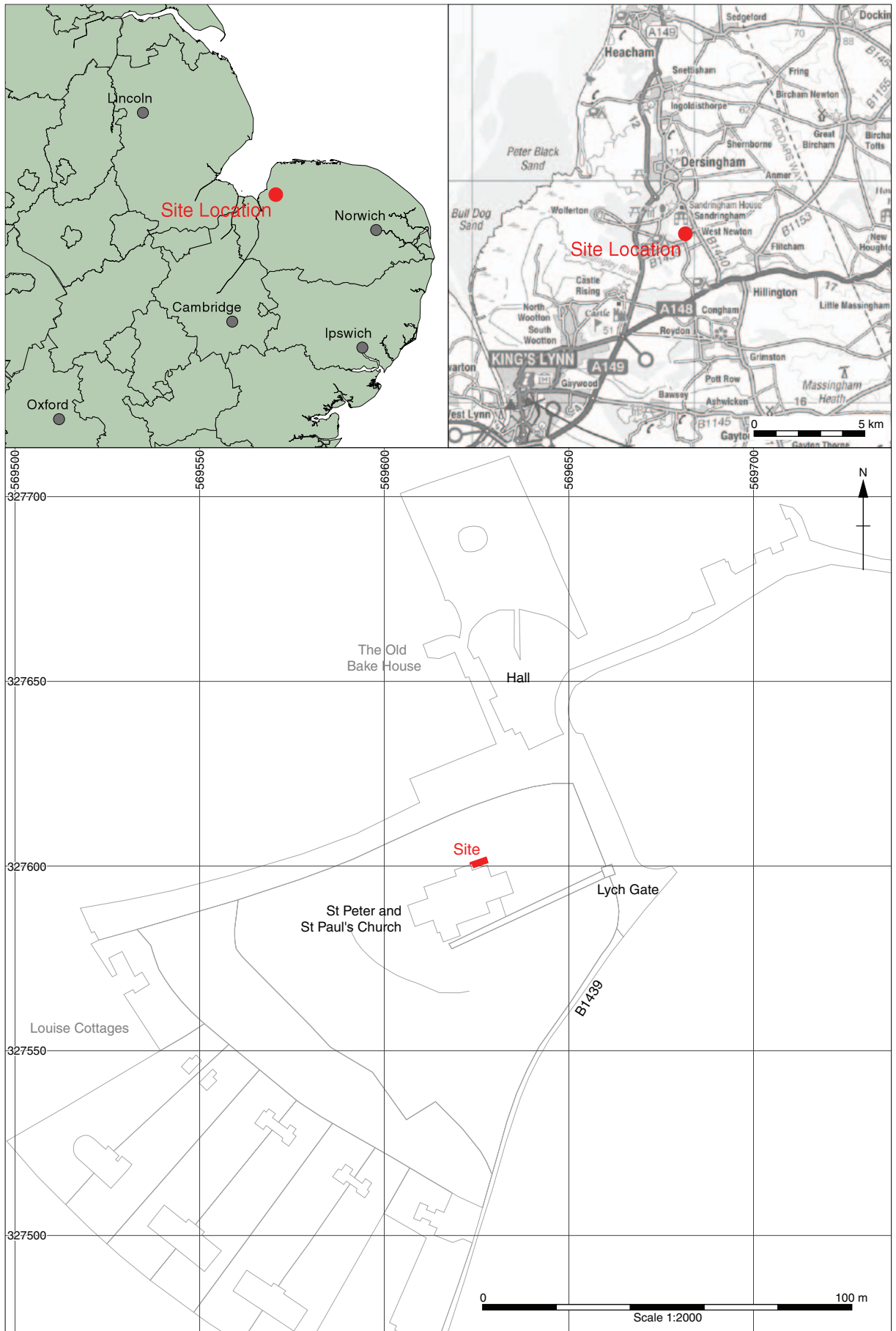
Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
NA ...	Norfolk Museum Service ...	Norfolk Museum Service.
Accession ID ...	ENF132671	ENF132671

### Archive Contents/Media

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Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

**Notes:**



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Figure 1: Site location

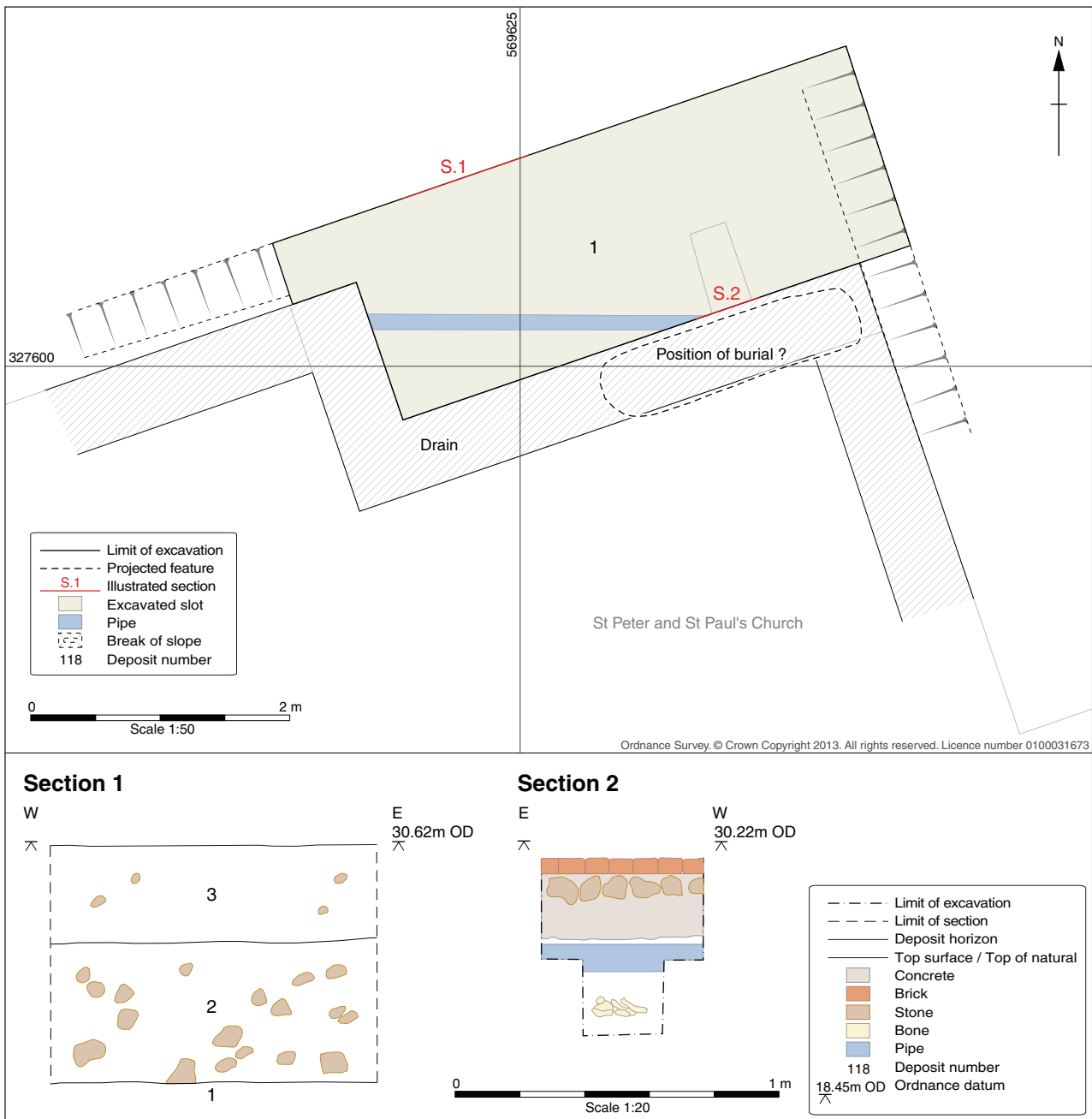


Figure 2: Plan and sections



Plate 1: Site Overview looking east south east



Plate 2: Trench Overview looking east





Plate 3: *In situ* Human Remains looking south



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