



CHRISTCHURCH, ECCLESTON, ST HELENS, LANCASHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

January 2015

**REV FORSTER AND THE PCC OF
CHRISTCHURCH**

Issue No: 2014-15/1552

OA North Job No: L10781

NGR: SJ 48445 95559

Document Title: CHRISTCHURCH, ECCLESTON, ST HELENS

Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief

Client Name: REV FORSTER AND THE PCC OF CHRISTCHURCH

Issue Number: 2014-15/1552

OA North Job Number: L10781

National Grid Reference: SJ48445 95559

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A planning application for refurbishment was made by Rev Forster and the PCC of Christchurch, Eccleston, Lancashire. This included the installation of an accessible WC at the north-west corner of the nave, with the waste pipe running out of the church and through the graveyard to the north of the church. As the works potentially had an impact on existing burials, an archaeological watching brief was requested to be maintained during all ground disturbance. Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was contracted by Buttress Architects Ltd, on behalf the client, to undertake the archaeological works, which were conducted on 11th to 12th August 2014.
- 1.2 Christchurch was built in 1838 on land located off Church Lane, Eccleston (SJ 48445 95559; Fig 1). Constructed from rock-faced red sandstone ashlar with a slate roof, the church comprises a nave, chancel, transepts and a steeple to the west (britishlistedbuildings.co.uk 2014).

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Throughout the groundworks, a permanent-presence archaeological watching brief was maintained, in accordance with standard OA North practices. It sought to identify, investigate and record any archaeological features and deposits or human remains encountered.
- 2.2 A daily record of the nature, extent and depths of groundworks was maintained throughout the duration of the project. All archaeological contexts were recorded on OA North's *pro-forma* sheets, using a system based on that of English Heritage former Centre for Archaeology. A digital photographic record was maintained throughout.
- 2.3 The service trench located across the graveyard (Plate 1) was hand excavated for a length of 8m, with a width of 0.22m and a depth of 0.4m. A 1.5-ton mechanical excavator was subsequently used to excavate the remaining service trench through the existing pathway to the north of the Church (Plate 2). This second section measured 15m in length, was up to 1.2m wide, and 0.45m deep.



Plate 1: Location of drain through graveyard to the north of the church.



Plate 2: Location of drain through pathway facing east

3 RESULTS

- 3.1 Trench 1 ran on a north/south alignment from the edge of the church to the pathway. It consisted of topsoil and disturbed backfill from the four graves that it crossed over. The grave curbs belonging to 'Leigh', 'Blackburn' and 'Melling' plots were uncovered during the excavation (Plate 3) but no human remains were encountered.



Plate 3: Excavated Trench 1 through the graveyard. Viewed facing south.

- 3.2 Trench 2 was located within the current pathway on an east/west alignment at right-angles to Trench 1. It consisted of a tarmac surface, overlying crushed red sandstone, presumably acting as a consolidation deposit for the path (Plate 4). No archaeological or human remains were encountered in the trench.



Plate 4: Trench 2 fully excavated. Viewed facing west.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The groundworks conducted within the graveyard did not extend to a sufficient depth to encounter articulated human remains within the burial plots. In addition, no disarticulated human remains were identified in either trench, suggesting there had been little former disturbance of the plots prior to the current works.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 5.1 OA North is grateful to Steve Welsh of Buttress Architects Ltd and the Rev Forster for commissioning the archaeological works. Thanks are also due to Denis Morris of Armitage Construction for on-site liaison. The watching brief was undertaken and reported upon by Vickie Jamieson. The report was illustrated by Mark Tidmarsh and edited by Adam Tinsley. The project was managed by Stephen Rowland.

6 REFERENCES

<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-50555-christchurch-eccleston>
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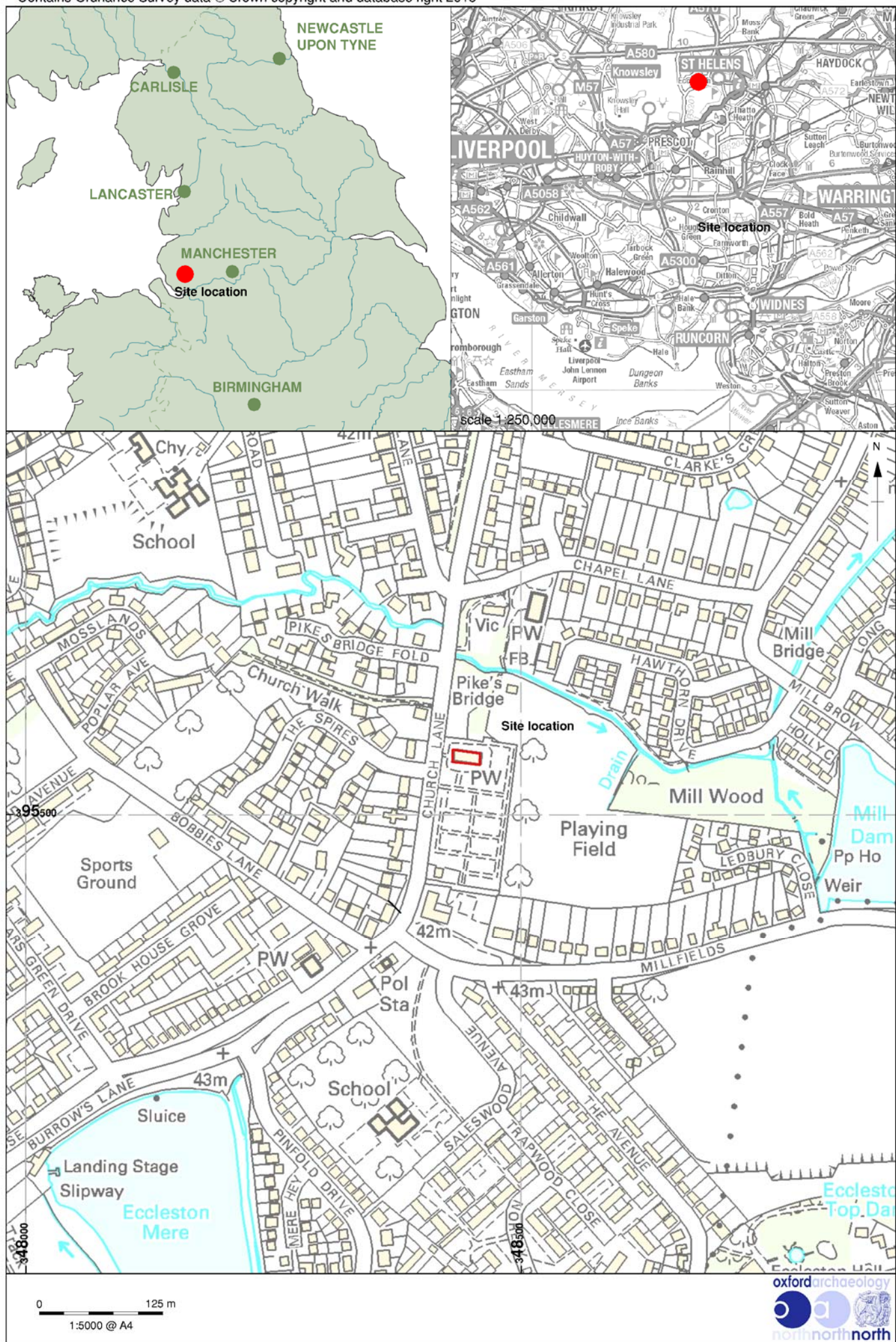


Figure 1: Site location

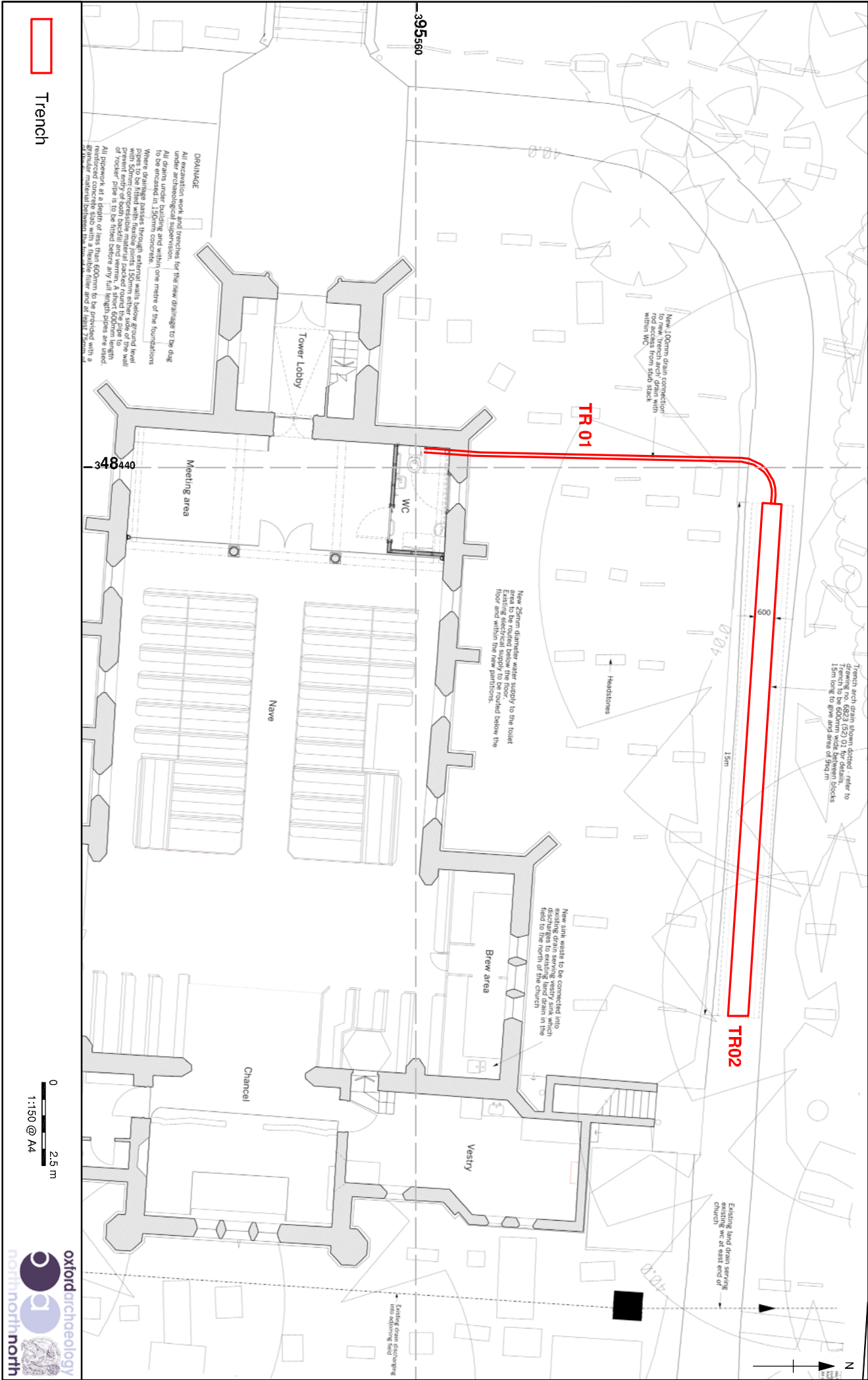


Figure 2: Trench location