



Church of St Andrew, West Stafford, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording during Re-ordering Works



Report No. 53433/3/1

July 2015

Church of St Andrew, West Stafford, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording during Re-ordering Works, May 2015

Report No. 53435/3/1

July 2015

Client: PCC of the Church of St Andrew, West Stafford

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Table of Contents

Part 1: Introduction

1.1	Project Introduction.....	1
1.2	Definition and purpose of Archaeological Observations and Recording	1
1.3	Brief.....	1
1.4	Site Location.....	2
1.5	Geology	2
1.6	Archaeological and Historical Background	2
1.7	Previous Archaeological Fieldwork	2
1.8	Aims and Objectives	2
1.9	Groundworks.....	2
1.10	Methods	2
1.11	Archive and Dissemination	3

Part 2: Results

2.1	Internal Features	3
2.2	External Features	3
2.3	Churchyard Deposits	4
2.4	Churchyard Wall	4
2.5	Deposits outside Churchyard	4

Part 3: Finds

3.1	Finds assemblage	4
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Part 4: Discussion and Conclusions

4.1	Discussion	4
4.2	Conclusions	5

Part 5: References	5
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Figures

1	Location map.....	6
2	Plan of Observations.....	7
3	Reconstructed Section through Vault Entrance 126	8

Plates

1	View of surface 101 in NW corner of Nave	9
2	Western end of surface 101 and holes 103, 105 and 107	9
3	Surface 101 after excavation of conduit channels	9
4	Foul drain through west wall of nave and west end of drain trench.....	10
5	Vault entrance 126, with capstone 125 partially dislodged by machine	10
6	View of vault entrance 126 with 1m scale on steps 122 and revetment wall 124 behind.....	10
7	Vault entrance 126 showing brick steps 122	11
8	Blocking 127 in north wall of nave, within vault entrance 126	11
9	Foul drain trench near east end of church	11
10	Skull 130.....	12
11	Rear face of churchyard wall and footings 135.....	12
12	Trench east of churchyard	12

Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
OASIS Reference	terraina1-218664		
Project Title	Church of St Andrew, West Stafford, Dorset		
Short Description of Project	Terrain Archaeology carried out a programme of archaeological observations and recording during reordering works at the Church of St Andrew, West Stafford, Dorset. The remains of a mortar surface was found in the north west corner of the nave, which may be part of the 1640 reconstruction of the church, or later. Outside the church to the north, brick-built steps of eighteenth or early nineteenth century date down into a blocked vault beneath the nave were found. These had been sealed by stone slabs, perhaps in the later nineteenth century. In the eastern part of the churchyard was a disturbed layer, which may relate to the construction of the chancel in 1898-9.		
Project Dates	Start: 07-05-2015	End: 01-06-2015	
Previous/Future Work	No/No		
Project Code	53435		
Monument Type and Period	Church (post-medieval); Burial vault (post-medieval)		
Significant Finds	None		
Project Location			
County/District/Parish	Dorset/ West Dorset/West Stafford		
Site Address	Church of St Andrew, West Stafford, Dorset DT2 8UB		
Site Coordinates	SY 7255 8962		
Site Area	c. 20 m ²		
Height OD	c. 47.2 aOD		
Project Creators			
Organisation	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Brief Originator	None		
Project Design Originator	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Supervisor	Peter Bellamy		
Project Manager	Peter Bellamy		
Sponsor or Funding Body	PCC of the Church of St Andrew, West Stafford		
Project Archive			
Archive Type	Physical	Digital	Paper
Location/Accession No	None	Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with Dorset County Museum.	Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with Dorset County Museum.
Contents		Digital photography	context sheets, diary, photographs, plans, report

Church of St Andrew, West Stafford, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording during Re-ordering Works, May 2015

1. Introduction

1.1 Project introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by the PCC of the Church of St Andrew, West Stafford, through their agent, John Stark and Crickmay Partnership, to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during re-ordering works.

1.2 Definition and purpose of Archaeological Observations and Recording

Archaeological Observations and Recording are also known as an Archaeological Watching Brief.

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) definition of an archaeological watching brief is “a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.” (CIfA 2014a).

The purpose of Archaeological Observations and Recording as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists is as follows:

- a. to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works
- b. to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard

A watching brief is not intended to reduce the requirement for excavation or preservation of known or inferred deposits, and it is intended to guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits. (CIfA 2014a).

Fieldwork was carried out between the 7th May and the 1st June 2015 by Peter Bellamy BSc (Hons) MCIfA.

Terrain Archaeology wishes to acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of Neill Fraser (Daedalus Conservation Ltd), Peter James (John Stark and Crickmay Partnership) and Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council).

1.3 Brief

No written brief for the works was produced by or on behalf of the PCC of the Church of St Andrew, West Stafford John Stark and Crickmay Partnership's specification for the works includes the following clause: *The contractor is to make provision for and allow time for an archaeological contractor to monitor all excavation work including excavations to the following:*

- *The trench for foul drainage/extended water supply*
- *The reduced levels within the church below the pew platform.*

This is all to be in accordance with the separate programme of archaeological work.

1.4 Site Location

The church lies within the the village of West Stafford (centred at SY 7255 8962) at a height of about 47.2 m above OD, on the edge of the floodplain of the river Frome (Figure 1).

1.5 Geology

The geology is mapped as chalk of the Portsdown Chalk Formation (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). No superficial deposits are recorded.

1.6 Archaeological and Historical Background

The Church of St Andrew is of fifteenth century origin, with only part of the south wall at the west end of the nave surviving from this date. The west tower was added in the sixteenth century. The church was extensively rebuilt in 1640, including the widening the nave by rebuilding the north wall of the nave on a line slightly further north. In 1898-9, the present chancel was added and the chancel of 1640 became part of nave (RCHME 1970, 263).

1.7 Previous Archaeological fieldwork

There have been no archaeological investigations on or in the immediate vicinity of the site.

1.8 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Archaeological Observations and Recording was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

Its objectives were:

- To observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.
- To present the results in a report to the appropriate standard.

1.9 Groundworks

1.9.1 Internal Works

Five pews in the north west corner of the nave were removed, then channels were cut into the surface below for electrical conduits and a hole was drilled through the east end of the north side of the nave for water and drainage (Figure 2). A new stone flag floor was laid and the walls plastered as part of the installation of a kitchenette.

1.9.2 External Works

A new water supply pipe trench was dug by hand from the west churchyard boundary wall to the new kitchenette area in the north west part of the nave. It was 0.4 m wide and 0.5 m deep. A new foul drain trench was dug by machine from the north west corner of the Nave, along the north side of the church to a manhole to the lane east of the churchyard (Figure 2). This trench was about 0.5 m wide and between 0.5 and 1.4 m deep.

1.10 Methods

All archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA 2014a).

The internal works were recorded after the initial removal of the pews, which was not observed. Originally, the intention was to reduce dig the area of the removed pews to form a suitable level for the new kitchenette. However, after the removal of the pews, a mortar surface was revealed and only minimal excavation for electrical conduits was required below this level. The new stone flag floor was laid directly on top of the revealed mortar surface.

Externally, the new water pipe was dug by hand and observations were only undertaken after the trench had been partially backfilled. The drain trench along the north side of the church was excavated partly by hand and partly by

machine. The full course of this trench within the churchyard was observed, but only the first part of the trench outside in the lane was recorded.

All deposits revealed during the groundworks, irrespective of their apparent archaeological significance, were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. These have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current guidelines (AAF 2007; ClfA 2014b) and the requirements of the receiving museum. The photographic record of the work was maintained in digital format, and included aspects of its setting, conduct and technical detail.

1.11 Archive and Dissemination

The project archive, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and appropriate background documentation, is currently stored by Terrain Archaeology under the project code 53435. In due course it is anticipated that it will be accessioned for long-term curation by the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.

A paper copy of this report will be lodged with Dorset County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER is a publicly funded and accessible resource, and deposition of the report will place it, and the project results, in the public domain.

A digital summary of the archive will be placed with the OASIS project (www.oasis.ac.uk) under the reference code *terrains1-218664*. A digital copy of this report will be uploaded for inclusion in the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) online 'grey literature' library.

A brief report of the project will be published by Terrain Archaeology in the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*.

2. Results

2.1 Internal Features

At a depth of 0.26 m below the present level of the stone flag floor of the central aisle, the top of a layer of compact mid greyish-brown sandy clay (113) was exposed in the base of a narrow trench for new electricity cables. Not enough of this layer was exposed to be certain of the exact nature and interpretation of this layer, but it may either be part of the natural soils beneath the church or part of an earlier beaten earth floor within the nave.

Above soil layer 113 was a rough lime mortar surface (101) on a bed of angular small limestone rubble (112), which lay at a height of between 0.10-0.13 m below the level of the stone flags in the central aisle (Figure 2; Plates 1-4). This mortar screed continued into the threshold of the north door beneath its stone blocking (114) and also appeared to continue below the stone flags of the central aisle. A series of ten square and rectangular void holes 30-40 mm across were visible in the mortar surface (Plate 2). These appeared to form three parallel rows, except for one hole (109) not in this alignment (Figure 2). The holes were about 0.35 m deep.

2.2 External Features

2.2.1 Vault Entrance 126

Midway between the first and second buttress (from the west) of the north wall of the nave, the remains of a blocked entrance to a burial vault (126) was exposed (Figures 2-3; Plates 5-8). This consisted of a flight of brick-built steps (122) starting about 1.75 m out from the nave wall 115. Parts of three steps 0.84 m wide were exposed (Figure 2, Plates 6-7) and another 3-4 steps are projected to continue down below the limit of the excavation (Figure 3). The steps (122) were built of unfrogged red brick, of eighteenth/early nineteenth century character, bonded with grey charcoal-rich lime mortar. The sides of the steps were revetted with unmortared limestone rubble walls (123, 124) about 0.4 m wide and containing occasional fragments of worked limestone. An opening 0.76 m wide had been inserted through the nave wall.

The opening in the wall was blocked with a mixture of mortared brick and limestone blocks (128) (Plate 8). The steps were covered by limestone slabs (125) supported on iron straps. The upper part of the vault entrance was void, but the lower part had silted up (127).

2.3 Churchyard Deposits

Along most of the length of the water pipe and foul drain trenches, was a fairly loose mid brown sandy clay graveyard soil (121) with frequent flint gravel and gravel nodules and occasional-to-moderate fragments of limestone, slate and occasional loose human bone. A small amount of nineteenth century coarseware pottery was noted, probably from the top of this layer.

A layer of dark yellowish-brown clayey sand with very frequent flint gravel and small chalk lumps (129) was found above layer 121 in the eastern part of the trench. The western edge of this layer was encountered between the second and third buttress (Figure 2) and it got thicker towards the east where it was over 0.7 m thick. This layer continued up to about one metre past the east end of the chancel (Figure 2). There was significantly more loose human bone in layer 129 than in layer 121, including part of two adult skulls (130, 131) (Figure 2; Plate 10).

Beyond layer 129 to the east was a layer of friable mid greyish-brown clay loam (132) with moderate flint gravel that had been mounded up against the churchyard wall 135.

Overlying layers 121 and 129 was a 0.18 m thick layer of dark greyish-brown sandy loam topsoil (120) with frequent small flint gravel.

2.4 Churchyard Wall

The rear face of the east churchyard wall was exposed (Plate 11). The wall (135) consisted of eleven courses of limestone rubble brought to courses, bonded with pale yellow sandy mortar, and a cock-and-hen coping. It was constructed in a construction cut (133) about 1.1 m wide with a sloping side and flattish concave base, with a 0.34 m thick footing of mid yellowish-brown sandy lime mortar and flint gravel aggregate, which projected 0.36 m beyond the west face of the wall. The remainder of the construction cut was filled with dark yellowish-brown clay loam (134) with flat limestone rubble near the base and lenses of sandy mortar throughout.

2.5 Deposits outside Churchyard

In the trench in the lane to the east of the churchyard there was a disturbed layer of fairly compact mid brown clay with moderate flint gravel and occasional brick and tile fragments, modern glass, limestone pieces and chalk rubble (137), over 0.5 m thick (Plate 12). This layer was present below the topsoil in the verge next to the lane and also appeared to continue beneath the surface of the lane.

3. Finds

3.1 Finds Assemblage

A small number of artefacts were noted during the groundworks. The finds were mainly nineteenth century pottery and brick fragments recovered from the upper part of the churchyard deposits and a small amount of stray human bone. None of these artefacts were collected as they were not securely stratified in sealed contexts. .

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Discussion

The groundworks for the reordering of the church caused relatively little disturbance to the fabric of the church and to the churchyard, resulting in a relatively small amount of new information gained. The main features exposed were the mortar surface 101 in the nave and the entrance 126 to a burial vault accessed through the north wall of the nave. No articulated burials were exposed or disturbed.

The mortar surface 101 was laid directly on top of a soil layer of unknown derivation, possibly a natural soil, or the remains of an earthen floor. The mortar surface was fairly rough and not very worn suggesting it was not an exposed floor surface. The stone flags of the central aisle appear to be set directly on this surface. No dating evidence was recovered for this surface, but it clearly post-dates the 1640 enlargement of the nave and it pre-dates the blocking of the north doorway, which itself is not closely dated but may be nineteenth century or later. It is possible that the surface is part of the seventeenth century work as mortar screeds over rubble occur fairly frequently in late medieval churches, often as a consequence of tidying up the interior after construction (Rodwell 2001, 42) The holes in the mortar surface (102-111) appear to have been formed by metal(?) rods driven into the ground and the mortar screed laid around them. The function of these holes is unclear, but may be associated with fixing pews or benches. However, they were not utilised in the removed pew platform, which was constructed on wooden beams laid directly on top of the floor.

No trace of the earlier nave wall removed as part of the 1640 works was identified, but as a very small area across its projected line was exposed, it is not possible to be certain whether anything of this wall survives below floor level.

The brick steps found outside the north wall are undoubtedly the remains of the entrance into a burial vault below the north side of the nave. No secure dating evidence for this vault was recovered, but the bricks used in the steps are of eighteenth or early nineteenth century character and it is assumed the vault is of a similar date. The date of the sealing of this vault is not known either, but is most likely to be in the later nineteenth century. It lies beyond the area of the late nineteenth century construction and was not disturbed by this work. Its position would place it under the eastern end of the seventeenth century nave. No documentary research has been done to try and trace the ownership of this vault or its date of construction.

The churchyard deposits at the east end of the church (context 129) are distinctively different to the deposits elsewhere in the churchyard. They are more mixed and contain significantly more disarticulated human bone and may represent disturbance associated with the late nineteenth century construction of the chancel.

4.2 Conclusions

The internal works revealed a mortar surface, incorporating a number of small holes perhaps originally for fixing pews or benches, laid directly on top of soil deposits beneath the nave. This mortar surface is of seventeenth century or later date. The remains of an external stepped entrance to a burial vault beneath the north side of the nave were found near the east end of the seventeenth century nave. The steps down to the vault were made from bricks of eighteenth-early nineteenth century character and probably indicate the date of construction of the vault. The vault opening in the nave wall was blocked up and the steps sealed beneath stone slabs, perhaps later in the nineteenth century. In the eastern part of the churchyard was a disturbed layer, which may relate to the construction of the chancel in 1898-9.

5. References

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------|--|
| AAF | 2007 | <i>Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation.</i> Archaeological Archives Forum. |
| CIfA | 2014a | <i>Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief.</i> Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. |
| CIfA | 2014b | <i>Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Preparation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives.</i> December 2014. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. |
| RCHME | 1970 | <i>An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset. Volume Two, South East.</i> HMSO; London. |
| Rodwell, W., | 2001 | 'The archaeology of church and cathedral floors' in J. Fawcett (ed), <i>Historic Floors. Their Care and Conservation</i> , 41-52. |
| Terrain Archaeology | 2015 | <i>St Andrew's Church, West Stafford, Dorset: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Observations and Recording during Reordering Works.</i> Unpublished client report, reference 3435/0/1, April 2015 |

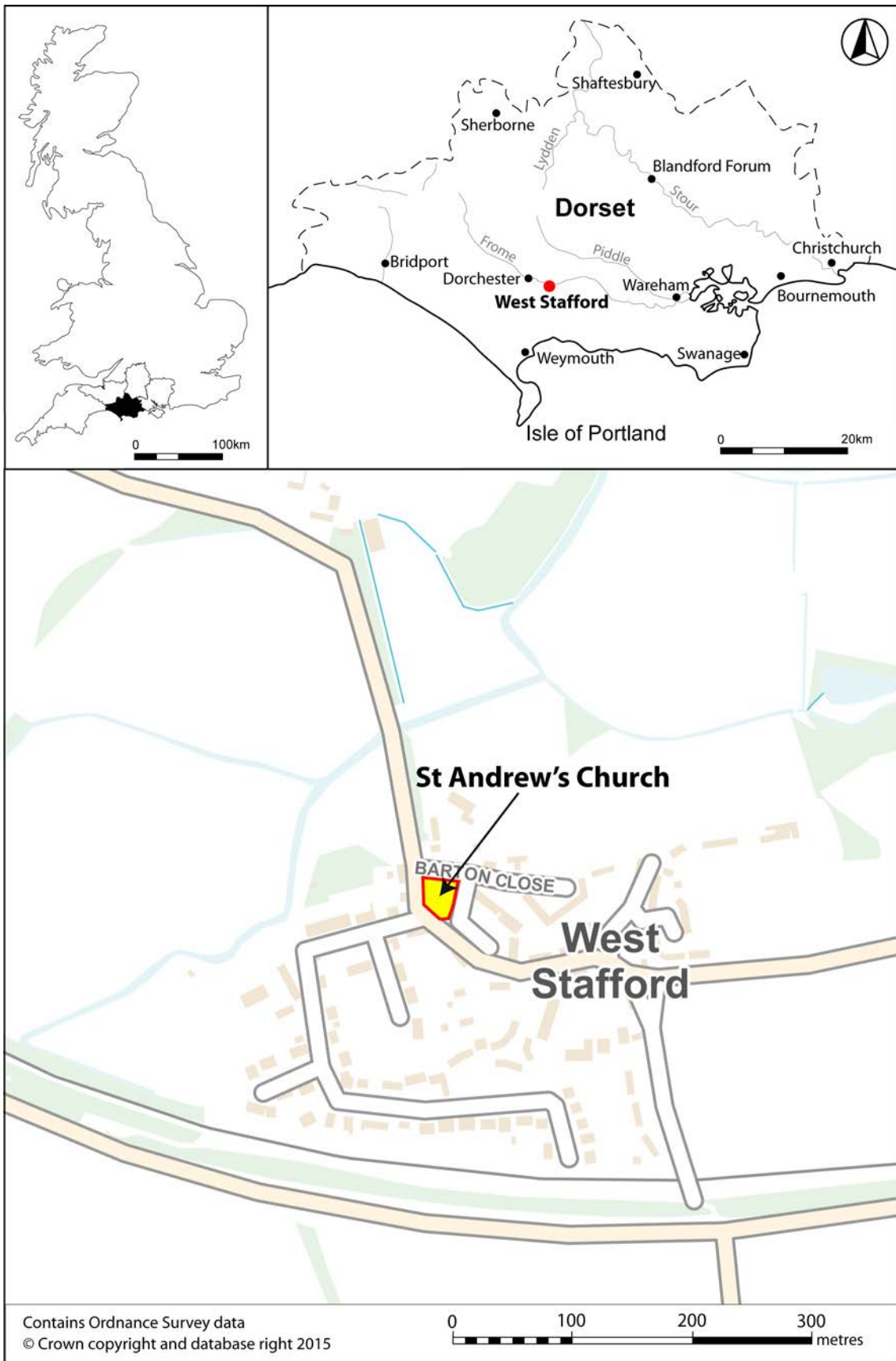


Figure 1 Location map.

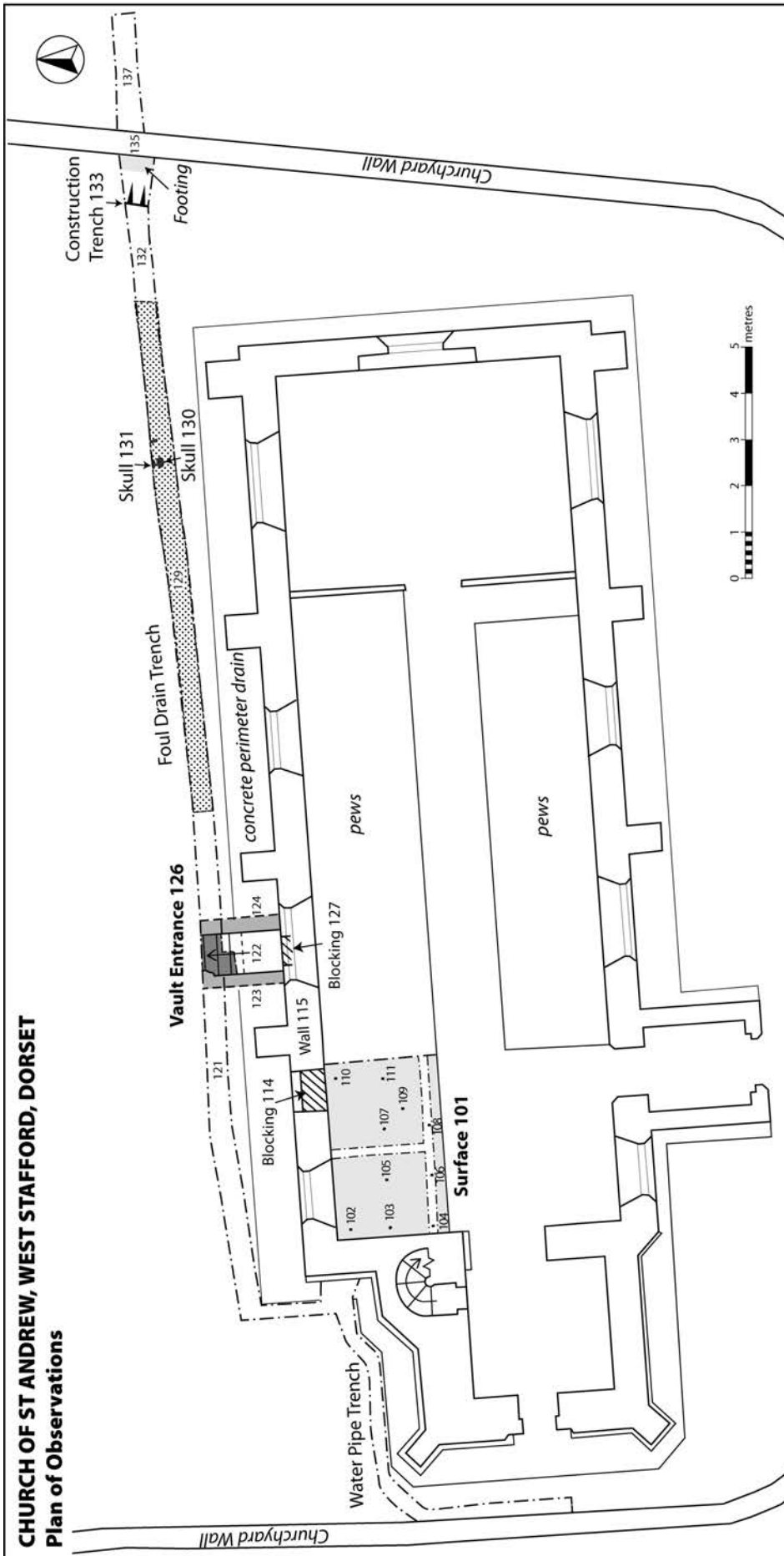


Figure 2: Plan of Observations (The church plan is schematic and does not show all architectural details).

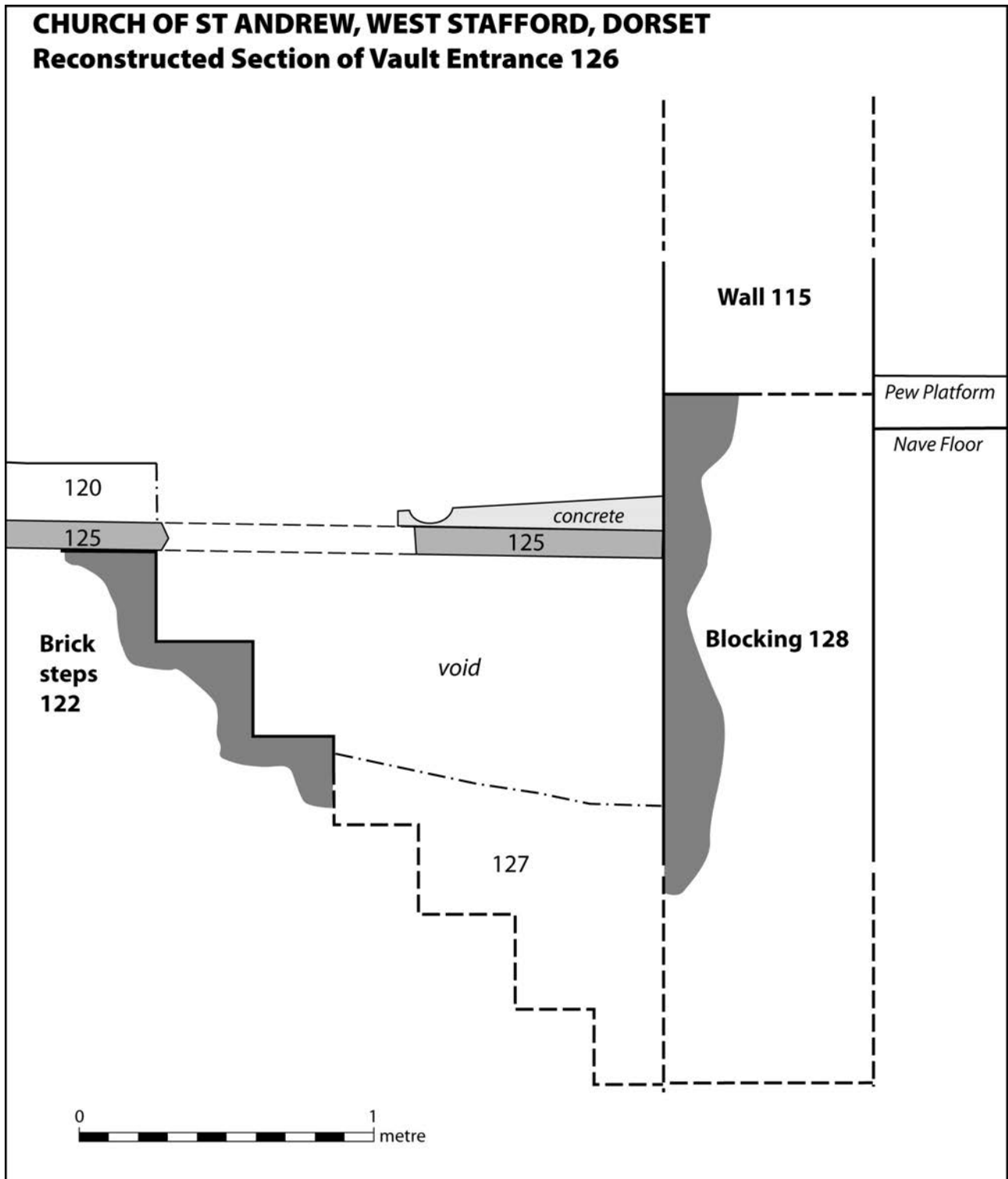


Figure 3: Reconstructed Section through Vault Entrance 126.



Plate 1: View of surface 101 in NW corner of Nave. 2m scales.



Plate 2: Western end of surface 101 and holes 103, 105 and 107. 2m scale.



Plate 3: Surface 101 after excavation of conduit channels.



Plate 4: Foul drain through west wall of nave and west end of drain trench. View from west. 1m scale.



Plate 5: Vault entrance 126, with capstone 125 partially dislodged by machine. View from north west.



Plate 6: View of vault entrance 126 with 1m scale on steps 122 and revetment wall 124 behind. View from north east.



Plate 7: Vault entrance 126 showing brick steps 122. 1m scale. View from north.



Plate 8: Blocking 127 in north wall of nave, within vault entrance 126. Viewed from north west.



Plate 9: Foul drain trench near east end of church. 1m scale. View from west.



*Plate 10: Skull 130. 1m scale.
View from south.*



*Plate 11: Rear face of
churchyard wall and footings
135. 2m scale. View from
west.*



*Plate 12: Trench east of
churchyard. View from south
east.*