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## **CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, Stotfold, Beds.**

HN1031

## ***ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT***



# *THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD*

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Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

## CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN Stotfold, Bedfordshire

Project no.: HN1031  
Accession no.: BEDFM 2012.73

### *Archaeological Monitoring Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Stotfold Parochial Church Council*

By

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*The cover photograph shows St Mary's Church, looking south*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by David Hillelson, Robin Densem and Helen Ashworth. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Helen Ashworth, and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to: Helena Dean and Mike Dales, Michael Dales Partnership; David Baker, St Albans DAC; Bob Barnard, Lodge & Son; and the ground crew from E.J. Taylor, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	St Mary's Church, Stotfold, Beds.		
<b>County:</b>	Bedfordshire	<b>District:</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Village/town:</b>	Stotfold	<b>Parish:</b>	Stotfold
<b>Planning reference:</b>	N/A	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 22030 36676
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Stotfold PCC, c/o Michael Dales Partnership, 95 Sharpenhoe Rd, Streatley, Luton, LU3 3PS		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	New kitchen, WC & services	<b>Existing land use:</b>	Church & churchyard
<b>Site status:</b>	Listed Building	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of Diocesan Faculty
<b>Position in planning process:</b>	n/a	<b>Project brief originator:</b>	Diocesan Advisory Committee
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c. 160m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c. 160m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN1031	<b>Museum accession no:</b>	BEDFM 2012.73
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.:</b>	Monitoring	<b>Archive recipient:</b>	Bedford Museum
<b>Start of work</b>	13/11/2012	<b>Finish of work</b>	11/04/2013
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	1132 (church); 8972 (churchyard)	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Medieval; Post-medieval
<b>Oasis UID</b>	heritage1-136928	<b>Significant finds:</b>	None
<b>Monument types:</b>	Church, churchyard		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	None		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	None		

**Synopsis:**

In response to a proviso on the Diocesan faculty for the installation of new kitchen and toilet facilities in the tower of St. Mary's Church, Stotfold, Bedfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Stotfold PCC to implement a scheme of archaeological monitoring in the course of the works. The project has included monitoring of the excavation of a number of service trenches and a soakaway in the churchyard, together with the recording of features revealed during works to the floor and walls at the west end of the nave and in the west tower.

The groundworks in the churchyard showed that the creation of a car park to the north-west of the church, the insertion of services and floodlights, and the planting of trees, had caused a significant amount of modern disturbance. A large quantity of fragments of disarticulated human bone was recovered from all of the intrusive groundworks, but only one cut grave was revealed.

The internal works revealed a number of features of archaeological significance, including wall foundations, a possible furnace pit and a number of features to which no clear function could be assigned. The removal of the plaster from the walls to the tower and west end of the nave revealed evidence for rebuilding and a probable blocked doorway. It also appears that the nave may have continued further to the west before the tower was added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Several examples of graffiti were uncovered when the plaster was removed from the tower walls. The majority of these were on the north wall. Most are likely to date to the late 18th or early 19th century. One appears to date to 1818, while another was probably made by Henricus Octavus Roe, the son of the vicar in the late 18th century.

# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared at the request of the Michael Dales Partnership, acting on behalf of Stotfold Parochial Church Council, as part of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording of works to create a new kitchen and toilet facilities in the west tower at St Mary's Church, Stotfold, Bedfordshire.

**1.2** The the archaeological work was a requirement of the Diocesan faculty. The present report describes the findings of the monitoring programme and is intended to complete the requirements of the faculty.

**1.3** The study area, centred on NGR TL 22030 36676, is located within the west tower and in the churchyard to the west and south of the church. The site is bounded on the north and east by properties fronting Rook Tree Lane and Chequers Close, on the south by properties fronting St Mary's Avenue and on the west by properties fronting Church Road (Figure 1). The works for the present project comprise the creation of new kitchen and toilet facilities in the west tower, with associated drainage and services.

**1.4** On the basis of the location of the works within a Grade II\* listed church and a medieval churchyard, the Diocesan Archaeology Adviser recommended that archaeological monitoring of the works should be carried out. It was considered that there was a risk that the lowering of the floor levels within the west tower and at the western end of the nave would expose the foundations to the present church, revealing evidence relating to the construction and development of the church; that the removal of the existing wall plaster within the tower and nave could reveal hidden architectural details; and that the service trenches could disturb human remains and possibly expose evidence relating to the construction and development of the church.

## 2. Fieldwork

### **SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

**2.1** St Mary's Church lies at the eastern end of the modern village, within the medieval core of Stotfold. The site lies on level ground within the valley of the River Ivel, at approximately 45m AOD.

**2.2** Locally the soils belong to the Wantage 2 Association (342d), described as 'Shallow well drained calcareous silty soils over chalk' (SSEW 1983).

**2.3** The underlying geology consists of chalk of the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, overlain by glaciofluvial deposits of sand and gravel, formed up to 2 million years ago ([www.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/viewer.html](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/viewer.html)).

### **METHODOLOGY**

**2.4** The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. A number of site visits were made to record the exposed surfaces and walls within the church and to supervise the excavation of the service trenches.

**2.5** The machining for the service trenches was undertaken using a 360-degree tracked mini digger fitted with a toothed or toothless ditching bucket, as required.

**2.6** All human remains were rapidly assessed on site. As the remains were disarticulated and did not represent a statistically significant sample of the population, it was decided that there was no justification for detailed off site study and the bones were set aside for reburial by the vicar.

**2.7** No Project Design was requested for the present project. All work followed the *Brief for Archaeological Investigation, Recording and Reporting at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stotfold, Bedfordshire*, prepared by the Archaeological Advisor to the DAC. It was carried out both in accordance with the Heritage Network's documented practice, and with current standards and guidelines published by English Heritage, the Institute for Archaeologists, and others.

### **EXTERIOR WORKS**

**2.8** These comprised the excavation of a new sewer trench across the churchyard (Trench 1), a new drainage trench (Trench 2) and associated soakaway, a new water main trench, linking the new facilities with an existing water main (Trench 3), and a new gas main trench.

#### **Trench 1**

**2.9** Trench 1 ran north-west to south-east from the western boundary wall, across the car park and the churchyard, to the west door of the church (Figure 2). It measured approximately 29m in length and 0.50m in width. The depth of the trench rose from approximately 0.95m at the north-western end to approximately 0.40m at the south-eastern end.

**2.10** The stratigraphy revealed in the north-western half of the trench (the car park) comprised a layer of tarmac, 0.10m thick, above a layer of overburden, approximately 0.45m thick (Plate



1). Below this was context (1), a firm yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) sticky clay silt containing frequent chalk flecks and flints, interpreted as a graveyard soil. It appears that the ground level at this end of the trench had been reduced prior to the creation of the car park. Occasional fragments of disarticulated human bone were noted in the cemetery soil. These were collected and set aside for reburial by the vicar.

**2.11** At the south-eastern end of the trench, the cemetery soil was overlain by a layer of dark brown loose silty topsoil, between 0.15 and 0.20m in depth (Plate 2). Significant root disturbance from nearby trees was encountered in this area. The trees are known to have been planted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ([www.stotfoldchurch.org/History.htm](http://www.stotfoldchurch.org/History.htm)). No grave cuts were revealed in this half of the trench, but part of a disarticulated human skull was encountered at approximately 14.50m from the NW end of the trench and at a depth of 0.80m below the existing ground surface. A second group of fragments of disarticulated human bone was encountered at 18.40m from the NW end of the trench, at a depth of 0.63m below the existing ground surface.

**2.12** All the bone was in poor and fragmentary condition, making identification of age and gender impossible. Elements present appeared to include fragments of long bone, ribs and skull (Plate 3). The bones were collected and set aside for reburial by the vicar. A piece of clay pipe stem and a fragment of post-medieval peg tile were also located within the area of the second group, these items were not collected.

**2.13** No significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were present in this trench. The underlying natural chalk was not reached in any part of the trench.

### **Soakaway**

**2.14** The new soakaway was located approximately 7m to the north-west of the west tower (Figure 2). It measured 1.80m square and was excavated to a depth of 1.60m.

**2.15** The sections revealed a layer of brown silty topsoil, 0.30m in depth, above the cemetery soil, context (1), a firm yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) sticky clay silt containing frequent chalk flecks and flints, 1.10m in depth (Plate 4). The natural chalk was encountered immediately below (1) at a depth of 1.40m below the existing surface.

**2.16** A single grave, cut [13], was recorded, extending from the eastern corner. This was cut into the cemetery soil, but only became clearly visible where it cut the chalk. The exposed area of the grave measured 1.20m in length by 0.50m in width (Figure 3; Plate 5). The grave contained fill (14), a brown (10YR 4/3) loose clay silt with sand, containing moderate sub-angular gravel. Articulated human bone was starting to be exposed within the grave fill just at the impact level of the soakaway and, on this basis, the skeleton was left in situ.

### **Trench 2**

**2.17** This ran south-west from the soakaway to the west door of the church and measured approximately 9.80m in length, 0.38m in width and between 0.88m and 0.95m in depth (Figure 2). The sections were similar to those described in Trench 1, comprising a layer of topsoil, between 0.18m and 0.26m in depth, above the cemetery soil, context (1). The underlying chalk natural was not exposed in the trench.

**2.18** Part of a stone setting was exposed within the trench at a depth of 0.64m below the existing surface. It was located towards the southern end of the trench, approximately 1m to the west of the north buttress to the west tower. The setting, which measured approximately 1m in width, was 0.30m thick and consisted of worked clunch pieces set in a sandy lime mortar (Plate 6). It extended into the trench for approximately 0.15m at its southern end. A modern electricity cable ran diagonally across the top of the footing, suggesting that it had been previously disturbed.

**2.19** No grave cuts were encountered in the trench, though a number of fragments of disarticulated human bone were present in the cemetery soil. As with the bone from Trench 1, this was in poor condition and no complete skeletal elements were present. The bones were collected and set aside for reburial by the vicar.

### ***Trench 3***

**2.20** The water main trench, Trench 3, was proposed to run from an existing water main that was known to cross the graveyard to the south of the church, though its exact course was unknown.

**2.21** In order to locate the water main two trial pits were excavated to the south-west of the church (Figure 2). The first (TP1) was located at approximately 2.33m from the south-western corner of the tower and measured 1.14m in length, 0.66m in width and 0.92m in depth. The sections were similar to those revealed in Trenches 1 and 2 and consisted of a layer of topsoil, approximately 0.22m in depth, above the cemetery soil (1). A modern electricity cable crossed the north-western corner. The second trial hole (TP2) was located 0.15m to the south. It measured 1.10m in length, 0.65m in width and 0.90m in depth. The sections were very similar to those in TP1. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were present in either trial pit.

**2.22** The east - west aligned water main was located at the third attempt, at approximately 0.80m to the south-west of the west tower. The third trial pit (TP3) measured 0.90m in length, 0.33m in width and 0.48m in depth. The electricity cable noted in TP1 crossed its north-western corner (Plate 7). A second electricity cable was also encountered, running east – west into TP3 before turning north to cross the west front of the church. The line of Trench 3 followed the course of this cable, though previously disturbed ground.

**2.23** Trench 3 ran north from the third trial hole to meet Trenches 1 and 2 by the west door. It measured 0.33m in width and 0.48m in depth (Figure 2). The sections revealed a layer of topsoil, approximately 0.20m in depth, above a layer of dark brown silty clay with frequent stones and brick rubble. The excavation of the trench was monitored for approximately 1.50m of its length. At this point it was clear that the line of Trench 3 was running through ground previously disturbed by the installation of the electricity cable and, on this basis, no further monitoring of this trench was undertaken.

### ***Trench 4***

**2.24** The excavation of the trench for the gas main (Trench 4) took place some time after the main groundworks programme had been completed.

**2.25** Trench 4 measured 0.38m in width and approximately 0.70m in depth. It entered the churchyard in the south-western corner, from the southern side of the Roecroft Centre, then turned north along the western boundary of the churchyard to meet the line of the existing

watermain (Figure 2). The trench turned east before the car park to follow the previously excavated water trench. Only the section of the trench that ran along the western boundary was monitored, the remainder running through ground that had already been disturbed by the recent groundworks programme.

**2.26** The trench sections revealed a greyish brown silty clay soil, containing occasional stones and fragments of post-medieval brick and tile (Plates 43 & 44). No fragments of human bone were noted and neither the graveyard soil (context 1) nor the natural chalk were exposed in the trench.

**2.27** Modern service cables were noted running across the trench at 2.50m from its southern end (Plate 43) and a thin layer of redeposited chalk was observed in the eastern section at the base of the section at 11.40m from the south (Plate 44). This extended for approximately 1.70m before petering out. No features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were encountered in the trench.

### **INTERIOR WORKS**

**2.28** The interior works included the reduction of ground levels in the tower and at the western end of the nave, and the stripping of wall plaster in these areas.

#### ***West Tower and Nave floor***

**2.29** Prior to the start of the present works the floor of the west tower was approximately 0.30m higher than the floor of the nave (Figures 4 & 5). The tower was also screened from the nave and accessed via a door in the screen.

**2.30** The most recent surface within the tower comprised a suspended wooden floor, supported on concrete sleeper beams. Evidence for a possible earlier wooden floor, supported on wooden joists was noted during the preliminary site meeting.

**2.31** Removal of the suspended floor revealed a surface consisting of stone paviments (Plate 8). These varied in size with smaller rectangular paviments, measuring 0.20m x 0.10m x 0.04m and laid in straight lines, covering most of the floor (Plate 9). At the eastern end of the tower, and extending into the nave, the paviments comprised larger square slabs, measuring 0.30m x 0.30m x 0.04m laid in diagonal lines (Plate 10).

**2.32** Removal of the paviments exposed layer (3), a brown (10YR 5/3) compacted sand containing frequent mortar and cement fragments and moderate gravel (Plate 11). This deposit, which was between 0.07m and 0.10m thick, covered the whole area of the west tower and extended into the nave. It has been interpreted as a make-up layer for the stone paviments.

**2.33** Following the ground reduction, the sections exposed below the base of the north and south walls of the tower were examined and a number of layers of make-up below the stonework were recorded (Figure 6).

**2.34** On the south side, the stonework was bedded on a layer of sand and mortar 0.07m in depth (Figure 6, Plate 12). Below this was a layer of grey clay, 0.08m in depth, which overlay a thin line of yellowish white redeposited compacted chalk, 0.01m in depth, above a further layer of grey clay, 0.03m in depth. Beneath this was a mixed deposit of yellow sand and mortar, 0.04m in depth, which overlay layer (10), a light yellowish brown (10YR 6/4) compact sand and

mortar with moderate gravel and occasional charcoal flecks, over 0.08m in depth, which extended beyond the impact depth of the ground reduction and covered the entire area of the west tower and into the nave (Figure 7). Both these lower layers were cut by feature [24], at a distance of 1.44m from the eastern end of the wall (Plate 13). The feature, which measured 1.20m in width and over 0.10m in depth, was characterised by a mixed yellow sand and mortar matrix with frequent cobbles, flints and small chalk fragments.

**2.35** On the north side, the sand and mortar bedding was identified at the extreme west end of the section, 0.16m in depth, with a band of grey clay, varying in depth between 0.07 and 0.03m, separating it from layer (10). These layers also appear to have been cut by feature [24], which here sits immediately below the stonework. Beyond this, up to the pillar, the stonework is underpinned by a stone and flint rubble foundation (Figure 6, Plates 13-16).

**2.36** A number of features and deposits were encountered at the reduced depth, particularly at the west end of the nave. These included a boiler vault of late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date, a possible lead smelting pit, two brick sleeper walls, a linear foundation and the foundations to the nave walls.

#### *Boiler vault*

**2.37** The western end of the nave is dominated by the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century vault serving the defunct boiler that used to heat the church and that remains in situ below the centre aisle of the nave (Figure 7, Plate 17). The vault, feature [2], which provided coal storage in a wing running north, is brick built and set within a construction cut [11], backfilled with a pale brown (10YR 6/3) mixed sand and mortar with occasional brick fragments, context (12).

**2.38** The vault measures c.2.75m in length and 0.75m in width, with the north wing measuring 1.5m in length and 0.75m in width. It extends 1.10m below the existing floor level and is built of frogged Arlesey white bricks, laid in English Garden-Wall Bond with cement mortar, topped with a later line of Fletton bricks, stamped "MARSTON BESPRES" in the frog. The walls measure 0.23m in width and stand 14 courses high (Plate 18).

**2.39** The boiler stands at the eastern end of the vault (Plate 19). The legend above the charging door reads "JOHN GRUNDY LTD. HEATING & VENTILATION ENGINEERS". The head office of the company was in City Road, London, but the ironworks, where the boilers were manufactured, was in the Grundy family's home town of Tyldesley, Lancashire. The company's success was based on the Grundy warm air heating stove, "which proved a great success and was installed in several Cathedrals, and numerous Churches and Chapels throughout the country. To handle the increasing demand for this heating apparatus an iron foundry and works was built in Parr Street, Tyldesley in 1886" ([http://www.hevac-heritage.org/victorian\\_engineers/grundy/grundy.htm](http://www.hevac-heritage.org/victorian_engineers/grundy/grundy.htm)). The first warm air stove was built in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century for the chapel at Tyldesley and the firm was established in 1857. It went out of business in 1974.

**2.40** The vault will remain in situ, but has been backfilled as part of the present project.

**2.41** A large ceramic air inlet pipe, with a diameter of c.0.24m, ran from a grille outside the west door and across the centre of the west tower into the west end of the boiler vault (Figure 7; Plate 20). The pipe was set into a trench, approximately 0.50m in width, and filled with redeposited mixed sand and mortar.

*Possible furnace pit [15]*

**2.42** A semi-circular feature, cut [15], was noted on the northern side of the boiler vault and was truncated by its cut [11] (Figure 7). This feature cut layer (10) and its exposed area measured 0.50m by 0.28m and more than 0.10m in depth (Plate 21).

**2.43** The feature had two fired clay linings: context (17) was the earlier and comprised very pale brown (10YR 7/3) fired clay, 0.20m in width; context (16) was the later, and comprised a similar fired clay, containing fill (23), a very dark brown (10YR 2/2) sandy silt. No finds were recovered to date the fill. The soil around the feature had been reddened by heat.

**2.44** On the basis of its appearance it has been suggested that this forms the remains of a small furnace pit, possibly associated with re-smelting lead. The feature has been left in situ.

*Feature [18]*

**2.45** A square feature, [18], was noted at the western end of the nave, close to the north-eastern pillar to the west tower (Figure 7, Plate 22). Its exposed area measured 1.80m by 1.84m and it consisted of a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) friable sandy clay silt, with occasional angular gravel. The feature was truncated to the east by the boiler vault.

**2.46** No finds were recovered to date the feature and its purpose is not known.

*Brick sleeper walls [5]*

**2.47** Two brick sleeper walls, structure [5], were uncovered at the western end of the nave, to the south of the boiler vault (Figure 7, Plate 23). They were aligned east to west and located approximately 1.67m apart. The southern wall measured 2.35m in length, while the northern wall measured 1.10m.

**2.48** They comprise a single course of red and buff unfrosted handmade bricks, laid as stretchers, and bonded with lime mortar. The individual bricks measured 0.22m (9") x 0.11m (4¼") x 0.07m (3"). These date to the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century and are presumed to have supported a plinth for pews given their alignment relative to the pews to the east.

*Church wall foundations*

**2.49** The foundations to the west wall of the nave were exposed in the course of the ground reduction. The northern foundation, consisting of rounded flint cobbles, mostly between 0.06m and 0.11m in diameter, set within a light yellowish brown (10YR 6/4) loose lime mortar matrix (6), ran from the western side of the north-eastern pillar, then north along its eastern side before turning east to follow the southern side of the arcade to the north aisle (Figure 7, Plates 24 & 25). The foundation appeared to have been laid in a trench [19], which varied in width between 0.25m and 0.35m. The full extent of the feature was not seen, but it was at least 0.36m in depth.

**2.50** The southern foundation, consisting of clunch fragments measuring approximately 0.20m x 0.06m x 0.10m, and rounded flint cobbles up to 0.10m in diameter, set within a light yellowish brown (10YR 6/4) loose sandy lime mortar (9), followed the south-eastern pillar, before turning east to follow the northern side of the arcade to the south aisle (Figure 7, Plates 26-27). The foundation appeared to have been laid in a trench [4], which measured between 0.25m and

0.30m in width. The full extent of the feature was not exposed, but it was at least 0.15m in depth.

**2.51** It is possible that the foundations that support the tower arch are later than those that support the aisle arcades, but no clear evidence for this was noted during the present project. No finds were recovered to date these features.

**2.52** No evidence for foundations to the tower itself was encountered during the present project.

#### *Feature [20]*

**2.53** Feature [20], was noted at the eastern edge of the study area, running south from the north aisle arcade (Figure 7, Plate 28). Its exposed area measured approximately 2.25m in length and 0.25m in width and contained dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) friable sandy clay silt with occasional small sub-angular stones. The feature was truncated to the south and west by the boiler vault [2] and was not observed on the south side of the vault. The full extent of feature [20] was not exposed and no evidence for its function was found. No finds were present to date the feature.

#### *West Tower*

##### *Feature [24]*

**2.54** Feature [24], which ran north – south across the footprint of the tower, was offset towards its western end. It was cut through layer (10) and measured 3.96m in length, 1.25m in width and at least 0.10m in depth. The feature contained frequent flints, rounded cobbles and small chalk fragments, set with a light yellowish brown (10YR 6/4) loose sandy mortar matrix.

**2.55** The tower wall sections show that it lay beneath a layer of grey clay on the southern side, but appears to have been located directly below the stonework to the wall on the northern side. A small fragment of clay pipe stem was observed within the fill, but this may have been intrusive.

##### *Feature [25]*

**2.56** This was located close to the north wall of the tower and comprised a rectangular patch of yellowish brown sandy mortar and small stones cutting layer (10) (Figure 7, Plate 30). It measured 0.36m in length and 0.25m in width, but, as it was observed at the impact level, the feature was not excavated.

#### *West Tower and Nave walls*

##### *Nave*

**2.57** The lower part of the west end of the northern nave wall, to the west of the arcade, was stripped of plaster to a height of approximately 1.80m, exposing the stone beneath. The eastern end of the exposed section appears to have been rebuilt, probably at the time that the north aisle and arcade were added in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 31).

**2.58** The lower part of the west end of the southern nave wall was also stripped to a height of approximately 2.5m, exposing the stonework below. This revealed a blocked opening against the eastern wall of the tower, suggesting that the nave may have continued further to the west

before the tower was added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 32). The base of the opening sits approximately 0.45m above the reduced floor level, and is defined by two large rectangular stone blocks. It is possible that the opening was later converted into a window, with a possible sill, again formed by rectangular stone blocks, at approximately 1.50m above the reduced floor level. The top of the opening was hidden by the surviving plaster above the stripped area.

**2.59** The plaster was also removed from the eastern side of the walls flanking the tower arch. On the southern side this revealed courses of squared stone blocks to a height of approximately 1m above the reduced floor. Rubble infill, approximately 0.80m in height, sat above the stone blocks, with further courses of squared stone above (Plate 33).

**2.60** To the north of the tower, the wall was constructed in coursed squared stone blocks (Plate 34). This had previously been exposed and is to be repointed.

### *West Tower*

**2.61** The west tower walls were constructed of coursed squared stone blocks (Plates 35 & 36). No blocked openings were visible, but a small recess or void was noted in the northern and southern elevations: the northern recess was located in the centre of the wall, the southern was located at the western end, adjacent to the tower staircase wall.

**2.62** A number of instances of graffiti were noted scratched into the stonework on both walls, with the majority on the north wall. Only the most prominent examples were recorded in detail, no record has been made of vague scratch marks with no clear pattern or form.

**2.63** At the western end of the south wall of the tower, an incised letter W was noted, formed of crossed 'V's with holes drilled at the end of each stroke (Plate 37). The graffiti was located towards the western end of a stone block measuring 0.29m in length and 0.18m in width.

**2.64** On the north wall, 0.32m from the west end, the graffiti 'H + Roe' was inscribed on a stone block measuring 0.45m in length and 0.20m in depth (Plate 38). This is likely to have been made by Henricus Octavus Roe, the son of the Reverend Samuel Roe, vicar of St Mary's Church in the mid - late 18<sup>th</sup> century. H.O. Roe, born c.1762, was a local benefactor, who founded a school adjacent to the churchyard in 1808 (now the Roecroft Centre). His Almshouse Charity, founded in 1835, is still in existence. Other charities he founded include Roe's Church Bread Charity, Roe's Bread, Fuel and Clothes Charity, a Charity for Apprenticing and Roe's Charity for the Parish Clerk ([www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk)). Roe was a landed proprietor, with properties in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. From 1761, and until H.O. Roe's death in c.1853, the family were also lords of the manor of Hadley in Shropshire (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=18152>). Roe's name is underlined, but this may be a later addition. The letters 'IP' have been crudely scratched at the eastern end of the same stone block and these are also likely to be later.

**2.65** Two examples of graffiti were located on either side of the small recess in the north wall, at approximately 2m from the western end. To the west are the initials 'WI', scratched into a stone measuring 0.35m in length and 0.13m in depth (Plate 39). The letter 'W' is very similar to that on the south wall and may have been made by the same person. To the east of the recess, a square stone, measuring 0.20m by 0.20m contains two sets of graffiti (Plate 40). The upper graffiti reads '18 DW 18', while the initials 'WP' have been scratched below. It appears that the upper graffiti is the later, as it looks rather squashed above the 'WP'.

**2.66** A possible *apotropaic* mark, comprising diagonal lines, drilled at the ends, has been incised on the stone immediately to the east. This has been overwritten by the initial 'C', also with drilled holes at each terminus. The initials 'IT', immediately to the east, are cruder and are likely to be a later addition.

**2.67** Also to the east, and at a higher level, three adjacent stone blocks each have something inscribed. The western block, which measures 0.20m by 0.17m, has the letters 'H<sub>B</sub><sup>1</sup>', with the initial 'H' larger than the 'B' (Plate 41). Next to the 'B', and set slightly higher, is either a numeral '1' or a letter 'I'. The central stone, which measures 0.21 by 0.17, has the initials 'IC', with serifs at each terminus and a small bar across the centre of the 'I' (Plate 42).

**2.68** The eastern stone, which measures 0.19m by 0.17m, has either a formless mark or the numeral '17', with a diagonal stroke to the east which may represent another number '7' (Plate 42). Below this is the letter 'P', again with serifs. A curving line next to the 'P' may form part of another letter, an 'O' or a 'C' perhaps. At the same level, and to the east, is another odd mark, comprising a vertical line with a horizontal bar extending east. Next to this is a mark that looks like the numeral '2'.



## 3. Discussion

### *Historical and Archaeological Setting*

**3.1** The core of the modern village of Stotfold is located along Arleseay Road, to the south of the church. The church lies at the eastern end of the parish and is likely to have formed part of the manorial complex with Stotfold Bury to the north-east.

**3.2** Little evidence for early occupation has been recorded from the immediate vicinity of the church. Pre-medieval finds include a Palaeolithic handaxe (HER 14677), found to the east of the village, and Roman pottery (HER 11327) at Bury Farm, less than 200m to the north-east.

**3.3** Stotfold is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as forming part of the holdings of Hugh of Beauchamp (Morris 1977). The manor was relatively large and wealthy, answering for 15 hides (approximately 1,800 acres) and worth £25.00 at that time. Forty one households are recorded on the manor, giving an estimated total population of between 160 and 200. The property also had 4 mills, valued at £4 and produced 400 eels from the River Ivel. The river meadows were sufficient to pasture 7 plough teams, half the number employed on the manor. One of the hides (approximately 120 acres) belonged to St Albans Abbey and had done so before 1066. The Domesday entry indicates a thriving settlement that had been in existence since at least the late Saxon period.

**3.4** The present church (HER 1132) is a Grade II\* listed building (List entry no. 1113866) ([www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)). The building has 12<sup>th</sup> century origins, probably as an aisle-less nave and chancel, but may have had an earlier wooden precursor given that a Saxon coffin, containing a human skeleton, was discovered in the nave during restoration work in 1890 ([www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk/History.htm](http://www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk/History.htm)). The church was granted to Chicksands Priory by Simon de Beauchamp, the founder of the Priory, in c.1150 (ibid).

**3.5** Various stages of work were undertaken in the 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the addition of the north and south aisles, the south porch and the west tower. The nave and chancel were also reworked in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**3.6** The west tower is of 15<sup>th</sup> century date and consists of three stages, with four-stage angle buttresses ([www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)). The west elevation of the ground stage has a pointed arch doorway under a square head, surmounted by a 3-light 2 centre-headed window. The bell-stage has paired 2-light pointed-arched windows to each side.

### *Current Work*

**3.7** The present project has comprised the monitoring of the excavation of a number of service trenches and a soakaway in the churchyard, together with the recording of features revealed during works to the floor and walls at the west end of the nave and in the west tower.

**3.8** The groundworks in the churchyard indicated a significant amount of modern disturbance, including the creation of a car park to the north-west of the church, the insertion of modern services and floodlights, and by tree planting. A large quantity of fragments of disarticulated human bone, all in poor condition, was recovered from all of the intrusive groundworks, but only one cut grave was encountered.

**3.9** The cut grave was exposed during excavation of the soakaway to the north-west of the church, approximately 1.40m below the existing ground surface. This was a sufficient depth to allow the skeleton, just identified at the impact level, to be left in situ.

**3.10** A stone setting was encountered in Trench 2, located approximately 1m to the west of the north-western tower buttress. The setting was of uncertain function and appeared to have been previously disturbed by the installation of a modern electricity cable.

**3.11** The lowering of the floor level at the western end of the nave and in the west tower revealed a number of modern features including a boiler vault, together with an associated ventilation pipe, and an intake grille located just outside the west door.

**3.12** To the south of the boiler vault, two brick sleeper walls, of late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date, demonstrated that the fixed pews and their plinth formerly extended to the back of the nave.

**3.13** The foundations to the western wall of the nave and the western end of the aisle arcades were also exposed during the works. No clear stratigraphic relationship was observed between the foundations of the 15<sup>th</sup> century tower arch and those of the aisle arcades, which follow the line of the 12<sup>th</sup> century nave walls.

**3.14** Several undated features, of probable medieval date, were also revealed.

- A linear feature, [24], crosses the west tower and appears to predate it. No clear function could be assigned to the feature, but it may represent a foundation, possibly marking an earlier western end to the 12<sup>th</sup> century church.
- The northern side of the boiler vault truncated a circular feature, [15], which has been interpreted as a furnace, possibly for melting lead. The feature was apparently fired on at least two occasions as two separate clay linings were identified. No finds were present to date it, but its location suggests that it may date to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the period when the north aisle was extended to the west with the addition of the vestry, and the west tower was built. The listing details also describes the windows as being mainly of 15<sup>th</sup> century date ([www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)) and these will have required large amounts of lead in their manufacture.
- Two other features of unknown function, features [18] and [20], were exposed at the western end of the nave. These also appear to date to the medieval period, and they may represent foundations or settings of unknown purpose.

**3.15** The removal of the plaster from the walls to the tower and west end of the nave revealed a number of features of interest.

- a probable blocked doorway was revealed in the southern wall, located against the eastern wall of the tower. This appears to have been truncated on its western side by the tower wall, suggesting that the 12th century nave may have continued further to the west. The doorway may subsequently have been converted to a window.
- Changes in the stonework were noted on the northern wall of the nave, suggesting that this had been rebuilt, possibly when the north aisle was constructed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

- Several examples of graffiti were uncovered when the plaster was removed from the tower walls. The majority of these were on the north wall. Most are likely to date to the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. One appears to date to 1818, while another was probably made by Henricus Octavus Roe, the son of the vicar in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

***Confidence Rating***

**3.16** In the course of the fieldwork, weather and ground conditions were acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. There were no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the work which was less than *High*.

## 4. Schedule of site visits

Date	Staff	Hours	Comments
13/11/2012	HMA / DJH	3	Photographed & recorded tower & boiler void
15/11/2012	RGD	8	Monitor excavation of NW half Tr.1 & record exposed features within the church
19/11/2012	HMA	6	Monitor excavation of SE half of Tr.1 & record exposed features within the church
20/11/2012	RGD	8	Monitor excavation of SE half of Tr.1 & record exposed features within the church
21/11/2012	RGD	8	Record exposed features within the church
22/11/2012	DJH / RGD	6	Monitor excavation of the soakaway & record exposed features within the church
23/11/2012	RGD	9	Monitor excavation of the soakaway & record exposed features within the church
26/11/2012	RGD	8	Record exposed features within the church
29/11/2012	HMA	7	Monitor excavation of Tr.2 & record exposed features within the church
03/12/2012	HMA	5	Monitor excavation of Tr. 3
18/12/2012	DJH	2	Record exposed nave walls
13/01/2013	DJH	3	Record graffiti on tower walls
11/04/2013	HMA	2	Record Tr. 4

## 5. Bibliography

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Oake, M., Luke, M., Dawson, M., Edgeworth, M. & Murphy, P. 2007 *Bedfordshire Archaeology Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy*. Bedfordshire Archaeology Monograph 9.

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History of the church: <http://www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk/History.htm>. Date accessed: 21 January 2013

History of the Roecroft Centre: <http://www.roecroftcentre.org/history.php>. Date accessed: 21 January 2013

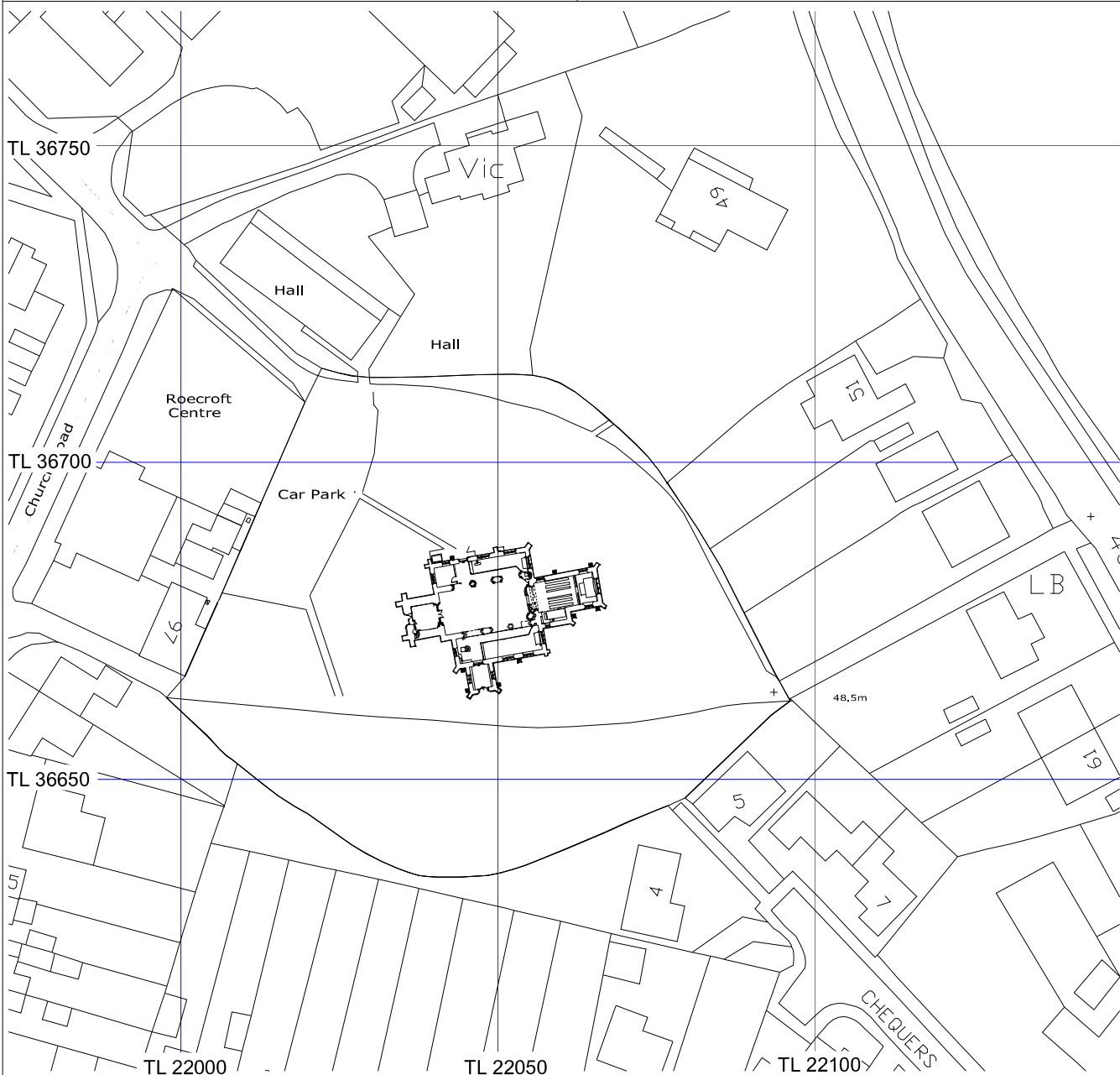
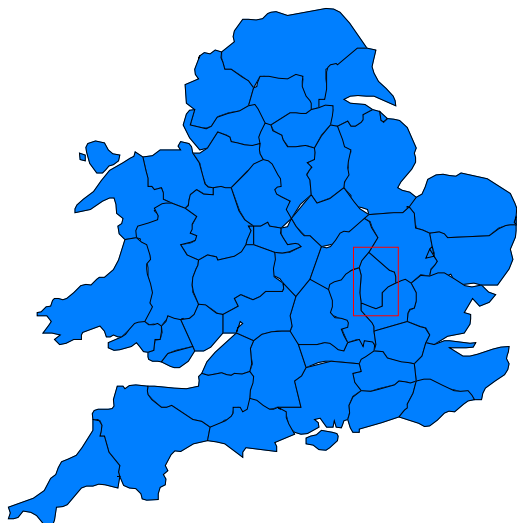
Victoria County History [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk): 'Parishes: Stotfold', *A History of the County of Bedford: volume 2* (1908), pp. 300-304. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=62652>. Date accessed: 02 January 2013

## 6. Illustrations

Figure 1 .....	Site Location
Figure 2 .....	Plan of exterior groundworks
Figure 3 .....	Soakaway section & plan
Figure 4 .....	Plan of west tower as existing
Figure 5 .....	Elevation of west tower screen
Figure 6 .....	Sections below stonework to west tower walls
Figure 7 .....	Plan of features exposed within the church
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Plate 2.....	Indicative section, SE half of Tr.1
Plate 3 .....	Detail – human bone fragments, Tr.1
Plate 4 .....	Soakaway, indicative section
Plate 5 .....	Grave [13] in the soakaway
Plate 6 .....	Stone footing, Tr.2
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Plate 8 .....	Paved surfaces in west tower
Plate 9 .....	Detail of smaller paviments in west tower floor
Plate 10.....	Detail of larger paviments in west tower floor
Plate 11.....	Layer (3), following removal of stone flooring
Plate 12.....	S wall of tower, section below wall, E end
Plate 13.....	S wall of tower, section below wall, W end
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Plate 15.....	N wall of tower, section below wall, centre, showing [24]
Plate 16.....	N wall of tower, section below wall, E end
Plate 17.....	Structure [2] looking down from gallery
Plate 18.....	Structure [2], N & E interior elevations
Plate 19.....	Structure [2], E elevation showing boiler front
Plate 20.....	Structure [2] W interior elevation, showing air inlet pipe
Plate 21.....	Cut [15], looking W
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Plate 23.....	Brick sleeper walls, [5], looking E
Plate 24.....	Foundation [6], by NE pillar, looking N
Plate 25.....	Foundation [6], looking N
Plate 26.....	Foundation [4], by SE pillar, looking E

Plate 27.....	Foundation [4] looking SW
Plate 28.....	Feature [20], looking down from tower gallery
Plate 29.....	Feature [24] looking W
Plate 30.....	Feature [25] looking E
Plate 31.....	W end of N nave wall, looking N
Plate 32.....	W end of S nave wall, showing blocked opening
Plate 33.....	W end of nave, to south of tower arch
Plate 34.....	W end of nave, to north of tower arch
Plate 35.....	S wall of tower, looking SW
Plate 36.....	N wall of tower, looking N
Plate 37.....	Detail of graffito on S wall of tower, letter <i>W</i>
Plate 38.....	Detail of graffito on N wall of tower, <i>H + Roe</i>
Plate 39.....	Detail of graffito on N wall of tower, initials <i>WI</i>
Plate 40.....	Detail of graffito on N wall of tower, <i>18DW18 &amp; WP</i>
Plate 41.....	Detail of graffito on N wall of tower, letters <i>H<sub>B</sub><sup>I</sup></i>
Plate 42.....	Graffito on N wall of tower, letters <i>IC &amp; P</i> & other marks
Plate 43.....	Trench 4, looking south
Plate 44.....	Trench 4, detail of west facing section showing chalk lens

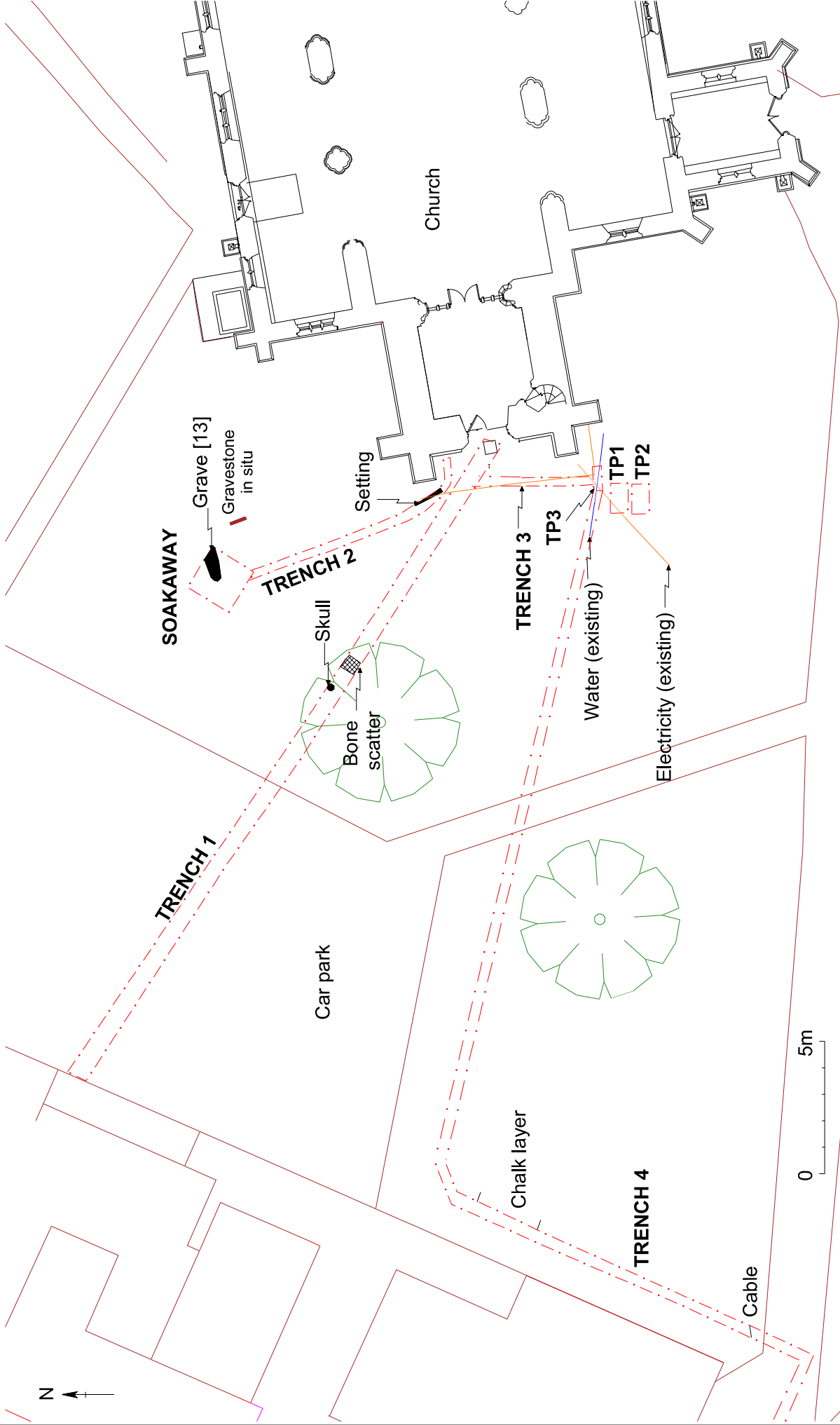




Site Location

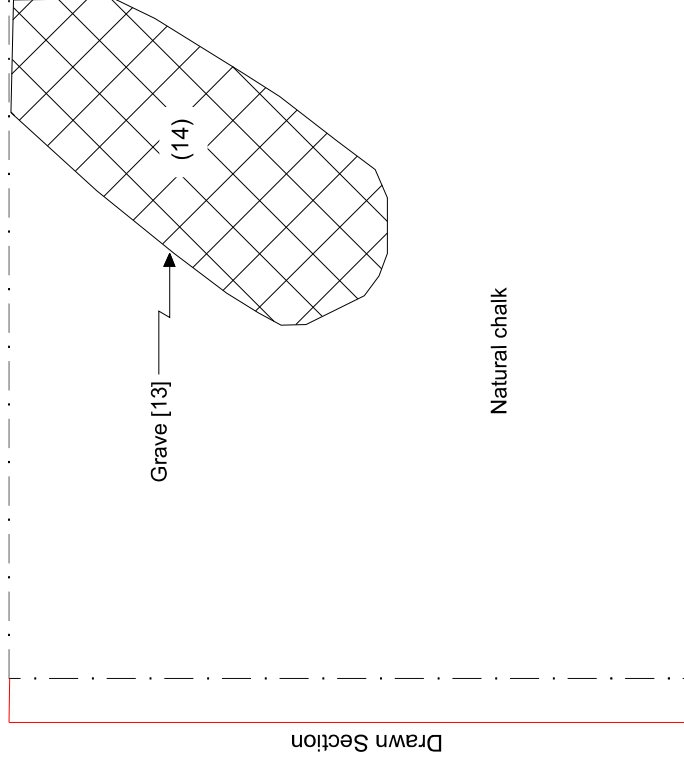
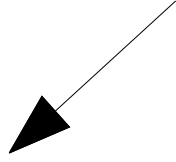
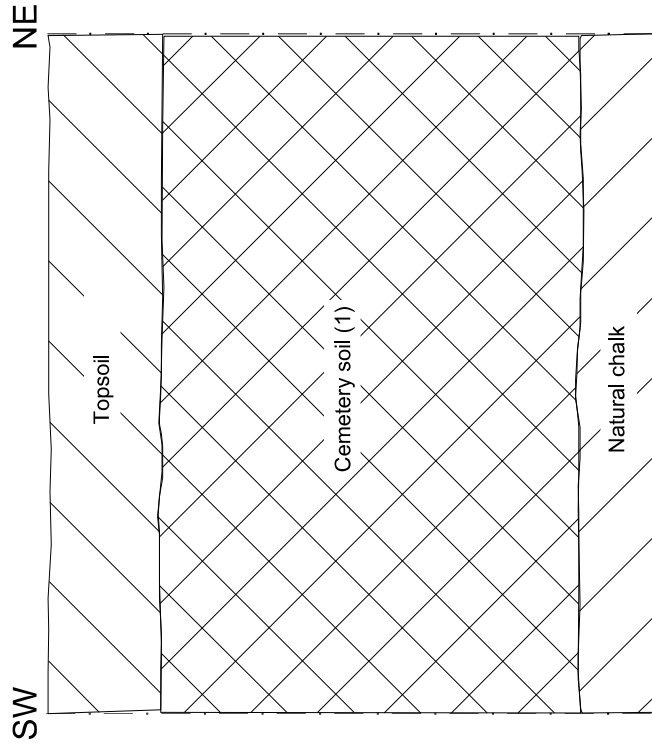
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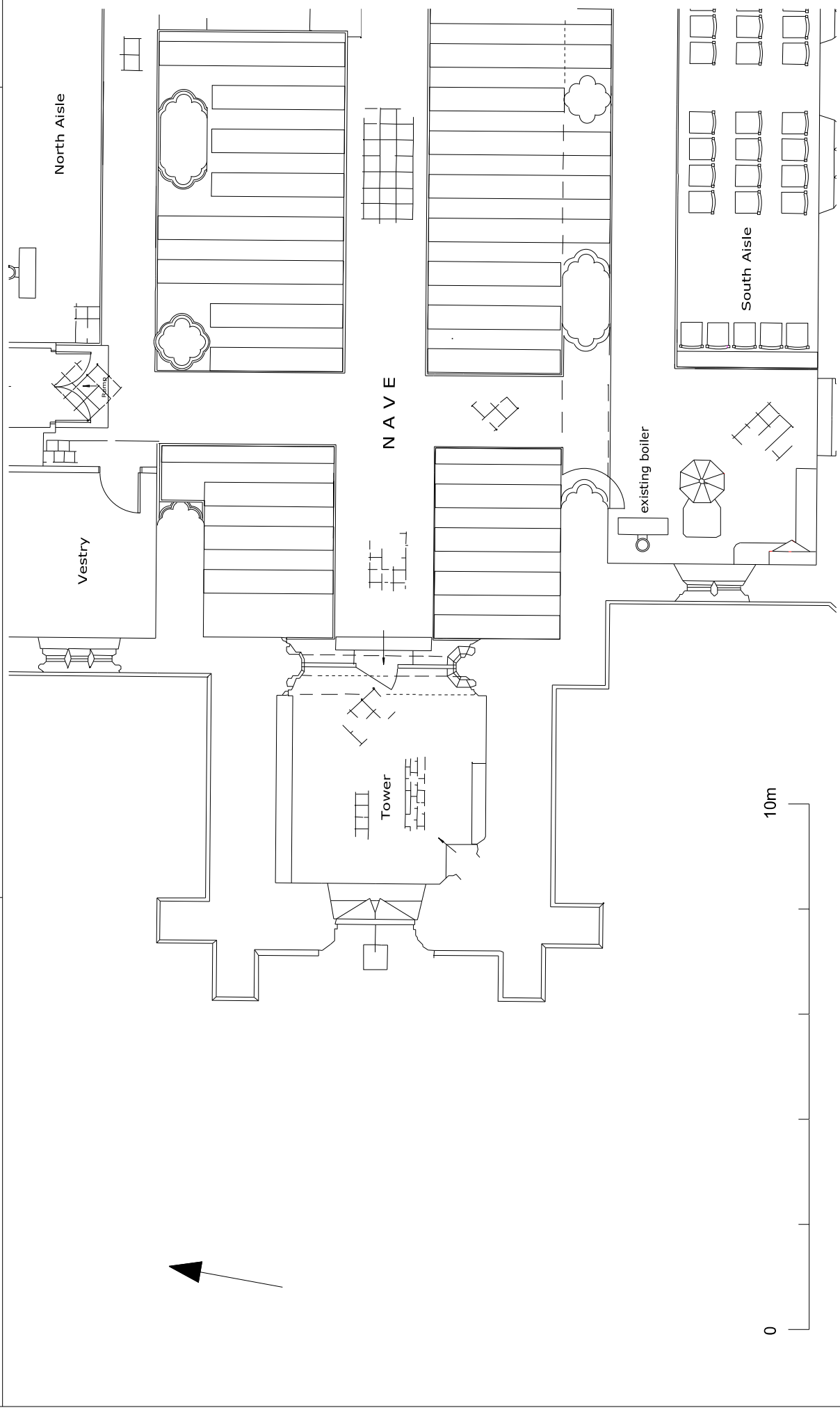


Plan of exterior groundworks  
Base plan courtesy of Michael Dales Partnership

Scale 1:200  
Figure 2

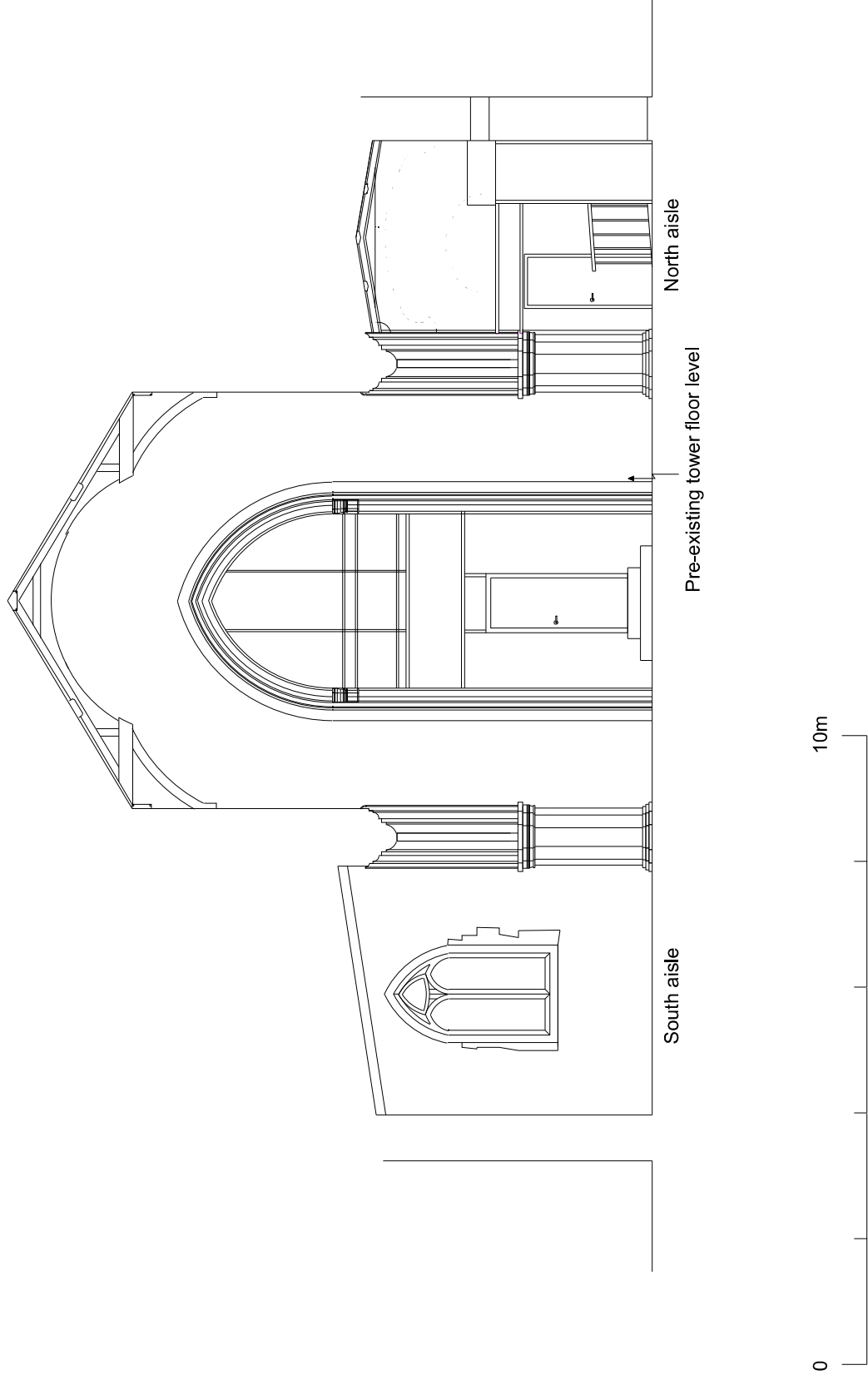


Soakaway - plan and section

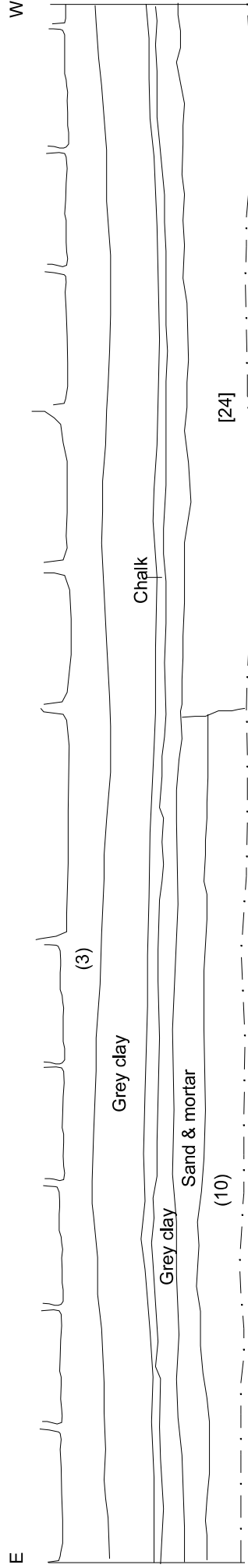


West tower as existing  
by courtesy Michael Dales Partnership

Scale 1:100  
Figure 4

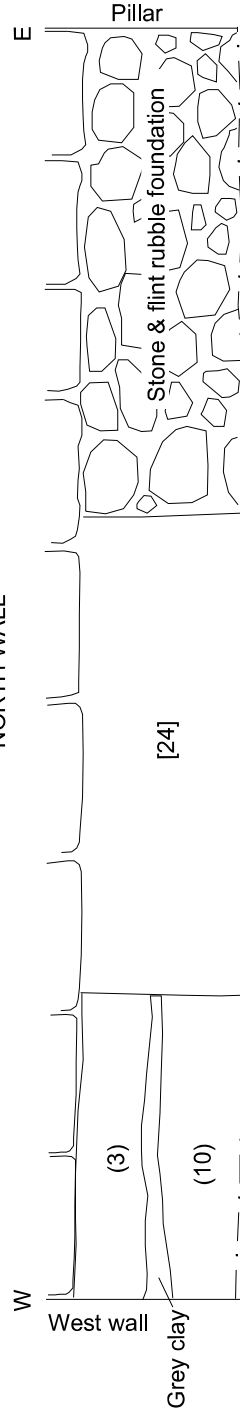


SOUTH WALL



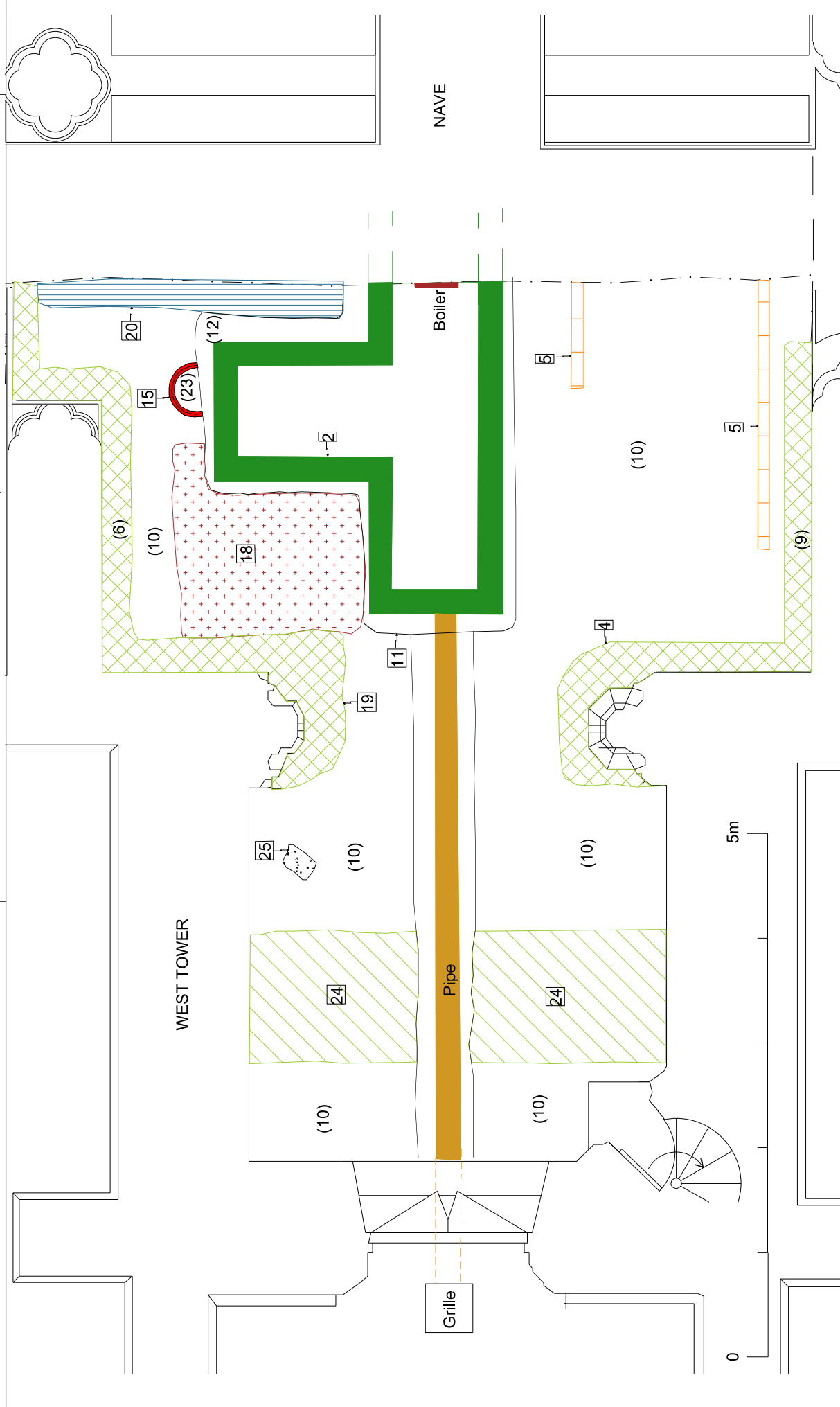
Scale 1:10

NORTH WALL



Scale 1:20

West tower wall sections after ground reduction



Archaeological features exposed in the West Tower & Nave

Scale 1:50  
Figure 7





Plate 1: Indicative section, NW half of Trench 1



Plate 2: Indicative section, SE half of Trench 1





Plate 3: Detail of disarticulated fragments of human bone, Trench 1



Plate 4: Soakaway, indicative section



Plate 5: Grave [13] cutting the natural chalk in the soakaway



Plate 6: Stone footing in Trench 2



Plate 7: Trial pit 3, showing the existing watermain, electric cables and S end of Tr.3



Plate 8: Paved surfaces within west tower, looking east



Plate 9: Detail of smaller paviours, west tower floor, looking N



Plate 10: Detail of larger paviours, west tower floor, looking N



Plate 11: Layer (3) following removal of stone pavours, looking S



Plate 12: South wall of west tower, section below the stonework at the east end



Plate 13: South wall, west tower, section below the stonework at the west end



Plate 14: North wall west tower, section below the stonework at the west end



Plate 15: North wall west tower, central section below the stonework showing [24]



Plate 16: North wall west tower, section below the stonework at the east end



Plate 17: Structure [2] from the tower gallery



Plate 18: North & east interior elevations to the boiler room, looking NE





Plate 19: Front of boiler in E elevation of structure [2], looking E



Plate 20: West elevation of structure [2], showing air inlet pipe, looking W



Plate 21: Cut [15], looking west



Plate 22: West end of the nave, showing feature [18]



Plate 23: Brick sleeper walls, structure [5], looking east



Plate 24: Foundation [6], looking north



Plate 25: Foundation [6], looking north



Plate 26: Foundation [4], looking east



Plate 27: Foundation [4], looking south-west



Plate 28: Photograph from clerestory, showing feature [20], looking NE



Plate 29: Feature [24], looking west



Plate 30: Feature [25], looking east



Plate 31: West end of the northern nave wall, looking north



Plate 32: West end of the southern nave wall , showing blocked opening, looking S



Plate 33: West end of nave, to south of tower arch



Plate 34: West end of nave, to north of tower arch





Plate 35: South wall of west tower, looking SW



North wall of west tower, looking N



Plate 37: Detail of graffiti on south wall of tower, letter W

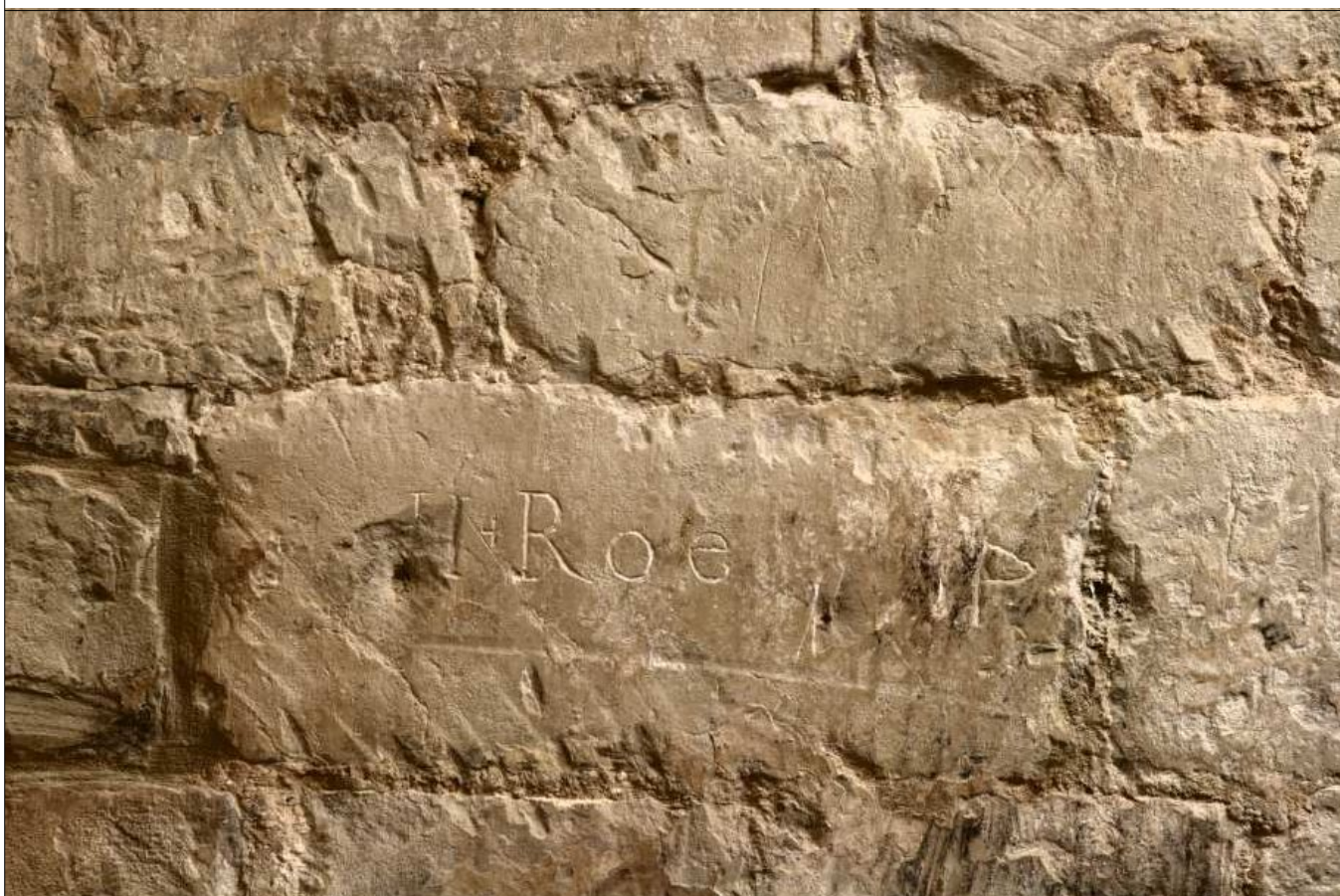


Plate 38: Detail of graffiti, N wall of tower H + Roe

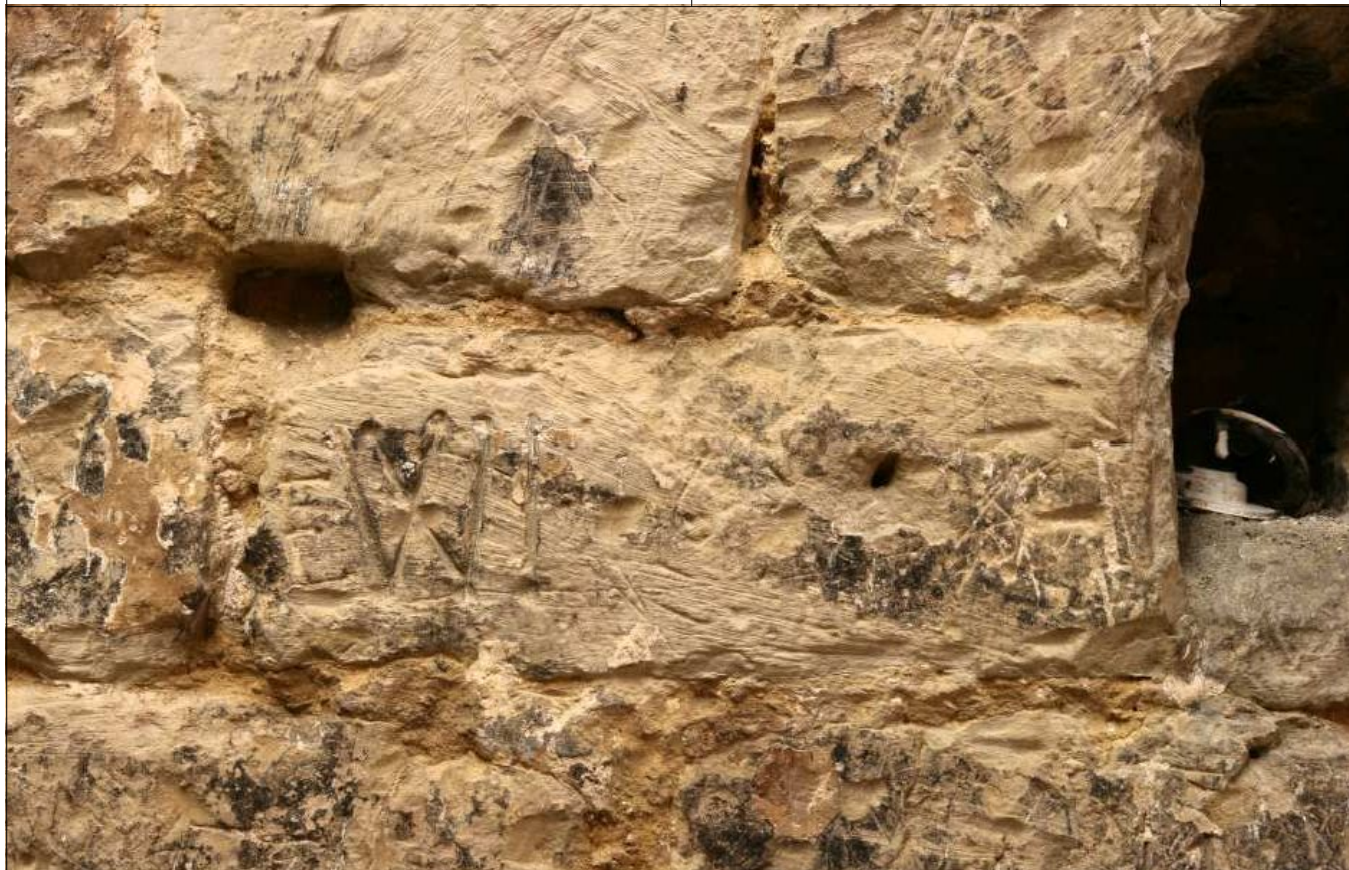


Plate 39: Detail of graffiti on N wall of tower, initials WI

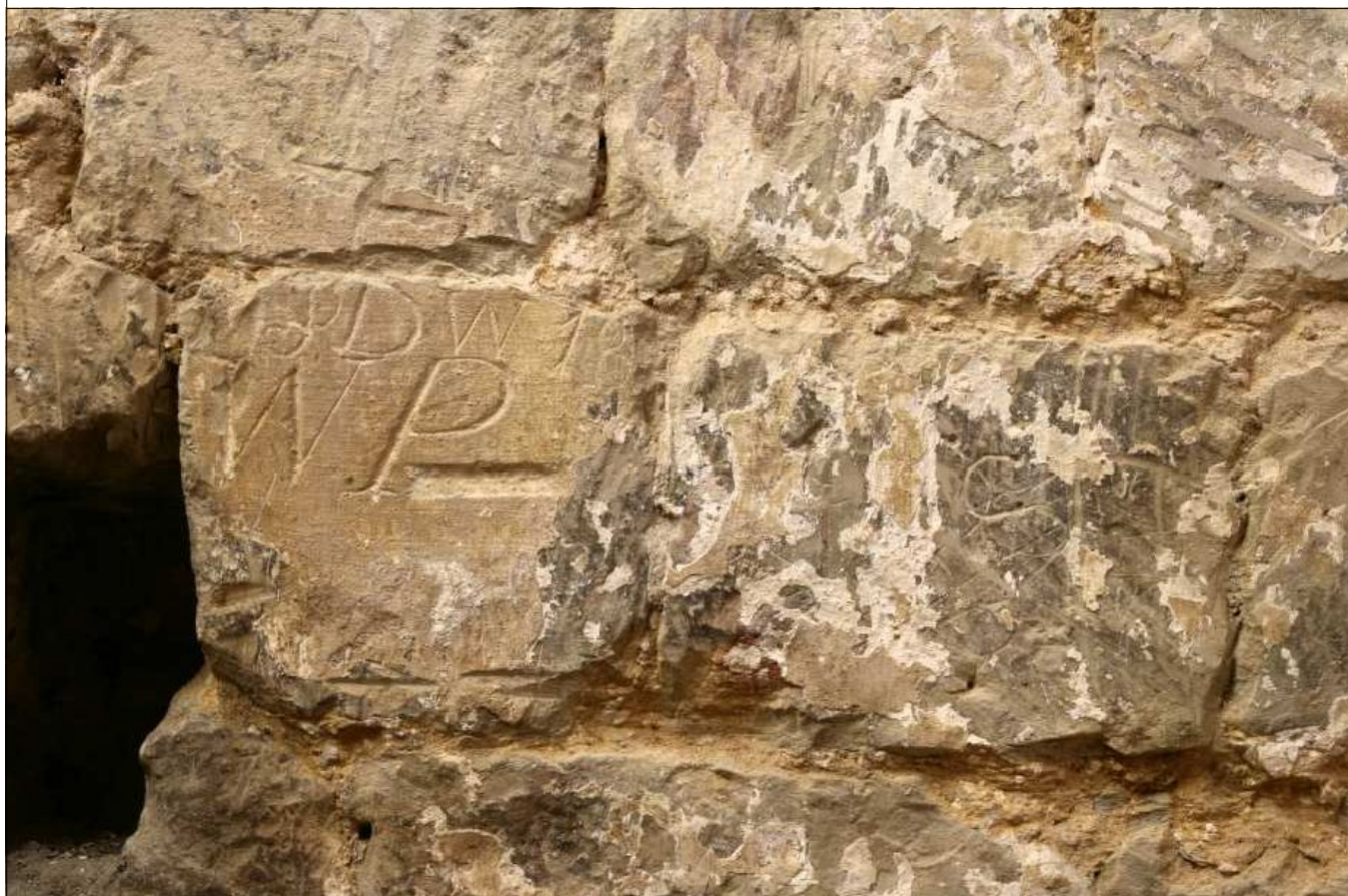


Plate 40: Detail of graffiti on N wall of tower, initials DW & WP



Plate 41: Detail of graffiti on N wall of tower, letters H B I



Plate 42: Detail of graffiti on N wall of tower, letters IC & P and other markings



Plate 43: Trench 4 looking south



Plate 44: Trench 4, detail of west facing section, showing chalk lens

## Appendix: OASIS data entry form

<i>OASIS ID: heritage1-136928</i>	
Project details	
Project name	Stotfold, St. Mary's Church, Church Road
Short description of the project	<p>In response to a proviso on the Diocesan faculty for the installation of new kitchen and toilet facilities in the tower of St. Mary's Church, Stotfold, Bedfordshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Stotfold PCC to implement a scheme of archaeological monitoring in the course of the works. The project has included monitoring of the excavation of a number of service trenches and a soakaway in the churchyard, together with the recording of features revealed during works to the floor and walls at the west end of the nave and in the west tower.</p> <p>The groundworks in the churchyard showed that the creation of a car park to the north-west of the church, the insertion of services and floodlights, and the planting of trees, had caused a significant amount of modern disturbance. A large quantity of fragments of disarticulated human bone was recovered from all of the intrusive groundworks, but only one cut grave was revealed.</p> <p>The internal works revealed a number of features of archaeological significance, including wall foundations, a possible furnace pit and a number of features to which no clear function could be assigned. The removal of the plaster from the walls to the tower and west end of the nave revealed evidence for rebuilding and a probable blocked doorway. It also appears that the nave may have continued further to the west before the tower was added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.</p> <p>Several examples of graffiti were uncovered when the plaster was removed from the tower walls. The majority of these were on the north wall. Most are likely to date to the late 18th or early 19th century. One appears to date to 1818, while another was probably made by Henricus Octavus Roe, the son of the vicar in the late 18th century.</p>
Project dates	Start: 13-11-2012 End: 11-04-2013
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HN1031 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	BEDFM 2012.73 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	CHURCH Medieval
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Medieval
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Post Medieval
Monument type	GRAVE Uncertain
Monument type	PIT Medieval
Monument type	WALL FOOTING Medieval
Monument type	BOILER VAULT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction

<b>Project location</b>	
Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE MID BEDFORDSHIRE STOTFOLD St. Mary's Church, Church Road
Study area	160.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 22030 36676 52 0 52 00 52 N 000 13 17 W Point
<b>Project creators</b>	
Name of Organisation	Heritage Network
Project brief originator	Diocesan Archaeologist
Project design originator	David Hillelson
Project director/manager	David Hillelson
Project supervisor	Helen Ashworth
Project supervisor	Robin Densem
Type of sponsor/funding body	Parochial Church Council
<b>Project archives</b>	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Bedford Museum
Digital Archive ID	BEDFM 2012.73
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Bedford Museums
Paper Archive ID	BEDFM 2012.73
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Diary","Drawing","Plan","Report","Section"
<b>Project bibliography 1</b>	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stotfold, Bedfordshire. Archaeological Monitoring Report.
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Ashworth, H.
Other bibliographic details	Report no.782
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	Heritage Network
Place of issue or publication	Letchworth, Herts.
Description	A4 booklet, comb bound, green cover, 18 pages, 7 figures, 44 plates