

WATCHING BRIEF ON INTERNAL  
AND EXTERNAL  
GROUNDWORKS TO SOUTH OF  
ALL SAINT'S CHURCH, DEANSWAY,  
WORCESTER

WCM 102455



**Mike Napthan Archaeology**

3 Hamilton Road, Worcester, WR5 1AG [mike@mikenapthanarcheology.co.uk](mailto:mike@mikenapthanarcheology.co.uk)

# Watching brief on internal and external groundworks to south of All Saint's Church, Deansway, Worcester

WCM 102455

12<sup>th</sup> June 2020  
(rev. 5<sup>th</sup> Nov 2020)

Mike Napthan MCIFA

## 1 Summary

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks relating to the internal rearrangement and provision of facilities at All Saints Church. The groundworks were generally shallow, and included a small section of trench within the medieval tower. The majority of the trenching was external, in the angle between the tower and south aisle.*

*The observed excavated deposits were mainly loose fills of 19<sup>th</sup> Century and more recent date, but the external service trench revealed the side of an earlier ashlar sandstone foundation and wall (with chamfered external offsets to the west). This wall would appear to represent the original medieval west wall of the south aisle. The projecting masonry "stub" on the southern side of the tower corresponds exactly with the observed foundation, and is a largely refaced stub of the earlier southern aisle western end wall. As the trench was around 0.8m-1m from the present west end of the aisle it is unclear if the present aisle wall sits partially on the inner face of this foundation (the eastern edge of which was outside the trench).*

*A significant discovery within the tower was a square ashlar projection from the tower wall just to the west of the present southern respond of the tower arch; this does not appear to be part of the present tower arch and may possibly reflect an earlier, and slightly narrower tower arch. The trench was too small and shallow to determine the full extent of this masonry, which certainly pre-dates the creation of the recess / blocked opening on the southern side of the tower.*

*The project produced no artefacts, other than a few small bone fragments, apparently charnel, within the tower, The bone fragments were reburied within the trench*

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with the provision of internal facilities at All Saints Church, Worcester (WCM 102455; SO 84800 54870; Fig 1). The works were undertaken on behalf of All Saints Church at the instruction of their architects Nick Joyce Architects. The report was compiled at to meet the requirements of a Faculty condition (W 2018-027311). The site is in the Historic core of the Roman and medieval city Archaeologically Sensitive Area and the Historic City Conservation Area. All Saints Church is listed Grade II\*. The site is registered on the Worcester City Historic Environment Record as WCM 96045 (church) and WCM 96046 (churchyard).

## 3 Aims

- 3.1 The aims of the project were to gather, record and analyse information relating to the former standing structures and buried deposits. The excavation of service trenches was observed to provide evidence for the earlier development of the church.

## 4 Methodology

- 4.1 Site visits were made during the groundworks, both within the tower and in the carpark area at the western end of church. The observed deposits were hand cleaned (and the areas of exposed sandstone walling hand excavated to avoid damage). The main contractors undertook the bulk of the external excavation mechanically under archaeological supervision; the remainder of excavation was undertaken by hand. Photographs were taken of all significant deposits, and the location of observed features and excavation boundaries recorded on plan.
- 4.2 No artefacts were recovered from the excavations. Residual bone from the site was reburied in the trenches. It is likely that the fragmentary bone was residual charnel previously disturbed during excavation of the heating ducts and previous replacement of the floors.
- 4.3 The works had very limited impact on historic fabric – where the service trenches encountered in situ structural remains these were exposed by hand to avoid damage. The service route was core-drilled through the tower wall in an area of later post medieval blocking .
- 4.3 The site report (and any additional unpublished digital images) will be offered as a digital file to ADS. There is no physical archive for this project.

## 5 Cartographic sources

- 5.1 The earliest detailed general map of Worcester (by J Speed) shows the church, Merryvale and the southern side of Broad Street/All Hallows built up by 1610. Doharty's map of 1741 shows only the outline of the church with no additional range to the south, as do the plans in Green 1764 and Broad 1768. The earliest representative details are shown on the map by Young (1779) and that in Nash, drawn c 1781 and published 1799. Young's plan of 1779 shows a building to the south of the tower, but not extending to the east of the end of the southern aisle. It has been suggested (HER entry) that this might be the parsonage house of 1615 [sic] quoting a source of 1650 reproduced by Buchanan Dunlop (1936, 22-23), though there is no indication that the parsonage house and tenements thereto pertaining were adjacent to the church (HER entry WCM 96046). The Ordnance Survey of 1885 (Fig 1) also shows buildings to the south of the tower, with a further block to the south of the aisle. A small open area is shown in the angle of the tower and aisle, and this may have served as a lightwell for a possible window in the area of the recess in the present southern wall of the tower. These buildings were demolished around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and do not show in

1920s aerial photographs.

## 6 Historic background

- 6.1 The present site lies to the south-west of Broad Street, at the point where it widens into the former All Hallows, and is joined by the former Merryvale, now substantially widened and incorporated into Deansway, created in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Fig 1). The church lies on the projected line of the early medieval burh defences running behind the southern side of Broad Street, and it is clear that the early medieval defences changed direction in this vicinity, though their actual location is a matter of debate. The church probably sits on the bank of the defences, possibly adjacent to a gateway (Baker and Holt, 2004,206). The precise date of the development of the area immediately outside the defences is unknown, but Broad Street itself is probably of pre-conquest date. Building development of the plots on the southern side of the street possibly occurred in the immediate post-conquest period. The plot boundaries appear to reflect the line of the earlier defences, and these indicate a turn to the south immediately to the east of the northern corner of All Saint's Church (Baker and Holt, 2004, Figure 6.11, 167).
- 6.1.2 The area has been subject of a number of archaeological interventions, not least extensive excavations to the south-east on the opposite side of Deansway (Dalwood and Edwards 2004). Immediately to the south of the present site a watching brief was undertaken during construction of the Technical College building in 1969 (WCM 100342). An unpublished section drawing from the "Hounds Lane" sites shows a total stratigraphic sequence of 1.6m, the upper 1m being "modern". A significant assemblage of Roman and Iron Age material was, however, recovered and Roman and medieval cut features identified (Sandon 1969; WCM 100342). A previous watching brief at All Saints Church (WCM 100069) is recorded, but no details are known. A further watching brief on the site of the public toilets (now parish offices) in 1985 recorded one burial (WCM 100070). The most recent recording was by the present author in 2010, and covered works in the carpark area south of the church (Napthan 2010; WCM 101826). The 2010 works partially overlapped the present scheme and found brick foundations relating to the 18<sup>th</sup> C vestry and 19<sup>th</sup> C Sunday School building, together with numerous fragments of internal memorials and monuments destroyed during previous (18th-19th C) remodelling of the church. Trenches were somewhat deeper than the present intervention.
- 6.2 *The Church*
- 6.2.1 The earliest record of the church dates to a charter of 1149, although the location suggests a pre-conquest foundation (HER record WCM96045). Buchanan Dunlop quotes 1125 as the earliest record of the church of All Saints. The church was rebuilt between circa 1450 and 1468 (Buchanan-Dunlop 1936, 17). The old church was so much damaged in the civil wars "that it was found requisite to take it down" (WR 1816, 122). Described by Green in 1764 as "*situated at the bottom of Broad-Street, near the Severn. It is surrounded by that street on the north, Merry-vale on the east, Grope Lane, on the south, and Cain-street on the west. It is a new church built in the year 1742....The altar piece is Corinthian, divided by four pilasters, on each side of the communion is a plain pilaster, on a pedestal painted in imitation of fluting, and is indeed a pretty deception. The church is divided into three iles, by two rows of plain Doric columns, and two three quatered ones on pedestals; entablature, architrave freeze and cornice. This ile is arched, ribbed, and panelled. The side iles have flat plain ceilings, with a plain cove cornice. Near the communion, at the east end of the south ile, is an old monument of Edward Hurdman, gent. The first mayor of Worcester, on which are the effigies of him and his wife, represented kneeling and praying. It hath no inscription. The tower of this church is terminated by four pinnacles, with battlements, and contains a complete sett of ten very musical bells. The church is well and regularly pewed, hath a good light, and makes a handsome and decent appearance. In a concave circle of the wall over the great west window, on the outside, is a carved head of the late renowned bishop Hough; underneath which, are the arms of the see, carved likewise in stone*" (Green, 1764 220)

- 6.2.2 The church is of six bays with aisles and wide round-headed windows in the side walls. The tower at the west end retains its 15th-century lower stage with angle buttresses, but is finished at the top with two stages of the date of the rebuilding (1742). A low level round headed window on the northern side of the tower (opposite the recess affected by the present project) may be re-used from the Norman church. There are various fragments of old glass in the windows and a fine wrought-iron stand for the mayor's sword. There are a number of old monuments, the most important being one to Alderman Samuel Mathew with a bust (1676), and that of Edward Hurdman, dating to 1621. The latter monument was described by Green in 1796 as being located “*south of the altar, in the wall of the vestry, beneath an arch prepared out of proper respect to the magistracy of the city when this church was built...*” (Green 1796, Appendix cxvi). A full listing of the monuments present in 1737 was made by Dr Thomas prior to the pulling down of the old church. These are published in full by Nash (1782, Appendix, cxxxi-cxxxiv) Green (1796) further lists several pages of monuments within the church, mainly within his stated criteria of “subsequent to the year 1737” (Green 1796, Appendix cxvi). The church had only a very limited external churchyard, lying to the north of the church. This was replaced from 1644 by a new church yard in Angel Lane, the previous churchyard being full – not helped by a pestilence in the summer of 1637 which led to 167 burials in three months (Nash, 1782 Appendix cxxxv).
- 6.2.3 The organ was added in 1822 (Billings 1855, 20), and replaced by a Nicholson Organ in 1871 (Littleburys, 1879).. The ten bells were originally cast by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester in 1692, and the fifth, seventh, eighth and ninth are of this date. The treble is by Thomas Rudhall, undated; the second, third, fourth and sixth by Abel Rudhall, dated respectively 1752, 1750, 1750 and 1753. The tenor is by Thomas Mears & Son of London, 1805. There is also a 'ting-tang' by Abel Rudhall, 1741.
- 6.2.4 A Sunday school “taught in the Vestry” was active in 1840 (Bentley, 1840, 21), but received no other separate mention in available published sources. All Saints School appears to have superseded it in extended buildings – “*All Saint’s School is attached to All Saint’s Church, at the bottom of Broad Street, and erected July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1849 by public subscription and a small grant from Government. The School is divided into two apartments; the upper being for boys and girls under the direction of the master, and the other for infants with a mistress and the assistance of a sewing mistress. The average number of boys and girls is 70; infants 80...*” (Lascelles, 1851, 25). The date of closure of the school is unclear.

## 7 Results

### 7.1 Deposits in Carpark Area

- 7.1.1 The groundworks in the external part of the trench consisted primarily of a shallow drainage trench which also served as a route for a new water supply. The trench ran immediately to the east of an existing electricity cable trench approximately 0.55m deep. The cable continues at surface level around the tower.. Much of this depth (averaging 0.6m) proved to be relatively recent accumulation of material dating from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century and later, probably levelling up of the site for the 1990s “grasscrete” permeable surface, which in turn has been covered by the 2010 carpark resurfacing in block pavements.. Current external surface levels are between 22.40 and 22.65mAOD.
- 7.1.2 The observed brick foundations were seen to be on a slightly different alignment to the church, and principally running generally east to west. Only one brick foundation (Fig 4) was seen over a length sufficient to determine its character, and this appeared to be mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century in date. A small area of brick flooring was also observed close to the tower – the brick surface at approx 21.80mAOD, at a depth of circa 600mm below current car-park level. The presence of coal dust on the surface is suggestive of a coal store or possible boiler-room.
- 7.1.3 The external trench ran parallel with the western end of the southern aisle, at a distance of circa 1m from the wall face. Deposits in this area had been previously disturbed by an

electricity cable trench circa 0.55m deep. The eastern section of the trench however revealed the bottom courses of a greenish brown sandstone ashlar wall of medieval character (Fig 2a and Fig 4). The presence of a very well preserved chamfered offset course at 21.87mAOS indicates that the observed level of stonework was originally above ground. Ground levels have therefore risen around 0.6 m in this area. The alignment of the observed section was closer to that of the tower than the 18<sup>th</sup> C aisles. The wall foundation continues south from the rather odd squared projection on the southern face of the tower – in light of the now known wall alignment this “stub” (which has been much re-faced) may be interpreted as the scar of the original return wall forming the western end of the aisle. Only the western edge of the wall was within the trench and therefore the thickness of the wall could not be determined – if the surviving stub is a guide the wall is likely to be around 0.8-1m wide below the chamfer course.

## 7.2 *Deposits within the tower*

- 7.2.1 The deposits in the tower area consisted of a parquet floor bedded over a shallow cast concrete slab, probably of early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century date. The slab continued across a brick built heating pipe conduit containing cast iron heating pipes, again of probably early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century date. The alignment of the pipes was approximately east-west, following the alignment of the nave (Fig 2). The overall depth of the heating conduit (including base) was circa 0.4m.
- 7.2.2 The area between the heating pipe conduit and the southern wall of the tower was trenched by hand, the fill being a relatively loose mixture of sandy soil, plaster, mortar, brick and stone dust, compatible with the known 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> C alterations to the church. This material appeared to be part of a general raising and levelling up of the floor within the base of the tower; the depth of make up was not established but appeared to be at least 0.5m. The artefactual assemblage (other than a small amount of fragmentary bone, probably charnel, was all building material compatible with 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> C dates. The area had clearly been disturbed by laying of the underfloor heating system (in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century) and the raising of the tower floor to its present level may have been comparatively recent (post 1910). None of the observed bone material was worthy of retention and it was re-buried within the trench.
- 7.2.3 The exposed historic fabric consisted of a continuation of the ashlar stone base of the tower un-interrupted below the base of the recess (which is usually occupied by a safe). The continuation of the sandstone wall here indicates that there was not a doorway here prior to raising of the floor to its present level; this is circumstantial evidence for the recess having been created for a window or niche, it being rather low for a doorway. Only a small area of this wall was seen in elevation, but it appeared to be medieval faced sandstone ashlar intended to be seen and relatively intact. A return projected 0.3m to the north and at least 0.3m to the east back towards the present tower arch. The absence of wear or abrasion to the external angle of the return suggested that it was not originally close to floor level (Fig 3). The western face of the return appears to correspond closely to the external western face of the original western end of the south aisle (prior to 1740s rebuilding (Fig 2).

## 8 **Discussion and Conclusions**

- 8.1 The principal discoveries of the present intervention both relate to surviving below ground evidence of the pre-1740s church. The external trench revealed the lower courses of what must, (due to its position), have been the medieval western end wall of the southern aisle. The presence of very well preserved double chamfered offset courses indicates that the observed level of stonework was originally intended to be seen above ground. The alignment of the observed section was closer to that of the tower than the 18<sup>th</sup> C aisles, and continues south from the rather odd projection on the southern face of the tower – in light of the now known wall alignment this “stub” (which has been much re-faced) may be interpreted as the scar of the original return wall forming the western end of the aisle. A similar “stub” survives on the north face of the tower in the angle of the western end of the north aisle. There seems little

doubt that the aisles were both originally slightly longer to the west. Evidence for this is found in the Buck brothers' engraving published in 1732 (prior to rebuilding – see Fig 7) The present aisle walls may be carried partly on the inner faces of these foundations – if so the stone foundations are of exceptional thickness (equating to the tower base).

- 8.2 The later buildings in the area south of the tower and east of the church all appear to have post-dated the 1740s rebuilding (when the south facing windows were created) and were, from the (admittedly limited) cartographic evidence probably not completed until the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The vestry however, may have been of late 18<sup>th</sup> C origins. Robert Raikes of Gloucester founded the Sunday Schools movement in the 1780s, and therefore the earliest likely date for the Sunday School here is unlikely to be prior to 1785. The Sunday School building and vestry (the brick foundations seen in the present investigation) appear to have been demolished in the late 19<sup>th</sup> C or very early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. They do not appear on post 1905 mapping nor on photographs of the area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is probable that they were removed as part of the 1889 “restoration” of the church or shortly thereafter. The scar of the southern buildings remains visible on the exterior of both tower and aisle.
- 8.3 The significance of the squared projection of masonry immediately to the north-west of the southern respond of the tower arch is not immediately clear, other than it does not appear to correspond with the present tower arch position. Significantly it does align with the stone foundation and wall stub observed externally. It also seems to reflect a general raising of floor levels within the base of the tower – a feature clearly visible within the tower stairwell, where there is a step down into the stairwell from the tower interior. It is probable that some earlier and deeper floor level is present beneath the present tower floor; however it is likely to be at least 0.5m below the current surface. Observations to the south of the tower suggest a similar raising of levels externally.
- 8.4 Little could be deduced about the recess in the southern tower wall, other than that the brick inner face and stone slips externally conceal a former opening – the sloping head of the recess suggests either a stair well or a window, but the latter seems more probable in view of the fact that late 19<sup>th</sup> C mapping shows a small yard or lightwell in the angle of the tower and aisle. The opening appears to be rather too low for a convenient doorway.
- 8.5 Overall, despite the project having very limited below-ground impact, it has revealed has been a significant amount of additional knowledge gained about the medieval church of All Saints and the extent of rebuilding in the 1740s.. The present scheme of works has had very limited permanent impact on the historic fabric (other than the removal of later 19<sup>th</sup> C pews) and is largely reversible. The addition of internal facilities makes the building more practical for modern usage beyond the traditional religious services.

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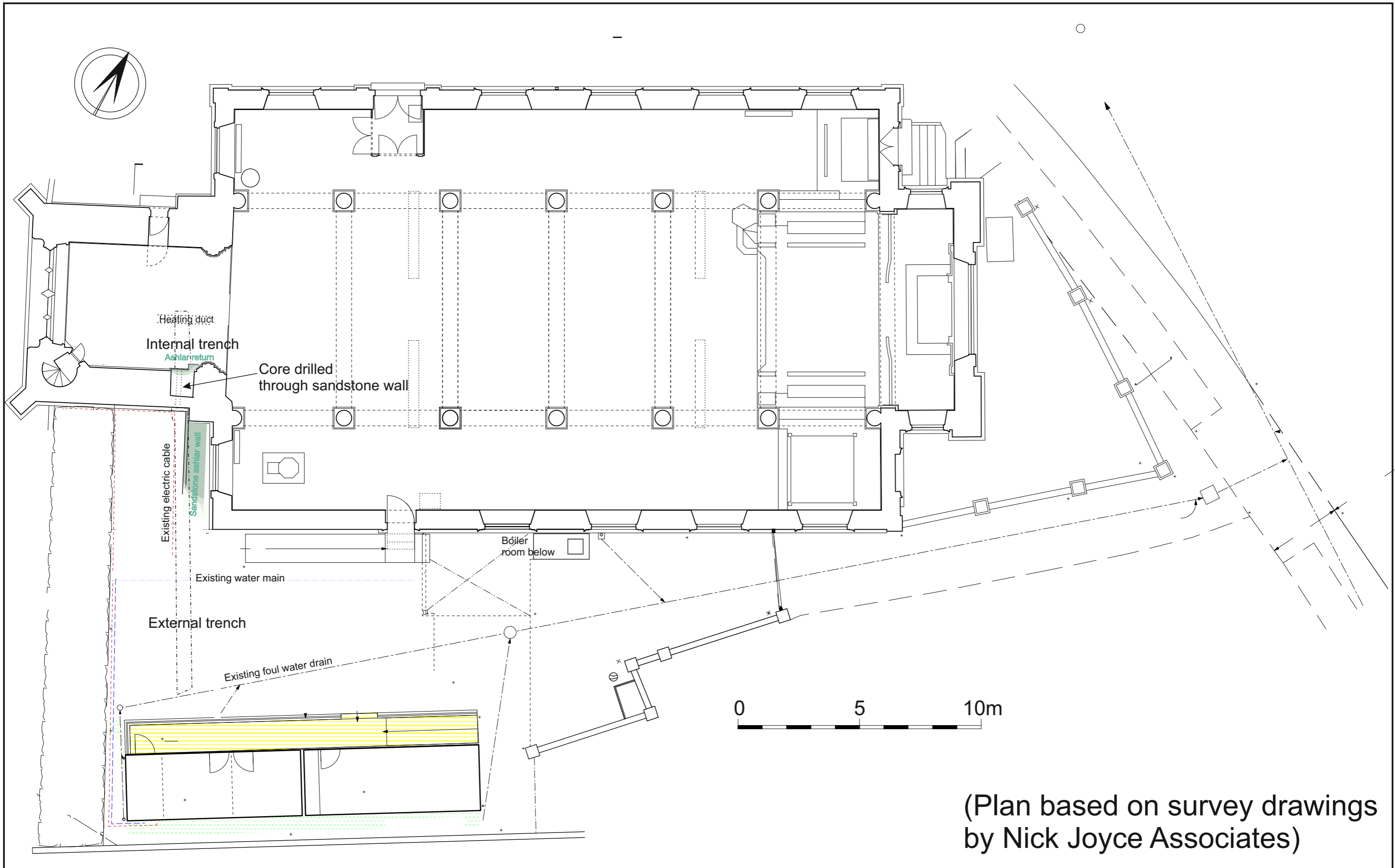
## 10 **Acknowledgements**

The project was completed with the assistance of the following; Nick Joyce and John Middleton of Nick Joyce Architects, Stella Power (All Saints PCC project manager). Particular thanks are due to the main contractors Croft Building and Conservation Ltd and their site team for their enthusiastic co-operation with the archaeological project. Dionne Rooney proof read the final report.



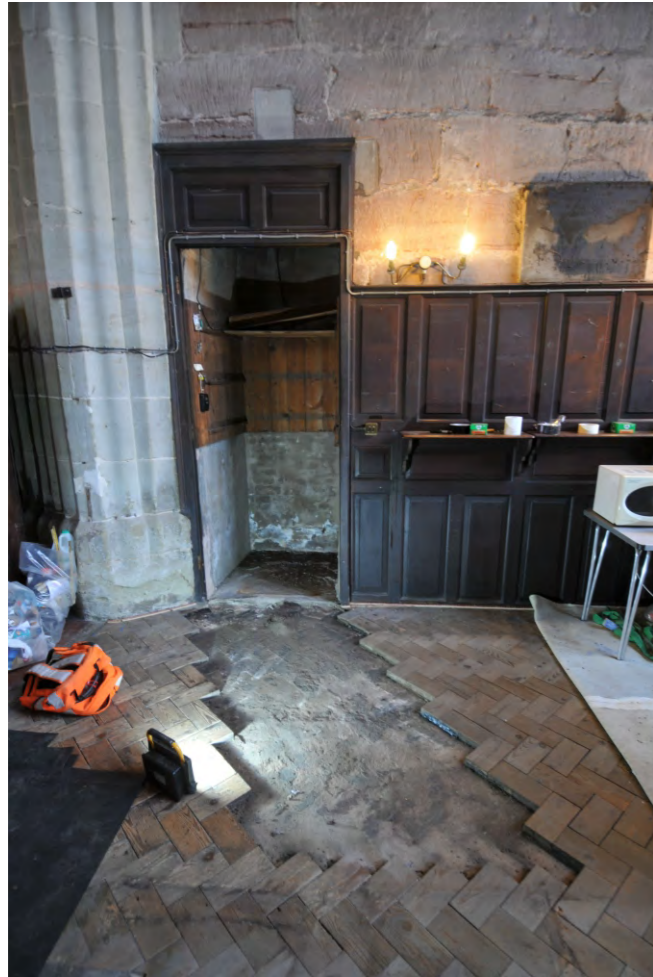


Figure 1: Location and historic mapping



(Plan based on survey drawings by Nick Joyce Associates)

Figure 2: Site Plan showing location of observed features



Area of concrete bedding under parquet



Detail of ashlar return; possible former chancel arch



Part excavated trench; line of heating pipe duct marked with black tape

Probable former Chancel arch return to NW of present southern jamb of chancel arch



Figure 3: Interior trenching



Figure 4: Exterior trenching - note chamfer course of ashlar extending 3m south of tower and representing earlier west wall of aisle



View facing north



View facing north



View south along stone foundation



Brick foundation on line of trench

Figure 5: Exterior trenching - 19th C brickwork associated with schoolroom partially founded on southern continuation of sandstone ashlar foundation

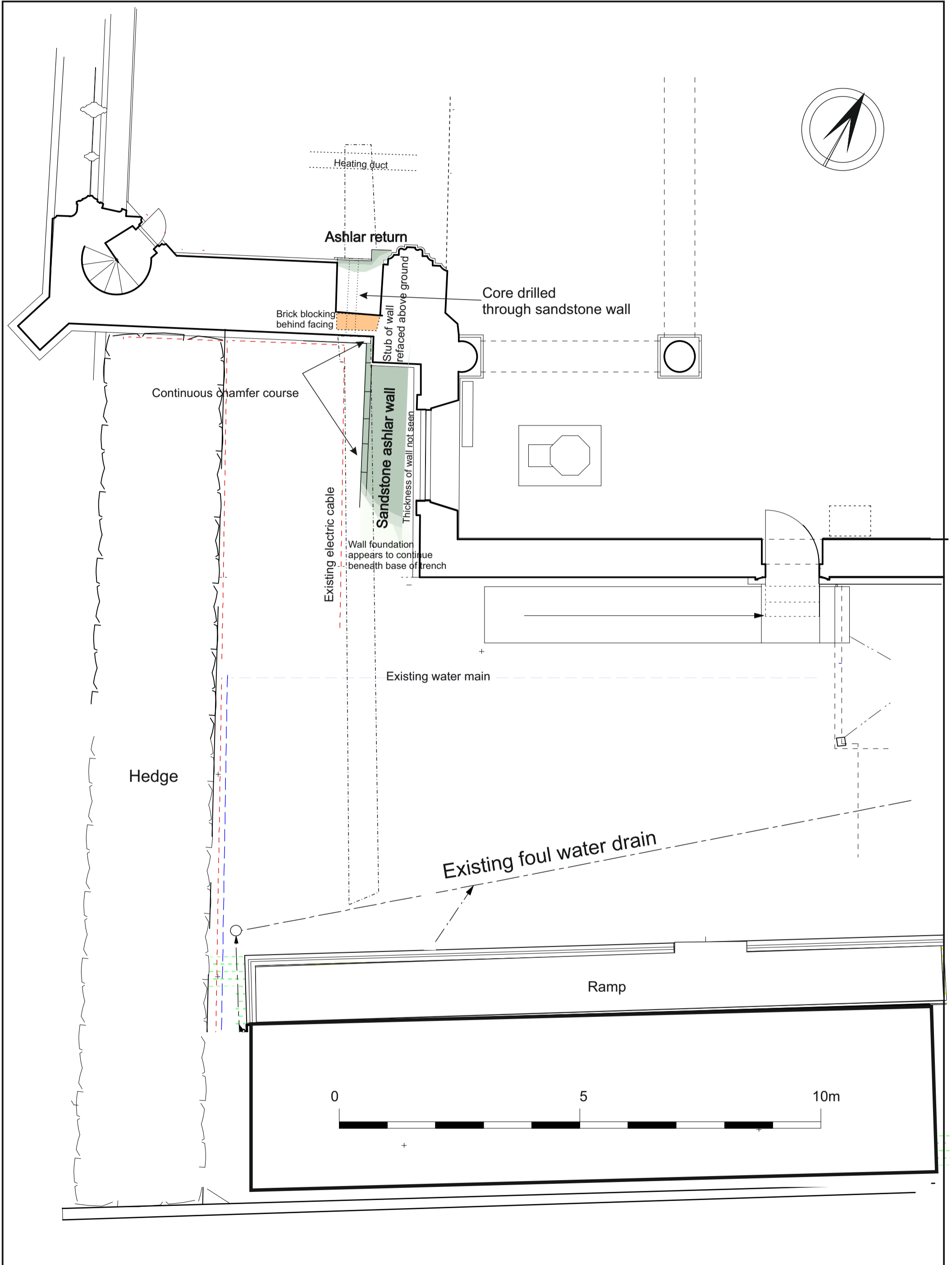
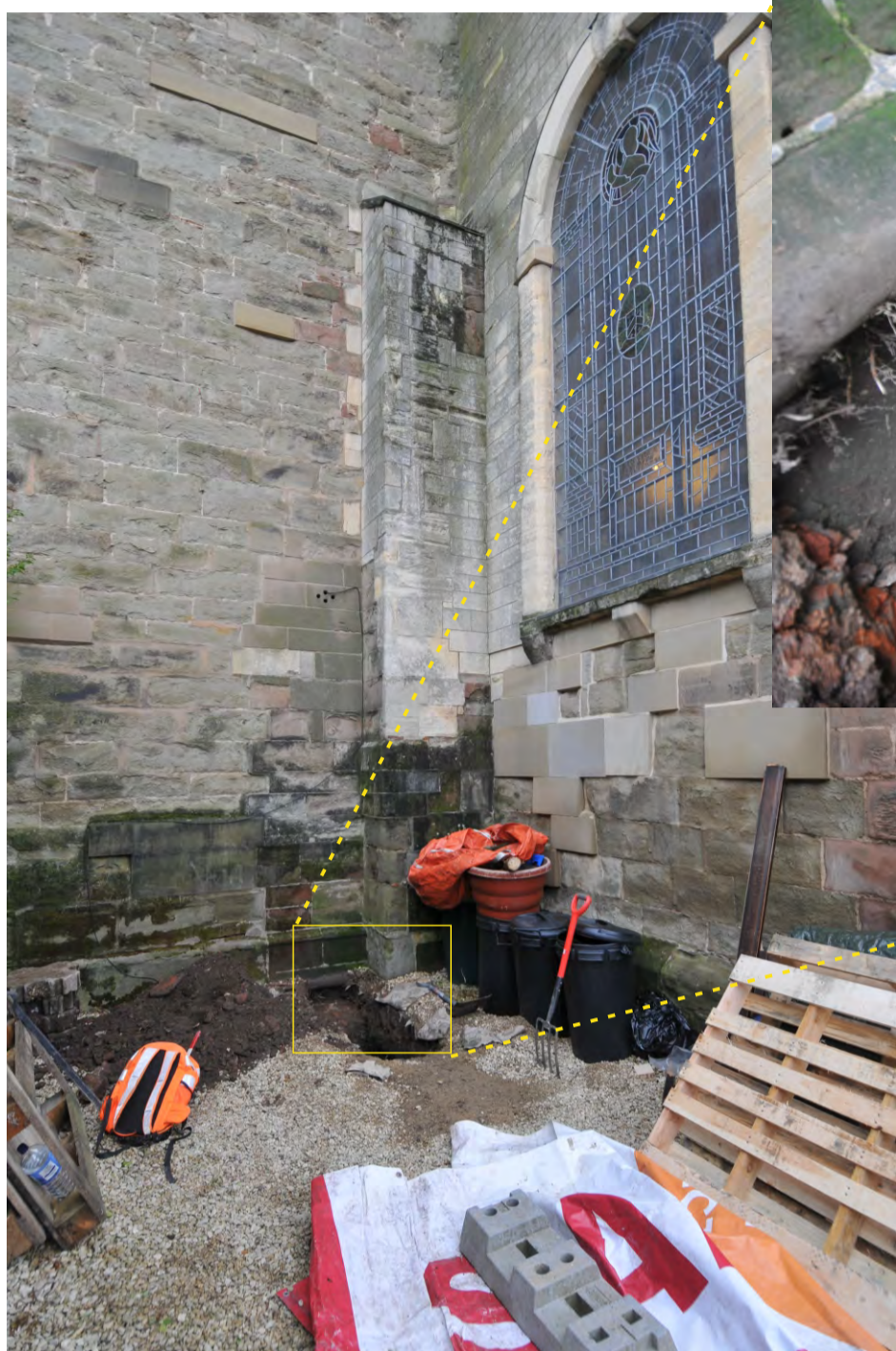


Figure 6: Site Plan showing location of observed features



Detail of lower chamfer continuing around tower and along stub of wall

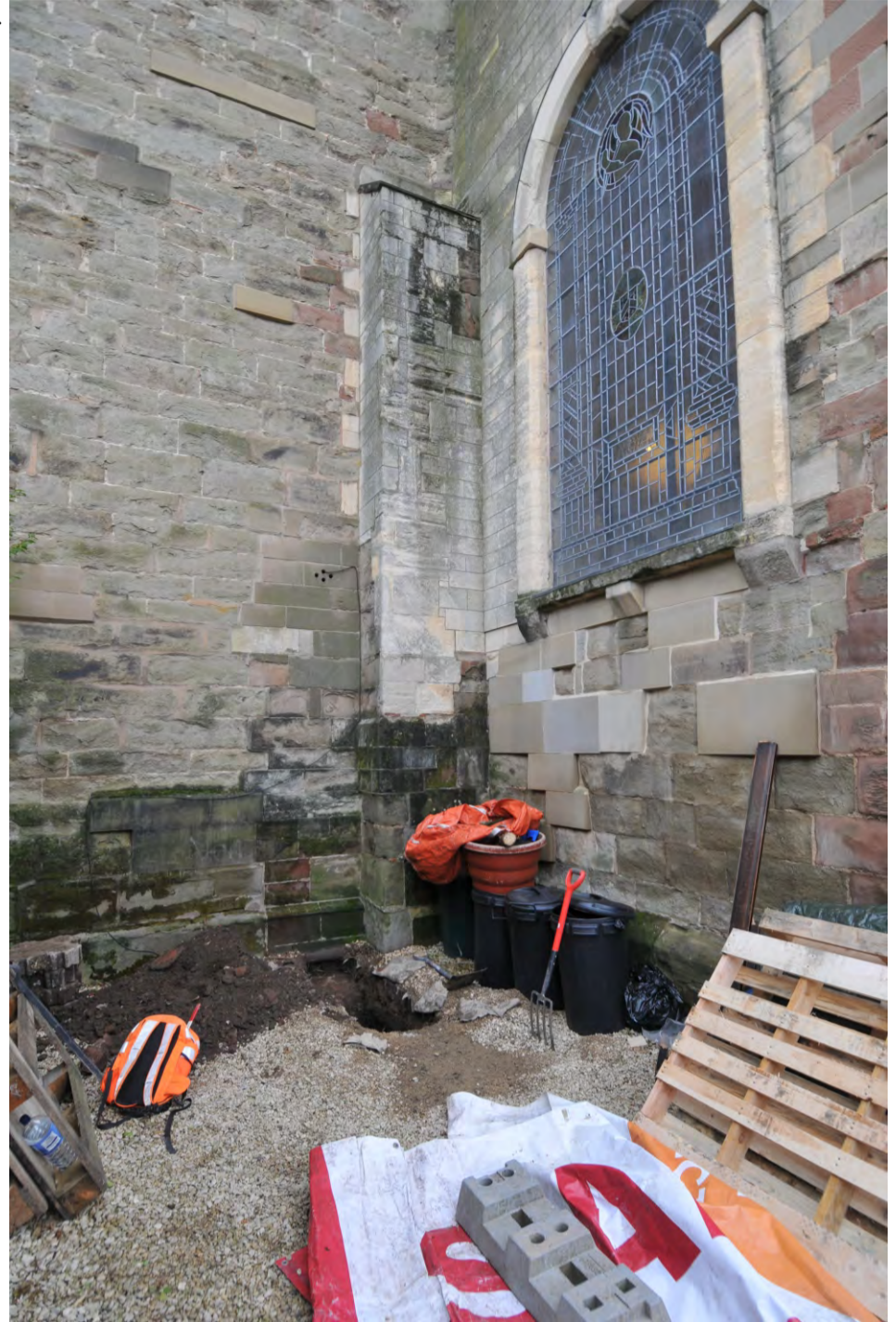
General view of wall stub in angle of tower and aisle



View of church prior to rebuilding of aisle showing west end of southern aisle engaged with tower apparently at point of surviving "stub".

Buck brothers 1732

General view showing re-faced wall stub on southern face of tower



Blocked opening



Detail showing continuation of lower chamfer course around angle of tower - wall stub to right