

ALL SAINTS CHURCH SAWLEY, DERBYSHIRE

A Report on the Archaeological Watching Brief conducted during the
Installation of a Lighting Scheme

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SUMMARY

- Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit was commissioned by J. Maynard (Deputy Churchwarden) on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, to conduct an archaeological watching brief at All Saints Church, Sawley, Derbyshire, during groundwork for the installation of a lighting scheme to the north and west sides of the church.
- Prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval remains are known from adjacent areas including Church Farm immediately to the west. A church has been recorded as present at Sawley since at least Domesday c.1086 AD, while an earlier date of 822 AD has been alluded to for church activity on site, linked to a prebend of Lichfield Cathedral.
- Groundworks comprised cable trenches and four lamp standard foundations excavated to depths of 400mm and 750mm respectively.
- All trenches were monitored and their position, depths and deposits present recorded by drawing and photograph. All spoil heaps were searched by hand for artefacts including with the use of a metal detector.
- The groundwork revealed a basic stratigraphy to be present across the site comprising :
 - 0001 a 0.20m thick dark yellowish brown sandy loam topsoil.
 - 0002 a 0.35m thick mid-yellowish brown subsoil.
 - 0003 a mid-reddish brown loamy sand grave-earth, containing occasional pebbles.
- The only significant feature exposed by the groundwork comprised the remains of an old boundary wall running east west, located to the north of the church. This may coincide with a boundary shown on Sandersons map of 1836. Bricks present in the feature suggest a 18th to 19th century date, although it may be reflective of an older boundary feature.
- Artefacts found during the groundwork comprised mostly of post-medieval pottery (17th to 20th centuries) glass, and iron (nails). All finds were residual in nature, most being recovered from the spoil heaps.
- Finds of greater significance included a rubber stone, heat affected stone and two sherds of pottery of medieval or earlier date. Their presence suggests the potential for related features and deposits to lie below the current depth of excavation or within adjacent areas as found at nearby Church Farm.
- In conclusion the limited nature and depth of the lighting scheme works largely mitigated the impact on any archaeological remains that maybe present on site.

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Author of the report and all fieldwork was by Barry Lewis. Advice on the finds was received from L.Elliott, Dr.D.Walker and Dr.D.knight of the University of Nottingham. Thanks are extended to Gerald Dalby (Architect for the Scheme), John Maynard (Deputy Churchwarden) and members of Sawley PCC and parishnors for the hospitality on site and patience shown during production of the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This watching brief was conducted during groundworks to install a lighting scheme at All Saints Church Sawley, Derbyshire (**Figure 1**). The groundworks involved were relatively shallow. However, there was potential to disturb shallow burials or disarticulated human remains, or structural remains predating the existing church.

1.2. The work was conducted over a period of the 20th March continuing to 29th March 2006, corresponding with phases of site stripping or post stripping inspections.

1.3 The objective of the watching brief was:

- To observe the excavation by others of the cable trenches and lamp standard foundations in all areas of the churchyard as detailed by the project architect's specification/plan (dated March 2005), recording as appropriate any archaeological stratigraphy found to be present. Any archaeological artefacts discovered were to be recorded and removed as necessary.

1.4 The watching brief comprised:

- Observation of the excavation (by other contractors) of new cable trenches 1'6" deep alongside Lime Avenue leading to the Church and Church Hall (as marked on the plan dated March 2005).
- Observation of the excavation (by other contractors) of up to 4 lamp stand foundations 2'0" to 3'0" deep (as marked on the plan dated March 2005).

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 Sawley is located in the south east corner of Derbyshire, adjacent to the River Trent and the county boundary of Nottinghamshire. The site centred on SK 47245 31398 sits at approximately 31m OD in the Trent Valley on the sands and gravels of the Holme Pierrepont Terrace, with an underlying solid geology of various Mudstone Formations (BGS 1:50,000 Solid and Drift Sheet 141, 2001).

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The stages of the watching brief fieldwork included the following:
- 3.2 Archaeological Monitoring of the excavation of the cable trenches and lamp standards involving removal of the topsoil and subsoils.
- 3.3 All archaeological deposits or remains, potentially medieval or earlier in date, were where possible cleaned by hand, examined and recorded, though this was severely limited by the confines of the trenches
- 3.4 Recording of the cable trench and lamp standards, including their position, depths and the deposits exposed, comprised both drawing (both in section and plan at 1:20 and 1:50 scales where applicable) and photograph (digital and colour print).
- 3.5 All spoil was searched by hand for artefacts including with the use of a metal detector.
- 3.6 Areas were given two digit numbers e.g. 01. Artefacts were given individual three letter finds codes e.g. AAA. All deposits were allocated unique four digit context numbers e.g. 0001. Pro-forma watching brief and context sheets were used to record features, deposits and fills.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric and Roman

4.1 Cropmarks and earthworks from this period are recorded within adjacent areas of the gravel terrace and floodplain. This includes the rectangular earthwork 185m to the southeast of the churchyard at SK474 313, which has been interpreted as a Roman Fortlet (Todd 1967,166).

4.2 Lying immediately adjacent to the site are finds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery recovered from evaluations on the site of Church Farm, which included a possible ditch of this period (Jones 2001). Activity of this period may extend into the churchyard.

Medieval

4.3 Sawley is recorded within Domesday along with Draycott and Hopwell, the entry noting the presence of a priest and two churches, a mill and a fishery (Williams and Martin 2002, 743). The name Sallo originally recorded in Domesday derives from 'Willow Hill' (Cameron 1959, 499) possibly referring to the slight rise the church lies upon.

4.4 Previous finds of this period within the vicinity include pits and ditches of 13th century date found beneath a later medieval cultivation layer on the site of the adjacent Church farm (Jones 2001). Activity of this period may extend into the churchyard.

4.5 In addition there are several surrounding earthworks notably too the east, comprising a fishpond and ridge and furrow (Allen et al 2005, 20-22).

All Saints Church

4.6 An early date for the existence of a church at Sawley has been alluded to by the reference to it as a potential former prebend of Lichfield Cathedral in 822 (Cox 1879, 377-394; Leonard 1993, 81). Activity of this period may extend into the churchyard.

4.7 The existing church is a grade 1 listed building. The earliest element comprises the 11th/12th century chancel arch and fabric above. The chancel is 13th century in date along with the south aisle.

4.8 The north aisle is 14th century in date while 15th century work comprises the substantial west tower with angle buttresses, battlements and spire, as well as the clerestory and south porch (Pevsner 1979, 313-314; Salter 1998, 79).

5 RESULTS

AREA 01

5.1 Light position 1 (**Figure 2, Plate 1**) 0.45m square in plan, was excavated to a depth of 0.90m. It demonstrated the sites stratigraphy to comprise:

- 0001 a 0.20m thick dark yellowish brown sandy loam topsoil.
- 0002 a 0.35m thick mid-yellowish brown subsoil.
- 0003 a mid-reddish brown loamy sand, containing occasional pebbles.

5.2 The finds from layer 0002 indicate that this was a disturbed subsoil layer. Context 0003 is interpreted as an old burial soil or 'grave earth', due to its fairly mixed homogenous nature.

5.2 The hand dug trench of 01 running from the light position continued for a distance of 25m, until reaching a tarmac footpath. It was excavated to maximum depth of 0.40m, never going below the level of context 0002 (**Plate 2**). Finds from 0001 and 0002 would appear to be broadly contemporary in date.

5.3 The finds from Area 01 consist of fragments of late 18th/early 19th century brick, lead flashing, 18th/19th century to 20th century pottery (including white earthenware, red

earthenware) and undated animal bone. An unexpected find of interest was a chipped and near complete glass paperweight with surface pitting, probably of 19th century date.

5.4 Of greater significance was a sandstone rubber stone. Roughly tubular in form with an oval profile (100mm long by 73mm in diameter), and wasted middle, each end is worn and faceted from abrasive action, possibly grinding (similar in use to a mortar and pestle). The artefact cannot be closely dated, but would not look out of place from a Prehistoric, Romano-British or medieval context. In addition a single heat affected waterworn pebble, often found on prehistoric sites (used in the boiling of water) was also found. All finds were residual in nature, most being recovered from the spoil.

AREA 02

5.4 Area 02 consisted of a short-run of trench that cut through the turn-in area of the car park (**Figure 2**). This was done in two phases to allow access and egress to cars using the community hall facility. A short section of trench was also cut through the adjacent grassy area to the south of the car park.

5.5 This revealed the tarmac to be 0.08m thick and lying over a compacted crushed limestone layer 0.35m thick, which in turn sealed the sandy loam layer 0002. Only a maximum depth of 0.10m (typically 0.05m) of layer 0002 was cut into by the trench. Consequently no finds were exposed by this section of groundworks.

5.6 In the adjacent grassy area two fragments of pottery (black/brown slipped earthenwares) of late 18th to early 19th century date were recovered.

AREA 03

5.7 Light position 2 (**Figures 2, 4; Plates 3, 4**) was excavated to a depth of 0.72m and demonstrated the same stratigraphy as Light Position 1 (0001 dark yellowish brown sandy loam topsoil, 0002 a mid-yellowish brown subsoil, 0003 a mid-reddish brown loamy sand, containing occasional pebbles).

5.8 From the light position the cable trench ran south for a short distance (**Plate 4**) then turned west (running northeast to southwest) and cut across the churchyard path leading to the northside of the church (**Plate 5**). Crossing this path the trench connected with a further section of trench that ran from Area 02 south to Area 04 (**Plate 6**). The cable trenches were excavated to the same depth (c.0.4m) as the others.

5.9 The south end of Area 03 on the west side of the churchyard path (**Figures 2, 3**) cut across the line of an old boundary visible as a grassed over earth bank (**Plate 7**). The trench

section (**Figure 5, Plate 8**) showed that the bank was probably constructed of brick in at least its later phase of use. The dismantling of the wall left only a disturbed bank 0004, possibly as a result of robbing out the footings. A sample of the bricks were retained for reference. These comprise a brick size of 225mm x 103mm by 60mm, while an incomplete brick voussoir was also present (56mm thick, narrowing from a width of 184mm to 150mm). These suggest the brick wall was constructed across the boundary sometime in the 18th century/19th century. There was however, due to the shallow nature of the excavation, no evidence to indicate any earlier phase to this boundary.

5.10 Finds recovered from Area 03 comprised a range of pottery fragments dating largely from late 17th to 20th centuries (including brown slipped earthenware, white earthenware, and stone ware). Other finds included two nails (undated), several fragments of plain roof tile (one with a hand formed nib) dating to anywhere from the late medieval to 19th century, pieces of bottle glass and a Elizabeth II half-penny coin dating to 1974. Some of the finds recovered were metal-detected from the spoil heap. All finds were residual in nature, most being recovered from the spoil.

5.11 Finds of note included two sherds of pottery. The first was a small abraded sherd of black sandy fabric, with a slight groove on one face. This is comparable with a range of pottery wares present from the prehistoric, Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon periods and cannot be more closely indentified and therefore remains undated. The second consists of a reduced grey gritty fabric, with some mica, and a red brown external glaze with metallic like sheen over a white slip. Ridging is visible on this body sherd. Although a medieval date is likely, as the ware this sherd represents is undetermined, its exact date is unclear.

AREA 04

5.12 The last area of watching brief connected up with Area 03 and the final two light positions 3 (**Plate 10**) and 4, and ran roughly north-south. The trench also ran westwards as a spur to the power supply near to the Church Hall (**Figure 2, Plate 9**). This was also the section of trenching closest to the church. Depths and stratigraphy were again the same as those given for the above described areas and light positions (**Figure 4**).

5.13 The finds recovered, were all of post-medieval date, spanning the 17th to the 19th centuries and included pottery (stoneware, midland yellow type ware, white earthenware, black/brown slipped earthenware), modern window glass and two items of ironwork (one a gate hinge and the other a large nail).

5.14 A single fragment of disarticulated human mandible was found within context 0002 and was reburied at depth below the base of light position 4.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The limited nature and depth of the lighting scheme works caused minimal impact upon deposits in the churchyard.

6.2 The most significant feature exposed by the groundwork was the old boundary wall found in area 03 (**Figures 2, 3, 5, Plates 7, 8**). On Sandersons map of 1836 an east west running boundary may coincide with that found during the watching brief, however this remains unclear with out significant documentary search. Although found to be of post-medieval date (c.18th /19th century) from the brick used, it is probably reflective of an older boundary feature.

6.3 Finds were confined mainly to post-medieval glass and pottery of residual nature. However, a small number of finds including the rubber stone, heat affected stone, and two sherds of pottery of medieval or earlier date indicate the likely potential of related features/deposits to lie below the current depth of excavations or within adjacent areas as suggested by previous findings at nearby Church Farm.

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Martin G.H.

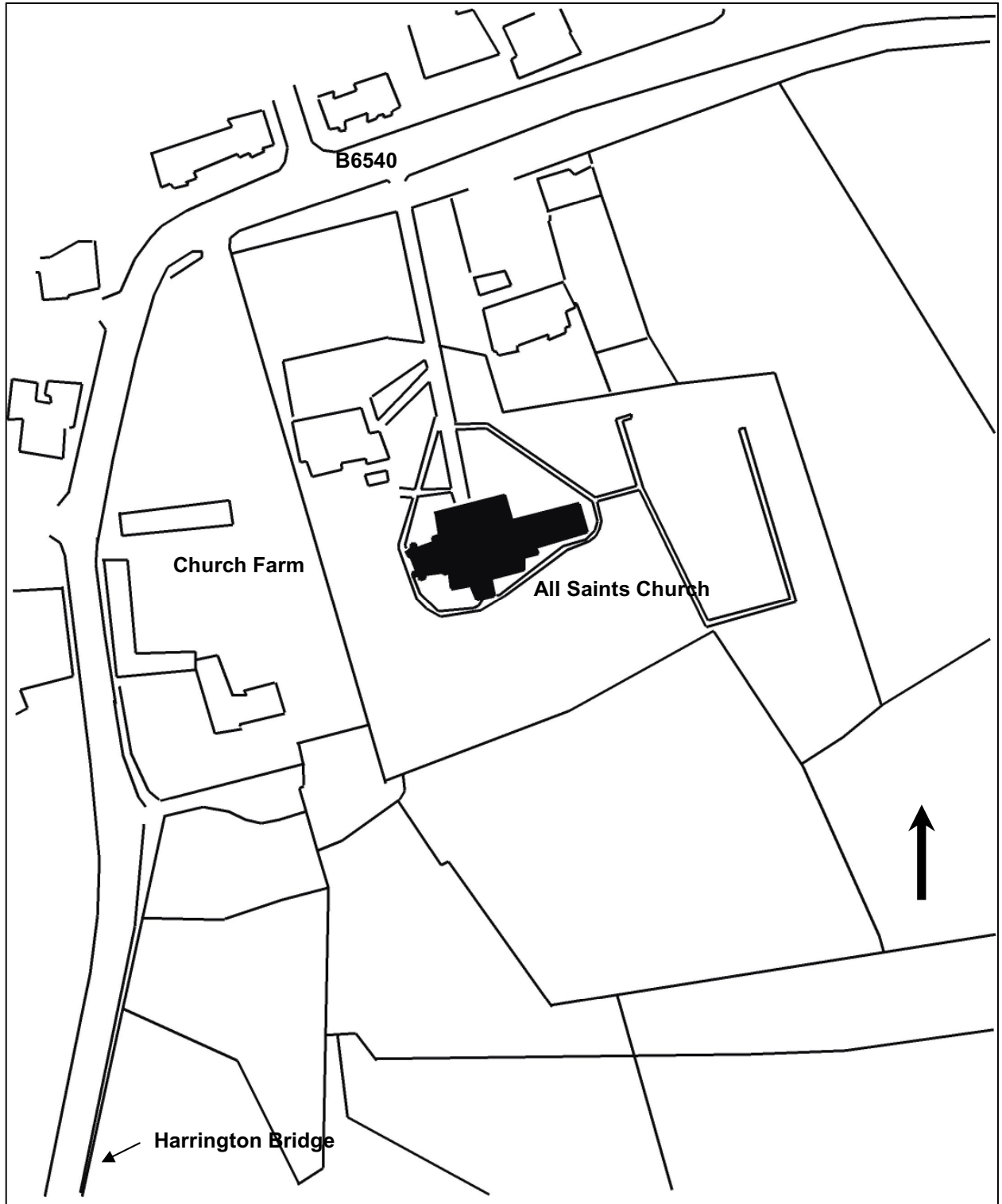


Figure 1: Location of All Saints Church, Sawley.

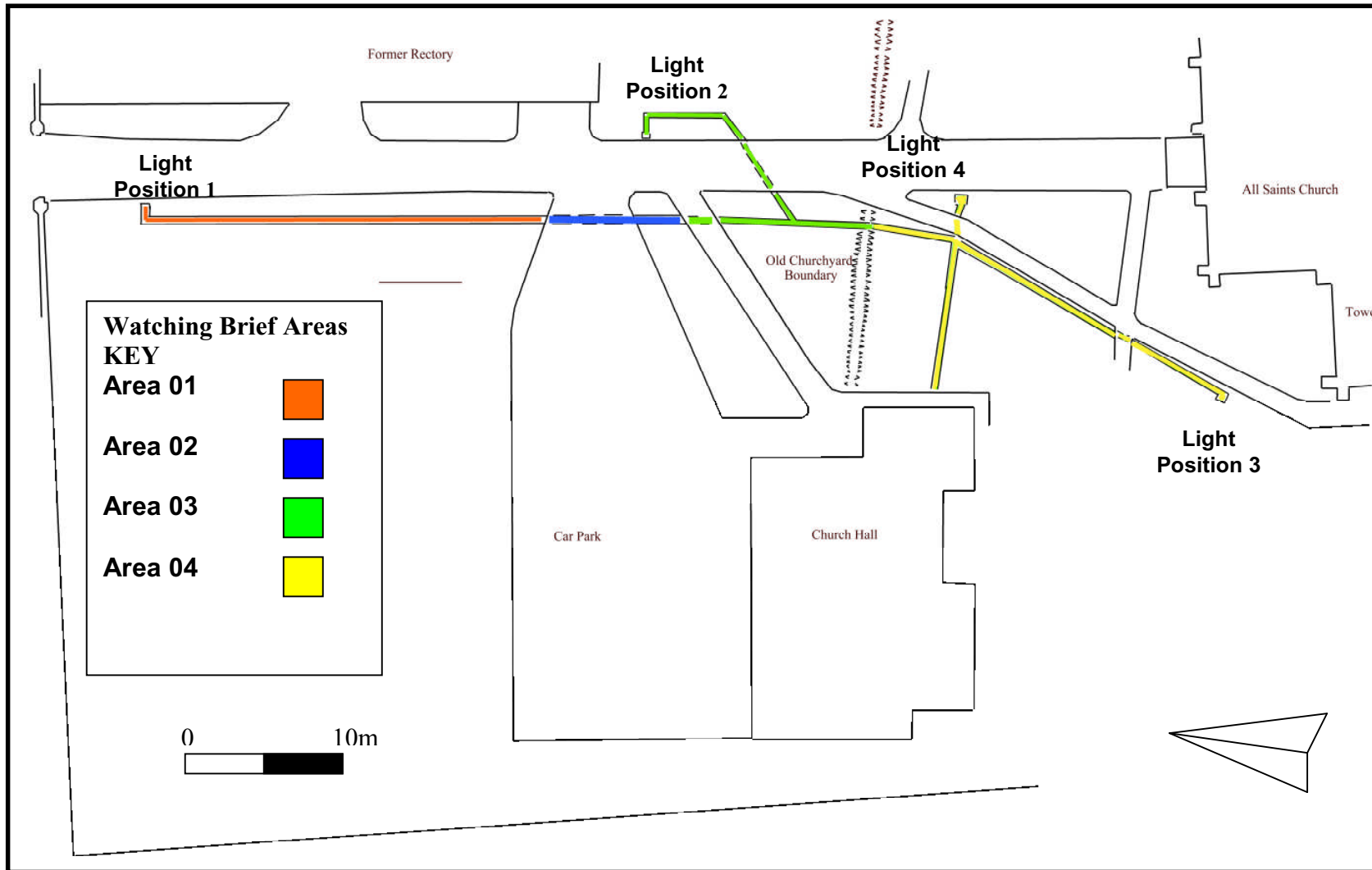


Figure 2: Areas observed during the Watching Brief.

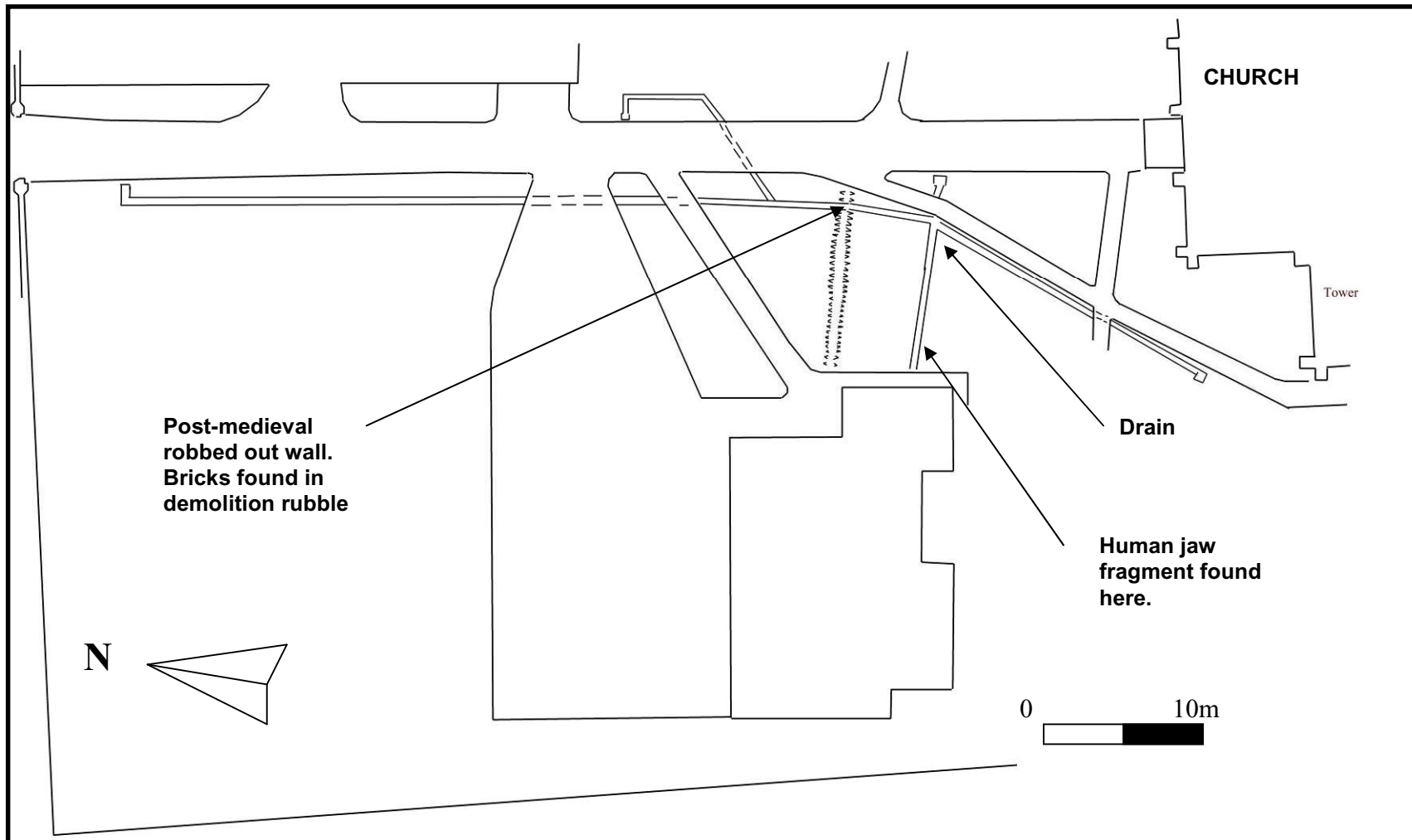


Figure 3: Main features and finds discovered during watching brief.

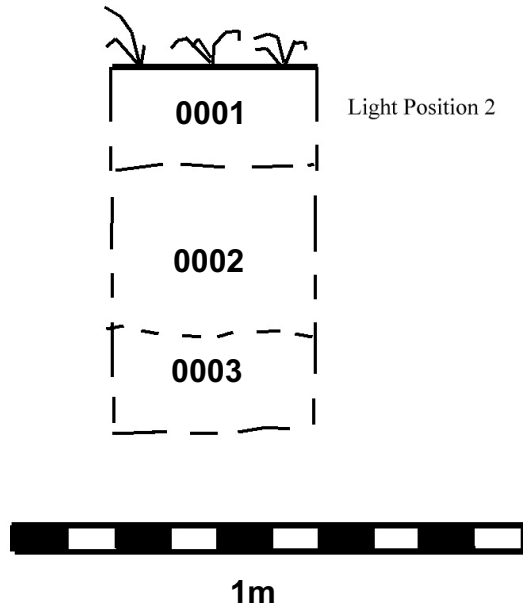


Figure 4: Representative north facing section at light position 2.

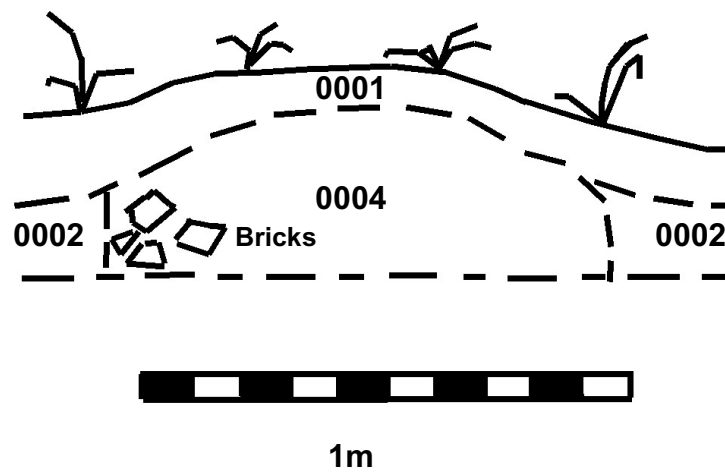


Figure 5: West facing section through the former churchyard boundary. Post medieval bricks shown in section.



Plate 1: Light Position 1. Looking northeast.



Plate 2: Area 01. Looking south.



Plate 3: Light position 2. Looking north.



Plate 4: Light Position 2/area 03. Looking south.



Plate 5: Area 03. Looking east.



Plate 6: Area 03. Looking south.



Plate 7: Area 03/04 showing the old boundary wall as a slight rise in the foreground. Looking north.



Plate 8: Area 03/04 showing the trench over the old boundary wall. Looking east.



Plate 9: Area 04. Looking west towards church hall.



Plate 10: Light Position 3. Looking west.