

*BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY  
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT*

**Saint Andrew's Church,  
Shifnal,  
Shropshire  
An Archaeological  
Intervention  
May 1998**

*B.U.F.A.U.*



Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
**Project No. 535**  
November 1998

**Saint Andrew's Church, Shifnal,  
Shropshire**

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May 1998**

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## **1.0 Summary**

St. Andrew's Church in Shifnal, Shropshire is situated to the north of Church Street, close to the town centre at NGR SJ74700748. It has a long and complex history, with documentary references to the settlement of Shifnal appearing in the early Anglo-Saxon period (see Appendix). In order to provide more modern utilities in this ancient building the Parochial Church Council recently decided to install disabled toilet facilities and a meeting room in the western end of the church's nave. The design for this work necessitated a certain amount of ground disturbance both within and outside the church. In response four trenches were excavated by hand by staff of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. The principal intention of the work was to keep disturbance to a minimum and, where archaeologically significant deposits and features were encountered, to record these in detail. Evidence of earlier foundations was recorded in the three trenches excavated in the interior, probably dating to the early medieval period. Human skeletal remains were recovered and returned to the church for re-burial whilst some undisturbed graves were identified but not excavated. This report is intended to provide a description of the background to the work, an account of the archaeology encountered and a brief discussion and interpretation of the archaeological findings. An Appendix written by R.Meeson provides a description of the historical development of the fabric of the church.

## **2.0 Background**

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of Saint Andrew's Church decided to reorganise the west end of the church nave in order to provide facilities in keeping with modern church practice. A meeting with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) on the 3rd July 1997 raised the possibility of archaeological implications involved in the progression of the proposed works. A report was commissioned from R.Meeson (see Appendix) on the implications of the proposed alterations and this report contained recommendations relating to the advisability of archaeological involvement in the ground work phase of the project. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit were contracted to undertake this work by the architects, Derek Phillips, on the 8th April 1998 and the archaeological intervention took place between Wednesday 13th May and Friday 15th May 1998. The work consisted of the hand excavation of three trenches internal to the church and one trench, to be machine excavated, externally. Prior to the commencement of archaeological excavation the floor surfaces were removed by the principal contractor. These consisted of areas of suspended wooden planking and tiles set on beds of concrete. They would date to the period of the Victorian restoration of the church, which occurred in c1870.

### **3.0 Methods**

The three trenches (Fig.2) excavated within the western end of the church nave were exposed by the contractors who had previously removed the floor surfaces. The trenches were designed to be 0.6m. wide and 0.6m. deep. The trenches were excavated by hand and all finds collected. All bone fragments were carefully boxed and presented to the parish vicar for re-burial. The eastern sections of each trench were cleaned, photographed in black and white print and colour slide and then drawn at a scale of 1:20. The intended depth of Trenches 1 and 2 was varied after consultation with the contractor. A slightly different foundation method was adopted which allowed these trenches to remain substantially more shallow than had originally been planned. All features and layers were recorded on pro-forma cards. Fortunately, although undisturbed burials were identified, none had to be excavated because of the revised foundation method.

Trench 4, external to the church and running southwards as a continuation of Trench 3 (Figs.1 and 2), was excavated by machine with archaeological supervision. All disturbed bones were gathered for re-burial. No archaeologically-significant features or deposits were observed.

### **4.0 Results (Figs 3 and 4)**

#### **Trench 1**

This trench ran from north to south between the northern wall of the nave and the western pillar of the nave. It was 0.60m.wide and varied in depth. The trench was needed in order to take the footings for a screen intended to divide the westernmost bay of the nave from the rest of the church.

The floor surfaces and brick structures associated with the Victorian restoration were not given context or feature numbers.

The stratigraphy consisted of

1004: Loose red sand layer with inclusions of mortar and sandstone chips etc. Situated at the southern end of the trench below a section of tiled floor. Seems to be a deliberate levelling layer for the floor and dates to the restoration.

1003: Compact layer of the natural sand with an admix of mortar fragments, sandstone chips etc. this layer will have formed a working surface during the restoration.

1001: Layer of very clean red/brown sand which appeared to be undisturbed natural. Seen in a very small area this is not certain. A small test pit was excavated to a depth of 0.20m. The deposit was not bottomed and appeared to be uncontaminated.

1005: This may be a fill of a construction trench for wall F102, consisting of red/brown sand with loam admix and quantities of mortar and sandstone fragment inclusion.

F101: This is a cut visible in both plan and section. It is interpreted as being a grave, and predates the restoration. The fill of the grave? consisted of re-deposited red/brown sand with an admix of mortar and sandstone fragments (1002).

F103: Is a deposit of large pebbles (max. 0.20m. in diameter) and occasional sandstone fragments. These sit in a matrix of re-deposited natural sand. The feature is situated towards the southern end of the trench. This type of feature was also detected in Trenches 2 and 3, but in Trench 1 it had been disturbed by later activity. Despite this, it seems certain that it is an early foundation running along the west-east axis of the nave pillars.

No contexts were given to the pillar situated at the southern end of this trench. The pillar is octagonal and is constructed of dressed sandstone. Its foundations sit in a narrow trench which cuts F103 and are largely constructed of brick. The pillar as it now stands shows no evidence of surviving medieval masonry.

## **Trench 2**

This trench was a continuation of Trench 1 and ran from north to south between the two pillars forming the last (western) bay of the church. As in Trench, 1 the depth of the trench varied as the proposed new foundation design was changed.

The stratigraphy consisted of

### ***Northern section:***

2004: A compact mortar layer.

2003: A layer of red/brown sand with loam admix and inclusions of brick, mortar and sandstone fragments. This overlay the fill of F201 (2012) and natural (2001).

### ***Central section***

2009: A loose mix of red sand with loam, mortar and brick inclusions. A levelling layer for Victorian tiled floor.

2007: A lens of loose, off-white mortar.

2005: Fairly compact layer consisting of red/brown sand with an admix of mortar, brick and sandstone fragments.

2004: A compact mortar layer (c0.02m deep). A working surface during the Victorian restoration. This overlay the fill of F204 (2002).

2001: The natural red/brown sand.

### *The Southern section*

2010: A compact mortar layer.

2011: A loose red/brown sand layer with grey loam admix.

2008: A compact layer of mortar and red/brown sand.

2006: A layer of red/brown sand with loam admix and inclusions of mortar, brick and sandstone fragments. This layer overlay 2004, as in the central section, and also F205.

Features 201 (2012), 202 (2013) and 203 (2014): These are cuts into 2001 and are interpreted as graves. They were not excavated. The rounded ends of the cuts would suggest that they are early and certainly pre-date the church's Victorian restoration. The backfill within these features consisted of re-deposited natural sand with an admix of brown loam and some mortar and sandstone chip inclusions.

F204: This is a large cut, with a fill (2002) of loose, grey/brown sandy loam with pebbles and a significant quantity of human bone, none of which was articulated. The pit cuts 2001 to the north and F205 to the south. The pit was probably excavated to take the remains which were disturbed during the restoration of the church. F204 was not fully excavated.

F205: This is a concentration of large pebbles and sandstone blocks in a matrix of red sand with an edge running from east to west at 1.20m. from the southern aisle pillar. One of the edging blocks is of sandstone and has limewash on its outer face. This block may be part of the primary construction of this feature. Alternatively, it could have been inserted during a rebuild of the pillars, or as a result of ground disturbance connected with a burial.

F206: This is a very compact layer of mortar with a high concentration of brick fragments. It appears to be associated with the construction of the northern pillar.

### **Trench 3**

Trench 3 was situated in the southern aisle of the last western bay. It ran from the line of the nave columns to the south-west where, it reached the external southern wall of the aisle. The trench was designed to take drainage from the new toilet facilities to be constructed and connects with Trench 4, external to the church. The trench was c0.60m. deep and c0.60m. wide. Four distinct layers were observed and are recorded in the drawing of the eastern section of the trench (Fig.3).

3001: A thin, compact surface containing mortar, sandstone chips and small pebbles within a matrix of grey loam and red sand (0.03m. deep). This is interpreted as being the working surface relating to the laying of the new floor during the rebuild of the 1870s.

3002: A deposit of loose, red/brown sand with inclusions of mortar, plaster flecks, tile and sandstone chips (max. 0.30m. deep). The layer consisted of building debris associated with raising the ground surface to take the new floor in the 1870s.

3003: A compact surface (0.02m. deep) similar to 3001, and interpreted as being the working surface during the reconstruction of the surrounding masonry in the 1870s.

3004: A clean red/brown sand with occasional inclusions of sub-circular pebbles and also human bone. No discrete burials were identified within this layer and the whole deposit is interpreted as being re-deposited natural, becoming mixed throughout the life of the church.

Excavation ceased at c0.60m. depth.

F301: This feature appeared to cut 3004 and consisted of three courses of sub-angular cobbles (max. dimension 0.20m.) set in a matrix of red/brown sand. The feature extended to a greater depth but was not excavated. The feature was revealed in section at the northern end of the trench and extended northwards. The southern face is vertical and indicates that the feature runs in a west to east direction along the line of the southern aisle pillars.

F302: This is the southern wall of the church and its offset foundations, appearing to underlie 3004. The absence of an obvious foundation trench can be explained by the disturbed nature of layer 3004.

No Feature numbers were given to the brick structures associated with the 1870s rebuild

#### **Trench 4**

Trench 4 was located external to the southern wall of the nave and was an extension of Trench 3. Its purpose was to take a drainage pipe from the church to join a mains service situated on the public footpath. The trench was excavated by machine and was c0.60m. wide and c0.60m. deep where it met the church wall. The trench had a significant drop to the south in order to compensate for the height difference between the graveyard, through which it was cut, and the public footpath which it was designed to reach. No significant archaeological deposits were observed. Disturbed bones occurred more frequently to the northern end of the trench - closer to the church. A deposit of clean red-brown sand was observed towards the south, which is interpreted as being re-deposited natural, dating to the construction of the current revetment/boundary wall which separates the graveyard from the public footpath.



## **5.0 The finds**

No medieval or earlier contexts were excavated and therefore all finds are residual, generally coming from the layers associated with the restoration of the church in c1870.

### ***Human bones***

All human skeletal remains were carefully collected, boxed and presented to the parish vicar who, after a service of re-consecration, re-buried them in a new grave to the south-west of the nave. The remains amounted to five standard long bone boxes.

### ***Pottery***

No pottery sherds were recorded.

### ***Metalwork***

There were six iron coffin handles, one of which had a mounting plate still attached to it. There were also five ferrous objects e.g. nails etc.

One fragment of sheet lead was also recovered which may have been part of a lead-lined coffin.

### ***Window glass***

Four fragments of green-tinted window glass were recovered. These are very thin and appear to date to the early post-medieval period.

### ***Floor tile***

Four fragments of floor tile were excavated

- 1 Unglazed and undecorated.
- 2 Green glazed and cut diagonally before firing and glazing. The impressed decoration was too indistinct to define.
- 3 Traces of green/brown glaze, with impression leaving the pattern proud of the tile surface.
- 4 No glaze surviving, but impressed pattern inlaid with off-white clay.

### ***Other***

Five fragments of plain roof tile.

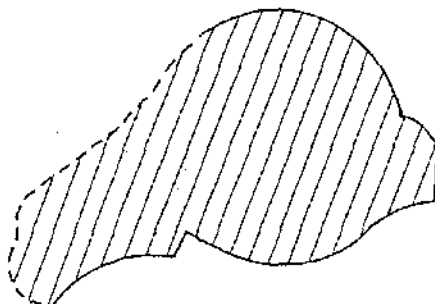
One fragment of pipe bowl of 18th century or later date.

One fragment of plain white plaster.

### *Worked stone*

Four fragments of red sandstone showing chisel marks.

Three fragments of red sandstone with white limewash adhering. These have been carved and once formed part of a door or window drip-mould, late medieval in date. The fragment illustrated below is 0.11m in length.



All the finds have been boxed and will be returned to the parish council along with the rest of the site archive.

### **6.0 Discussion**

Very little information was obtained about the architectural history of the church of St Andrew from these trenches and fortunately no undisturbed graves had to be excavated.

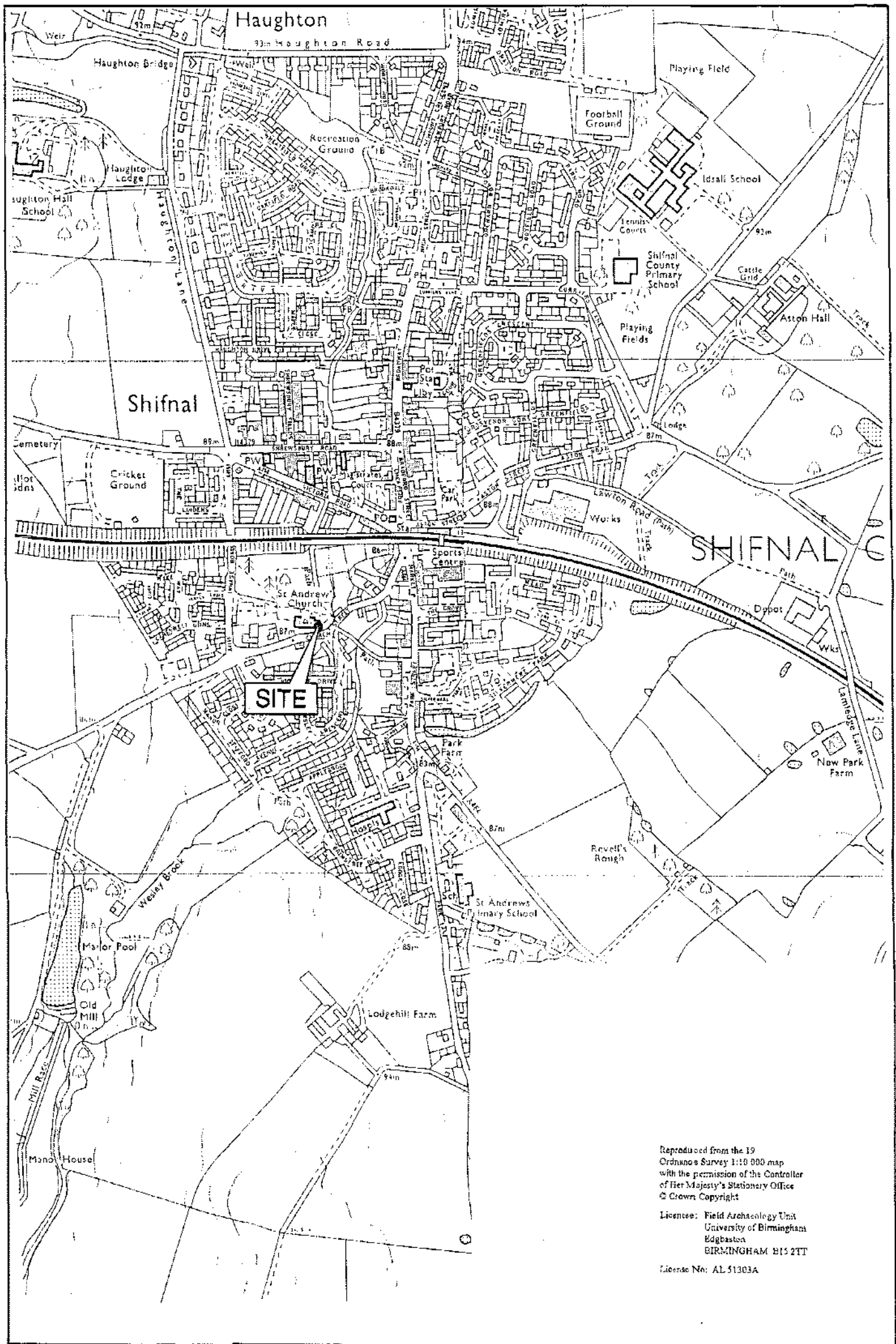
The principal features worthy of note were the cobble raft foundations which ran from west to east along the line of the aisle pillars. These certainly pre-date the Victorian restoration, but without proper excavation, and the recovery of datable material associated with them, it would be difficult to ascribe a particular date to them. Certainly this type of unmortared cobble foundation was being used in the early medieval period and it is unlikely to have been used in the later medieval period when mortared foundations would be expected. It seems possible that these features date to the Romanesque period of construction, architectural elements of which survive within the standing fabric of the church (see Appendix).

### **7.0 Acknowledgements**

The archaeological intervention at St. Andrew's Church was funded by the Parochial Church Council and carried out by S.J.Linnane and R.Krakowicz for Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. The work was assisted by the provision of plans from Derek Phillips (the architect) and by the contractors (H.James Builders (Wolverhampton) Ltd.). The illustrations were drawn by J.Halsted. Many thanks to R.Meeson for permission to reproduce his detailed report on St. Andrew's Church.

## **8.0 References**

Pevsner N. The buildings of England: Shropshire (Harmondsworth 1958)  
and see Appendix.



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Fig. 1

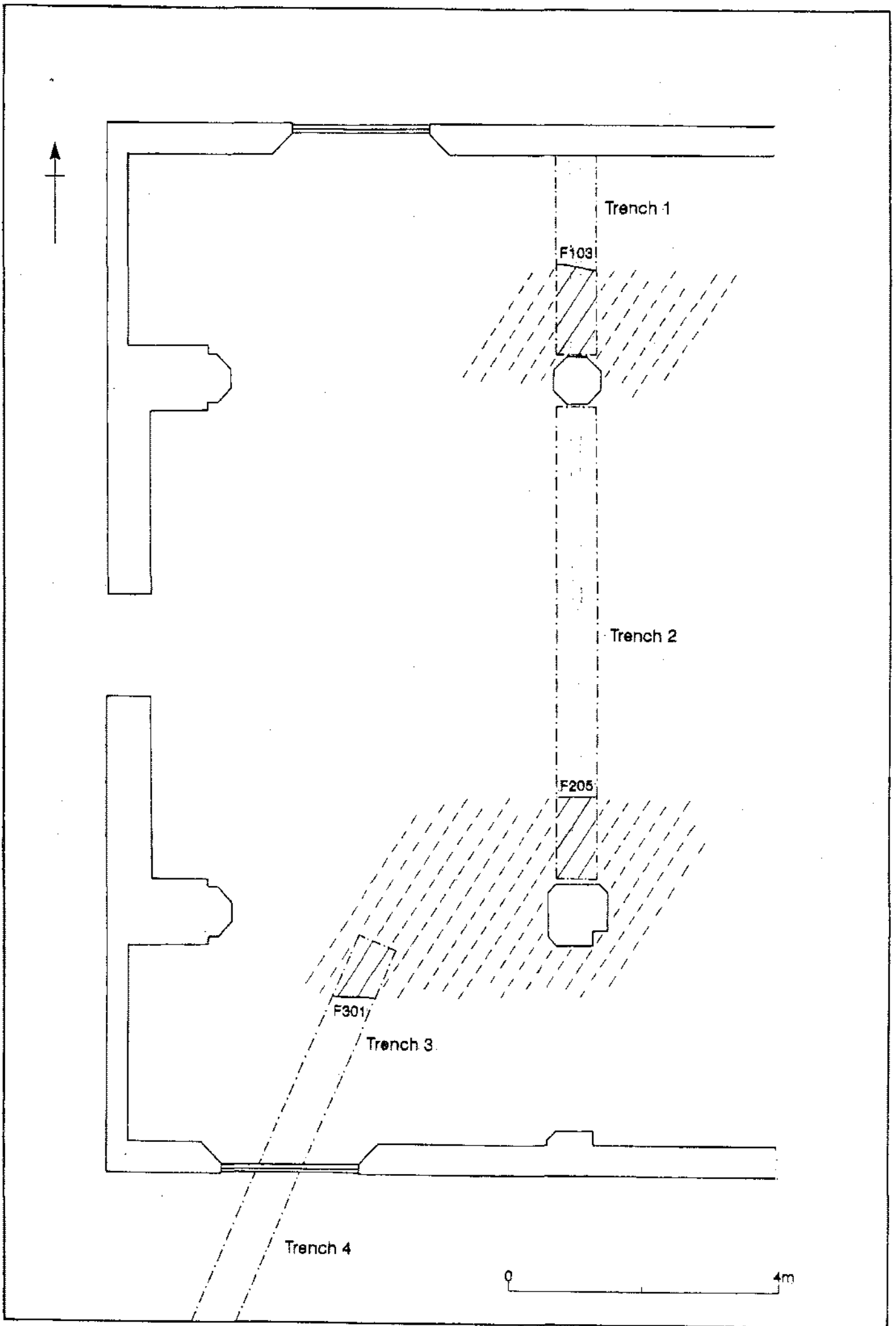


Fig.2

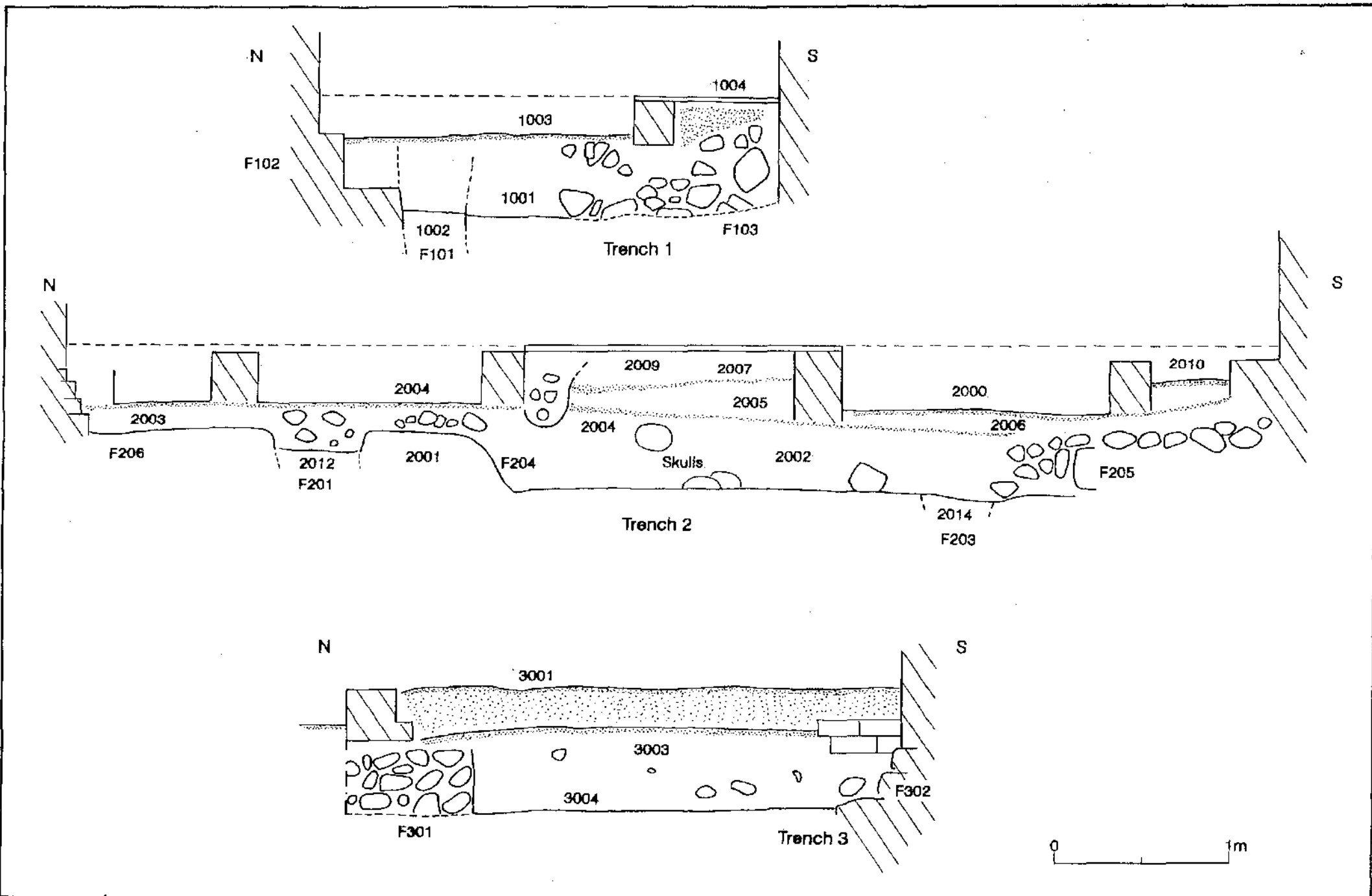


Fig.3

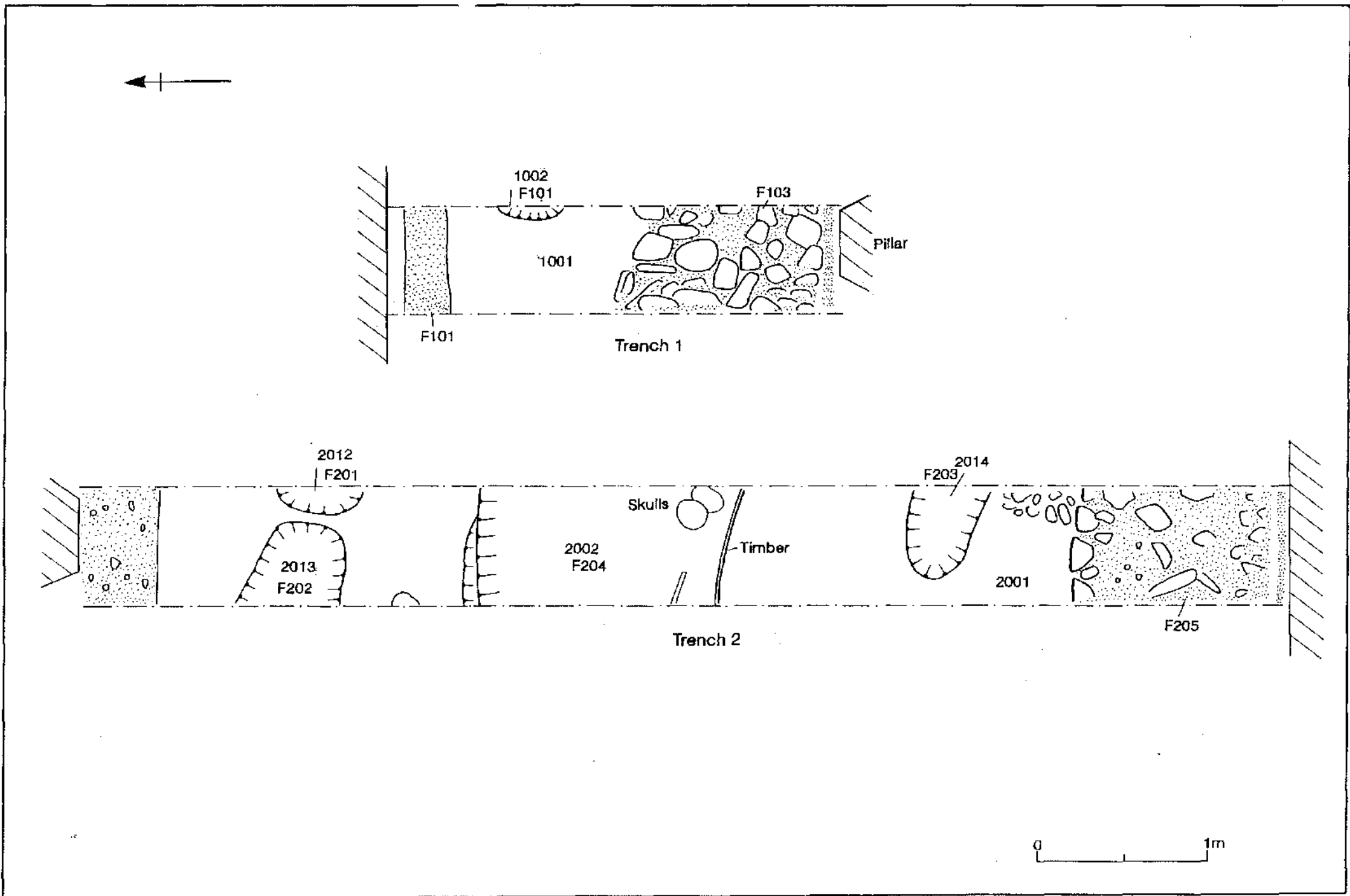


Fig. 4

**SAINT ANDREW'S CHURCH, SHIFNAL**  
**The archaeological implications of proposed alterations**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report arises out of the need for the Parochial Church Council to make adequate provision for the conservation or recording of archaeological interests that might be affected by proposed works at St. Andrew's Church, Shifnal. In the light of a brief site assessment the alternative options are discussed and recommendations are made regarding potential conservation measures and archaeological recording.

**2. The location of the site**

- 2.1 The church is situated on the north side of Church Street, Shifnal (Shropshire), at National Grid Reference SJ74700748.

**3. The proposed works**

- 3.1 The PCC propose to form a meeting room, kitchen and toilet at the west end of the nave and aisles. The scheme would include a new screen to section off the west bay of the nave, with a suspended floor above. The drawing no. 701/1 by the architect (Mr. D.L.S. Phillips) proposes alterations to the existing timber floor. As amended on a copy supplied to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, the same drawing indicates a trench foundation for the proposed new screen across the nave and a trench excavation across the west bay of the south aisle, continuing externally across the churchyard. Drainage works include the connection of the proposed toilet to the main sewer in the road.

**4. Circumstances leading to this report**

- 4.1 During a visit by members of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) to St. Andrew's Church on 3rd. July 1997 to review proposals for the re-ordering of the west end of the nave and aisles the archaeological implications of the scheme were considered. The PCC was asked to advise the DAC of the extent of any necessary excavations inside and outside the building. In the event that archaeological remains became evident it might be necessary to provide for a 'stopping brief' or other archaeological measures to be included in the works. The Archaeological Adviser was asked if some assessment could be made with a view to clarifying the situation and reporting both to the PCC and the DAC. Accordingly, a preliminary site assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposed works was undertaken on Monday 15th September, leading to the production of this report.



## 5. Archaeological assessment

### *Historical/topographical context*

- 5.1 Shifnal parish apparently once coincided with at least two manors, one of them abandoned in the fourteenth century, the other developing as a planned town.<sup>1</sup> However, the placename evidence suggests the possibility that two settlements within the medieval parish were both of early origin. *Scuffenhalch* was referred to in a forged charter dated 664, and in a different form in 665.<sup>2</sup> *Iddeshale* was referred to in a charter in 836.<sup>3</sup> The Anglo-Saxon *parochium* of Shifnal included Kemberton, Ryton, Sheriffhales and Dawley.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, at least 69 households were recorded under Shifnal in 1086 (Domesday Book), but an uncertain proportion of these were probably in surrounding settlements. That the church of St. Andrew probably served a number of communities beyond the later limits of its reduced parish gives circumstantial support to the notion that it stands on the site of an Anglo-Saxon *minster*. Michael Franklin defined a *minster* as 'a church originally, or vestigially, with pastoral responsibilities for an area larger than a single village', but further to this, it was probably also *collegiate*. That is to say, it was served by an unknown number of priests who lived communally.<sup>5</sup> The extent of the medieval churchyard is unknown; nevertheless, it has been suggested that it occupied part of the precinct of a Saxon minster and that St. Andrews is on the site of an 11th-century or earlier church.<sup>6</sup>
- 5.2 The church and the nearby site of a medieval moated house (now beneath a modern housing development) stand apart from Shifnal's main planned medieval street. Possibly the sites of the church and manor reflect the main focus of one of the two principal settlements prior to the establishment of the planned street to the north.

### *The standing structure, with special reference to the west end of the nave*

- 5.3 There is no recent detailed archaeological assessment of the fabric of St. Andrew's

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<sup>1</sup> T. Rowley *The Shropshire landscape* (London 1972), 176 and 179 - 181.

<sup>2</sup> E. Ekwall *The concise Oxford dictionary of English Placenames* (4th edn, Oxford, 1960), 417, quoting Birch (ed.) *Cartularium saxonicum* (London 1885-93), 22, 675 and The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>3</sup> Ekwall op cit, 262, quoting Birch 416.

<sup>4</sup> D.H.S. Cranage *The churches of Shropshire I* (Wellington 1901), 27.

<sup>5</sup> M.J. Franklin 'The identification of minsters in the midlands', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 7 (1984), 69. Also see S. Foot 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a review of terminology' in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.) *Pastoral Care before the parish* (Leicester, 1992), 212 - 225.

<sup>6</sup> Shropshire County Sites and Monuments Record PRNo. 5342.

Church. Published accounts include the *Listed building description* (reproduced in the Shropshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Primary Record Number 00920), the summary by Pevsner, and a more detailed description by Cranage.<sup>7</sup>

- 5.4 The earliest visible fabric is Romanesque. There are two Norman windows in the north wall of the chancel; part of the crossing and much of the south transept are Norman, and Cranage argued that part of the west wall of the nave was also of that period. A blocked south doorway into the south transept retains its detached shafts with rings decorated by dogtooth ornament which, as Pevsner observed, cannot be before about 1190. A window in the west wall of the same transept shows that the Norman nave had very narrow aisles or none at all. From a Norman arch in the east wall of the south transept Cranage deduced that it once had an apse and Pevsner confirms this on unreferenced evidence from an archaeological excavation.
- 5.5 Whether or not the first Norman nave had aisles is not clear, but a major reconstruction in the thirteenth century provided this western arm with four-bay arcades and narrow north and south aisles. The thirteenth-century south porch is of two storeys, complete with an upper room which projects internally over the aisle. Both the porch and the second bay of the aisle have quadripartite vaults. Pevsner attributes the two-light window lighting the first-floor room above the porch to about 1250 and, like Cranage, suggests that the room was first used to accommodate a priest. However, there are no domestic fittings such as a fireplace or garderobe, so the room was more probably designed to accommodate small parochial, guild or court meetings, for the distribution of dole or legacies, or to house valuables or arms and armour.<sup>8</sup>
- 5.6 Close examination of the masonry on both sides of the west wall suggests that the thirteenth-century north and south walls both had very low eaves, raising the question of how the nave would have been lit. Churches at Gnosall, Stafford, Brewood and Lichfield had low eaves and, apparently, were originally lit by rows of pointed windows each with independent gable roofs set at right-angles to the nave.<sup>9</sup>
- 5.7 The crossing was reconstructed in the thirteenth century, and the nave west window is probably of c. 1275 or later. In the fourteenth century the chancel was extended to the east and a chapel was built on its south side, replacing the former transeptal apse. (The Early English sedilia in the south chapel was probably resited there when the chancel south arcade was broken through the former south wall). Much of the north transept was rebuilt in Perpendicular style, as were the two eastern bays of the nave south aisle.

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<sup>7</sup> D.H.S.Cranage op cit and N.Pevsner *The buildings of England: Shropshire* (Harmondsworth 1958), 243-245.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the use of rooms over porches see S.Friar *A companion to the English Parish Church* (Stroud 1996), 356-7.

<sup>9</sup> R.A.Meeson 'Aisle lighting in thirteenth-century Staffordshire' *Church Archaeology* I (1997), 45.

- *An assessment of the archaeological deposits beneath the floor of the west bay of the nave*

- 5.8 As part of the investigations carried out on the instructions of the architect, two inspection holes had been cut through the suspended wooden floor, one on each side of the central aisle in the west bay of the nave. Working to a commission from the PCC, the opportunity was taken to investigate the buried floor deposits made accessible beneath these two holes, the locations of which are shown at positions A and B on figure 1.

Trial hole A (figure 1)

- 5.9 Trial hole A had been cut through the floor in the space between two pews. The east-west softwood floor-boards were laid across north-south timber joists of 0.14 x 0.08m section which were themselves supported by east-west timber bearers of 0.09 x 0.07m section on red brick foundation walls. These east-west brick foundations stood to a height of approximately 0.2m, with a distance of 1.48m between the two that were visible through hole A.
- 5.10 The visible ground horizon was 0.38m beneath the top face of the floor-boards (1 and 2 on figure 1); this was the top of an 0.02 - 0.05m layer of dust, friable brown sand, white lime-based plaster or mortar with animal hair inclusions, small fragments of sandstone and wood. The layer 1 / 2 sealed 3 and 4. Context 4 - a red / brown soft sandy deposit, overlay 3 and abutted the face of the brick foundation wall. The gritty brown sandy layer 3 had a compacted surface approximately 0.40m below the top face of the floorboards. It contained small stone fragments (up to 0.03m diameter), plaster, lime and charcoal. Three small-finds were recovered from a small sondage cut through this layer. Sf 1 and Sf 2 were broken portions of medieval encaustic tiles, both badly eroded. Sf 3 was a copper/bronze costume pin of circular cross-section with a small spherical head, 43mm long and just under 1mm diameter. Context 3 overlay context 5, which was a very soft friable fine sandy light brown material containing lime fragments, small pebbles and broken sandstone fragments. A short length of disarticulated human rib bone was found in this layer. Although the two cuts between them were not distinguishable, 5 is interpreted as the fill of three separate negative features cut at different times through 6. A very small post-medieval potsherd was found in 5; it had a buff/cream hard, fine-textured paste, the inner face with a clear glaze, the outer with a decorative circular stamped disc decoration and a deep blue glaze. Context 6 was a hard red/brown deposit with approximately 5% small rounded pebbles of up to 0.02m diameter, provisionally interpreted as undisturbed 'natural'. The top of 6 was 0.49m below the floorboards.
- 5.11 Context 5 was excavated by trowel to a depth of 0.68m below the floorboards, exposing three faces cut through 6. Fragments of thin wooden planking on the north side of the sondage through context 5 were probably part of a decayed coffin at only 0.68m below the floorboards. One disarticulated human rib fragment was recovered from 5, east of the cut through 6. This fragment was 92mm long; having a perimeter measurement of only 0.23mm, it probably belonged to a juvenile.

### Trial hole B

- 5.12 The surface visible through the inspection hole B was that of a layer of broken plaster or mortar fragments 0.40 - 0.42m beneath the top face of the floorboards. Removal of a small area of this deposit exposed another horizon 0.45m below the suspended floor. This was generally similar to context 3 (above), but with a higher proportion of sandstone rubble fragments (up to 60%). This deposit was not removed.

### Discussion

- 5.13 A full archaeological evaluation would require formal consent, so the level of disturbance during this preliminary site assessment was kept to the minimum necessary to form some idea of the likely implications of the proposed works. The conclusions set out below are not based upon a level of investigation which could be properly described as a site evaluation as defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Nevertheless, the exercise has provided some indication of the presence, fragility and vulnerability of the archaeological deposits buried beneath the suspended floor in the west bay of the nave.
- 5.14 At both 'A' and 'B' the uppermost layer contained or comprised a lime-based plaster or mortar. One fragment was identified with what might be a colour-coated or painted surface, but apart from this it was not established whether this deposit was a wall-plaster or a screed on which floor-tiles had once been laid. (No obvious evidence could be seen to suggest that the nave walls had been hacked or chiselled to provide a key for wall plaster). Nevertheless it is clear that even this uppermost deposit might have archaeological potential, given access to a large sample area. On the available information, context 3 below the inspection hole A and the similar layer below B are post-medieval, but they are very thin and apparently they seal a number of earlier negative features, provisionally interpreted as graves. The presence of coffin fragments at only 0.68m below the suspended floor could imply that there are shallow human interments beneath the west bay of the nave.

## 6. The implications of the proposed works

- 6.1 The deposits described above are relatively shallow in relation to the level of the suspended timber floor. Possibly undisturbed natural sand has been recorded at only 0.49m below the suspended floor, cut by a number of features that are sealed by a post-medieval deposit at only 0.40m.
- 6.2 A brief inspection has served to confirm the suggested phases of construction of the visible standing fabric, including possibly Norman and Early English work in the west wall and the nave arcades. Whether or not the Norman nave was fully aisled is not clear from the visible fabric. If the Norman nave was first built without aisles the foundations of the north and south walls may survive beneath the thirteenth-century arcades. The proposed works include the excavation of a north-south foundation trench to a depth of 0.90m on the line of the new screen across the nave; such work would expose and might potentially disturb the junction between the feet of two late thirteenth-century piers and the

underlying earlier masonry and remove potentially sensitive deposits across the nave. As proposed, the excavation of a trench to carry services associated with the disabled WC and the kitchen (depth not specified on drawing), may disturb significant deposits in the south aisle and on the line of the putative Norman south wall.

- 6.3 The relationship between the present church and its possible Anglo-Saxon predecessor or any former buildings associated with the *minster* is not known. In view of the apparent vulnerability and fragility of the archaeology beneath the west end of the nave any excavations, however shallow, might disturb such early potential survivals.

## 7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The primary conservation objective should be to retain archaeological deposits in situ and undisturbed by contractors carrying out works in connection with the proposed meeting room, disabled access toilet and kitchen. Long-term conservation of the archaeological deposits is to be preferred to excavation and recording in advance of or during the course of works.
- 7.2 Areas where disturbance of the archaeological deposits cannot be avoided should be kept to the absolute minimum. An appropriate archaeological response should be specified and agreed prior to the commencement of works to ensure that an adequate record is made of areas where disturbance cannot be avoided.

### *The floors*

- 7.3 There are three potential options for the floor in the west bay:
- i. The original, non-preferred proposal was to introduce a concrete floor into the west bay of the church. This remains feasible from an archaeological standpoint provided that the existing surface below the suspended floor can be retained and protected by not less than 150mm of sand or other suitably soft material. Such a make-up layer would have two main functions. Firstly, it would separate, define and conserve the existing levels in situ beneath the new floor; secondly, if at any time in the future the concrete floor is broken up for removal, the archaeological deposits will be protected from the impact of such works.
  - ii. The revised drawing No. 701/1 specifies the lowering of the existing timber floor. This is feasible provided that it can be achieved without disturbance to the present buried floor levels which contain archaeological deposits. The work would need to be carried out without excavating the buried floor deposits or causing unnecessary disturbance to them. It would be essential to calculate whether or not this would be achievable, leaving a sufficient gap between the lowered floor and the underlying deposits to provide for adequate ventilation.
  - iii. Should it prove that there would be insufficient space for ventilation beneath a new suspended floor at a reduced level, an alternative to lowering the floors where

the pews now stand would be to raise the nave aisle and aisle floors to a consistent level across the west bay of the church, but at a sufficient consistent level to provide for adequate ventilation throughout.

- 7.4 Option ii would be the preferred solution from an archaeological standpoint provided that there would be sufficient ventilation under the reduced areas of the floor. Any option which would result in large areas of the buried archaeological deposits being disturbed should be avoided for two principal reasons:
- a. the preferred objective of conserving the remains in situ would be compromised
  - b. the option of archaeologically excavating, recording and publishing the entire west bay prior to the commencement of works as an alternative to conservation would be expensive.

*The foundation and service trenches inside the church*

- a. The screen across the nave

7.5 Whereas the majority of the archaeological deposits in the west bay of the church might be retained undisturbed beneath a new or adapted floor, the proposed foundation trench, with a width of up to 1m and a depth of up to 0.9m, would be likely to disturb sensitive archaeological deposits. From an archaeological standpoint it would be preferable to avoid disturbing these deposits by designing a structurally adequate foundation for the proposed screen which would not necessitate the excavation of a deep trench across the nave. If, on structural grounds, the proposed trench foundation is unavoidable, it should be excavated only under archaeological supervision, and there would be two ways of doing this:

- i. The preferred option would be to have the trench excavated and recorded by appropriately qualified archaeological sub-contractors prior to the commencement of the main contract.
- ii. The non-preferred but slightly cheaper alternative option would be a 'stopping brief', the brief and schedule for which should be agreed prior to the commencement of works. A 'stopping brief' would allow for the archaeologist on the site to call a temporary halt to the excavation of the trench by the main contractor to enable any deposits of archaeological interest that are exposed to be adequately recorded. The main contractor would have to be notified of this possibility and allow for it in any submitted tender.

7.6 Option i would minimise any risk of unrecorded loss of archaeologically valuable information but might cost a little more than option 2. On the other hand, the completion of archaeological recording within the church prior to the commencement of the main contract would eliminate any potential for delays to the main contractor.

b. . The trench in the south aisle

- 7.7 As presently designed, an east-west length of trench of unspecified depth beneath the proposed disabled w.c. might potentially remove a 1.5m length of the outer face of any potentially surviving Norman nave wall foundation (unless it transpires that the nave was aisled at the outset). A realignment of the trench might minimise the potential damage.
- 7.8 The proposed service trench should be excavated in advance of the main contract by appropriately-qualified archaeologists. As a non-preferred option it would be possible to arrange for a 'stopping brief' on the same terms as those described above.

*The trench across the churchyard to the sewer*

- 7.9 The excavation of this trench by the main contractor should be subject to an archaeological watching brief. This is unlikely to cause delay to the main contractor.

Figure 1

St. Andrew's Church  
Shifnal

Plan of west end of nave  
and south aisle at c. 1:100

A, B location of trial holes

c proposed trench from wc

d proposed trench for screen

Plans of trench A at c. 1:20

Contexts 1 - 6

