

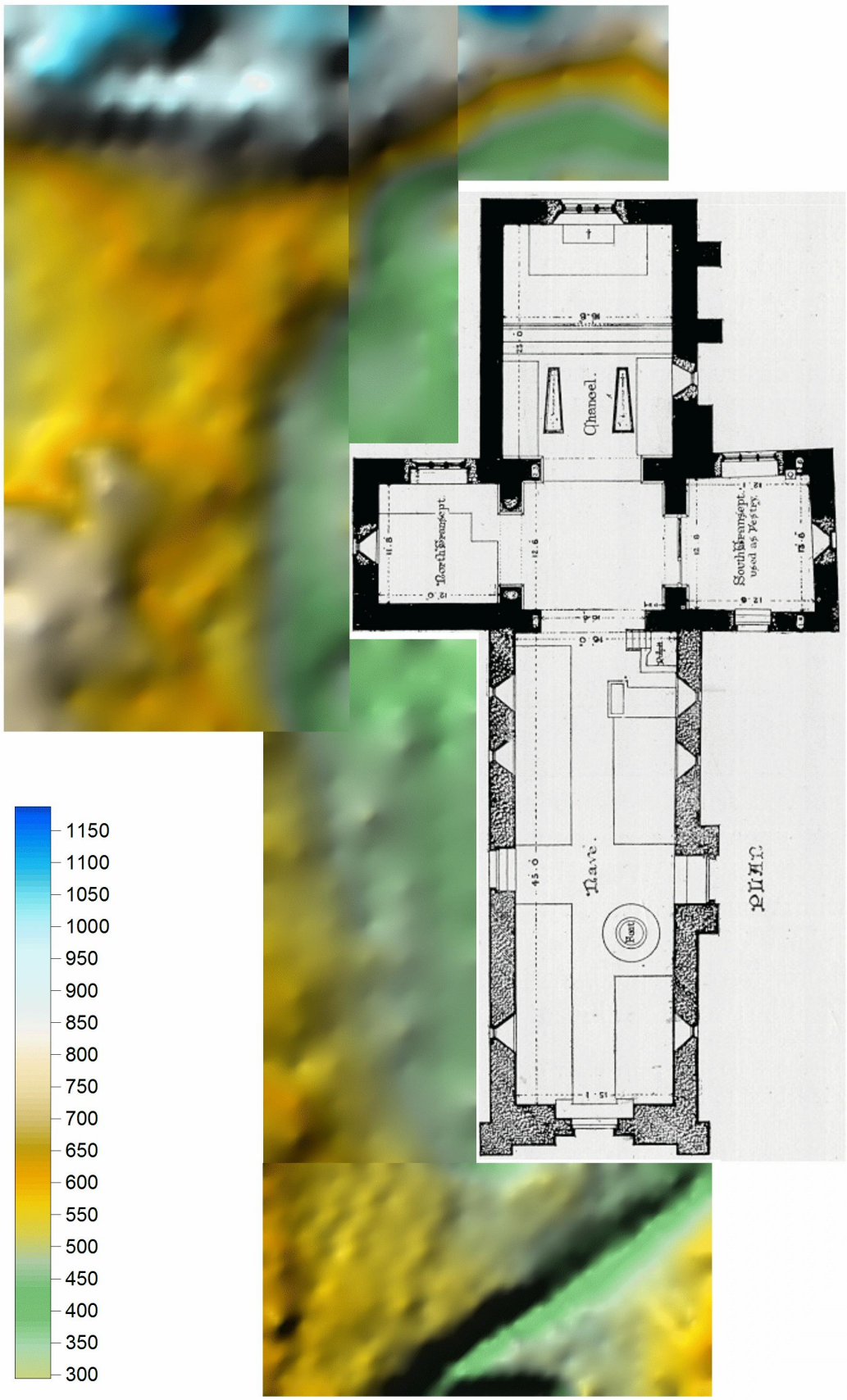
## **Report on a geophysical survey and excavation of a small archaeological trench at St Martha's, Guildford (TQ 0275 4826), 2004**

**Introduction:** A project consisting of an initial test geophysical survey in February 2004 followed in April 2004 by a larger survey linked to an archaeological test trench. This work was undertaken by volunteers from Surrey Archaeological Society in advance of the insertion of a new water pipeline to supply the church. The archaeological work in April was hampered by heavy rain and sleet but nevertheless achieved the basic aims of the project.

**The geophysical survey:** The initial survey (resistivity) was undertaken as a limited test of the suitability of the site for such surveys. In the event the small area surveyed showed clear results – largely because the ground was relatively dry at the time. Unfortunately, the results of the later main survey, on the west, north and east sides of the church, was adversely affected by the wet conditions on the day, which produced less satisfactory results. However a number of features can still be seen on the accompanying printout.

The diagonal green line to the west of the church represents the existing access path and underlying electricity cable, while the footings for a tomb can be seen as a dark band at the extreme bottom edge of the survey next to the path. A number of graves can be seen, albeit not clearly in the main survey, as slightly higher points in the yellow/orange area at the bottom left hand side of the plan. The prominent green oval shape around the church, which was tested by the trial trench, is the result of land raising probably connected with the reconstruction work in the Victorian period. The outer yellow area represents the background geology, though again a number of probable burials can be seen – the positions being indicated by the raised 'humps'. To the east there appears to be an area of high readings – indicated by the grey and blue zones. While this may again be the result of the underlying geology, it is also possible that the edge may represent an earlier boundary wall with the highest (blue) points being vaults or tombs set within an expanded cemetery. The only other major feature visible lies to the north of the north transept where the vague outline of a three-sided structure can be seen with a possible buttress at the north-east corner. To the north and adjacent to the possible walling appears to be a spread of higher readings marked by the light grey/brown area. It is just possible that this could represent the partially disturbed footings of an earlier tower, or similar building, with a rubble deposit to its north. A further, more detailed survey, carried out under better conditions might help to resolve this point. Finally, though not clearly visible on the plan, the line of the rainwater soakaway from the north transept can just be seen emerging from under the made-up ground (green) and running north-west as a yellow line across the inside of the possible tower.

**The trial trench:** In order to check the validity of the geophysical survey, which showed no structures in the area, as well as to look for prehistoric material, which is known from elsewhere on the hilltop, a small trial trench (4.2 x 0.9m) was opened outside the west end of the nave and on the line of the proposed water pipeline (see plan). The work was again curtailed by the bad weather, but the centre of the trench (shown in grey on the plan) was excavated to a depth of 1.13m where natural yellow sand was encountered (see photograph). The section showed that above this the ground had been artificially raised by the deposit of a thick band of mixed mortar, ironstone, tile and sand – all of which may well have come from the reconstruction work on the church in the Victorian period. Certainly the door at the west end of the nave respects the existing ground surface and is, therefore, presumably connected with it. What is also clear is that the medieval ground surface lies just over a metre below that of the present day. This may well explain why the floor of the nave is equally below the



St Martha's, Guildford. Geophysical survey



modern ground surface. The other interesting point is that, as already mentioned, the re-deposited material lay directly on undisturbed yellow sand. This must mean that the top of the hill has been levelled at some stage, presumably prior to the original construction of the church. This levelling work has had the effect of removing the original ground surface and with it any prehistoric material from at least this part of the site.

This suggestion is supported by the fact that the only finds that were made consisted of one Mesolithic flint blade and one sherd, probably of medieval date, both of which came from within the layer of re-deposited material.

The size of the trench was inadequate to establish whether the hilltop had been levelled in the medieval period prior to the construction of the original church.

However it seems highly likely that this was the case and certainly there was no indication of any surviving prehistoric levels within the small area that was examined.

**Conclusion:** It seems likely that the new pipeline will not disturb any intact archaeological layers, at least at the top of the hill, though it would perhaps be advisable to monitor the work as it is carried out. The geophysical survey clearly shows evidence for considerable land raising around the church and hints at the possibility that some form of structure may lie to the north of the north transept. A further, more detailed, survey will need to be carried out under better conditions before there can be any certainty about this point

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks are due to Andrew Norris for arranging permission for the work and for helping on the day and to David Attyde, Andrew Cornwall, Alan Hall and Mike Rubra for excavating the trench. Audrey Graham kindly helped with the geophysical survey.

David Graham  
May 2004