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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT ST MARY'S CHURCH, HUNTON, KENT ME15 0RR

Planning Reference: 19/504235/FULL

NGR: TQ 7241 4975

DAS Site Code: SMH20-WB

OASIS Reference Number: TBC



Report prepared for Reverend Peter Calway (Client)

By Darnley Archaeological Services Ltd Company, No 12320658

Report Number DAS 010/20/SMH20

November 2020



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Contents

1.0	Summary	3
2.0	Introduction	3
3.0	Location, Topography & Geology	4
4.0	Archaeological & Historical Background	6
5.0	Methodology	9
6.0	Summary of Results	10
7.0	Finds	14
8.0	Interpretation	15
9.0	Conclusion	15
10.0	Acknowledgements	15
11.0	References	16

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Site Images	17
Appendix B: Finds Images	18-20

List of Figures

Figure 1 - 1:250000 Site Location of SMH20-WB	4
Figure 2 – 1:25000 Site Location of SMH20-WB	5
Figure 3 – 1:250 Proposed Groundworks Area SMH20-WB	5
Figure 4 – 1:2500 Nearby Heritage Assets	8
Figure 5 – 1:2500 Nearby Historic Parks & Gardens	8
Figure 6 - 1:55 Site Plan SMH20-WB	10
Figure 7 – 1:20 Plan Trench 1	11
Figure 8 – 1:30 Plan Trench 2	12
Figure 9 – 1:10 Section 1	12
Figure 10 – 1:200 Groundworks Overlaying 1987 OS Map	13
Figure 11 – 1:30 Plan Trench 3	13
Figure 12 – SMH20-WB Stratigraphic Sequence	15

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1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. During September 2020, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Darnley Archaeological Services at St Mary's Church (HER No: TQ 74 NW 114), Hunton, Kent (TQ 7241 4975). The focus of the watching brief was to monitor groundworks in the churchyard of St Mary's and to the rear of the Church Cottage. The groundworks consisting of vaults, a soakaway pit and topsoil removal for a path connecting the building with the adjacent established walkway. All features of archaeological interest were correctly examined and recorded, under planning application 19/504235/FULL.
- 1.2. The archaeological watching brief recorded a rubbish deposit revealed during the groundworks, demonstrating continuity of use of the cottage from the 18th century to the twentieth century. No significant archaeological remains were discovered.

2. INTRODUCTION

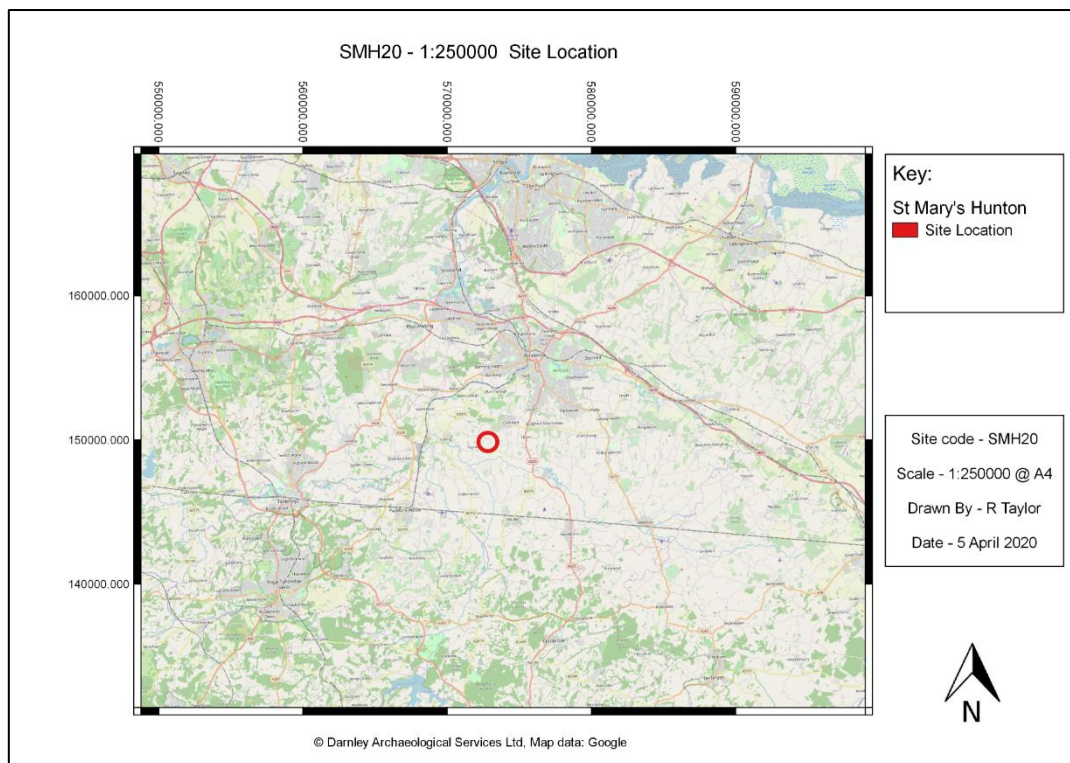
- 2.1. This report presents the results of the watching brief at St Mary's Church, Hunton, Kent, ME15 0RR.
- 2.2. The church is a Grade 1 listed building (1250030), and the Church Cottage is a grade II listed building. Both are in the parish of Hunton, within the Maidstone district of Kent and lie on the south side of the High Street and northwest of the village (TQ 7242 0497).
- 2.3. The church (HER No: T TQ 74 NW 114) dates from 1067 and the cottage (HER No. TQ 74 NW 211) from 1800-1860. The churchyard which surrounds the church and at the rear of the cottage contains several notable burial monuments and gravestones. There are no other features of historical significance nearby.
- 2.4. The installation of a toilet block required a vault of approximately 3.0m x 2.0m to a depth of 0.8m to be excavated along with an adjacent soakaway of approximately 1.5m x 1.5m x 0.30cm deep. A topsoil strip approximately 3.5m x 2.0m was required to accommodate the installation of an access path.
- 2.5. The potential impact arising from the proposals to the surrounding heritage environment or archaeological remains are considered minimal. However, the groundworks will take all necessary precautions owing to the proximity of known heritage assets and the possibility of burials at the location.
- 2.6. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was submitted to Reverend Peter Calway (client) before the Watching Brief being undertaken. All subsequent reports will be forwarded to the Local Planning Authority, KCC and archived to the local archaeological society or another suitable custodian. The client will be consulted if any significant finds are made during the excavations.



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3. LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 3.1. The church site is located within a rural area to the east side of West Street, north of Hunton, a village near Maidstone, Kent, 2.5km east of the village of Yalding, 200 m north of the River Medway, 7.0km southwest of Maidstone and 7.2km northeast of Paddock Wood (Figs 1 & 2).
- 3.2. The site is on top of river terrace gravel deposits (sand and gravel) above bedrock composed of the Weald Clay formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed during the Cretaceous Period.¹ The site is relatively level at a consistent 31m (+/- 1m) aOD with the curtilage of the churchyard.
- 3.3. There are no known existing disturbances on the site.



(Figure 1 – 1:250000 Site Location of SMH20-WB)

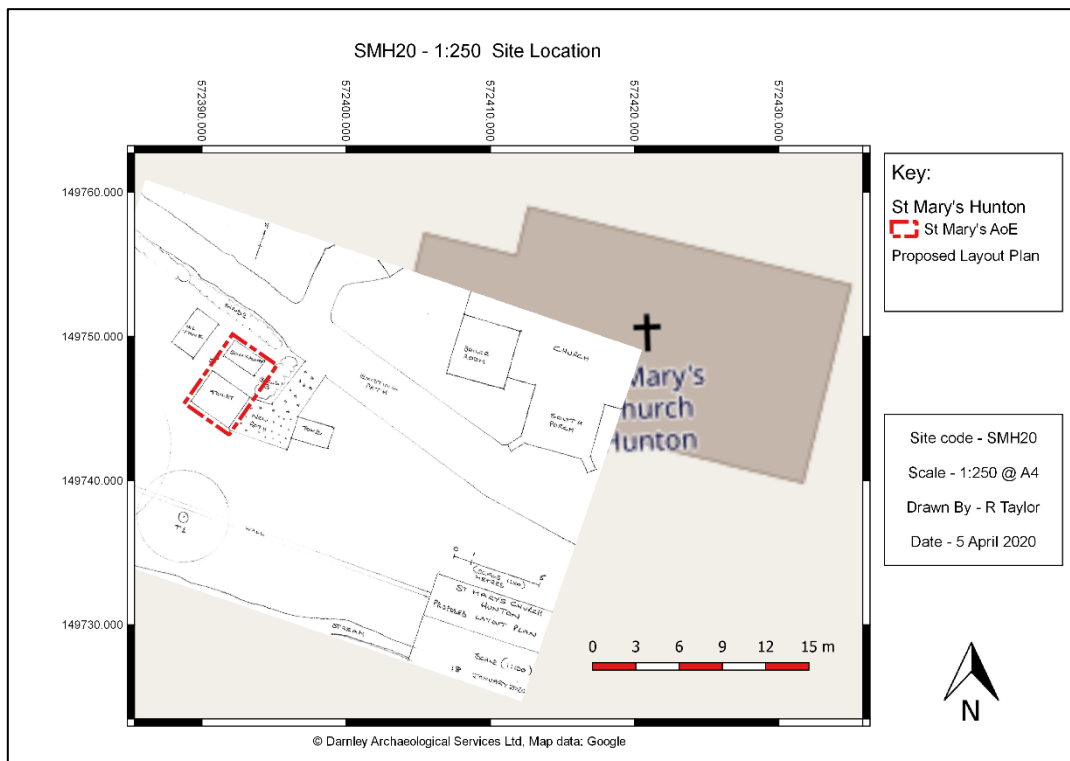
¹ www.bgs.ac.uk



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(Figure 2 - 1:25000 Site Location of SMH20-WB)



(Figure 3- 1:250 Site Location & Proposed Groundworks Area for SMH20-WB)



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4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1. A church at Huntintune (Hunton) is mentioned in the 11th century *Textos Roffensis*. The present building was probably not the first one to occupy the site. It may have been in the course of re-building before the Norman Conquest.
- 4.2. A church was in use on the present site at least in Saxon times, and the building has evolved continuously ever since. Changes in prevailing religious practices, population size, distribution of wealth, new ideas and even legislation have all affected the appearance of the church as we see it today. Some prominent features from the past such as galleries, screens, box pews and an interior chapel have been swept away over time.
- 4.3. The churchyard contains many monuments which, together with its trees, provides an appropriate setting for a country parish church. Of particular interest are fourteen table-top tombs, many of which are listed structures. The largest yew trees may be up to one thousand years old, and the lych gate dates from 1868. The churchyard contains the graves of local residents many of whom date from the nineteenth century, including that of Henry Bannerman who bought Hunton Court in 1848.²
- 4.4. Although they do not lie within its boundaries, the Church and Church Cottage are surrounded on three sides by Hunton Court, which is a designated Historic Park and Garden.
- 4.5. A detailed study of the Kent Historic Environment Record database was undertaken to assist the written scheme of investigation and watching brief. The following provides each entry's HER number and a brief description:

Medieval

TQ 74 NW 114	Church of St Mary Hunton – Grade I Listed Building 1250030 - Parish church. Late C11 or C12, C13, C14, C15, C16, and 1866. Restored 1876 by Ewan Christian.
TQ 74 NW 225	Hunton Court – Grade II Listed Building 1250127 - House. C13 core to C14 house with C18 alterations and facade of circa 1848.

Post Medieval

TQ 74 NW 120	Stables – Grade II Listed Building 1250141 - Former Stables about 50 metres north-north-east of Hunton Court and Paved Yard adjoining to south GV II Stables, with paved forecourt. Stables: Late C18.
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² Heritage statement for St Mary's Hunton written by Iain Simmons & James Forster



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TQ 74 NW 171	Coach House – Grade II Listed Building 1250153 - Former Coachhouse and Flats about 40 metres north-east of Hunton Court and Paved Yard adjoining to west GV II Coachhouse, now flats and storage. Late C18.
TQ 74 NW 118	Barn – Grade II Listed Building 1250168 - Former Barn about 100 metres north-east 20.3.1984 of Hunton Court. (Formerly listed as Barn at Court Lodge) GV II Barn, now part barn part house. Late C17 or early C18, with C15 or C16 core and later C18 additions.
TQ 74 NW 211	Cottage – Grade II Listed Building 1263466 - The Church Cottage GV II Poor house, now house. Early C19 (by c.1840).
TQ 74 NW 105	Grade II listed Building 1250019: Wall and Gate piers about 5 metres northeast of South Lodge. Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England: Early 17th century 100-acre garden and parkland, Hunton Court, Maidstone

There are several Grade II Listed Monuments located within the boundary of St Mary's Church – for details see:

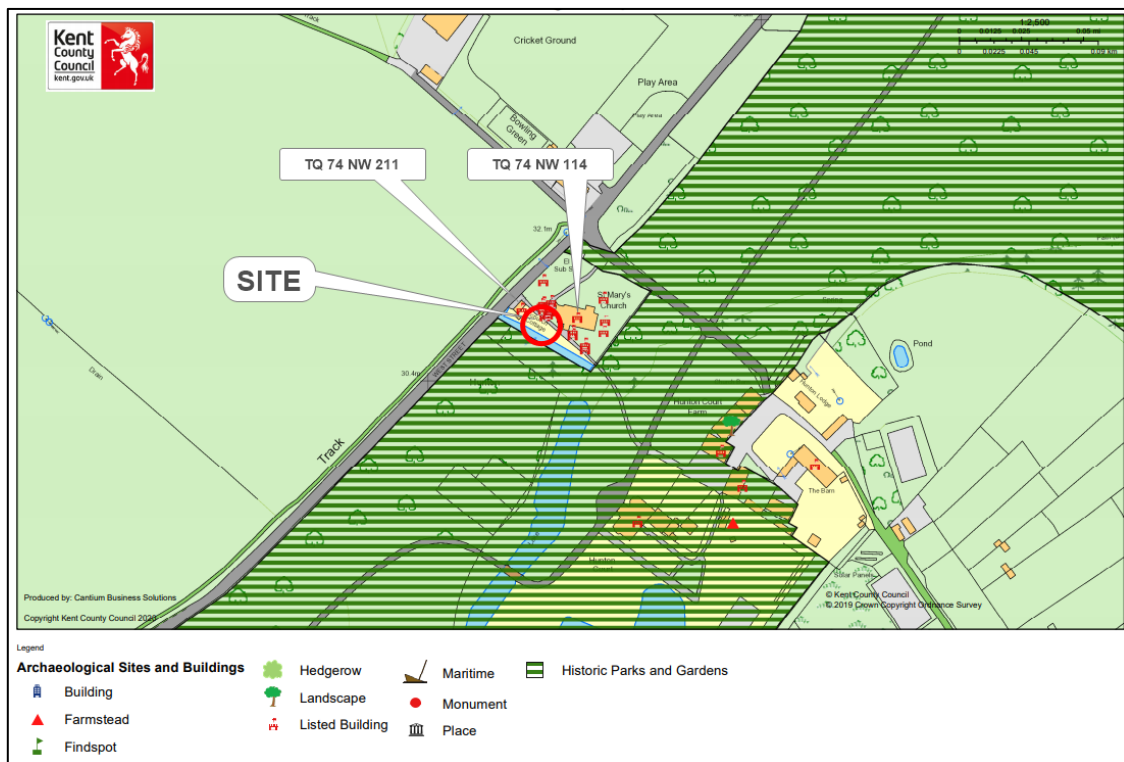
<https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.HeritageMaps.Web.Sites.Public/Default.aspx?find=hunton&lyrs=0,1,2&xmin=572108&xmax=572918&ymin=149472&ymax=149893&bg=osColour>



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(Figure 4 – 1:2500 List of Nearby Heritage Assets SMH20-WB – courtesy of KCC)



(Figure 5 – 1:2500 Showing Historic Parks & Gardens SMH20-WB – courtesy of KCC)



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5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. An excavation strategy for the work was compiled by Darnley Archaeological Services Ltd, in the WSI, providing full details of the watching brief methodology.

5.2. The aims of the watching brief are to:

- **Ensure that the planned excavations at St Mary's, Hunton are observed and that features of archaeological interest are correctly examined and recorded.**

5.3. The objectives of this development project are to:

- **Excavate a vault and soakaway and clear topsoil for installation of a path**
- **Install a toilet block, soakaway and path**

5.4. All work was undertaken following the methods set out within this WSI, according to best practice as set out by ClfA. Any significant variation on these methods would have been agreed with the Client, Maidstone Borough Council and KCC before excavation.

5.5. A Risk Assessment was drawn up for the duration of the watching brief and signed by all those involved.

Setting out the excavation areas

5.6. Excavation areas were set out according to the plans (Figure 3). As the area was under a tree canopy, the locations were recorded using GNSS reference points to measure the location of the excavations by hand tape.

Excavation

5.7. All groundworks were excavated by machine and hand tools, by single context excavation. A suitably qualified professional archaeologist supervised all excavation areas.

5.8. No constraints were experienced while carrying out the duties of the watching brief.

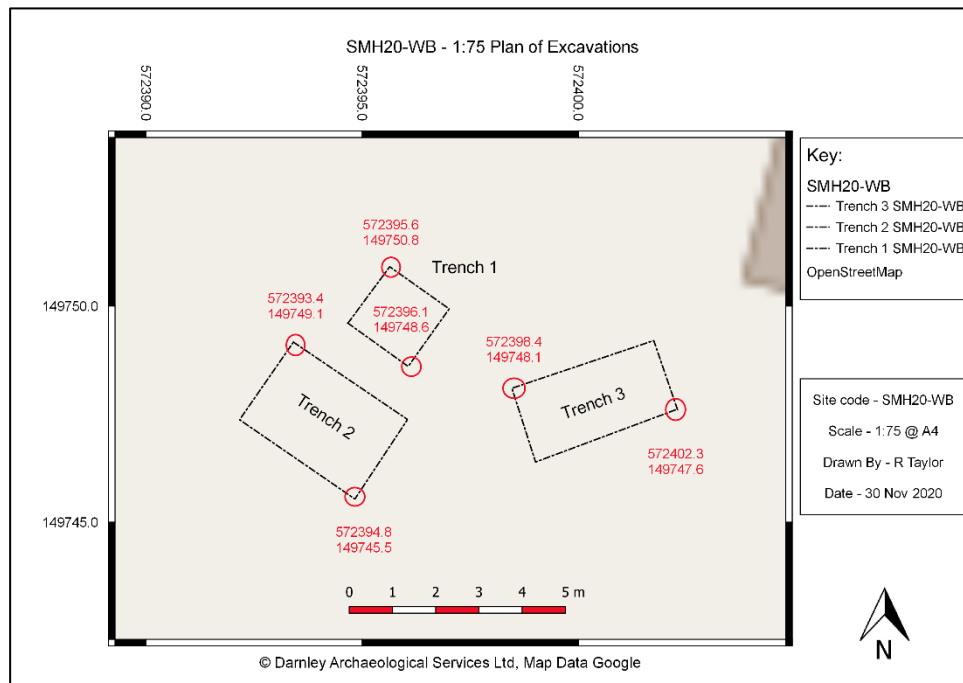


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6. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- 6.1. The soakaway (Trench 1) comprised a rectangular area measuring approximately 1.6m x 1.7m to a depth of 0.32m. The excavation area provided a few artefacts and stratigraphy compatible with the occupations and role(s) (i.e. residential) of the property.
- 6.2. (Trench 2) comprised a rectangular area measuring approximately 3.2m x 2.2m to a depth of 0.80m. The excavation area provided several artefacts and stratigraphy compatible with a midden or refuse area consistent with the occupation and role(s) (i.e. residential) of the property.
- 6.3. The final work (Trench 3) was to partially strip out topsoil over an area approximately 3.8m x 2.0m from the front of the vault to allow a path to be laid from the existing walkway to the toilet. There were no artefacts or stratigraphy revealed during this phase of the work as the intervention did not exceed the thickness of the topsoil.
- 6.4. A total of three phases associated with the site were established during the excavation:
- Phase 1 = Geological
Phase 2 = Post Medieval (c.1800 to 1945 AD) – associated with Church Cottage
Phase 3 = Modern (after 1945 AD)

- 6.5. The final plan of the completed groundworks is shown below:



(Figure 6 – 1:75 Site Plan of SMH20-WB)



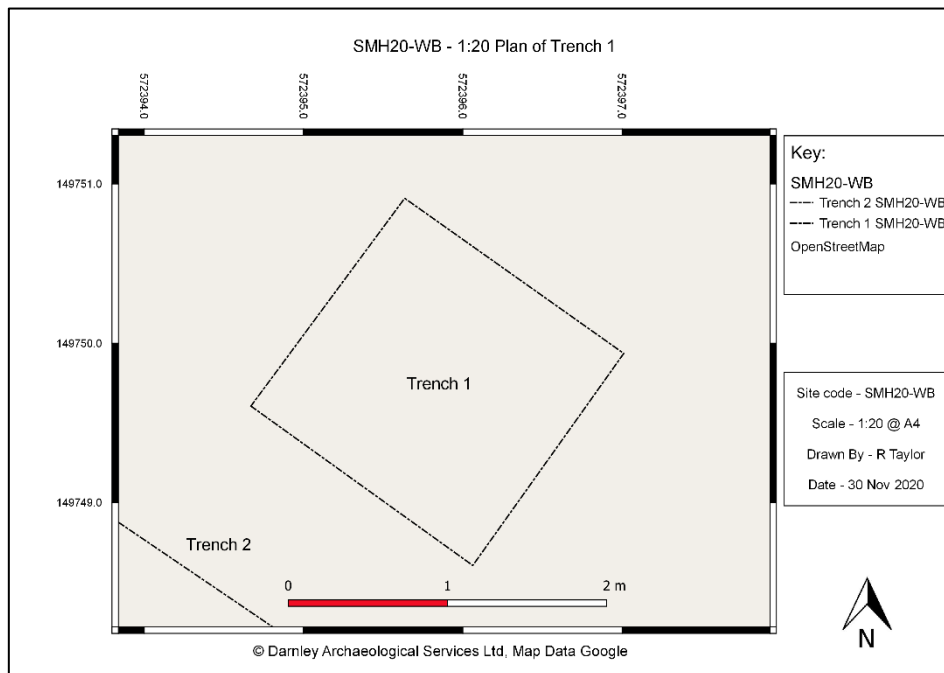
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6.6. During the watching brief, a total of seven contexts were investigated and recorded (Table 1):

Context List (VH20-WB)					
Context No.	Trench	Type	Description	Depth	Phase
1001	1, 2 & 3	Layer	Dark brown sandy loam; heavy rooting and frequent organic material present.	0.15m	3
1002	1 & 2	Layer	Loose brown sandy loam subsoil; under 1001	0.07m – 0.3m	3
1003	1 & 2	Layer	Yellow / brown sandy clay; below 1002	U/D	1
1004	1	Cut	Cut for soak away trench	n/a	3
1005	2	Layer	Loose brown sandy loam; frequent modern building debris; below 1002	0.16m	3
1006	2	Fill	Moderately compact sandy clay; frequent domestic refuse, building material and medium-sized flint & chalk pieces. Finds include cbm, pottery, glass and animal bone.	0.3m	2
1007	2	Cut	Cut for midden; fill 1007	n/a	2

(Table 1 – SMH20-WB Contexts)

6.7. **Trench 1** – excavation by mechanical digger of a soakaway measuring approximately 1.6m x 1.7m. Revealed a total of four contexts, but no archaeology observed (see **12.1**).

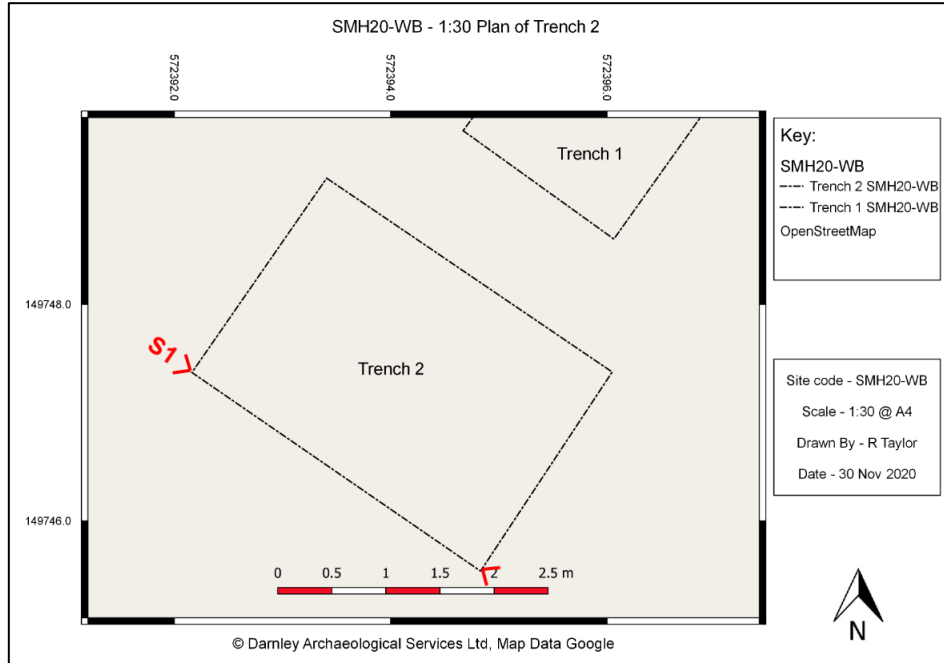


(Fig 7 - 1:20 Plan of Trench 1)

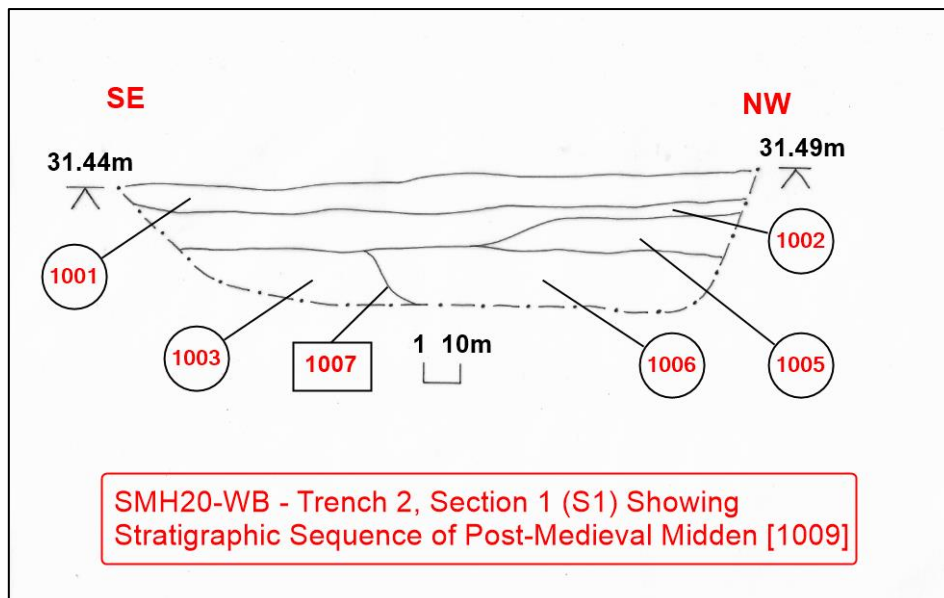


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6.8. **Trench 2** - excavation by mechanical digger of a vault to house the foundation case of the toilet block, revealed six contexts.



(Figure 8 – 1:30 Plan of Trench 2)

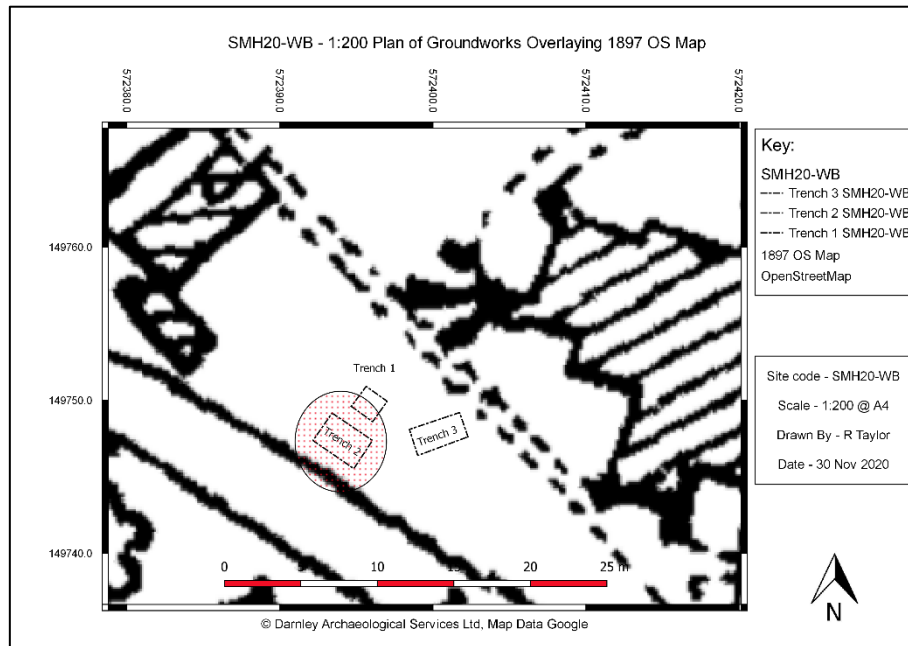


(Figure 9 – 1:10 southwest-facing Section of S1)

6.9. 0.1m of topsoil 1001 sits above 0.15m to 0.3m of 1002, loose brown sandy loam subsoil. 1002 sits above 0.15m of 1005, a loose brown sandy loam containing modern building debris. Under 1005 is 1006, up to 0.3m of a moderately compact sandy clay, probably the fill of a post-medieval midden (1007), containing refuse consistent with domestic settlement; pottery suggests a late eighteenth or early nineteenth-century date (see **13.1 - 13.3 & 13.9**). 1007 is cut into the natural (1003) (See **12.2 & 12.3**).

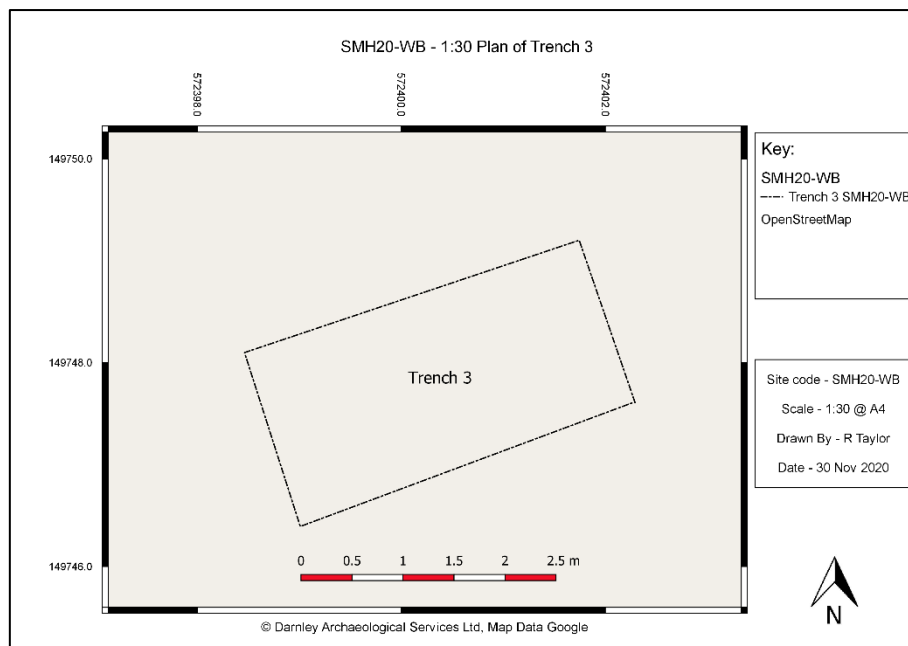


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(Figure 10 – 1:200 Plan of Groundworks Overlaying 1897 OS Map)

- 6.10. Figure 10 shows the groundworks georeferenced with the 1897 OS Map, demonstrating that the probable midden in Trench 2 is sited well within the garden area of Church Cottage and south of the Church pathway, implying domestic use.
- 6.11. **Trench 3.** Topsoil stripped by mechanical digger, from the existing path to an area northeast of the vault; excavation did not exceed the depth of the topsoil, and no archaeology was revealed (see 12.4).



(Figure 11 – 1:30 Plan of Trench 3)



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7. FINDS

- 7.1. Several finds were recovered during the watching brief, with a date range of c.1800 AD to c.1945 AD, all which characteristic of domestic occupation and consistent with the site's domestic and commercial uses.
- 7.2. No human remains or finds associated with churchyard burials of St Mary's were encountered.
- 7.3. Pottery, glass and bone provide accurate diagnostic dating evidence and is subject to additional photographic analysis in Appendix B.
- 7.4. All finds were washed, bagged, recorded and photographed according to ClfA guidelines. Table 2 below details the type, quantity and location of finds according to context:

Find Type	Quantity	Context
Pottery	2	1002
Glass	2	1006
CBM	2	1006
Bone	3	1006
Pottery	11	1006
Building Stone	1	1006

(Table 2 – Finds according to type, quantity, and context)

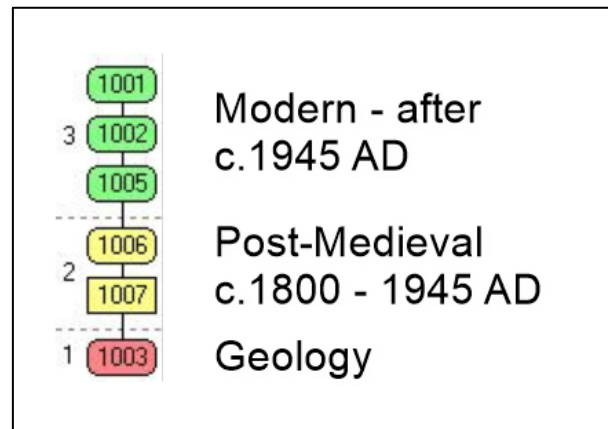


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8. INTERPRETATION

8.1. The results of the watching brief revealed a stratigraphic sequence confirming the site's past from c.1800 AD to present-day and likely related to land (or gardens) adjacent to Church Cottage, rather than St Mary's Church. Pottery evidence provides the most accurate evidence for the domestic settlement (c.1800 to 1945 AD), but no human burial remains, nor ecclesiastical finds associated with St Mary's were recovered.

8.2. The following matrix diagram illustrates the stratigraphic sequences and phasing:



(Figure 12 – SMH20-WB Stratigraphic Sequence)

9. CONCLUSION

9.1. The watching brief has fulfilled the aims and objectives of the KCC Watching Brief Specification and the Written Scheme of Investigation. The groundworks demonstrated the stratigraphy associated with the use as a domestic dwelling and business premises. Beyond this, no other archaeological features were viewed. The archaeological significance of the site is low and recorded accordingly.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

10.1. Sincere thanks are extended to the client for permissions to access the site and their patience while the archaeological process took place.



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11. REFERENCES

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www.bgs.ac.uk

<https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ExploringKentsPast.Web.Sites.Public/Default.aspx>



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12. APPENDIX A – SITE IMAGES

Image	Number & Description
	<p>12.1</p> <p>Looking northwest at Trench 1 & 2 before excavation.</p>
	<p>12.2</p> <p>Looking northeast at Section S1 in Trench 2</p>
	<p>12.3</p> <p>Concentration of animal bone at base of midden context 1006, Trench 2</p>
	<p>12.4</p> <p>Looking west towards Trench 3 from the church path</p>



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13. APPENDIX B – FINDS IMAGES

Image	Number & Description
	<p>13.1</p> <p>1007 – German-type Stoneware Jug Handle c.1700 – 1900 AD.</p>
	<p>13.2</p> <p>1007 – Red earthenware green-glazed rim from chamber pot c.1750 – 1850 AD</p>
	<p>13.3</p> <p>1007 – Kent red earthenware rim from a jar with dark iron glazing c.1750 – 1850 AD.</p>






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Image	Number & Description
	<p>13.4</p> <p>1007 – Cattle molars; little wear to surface and relatively small; suggest juvenile.</p>
	<p>13.5</p> <p>1007 – fine pale blue glass (containing manufacture bubbles). Thin with slight curvature suggests a small dish, rather than window glass c.1750 – 1850 AD</p>
	<p>13.6</p> <p>1002 – Creamware sherd c.1800 – 1900 AD</p>



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Image	Number & Description
	<p>13.7</p> <p>1007 – Shaped igneous rock fragment, probably granite, that has been subject to fire or burning.</p>
	<p>13.8</p> <p>1007 – Post-medieval Kentish peg tile c.1800 – 1900 AD</p>
	<p>13.9</p> <p>1007 – Handle from brown glazed earthenware posset pot or cup c.1750 – 1850 AD</p>