

St Mary's Church, Sheviock, Cornwall

Archaeological Watching Brief



Historic Environment Projects

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Acknowledgements

This study was commissioned by Shevioc Parochial Council and carried out by Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council.

Within Historic Environment, the Project Manager was Andy Jones.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of Historic Environment Projects and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Cover illustration

St Mary's Church looking from the western entrance into the churchyard

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Abbreviations

DAC	The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches
HBSMR	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Buildings, Sites, and Monuments Record
HE	Historic Environment, Cornwall Council
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRN	Primary Record Number in Cornwall HBSMR

1 Summary

HE Projects undertook a programme of archaeological recording on behalf of Sheviock Parochial Church Council at St Mary's Church, Sheviock (NGR SX 3702 5509) during the excavation of new drainage in January 2010.

The excavations revealed that the early thirteenth century south transept and the nave were built on a foundation layer of slate rubble that extended from the walls of the church for up to 0.3m. A slate-filled drain running alongside the south side of the nave probably dates to this period too. An earlier stone feature was identified beneath the foundation layer and may represent an earlier building on the site of the church.

Evidence from artefacts recovered during the project suggests that the church may have been renovated during the early post-medieval period since a number of ridge tile fragments recovered from the trench may date to this era.

A large number of human remains were encountered during the course of the excavation, the vast majority disarticulated and clearly the result of the disturbance of earlier burials by later inhumations. However, one articulated skeleton was located at a shallow depth against the eastern wall of the south transept. In addition, a concentration of long-bones was identified by the south-eastern corner of the transept, perhaps representing a single depositional event.

Later alterations to the church were suggested by the construction of a culvert running from the intersection between the transept and the nave.

2 Introduction

2.1 Project background

HE Projects were commissioned by Mr Peter Davies on behalf of Sheviock Parochial Church Council to undertake a programme of archaeological recording in advance of the excavation of a drainage channel along the sides of the south transept of St Mary's Church (NGR SX 3702 5509) (Figs 1 and 2). This work was required by The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC) as part of the Faculty Jurisdiction process, the Church of England's mechanism for regulating changes to its church buildings, their contents, and churchyards.

The church is of medieval origin and is a Grade 1 Listed Building (2/134). There are other Listed structures in the churchyard, including monuments to George Cookworthy (d. 1668), John Pole (d. 1838), and a pair of slate headstones to William Stephens (d. 1784) and John Stephens (d. 1805). The church is located near to a number of historical features recorded in the Cornwall and Scilly HBSMR including the church itself (PRN 6455), an early medieval period lann enclosure (PRN 6411), the early medieval settlement of Sheviock (PRN), and the site of a medieval fortified house and medieval settlement (PRN 6414 and PRN 6414.01).

The potential preservation of buried archaeological material was thought likely to be high and that there was the likelihood that the site works could cause disturbance to buried archaeological deposits, in the form of human burials and/or structures associated with the medieval church, or with the medieval settlement. Consequently archaeological mitigation was considered necessary.

Phil Markham (Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, Cornwall Council) was consulted over the requirements for the archaeological recording and this resulted in a written scheme of investigation being produced by HE Projects (Jones 2009).

2.2 Aims

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief was to record archaeological layers, features, structures, and artefacts affected by the proposed works.

In particular the key objective was:

- To record evidence for the nature of the archaeological potential in the area of the south transept, for example the depth and character of archaeological deposits in this area.

2.3 Methods

2.3.1 Fieldwork

Inspection and recording of the trench

The trenching was carried out by hand or by a machine fitted with a grading bucket. The trench was then cleaned and inspected by the archaeologist, who recorded any archaeological features exposed in the trench.

Where appropriate this required:

- A stop on the works whilst archaeological deposits or structures were recorded. In the event of significant remains being discovered a contingency of up to 2 days was to be allowed to permit the archaeologist time to record the remains. In the event half a day contingency was required to complete the fieldwork.

Human remains

- Any human remains which were encountered were left *in situ* where possible. Where this was not possible they were removed, bagged, and left with the church authorities to undergo reburial at a later stage.
- Where human remains were not to be removed their physical security was ensured by backfilling as soon as possible after recording.
- Where human remains were removed this was done with due reverence and in accordance to current best practice and legal requirements. The site was screened from public view and, once excavated, human remains were not left exposed to public view.

Recording - general

- Site drawings (plans, sections, locations of finds) were made by pencil (4H) on drafting film; all plans were linked to the Ordnance Survey electronic MasterMap; all drawings included standard information: site details, personnel, date, scale, north-point.
- All features and finds were accurately located in 3 dimensions at an appropriate scale.
- All archaeological contexts were described to a standard format linked to a continuous numbering sequence.
- Finds were collected in sealable plastic bags, which were labelled with the context number. Finds post-dating AD 1800 will not be retained
- Photography: scaled monochrome photography will be used as the main record medium, with colour slides used more selectively and for illustrative purposes.

2.3.2 Post-fieldwork

The results from the fieldwork have been collated as an archive. This involved the washing and cataloguing of finds and indexing and cross-referencing of photographs and drawings. A Cornwall Council Historic Environment Record - Event Record has been completed for the project in consultation with the Principal Archaeologist (HE Information).

3 Location and setting

The village of Sheviock lies on the Rame Peninsula in South East Cornwall approximately halfway between Whitsand Bay on the South Cornish coast and the River Lynher, a tributary of the River Tamar (Fig 1). The church is situated at the heart of the parish of Sheviock in the small village of the same name. Other villages within the parish include Crafthole and Portwrinkle. The population of the parish in 2001 was 683 (UK Census).

The village lies on a saddle between two valleys, one running west, the other east, with high ground to the north-east (Berry Down) and south-west (Crafthole). The soils are predominately well-drained fine loamy and silty (HE GIS Layer 'Soils') derived from a solid geology of Early Devonian slates, siltstones, and sandstones of the Bovisand Formation, part of the Meadfoot Group (HE GIS Layer 'Solid Geology').

4 Site history

Sheviock church was probably established by the abbey of Tavistock to serve their Domesday manor of Sheviock. A church is first recorded here in 1193; but nothing survives from this date. The church was rededicated in 1259. The west tower is evidently of this period; it is slim, with a spire and long, narrow lancet windows. Otherwise, the church is a fourteenth century

cruciform building, to which a north aisle was added in the fifteenth century. The south side in its interior and exterior is all early fourteenth century. The south transept buttress, the windows of three or four lights, the south and east windows of the equally heavily buttressed chancel and the west window of the north aisle are all fourteenth century. Mr G E Street restored the church in 1850, and also rebuilt the chancel. The present guttering was installed in 1902. A fuller history of the church appears in a recently published history of the parish (Cusworth 2009, 337-434).

5 Archaeological results

The excavation took the form of a narrow trench 0.3m wide and up to 0.6m deep that followed the southern side of the nave, the eastern, southern, and western sides of the south transept, and up to the wall of the nave again in a space between the porch and the south transept (Fig 2). A number of features and finds of archaeological significance were encountered. At no stage was the natural geology encountered and all deposits recorded were cultural.

Wall 113

A possible alignment of stones, 113, running east-west, was identified 1.1m to the south of the extant nave wall. The stones were not excavated as the base of the trench had been reached but they may represent the wall of an earlier building on the site of the church. If so this building appears to be aligned east-west compared to the east-north-east to west-north-west of the extant church.

Foundations 105 and 115 (Fig 3)

It became quickly apparent that the trench could not be excavated against the wall of the church because the building had been constructed upon a substantial foundation of slate rubble. This material projected out from the base of the building, 0.1m from the walls and up to 0.3m around the buttresses of the south transept. The foundations were not fully excavated but were at least 0.3m deep. Similar foundation levels have been observed at the base of other Cornish churches, for instance Mullion (Thorpe 2003) and St Winnow (Mossop 2004). The foundations of the transept, 105, could be seen to be added to the foundations of the nave, 115, at the junction connecting the two in the area between the transept and the porch. It could thus be demonstrated that the transept post-dated the nave, even if only by a short span of time.

The deposit that covered the buttresses, (104), contained a number of early post-medieval artefacts including ridge tile fragments, one of which included a crest spike, and green window glass fragments (see Thorpe below).

Drain 114

Between the porch and the south transept, butting the edge of foundation 115, a stone drain was identified. The drain was at least 0.16m wide and 0.14m high and comprised a series of stacked upright slates capped by flat-laid slates. It ran from foundation 115 towards the south but was only visible for 0.3m. It lay beneath the foundation of the porch, 116, and thus predated the construction of this part of the church.

Culvert 107 (Figs 4 and 5)

A stone-lined culvert, 107, was recorded in the corner between the eastern end of the nave and the south transept. It was constructed of slate rubble on a slate base with slate capping. It was 0.35m wide and 0.24m deep in total. It led away from the corner towards the south-east,

with a total length of 2.1m visible in the trench. The inside of the culvert contained a dark silty fill rich in mortar fragments and the shells of land snails.

The interface between the transept and the nave had been filled by coursed stone rubble, 111. It was unclear whether this concealed an earlier downpipe that had fed the culvert or whether the walling had been added after the decommissioning of the drain following the installation of cast iron guttering in 1902.

Human remains (Fig 6)

In the course of the excavation of the trench a large number of human bones were revealed. At the eastern edge of the south transept, to the north of the corner buttress, two craniums, S1 and S2, were uncovered at a depth of 0.5m. The craniums were missing their jawbones and no related remains were found. Although the remains must have been located within a cut feature, for instance a pit, no such cut was observed. Alternatively, they may have been within a layer of dumped redeposited material acting as a make-up layer. This seems unlikely given the presence of an *in situ* burial directly beneath them (see below). Several iron nails, possibly coffin nails, were recovered from the disturbed deposit, (102), that may have filled this putative pit, [103]. Other finds from this deposit included part of an iron window frame fitting of nineteenth century date, an iron rafter spike, a fragment of roofing slate, and a piece of red brick

An attempt was made to rebury the bones in the same area at a greater depth but part of an articulated skeleton, S3, was revealed at 0.7m. Only a small number of vertebrae, some rib bones, and part of a shoulder were uncovered: however, this was enough to verify that the skeleton was articulated and *in situ*. The body was aligned with the head (not uncovered) to the west, feet (not uncovered) to the east in the Christian manner. If the body was that of an average-sized adult the head would have been just in front of the south transept wall.

Since the attempt at reburial had encountered an articulated skeleton a decision was made to re-cover the skeleton and to keep all disarticulated bone in bags to be reburied by an appropriate authority at a later date. Other concentrations of bone were noted in the angle formed by the buttresses at the south-eastern corner of the south transept, where the majority of the remains were long-bones. This might suggest a single depositional event. Other parts of the trench contained seemingly random concentrations of bone, most at a depth of 0.3m to 0.6m, the base of the trench. All were contained within layer (110), beneath disturbed layer (102). This layer also contained ridge tile fragments of early post-medieval date, one of which was decorated with an incised wavy line (see Thorpe below).

6 Conclusions/discussion

6.1 Chronology

The project revealed evidence for activity during various phases of the existence of the church. Wall 113 represents the earliest activity on the site and may form part of the original church, probably Norman but possibly earlier (Cusworth 2009, 341). The stonework revealed consisted of a single stone's width and is far too insubstantial to represent the footings of the exterior of a building but may be the remains of an internal division or an external feature.

The foundation layers of the south transept and the nave showed that, although the two sections may have been broadly contemporary, the transept was built onto the nave. Perhaps contemporary with this early fourteenth century construction is the slate drain that runs along the southern side of the nave beneath the later porch.

The evidence from the artefacts recovered suggests that the church was re-roofed in the early post medieval period, or at least the ridge tiles were replaced.

Another slate drain or culvert, 107, running from the intersection of the transept and the nave, may date to the middle nineteenth century period of extensive repairs inspired by G E Street. This corner has been blocked up by later masonry in what may be an attempt to divert rainwater away from this area. The subsequent installation of guttering in 1902, as part of a major programme of works including the restoration of the spire, may have been a further attempt to prevent damp in this part of the church. The guttering is inscribed with the date and the initials of the rector, Gerald Pole Carew (Cusworth 2009, 404).

6.2 Human remains

A large amount of human bone was recovered from relatively shallow depths. Two craniums were recovered from a single location and a concentration of long-bones was recorded in the area to the south-east of the south-eastern corner of the south transept. The disarticulation of the remains, the shallow depth at which they were buried, and the robustness of the types of bones in question strongly suggests that these remains had originated elsewhere and had been reburied following disturbance, most likely during the excavation of fresh graves.

The articulated remains indicated a Christian burial but at a relatively shallow depth of 0.7m. This may indicate that upper layers have been removed at some stage, probably during construction or renovation works, or it may indicate a considerable antiquity for the burial.

All human remains recovered during the project were collected and given to the church authorities for reburial. No human remains were retained by HE Projects.

7 References

7.1 Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, c1880. *25 Inch Map* First Edition (licensed digital copy at HE)

Ordnance Survey, c1907. *25 Inch Map* Second Edition (licensed digital copy at HE)

Ordnance Survey, 2007. *Mastermap Digital Mapping*

7.2 Publications

Cusworth, N, 2009. *Sheviock: History of a Cornish coastal manor and parish*, Phillimore

Jones, A, 2009. *Sheviock Church: Project outline and estimate for archaeological recording*, HE, Truro

Mossop, M, 2004. *St Winnow Church, Lostwithiel, Cornwall archaeological Watching Brief*, CAU, Truro

Thorpe, C, 2003. *Mullion Church Archaeological Watching Brief*, CAU, Truro

7.3 Websites

<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/>
Buildings

English Heritage's online database of Listed

8 Project archive

The HE project number is **2009107**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. A project file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration.
2. Field plans and copies of historic maps stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE714).
3. Electronic drawings stored in the directory R:\Historic Environment (CAD)\CAD Archive\Sites S\Sheviock Church WB 2009107
4. Black and white photographs archived under the following index numbers: GBP2146
5. Digital photographs stored in the directory R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.Q-T\Sheviock Church WB 2009107
6. English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-79635

This report text is held in digital form as: G:\Historic Environment (Documents)\HE Projects\Sites\Sites S\Sheviock Church WB 2009107\Sheviock Church Report.doc

Arrangements will be made for the return of artefacts to the landowner. The site code is SC10.

8.1 Site Indices

8.1.1 Context Records

Context Number	Type (Cut/Deposit/Build)	Description
Block used:	101-115	
101	D	Topsoil. Dark greyish brown soft silty clay.
102	D	Disturbed material adjacent to south transept. Light greyish brown compact silty clay containing abundant shillet and slate fragments. Deposit appears to be the result of disturbance around much of the perimeter of the southern transept and contained human bones including two craniums (S1 and S2) and an articulated skeleton (S3).
103	C	Putative cut for reburied human remains. Not actually observed.
104	D	A subsoil horizon over wall 105.
105	B	Foundations of south transept. Flat-laid slate beneath wall 109. Extends away from wall 109 for up to 0.5m around the southern buttresses but is much narrower (0.1m) under the bulk of the wall. At least 0.22m thick, probably more.
106	C	Putative cut for articulated skeleton S3. Not actually observed.
107	B	Stone-lined drain leading from junction between south transept and the eastern end of the nave.
108	D	Fill of drain 107. A dark greyish brown loose silty clay with frequent mortar fragments and land snails.
109	B	Wall of south transept. Flat-laid killas and slate rubble with larger dressed stone on buttress bases and quoins.
110	D	Deposit beneath (102). Light reddish brown sticky silty clay with moderate amounts of shillet fragments and lime mortar. Contained frequent human bone including articulated skeleton S3. The deposit contained a concentration of long-bones immediately to the SE of the south transept.
111	B	Stonework between nave and south transept. Partially covers the arch of a window in the nave although the window frame itself is keyed into this stonework. Composed of flat-laid slate rubble.
112	B	South wall of nave. Flat-laid slate rubble.
113	B	Possible early wall beneath the present porch and south transept. Follows an east-west alignment slightly at variance with the existing nave wall (ENE-WSW). Composed of killas/slate rubble.
114	B	Stone-lined drain between porch and south transept. Composed of upright slates capped with flat-laid slate. Lies beneath wall 116.
115	B	Foundations of nave. Flat-laid slate beneath wall 112.
116	B	Foundations of the porch. Flat-laid slate similar to 105 and 115.

8.2 Finds report C M Thorpe

A total of 20 artefacts and one charcoal sample were recovered during this project.

Pottery in the form of ridge tile comprises the largest group, nine sherds in total, some 45% of the collection. There is also stone, glass, brick, charcoal, and metalwork within the assemblage.

The finds were initially processed going through the stages of cleaning, and sorting. This greatly simplified the task of identification and cataloguing. Currently all the artefacts are being temporarily stored in the HE finds store, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Truro, Cornwall.

The artefacts were collected from recognisable features, being collected as tray finds by context. The total number of finds from each are summarised in the tables below.

Context No: (101)

MATERIAL	WEIGHT (g)	NO OF ITEMS	OBJECT NO	INTERIM BOX NO
Clay				
Tile: Ridge	29g	1		

1 ridge tile fragment in a Cornish post medieval coarseware granitic fabric. 16th to 17th centuries.

Context No: (102)

MATERIAL	WEIGHT (g)	NO OF ITEMS	OBJECT NO	INTERIM BOX NO
Metalwork				
Iron	910g	7		
Stonework				
Slate	61g	1		
Clay				
Other: Brick	53g	1		

1 iron window frame fitting. 19th to 20th centuries.

1 iron rafter spike.

5 iron nails, hand forged various sizes.

1 roofing slate fragment.

1 red brick fragment.

Context No: (104)

MATERIAL	WEIGHT (g)	NO OF ITEMS	OBJECT NO	INTERIM BOX NO
Clay				
Tile: Ridge	265g	3		
Glass				
Post-Medieval	49g	2		

1 ridge tile fragment with a crest spike in a Cornish post medieval coarseware granitic fabric. 16th to 17th centuries.

2 ridge tile fragments in a Cornish post medieval coarseware granitic fabric. 16th to 17th centuries.

2 green window fragments. 17th to 18th centuries.

Context No: (110)

MATERIAL	WEIGHT (g)	NO OF ITEMS	OBJECT NO	INTERIM BOX NO
Clay				
Tile: Ridge	646g	5		
Charcoal	33g	1 sample		

1 ridge tile fragment in a Cornish post medieval coarseware granitic fabric. Lightly incised wavy parallel line decoration. 16th to 17th centuries.

4 ridge tile fragments in a Cornish post medieval coarseware granitic fabric. 16th to 17th centuries.

1 charcoal sample mixed with white lime mortar.

Discussion

The earliest identifiable artefacts recovered during the course of this project were the ridge tile fragments coming from contexts (101), (104), and (110). These are in a Cornish post medieval coarseware granitic fabric and date from the 16th to 17th centuries.

The rest of the material recovered was not very diagnostic, although it appears to be of 19th or 20th century date.

All finds should be stored in a sturdy box and be kept under stable conditions. Arrangements should be made for the return of artefacts to the landowner.

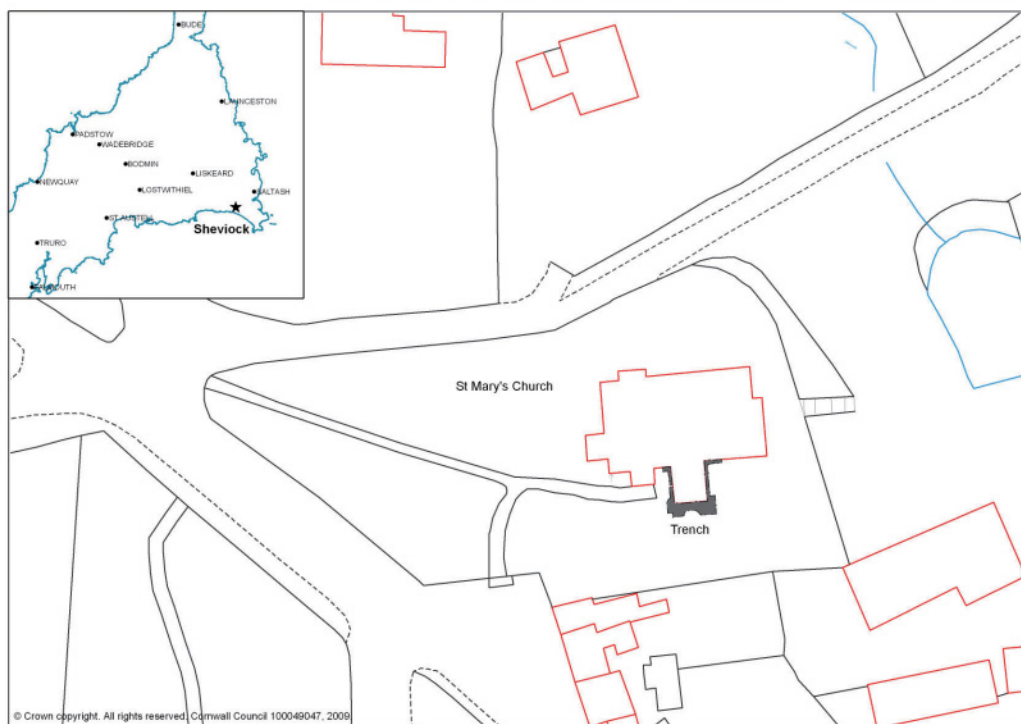


Fig 1 Location Map

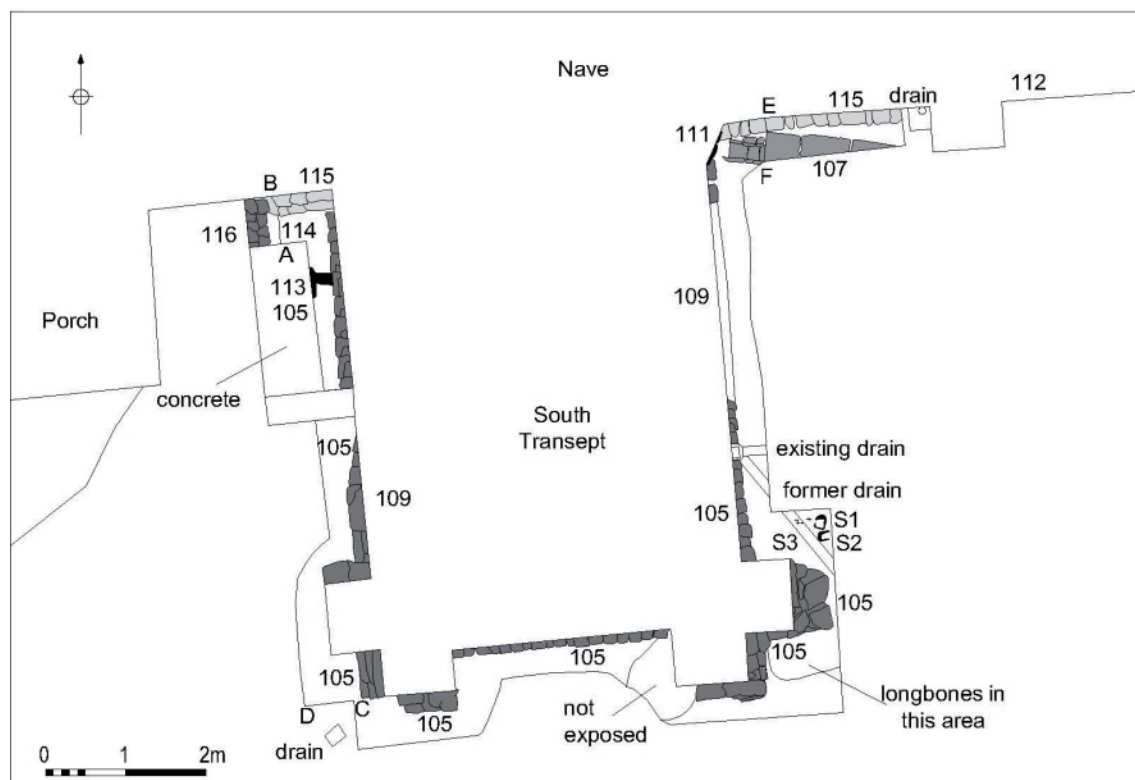


Fig 2 Trench plan



Fig 3 South east buttress of transept showing foundation layer 105



Fig 4 Culvert 107 in front of wall section 111



Fig 5 Culvert 107



Fig 6 Skeletons 1 and 2