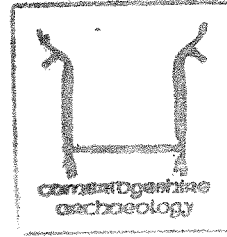
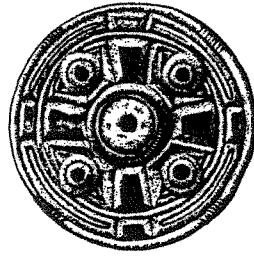


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Undated Burials at All Saints' Church Shepreth: An Archaeological Evaluation

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1999

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. B 59

Commissioned by Mr J R L Brashaw

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SUMMARY

On July 13th 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological evaluation at All Saints' Church Shepreth (TL393 475). The work was commissioned by John Brshaw, Churchwarden, and was carried out in advance of the construction of a extension to the church. Results revealed a number of undated human burials at 1m below the ground surface. No remains of earlier walls relating to the church were encountered.

**Undated Burials at All Saints' Church Shepreth: An Archaeological Evaluation
TL 393 475**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On July 13th 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological evaluation at All Saints' Church Shepreth. The work was commissioned by J.R.L Brashaw, Churchwarden.

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Specification WW/99/01, in response to a brief provided by the County Archaeology Office dated January 1999. The proposed development included construction of an extension on the south side of the church. The south aisle of the Church was moved in the 19th century and it was therefore thought possible that the remains of earlier walls may have survived within the area of the proposed extension.

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The site is situated in a flatish low lying area at about 15m -20 m OD on a lower Chalk subsoil. Soils are of the Milton Association and there is a suggestion of the presence of river terrace and chalky drift. These soils are described as deep permeable calcareous fine loamy soils variably affected by groundwater.

The late medieval Manor Farm lies to the south east, whilst the historic core of the medieval village surrounds the church. There is a moated site to the east of the site

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3. Archaeological Background

3.1. Prehistoric

Evidence of prehistoric occupation is widespread in the area. A Bronze Age spearhead (SMR No03188) was found 200m to the south of the subject site. Large quantities of Neolithic flints have been found on a mound in a marsh near Shepreth and Fox notes the large number of prehistoric finds present in the general area to the south-west of Cambridge

3.2 Roman

A Roman villa(SMR No 03364) to the north of the subject site, near Foxton Brook, was investigated in the 19th century. This investigation revealed walls of three houses with tesserae from a mosaic pavement and wall plaster. Further work uncovered the ground plan of the villa and flint and mortar walls.

Roman remains have been observed within the vicinity of the church. A desk-based study of land adjacent to the church (Murray 1995) suggested potential for early medieval remains associated with the first church. Excavations undertaken in 1995 on the site adjacent to the graveyard (Walker 1995) revealed significant Roman remains. Three large ditches were encountered which contained Roman pottery and large quantities of Roman brick and tiles. It was thought that the features encountered may have related to a nearby farmstead.

3.3 Historical Background

3.4 Village Development

The earliest settlement at Shepreth was probably concentrated around the existing parish church next to the site of the main manor house (SMR No 03118) which belonged to the Abbess of Chatteris.

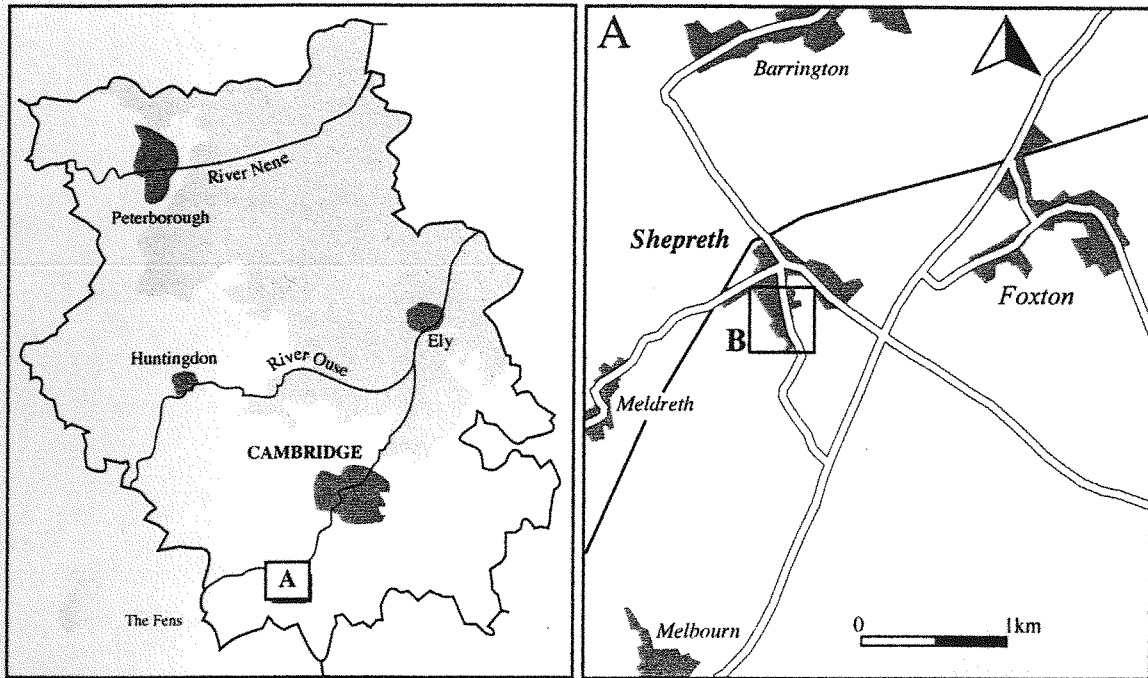
In the 14th century the manors of Docwras and Wimbish were divided and when Docwras manor house was destroyed in 1401, it was rebuilt on its present site to the north near a cross-roads with routes to Meldreth, Barrington, Foxton and Fowlmere. The de la Haye family who held the manor had been granted a market charter in the 14th century and it could possibly be that this northern part of the village was seen as more suitable for commercial growth.

In 1086, there were 30 inhabitants were recorded; in 1377, 147 adults paid poll tax and there were 35 families in 1563. The church of All Saints was not mentioned in the Domesday Book, but was built by the early to mid 12th century, though much 13th century fabric is visible in the church and a 13th century stone Coffin lid was found at Manor Farm in 1953.

The manor of Shepreth passed to Edward Elrington after the Dissolution and was held by Sir William Laxton, Alderman of London in 1556. The 16th century was a period of expansion for the village with Moor End being settled by 1569.

Before or during the 18th century a further freehold settlement was established at Frog End, away from the nucleus of the village.

The earliest cartographic source is the 1764 Estate Map for the Woodham family. This unfortunately does not depict the area of proposed development but shows features to the east of the High St including the moated sites of Tyrells and Hallyards.



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Figure 1 Location map

3.5 History of All Saints' Church

Architectural evidence demonstrates that Shepreth church had been built by the mid 12th century. In 1214 Chatteris Abbey asserted its claim to the advowson of the vicarage and by 1215 had been confirmed as appropriator of the tithes (VCH 1973). In 1249 the abbess granted the vicar of Shepreth 40 acres of arable land and 20 shillings year. Chatteris retained the advowson until the Dissolution.

The church of All Saints has a chancel nave with south aisle and a low west tower with a pyramidal roof. The tower is of clunch ashlar, the chancel is plastered externally and the nave and aisle walls are yellow 19th century brick. The narrow chancel arch dates from the early 12th century. Facing the nave it has a single roll moulding corresponding to a shaft on each of the jambs. The South of the chancel arch is a large recess with a foiled and heavily moulded 13th century arch. In the chancel a trefoil-headed piscina is probably a 19th century copy. The chancel was rebuilt early in the 17th century and partly rebuilt at a later period.

The south aisle may have been added in the 13th century, for its arcading is of 13th century character. The late 14th century tower, from which the belfry stage is missing, has a large west window with perpendicular tracery. When the tower was complete there were two-light windows to the belfry stage, an embattled parapet and a large spire. In 1774, the tower having cracked and two bells fallen, the spire was removed. In 1853 the tower was lowered and presumably given its pyramidal roof. The church was reroofed in 1635, a date which is carved on one of the arch-braced tie beams of the nave.

4 METHODOLOGY

Following the initial documentary study one trench was excavated using a JCB with a toothless ditching bucket. After machining the trench was cleaned and photographed and recording using the AFU standard archaeological recording system

5 RESULTS

Results revealed a number of undated human burial at 1m below the ground surface. In line with the requirements of the specification and the brief, no excavation of *in situ* or articulated human remains was undertaken, beyond some limited investigation which attempted to ascertain their character and date. No other archaeological finds or features were noted.

The single evaluation trench was located on a north-south alignment in order to locate and identify possible medieval walls of the church. The trench was 7.6m long and 1.1m deep. Topsoil (1) was a dark brown clay silt which was 0.40m deep. It contained a number of post-medieval artefacts. Layer 2 was composed of a dark greyish brown clay silt with a frequent amount of gravel.

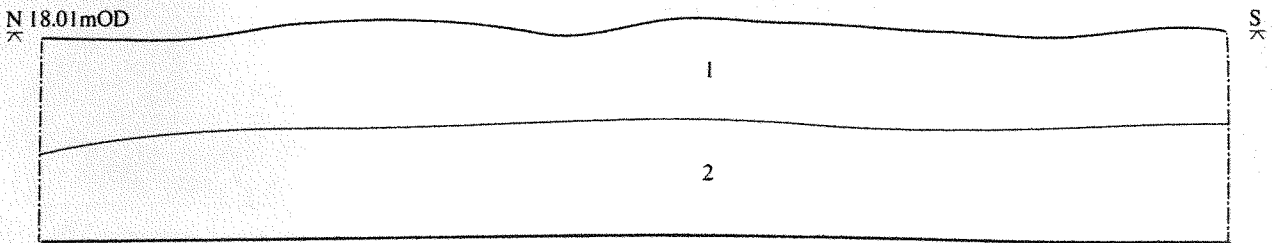
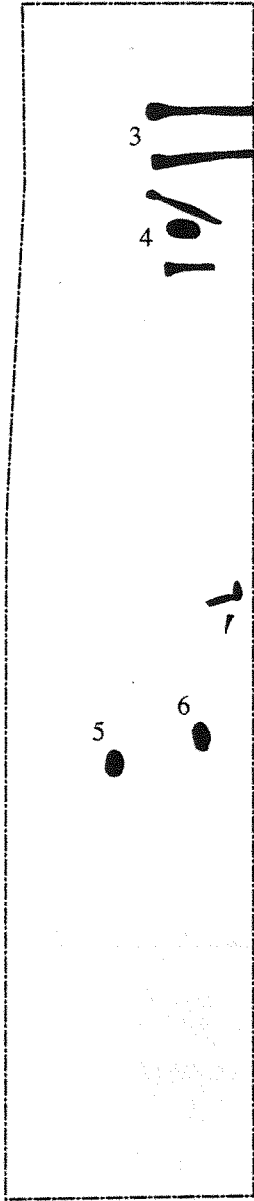


Figure 2 Plan and east facing section

This layer contained a number of post-medieval artefacts. Human burial 3 was revealed in the northern part of the of the trench. The burial was supine on an east- west alignment and only the lower half of the body (femur, patella and tibia) was uncovered, due to the narrowness of the evaluation trench. No artefacts were recovered from this burial. In the centre of the trench a skull and disarticulated humerus and radius (burial 4) were observed. No artefacts were recovered from this burial. In the southern part of the trench two skulls (burials 5 and 6) were observed.

6 DISCUSSION

The interpretation of the human remains encountered in the evaluation is severely hampered by the lack of dating evidence. It is difficult to ascertain whether we are dealing with Victorian or Medieval burials.

7 CONCLUSION

The evaluation revealed a number of undated burials. There was no evidence of masonry which might relate to an earlier phase of the church. Similarly there was no continuation of the Roman occupation encountered by Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust on the adjacent site (Walker 1995).

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the for their co-operation, the developer J. Brashaw Andy Thomas for monitoring on behalf of the CAO, and for William Wall Project Management.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Murray J 1995 *Desk-based assessment of All Saints Church Shepreth.*
Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Report 130
- Walker C 1995 *Roman Remains at Moor End Lane, Shepreth, Cambs.*
Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Report 131.

Maps and sources consulted:-

Enclosure map of Shepreth 1823
OS map 1st edition 1886
Cambridgeshire County Council SMR.

Appendix A

SMR Entries

01254 Moat Hall Yards
3061 All Saints Church
03118 Bronze Spear Head
03182 Post Medieval Manor
03183 Medieval Pottery
03364 Roman Villa.
01254 Moat Hall Yards

Context List

1 Dark brown clay silt with a frequent amount of gravel
2 Dark greyish brown clay silt .
3 Burial; tibia , fibula exposed.
4 Burial; skull and disarticulated armbones.
5 Burial; skull
6 Burial; skull

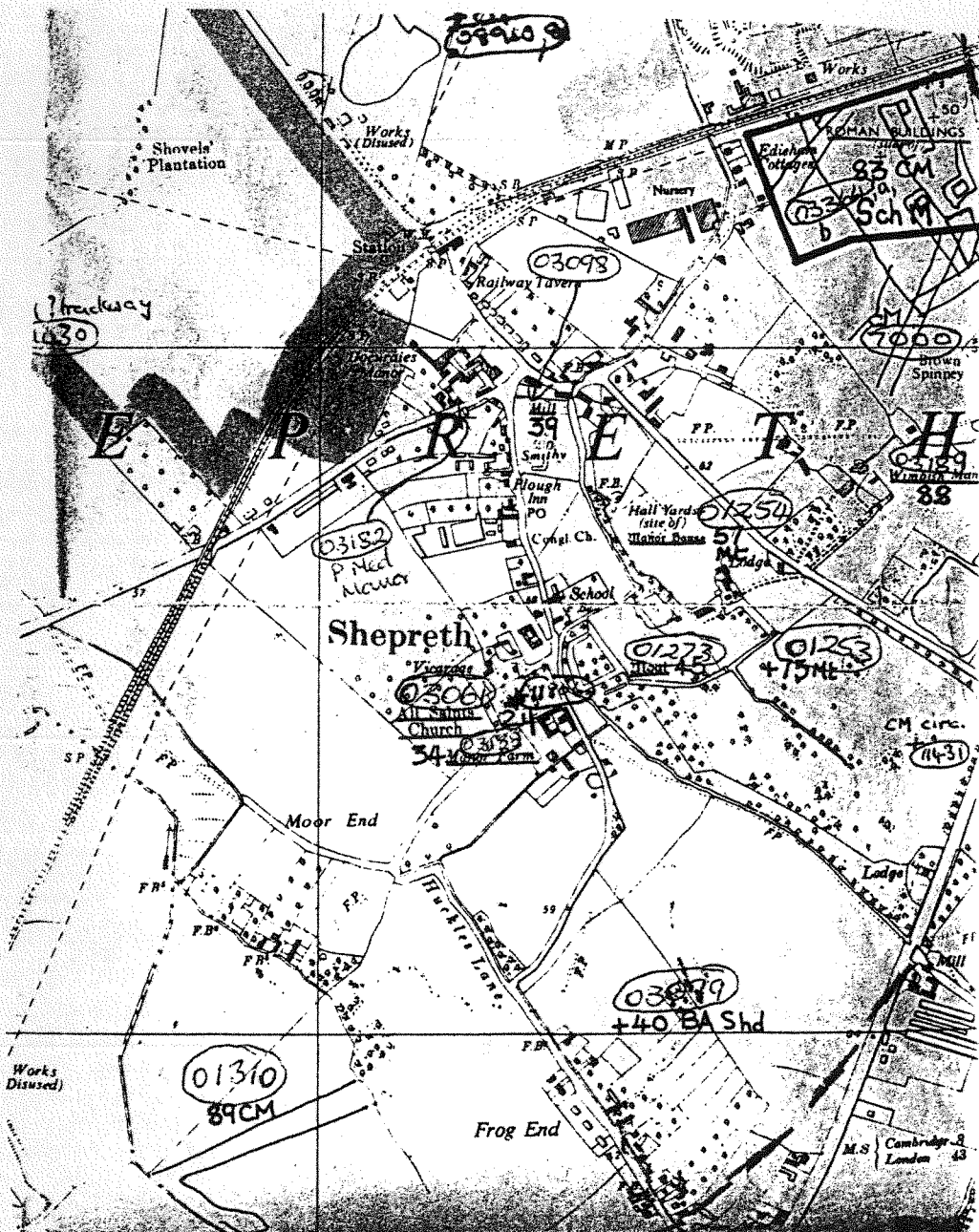


Figure 3 SMR map

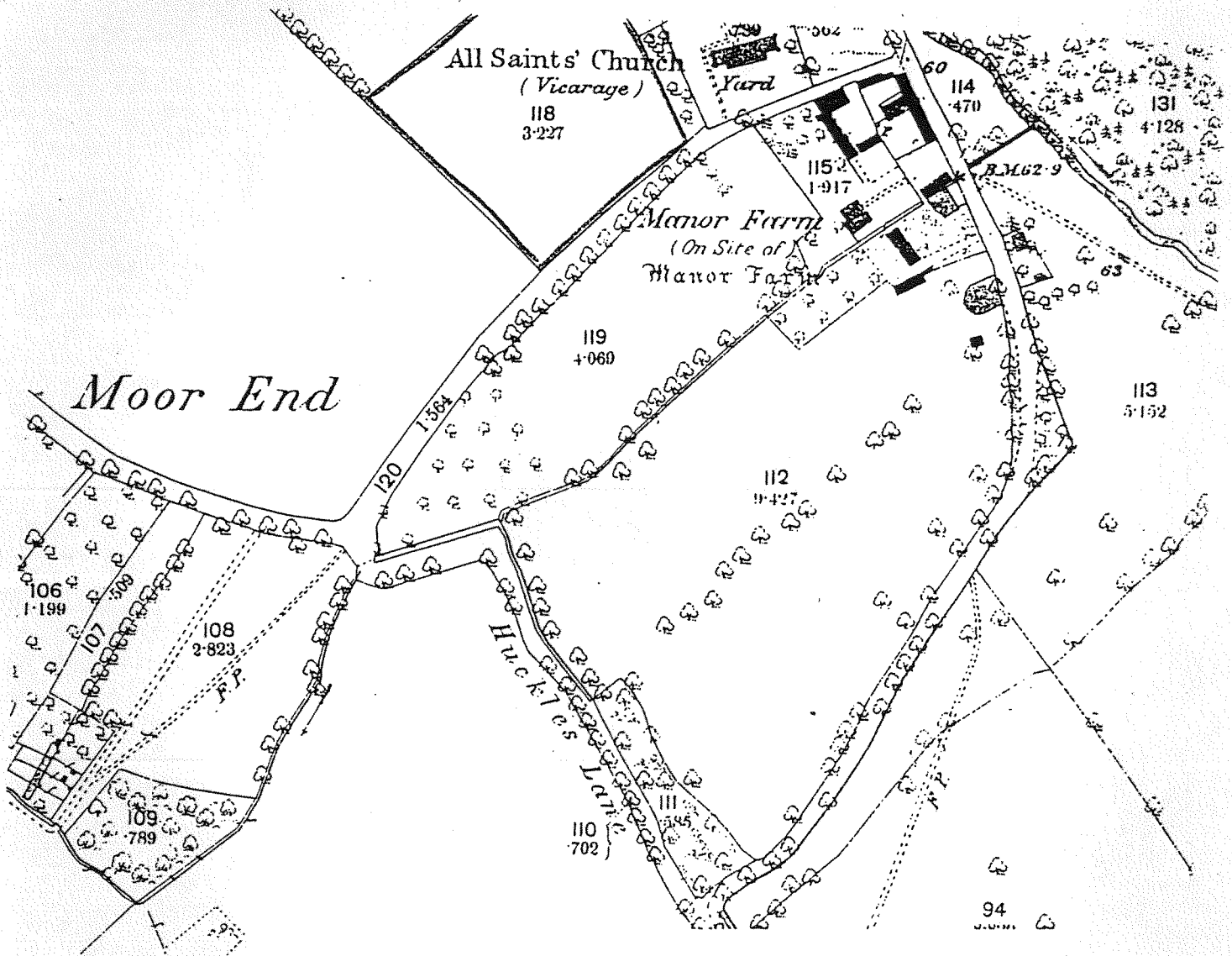


Figure 4 OS map 1st edition, 1886



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