



Archaeological Field Unit

**North Porch, St. Peter's Church,  
Barton, Cambridgeshire**

Judith Roberts

July 2004

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. 738

Commissioned by Barton Church Parochial Church Council

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Barton, Cambridgeshire**

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## **SUMMARY**

*The Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation in front of the north door of St. Peter's Church, Barton, Cambridgeshire, in June 2004. The work was commissioned by Freeland Rees Roberts on behalf of Barton Parochial Church Council in advance of construction of an annex with disabled access.*

*The investigation involved hand digging an area approximately 4m by 4.5m. Several burials were revealed at relatively shallow depths. The graves were cut by a pit (or possibly another, more recent grave) which in turn was sealed by a cobbled surface (probably a path) which was sealed by post-medieval deposits and topsoil.*

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# Drawing Conventions

Sections	Plans
Limit of Excavation	Limit of Excavation
Cut	Deposit - Conjectured
Cut - Conjectured	Natural Features
Soil Horizon	Intrusion/Truncation
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	Sondages/Machine Strip
Intrusion/Truncation	Illustrated Section  S.14
Top of Natural	Archaeological Deposit
Top Surface	Modern Deposit
Break in Section	Stone
Cut Number <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">118</span>	Human Skeletal Remains
Deposit Number 117	Cut Number 118
Ordnance Datum $\frac{18.45m}{\lambda}$ ODN	Deposit Number 117

**North Porch, St. Peter's Church,  
Barton, Cambridgeshire  
(TL 40779 55730)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

In June 2004 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an evaluation on land to the north of St. Peter's Church, Barton. The site is immediately to the north of the north door of the church. The work was commissioned by Freeland Rees Roberts on behalf of Barton Parochial Church Council in advance of the construction of an annex with disabled access.

The excavations were carried out in accordance with the Brief dated September 2003 and prepared by Tony Baggs, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor. The archaeological objectives for the excavation were recorded in the specification for the site. These objectives were to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area. The specification was approved by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office before the start of the evaluation.

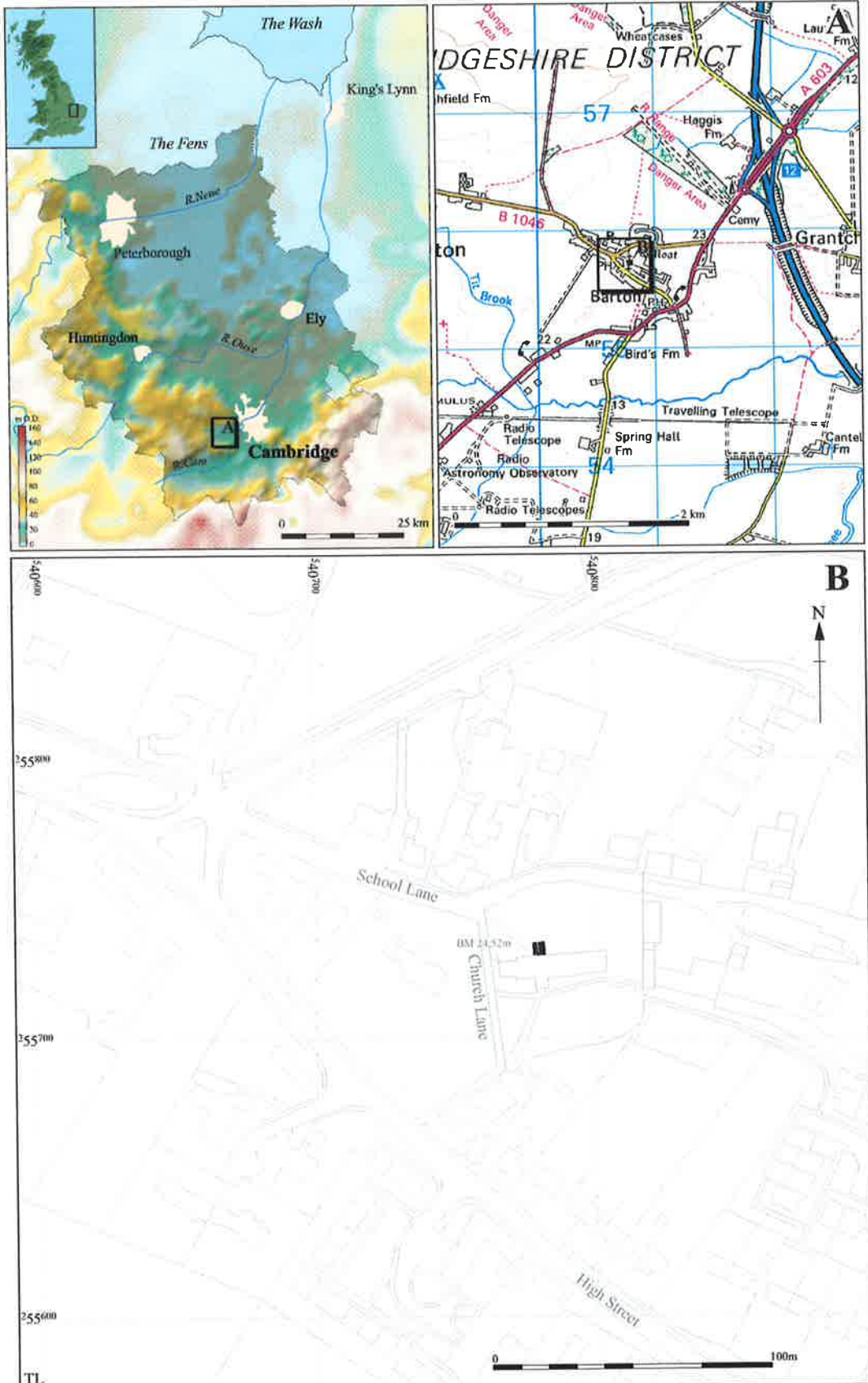
The excavated area revealed several burials, a pit and a cobbled surface or path.

**2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The underlying geology is Gault clay and the benchmark on the north-west corner of the tower indicates a height of 24.52mOD. No natural geology was revealed in the area excavated.

**3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (RCHME 1968) inventory of monuments in west Cambridgeshire indicates the church lies on the route of Akeman Street (Roman road) and there is considerable Roman activity recorded in the parish (SMR no. 4925).



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**Figure 1** Location of excavated area (black)

Saxo-Norman sherds have been found south of the church, opposite the smithy (SMR no. 4357). There may, indeed, have been an earlier church on the development site with settlement of this period clustered around the church.

St. Peter's Church contains elements of an 11th century church which was extended in the 12th century and subsequently remodelled or rebuilt (SMR no. 246). Restoration work was carried out in the 19th and 20th centuries. There is no evidence for any structural remains along the north wall of the church

A number of post-medieval houses and agricultural buildings of 17th and 18th century date still occupy the centre of the village around the church (SMR nos. 4913, 4914, 491, 4913, 4919, 4990 and 5127).

#### 4 METHODOLOGY

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the area affected by the development.

An area 4mx4.5m was excavated by hand. The area was cleaned, photographed and recorded using the AFU standard contextual recording system. The spoil heap was scanned visually for artefacts.

#### 5 RESULTS

The excavation area was sealed by a very dark grey brown sandy silt topsoil (1) which varied in depth between 0.12m and 0.2m. The topsoil contained rare fragments of brick and tile. Close to the church wall a drain had been dug and backfilled with pea grit. Sealed by the topsoil was a firm mixed deposit, 2 (0.14m thick) of mid grey brown sandy silt with a moderate number of stones and fragments of brick, tile, slate, mortar and chalk fragments. Objects retrieved from 2 included butchered animal bone, clay pipe, glass, slate, lead fragments and iron nails. A small quantity of very fragmentary human bone was also recovered from this deposit.

The earliest features found during excavation were two burials - 11 and 13. These burials were contained within fills 19 and 16 respectively. Fill 16 was a firm mid brown silty clay with occasional stones. A copper alloy object (small find no. 7) was recovered from the fill. The top of the skull was revealed but the skeleton was not fully excavated. The skeleton was oriented east-west, parallel to and 1.45m from the north wall of the church.



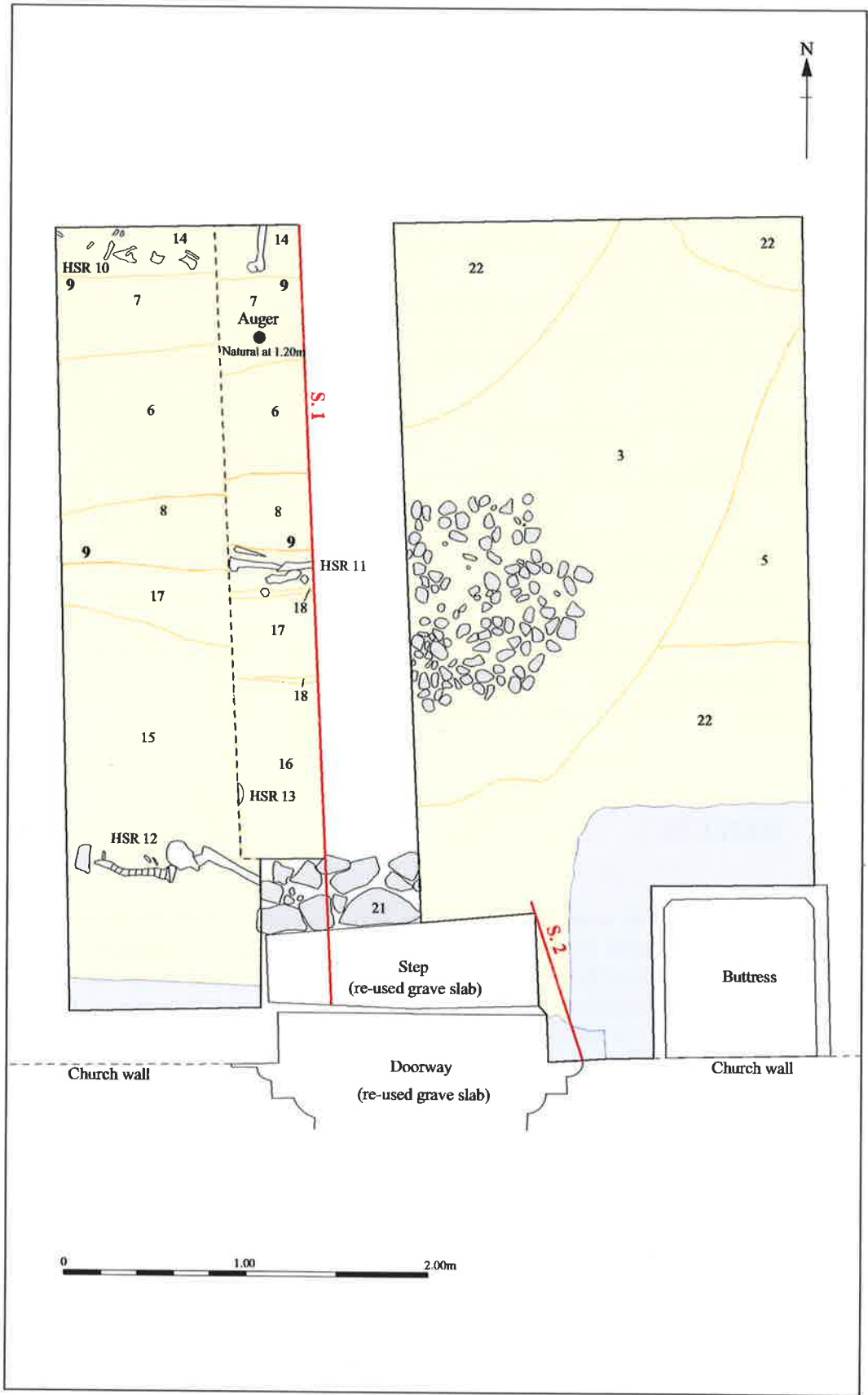


Figure 2 Trench plan

Burial 11 was contained within fill 19, a firm grey brown silty clay with occasional small stones. The skeletal remains comprised an articulated hand, three long bones and a patella. Again this skeleton was not fully excavated.

Burials 11 and 13 were both cut by a further grave (20) oriented east-west, 0.65m wide and over 0.16m deep. The lowest fill in this grave, 18, was a thin layer of a firm bright brown orange sandy clay with occasional small stones. A small fragment of human bone was found in this deposit which may be the result of cutting earlier burials. Sealing layer 18 was deposit 17 - a firm mid pale brown grey silty clay with moderate small stones and chalk fragments, 0.16m thick. An iron nail (small find no. 10), fragments of bone and medieval and late medieval pottery were found in this fill.

Sealing grave 20 and the grave fills 16 and 19 was deposit 15 which was a firm mid grey brown clay silt with frequent grit and stones (varying in size between 0.14 and 0.04m). This deposit was 0.20m thick and the remains of an articulated skeleton (12) were found at the interface of this deposit and lay 16.

Skeleton 12 was oriented east-west. The skeleton was partially exposed - revealing the left pelvis and femur, most of the spinal column, the left scapula and part of the left humerus. The right-hand part of the skeleton may have been disturbed when the drain around the church wall was excavated.

In the north-western part of the trench a collection of human skeletal remains (10) were found within deposit 14. Associated with these remains was a fragment of lead, a nail and an iron artefact. Deposit 14 appears to be upcast from the cutting of a grave. It was a firm mid orange brown silt with moderate mottles of bright brown orange and occasionally bright orange sandy clay with moderate stones.

Cutting through deposits 14 and 19 was a pit (9) which was 1.6m wide. Its full length and depth were not revealed. Again this ran on an east-west axis, parallel to church and full excavation may show this to be a grave. The pit contained two fills - 7 and 8 were the same fill (but given separate numbers on site) and 6. Fills 7 and 8 contained a copper alloy pin and an iron nail, together with a single piece of Roman samian pottery, fragments of medieval Ely ware and Essex micaceous ware pottery and floor tile. The fill was a firm orange brown slightly sandy clay silt with moderate stones. Over these fills was fill 6, a firm mid grey brown slightly clay silt with moderate stones.

Stratigraphically above the southern edge of this feature was deposit 5 which was a very firm mixed mid and pale brown grey silt with chalk and sand. The deposit had very frequent grit and small stones and occasional larger chalk fragments. Over 4.0m of this deposit was exposed and it varied between 1.0m and 1.5m wide and was 0.09m thick. The top was cambered and appeared to be parallel to and 2.25m from the north wall of the church. Over this was a cobbled surface (3) which was comprised over frequent rounded cobbles and sub-angular stones (0.04-0.11m) with occasional angular flints and degraded chalk lumps. The path was only one to two stones thick and ran on a north-

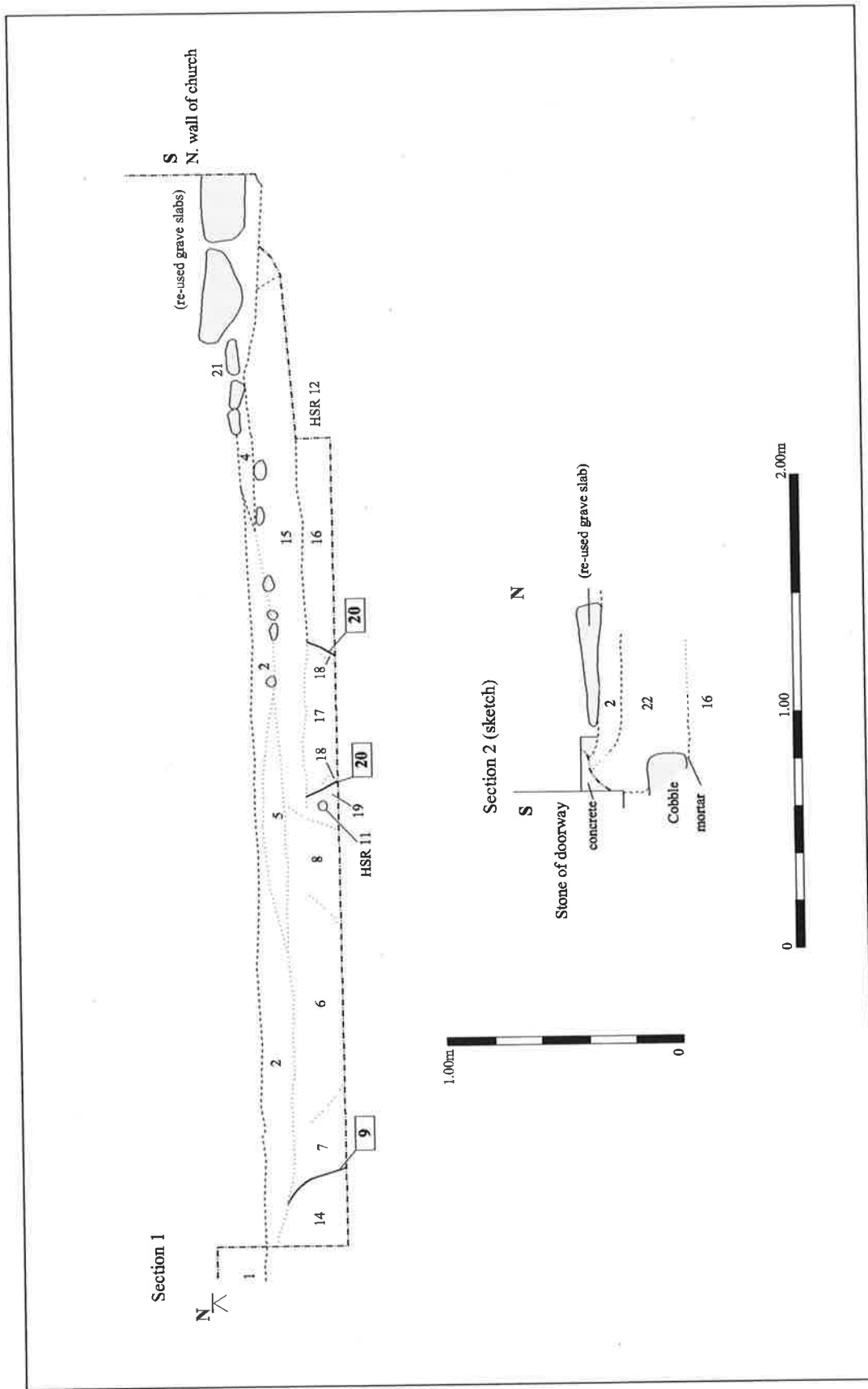


Figure 3 Section drawings

east-south-west orientation. The dressing for the path (4) was a yellow orange sand with frequent grit and gravel, 0.06m thick.

To the north-east of the door was a deposit 22 which sealed deposit 16 in this part of the trench. Layer 22 was similar to deposit 15 but greyer and less stoney. It was 0.27m thick and appeared to underly the path.

Next to the doorway was the foundation for a step. This was a rectangular setting of limestone fragments closely fitted with a matrix similar to deposit 2. The stonework abuts the re-used grave slab which forms the step into the north door.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation has demonstrated the survival of archaeological features within the proposed development area but in the main these appear to be medieval or post-medieval date.

Burials were expected but their exact positions were not clearly identified. There were no grave markers although upturned grave slabs had been used as steps to the north door. The presence of a path was not expected and it is not clear where it lead to as there is no obvious break in the present north wall of the church.

Most of the pottery appears to be small, fairly abraded sherds of Essex micaceous wares (late medieval and post-medieval). A single sherd of medieval Ely ware was found and a single sherd of Roman samian ware. The presence of Roman pottery in the area was expected as route of a Roman road is thought to pass through this part of Barton and numerous Roman remains have been found in Barton.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has provided an opportunity to investigate the churchyard close to the north door of St. Peter's church. It must be stressed, however, that the evaluation was limited in depth by the presence of articulated burials within 0.6m of the present ground surface.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author would like to thank Barton PCC who commissioned and funded the archaeological work and their architects Freeland Rees Roberts. The area was excavated and recorded by Tony Baker, the illustrations were prepared by Emily Oakes and Sam Whitehead. The project was managed by Judith Roberts.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Tony Baggs, who monitored the excavation.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England 1968 An Inventory of  
Historical Monuments in the County of Cambridge Volume 1 West  
Cambridgeshire

## APPENDIX 1 Finds catalogue

Context Number	Small Find Number	Material	Object Name
7	1	Cua (copper alloy)	Pin
2	2	Glass	Artefact
2	3	Pb (lead)	Artefact
2	4	Pb (lead)	Artefact
2	5	Fe (iron)	Nail
2	6	Pb (lead)	Came
16	7	Cua (copper alloy)	Artefact
2	8	Glass	Window glass
2	9	Pb (lead)	Artefact
17	10	Fe (iron)	Nail
10	11	Pb (lead)	Artefact
1	12	Glass	Artefact
10	13	Fe (iron)	Nail
10	14	Fe (iron)	Artefact
8	15	Fe (iron)	Nail

Context	Material	Object Name	Weight in kg
1	Ceramic	Tobacco pipe	0.01
1	Ceramic	Roofing tile	0.18
1	Stone	Slate	0.02
2	Organic	Bone	0.04
2	Ceramic	Tobacco pipe	0.01
2	Ceramic	Vessel	0.03
2	Ceramic	Floor tile	0.08
2	Stone	Slate	0.01
2	Organic	Human Skeletal Remains	0.08
5	Ceramic	Vessel	0.02
5	Organic	Human Skeletal Remains	0.11
7	Ceramic	Vessel	0.03
7	Ceramic	Tile	0.03
7	Organic	Human Skeletal Remains	0.02
8	Ceramic	Vessel	0.00
8	Organic	Human Skeletal Remains	0.15
10	Ceramic	Vessel	0.01
10	Organic	Human Skeletal Remains	0.60
16	Organic	Human Skeletal Remains	0.05
17	Ceramic	Vessel	0.01
17	Organic	Human Skeletal Remains	0.01



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