

SCWB10



SHOBDON CHURCH, HEREFORDSHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief

for I J Preece & Son Ltd

July 2012

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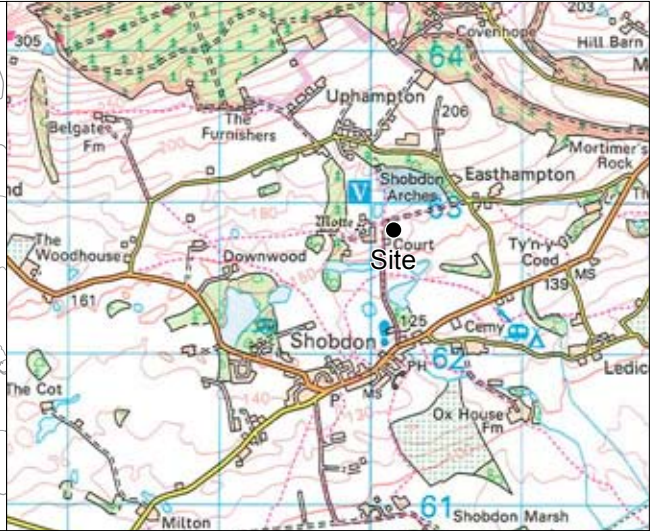
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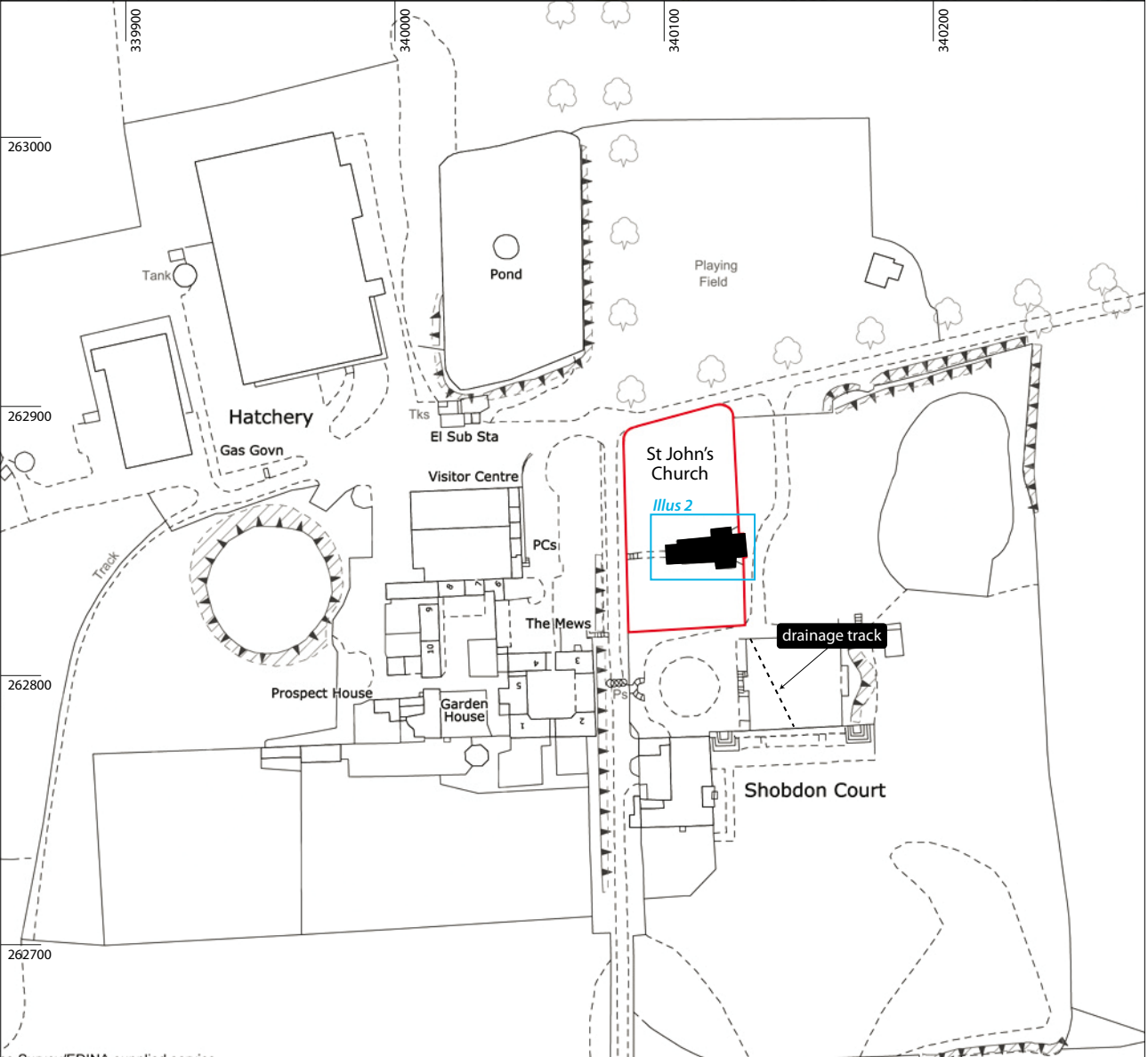


Shobdon
Herefordshire
West Midlands



0 100km

viii



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Scale 1:2,500 @ A4



0 125m

Illus 1

Site location

SHOBDON CHURCH, HEREFORDSHIRE

Archaeological watching brief

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the excavation of new drainage at Shobdon Church, Herefordshire. The drains ran along the northern, southern and eastern sides of the church before crossing the position of the former Shobdon Court to a soakaway.

A single burial, of a child, was encountered at the eastern end of the church. Also at the eastern end of the church was a brick structure, possibly a vault. Human bones in the vicinity suggested that this structure may have cut a further burial.

A stone drain, thought to have formed part of the original drainage system installed at the time of the construction of the church in the 18th century ran along the length of the north transept.

Walls and cellarage, filled with building rubble and associated with Shobdon Court were seen on the southern part of the site.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by I J Preece & Sons to undertake a watching brief at Shobdon Church, Herefordshire during insertion of a new drainage system. The work was associated with a programme of renovation and repair of the church. Shobdon Church is a Grade I Listed Building (1166734).

1.1 Location

The church lies to the northwest of the village of Shobdon, some 29km from Hereford. A walled garden, formerly the position of Shobdon Court manor, lies to the south east of the church. A track runs to the north and to the west of the churchyard.

Underlying geology comprises glacial deposits overlying the Whitcliffe Siltstone Formation.

1.2 Historical and archaeological background

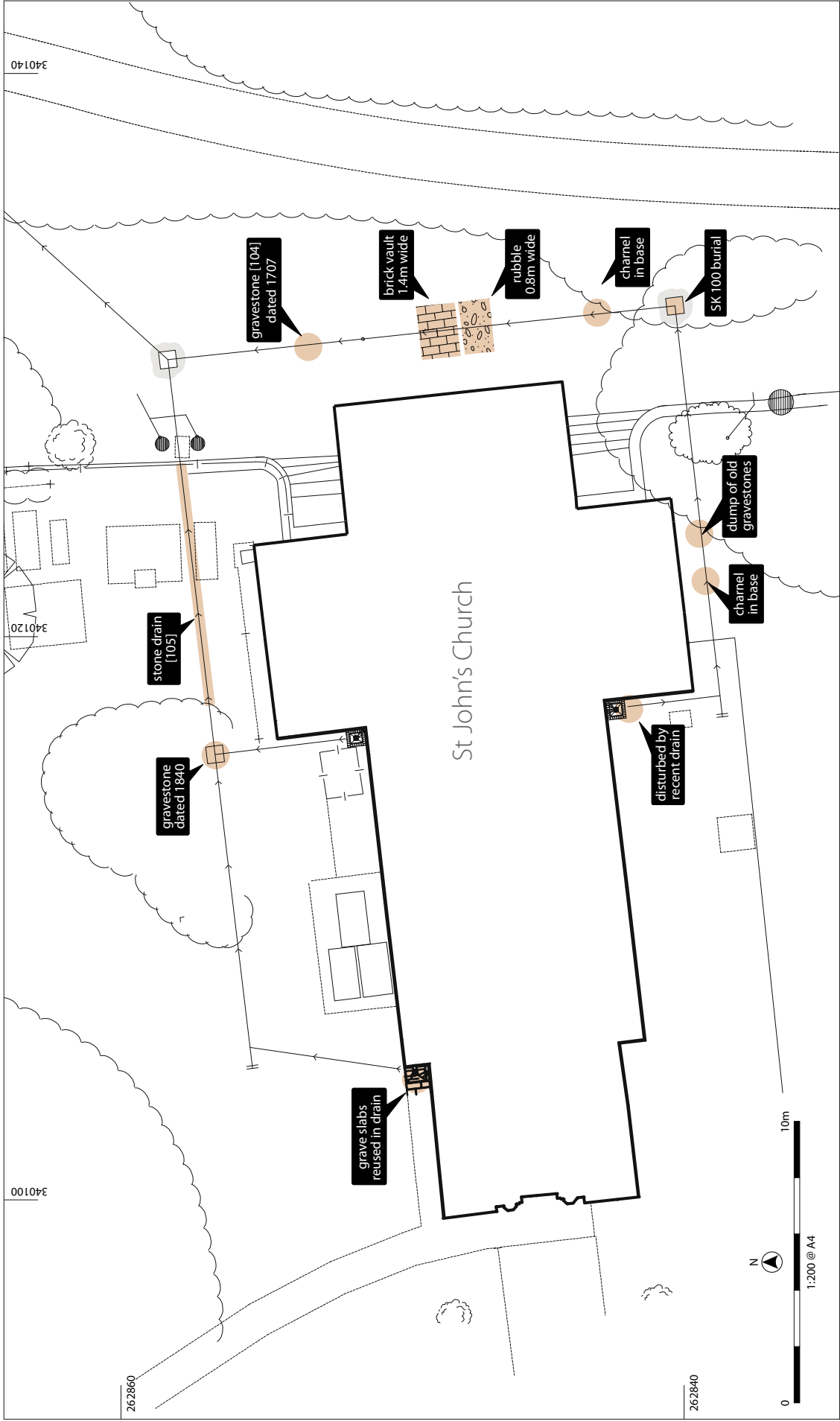
Shobdon is mentioned in the Domesday Book as having been in the possession of Queen Edith. Together with 20 villagers and smallholders it had a riding man and a smith. It was valued at £6 in the time of King Edward and £7 at the time of the Domesday survey.

The original church at Shobdon was an Anglo-Saxon structure. A priory was founded by Oliver de Merlimond in the 12th century when the Saxon church was replaced by a stone building of the Herefordshire school.

Shobdon Court was purchased by Sir James Bateman, a financier, in 1705. He replaced the Jacobean mansion with a new house built of red brick with stone dressing and established extensive gardens. The house was restored in the 19th century.

The existing church was constructed by Richard Bateman of Shobdon court in 1756. Bateman was a friend of Horace Walpole and the church was built in the Strawberry Hill Gothic style. The chancel arch and doorways of the Romanesque church were erected as a folly on a hill to the north of the church.

Following the deaths of the last male members of the Bateman family the contents of Shobdon Court were sold in July 1932, with the estate then sold to George Malcolm Kent of Pudleston Court. After the fittings had been sold he had the house demolished in October 1933 (Pfuell, 1994 p.114). The stable building (formerly linked to the Court by a bridge) was converted to residential use, and the former service wing is now a house.



Illus 2

Drainage excavations adjacent to the church

2. METHOD

Groundworks were carried out between 23 April and 6 June 2012. Excavation took place using a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket, under archaeological supervision.

All recording followed standard archaeological guidelines as set out by the Institute for Archaeologists. Contexts were given unique numbers and recording was undertaken on *pro forma* record cards that conform to accepted archaeological norms.

Photographs were taken throughout using 35mm monochrome and colour slide film, while digital photographs were taken on a 7.2mp camera for illustrative purposes. Registers were kept for context records, photographs, and drawings.

Excavation was carried out by the contractors throughout, using a machine with a toothless bucket. An archaeologist was present throughout the excavations. The only skeleton encountered below the level required for drainage and following recording was left *in situ*. Disarticulated human remains were reinterred on the site.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Area 1 – Shobdon Court

The trench ran in a north-westerly direction from a new manhole, towards the church.

An excavation to establish the position of an existing soakaway at the south-eastern end of the trench was dug to a depth of 3m, after which the trench was dug to a depth of c1.3m. All parts of the trench were dug into a thick layer of brick rubble with architectural fragments and mortar. The deposits comprised rubble from the demolition of the Court used to fill the basements before excess was removed from the site, which had then been levelled. A number of walls with plaster facing were assumed to have been part of the basement area of the house.

Some 15.3m from the new inspection chamber was a stone wall on a north-west/south-east alignment. The northern wall of Shobdon court was encountered some 2m beyond the hedge on the northern side of the garden.



3

Illus 3

Drainage run leading from the south side of Shobdon Court manor



Illus 4

Backfilled cellars of Shobdon Court manor excavated in search of drainage connection

3.2 Area 2 – East side of church

Work was observed from the manhole at the south-eastern corner of the church.

4

A burial of a subadult was present in the base of the manhole at a depth of some 1.1m beneath the existing surface [100]. The upper part of the body only was present with the lower limbs extending into the section. The skeleton lay beneath the required depth for the drainage and following recording the skeleton was protected with sand before installation of the manhole.

Some 1.2m from the south-eastern corner of the trench a brick structure [103] was present. This consisted of two walls some 1.4m



Illus 5

Architectural fragment from manor house

apart. They appeared to curve to a vaulted roof, but this part of the structure was previously damaged. On its northern side a quantity of disarticulated human bone was present suggesting that a previous burial may have been damaged during its insertion. A grave stone dated 1707 [104] was observed within the drainage track to the north of this vault at a depth of 0.6m.

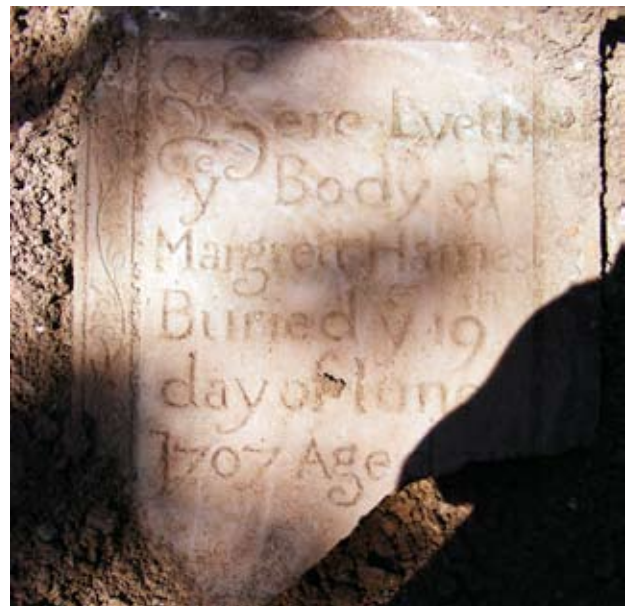
3.3 Area 3 – North side of church

No archaeological features were present at the northeastern corner of the church; as the entire area had been disturbed by previous drain runs. The drain ran between the graves of the Bateman Hanbury family. At this point a stone culvert [105] with a carved base, was seen. It ran to the west along the full length of the north transept of the church. On its southern side a number of large slate slabs - possibly reused grave stones - appeared to run beneath the foundations of the church, although it was not possible to confirm that this was the case. It is thought that the slabs may have provided a damp course for this part of the church.

A grave slab dating to the 1840s, previously buried beneath topsoil and turf was seen at this point. It was lifted and retained to be replaced once drainage work was complete

Further to the west no archaeological features were present in the trench.

No archaeological features were observed beyond this point although a number of fragments of broken gravestone were seen throughout and some grave slabs had been reused in the construction of an existing drain adjacent to the church.



Illus 6

Gravestone [104]



Illus 7

Stone drain [105]

3.4 Area 4 – South side of church

No archaeological remains were observed within the drainage runs along the southern side of the church, save for charnel and a dump of old gravestones.

4. DISCUSSION

It is well established from the architectural evidence that the 'rebuilding' of Shobdon church in the 1750s removed and altered far more of the earlier church than it retained – the only significant part of the church which predates this event is the 14th century west tower; the nave, transepts and chancel are all 18th century. The current watching brief has demonstrated that the impact of the rebuilding upon the surrounding church yard was probably also significant and resulted in some earlier grave stones being buried or otherwise removed. Presumably an element of landscaping and other ground work was required in order to accommodate the new structure. This may have included construction of the stone drain [105], which appears to have been partially built from reused grave stones.

Burials do not appear to occur at any great density within the depth limits reached by the drainage works, but it is not known whether this is due to disturbance from the 18th century construction works and therefore local to the immediate vicinity of the church, or whether it reflects the pattern of burial across the whole churchyard.

Archaeological monitoring of drainage works over the former site of Shobdon Court has demonstrated that despite the

demolition of this structure in the 1930s, substantial structural remains survive beneath the surface. These are most likely to be cellars that were filled with rubble at the time the building was demolished.

5. REFERENCES

Pevsner, N 1963 *The Buildings of England, Herefordshire*, Penguin.

Pfuell, I 1994 *A History of Shobdon Ivor Pfuell*, London.

Thorn, F & Thorn, C (eds), 1983 *Domesday Herefordshire*, Phillimore.



6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Site registers

Appendix 1.1 Context register

Context	Description	Depth (below surface m)
100	Skeleton	0–1.1m
101	Cut for grave of SK100	–
102	Fill for grave cut 101, with SK100	–
103	Brick vault	0–0.6m
104	Gravestone with visible text	0–0.6m
105	Stone structure with groove in it (possible drain?)	0–0.6m

Appendix 1.2 Photographic register

Photo	C/S	B&W	Digital	Facing	Description
01		1	S		Shot of garden area prior to digging
02		2	S		Shot of garden area prior to digging
03		3	N		Shot of garden area prior to digging
04		4	N		Shot of garden area prior to digging
05		5	NE		Shot of garden area prior to digging
06		6	NE		Shot of garden area prior to digging
07		7	W		Slot/trial hole to ID existing drain
08		8	W		Slot/trial hole to ID existing drain
09		9	E		Slot/trial hole with brickwork/wall
10		10	E		Slot/trial hole with brickwork/wall
11		11	E		Slot/trial hole with brickwork/wall
12		12	E		Slot/trial hole with brickwork/wall
13		13	E		Slot/trial hole with brickwork/wall
14		14	E		Slot/trial hole with brickwork/wall
15		15			Decorated masonry
16		16			Decorated masonry
17		17			Trial hole with brickwork visible
18		18			Trial hole with brickwork visible
19		19			S. edge of garden wall-S. of church
20		20			S. edge of garden wall-S. of church
21		21			S. edge of garden wall-S. of church
22		22			S. edge of garden wall-S. of church
23		23			Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
24		24			Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.

Photo	C/S	B&W	Digital	Facing	Description
25		25			Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
26		26	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
27		27	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
28		28	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
29		29	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
30		30	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
31		31	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
32		32	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
33		33	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
34		34	E		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
35		35	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
36		36	S		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
37		37	W		Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
38		38			Trench at S. of garden-rubble and masonry within.
39		39			Continuation of drainage trench
40		40	N		Continuation of drainage trench northwards with rubble in section

Photo	C/S	B&W	Digital	Facing	Description
41			41	N	Wall in section-remains of previous building on site
42			42	N	Wall in section-remains of previous building on site
43			43	N	Wall in section-remains of previous building on site
44			44	N	Wall in section-remains of previous building on site
45			45	S	Trench-mid-ex-general shot of site
46			46		Tiles recovered from drainage trenches
47			47	N	N-S trench with wall in section
48			48	NW	N-S trench with wall in section
49			49	NW	N-S trench with wall in section
50			50	N	Drainage trench in the process of being dug
51			51	N	Brick wall within N-S running trench
52			52	N	Rubble within N-S running trench
53			53	N	Rubble within N-S running trench
54			54	N	Foundation of previous structure on site
55			55	N	Brickwork/wall visible within trench
56			56	NE	SW facing section within trench
57			57	SW	NE facing section with plastered brickwork
58			58	SE	Manhole area number 2 within garden area (S. of church), plastered brickwork diverging northward
59			59		Decorative masonry rubble
60			60		Decorative masonry rubble
61			61		Decorative masonry rubble
62			62		Decorative masonry rubble
63	9	10	63		SK100
64	10	11	64		Edge of brick vault 103
65			65		Edge of brick vault 103
66			66		Edge of brick vault 103
67			67		Large stone (assoc. with brick vault?)
68			68		Edge of brick vault 103
69	11	12	69		Gravestone (104) with visible text
70			70		Edge of brick vault 103
71			71		Trench
72			72		Trench with modern service pipe within
73	12	13	73		Stone drain 105
74			74		Trench between two burial vaults
75			75		Burial vaults with drain 105 visible
76			76		Section of trench
77			77		Stone drain (105) visible within trench
78			78		Stone drain (105) visible within trench

Photo	C/S	B&W	Digital	Facing	Description
79			79		Shot of trench
80			80		Edge of another vault/burial
81			81		Drain (105), vaults and stone slabs (possible burial)
82			82		Drain (105), vaults and stone slabs (possible burial)
83			83		General shot of trench
84			84		Section
85			85		Vault? Covered by stone slabs
86			86		Vault? Covered by stone slabs
87			87		Shot of trench
88			88		General shot of trench location
89			89		Foundation of church
90			91		Shot of trench



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