

# Footpath construction at St Peters and St Pauls Church, Steeple Morden, Cambridgeshire



## Archaeological Monitoring and Recording



July 2011

### Client:

OA East Report No: 1285

OASIS No: oxfordar3-105465

NGR: TL 28559 42496

**Footpath construction at St Peters and St Pauls Church, Steeple Morden,  
Cambridgeshire**

*Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*

*Site Code: STEPPC11*

*CHER No. ECB3633*

*Date of Works: 14/7/11 and 18 /7/11*

*Report No: 1285*

*Excavator: Jonathan House*

*Client: CAPITA SYMONDS*

*Report Date: July 2011*

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### **Summary**

*On the 14th and 18th July 2011, OA East carried out an archaeological monitoring and recording at St Peters and St Pauls church, Steeple Morden (TL 28559 42498). The monitoring was carried out during machine excavation for a footpath on the northern side of the church, within the churchyard. A small amount of disarticulated human bone was recovered, however these remains were given to the church vicar, for considered reburial. No archaeological features or deposits were disturbed.*



## 1 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.1.1 Steeple Morden is located in south-western Cambridgeshire close to the Hertfordshire border, 8km north-west of Royston. The land is gently rolling terrain cut by small streams flowing into the River Cam or Rhee; the site itself is located within the centre of Steeple Morden village. The church yard sits at the confluence of Hay street, Cheyney Street, and Station Road (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The site is at a height of approximately 50m OD and lies on the Lower Beds (known as Chalk Marl) of the Cretaceous Lower Chalk ridge of south Cambridgeshire (British Geological Survey 2002).

## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 The village of Steeple Morden ('*Alia Mordune*') is recorded in Domesday Book as having 42 peasants and 12 servi. The population rose until it reached a peak in the early 17th century, declining again during the second half of the century: in 1660 it was recorded as having approximately 195 adults living within the village, the population increased again, reaching 1018 adults in 1871. By the early 20th century the population had stabilised and averaged at 640 (Wright 1982).
- 2.1.2 By the 13th century the village had built up along a north-to-south axis past the church with the street to the north known as Hay Street. The street comprised c.30 houses north of the church and c.40 houses south of the church. By 1800 Cheyney Street had developed east of the church with up to 10 houses along its length (Wright 1982).
- 2.1.3 Archaeological fieldwork in Steeple Morden has so far largely focused on the village core around the subject site, with recent works carried out within the school grounds.
- 2.1.4 Investigations at 15-17 Hay Street (Grant and Wilkins 2002) revealed archaeological features sealed beneath 0.5-0.6m of topsoil and mature subsoil. These features were dated to the Romano-British period and included ditches and narrow curvilinear features together with pits and post-holes indicative of occupation on the site during this period. Further investigations (Rudge 2002/2004) revealed a large ditch dated to the Romano-British period which contained significant amounts of pottery.
- 2.1.5 Evaluation in the playground of the Primary School, close to the current site, produced similar evidence for occupation sealed beneath approximately 0.50m of overburden (Kenney 2001). The features encountered were undated ditches on two alignments (north-northeast to south-southeast and east-to-west), one of which could be a continuation of a feature found at 15-17 Hay Street.
- 2.1.6 Another Evaluation was carried out immediately to the north of the development area, a single ditch was excavated with a possible Saxon Date, the ditch ran east to west, on the same alignment as the churchyard boundary (House 2010).
- 2.1.7 Investigation at No.1 Cheyney Street uncovered a large undated pond or quarry pit together with a post-hole and a late medieval ditch terminal (Fletcher 2004).

### 3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The objective of this archaeological monitoring and recording was to monitor groundworks within the churchyard, record any archaeological features encountered, ensuring minimal disturbance to any graves, as well as the collection and appropriate reburial of any human remains during the excavations.
- 3.1.2 The Brief required that all archaeologically significant deposits should be investigated, and any human remains should be appropriately reburied.
- 3.1.3 The area of investigation was located by the client. Survey was carried out by Jonathan House using measurements from existing buildings.
- 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 The site conditions and the weather did not inhibit the archaeological work.

### 4 RESULTS

#### 4.1 Machine excavation of footpath footings, and ground reduction

- 4.1.1 The area of the footpath was stripped to a depth of around 0.25m, depth was relatively constant following the minor changes in topography along the proposed footpaths route within the northern side of the churchyard. For the most part this merely constituted the removal of top soil only, the north-east arm of the path revealed a steel pipe at the aforementioned depth.
- 4.1.2 Areas of ground depression were observed along the northern boundary of the church yard, the lower ground meant the footpath was dug considerably deeper at the point where the north west arm of the footpath from the church connected to the school gate (figure 2, section 1, Plate 2). The gate and school grounds sit at a lower level to the church yard, so deeper excavation was required to match up the levels. Further ground reduction was required within this area to grade into the proposed final level of the footpath. The footpath footing was dug to a depth of 0.8m, this cut through what appeared to be relatively recent deposits, with pottery of late 19th century to 20th century date.
- 4.1.3 The earliest deposit (103) was not bottomed, the deposit was a dark grey brown, silty sand sub soil. The next layer observed in the sequence was a light greyish brown, sandy silt deposit (102), the deposit was seen at the southern end of the section and had a high frequency of chalk inclusions, the deposit measured 0.14m in depth and thinned to the north. Overlying this deposit was a typical top soil material (101) measuring 0.17m. The uppermost layer (100) was only seen at the northern end of the section, the deposit was a sandy silt, greyish brown with a high frequency of chalk inclusions the deposit measured 0.12m thinning to the south.
- 4.1.4 No graves either marked or unmarked were disturbed during the works, the human skeletal remains recovered were found out of *situ*. All such remains were collected and bagged, then given to the church vicar, for considered reburial.

## 4.2 Finds summary

- 4.2.1 The only finds encountered dated from the end of the 19th century or later, ceramics and modern metalwork were recovered. All obviously modern finds were discarded on site, 71g of late 19th century to 20th century ceramics were analysed and recorded, and are awaiting permission to discard.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The thicker deposits at the north west end of the footpath are likely to represent an incidental levelling of the churchyard, the depressions observed partially along the north boundary of the churchyard may indicate a former boundary ditch, or a result of its use as a footpath. In either case it appears that the area of lower ground level has been raised whether as part of purposeful levelling or levelling as a result of the frequent digging of graves in recent centuries, with excess spoil being dumped in lower areas at the churchyard boundaries.
- 5.1.2 As expected the ground has been disturbed and seen continued use, the only finds seen were of 19th century or modern date. The groundworks for the church path did not impact on any archaeological features or deposits.

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1.1 The author would like thank CAPITA Symonds who respectively commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Aileen Connor and the illustrator was Gillian Greer, with Jonathan House as the on-site staff. The project was monitored by Andy Thomas of CCC.

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## APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

### Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-105465			
Project Name	Footpath construction at St Peters Church, Steeple Morden, Cambridgeshire			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	14-07-2011	Finish	18-07-2011
Previous Work (by OA East)	No		Future Work	Unknown

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	STEPPC11	Planning App. No.	
HER No.	ECB3633	Related HER/OASIS No.	

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

### Please select all techniques used:

<input checked="" 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
Churchyard	Medieval 1066 to 1540	Gravestone	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

### Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	S. Cambs	St Peters and St Pa Church, Hay Street, Steeple Morden, Royston, Herts. SG8 0PD	
Parish	Steeple Morden		
HER	Cambridgeshire County Council		
Study Area	1592m2	National Grid Reference	TL 28559 42498



## Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority
Project Design Originator	Aileen Connor
Project Manager	Aileen Connor
Supervisor	Jonathan House

## Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
CCC Stores	OA East (Bar Hill)	CCC Stores
STEPPC11	STEPPC11	STEPPC11

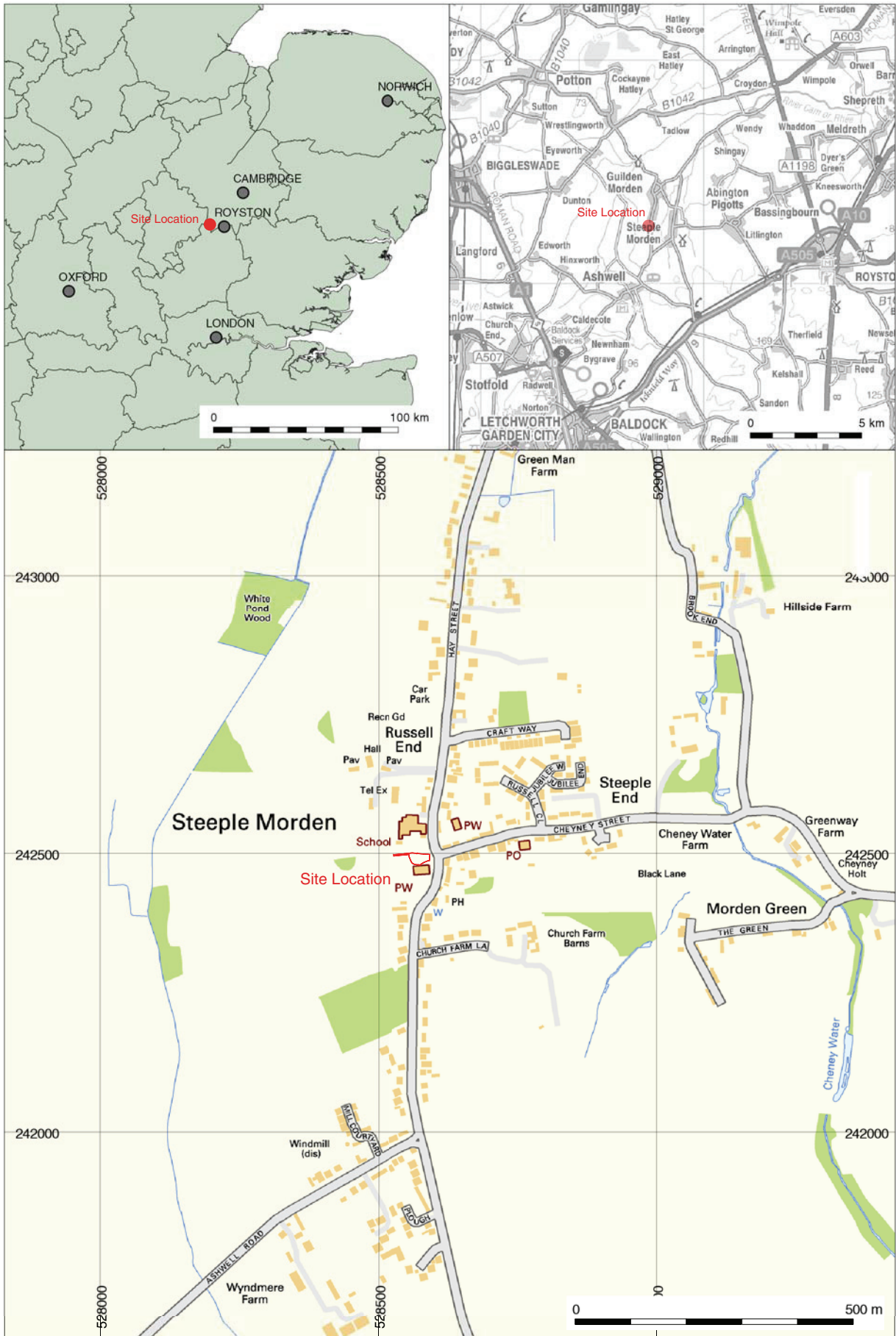
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Digital Media	Paper Media
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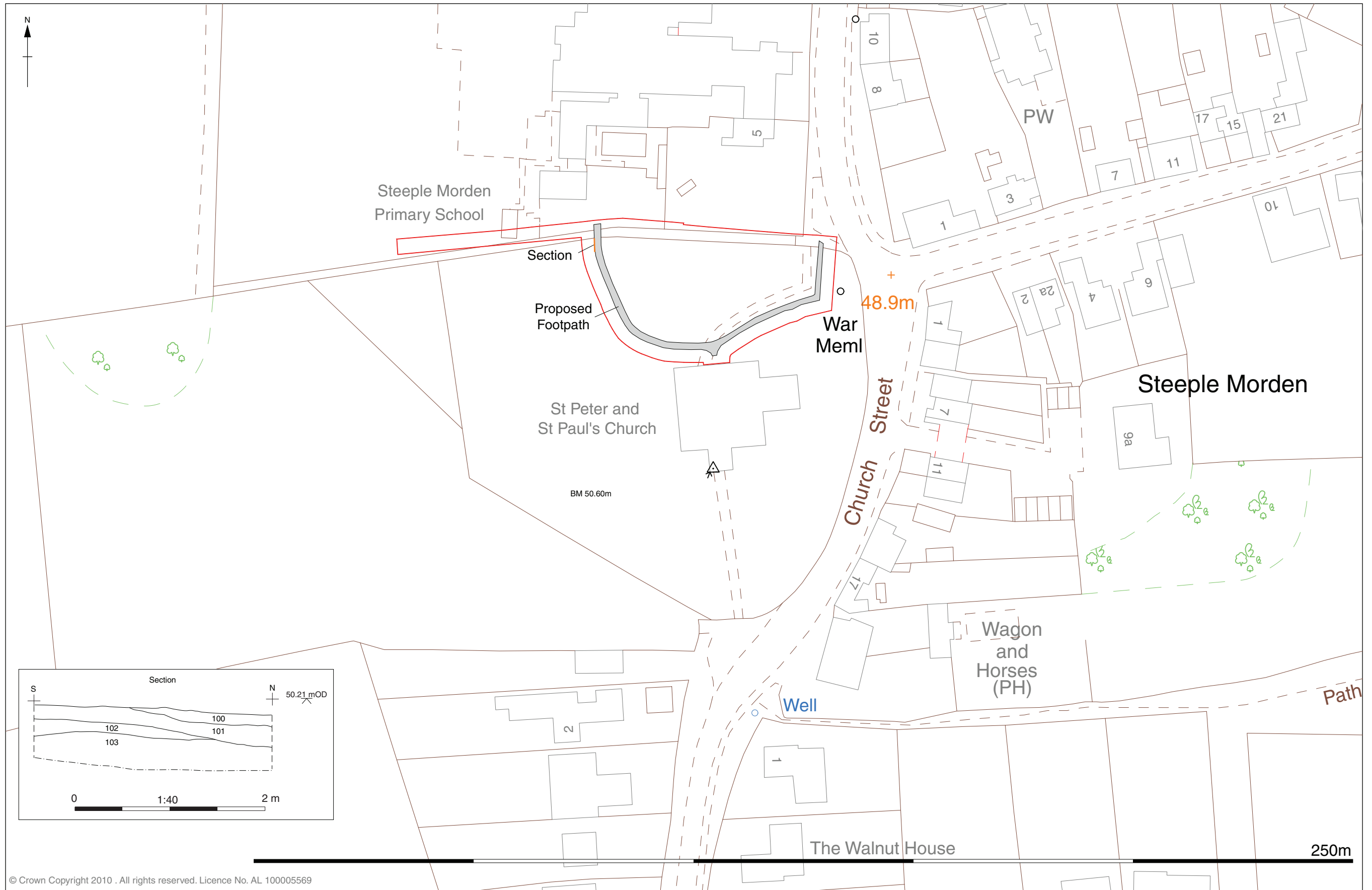
### Notes:

On the 14th and 18th July 2011, OA East carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Peters and St Pauls church (TL 28559 42498 ). The monitoring was carried out during machine excavation for a footpath on the northern side of the church, within the churchyard. A small amount of disarticulated human bone was recovered, however these remains were given to the church vicar, for considered reburial.



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Figure 1: Site location



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Figure 2: Plan of development area showing proposed footpath.





Plate 1: North east arm of footpath, taken from the north-east.



Plate 2: Stratigraphy through footpaths deepest impact, taken from the east.





Plate 3: North west arm of footpath, taken from the north-west.



Plate 4: Area of ground reduction and grading of footpath, taken from the south-west.





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