

# Archaeological monitoring at St Michael's Church, Kirby-le-Soken, Essex, CO13 0EF

September 2018-January 2019



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**commissioned by Paul Vismeg, The Morton Partnership  
on behalf of PCC of St Michael's Church**

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**CAT Report 1370**  
March 2018

## Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Introduction	1
3	Archaeological background	1
4	Aims	2
5	Results	2
6	Finds	4
7	Conclusion	4
8	Acknowledgements	5
9	References	5
10	Abbreviations and glossary	5
11	Contents of archive	5
12	Archive deposition	6
Appendix 1 Context list		7
Figures		after p7
OASIS summary sheet		

## List of photographs and figures

Cover: general site shot

Photograph 1	Crack through the chancel wall, looking S	2
Photograph 2	Trial-hole showing L1, L2, the land drain and wall foundation F1 beneath, looking S	3
Photograph 3	Pile-hole, looking W	3
Photograph 4	Excavation of the ground-beams around the pile caps, looking NW	4
Photograph 5	Wall foundation F1 within one of the ground-beams, looking SW	4

Fig 1	Site location
Fig 2	Results
Fig 3	Feature and representative section

## 1 Summary

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at St Michael's Church, Kirby-le-Soken, Essex during groundworks to underpin the subsiding chancel wall. Groundworks revealed the foundation of the chancel wall, made of large lumps of worked stone, septaria and flint set in mortar, with an associated construction cut.

## 2 Introduction(Fig1)

This is the report for archaeological monitoring carried out at St Michael's Church, The Street, Kirby-le-Soken, Essex, which was undertaken from 27th September 2018 to 8th January 2019. The work was commissioned by Paul Vismeg of The Moreton Partnership Ltd on behalf of the PCC of St Michael's Church, during groundworks associated with the underpinning of the chancel and was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

David Andrews, the archaeological advisor to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) recommended to the parish that, as the proposed work lies within an area with high potential for remains of archaeological significance, the applicant should be required to commission a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006) and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14 and 24). This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).

## 3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) held at Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex.

The EHER shows that the development site lies within an historic churchyard which has potential for archaeological finds of significance. The town's name Kirby-le-Soken has Anglo-Saxon/Norse origins, and is referenced in the domesday book as 'kyrke' or 'kirkebi'. The etymology, as it is currently understood, suggests the current name comes from the scandinavian 'kirkja by'; 'Kirk' being the scandinavian for church and 'by' meaning village or settlement. Soken is perhaps a later addition derived from Old English 'socn' meaning 'land held by right of jurisdiction' (Kemble 2011).

The church (ECC3572) is Grade II\* listed (NHLE no. 1111500). Both the chancel and northern aisle probably date from the 14th century, the west tower was added in the 15th century, and in the 19th century the church was restored when the nave was rebuilt. Some aspects of the earlier church remain including 14th-15th century windows and doorways, and 14th-century piscina and associated drains.

Monitoring works at the church in 2007 to underpin the south aisle revealed two articulated human skeletons in the underpinning trenches and two lead coffins within the church itself (CAT Report 441). Three waterlogged elm wooden piles were also exposed at the western end of the south aisle, below the tower, and radiocarbon dated to the late 14th or early 15th century.

Mesolithic microliths have also been discovered beyond the southeastern boundary of the site (ECC47240).

#### 4 Aims

Archaeological monitoring was carried out to excavate and record any archaeological deposits exposed by the groundworks, particularly in relation to earlier phases of the church and its grounds.

#### 5 Results (Figs 2-3)

All groundworks were carried out by the contractors under the supervision of a CAT archaeologist.



**Photograph 1** Crack through the chancel wall, looking S

**Trial-hole:** A small trial-hole was initially excavated to establish the depth of the foundation of the chancel wall. Once the modern paving slabs, sand bedding and geomembrane had been removed, the trial-hole was excavated through topsoil (L1, 0.35m thick) into an accumulation layer (L2, probably associated with the construction of the church). The trial-hole was excavated to a depth of 1.3m below current ground level (bcgl). A modern land drain was recorded above the foundation of the chancel wall (F1). The foundation was recorded for the full depth of the trench (see below for description).

**Piles:** Following the trial-hole, ground level was reduced by approximately 0.3m and a piling mat constructed. Eight piles (0.3m diameter), two per ground-beam, were excavated to a depth of 16m, through L1, L2 and into natural clay (L3).

**Ground-beams:** Four ground-beams, each 2.51m long by 0.6m wide, were excavated along the chancel wall (and around the pile caps) to a depth of 0.9m bcgl. In each of the four trenches, wall foundation F1, its associated construction cut and a modern land drain



were recorded. The ground-beams had been excavated through the piling mat, L2 and into L3 (identified at a depth of 0.86m bcgl).

Wall foundation F1 consisted of loosely-bonded and irregularly-coursed pieces of worked stone, septaria and flint set into mortar. Once the wall foundation had been identified and recorded in each of the four ground-beams, it was tunnelled through to allow the wall to be underpinned and properly supported.



**Photograph 2** Trial-hole showing L1, L2, the land drain and wall foundation (F1) beneath, looking S



**Photograph 3** Pile-hole, looking W





**Photograph 4** Excavation of the ground-beams around the pile caps, looking NW



**Photograph 5** Wall foundation F1 within one of the ground-beams, looking SW

## 6 Finds

A single fragment of lime mortar with small chalk and stone inclusions was recovered from L2 (1) but cannot be closely-dated.

## 7 Conclusion

Archaeological monitoring revealed the 14th-century wall foundation of the chancel. It measured at least 1.3m deep, was 0.3m wider than the wall and had been constructed of

loosely-bonded and irregularly-coursed pieces of stone, septaria and flint set into mortar. Despite the apparent size and depth of the foundation, the loosely-bonded construction may have played a part in the current structural instability of the chancel wall. No evidence for earlier phases of the church or archaeological deposits that predate the church were uncovered.

## 8 Acknowledgements

CAT thanks Paul Vismeg of The Moreton Partnership Ltd and the PCC of St Michael's Church for commissioning and funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister with fieldwork carried out by M Baister, S Carter, C Lister, R Mathieson and A Tuffey. Figures are by S Carter and A Tuffey. The project was monitored for the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) by David Andrews.

## 9 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

Brown, N & Glazebrook, J	2000	<i>Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2. Research agenda and strategy.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8 (EAA 8)
CAT	2018	<i>Health &amp; Safety Policy</i>
CAT Report 441	2007	<i>An archaeological watching brief at St Michael's Church, Kirby-le-Soken, Essex: July and October 2007</i>
Cifa	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs</i>
Cifa	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Kemble, J	2011	<i>The place-names of Kirby le Soken: Essex place-names project.</i> Essex Society for Archaeology & History
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)

## 10 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Cifa	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
DAC	Diocesan Advisory Committee
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit (layer) of material
medieval	period from AD 1066 to c 1500
Mesolithic	period from c 10,000 – 4000BC
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, <a href="http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main">http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main</a>
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
wsi	written scheme of investigation

## 11 Contents of archive

**Finds:** none retained

### Paper record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 1370)

Original site record (feature and layer sheets, finds record, notes and sections)

Inked section drawings  
Site digital photographic thumbnails and log

**Digital record**

The report (CAT Report 1370)  
Graphic files  
Digital photographs, photographic thumbnails and log  
Survey data

## 12 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museum under accession code COLEM: 2019.8.

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**Distribution list:**

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Date: 13.3.2019



**Appendix 1** Context list

<b>Context</b>	<b>Finds no.</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
L1	-	Topsoil	Dark brown silty-loam	Modern
L2	1	Accumulation	Greyish-brown silty-clay. Possibly associated with the construction of the church.	?Medieval
L3	-	Natural	Natural clay	Post-glacial
F1	-	Wall foundation	Loosely bonded and irregularly coursed lumps of worked septaria, stone and flint set in mortar.	Medieval, 14th century

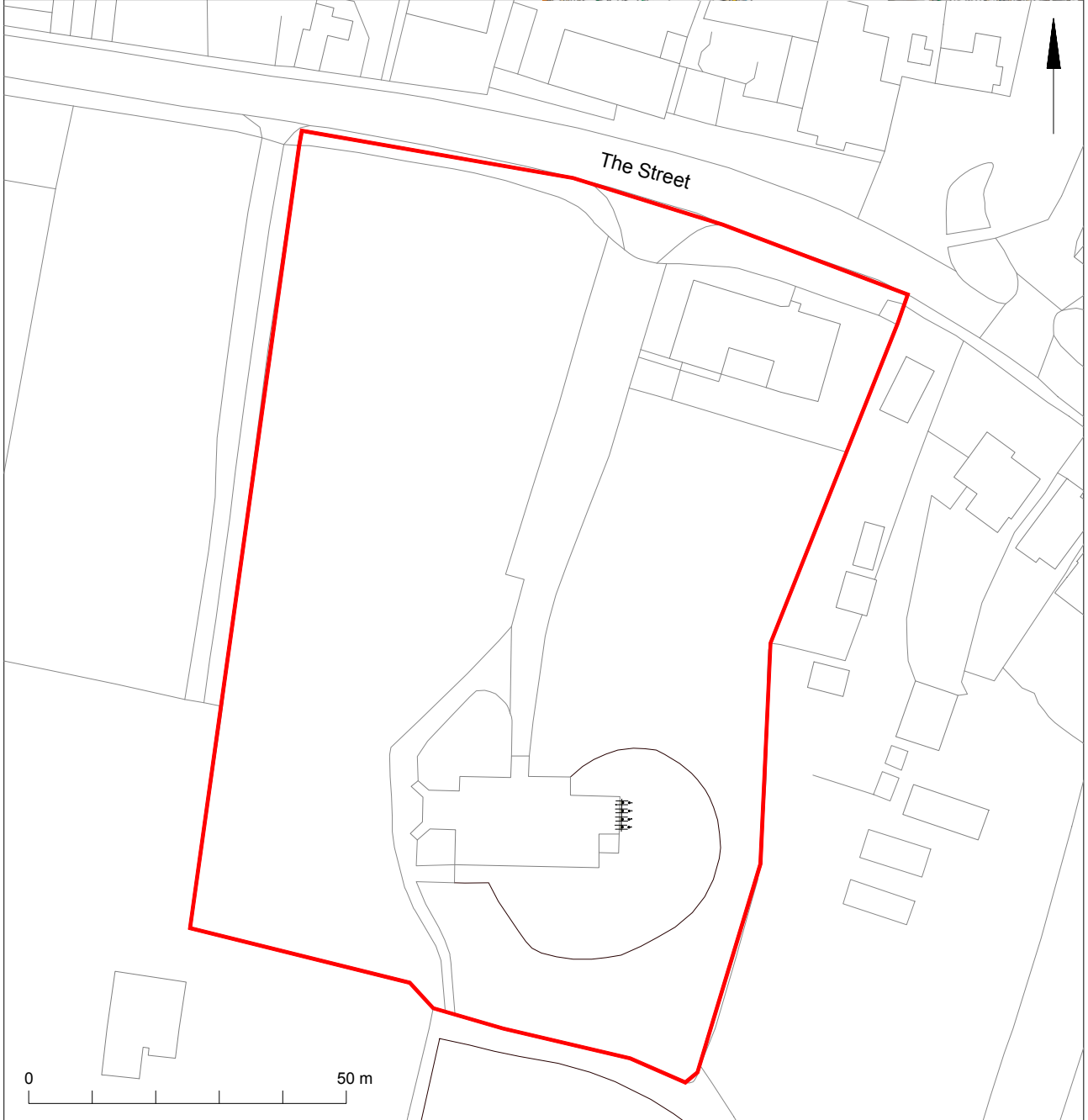
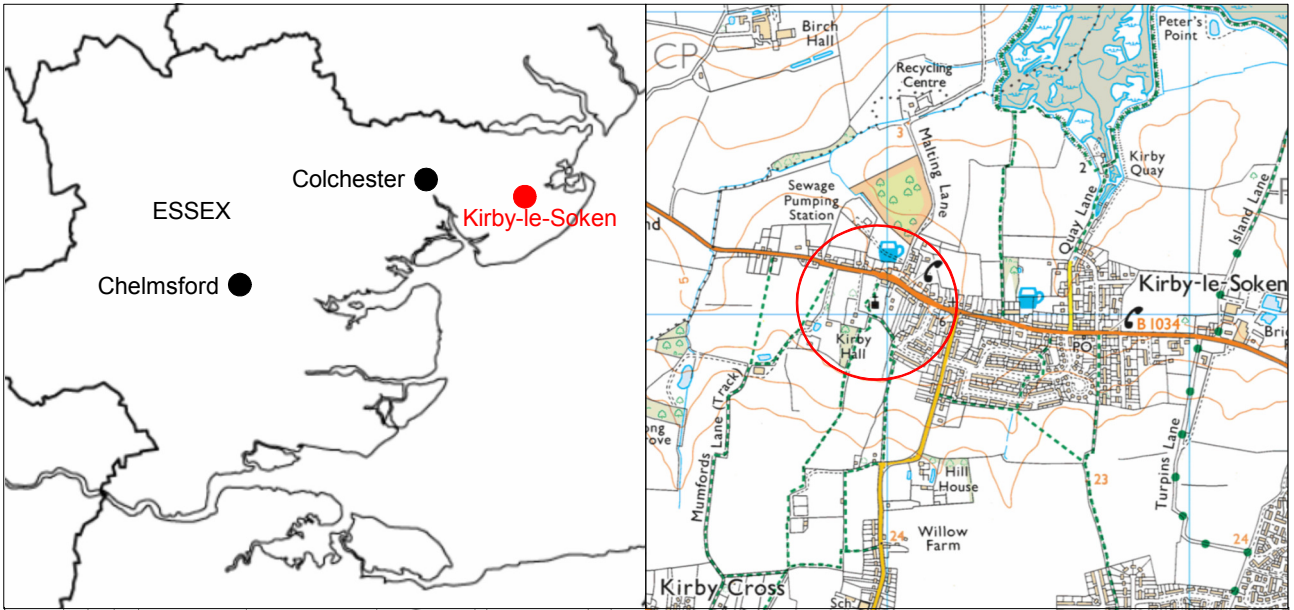


Fig 1 Site location

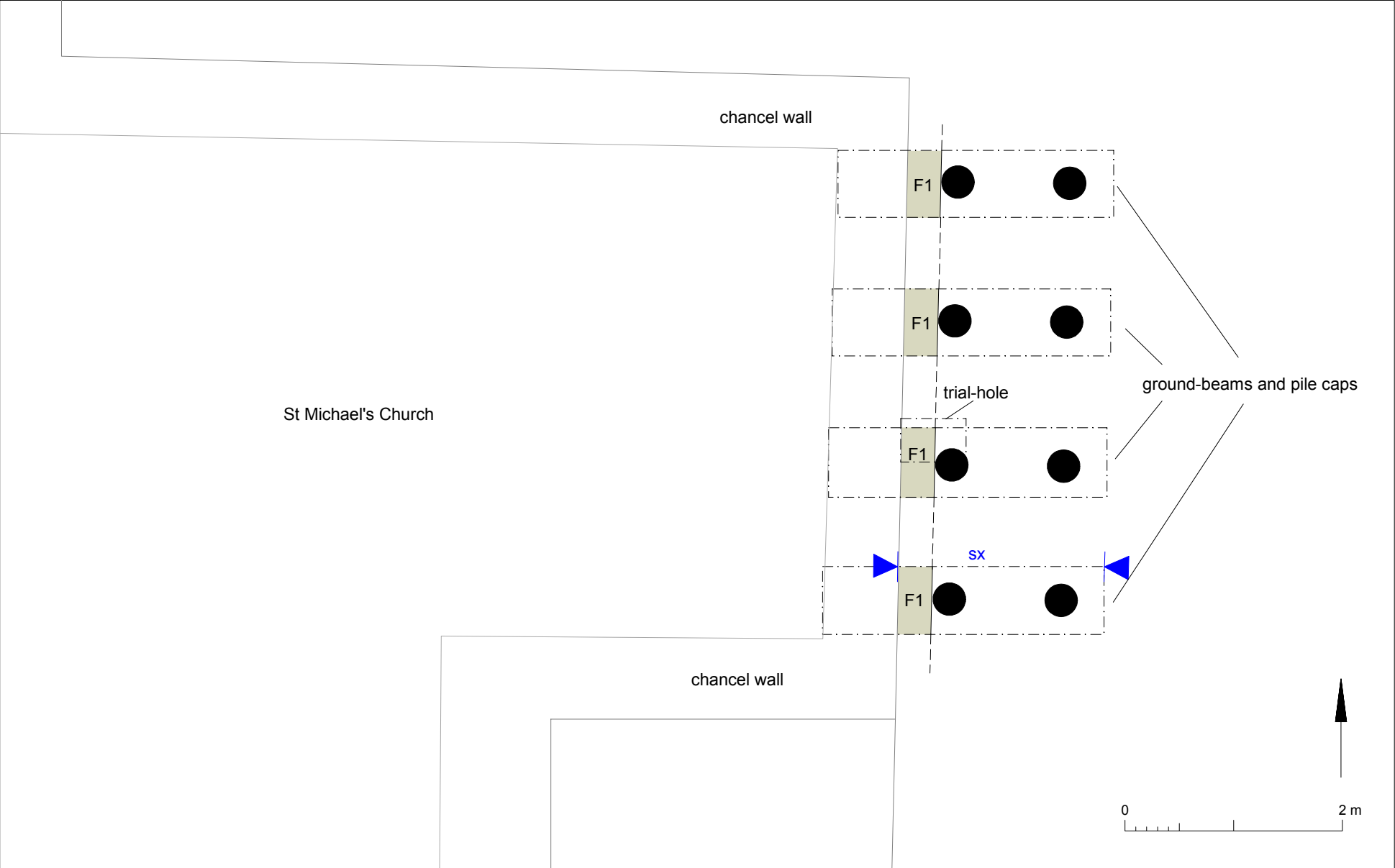


Fig 2 Results

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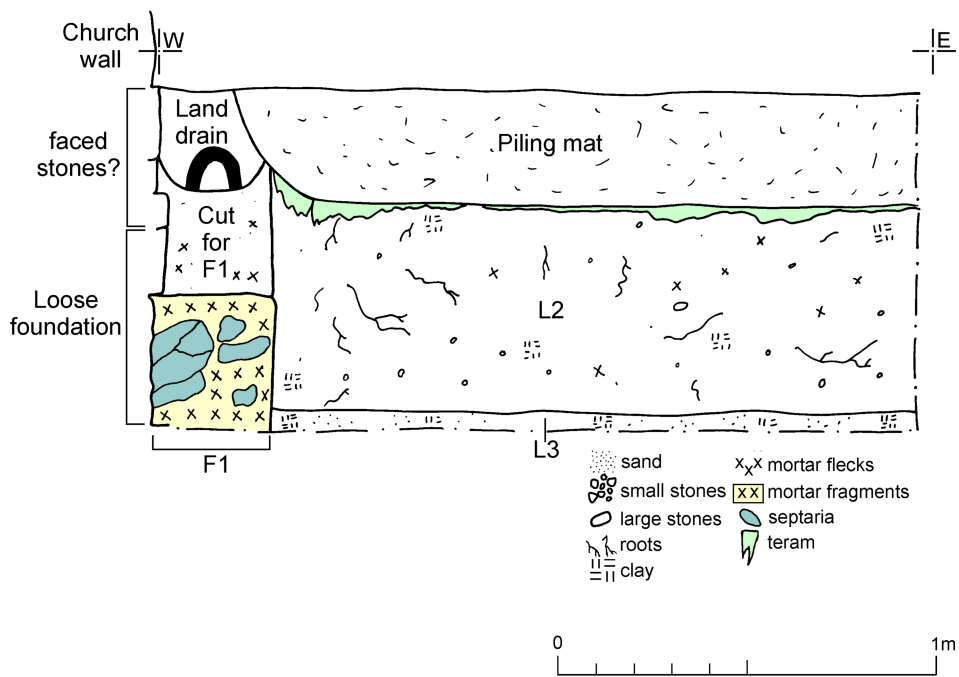


Fig 3 Feature and representative section.

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**OASIS ID: colchest3-343520**

## Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring at St Michael's Church, Kirby-le-Soken, Essex, CO13 0EF
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was carried out at St Michael's Church, Kirby-le-Soken, Essex during groundworks to underpin the subsiding chancel wall. Groundworks revealed the foundation of the chancel wall, made of large lumps of worked stone, septaria and flint set in mortar, with an associated construction cut.
Project dates	Start: 27-09-2018 End: 08-01-2019
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	18/01f - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	FWSM19 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	COLEM:2019.8 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	WALL FOUNDATION Medieval
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

## Project location

Country	England
Site location	ESSEX TENDRING FRINTON AND WALTON St Michael's Church, Kirby-le-Soken
Postcode	CO13 0EF
Study area	1.15 Hectares
Site coordinates	TM 21960 22033 51.852107130646 1.223301051544 51 51 07 N 001 13 23 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown

## Project creators

Name of Organisation	Colchester Archaeological Trust
Project brief originator	Diocesan Archaeologist
Project design originator	none
Project director/manager	Chris Lister
Project supervisor	Adam Tuffey
Type of sponsor/funding body	Parochial Church Council
Name of sponsor/funding body	N/A

## Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Colchester Museum
Digital Archive ID	COLEM: 2019.8
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive	Colchester Museum

recipient  
Paper Archive ID COLEM: 2019.8  
Paper Contents "none"  
Paper Media available "Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Photograph","Section","Plan","Report"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
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