

## **Interim Statement on Test Pits at St. Andrew the Great, Cambridge.**

Two test pits were excavated by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit in April 1992 in the area of the proposed extensions to the present church.

### ***Test Pit 1***

This was located mid-way along the proposed north wall line and measured 2m x 1m. At the east end of the test pit part of two Victorian brick built burial vaults (c.3m x 2m x 1.5m) were observed. In the remaining c.1m to the west of the vaults were two undisturbed inhumations, probably 19th century in date as determined from the brick and mortar rubble incorporated in the backfilled grave cuts. The remains of a third inhumation was seen to be truncated by the construction of one of the vaults, indicating its earlier date. The vault construction backfill incorporated a high quantity of displaced human remains, dressed limestone fragments (presumably of broken tombstones), rusted metal coffin fittings and brick rubble. Knowing that a church has stood on the site for over 700 years it is not surprising that so many disturbed human remains were encountered, some of which may well represent the disturbed inhumations of the pre-Victorian churchyards. Despite such disturbance, sherds of Saxon pottery and small 'islands' of earlier soil horizons were intact towards the base of the test pit. The natural second terrace sandy river gravels were encountered at 1.80m below the ground surface (7.37m OD).

### ***Test Pit 2***

This was located mid-way along the proposed western return wall of the extension and measured 2.7 x 1.0m. Modern services (foul drains and electricity cables) were encountered in the westernmost 1m of the test pit and this area was subsequently abandoned for further investigation. A 19th century wall foundation, aligned N-S and 0.2m wide was observed for a depth of c.1.2m. It was predominantly built of clunch and limestone, although some brick and tile fragments were evident within its construction. Its depth suggests that it may have been a below-ground internal wall partition, perhaps for basements. A loose rubble and human bone-rich silty clay backfilled the areas either side of the wall and a layer of clunch and limestone rubble capped the clayey backfill to the east. The upper layers to the west of the wall comprised the loose backfills of the NE-SW aligned service trenches. The presence of the wall foundation and service pipes disallowed safe excavation beyond a 1.30m depth in the narrow test pit and instead a borehole survey was carried out which encountered the natural subsoil at a depth of 2.6m below the ground surface (6.75m OD). A sharp drop of c. 0.60m, therefore, exists between the two test pit locations.

A third test pit (numbered Test Pit 5) was excavated by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit in June 1992 in the interior of the present church.

#### *Test Pit 5*

This was located 0.37m south of the southwest balcony-support column, and measured 1.85 x 0.80m, with its long axis aligned E-W.

The natural sands and gravels were encountered at 2.35m below the present floor surface - 7.16m OD. A developed soil horizon, of mid tan brown sandy silt, overlay the natural sub-stratum and was truncated by an early pit (i.e. pre-church development). It may be early Medieval in date (perhaps Saxo-Norman), but as no dating evidence was retrieved this inference remains open to speculation. The pit was sealed by a further soil horizon, truncated in all directions by grave cuts and vault construction trenches. Two graves which, on the basis of the finds, were within the graveyard of the 17th century church were further cut through by three later brick-built burial vaults. Two of these also related to the 17th century church but it is unclear whether they were external churchyard features or internal inhumations. One of these (the northernmost) was partly demolished during the emplacement of a supporting column within the 19th century church construction. This entailed the removal of the burial and the partial reduction of the east wall of the vault and, presumably, total demolition of its northern wall (which lay outside the test pit). Subsequently, the redundant vault was backfilled with rubble procured from the demolition of the 17th century church structure. Later in the 19th century (but prior to the Burial Act of c. 1870, preventing burial within churches) the third burial vault was inserted into the available space alongside the two extant vaults. The height of the vault rooves was recorded at 0.87m (8.28m OD) below the present floor surface. Above this level loose demolition rubble provided hardcore layers upon which concrete ground beams were laid, supporting the wood and York Stone slab floor.

#### *Test Pit 5 Levels*

0 - 0.87m	Concrete and rubble hardcore
0.87 - 1.66m	Depth of burial vaults
1.66 - 2.35m	Pre-burial vault grave cuts and one pre-church phase pit.
2.35m +	Top of natural sub-stratum.