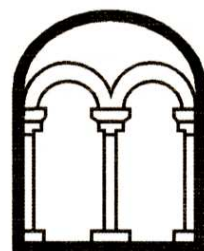


**CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST
CHELVESTON
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS
AND PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology



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On behalf of:
St John the Baptist, Chelveston PCC



Contents

Preface	5
Acknowledgements	5
Version History	5
Non-technical Summary	6
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Planning Background	7
1.2 Site Location and Description	7
1.3 Archaeological Background	8
1.4 Project Objectives	8
2. METHODOLOGY	9
3. RESULTS	10
3.1 Trench 1 – South Porch, South Aisle and Chancel	10
3.2 Trench 2 – Chancel to Churchyard Perimeter Wall	11
3.3 Trench 3 – Graveyard Perimeter Wall to Caldecott Road	12
3.4 Artefacts	13
4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	15
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY	16

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location plan

Figure 2: All-features plan

Figure 3: Graves, plans and sections of Trenches 1–3

Figure 4: Trench 1 selected photographs

Figure 5: Trenches 1 and 2 selected photographs

Figure 6: Trenches 2 and 3 selected photographs

List of Plates

Plate 1: General shot of the church, looking NE

Plate 2: Trench 1 – general shot, looking east

Plate 3: Trench 2 – general shot, looking NE

Plate 4: Trench 3 – general shot, looking ESE

Plate 5: Trench 1 – general shot, looking NE



- Plate 6:** Trench 1 – water pipe connection point, old service pipe and gravel-filled French drain
- Plate 7:** Trench 1 – porch foundation courses (112)
- Plate 8:** Trench 1 – grave [105], looking WNW
- Plate 9:** Trench 1 – grave [109], looking east
- Plate 10:** Trench 1 – fragments of machine-disturbed skeleton (110) from grave [109]
- Plate 11:** Trench 1 – disarticulated bone from cemetery soil layer (103)
- Plate 12:** Trench 1 – group of large limestone fragments (113)
- Plate 13:** Trench 2 – grave [205], looking north-west
- Plate 14:** Trench 2 – grave [208], looking west
- Plate 15:** Trench 3 – layers (300), (301), (304), (302), looking north
- Plate 16:** Trench 3 – layers (300), (301), (302), (303), looking NW
- Plate 17:** Trench 3 – general shot of the ground sloping away from the access path, looking south
- Plate 18:** Residual Roman pottery from make-up layer (301)
- Plate 19:** Late medieval/post-medieval lead-glazed floor tile from make-up layer (102)

The figures are bound at the end of the document. The plates are contained within Figures 2 and 4–6, with the exception of Plates 18 and 19, which are bound separately.



Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and was prepared solely for the benefit of the client. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and should not be relied upon by any third party. This document should not be used for any other purpose without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and the prior written authority of Albion Archaeology (a trading unit of Central Bedfordshire Council). Any person/party relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Albion Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Albion Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the persons/party by whom it was commissioned. This document is limited by the state of knowledge at the time it was written.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by John Ellred on behalf of the Church of St John the Baptist, Chelveston PCC. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner (Project Officer), who also prepared this report. The figures were produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

Version History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Issue date</i>	<i>Reason for re-issue</i>
<i>1.2</i>	<i>12/12/2019</i>	<i>Comments from DAA and AAA</i>
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Non-technical Summary

The Vicar and PCC of St John the Baptist, Chelveston obtained planning consent (19/01170/FUL) from East Northamptonshire Council for the resurfacing of the driveway to the churchyard and the establishment of a new path giving access from the north-east corner of the churchyard to the south porch of the church, together with a new mains water supply to the church from Caldecott Road.

The Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Archaeological Advisor (AAA) advised that the route of the proposed water pipe had the potential to affect archaeological remains including burials, as had been highlighted by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, who had provided a brief for archaeological monitoring of all the works.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by John Elldred on behalf of the PCC to produce a Written Scheme of Investigation, based on the Brief, and to oversee the groundworks associated with the new path and the excavation of the water pipe trench, in order to investigate and record any archaeological remains that might be present.

The archaeological monitoring took place on 1st and 2nd October 2019. The works comprised the monitoring and investigation of a narrow, c.0.8m-deep and c.120m-long, machine-excavated service trench that ran from Caldecott Road to the west end of the church's south aisle.

The trench revealed that separate graveyard soil layers exist to a considerable depth. Only a small patch of natural geology was exposed south of the church. Four burials and an additional probable burial were identified. None contained any artefacts and their precise date is unknown.

The trench along the access path from Caldecott Road revealed evidence for earlier surfaces and for consolidation of the entrance to the graveyard.

The only part of the church foundations exposed by the service trench was at the south-west corner of the porch. The foundation was 0.6m deep and extended 0.3m beyond the porch wall; it comprised roughly hewn, unmortared limestone blocks. A loose group of large stone blocks recorded close to the south aisle is judged to be a probable demolition deposit.

Layers either side of the graveyard entrance produced a small quantity of relatively unabraded Roman pottery. These are residual artefacts, derived from a Roman site in the vicinity. Their presence accords with earlier records of the discovery of Roman pottery within the churchyard and with known contemporary sites within the village.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

The Vicar and PCC of St John the Baptist, Chelveston obtained planning consent (19/01170/FUL) from East Northamptonshire Council for the resurfacing of the driveway to the churchyard and the establishment of a new path giving access from the existing hardstanding at the north-east corner of the churchyard to the south porch of the church, together with a new mains water supply to the church from Caldecott Road.

The Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Archaeological Advisor (AAA) advises the LPA on archaeological matters. The AAA advised that the route of the proposed water pipe had the potential to affect archaeological remains including burials, as had been highlighted by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, who had provided a brief for archaeological monitoring of all the works proposed in the planning application (DAA 2019).

The AAA advised that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on any archaeological remains present and (in accordance with NPPF paragraph 199) recommended a condition should be attached to any consent, in order to secure adequate provision for the investigation and recording of any affected remains.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by John Ellred on behalf of the PCC to produce a written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2019), based on the DAA's Brief, and to oversee the groundworks associated with the new path and the excavation of the water pipe (and part-way telecom) trench, in order to investigate and record any archaeological remains that might be present.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Chelveston is a small village in Northamptonshire, within the bounds of East Northamptonshire Council and c.2km north-west of the county boundary with Bedfordshire (Figure 1). It lies c.3 km east of Higham Ferrers on the B645 road from Higham Ferrers to St Neots. To the south is the hamlet of Caldecott and the settlement of Chelston Rise; the three settlements together comprise the civil parish of Chelveston cum Caldecott. The churchyard lies in largely open farm land between the settlements of Chelveston and Caldecott.

The Church of St John the Baptist is centred on NGR SP 9885 6913 and lies close to the 65m OD contour line. The underlying solid geology consists of Jurassic limestone and mudstone. No superficial geology is recorded, although there are extensive deposits of boulder clay across the eastern half of the parish¹.

¹ Contains British Geological Survey materials ©NERC [2014]



1.3 **Archaeological Background**

The Church of St John the Baptist is a building of major architectural and archaeological significance. It is Grade II* listed (NHLE 1040380; HER 3174/1/1) with the surviving fabric principally dating to the mid-13th, 14th and 17th centuries².

Remains associated with earlier phases of the church and earlier activities within the site may be preserved within the churchyard, including evidence for burial rites in the form of human bone (either disarticulated or articulated skeletons).

The church and its churchyard lie within the postulated extent of medieval Caldecott (HER 3174). A number of areas of late prehistoric/Roman settlement have also been recorded within the parish and particularly in the immediate vicinity of the churchyard (HER 1326, 3158, 1381). Roman pottery was reportedly found during restoration of the church tower (HER 1326/0/0). It is possible that remains associated with such settlement may survive within the churchyard, notwithstanding the disturbance that will have occurred during centuries of Christian burial.

1.4 **Project Objectives**

The purpose of the proposed programme of archaeological work was to make a full record of any archaeological remains impacted by the development, and to place them within their cultural and environmental setting.

The specific aims of the archaeological work were to:

- monitor all groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains;
- investigate the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains encountered within the groundworks;
- seek to ensure minimal disturbance of any articulated human remains encountered during groundworks;
- record any archaeological stratigraphy that had built up against the walls of the church and thereby determine the extent of modern disturbance by, for example, past drainage schemes.

Dependent on the nature of any remains that were revealed, specific research aims would be derived from the regional research framework, *East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework*³.

² The full Historic England list description can be viewed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1040380> [accessed 28-08-2019].

³<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/researchframeworks/eastmidlands/wiki/> [accessed 30-08-2019]



2. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological monitoring took place on 1st and 2nd October 2019. The works comprised the monitoring and investigation of a narrow, c.0.8m deep and c.120m long, machine-excavated service trench (water pipe and part-way telecom) that ran from Caldecott Road to the west end of the church's south aisle (Figure 1).

In order to accommodate both the water pipe and a protective duct for the telecom cable, the trench was required to be 0.3m wide from Caldecott Road to the north-east corner of the chancel. At this point, the telecom duct split-off to run along the north wall of the chancel, with its depth reduced to just 0.2m.

From the point where the telecom pipe split-off, the water pipe trench was narrowed for the remainder of its route (0.08m at the base to 0.15m at the top). It ran east of the chancel and then close to the south side of the church to the connection point towards the west end of the south aisle.

The path resurfacing required only shallow (c.0.2m deep) groundworks. Given the topsoil depths seen in the service trench, it was judged unnecessary to archaeologically monitor this part of the works.

The methods employed during the project complied with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of conduct* (2014) and *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014); Historic England's *The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (2015) and *Guidance for Best Practice for Treatment of Human Remains Excavated From Christian Burial Grounds in England* (2005) and subsequent Ministry of Justice guidance; and Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* (2001).

Within the narrow pipe trench, the exposed features and deposits of archaeological interest were cleaned and investigated where necessary. Observations and measurements were recorded on *pro forma* recording sheets and a digital photographic record was made of the works.

All the fragments of human bone that were uncovered were retained on site and were respectfully re-interred with a short church service beside the ossuary created by the PCC (pers. comm. W.J. Ellred).



3. RESULTS

For ease of recording, the excavation of the continuous service run was dealt with on site as three separate trenches, numbered 1, 2 and 3 (Figure 2). This subdivision is maintained within this report for ease of reference between the figures and the following descriptive text.

Individual deposits/features were recorded on site as contexts, using numbers in square brackets for cuts [***] and round brackets (***) for fills or layers. The layers are described for each trench from top to bottom.

3.1 Trench 1 – South Porch, South Aisle and Chancel

Trench 1 was excavated from the south wall of the south aisle, crossed in front of the porch, and continued along the chancel, turning to the north-east along the east end of the chancel. The water pipe trench was *c.*3.39m long, *c.*0.80m deep and varied in width from 0.08m at the base to 0.15m at the top. The narrowness of the trench prevented any clear view of the section at depth and made any cleaning of the sides impractical.

3.1.1 Pipe connection point to the south aisle

The new water pipe replaced an existing plastic water pipe from a neighbouring property. The existing water pipe was installed relatively recently and a small breach had been made through the fabric of the south aisle wall to the interior kitchen area. This breach was re-used for the new water pipe.

The new trench sloped upwards at 45 degrees to the connection point, which was relatively 'high' at just below ground level. The south aisle foundations were not exposed, being hidden by the loose gravel of a modern French drain that borders the south aisle wall (Plate 6).

3.1.2 Porch foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the south-west corner of the porch doorway foundations (112), which were *c.*0.6m from top to bottom and *c.*0.3m wider than the porch doorway wall to the west. It is assumed that the foundation was constructed within a trench, the upper part of which has been destroyed by the modern French drain (Plate 7).

The foundation comprised roughly hewn limestone blocks, which ranged from 150mm x 100mm x 60mm to 160mm x 150mm 80mm. The blocks were arranged in a fitted, drystone-wall fashion with gaps infilled with silt.

3.1.3 Layers revealed by Trench 1

From top to bottom, Trench 1 revealed:

- a *c.*0.12m-thick turfed topsoil (100);
- a *c.*0.12m-thick former path surface of small and medium limestone fragments (101);
- a 0.1–0.2m-thick possible imported make-up layer of mid-yellow-grey silt with limestone fragments (102);
- a *c.*0.6m-thick layer of cemetery soil of dark grey clay silt with limestone fragments and occasional disarticulated human bone (103).



- In the base of the trench a single small patch of undisturbed geology of light grey-orange clay was observed.

The 'cemetery soil' layer (103) was typical of cemetery deposits — a dark-coloured soil created over a considerable period of time by the disturbance and 'churning' of the ground by periodic re-excavation for burials. This process also causes human bone to be dispersed throughout the deposit (Plate 11). These rich soils are also subject to disturbance through 'worm action'. Identifying individual grave cuts within such cemetery soils is often impossible, as the graves are backfilled with the same deposit.

3.1.4 Grave cuts

Two broadly east-west aligned grave cuts were just discernible within the narrow trench in areas where human bone had been disturbed by the narrow trenching bucket.

The vertical faces of the trench exposed slightly differing deposits with steep-edged, flat-based profiles that defined the two grave cuts [105] and [108] (Figure 3; Plates 8 and 9). The graves were cut from 0.3–0.4m below the current cemetery ground level and were *c.*0.8m deep.

Grave [105], as visible, contained an *in-situ* human femur (106). It was backfilled with a primary deposit of mid-brown-grey clay silt (107) and an secondary deposit of mid-orange-grey clay silt with moderate medium-sized limestone fragments.

Grave [109] contained a skull, femur and pelvic and spine fragments (110), which were disturbed by the narrow trenching bucket (Plate 10). It was backfilled with dark grey clay silt (111).

No artefacts were present within the exposed grave backfills and their date is unknown.

3.1.5 Loose stone fragments

A group of large limestone blocks were present at a location towards the south-east corner of the south aisle within layer (103). The blocks continued beyond the limit of the trench to the south-east but were not present within the north-west trench face (Plate 12). The unworked limestone blocks ranged from 100mm x 80mm x 70mm to 500mm x 350mm 150mm. The blocks were loosely grouped, not arranged as a structure and no mortar deposits were present. They are judged to be either a demolition or unused construction deposit.

3.2 Trench 2 – Chancel to Churchyard Perimeter Wall

Trench 2 ran from the north-east end of Trench 1 to the entrance to the churchyard, excavated as a slight arc on a broadly SW-NE alignment. It was *c.*21m long, *c.*0.8m deep and was widened to 0.3m in order to accommodate the telecom duct as well as the water pipe. An additional 0.2m-deep segment of telecom trench was hand-excavated along the north side of the chancel to the connection point (Figure 2).

3.2.1 Layers revealed by Trench 2

The layers within Trench 2 were similar to those in Trench 1. From top to bottom:



- a c.0.1m-thick turfed topsoil (200);
- a c.0.1m-thick former path surface of limestone fragments (201);
- a c.0.25m-thick cemetery soil layer of mid brown grey clay silt and occasional disarticulated human bone (202);
- a c 0.28m-thick cemetery soil layer of dark grey clay-silt with limestone fragments and occasional disarticulated human bone (203).

Towards the east end of the trench a gradual change in colour was noted as layer (203) gave way to a mid-brown-grey clay-silt with limestone fragments (204).

In the base of the trench a variation in the cemetery soil to dark grey-brown clay-silt was observed immediately south-west of burial [208] (see below). The mid-brown-grey layer (202) contrasted notably in colour to the dark cemetery soil (203) below it, and appeared to be a possible import deposit, designed to raise and level the cemetery surface.

Cemetery soil layer (203) contained occasional fragments of Roman pottery. The burials and cemetery soils are associated with the church and are thus of medieval date or later. The Roman pottery is residual but does indicate the presence of a Roman site in the immediate vicinity.

3.2.2 Grave cuts

Two broadly east-west aligned burials were partially visible at the base of the 0.30m-wide trench (Figure 3; Plates 13–14). During machining, the grave cuts were not discernible against the dark cemetery soil with the grave locations only being identified as bone was reached at the base of the trench.

The revealed part of grave [205] contained a skull, spinal column, clavicles and left upper arm (206). The grave and was backfilled with a primary deposit of dark brown-grey clay-silt (207). The revealed part of grave [208] contained a skull and left upper arm (209). A pig jaw bone was also present in the brown-grey clay-silt grave backfill (211).

An additional skull was located, visible as a void in the base of the trench (Figure 3). The skull probably indicates the location of a third east-west aligned burial.

No dateable artefacts were present within the exposed grave backfills and their precise date is unknown.

3.3 Trench 3 – Graveyard Perimeter Wall to Caldecott Road

Trench 3 was a continuation of Trench 2, excavated in a straight line from the churchyard perimeter wall to Caldecott Road, following the access path to the church. It was c.60m long, c.0.8m deep and 0.3m wide, accommodating both the water pipe and the telecom cable duct (Figure 2).

3.3.1 Layers revealed by Trench 3

The layers within Trench 3 shared similar characteristics to those at the east end of Trench 2, despite being outside the extant perimeter of the churchyard. However, these layers did not contain any human bone.

At its west end Trench 3 revealed, from top to bottom:



- a block paving surface;
- a c.0.1m-thick levelling layer of silty sand and gravel (300);
- a c.0.27m-thick layer of mid-brown-grey sandy silt (301);
- a c.0.25m-thick layer of dark grey-black sandy silt with frequent medium and large limestone fragments (304), which intruded slightly inside the churchyard perimeter and continued down beyond the bottom of the trench (Plate 15).

Towards its centre and east end Trench 3 revealed, from top to bottom:

- a c.0.14m-thick surface and levelling layer of silty sand and gravel (300);
- a c.0.4m-thick layer of mid-brown-grey sandy silt (301);
- a c.0.14m-thick layer of dark grey-black sandy silt with occasional medium and large limestone fragments (302);
- undisturbed geological horizon of light yellow-orange sandy silt (303), revealed at the base of the trench (Plate 16).

Layer (304) was similar to the Trench 2 layer (203), but with frequent limestone fragments. The latter may represent wet-ground consolidation for an earlier, lower-level entrance point to the churchyard. Layer (302) is also interpreted as a ‘buried’ lower-level trackway/topsoil deposit.

Layer (301) contrasted notably in colour with the darker layers (304) and (302) beneath it. It appeared to be an imported make-up layer, designed to raise and level the entrance to the churchyard. It was noted that the ground along the southern edge of the access path dropped away fairly sharply at this point (Plate 17).

Layer (301) contained occasional fragments of Roman pottery (Plate 18) and a roof tile fragment of late medieval/post-medieval date. As the layer is probably imported, the artefacts are considered to be residual items within a deposit of unknown origin. However, as with layer (203), the presence of the pottery sherds is suggestive of a Roman site in the immediate vicinity.

3.4 Artefacts

The layers in the three trenches yielded a small assemblage of pottery and ceramic building material (*Table 1*).

Seven unabraded Roman pottery sherds (208g) were collected from layers (203) and (301). They are well preserved, with a mean sherd weight of 30g, and comprise standard wares from local sources — principally the Nene Valley and possibly Harrold (north Bedfordshire); they date from the mid-2nd century onwards.

Layer (102) yielded sand-tempered single portions of an unglazed pavioir and lead-glazed floor tile (Plate 19), the latter with a slightly bevelled knife-trimmed edge. A piece of plain flat roof tile derived from layer (301). All are likely to be of late medieval or post-medieval date.



Tr.	Layer	Date range	Find type	Qty.	Wt. (g)
1	(102)	Late med/post-medieval	Unglazed paviour; worn surface (T40mm)	1	399
		Late med/post-medieval	Glazed floor tile; very worn (T28mm)	1	289
2	(203)	Roman	Pottery – fine greyware	1	30
		Roman	Pottery – shelly ware	2	17
3	(301)	Roman	Pottery – Nene Valley mortarium	1	118
		Roman	Pottery – Nene Valley colour coat	1	7
		Roman	Pottery – Nene Valley greyware	1	15
		Roman	Pottery – shelly ware	1	21
		Late med/post-medieval	Plain roof tile – sand-tempered (T16mm)	1	175

Table 1: Finds summary by trench and layer



4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Excavation of the c.0.8m-deep service trench provided a very narrow but nevertheless revealing continuous sectional view across a large part of the graveyard from the south porch and down the access path to Caldecott Road.

The trench revealed that separate graveyard soil layers exist to a considerable depth. Only a small patch of natural geology was exposed south of the church. The deposit was, however, more evident in the east end Trench 3, beyond the churchyard perimeter.

Four burials and an additional probable burial were identified south and east of the church. None contained any artefacts and their precise date is unknown. Small quantities of disarticulated human bone were also encountered.

The trench along the access path from Caldecott Road revealed evidence for earlier surfaces and for consolidation of the entrance to the graveyard.

The only part of the church foundations exposed by the service trench was at the south-west corner of the porch. The foundation was 0.6m deep and extended 0.3m beyond the porch wall; it comprised roughly hewn, unmortared limestone blocks.

No foundations or *in-situ* stonework were revealed elsewhere. A loose group of large stone blocks recorded within Trench 1 is judged to be a probable demolition deposit.

Layers either side of the graveyard entrance produced a small quantity of relatively unabraded Roman pottery. These are residual artefacts, derived from a Roman site in the vicinity. Their presence accords with earlier records of the discovery of Roman pottery within the churchyard (Section 1.3).



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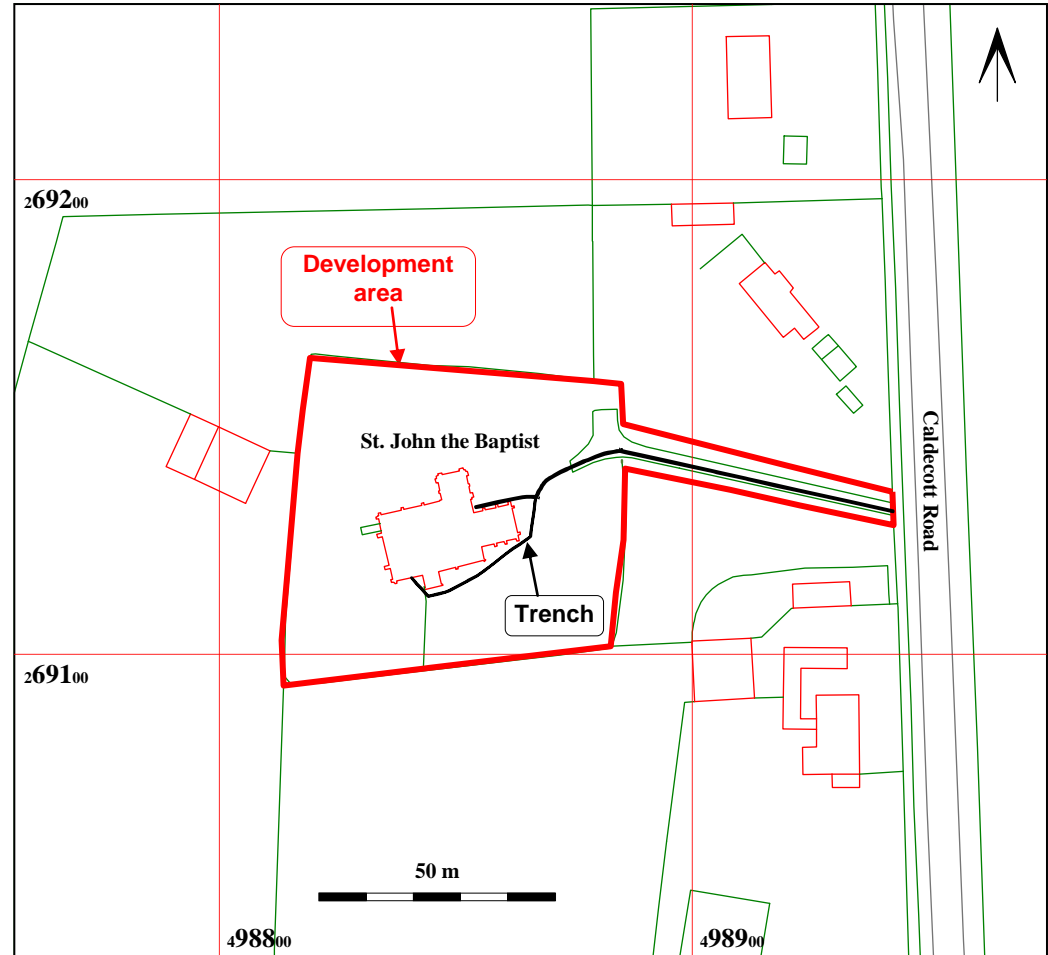
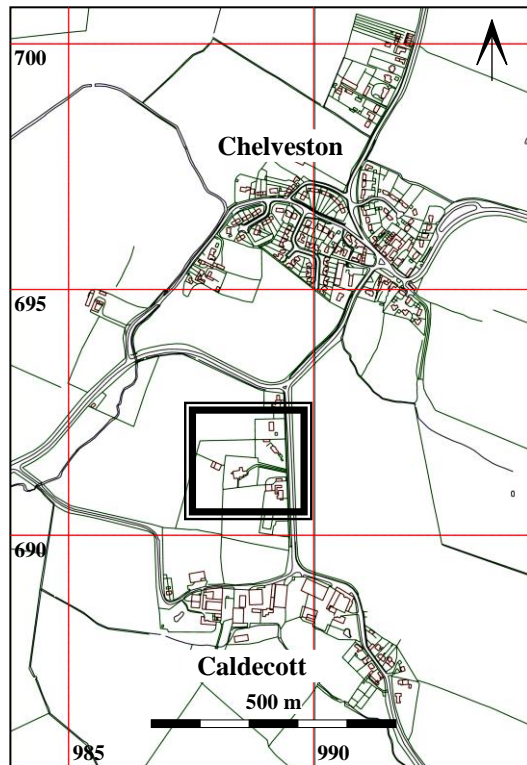
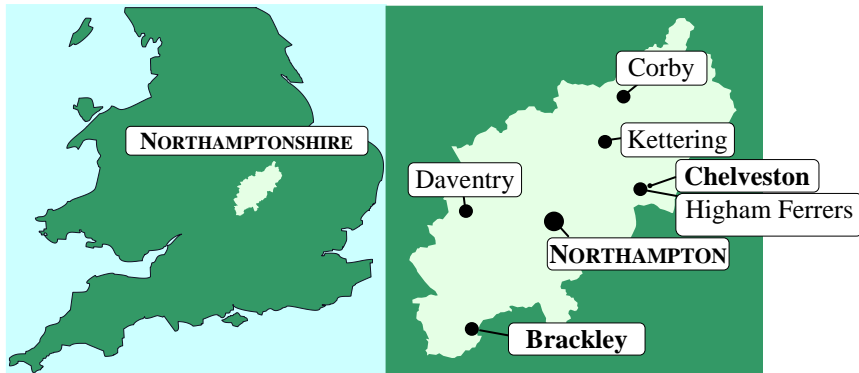


Figure 1: Site location plan

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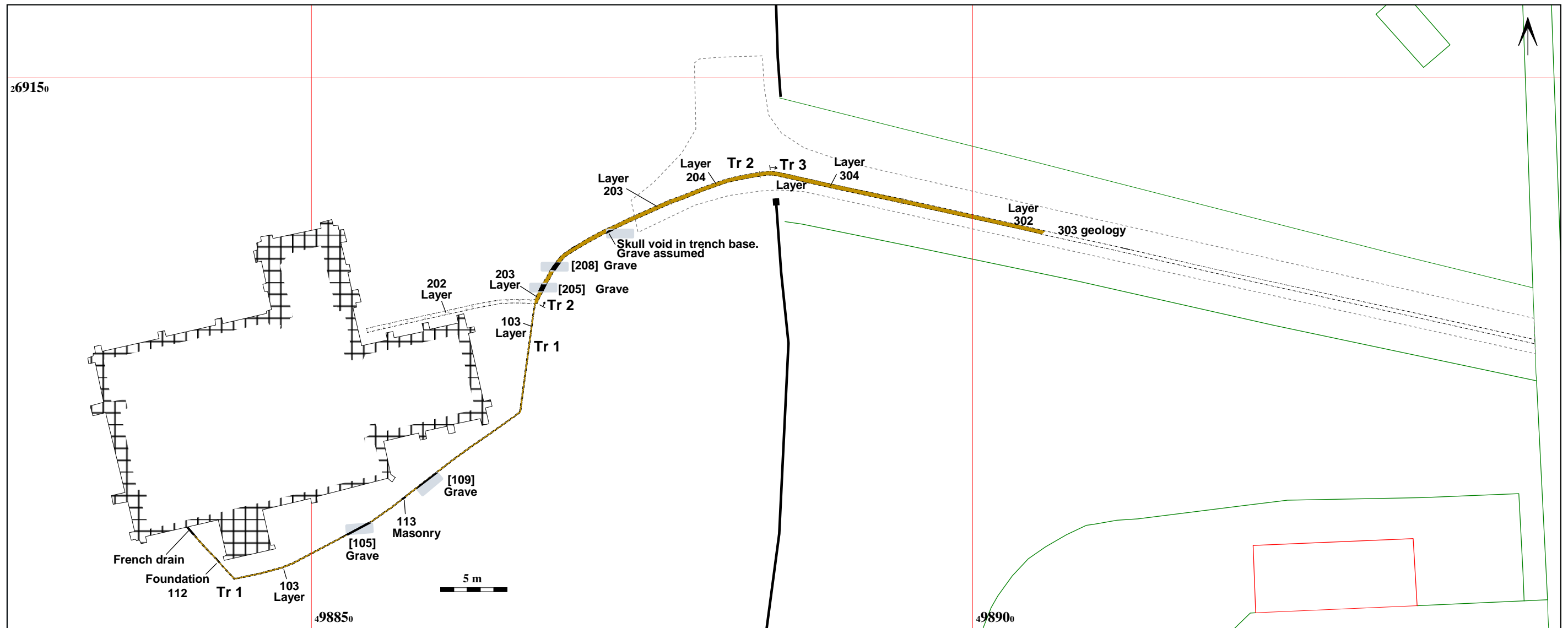


Plate 1: General shot of the church, looking NE



Plate 2: Trench 1 – general shot, looking east (scale 40cm)



Plate 3: Trench 2 – general shot, looking NE (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 3 general shot, looking ESE (scale 1m)

Figure 2: All-features plan

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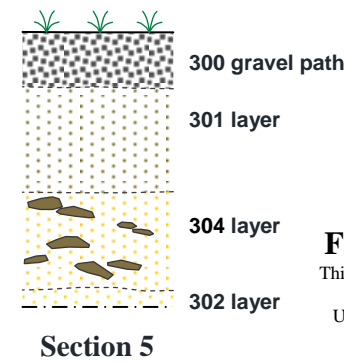
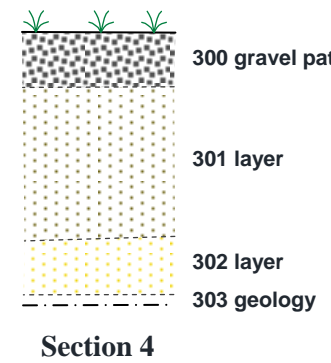
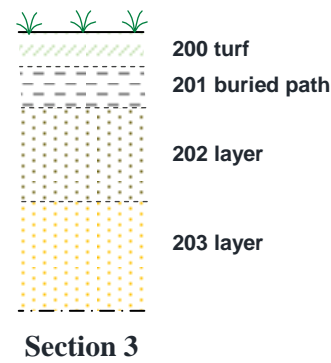
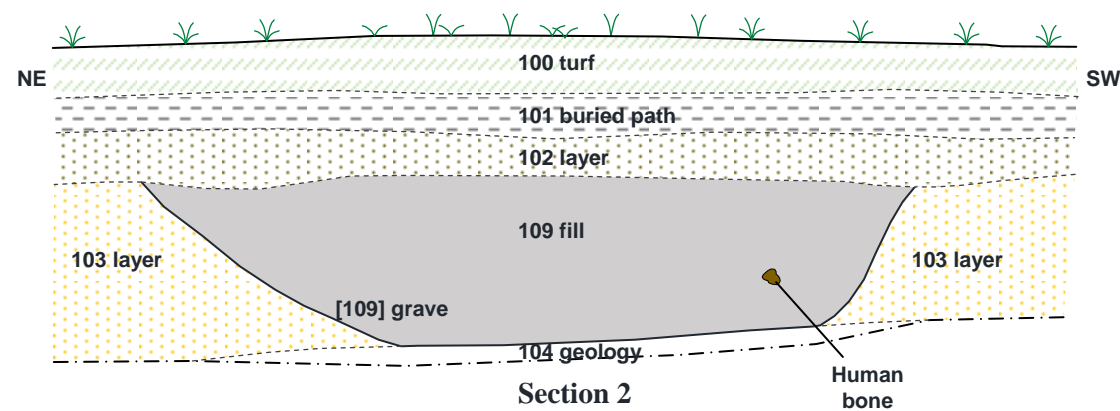
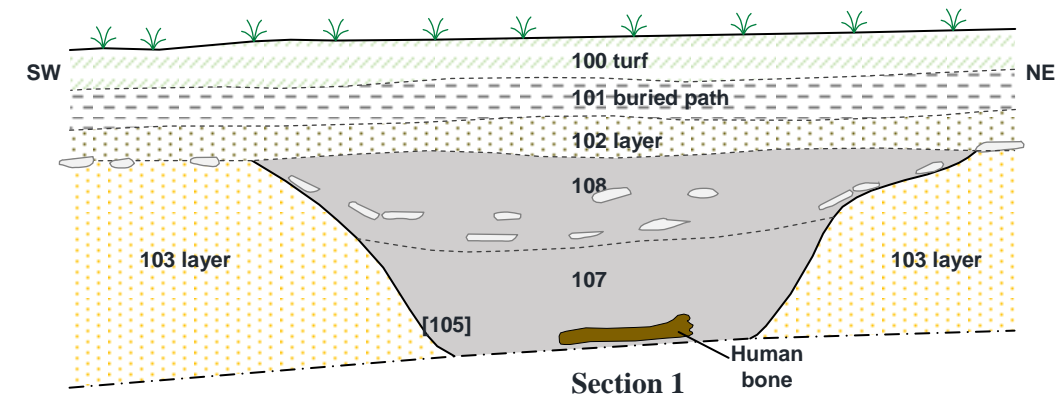
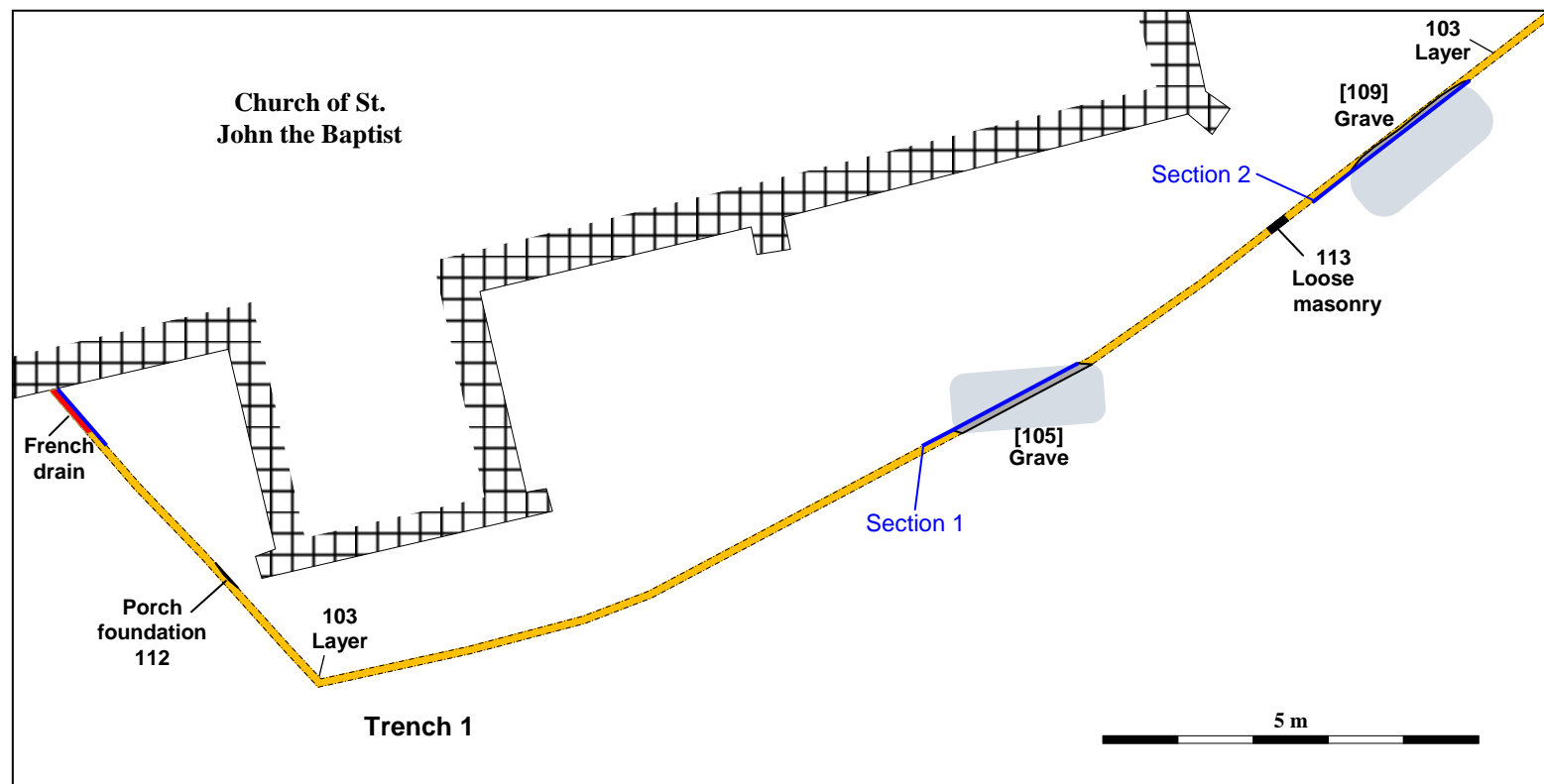
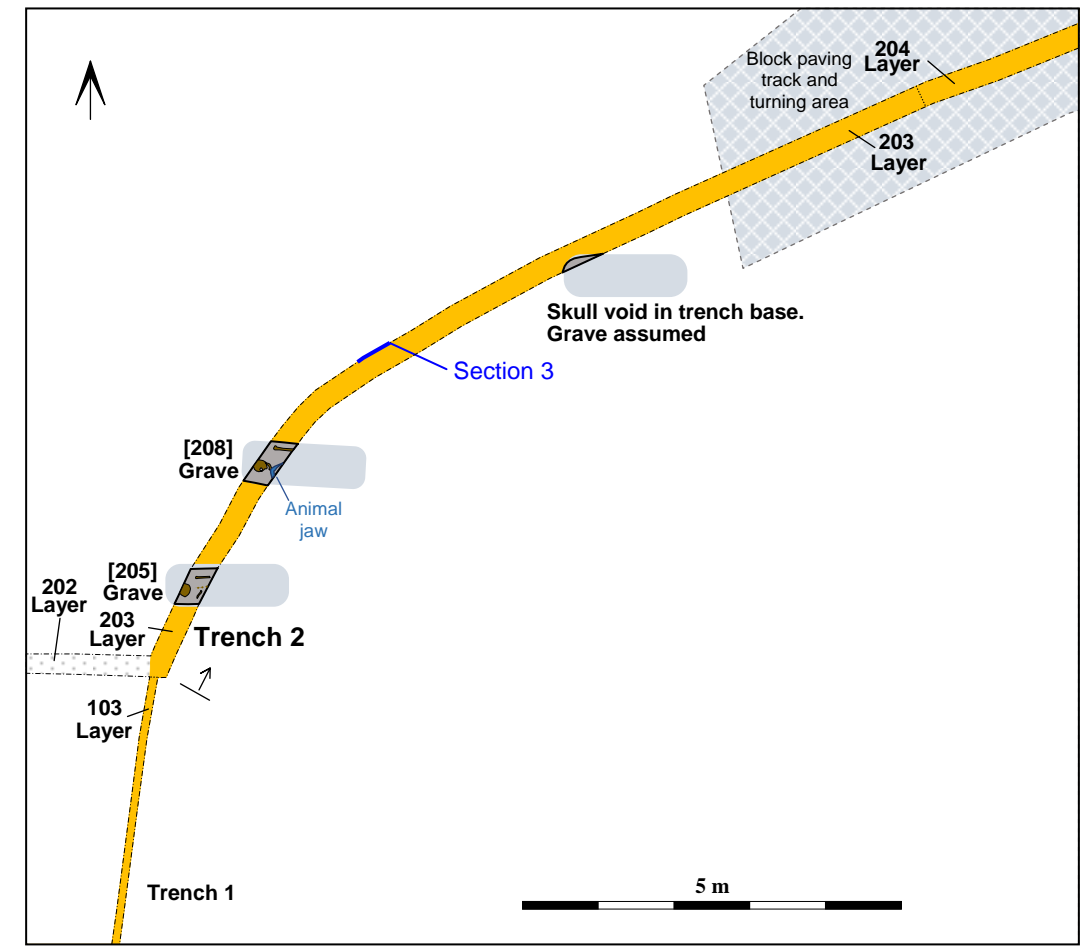
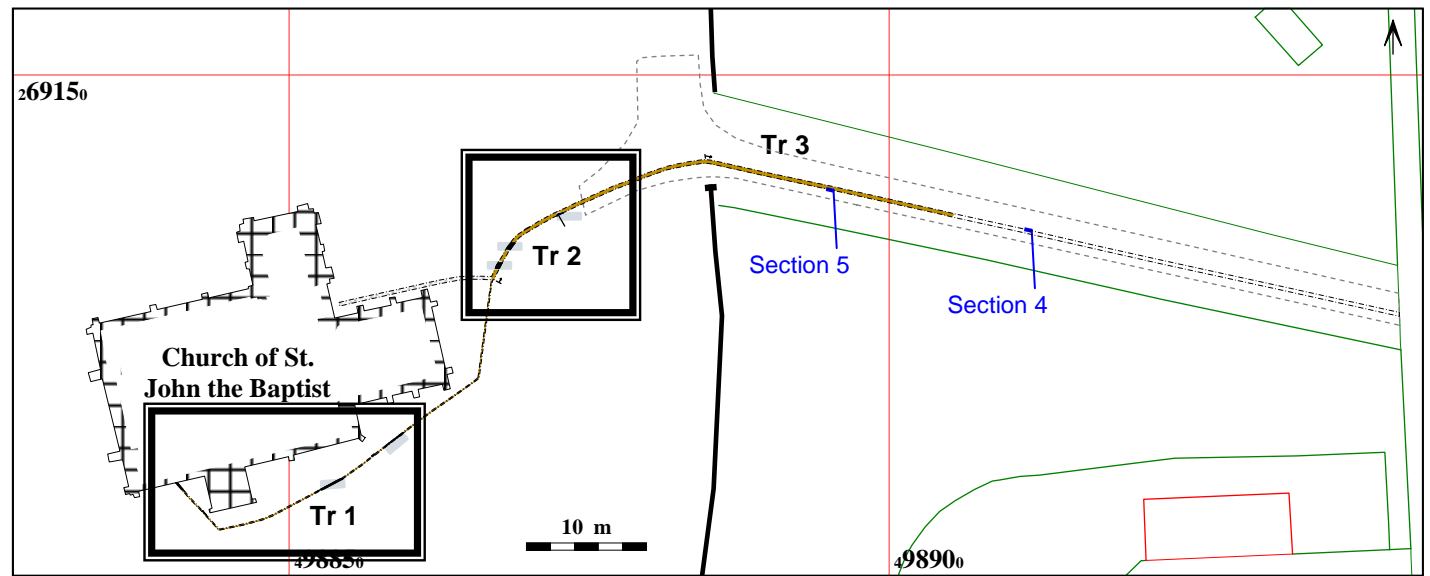


Figure 3 : Graves, plans and sections of Trenches 1–3
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Plate 5: Trench 1 – general shot, looking NE (scale 40cm)



Plate 6: Trench 1 – water pipe connection point, old service pipe and gravel-filled French drain (scale 40cm)



Plate 7: Trench 1 – porch foundation courses (112) (scale 1m)



Plate 8: Trench 1 – grave [105], looking WNW (scale 1m)



Plate 9: Trench 1 – grave [109], looking east (scale 1m)

Figure 4: Trench 1 selected photographs



Plate 10: Trench 1 – fragments of machine-disturbed skeleton (110) from grave [109]
(scale 40cm)



Plate 11: Trench 1 – disarticulated bone from cemetery soil layer (103)
(scale 40cm)



Plate 12: Trench 1 – group of large limestone fragments (113)
(scale 40cm)



Plate 13: Trench 2 – grave [205], looking NW
(scale 40cm)

Figure 5: Trench 1 and 2 selected photographs



Plate 14: Trench 2 – grave [208], looking west
(scale 40cm)



Plate 15: Trench 3 – layers (300), (301), (304), (302), looking north
(scale 1m)



Plate 16: Trench 3 – layers (300), (301), (302), (303), looking NW
(scale 1m)



Plate 17: Trench 3 – general shot of the ground sloping away from the access path, looking ESE
(scale 1m)

Figure 6: Trenches 2 and 3 selected photographs



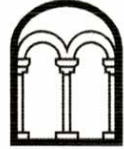
Plate 18: Residual Roman pottery from make-up layer (301)



Plate 19: Late medieval/post-medieval lead-glazed floor tile from make-up layer (102)

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