PROPOSED ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION DURING DEVELOPMENT CHURCHYARD OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARTIN, BREMHILL, WILTSHIRE

James Brigers, BA September 2023 (revised December 2023)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

1.1.1 Faculty and planning permission is being sought to allow the installation and upgrading of drainage within the churchyard. The work will involve upgrading of drainage immediately to the north east and south of the building the excavation of new drainage runs to the south east to join a principal new run to a new soakaway to be located to the north east of the church (fig. 2).

1.2 Location

1.2.1 The medieval church of St Martin stands at the above grid reference and towards the south western corner of a large, polygonal enclosure containing the associated graveyard at the southern edge of the village of Bremhill in north eastern Wiltshire. The underlying geology in the locality consists of sandstone of the Hazlebury Bryan series.

1.3 Historical & Archaeological Context

1.3.1 The existing settlement of Bremhill probably has its origins during the Saxon period and lands here were the subject of a grant by King Aethelstan to the Abbey of St Mary, Malmesbury in c935. The estate remained in the hands of the abbey following the Norman Conquest and receives mention in Domesday Book when it was a moderate sized settlement with a value £23 6 shillings[1].

1.3.2 The existing church building is thought to have Saxon origins and displays some evidence of surviving long and short work consistent with the period at the north west angle of the nave. Much of the surviving fabric would seem to be of the early 13th century at the earliest, in particular the heavily restored nave arcades. The tower is originally of 13th century date but re-fronted and raised in the 15th. The church was heavily restored in 1850 and the chancel, nave and aisle roofs were replaced at this time and much of the interior of the chancel was remodelled.

1.3.3 Geophysical Survey in the lawn of Bremhill Manor, immediately to the west of the site, in 2020 revealed extensive potential stony surfaces, possibly representing a former farmyard and several anomalies suggestive of walls or foundations of uncertain date[2]

[1] Morris, J gen ed. 'Domesday Book, Wiltshire', 8,12; Phillimore 1980
[2] Wilts & Swindon HER MWI77272 & MWI77270

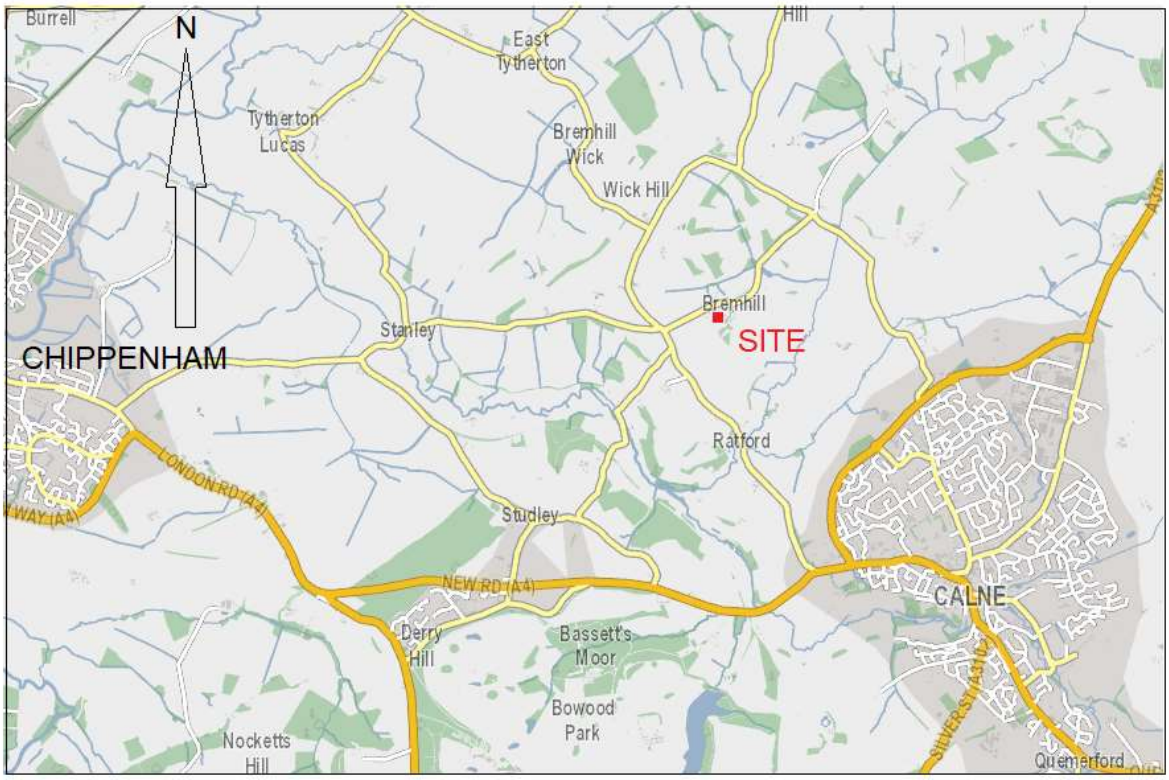


Fig. 1: Parish Church of St Martin, Bremhil. Location of the Site



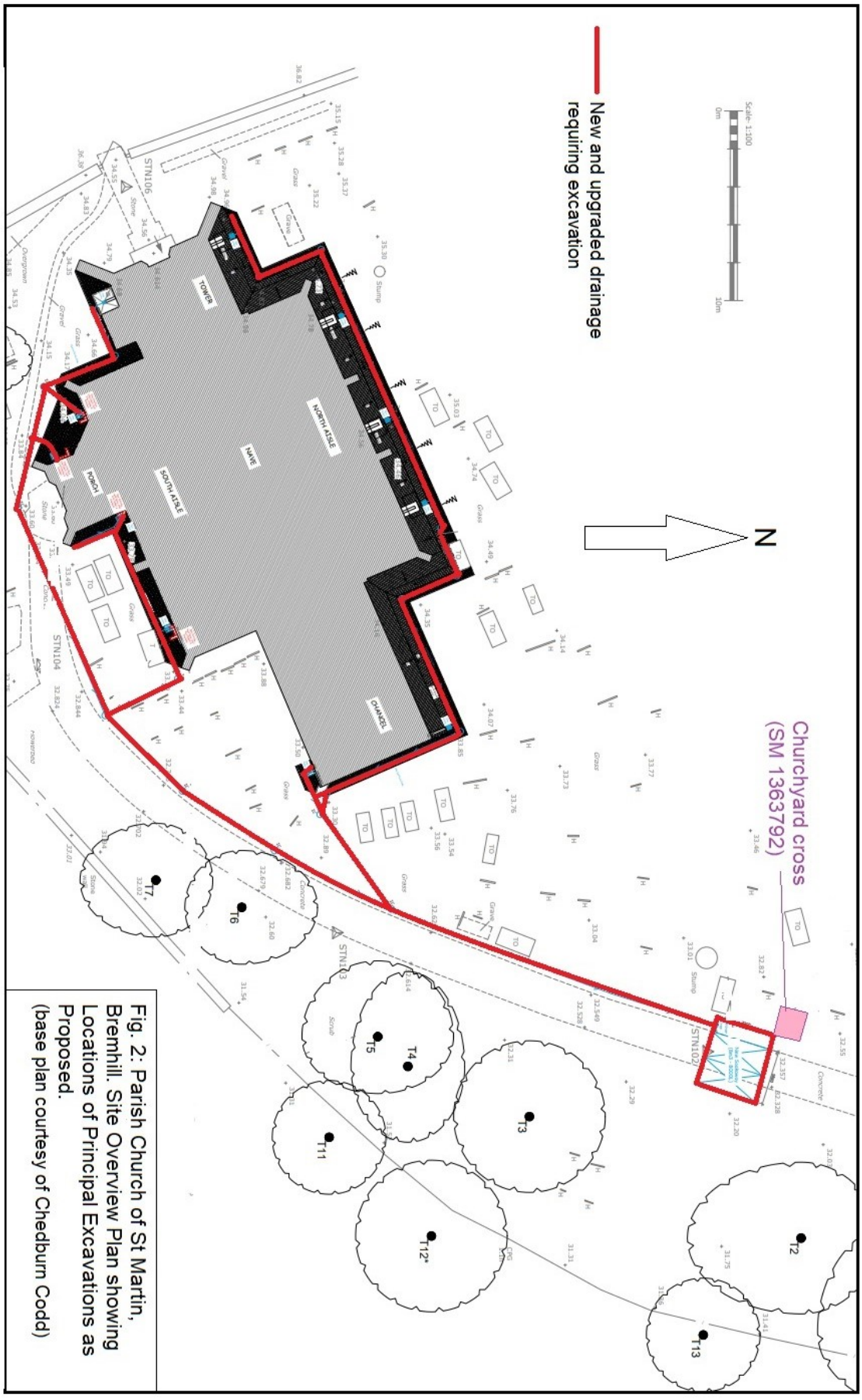


Fig. 2: Parish Church of St Martin, Bremhill. Site Overview Plan showing Locations of Principal Excavations as Proposed.
(base plan courtesy of Chedburn Codd)

1.4 Legislation

1.4.1 The church is listed Grade I by merit of its historical and architectural significance (no. 1199069) and a total of 26 monuments at various locations within the churchyard are protected by individual and group listings (all Grade II). The churchyard also contains a cross with a medieval base which is Grade II listed but also carries the status of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (no. 1363792; SAM Wiltshire 689).

2.0 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROGRAMME

2.1 Recommended Mitigation

2.1 The location of the site suggests high archaeological potential. It is therefore considered that intrusive elements of the proposed development are likely to have an impact on buried remains the character, date and extent of which is currently unknown.

2.2 In order to satisfy the condition of planning/faculty consent and mitigate the impacts of the development on potential archaeological remains it is proposed that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the excavation of the groundworks in these areas. This mitigation format has been provisionally agreed as suitable with Wiltshire Council HES and is in accordance with guidance presented in *NPPF.*

2.3 Due to the potential significance of archaeological material contained within the site, monitoring of excavations will initially be *comprehensive*[3] with the archaeologist being present on site during all groundworks associated with the development. The main contractor/applicant will be advised to contact the archaeologist well in advance of all intrusive works associated with the development.

2.4 The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are to contribute to the knowledge of the chronological development of the Church of St Martin and the wider area of the site through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of activities associated with the proposed development, to allow preservation by record of any such remains that will be otherwise destroyed by the excavation process and to enable the recovery of human remains and other artefacts under controlled conditions. Particular attention will be made to the character, condition date and significance of deposits, features and structures.

2.5 Attention will be paid to specific research aims as identified in the South West Archaeological Research Framework (SWARF)[4], particularly in relation to medieval burial practices, the origins of parish churches & chapels and the foundation and evolution of early medieval religious sites (Webster et al 2008; p. 204; 205 & 286)

2.5 The detailed method and process to be employed during the monitoring is presented in 3.1, below.

[3] CIfA, 'Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief', pub. 2014; updated 2020

[4] Webster, CJ (ed), 2008 'The Archaeology of South West England', Somerset County Council

3.0 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

3.1 Archaeological Monitoring

3.1.1 The archaeological contractor will provide the relevant officer from Wiltshire Council with adequate notice of work commencing on the site. Provision will be made to safely accommodate monitoring of the project by personnel from that body and any other interested parties.

3.1.2 All works will be undertaken within the terms of guidance provided by the Institute for Archaeology for the implementation of archaeological watching brief[5], Historic England guidance for the management of research projects[6] and to accepted best practice for archaeological work in Wiltshire

3.1.3 Only suitably qualified, trained and experienced persons will monitor all groundworks associated with the development.

3.1.4 Where areas of the site are to be stripped of modern surfaces or overburden the archaeologist will monitor the excavations and provide direction regarding the exposure of archaeological deposits.

3.1.5 The archaeologist will monitor all excavations and these will be accomplished through the use of a machine fitted with a toothless bucket; If possible archaeological remains are encountered machine excavation will be paused to allow further investigation.

3.1.6 The archaeologist will inspect the surfaces revealed. Any archaeological structures or features revealed will be recorded in plan and section as appropriate. As a standard, at least one long section of each excavated trench will be photographed with an appropriate scale in place, to be supplemented by detailed shots to illustrate the stratigraphic sequence (3.1.17). In areas of low stratigraphic complexity the written (3.1.16) and photographic record of each context will be supplemented by a measured sketch. Where a more detailed record is required a detailed drawing will be produced at an appropriate scale (usually 1:10 or 1:20) and the location of each drawing will be accurately marked on the overall site plan at a scale of 1:200 or 1:500 (3.1.14). The main contractor will allow the archaeologist reasonable time and resources to undertake any inspection or recording required.

3.1.7 In the event of particularly significant discoveries WC HES will be informed and a site meeting be arranged between the consultant, WC HES and the applicant to determine the appropriate mitigation.

3.1.8 Particular attention will be paid to the discreet recovery of disarticulated human bone from the top soil contexts likely to be disturbed by the trenching. This material will be bagged and stored in a suitable location away from public view prior to being returned to the church authorities for appropriate re-burial. Articulated in-situ burials encountered during the works will be carefully excavated by hand and recorded photographically. The locations and attitude of each burial will be recorded on the overall site plan. Following removal the exhumed remains will be securely stored prior to reburial. The remains will be examined on site to provide broad information regarding date

[5] Institute for Archaeologists, 'Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief', IFA 2008
[6] Historic England, 2015 'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment' (MoRPHE)

of deposition, age, gender and basic pathology. In respect of the treatment of human remains, guidance issued by the Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England (APABE) and Historic England[7] will be consulted and followed.

3.1.9 Artefacts will be collected as work progresses. Where possible these will be assigned to particular contexts and bagged and labelled accordingly with the site's unique code. Unstratified post-medieval material will be noted and discarded on site unless it retains extra-contextual significance. Provision will be made for the conservation and safe storage of finds of importance requiring such treatment.

3.1.10 Should any finds identified as treasure or potential treasure, including precious metals, groups of coins or prehistoric metalwork, be exposed, these will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice (2nd Revision). Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft.

3.1.11 Provision will be made within the budget for the collection and analysis of samples from deposits that exhibit potential for good environmental preservation or scientific dating techniques.

3.1.12 All structures, deposits and finds are to be recorded according to accepted professional standards.

3.1.13 All recording points used should be accurately tied into the National Grid and located on to the 1:1250 map of the area.

3.1.14 Plans indicating the location of all archaeological features are to be drawn at an appropriate scale, located on the site plan and levelled with respect to OD, or surrounding permanent ground levels or street level. An overall site plan is to be maintained at a suitable scale, usually 1:200 0r 1:500.

3.1.15 All plans are to accurately tied in to the site grid by triangulation from existing permanent features and through the use of a hand-held GPS device. All plans and sections are to be drawn on polyester based drafting film and clearly labelled.

3.16 All archaeological contexts are to be recorded individually on context record sheets. A further, more general, record of the work comprising a description and discussion of the archaeology is to be maintained as appropriate.

3.1.17 An adequate photographic record of the excavation will be prepared. This will include photographs illustrating the principal features and finds discovered, in detail and in context. The photographic record will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted. All photographs of archaeological detail will feature an appropriately-sized scale. The photographic record will consist of digital images of a size of no fewer than 18 megapixels.

[7] Historic England, 2017 'Guidance for Best Practice for the Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds'

4.0 Post Excavation Assessment, Analysis and Project Designs for further work

4.1 Where excavations reveal archaeological, artefactual or palaeoenvironmental deposits that have potential for yielding important information about the site or its environs, through specialist assessment and analysis, this assessment work will be undertaken and reported on in a separate formal Post-Excavation Assessment and Project Design. This document may also fulfil the role of an interim report if a substantial publication delay is expected.

4.2 On completion of the watching brief an assessment of the site records will be undertaken as a result of which a programme of post-excavation work will be defined and a full report on the findings will be produced within 3 months of completion of the fieldwork. If no archaeological remains are encountered, a brief summary report of the work undertaken and the depths of the made ground recorded will be prepared for the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record. The summary will also include a scale plan of the location of areas observed during the investigation.

4.3 During the post excavation process specialists will be consulted for the production of reports in respect of the artefact assemblage. The expected classes of finds and relevant consultants are: prehistoric/Roman ceramics (Rachel Hall); medieval/post medieval metalwork and ceramics (TBC); faunal remains (Lorrain Higby). Should other classes of material occur advice will be sought from persons with relevant specialist knowledge.

4.4 The final report (if required) will contain a minimum of the following.
a) figures:

i) a site location plan tied into the Ordnance Survey at 1:1250 (or similar);

ii) a trench/groundworks location plan at 1:100 or 1:200 showing the layout of archaeological features as related to the development site;

iii) plans of the main features revealed in each of the trenches at a larger scale; such plans are to also illustrate areas of disturbance; change in subsoil and location of sections;

iv) relevant section drawings and trench profiles as appropriate.

b) an account of the background and circumstances to the work including a description of the development proposals and planning history, the nature of potential impacts arising from the proposals, any known existing disturbances on the site, background archaeological potential of the area of the site and constraints on the fieldwork.

c) a description and interpretation of the archaeology of the site, together with an summary list of features containing information on stratigraphic relationships. This should include description of areas of disturbance, non-archaeological deposits and changes in geological subsoil where appropriate. The report will include a consideration of the effects of the development on the archaeological remains and

highlight any areas of increased sensitivity within the development site which may have potential to be considered during future development.

d) a catalogue and discussion of the finds by category. The level of detail will depend on the assessment of all stratified pottery and other datable material will be studied to some degree.

e) a copy of the OASIS form as completed online (see 4.6, below)

4.5 On completion of the final report, in addition to copies required by the Client, digital copies of the report shall be supplied to Wiltshire County HES on the understanding that this will be available for public reference on the HER Further copies will be available on request, but it should be noted the report, all illustrations and photographs remain copyright and reproduction or publication will be permitted without the express written permission of the author.

4.6 An online OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations) form will be completed in respect of the archaeological work and will include a digital version of the report. The report or HER entry will include the OASIS ID number.

4.7 All artefacts recovered during the investigation are the property of the landowner. They are to be suitably bagged, boxed and marked in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, conservation guidelines and on completion of the archaeological post-excavation programme the contractor will arrange for them to be transferred for long term storage with Wiltshire Museum (agreement has been made with the museum to facilitate this, see 4.8, below)

4.8 The site archive, to include all project records and cultural material produced by the project, is to be prepared in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990).* On completion of the project the landowner will arrange for the archive to be deposited at the Wiltshire Museum. Agreement has been made with the destination museum to provide adequate funding for the long term storage of the archive/artefacts (Box Fee) in satisfaction of a requirement of Wiltshire HES.

Contractor Details: