

**St Chad's Church,
Pattingham, Staffordshire**

An archaeological watching brief

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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**St Chad's Church, Pattingham, Staffordshire:
An archaeological watching brief 1999**

by
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1.0 Summary

The report describes the aims, methods and results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken within the Church of St. Chad, Pattingham, Staffordshire. Two foundation trenches were dug by contractors for new partition walls within the vestry area at the east end of the north aisle, as part of a development scheme at the church. Disturbed human remains and the foundations of an earlier building were uncovered.

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken within the Church of St. Chad, Pattingham, Staffordshire (centred on NGR. SO 82019913: Fig.1). Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) were commissioned to undertake the watching brief by Wood Goldstraw & Yorath, who managed the project on behalf of the Parochial Church Council of Pattingham. The watching brief followed on from an archaeological evaluation of land adjoining the church in 1997, carried out by BUFAU in advance of a planned extension of the east gable to the north aisle (BUFAU 1997). That extension and the current modifications to the interior building fabric form part of the same development.

The purpose of the watching brief was to record any archaeological deposits or features exposed during excavation of foundation trenches for two load-bearing partition walls within the vestry area at the east end of the north aisle (Fig.2).

3.0 Methods

Two trenches were hand-excavated by the contractors, one aligned north-south and the second orientated east-west (Fig.2). The former was located across the vestry between the pedestal of a column in the north arcade and the north, external wall. It measured 4.70m long by 0.75m wide and had reached a depth of 0.95m at the southern end before work was halted by the discovery of the human bones. With an archaeologist in attendance, the remainder of the trench was subsequently excavated to a depth of 0.95m. The sides and base of the trench were hand-cleaned in preparation for recording.

In order to prevent further disturbance of the human remains, the decision was taken to form a concrete support beam along the trench, which would rest on the footings of the column pedestal and external wall. This meant that the excavation was already deeper than required. Consequently, there was no necessity to define the full extent of the bone deposition and the trench was recorded in its then-current form.

The second trench, aligned east-west, was sited between the column pedestal mentioned above and a short section of external wall that joined the north aisle to the chancel. It measured 2.82m long by 0.75m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.85m. The sides of the trench were hand-cleaned before being recorded.

Recording was by means of proformas for features and contexts, plus scale-drawn sections and plans where appropriate. These were supported by colour slide photography. All records are held in the archive.

4.0 The site

The historic centre of Pattingham village is centred on the High Street, on either side of the church (VCH 1984, 173). The presence of a priest in the village in the Domesday Survey of 1086 indicates the existence of a church by that date. The unusually-small size of the existing nave of St. Chad's Church (Staffordshire Sites and Monuments Record No. 09285) may reflect the outline of the original 11th-century structure. The earliest surviving datable fabric of the church, in the north arcade of the nave, is of the late 13th-century. The chancel was rebuilt in the 13th-century, and a tower and south aisle were added in the 14th-century. A gallery was added at the eastern end of the nave in 1726, but this was removed in 1746. Sir Gilbert Scott rebuilt the north aisle; the south porch, added a second northern aisle and a northeastern vestry between 1863 and 1866.

5.0 Results

Partition-wall foundation trench with north-south alignment (Figs 3, 4 & 5)

The west-facing section of the trench was cleaned and recorded (Fig.3). The floor of north aisle comprises a layer of tiles laid onto a mortar bed, under which run service pipes, aligned east-west. Beneath the flooring the stratigraphy is variable, consisting of rubble deposits and other make-up layers.

Sealed beneath the mortar bedding in the northern half of the trench is a layer of coarse, red sand, containing rounded pebbles (2000) – no doubt a deposit laid down in preparation for the floor. Underlying this is a make-up layer of red sand (2002), which contains a vein of mortar but in all other respects matches the appearance of the layer above (2000). Beneath the red sand is a deep deposit of dark-brown sandy silt (2003), within which are occasional rounded pebbles, fragments of red sandstone and charcoal flecks. This layer appears to resemble context 1004 encountered in the evaluation trench excavated outside the church in 1997 (BUFAU 1997). Underlying the silt, and forming the base of the foundation trench, is a compact deposit of reddish-brown sandy subsoil (2004), which has a level surface.

Sub-surface layers 2002 and 2003 are cut by a negative feature (F010), possibly a U-shaped pit, the infill of which comprises a heterogeneous mix of red and brown sandy deposits. Randomly distributed throughout the latter are a number of fragments of bone, red sandstone and fired-clay bricks. A human tooth was observed in the fill and several fragments of brick were recovered. The infill also yielded a four-holed,

stamped-metal button that had a coating of black pigment. The face of the button bore the words "BEST MAKE" in negative relief.

Feature F010 was truncated by a later cut (F011). The purpose of feature F 011 was not apparent, but the steepness of its sides and narrow width suggest that it may have been excavated for pipework. However, a continuation of this cut was not evident in the opposing (east-facing) section. It was filled by a heterogeneous deposit (2005), the main component of which was a brown sandy silt. Randomly dispersed throughout this were pockets of red clay and a few fragments of red brick. Occasional fragments of bone, plaster and red sandstone were also noted.

Sealed beneath layer 2002 was the foundation trench (F012) for the external, north wall of the aisle, which cut vertically down through deposit 2003 and into 2004. It was filled by a mix of red and brown sandy soils, containing occasional fragments of red sandstone. No finds were recovered from the infill.

The southern half of the partition-wall foundation trench proved to be of greater archaeological interest. Immediately beneath the aisle flooring lay a deposit of sandy silt admixed with building debris (2006), comprising numerous red sandstone fragments of various sizes, fine particles of mortar/plaster, occasional rounded pebbles and fragments of plaster. This layer of rubble-filled soil overlay sandy-silt deposit 2003, filled the cut of the column pedestal foundation trench (F013), and came down onto the remains of an earlier sandstone structure (F014; Figs. 3 & 4).

Structure F014 comprised a length of red sandstone wall foundation, approximately one metre wide but of unknown depth. It continued down into sandy subsoil 2004, but inspection failed to reveal any indications of a foundation trench cut into the latter. The stones (2008) were roughly shaped and bonded by a reddish-brown, silty clay (2009), possibly a degraded mortar. From the short section of walling revealed, the structure seems to be aligned east-west, running parallel to the columns of the north arcade sited immediately to the south. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that the footing of a column pedestal in the arcade has disturbed the sandstone foundations.

Figure 5 shows the sandstone foundations in plan and also records the location of the human bones exposed during the excavation of the partition-wall trench. The skeletal remains are within the infill (2010) of an east-west aligned shallow cut (F015) into sandy subsoil 2004, but there was no evidence of this cut coming down through the overlying deposit 2003. The few bones exposed were in variable condition, some having degraded to the point of becoming friable. As a consequence, only limited cleaning (in preparation for recording) and identification were possible. An upper portion of a cranium, minus the crown, protruded from the soil and bones from limbs were also partly visible. The evidence suggests that the remains had been disturbed.

Partition-wall foundation trench with east-west alignment (Fig. 6)

The stratigraphy in this trench was similar to that in the north-south aligned trench, as illustrated by the north-facing section (Fig. 6). The floor tiles were laid on a thin bed of mortar, which rested on a levelling layer of cement/mortar containing tiles set flat within the matrix. Beneath these rigid layers was a deposit of building debris admixed with sandy silt (2006, also present in the north-south aligned trench), through

which ran service pipes aligned north-south. Underlying the debris was the deep deposit of dark-brown, sandy silt (2003), which continued down to and beneath the base of the partition-wall foundation trench. No finds of archaeological significance were recovered from any of these layers.

6.0 Discussion

The partition-wall foundation trench aligned east-west yielded no features or deposits of archaeological significance. However, the trench dug across the north aisle revealed two features of interest. Feature F015, cutting into deposit 2004, appears to be the cut for an inhumation that had undergone major disturbance. The overlying deposit (2003) bore no evidence for the cut of a grave associated with the bones. The flat surface of 2004 suggested that it has been levelled for a phase of building work, which disturbed the grave, with layer 2003 representing a make-up deposit.

The second feature of interest is the sandstone wall foundation (F014), the remains of an earlier structure. There was no dating evidence, hence it was not possible to determine whether the wall was associated with the original 11th-century construction or contemporary with fabric in the north arcade that has been dated to the 13th-century. It could relate to neither. However, there was no sign of an accompanying foundation trench cutting the make-up layer 2003, so both the disturbed grave and the wall foundation seem to predate the phase of building work associated with this deposit.

7.0 Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was commissioned by Wood Goldstraw & Yorath. Thanks are due to Mr. Gary Turner for providing site plans and to the on-site contractors for their assistance. The project was managed by Simon Buteux and the fieldwork was carried out by Roy Krakowicz. The figures were prepared by John Halsted.

8.0 References

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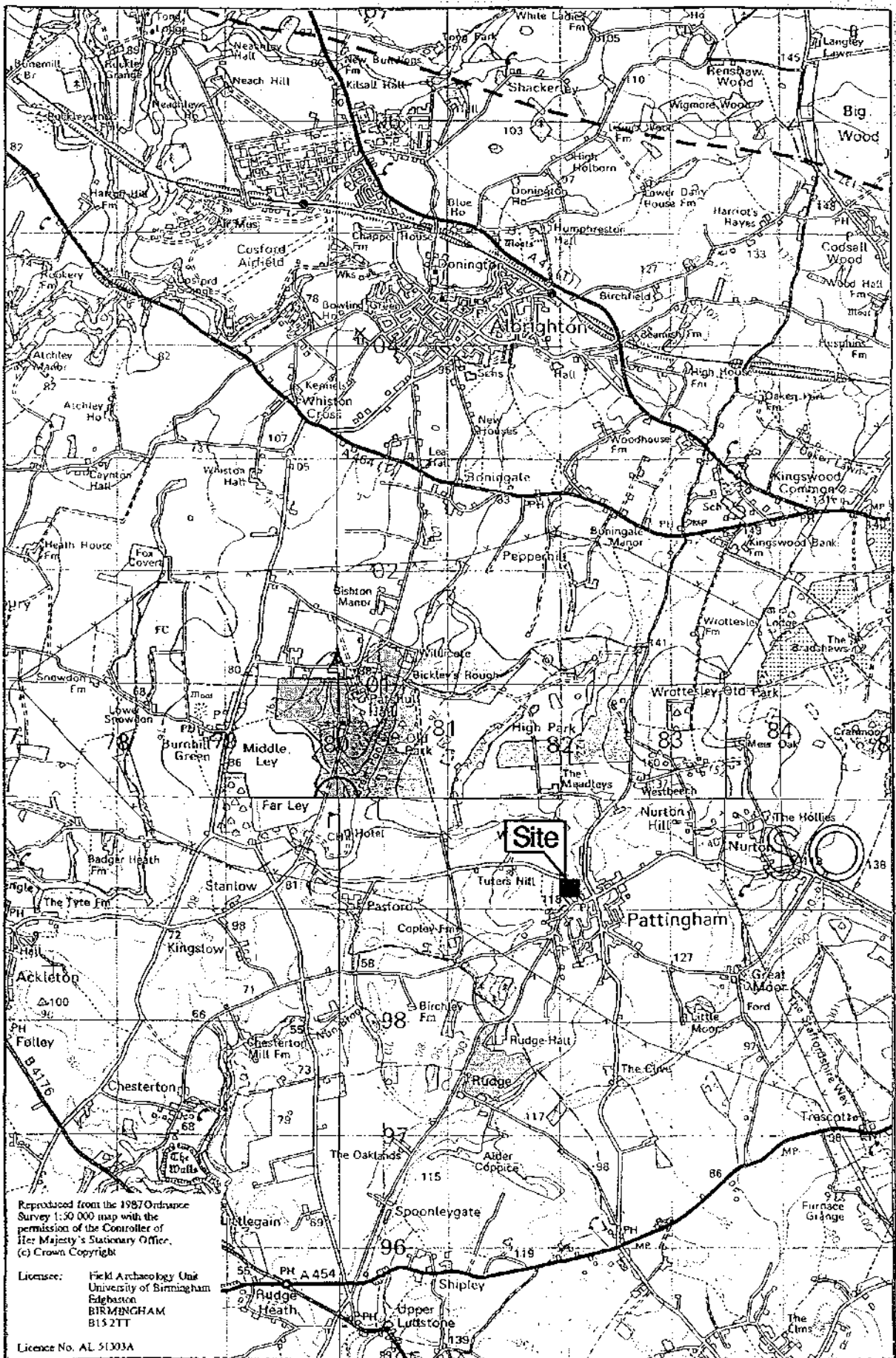
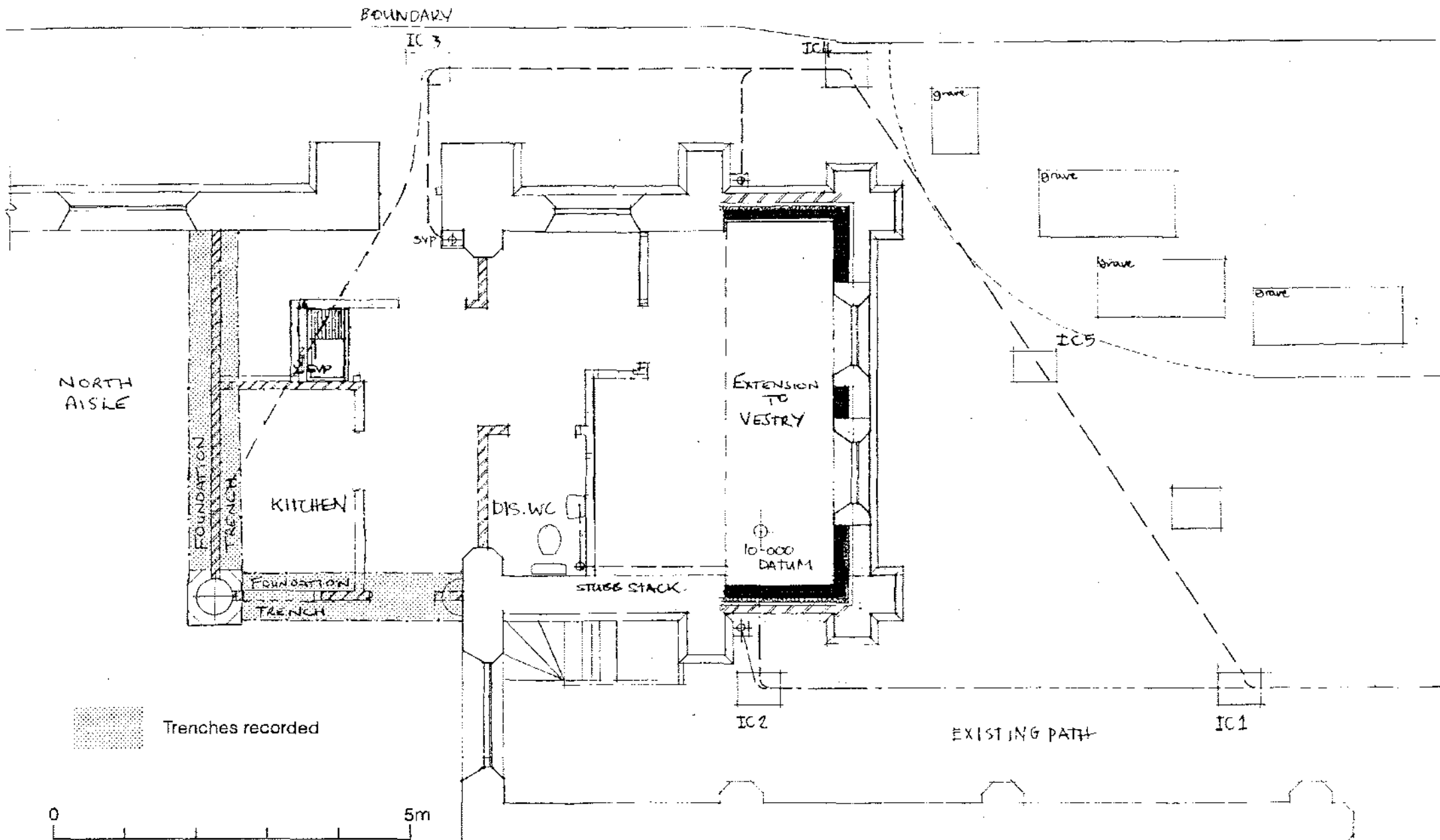
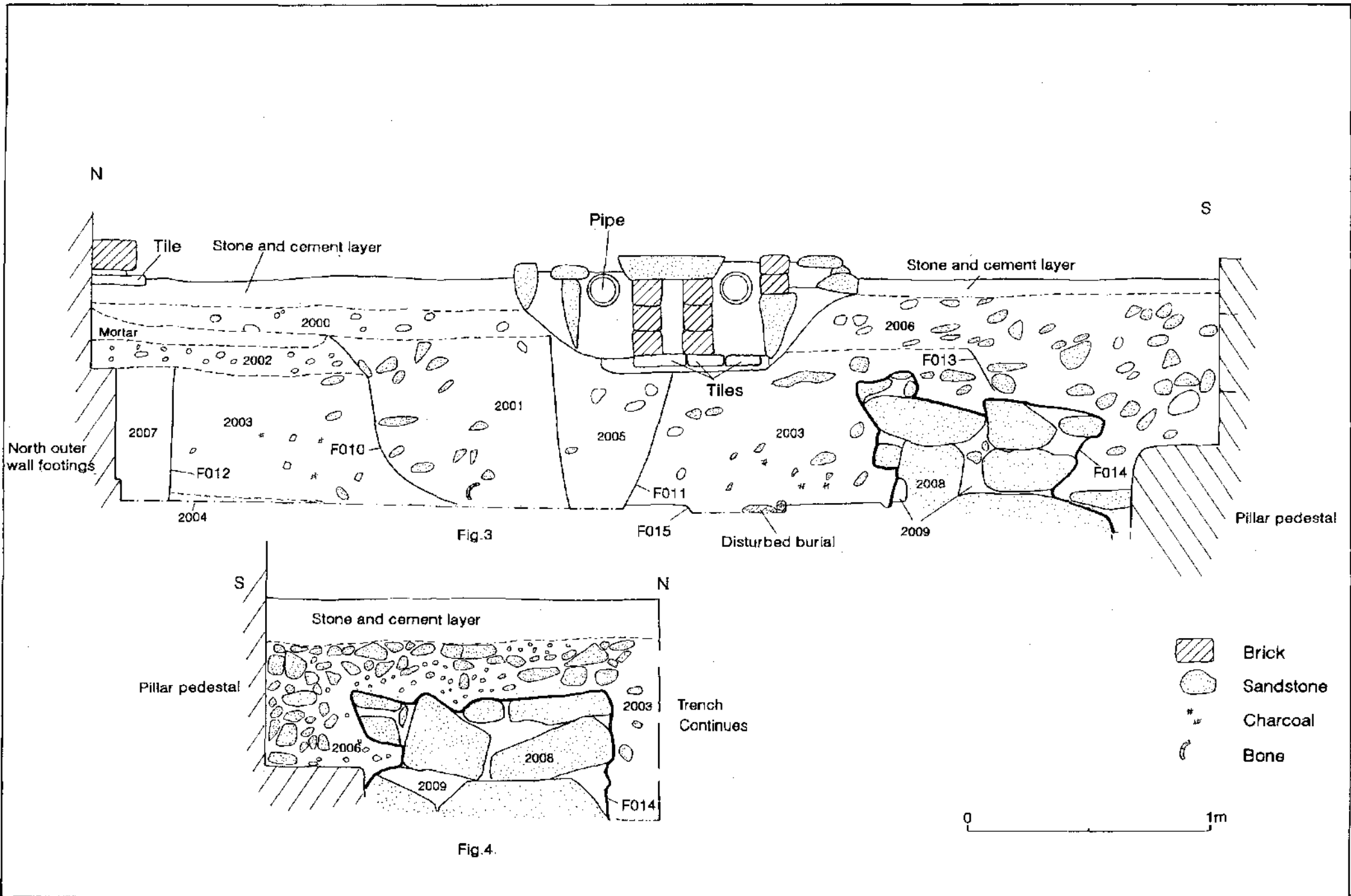


Fig 1



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Fig.2



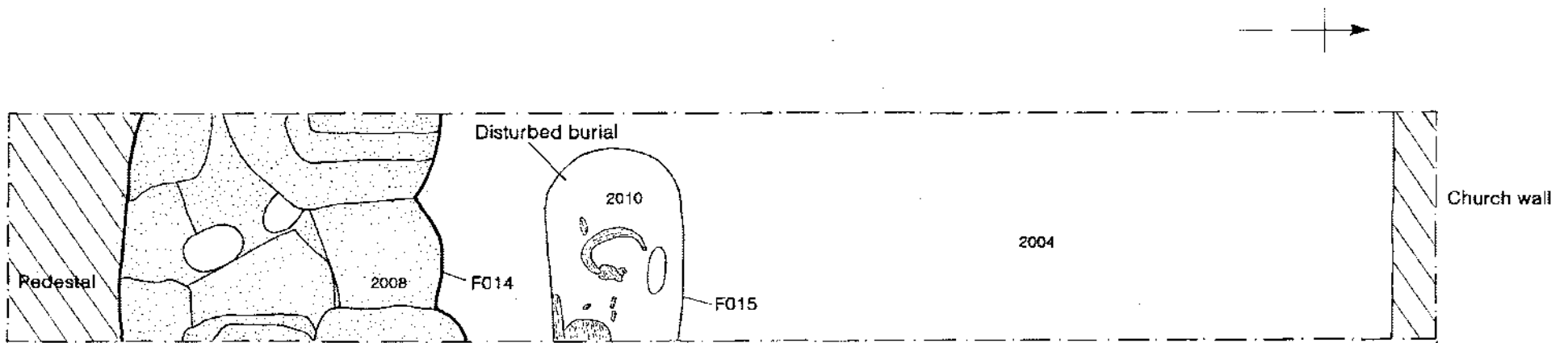


Fig.5

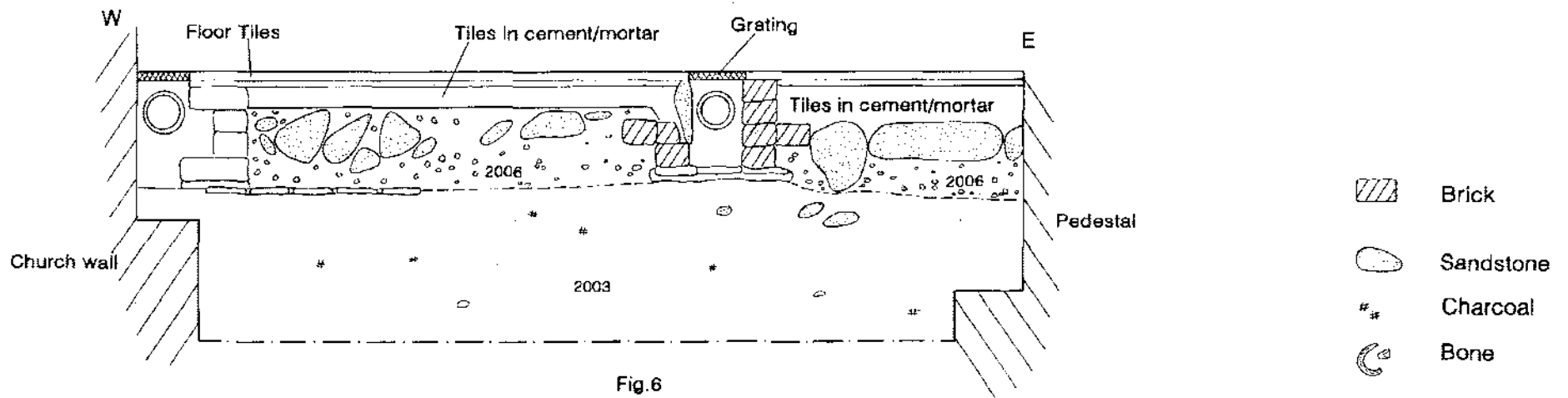


Fig.6

0 1m