

HERITAGE NETWORK



THE CHURCH OF ST MARGARET Higham Gobion, Beds.

HN548

Archaeological Monitoring Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

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Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

THE CHURCH OF ST MARGARET Higham Gobion, Beds.

HN548

Archaeological Monitoring Report

Prepared on behalf of the Vicar and Churchwardens of Higham Gobion

by

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The cover photo shows the Church of St Margaret, looking north

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by David Hillelson. The report text was prepared by David Hillelson and Helen Ashworth. The illustrations were prepared by Abigail Rothwell.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Michael Dales, Michael Dales Partnership, acting on behalf of the Vicar and Churchwardens; the Rev. Graham Newton; the staff of Hibbitt & Sons, builders; and David Baker, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	Church of St Margaret, Higham Gobion		
County:	Bedfordshire	District:	Mid Beds DC
Village/town:	Higham Gobion	Parish:	Shillington
Planning reference:	n/a	NGR:	TL 1038 3278
Client name and address:	c/o Michael Dales Partnership, 95 Sharpenhoe Road, Streatley, Luton, LU3 3PS		
Nature of work:	Building restoration	Current land use:	Churchyard
Site Status:	Listed Building	Reason for investigation:	Faculty jurisdiction
Position in planning process:	n/a	Project brief originator:	St Albans Diocese
Size of affected area:	n/a	Size of area investigated:	n/a
Site Code:	HN548	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc...	Building recording, recording of fabric	Archive Recipient:	Bedford Museum
Start of work	17 August 2005	Finish of work	29 September 2005
Related HER Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Med, Post-med, Modern
Oasis UID	heritage1-19057	Significant finds:	n/a
Monument types:	Church		
Physical archive:	n/a		
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

Synopsis:

In response to the requirements of the diocesan faculty for repair and refurbishment works at the Church of St Margaret, Higham Gobion, Beds, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the Vicar and Churchwardens to undertake the archaeological recording of the fabric and the monitoring of the groundworks.

The photographic recording and monitoring of the rebuilding of the buttress at the south-western corner of the church has enabled the documentation of a number of features associated with its construction and later phases of repair, including the keying of the buttress into the structure of the nave, the re-use of worked stone in its core, the use of injected lime grout to fill cracks, and evidence for the original south-west corner of the nave.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of the Michael Dales Partnership, acting on behalf of the Vicar and Churchwardens, as part of a programme of archaeological investigation associated with the rebuilding of the buttress at the south-western corner of the church of St Margaret, Higham Gobion, Beds. The faculty for the work, granted by the Chancellor of the Diocese of St Albans, was issued subject to an archaeological proviso, requested by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser (DAA). The scope of the required work follows the Brief for Archaeological Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Reporting prepared by the DAA (ref. DB 07/7/2005).

1.2 The site, centred on NGR TL 1038 3278, is located on the north-eastern edge of the village of Higham Gobion (Figure 1). A church is known to have stood on the site since at least the mid 12th century. The present building was substantially rebuilt in the late 19th century. The current works involve the taking down and rebuilding of the buttress on the south-western corner of the church.

1.3 The aims of the present project, subject to the limitations of reasonable safety and practicality, have been:

- to provide a photographic record of the south-west corner before and during the dismantling of the buttress;
- to identify and record any archaeological features and deposits which may be uncovered in the course of groundworks;
- to record any evidence which may clarify whether the supposed rebuilding of the church was actually a replacement on the same or different foundations, or an extensive repair of the existing structure, giving the impression of replacement;
- to retrieve artefactual and ecofactual elements which would allow the date, character, and significance of the site to be assessed in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

1.4 The present report is intended to present the findings of the project, and set them in their archaeological and historical context. The report will be submitted to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and, subject to any requirement for further analysis as per the provisions of English Heritage's Management of Archaeological Projects 2 (MAP2) and the deposition of the project archive with the Bedford Museum, will complete the archaeological requirements of the faculty.

2. Fieldwork

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site is located on the northern side of the road between Shillington and Barton-le-Clay. It lies on the north-facing slope of a small hill at approximately 65m AOD. The soil is formed of shallow well drained calcareous silt over chalk (SSEW 1983).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.2 A church has probably stood on this site since at least 1222. A list of Rectors held by Bedfordshire and Luton Archives (BLA) records Robert Gubion as the clerk from November 14th, 1222 (BLA: Fasti/1/HighG). He was presented by the Prioress and Nuns of Bosco, near Markyate. The tithes from Higham Gobion went to the convent at Markyate in the 13th century.

2.3 Although much of the exterior is Victorian, there is some medieval work surviving inside the church. The north arcade and at least part of the chancel arch dates to c.1300 (Pevsner 2002, 98). A number of 17th century monuments are located inside the church, including one to Dr Edmund Castell, Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, who died in 1674.

2.4 The church was substantially restored between 1879 and 1880 by Messrs. Benton and Woods, architects from London, at a cost of £1,100.00 (BLA: P125/2/2/1). The scope of this work was considerable and included stripping plaster from the external walls; the repair and pointing of the walls; pulling down walling between the arcades of the north wall; the building of a new north aisle; the taking down and rebuilding of the spire; the construction of external drains; and the provision of new windows in the east, north and south walls.

FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

2.5 A preliminary visit was made to photograph the south-western buttress to the nave on medium format black & white film, backed up by a digital record (Figure 3). Subsequent visits were made to take additional photographs during the dismantling of the buttress (Figures 4 - 6). A final visit was made to inspect the excavation of the foundation trench for the new buttress (Figure 8).

2.6 The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the DAC Brief.

OBSERVED STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE

2.7 The church is largely faced with coursed ironstone (carstone) and cobbles, with ashlar quoins and dressings. The refurbishment works comprised the taking down and rebuilding of the buttress on the south-west corner of the nave (referred to in the architect's specification as Buttress B1). The buttress, which extends for 1m from the south-western corner of the nave, was pulling away from the main structure of the church.

2.8 Prior to the start of building works, the buttress was photographed, and the following features noted (see Figure 7):

- 1 A patch of coursed fieldstones in a differently coloured mortar matrix, where the western elevation of the nave meets the southern elevation of the tower. Possibly the result of the insertion of a modern tie plate to stabilise the tower.
- 2 A York stone lintel in the upper stage of the buttress, possibly inserted to tie the buttress into the nave wall.
- 3 Building lifts in line with each level of the upper stage of the buttress.
- 4 A patch of coursed fieldstone and limestone blocks possibly representing the original facing of the buttress.
- 5 Coursed carstone at the junction between the western elevation of the nave and the southern elevation of the tower possibly representing the original facing of the nave.
- 6 A significant patch of fieldstone set in a modern cement mortar and occupying much of the lower stage of the buttress between the quoins and the facing of the nave.

2.9 The buttress was dismantled from the top of the lower weathering, leaving the upper part in situ. The facing on the western elevation was also stripped from the same level. It was noted that the quoins had been bedded in a cement mortar, possibly at the same time as the repair noted at (6) above. The core of the buttress was exposed during the works, revealing the original rubble core. The chronology of the repairs was not generally apparent. A further photographic record was made, and the following features were noted (see Figure 8):

- 7 Original rubble core, formed from a mixture of carstone, chalk cobbles and red brick in a matrix of hydraulic lime mortar.
- 8 Two levelling layers of red brick noted, but whole core in poor condition.
- 9 Evidence for the injection of a lime grout at some stage in a failed attempt to consolidate the rubble core.
- 10 One block of carstone was noted at the base of the W elevation, roughly in line with the nave wall.
- 11 Slab of concrete inserted on the outside of the buttress, possibly as part of a drainage scheme.

2.10 A further visit was made to monitor the ongoing works. Additional material from the core had been removed. A further photographic record was made, and the following features were noted (see Figure 9):

- 12 A line of carstone representing the corner of the nave was revealed following the removal of the block of cemented masonry at the base of the buttress. This lines up with the block of carstone noted at 10.
- 13 Loose packed chalk rubble beneath the buttress, representing the foundation.
- 14 Evidence for bird, or rodent nests was noted within the core, indicating that the crack had been open for some time.
- 15 A number of worked stones were removed from the rubble core. These include a section of arch and three pieces from possible window reveal. A carstone fragment showed evidence of rendering.
- 16 Facing stonework to the nave appears to have been removed to provide a key for the construction of the buttress. The core of the nave wall is solid and bedded in lime mortar.

2.11 A final visit was made to record ongoing works before the buttress was rebuilt. A trench, measuring 1.5m in length and 0.85m in width, had been excavated to accommodate the foundation for the new buttress (Figure 10). It revealed a compact layer of cobbles in a yellowish red sandy matrix, with occasional chalk flecks. A large block of chalk was observed in south-western corner of the trench, bedded in the sand and cobble layer. This may represent a natural outcrop, but gives the impression of having been deliberately placed, possibly as part of the foundation for another structure.

3. Discussion

3.1 The photographic recording and monitoring of the rebuilding of the buttress at the south-western corner of the church has enabled the documentation of a number of features associated with its construction and later phases of repair, including the keying of the buttress into the structure of the nave, the re-use of worked stone in its core, the use of injected lime grout to fill cracks, and evidence for the original south-west corner of the nave.

3.2 The evidence suggests that the buttress was not structural in purpose, but was built during the considerable renovation works in 1879-80 to match in with the newly rebuilt tower. No foundations were provided for the buttress, which sat on a layer of loose chalk rubble.

3.3 Observation of the foundation trench for the new buttress revealed a layer of sand and cobble below the loose chalk rubble. A chalk block was sited in the south-western corner of the trench, bedded into the cobbles. This may represent part of the foundations for an earlier structure, possibly the earlier tower.

Confidence Rating

3.4 During the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation.

3.5 There are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the present project which was less than High.

4. Sources Consulted

Bibliography

Pevsner, N. 2002 *The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* (2nd edition). London: Yale University Press

Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983 *Sheet 4: 1:250,000 scale Soil Map of Eastern England*. Harpenden: SSEW

Bedfordshire and Luton Archives

P125/2/2/1 1879 Faculty for the restoration of Higham Gobion church

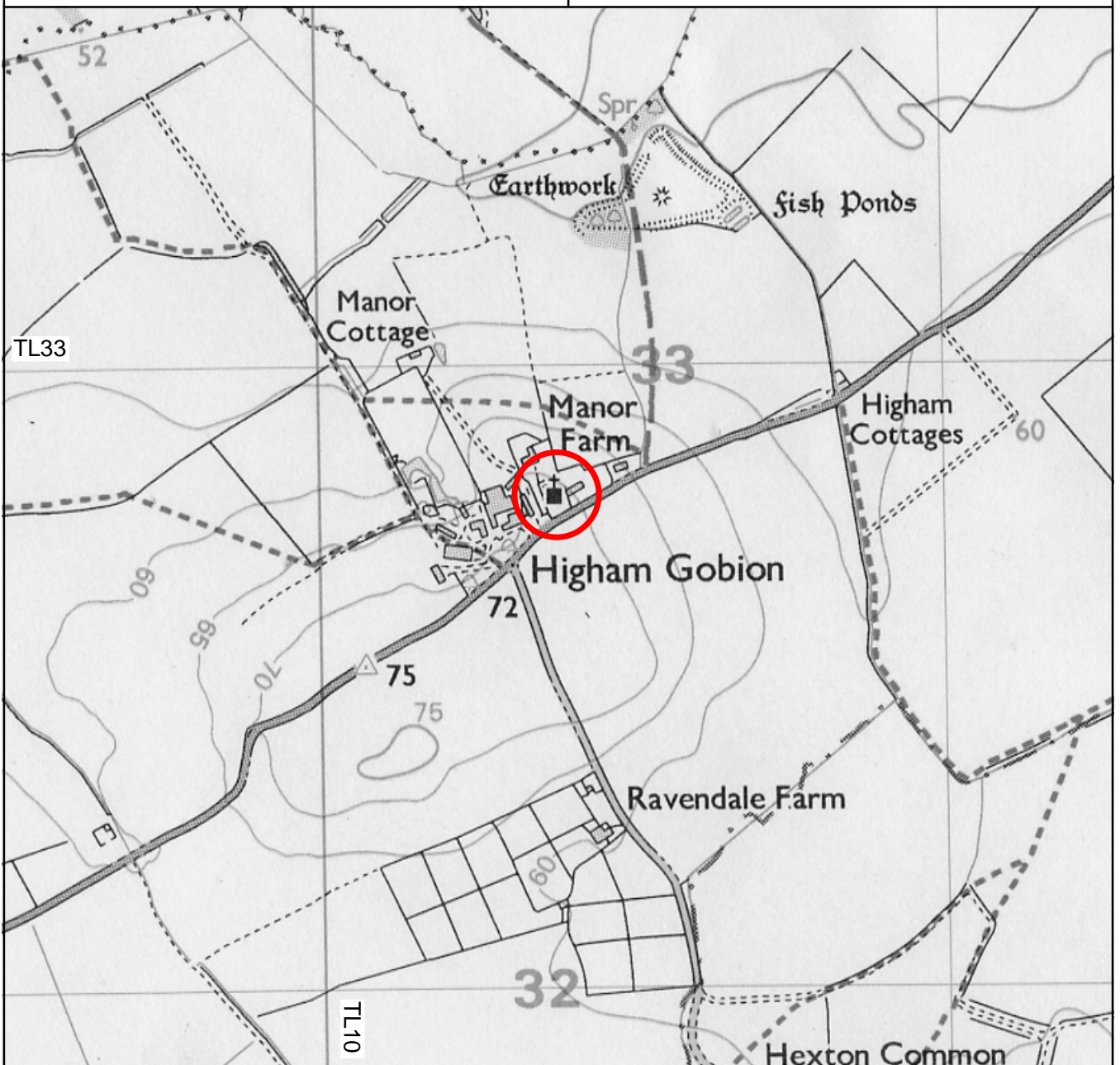
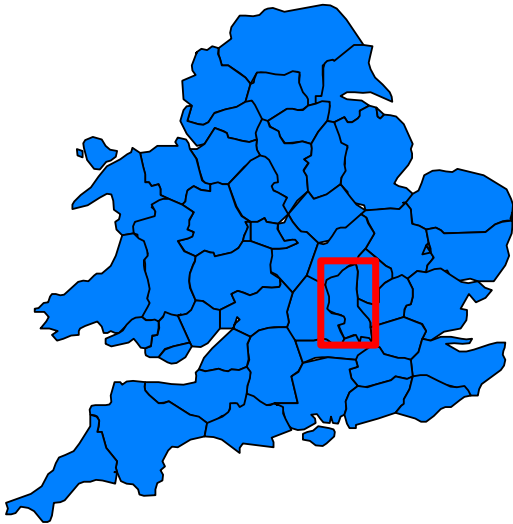
Internet Sites

Bedfordshire and Luton Archives: <http://blars.adlibsoft.com>. Accessed 12 June, 2006

English Heritage, Images of England: www.imagesofengland.org.uk. Accessed 12 June, 2006

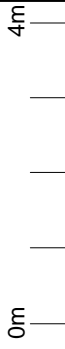
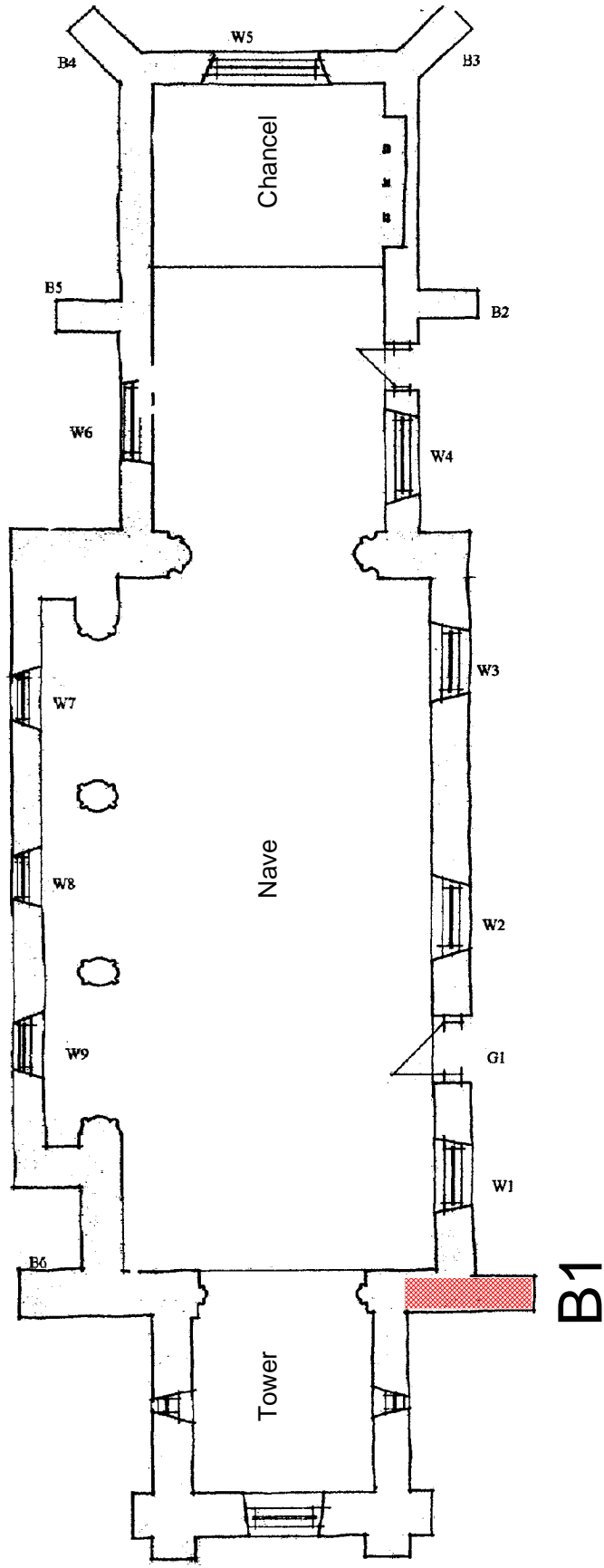
5. Illustrations & Plates

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	Church Plan showing location of Buttress B1
Figure 3	Buttress B1 before works (17/08/2005)
Figure 4	Buttress B1 during works (05/09/2005)
Figure 5	Buttress B1 during works (08/09/2005)
Figure 6	Buttress B1 during works (29/09/2005)
Figure 7	Observed structural evidence (1)
Figure 8	Observed structural evidence (2)
Figure 9	Observed structural evidence (3)
Figure 10	Foundation trench
Plates 1 - 4	Fragments of architectural limestone



Site Location

Scale 1:10,000



Scale 1:100
Figure 2

Church plan showing location of Buttress B1

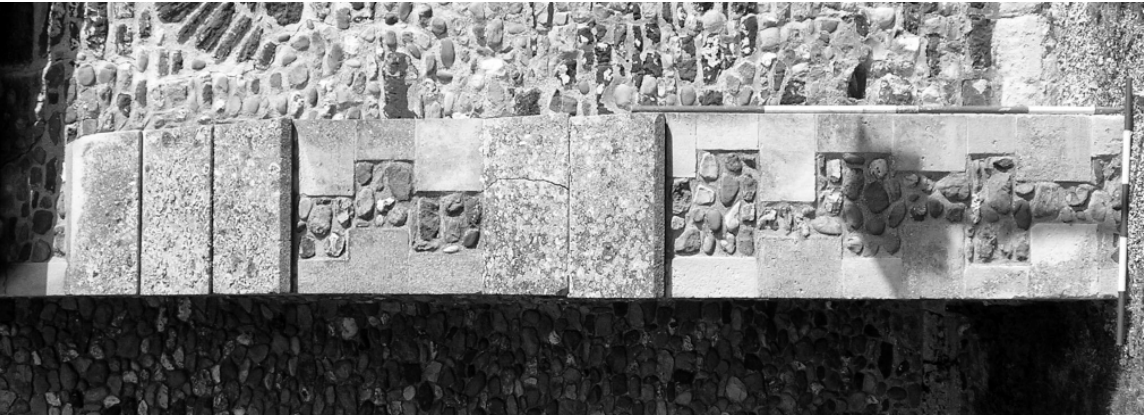


Church of St Margaret,
Higham Gobion
HN548

Buttress B1 Before Works
17 August 2005



East Elevation
Scale 1:20



South Elevation
Scale 1:20



West Elevation
Scale 1:30



Church of St Margaret,
Higham Gobion
HN548

Buttress B1 During Works
5 September 2005



East Elevation
Scale 1:20



South Elevation
Scale 1:20



West Elevation
Scale 1:30



South Elevation
Scale 1:10



West Elevation
Scale 1:20



Church of St Margaret,
Higham Gobion
HN548

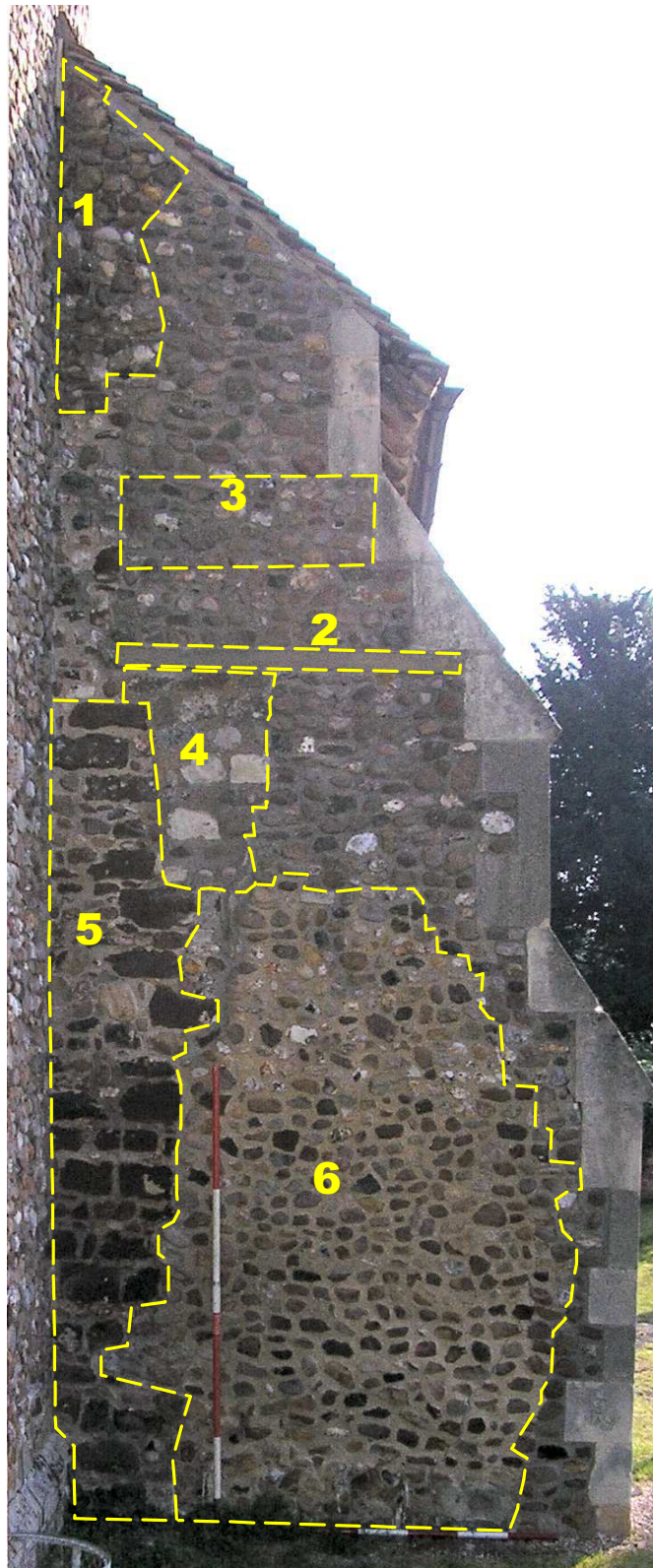
Buttress B1 During Works
29 September 2005



West & South Elevation
Scale 1:20



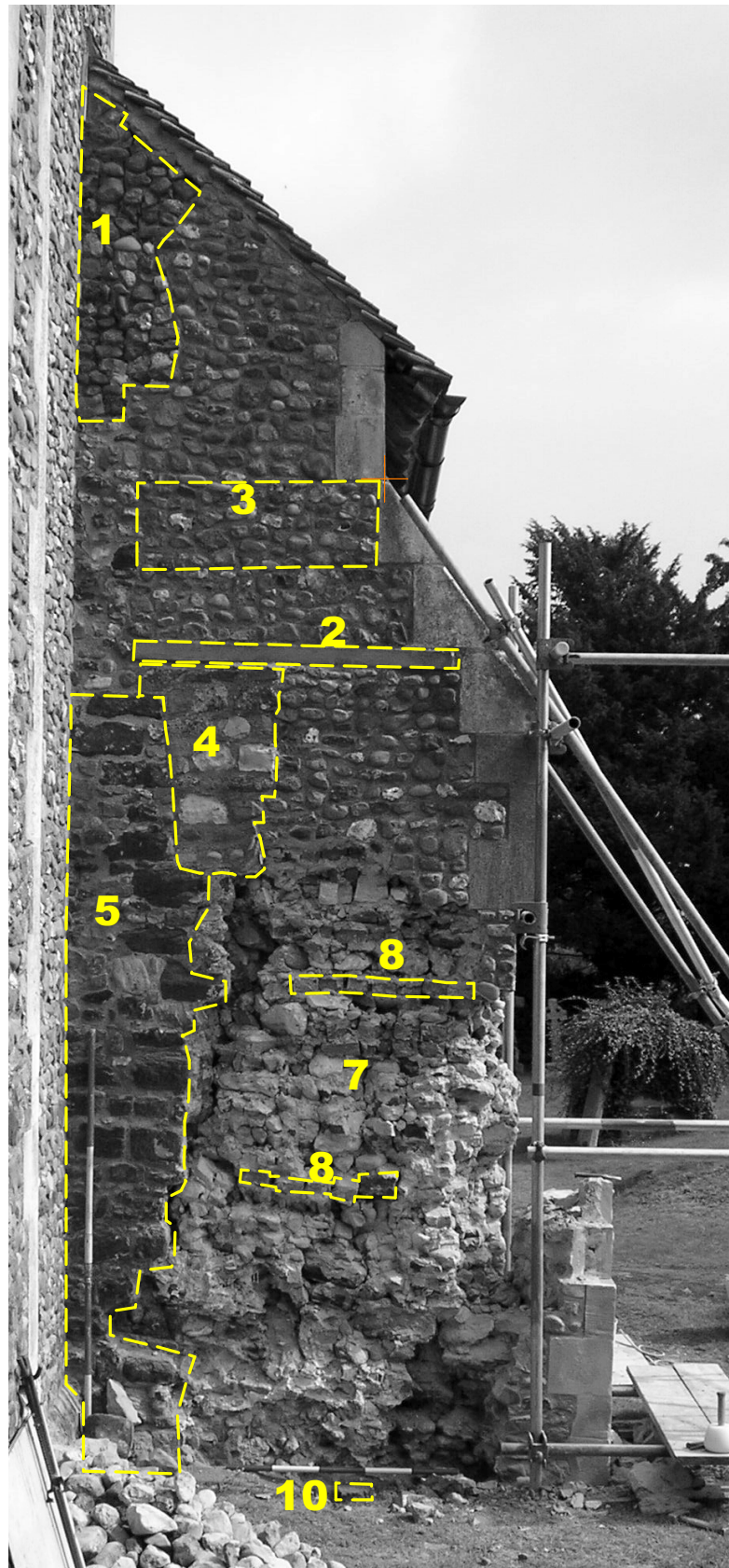
Detail
Scale 1:15



Observed Structural Evidence (1)

Scale 1:30

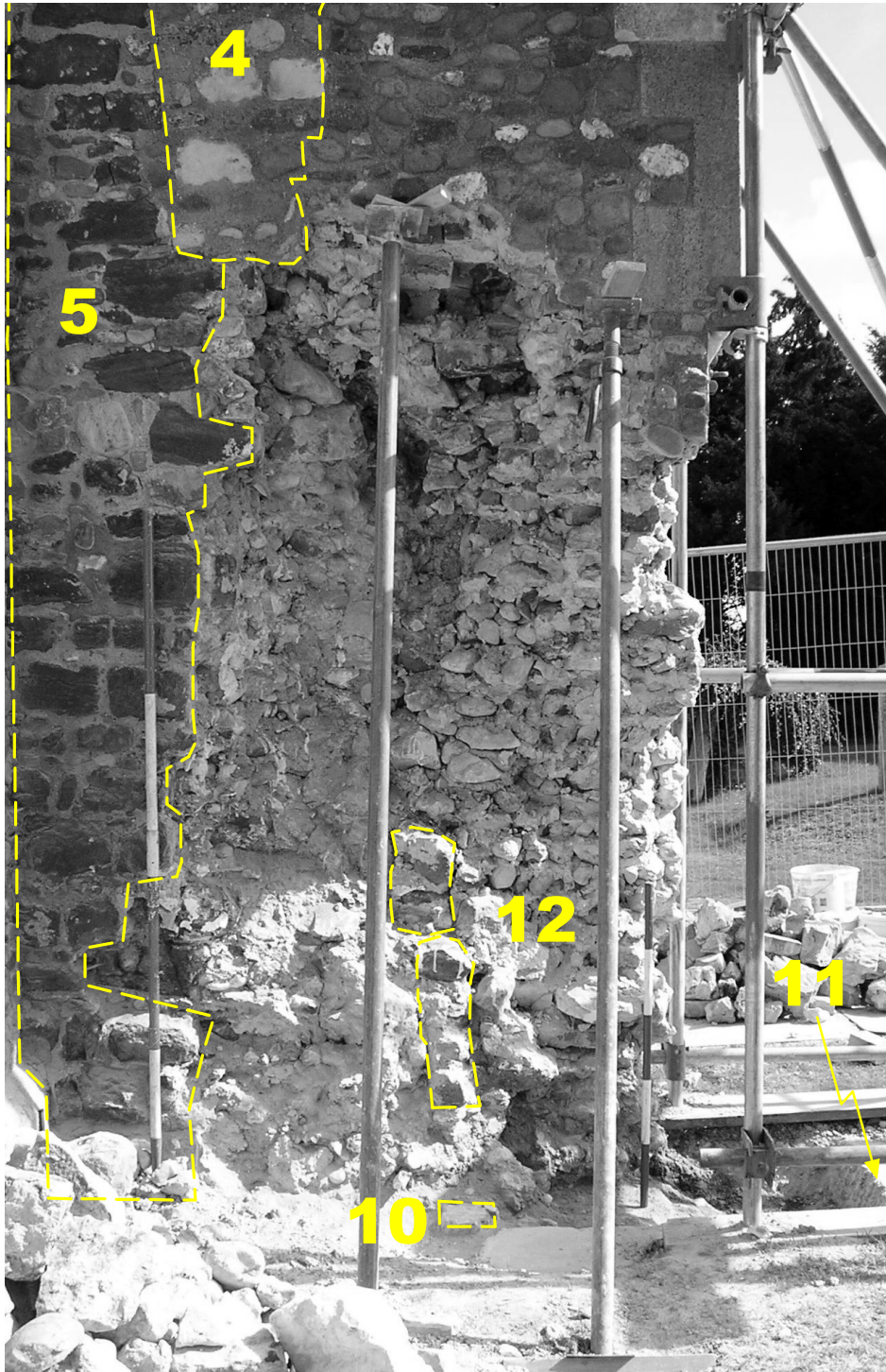
Figure 7



Observed Structural Evidence (2)

Scale 1:30

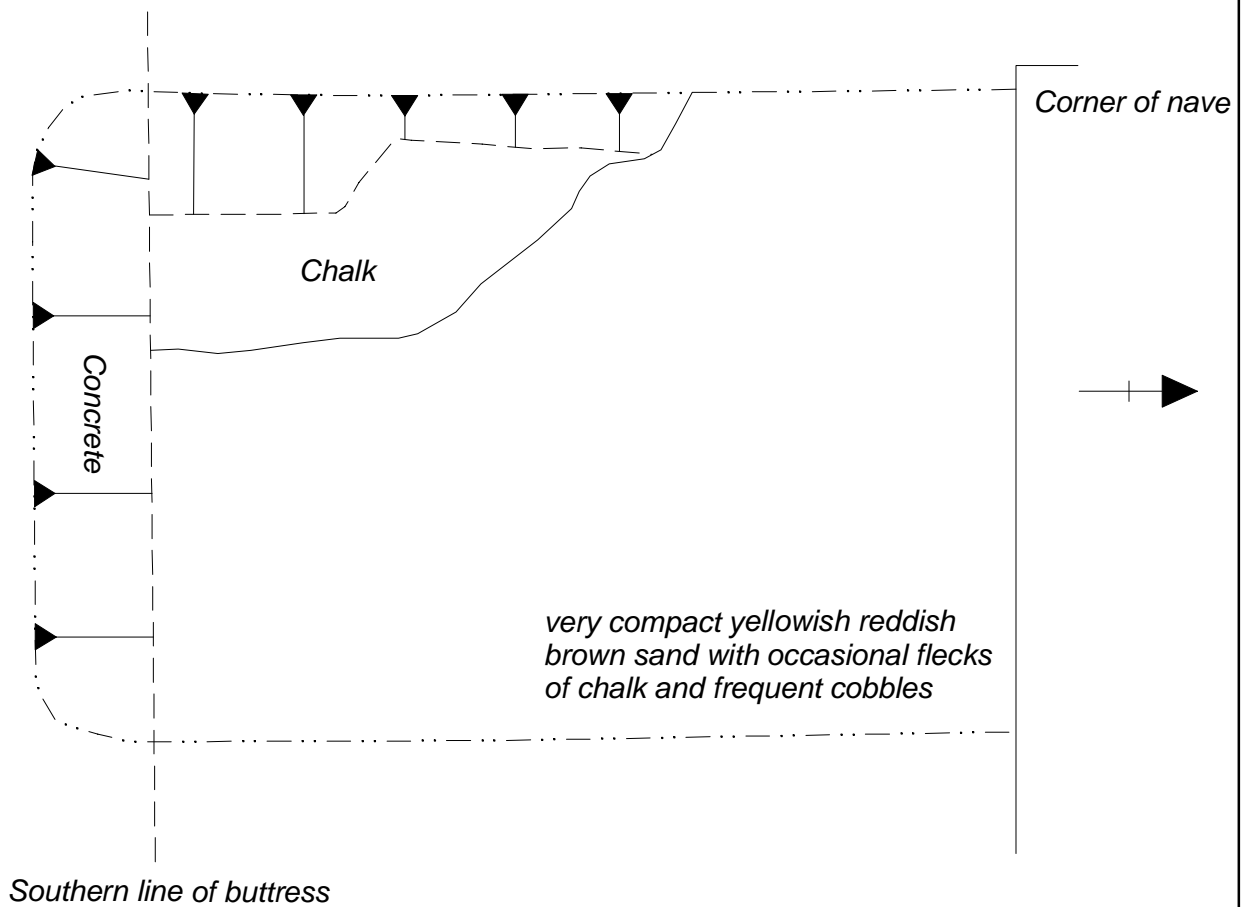
Figure 8



Observed Structural Evidence (3)

Scale 1:20

Figure 9



Foundation trench

Scale 1:10

Figure 10





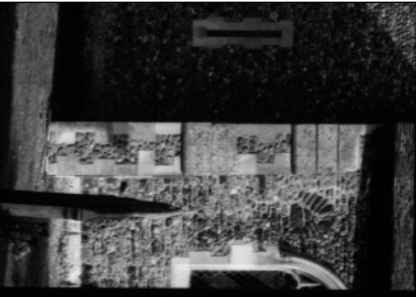
Frame 1: East Elevation



Frame 2: East Elevation



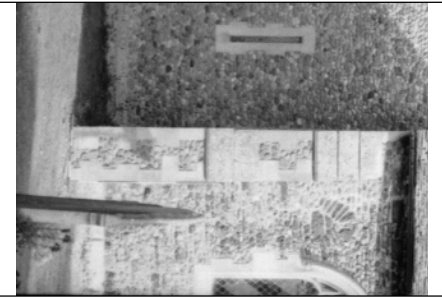
Frame 3: East Elevation



Frame 4: South Elevation



Frame 5: South Elevation



Frame 6: South Elevation



Frame 7: South Elevation



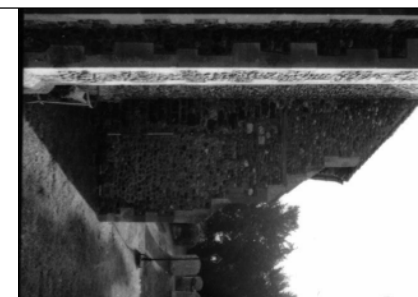
Frame 8: East Elevation



Frame 9: South Elevation



Frame 10: West Elevation



Frame 11: West Elevation



Frame 12: South Elevation



Frame 13: West Elevation



Frame 14: West Elevation



Frame 15: S Elevation of church

Appendix 2

Digital photographic log

Frame Number	Description	Facing
HN548_01	East Elevation – 17/08/2005	W
HN548_02	East Elevation – 17/08/2005	W
HN548_03	East Elevation – 17/08/2005	W
HN548_04	East Elevation – 17/08/2005	W
HN548_05	East Elevation – 17/08/2005	W
HN548_06	South Elevation – 17/08/2005	N
HN548_07	South Elevation – 17/08/2005	N
HN548_08	South Elevation – 17/08/2005	N
HN548_09	West Elevation – 17/08/2005	E
HN548_10	West Elevation – 17/08/2005	E
HN548_11	West Elevation – 17/08/2005	E
HN548_12	East Elevation – 05/09/2005	W
HN548_13	East Elevation – 05/09/2005	W
HN548_14	West Elevation – 05/09/2005	E
HN548_15	West Elevation – 05/09/2005	E
HN548_16	West Elevation – 05/09/2005	E
HN548_17	West & South Elevation – 05/09/2005	NE
HN548_18	West & South Elevation – 05/09/2005	NE
HN548_19	Block of carstone at the base of west elevation	E
HN548_20	Block of carstone at the base of west elevation	E
HN548_21	Block of carstone at the base of west elevation	E
HN548_22	West Elevation – 05/09/2005	E
HN548_23	West Elevation – 08/09/2005	E
HN548_24	West Elevation – 08/09/2005	E
HN548_25	West Elevation – 08/09/2005	E
HN548_26	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_27	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_28	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_29	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_30	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_31	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_32	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_33	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_34	Architectural Limestone	-
HN548_35	South Elevation – 08/09/2005	N
HN548_36	South Elevation – 08/09/2005	N
HN548_37	South Elevation – 08/09/2005	N
HN548_38	South Elevation – 08/09/2005	N
HN548_39	South Elevation – 08/09/2005	N
HN548_40	South Elevation – 08/09/2005	N
HN548_41	West & South Elevation – 29/09/2005	NE
HN548_42	West & South Elevation – 29/09/2005	NE
HN548_43	West & South Elevation, detail – 29/09/2005	NE
HN548_44	West & South Elevation, detail – 29/09/2005	NE
HN548_45	Possible Earlier Foundation	-
HN548_46	Possible Earlier Foundation	-
HN548_47	Possible Earlier Foundation	-
HN548_48	West & South Elevation – 29/09/2005	NE
HN548_49	West & South Elevation – 29/09/2005	NE