

**Church of St Mary Magdalene, Westoning, Bedfordshire**

HN1326

Report No. 1044

<b>Site name and address:</b>	Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Westoning, MK45 5JW		
<b>County:</b>	Bedfordshire	<b>District:</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Village/town:</b>	Westoning	<b>Parish:</b>	Westoning
<b>Planning reference:</b>	n/a	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 02823 32792
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Westoning PCC, c/o Pamela Ward, Chapel Farm, Whipsnade, LU6 2LL		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Drainage works and footpath	<b>Present land use:</b>	Church graveyard
<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 Archaeological Advisor
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	c.50m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	c.50m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Site Code:</b>	HN1326	<b>Other reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.</b>	Observation and Recording	<b>Archive Recipient:</b>	Bedford Museum
<b>Start of work</b>	02/02/2017	<b>Finish of work</b>	02/02/2017
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	5389	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Medieval/Post medieval
<b>Oasis UID:</b>	heritage1-275169	<b>Significant finds:</b>	Human remains
<b>Monument types:</b>	Church		
<b>Physical archive:</b>	None		
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>	None		

**Narrative****Background**

In response to the requirements of a diocesan faculty, the Heritage Network was commissioned by Westoning Parochial Church Council to implement a programme of archaeological monitoring during the re-excavation of a French drain and the excavation of a new footpath at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Westoning, Bedfordshire, MK45 5JW.

The site, centred on NGR TL 02823 32792, is located in the churchyard, on the western side of the church, which is aligned north-east to south-west. The churchyard is bounded to the north by Church Road, to the west by The Grove, to the south by Manor Gardens and to the east by The Old Vicarage (Figure 1). The church, which forms part of the manorial complex to the north-west of the modern village of Westoning, is a Grade II\* listed building (LBS no. 38101). It was originally built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but was rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and altered in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The chancel and nave are largely 14<sup>th</sup> century in date and the West Tower dates to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Westoning Manor house (HER 13846), which was built in the 1840s, lies to the south-west of the church. The medieval moated manorial site (HER 233) lies to the south-east of the present manor and is a Scheduled Monument (SM 20407).

**Results**

The works involved a site visit to monitor the re-excavation of an old French drain trench on the west side of the church. The line of a new footpath was excavated prior to the arrival on the site of the monitoring archaeologist. However this trench was no deeper than 0.2m and so was deemed to have not been deep enough to impact upon any potential archaeological features.

**Re-excavated French drainage trench**

The trench for the new drain was hand-excavated and ran along the exterior walls at the western side of the church, from the south-eastern corner of the south porch to the north-western corner of the nave. It measured approximately 28m in length, 0.40m in width and approximately 0.50m in depth (Figure 2).

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The stratigraphy exposed in the east facing section consisted of dark greyish brown friable sandy silty clay topsoil, c.0.20m in depth, over a graveyard soil consisting of mid-brown, friable silty sandy clay with very small flint and chalk inclusions, >0.30m in depth.

The west facing section revealed the foundations to the tower and the west end of the nave. The foundations to the southern and western wall of the nave to the south of the tower were flush with the standing walls (Plates 2 & 3). These consisted of coursed flint and limestone rubble, bonded with dry sandy lime mortar with chalk inclusions. This changed at the south-western corner of the tower. From this point north the existing walls stood on limestone blocks, which stepped out from the wall for between 0.20m and 0.40m (Figure 3, Plates 4 – 7). Below the blocks the foundations consisted of coursed flint and limestone rubble, bonded with lime mortar. It is possible that the walls to the south were originally of similar construction, but have been altered by later work.

No clear evidence for a distinction between the walls to the nave and the walls to the tower was observed, suggesting that they may be contemporary. This indicates that the west wall to the nave may have been rebuilt when the tower was added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. All of the exposed foundations continued below the impact level of the trench. No evidence for a foundation cut was observed in the trench.

A number of fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered from the cemetery soil (Plate 8). These were placed in the care of the sub-contractor to be handed to the Church Warden for re-interment within the churchyard. No other features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were encountered in the trench for the drain.

#### New Footpath

The line of a new footpath was excavated roughly parallel to the new French drain. It ran west from the existing footpath to the south porch for approximately 11m, before turning to run north-west around the tower (Figure 2). The path was excavated and laid prior without monitoring, but the depth of the trench was no more than c.0.20m deep, so was unlikely to impact on any potential archaeological remains.

#### **Conclusions**

The church, which forms part of the manorial complex to the north-west of the modern village of Westoning, is a Grade II\* listed building (LBS no. 38101). It was originally built in the 12th century, but was rebuilt in the 14th century and altered in the 15th century. The chancel and nave are largely 14th century in date and the west tower dates to the 15th century.

The present project involved monitoring the groundworks for new drainage at the west end of the church. These works revealed the foundations for the tower and the west wall of the nave, which consisted of very roughly coursed flint and limestone rubble. The evidence suggests that the tower and the west wall to the nave are contemporary, dating to the construction of the tower in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The observed stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a layer of topsoil sealing a cemetery soil over 0.30m in depth. No grave cuts or other significant features were encountered.

A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was recovered during the course of the monitored groundworks. This was collected and placed in the care of the sub-contractors to be handed to the Church Warden for re-interment.

#### **Illustrations**

Figure 1 Site Location  
Figure 2 Site Layout  
Figure 3 Plan showing the change in the wall foundations

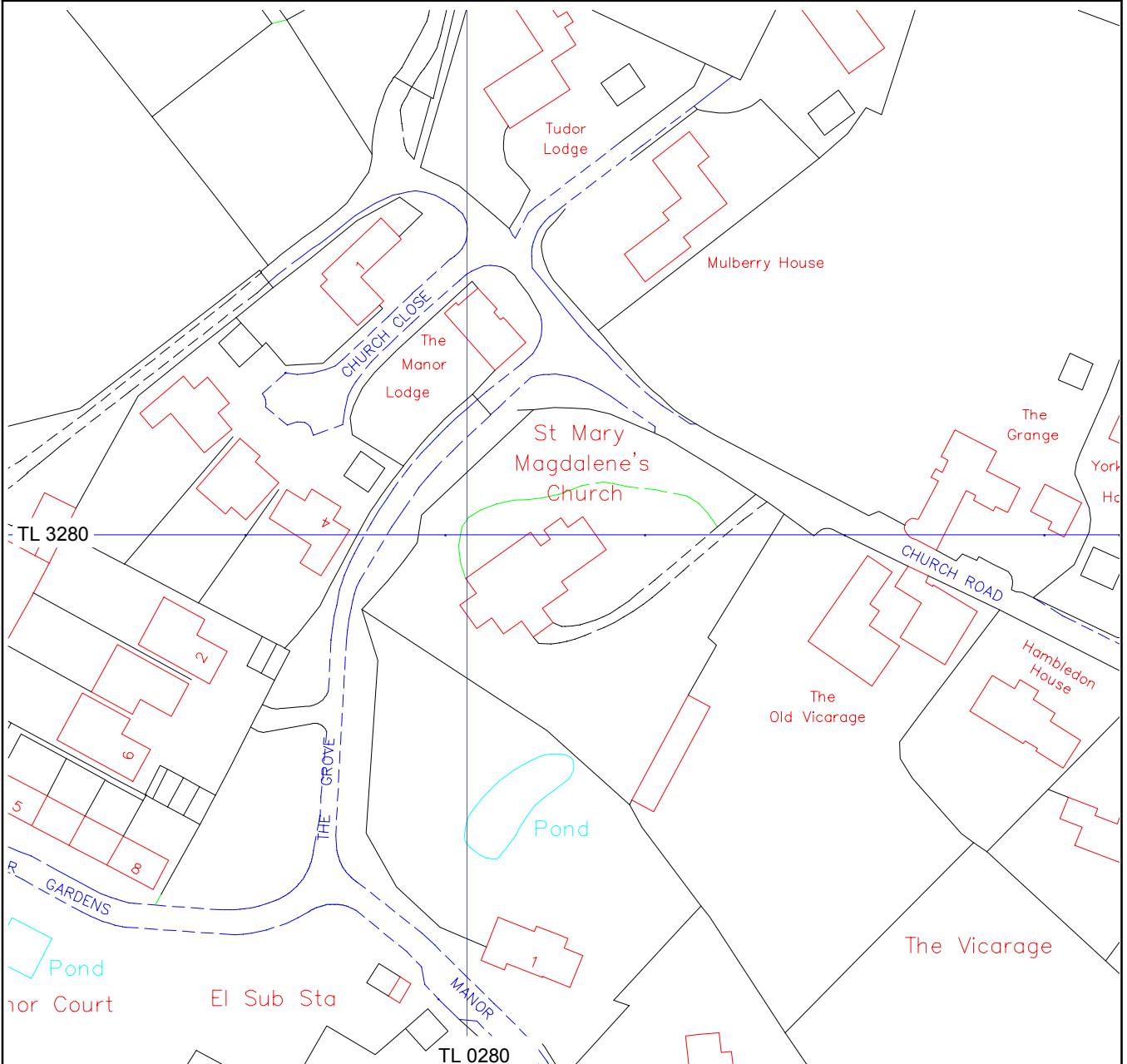
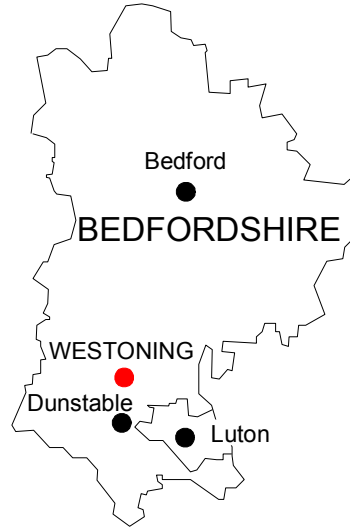
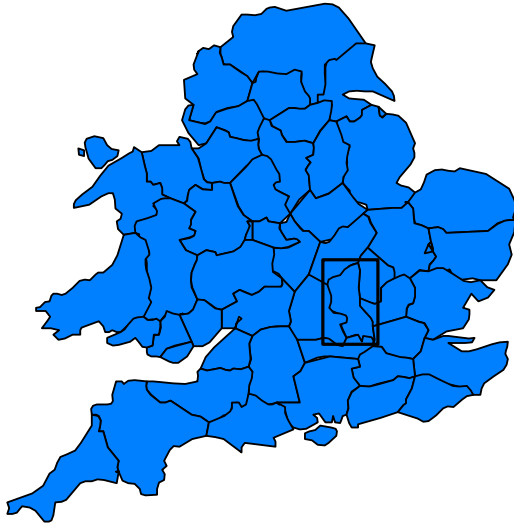
Plate 1 St Mary's Church, looking southeast  
Plate 2 Wall foundations looking east  
Plate 3 Wall foundations, looking north  
Plate 4 Wall foundations, looking south  
Plate 5 Wall foundations looking south  
Plate 6 Wall foundations looking south  
Plate 7 Wall foundations looking east  
Plate 8 Disarticulated bone fragments

Greg Jones BA (Hons) MA AIFA  
February 2017

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

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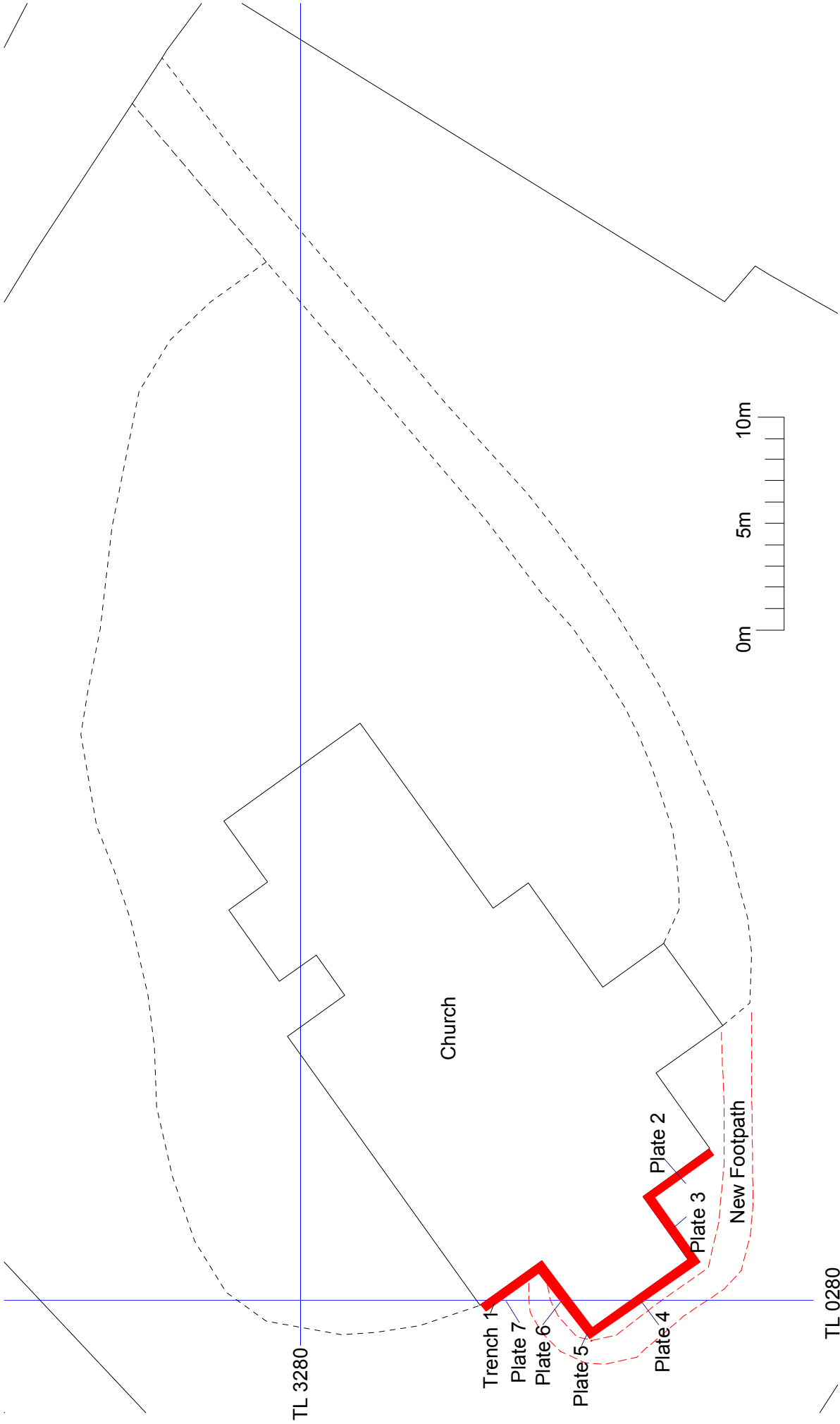


Site Location

Scale 1:1250

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Figure 1



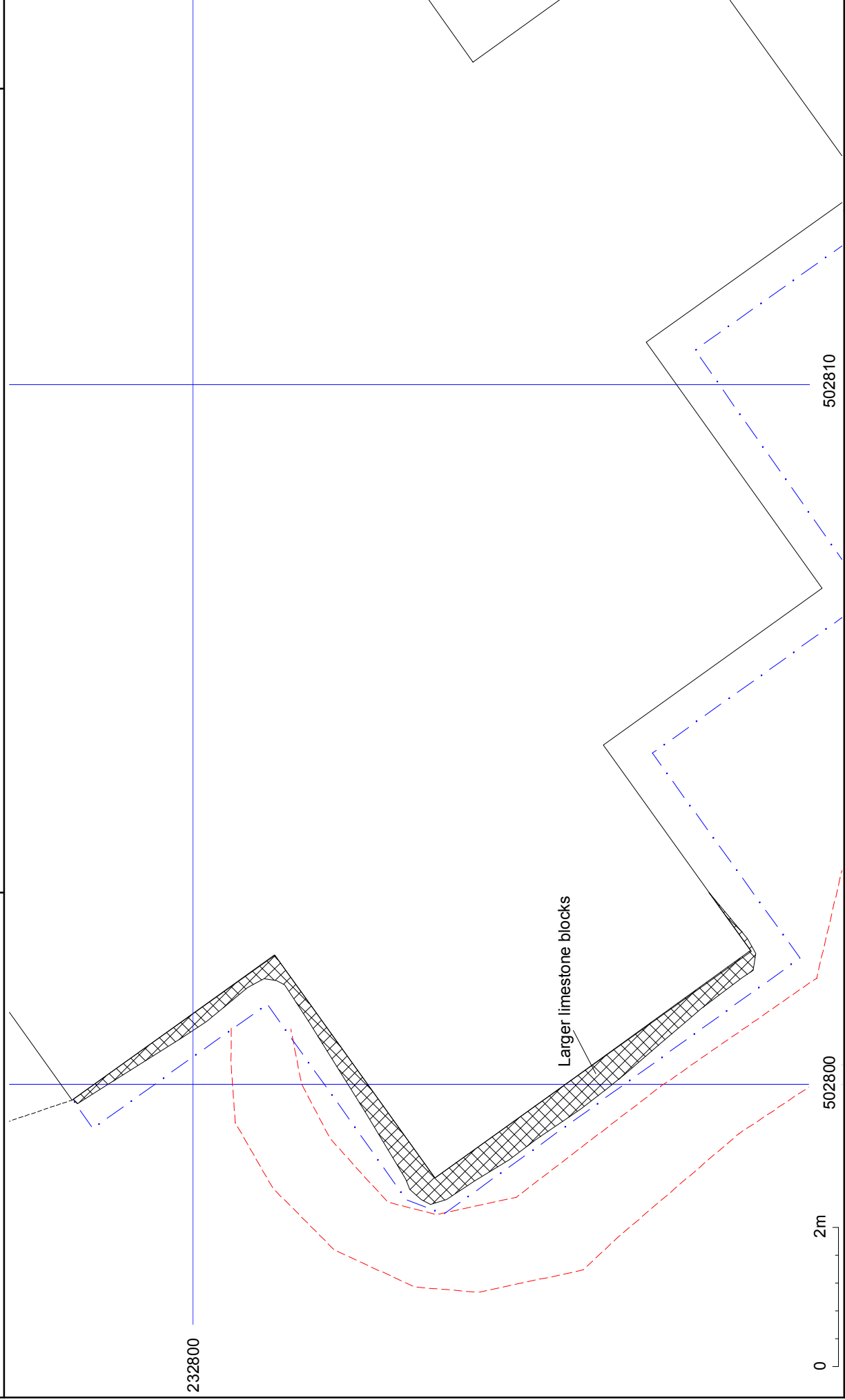
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Site layout

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Figure 2



Plan showing the change in the wall foundations

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Scale 1:75

Figure 3





Plate 1: St. Mary's Church looking southeast



Plate 2: Wall foundations looking east



Plate 3: Wall foundations looking north



Plate 4: West entrance wall foundations looking southeast





Plate 5: Wall foundations looking south



Plate 6: Wall foundations looking south



Plate 7: Wall foundations looking east



Plate 8: Disarticulated human remains