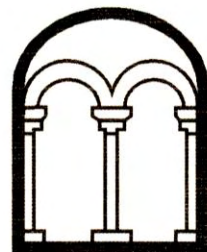


**CHURCH OF ST MARY AND ST ANDREW
GRANTCHESTER
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Albion
archaeology



**CHURCH OF ST MARY AND ST ANDREW
GRANTCHESTER
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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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.

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The project was monitored by Tim Reynolds, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Ian Turner. The figures have been produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by The Victor Farrar Partnership on behalf of Grantchester PCC to oversee groundworks associated with the excavation of a French drain around the outer walls of the Church of St Mary and St Andrew, Grantchester, Cambridgeshire, and to investigate and record any archaeological remains that were uncovered.

The attendance of an archaeologist had been requested by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA) as a precaution against the discovery of archaeological remains during the building works. The DAA issued a brief (2015), setting out their requirements for the archaeological work.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The Church of St Mary and St Andrew lies on the village High Street and is centred on grid reference TL 43366 55464 (Figure 1).

The Grade II* listed building consists of a nave, chancel, south aisle, west tower and north porch. Part of the north wall of the nave is 12th-century in date. The chancel is mid-14th-century in date and the west tower is late 14th / early 15th-century in date. More recent additions include the 16th-century north porch and the 19th-century south aisle. In the north wall of the nave there is a 14th- to 15th-century blocked opening, probably to a now demolished chapel (DAA 2015).

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

Human occupation in the Parish of Grantchester is of long-standing. There are records of stray finds of flintwork and Neolithic axes on the county Historic Environment Record and evidence for settlement from the Roman period is to be found close to the river. Anglo-Saxon activity (both settlement and burials) is recorded near the junction of the Cambridge, Coton and Barton Roads and evidence for medieval settlement and agriculture is also found across the parish (DAA 2015).



2. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological work comprised the monitoring of the hand-excavation of a French drain around almost the entire footprint of the Church. The drain trench was 0.6–0.8m wide and *c.* 1m deep (Figure 2).

Archaeological monitoring took place during May and June 2017. 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).

The excavation work was carried out by the building contractor under archaeological supervision. Exposed features and deposits of archaeological interest were cleaned and investigated where necessary by the supervising archaeologist.

Observations and measurements were recorded on *pro forma* recording sheets and a digital photographic record was made of the works.



3. RESULTS

The excavation of the continuous French drain was recorded on site as eight separate trenches. 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 (numbers in round brackets (***) in the following text.

3.1 *Trench 1 – South Side of the Chancel*

Trench 1 was excavated along the south side of the 14th-century chancel. The buttresses, although repaired with differing materials to the wall fabric, are contemporary in origin. The French drain trench here was *c.* 19m long, 0.8m wide and 0.55–0.9m deep.

3.1.1 Chancel foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the chancel foundation, which continued below the base of the trench. It comprised light grey-yellow sandy mortar with frequent flint and sandstone cobbles, *c.* 150mm x 60mm (102) (Plate 1). This material is interpreted as the ‘outer edge’ of a deposit placed within a foundation trench and tamped down to form a construction base. Above this, the chancel wall construction comprised roughly hewn, squared sandstone and clunch blocks, random and uncoursed, to a height of *c.* 1m, above which the wall fabric is squared clunch blocks in an ashlar construction.

3.1.2 Blocked opening

Beneath the east window a rectangular clunch block-edged opening that had been infilled with bricks was observed (Plate 1). The opening was probably a doorway that predates the extant window.

3.1.3 Layers present

The outside vertical trench face revealed a 0.35m-thick upper layer of dark grey-black sandy silt with occasional stones and occasional human bone fragments; an upper graveyard soil (100) and a 0.45m-thick lower graveyard soil (101) of mid-orange-brown sandy silt with occasional human bone fragments.

3.2 *Trench 2 – East and South Sides of the South Aisle*

Trench 2 was excavated along the east and south sides of the 19th-century south aisle. The buttresses appeared contemporary with the original build rather than being a later addition. The French drain trench here was *c.* 19m long, 0.8m wide and 0.55–0.9m deep.

3.2.1 South aisle foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the south aisle foundation and buttress fabric, which continued below the bottom of the trench. The exposed stonework comprised the upper part of a foundation ‘plinth’ that was either light grey-yellow unfrogged brick (208) or light white-grey clunch blocks (206) (Figure 2). The foundation was 0.12–0.18m wider than the wall. The lower part of the wall itself comprised larger, light white-grey clunch blocks to a height of *c.* 0.35m. Above this, the wall fabric was predominantly light brown sandstone and rounded



flint cobblestones with occasional randomly located rectangular stone block placements.

3.2.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench revealed, from top to bottom: a 50mm-thick modern surface layer of loose gravel (200); a 0.17m-thick levelling layer of dark grey-black sandy silt (201); a 0.14m-thick demolition layer of light yellow-pink brick halves and large mortar fragments (202); a 0.20m+ graveyard soil of mid-orange-brown sandy silt that contained occasional fragments of human bone and occasional small brick and tile fragments (203).

3.2.3 Burial vault

At the base of Trench 2, towards its eastern limit, a burial vault (204) was present (Figure 2; Plate 2). It was capped with a 73mm-thick light grey sandstone slab (205), which was fractured at the west end of the vault. The foundations of the south aisle, the orientation of which were at odds with the alignment of the vault, had been sympathetically constructed around and above the vault capstone, clearly indicating that the vault predated the construction of the south aisle.

The capstone fragment was temporarily removed to expose the burial, which was photographed but not otherwise disturbed in any way (Plate 3).

Vault (204) was a rectangular brick construction, measuring *c.* 2.4m long. The interior was 0.82m wide and at least 1.1m deep. It was constructed of light grey-yellow unfrosted bricks that measured *c.* 223mm x 108mm x 53mm. The interior brick face of the vault had been painted with whitewash. Three iron bars, which were triangular in section, were present, crossing the width of the vault at an approximately half-height position. They had been inserted through pre-formed holes in the brickwork (after the coffin had been inserted) and then cemented in place.

The human remains comprised a complete skeleton, which appeared to be in good condition with the bones retaining locations close to the positions of their original articulation. A large number of timber coffin fragments and some metal studs were also present in the base of the vault. The vault is of probable 18th- to 19th-century date.

The iron bars were probably fitted to prevent the possible opening of the coffin and the 'theft' of the body. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the expansion of the medical schools, such as the anatomy school at Cambridge, increased the need for human cadavers for dissection. Removal of recently interred bodies was prevalent during this period, aided by the fact that bodies were not legally anyone's property, which allowed grave robbers to operate in a legal grey area.

3.3 Trench 3 – West Side of the South Aisle

Trench 3 was excavated along the west side of the 19th-century south aisle and its corner buttress. The French drain trench in this area was *c.* 5m long, 0.65m wide and 0.6m deep.



3.3.1 South aisle foundation

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the south aisle foundation fabric (303), which was as (208) described for Trench 2.

3.3.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench revealed layers similar to those identified in Trench 2. The layers comprised, from top to bottom: 0.20m of mid-orange-grey sandy silt with moderate gravel, the modern levelling ‘turf’ surface (300); a 0.30m-thick layer of light brown-grey sandy silt with occasional stones, an upper graveyard soil (301); and a 0.10m+-thick layer of mid-orange-brown sandy silt with occasional fragments of human bone, a lower cemetery soil (302).

3.3.3 Modified buttress

In the corner of Trench 3, where the south aisle adjoins the tower, a rectangular deposit of light orange-grey sandy silt with small fragments of mortar (304) was visible in the base of the trench (Figure 2; Plate 4). This is interpreted as the location of part of the base of the tower buttress, the base of which is now masked by the west end of the south aisle as it wraps around and encompasses the buttress — probably in a slightly width-reduced form but consolidated by the wall of the south aisle.

3.4 Trench 4 – South Side of the Tower

Trench 4 was excavated along the south side of the tower which was added to the church in the late 14th/early 15th century. The brick buttresses appear a later addition to the cobblestone-faced tower. The French drain trench in this area was 3m long, *c.* 0.8m wide and 1.15m deep.

3.4.1 Tower foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the tower foundation fabric (403), which continued below the base of the trench. It comprised large clunch stone blocks (*c.* 200mm x 230mm), squared and built to courses. Above this, the outer skin of the tower wall was constructed of light brown-grey sandstone and flint cobblestones with occasional randomly located roughly hewn rectangular sandstone stone block placements (404). The tower outer skin had been heavily repointed with a hard light grey sandy mortar, which appeared to be associated with relatively recent (20th-century) maintenance.

3.4.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench (Plate 5) exposed a 0.1m-thick layer of mid-orange-grey sandy silt, the modern turfed surface (400). Below this was a 0.45m-thick layer of light brown-grey sandy silt with occasional stones, an upper graveyard soil (401). Below this was a 0.60m+-thick layer of dark brown-grey sandy silt with occasional stones, a lower graveyard soil (402), which contained a well-preserved sherd of late Saxon (850–1150) St Neots-type ware (16g).

3.5 Trench 5 – West and North Sides of the Tower

Trench 5 was excavated along the west and north sides of the tower. The French drain trench in this area was 15m long, *c.* 0.8m wide and 1m deep.



3.5.1 Tower foundations

The inside vertical face of the western trench exposed the tower foundation fabric which continued below the trench and comprised large clunch stone blocks (503) as described for Trench 4. Above this, the outer skin of the tower wall was constructed of light brown-grey sandstone and flint cobblestones (504), as described for Trench 4.

A gap in the foundations was present in a position central to the west side of the tower below the extant window (Plate 6). The gap probably represents the original position of a west door (as suggested by the Historic England assessment) that would have stepped down to a lower internal floor level within the tower.

3.5.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench exposed layers identical to those described for Trench 4. The layers comprised: a 0.1m-thick layer of mid-orange-grey sandy silt, the modern turfed surface (500). Below this was a *c.* 0.45m-thick layer of mid-brown-grey sandy silt with occasional stones, an upper graveyard soil (501). Below this was a 0.6m+-thick layer of dark brown-grey sandy silt with occasional stones, a lower graveyard soil (502).

3.6 Trench 6 – North Side of the Nave

Trench 6 was excavated along the north side of the nave, which is the oldest part of the exposed outer fabric of the church. The French drain trench in this area was *c.* 1.6m long, 0.8m wide and 0.8–1.1m deep.

3.6.1 Nave foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the nave foundation fabric (605), which continued below the base of the trench. It was a light yellow-orange sandy mortar with moderate clunch fragments, measuring *c.* 100mm x 60mm. This context, as observed, is interpreted as the ‘outer edge’ of a deposit placed within a foundation trench and tamped down to form a construction base. It is not known if a more substantial clunch block ‘core’ exists more deeply within the deposit as it was not excavated due to the risk of undermining/damaging the foundation.

Above the foundation deposit, a line of light white-grey, flat limestone blocks (606), measuring 130mm to 340mm long x *c.* 60mm thick had been laid end-to-end to create a flat surface for the wall build. The outer skin of the nave wall was constructed of light white-grey flint with occasional light brown rounded sandstone cobblestones. The wall had been heavily repointed with a hard, light yellow-grey sandy mortar. It was in good condition and appeared to be the result of maintenance work undertaken in recent decades.

3.6.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench revealed, from top to bottom: a 0.24m-thick modern surface layer of dark grey-black silt with frequent small stones (600); a 0.1m-thick layer of loose gravel (601), probably a remnant of a previous French drain; a 0.4–0.6m-thick layer of mid brown-grey silt with moderate stones and occasional fragments of red brick, tile and mortar, an upper graveyard soil (602); a 0.55m-thick layer of light grey-brown clay silt with occasional mortar fragments and occasional fragments of human bone, a lower graveyard soil (603); and a



0.40m+-thick layer of mid-grey-brown clay silt with occasional stones and occasional fragments of human bone, the lowest graveyard soil (604) in this area.

3.6.3 Demolished chapel foundations

Large clunch stone foundations were revealed at two locations towards the east end of Trench 6 (Figure 2; Plates 7–11). They were set on a north-south alignment, running perpendicular to the nave. The foundations corresponded with the location of a blocked former stone arch opening set into the north wall of the nave and surface depressions in the wider cobblestone wall surface indicating the position of a formerly attached structure that had been ‘cut away’ and removed.

The foundations were set *c.* 5.3m apart, were at least 0.7m wide and continued below the base of the trench at a depth of 1m. They comprised large roughly hewn, squared, light grey-white clunch blocks (611), ranging in size from 50mm x 50mm x 80mm to 350mm x 240mm x 120mm. They were tightly fitting random uncoursed in construction and bonded with light grey-yellow sandy mortar, which was in moderate condition.

Between the foundations a small area of flat, smooth-faced, squared and finely abutted clunch ‘flagstones’ (612) were present (Figure 2; Plates 12 and 13). The stones were 280–400mm long, 340mm wide and *c.* 80mm thick. The stonework is interpreted as a surviving section of the former floor of the building defined by the foundations. The surface level was a good match for the extant nave interior floor.

The demolished structure was probably a small chapel. The blocked archway in the nave north wall is shown on Figure 3. It has been variously described and discussed as:

‘... a blocked opening, C14-C15, probably to a chapel, now demolished’
(Historic England listing)

‘... a small transeptal chapel at the east end of the north wall of the nave was possibly built by the executors of Jakes Grantchester (d. 1404), who directed them to spend £40, from the proceeds of selling his lands, on such a chapel if his son died without issue. The window in the recess may come from that chapel, which had been demolished before 1744.’ (Elrington, 1973).

The building was probably a small chantry chapel, or possibly a lady chapel. A chantry chapel is often attached to, or screened off inside, a church and is endowed for the celebration of masses principally for the repose of the founder’s soul. A lady chapel contains an altar to the Virgin Mary.

The reason for the demolition of the chapel and the date of the event are uncertain. However, both types of chapel were abolished as part of the English Reformation, initiated by King Henry VIII with the dissolution of the monasteries (beginning in 1536). In the case of chantries the process was formally enforced by the Abolition of Chantries Acts of 1545 and 1547.

3.6.4 Backfill layers within demolished chapel

After demolition, the interior of the chapel had been deliberately backfilled to level the ground. The backfill layers were visible in the outer face of the trench,



between the two foundations. They comprised from top to bottom: a 0.25m-thick layer of dark brown-grey silt with occasional stones and occasional roof slate, mortar, and plain window glass fragments (607); a 0.47m-thick layer of mid-grey-brown clay silt with occasional stones and occasional mortar and red tile fragments (608); a 0.12m-thick layer of sterile light yellow-grey clay silt with occasional stones (609); a 0.20m+-layer of light grey-brown clay silt with moderate stones and occasional clunch fragments, measuring *c.* 100mm x 60mm (610).

3.6.5 Arched recess in nave north wall

A small arched recess is present in the north wall immediately east of the blocked opening, suggesting that it would have been a feature within the demolished chapel (Figure 3 and Plate 14). The recess was also blocked at the back and for part of its lower drop. Its purpose is uncertain. It may have been associated with an internal nave stair to a lost rood screen or it may have been a piscina.

3.7 Trench 7 – North Side of the Chancel

Trench 7 was excavated along the north side of the chancel, which is dated to the 14th century. The buttresses, although repaired with differing materials to the wall fabric, are contemporary in origin. Much of the outer face of the trench was excavated along an existing French drain retaining wall of modern brick. The east end of the chancel and the buttresses were not included in the existing French drain and were excavated separately for the 2017 drainage groundworks. The new French drain trench in this area was *c.* 12m long, 0.6m wide and *c.* 0.8m deep.

3.7.1 Chancel foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the chancel foundation fabric (702), which continued below the trench and was as described for Trench 1.

3.7.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench was the modern brick retaining wall of an extant French drain, which masked the graveyard soils. An exception to this was the area excavated around the buttresses which revealed layers as described for Trench 1: a 0.35m-thick upper layer of dark grey-black sandy silt with occasional stones; an upper graveyard soil (700); and a 0.45m-thick layer of mid-orange-brown sandy silt, representing a lower graveyard soil (701).

3.7.3 Burial vault

Part of a burial vault was exposed within the trench excavated around the centre buttress on the north side of the chancel (Figure 2; Plate 15).

The exposed convex ‘roof’ of the vault (703) was constructed of bricks. The vault was 1.7m wide. The unfrogged bricks were light grey-yellow, measuring *c.* 220mm x 108mm and bonded with a light grey-white sandy mortar that was in good condition. The south-west corner of the vault had been constructed around the base of the buttress. The vault is of probable 18th- to 19th-century date.

3.8 Trench 8 – East End of the Chancel

Trench 8 was excavated along the east end of the chancel. Excavation of the trench necessitated the removal of the western end of three substantial burial vault marker plinths with a fourth vault, to the south, being left in place. The French drain trench in this area was *c.* 5.5m long, 0.6m wide and 0.6–0.9m deep.



3.8.1 Chancel foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the chancel foundation fabric (802), which was as described for Trench 1.

3.8.2 Burial vaults

Two brick burial vaults were revealed, which aligned with the partially removed marker plinths (Figure 2; Plates 16 and 17). The most prominent was the centre vault (803), the exposed 'roof' of which was constructed of bricks. The vault was 1.7m wide and abutted the eastern end of the chancel foundations. The unfrosted bricks were light pinkish red or grey-yellow, measuring c. 223mm x 105mm. They were bonded with a light grey-white sandy mortar, which was in good condition.

To the north, the west end of a burial vault (804) was visible within the trench. It comprised light pinkish red bricks, measuring 220mm x 85mm with no bonding present. The third vault was not visible within the trench. Stone marker plaques attached to the east end of the chancel indicate a 19th-century date for the vaults.

3.8.3 Layers revealed

The area excavated around the north-east buttress revealed upper and lower graveyard soils (800) and (801), which were as described for Trench 7.

Due to the disturbance caused by the insertion of the parallel burial vaults, the outer face of Trench 8 revealed only the three corresponding patches of disturbed backfill. Of the three burial vaults that had their western end removed, the central example contained a backfill of light grey-brown sandy silt with moderate stones (805); the northern and southern examples contained a backfill of mid-brown-grey sandy silt (806) and (807) with occasional stones and moderate human bone fragments.



4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The excavation of the French drain trench enabled the full circumference of the church foundations to be recorded. The full depth of the wall foundations were never exposed in the works, although they were deep enough to show variations in construction.

The nave foundations comprised light yellow-orange sandy mortar with moderate clunch fragments. The chancel foundations comprised light grey-yellow sandy mortar with frequent mid-white-grey flint and mid-orange-brown sandstone cobblestones. Both contexts are interpreted as the 'outer edge' of a deposit placed within a foundation trench and tamped down to form a construction base. The tower foundations comprised large clunch stone blocks, which were squared and built to courses.

Large clunch stone foundations were revealed at two locations north of the nave on a perpendicular alignment. The foundations correspond with the location of a blocked stone arch opening (set into the north wall of the nave) and surface depressions in the wider cobblestone wall indicating the position of a structure that had been removed. The foundations comprised large, roughly hewn, squared, light grey-white clunch blocks (611). They were tightly fitting random uncoursed in construction.

Between the foundations a small area of flat, smooth-faced, squared and finely abutted clunch 'flagstones' (612) was present. The stonework is interpreted as a surviving section of the former floor of the building defined by the foundations. The surface level was a good match for the extant nave interior floor.

The demolished building was probably a small chantry chapel, or possibly a lady chapel. The reason for, and date of, its demolition are uncertain but are likely to be associated with the English Reformation, initiated by King Henry VIII.

Four brick burial vaults of 18th- to 19th-century date were encountered within the French drain trench — next to the south aisle and to the north and east of the chancel. Access to one of the vaults was possible due to a fragmented capstone. It contained a complete skeleton in good condition. Three iron bars that crossed the width of the vault were probably fitted to prevent the criminal removal of the body.

Small quantities of disarticulated human bones and bone fragments were encountered in the French drain trench.

The French drain trench revealed that separate graveyard soil layers exist to a considerable depth. No geological strata were observed in any of the trenches despite some being in excess of 1m deep. This suggests that the ground has been built up over centuries, partly by the disturbance caused by each new burial but also possibly by the deliberate importation of soil into the cemetery.

The lowest soil layer observed in Trench 4, south of the tower, contained a sherd of late Saxon (850–1150) St Neots ware pottery in good condition. The presence of this artefact attests to domestic activity in the vicinity during that period. However it is not known whether the use of the ground as a cemetery can be projected as far



back as the late Saxon period. The artefact may relate to an earlier and different phase of use of the area now occupied by the Church and cemetery.



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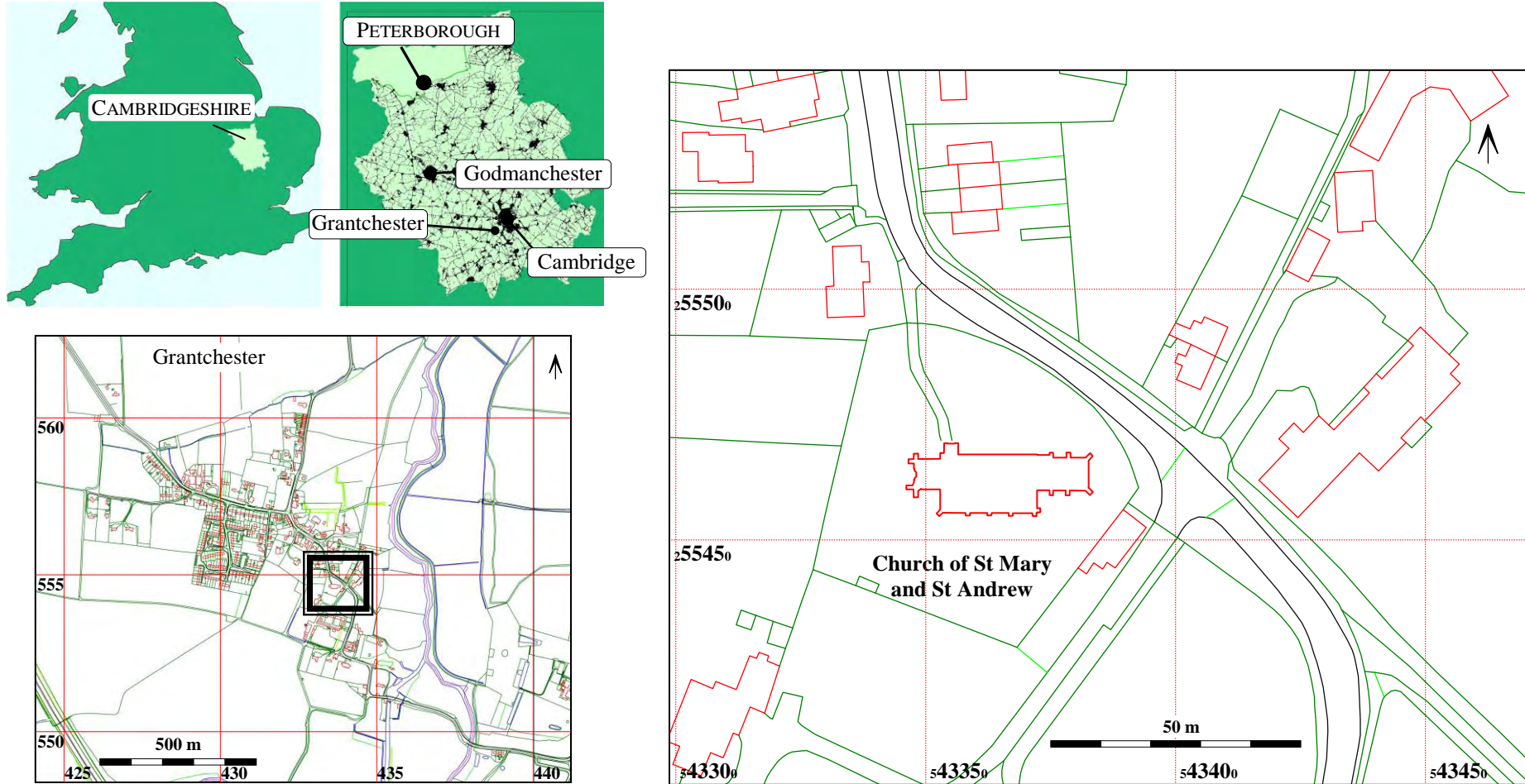


Figure 1: Site location

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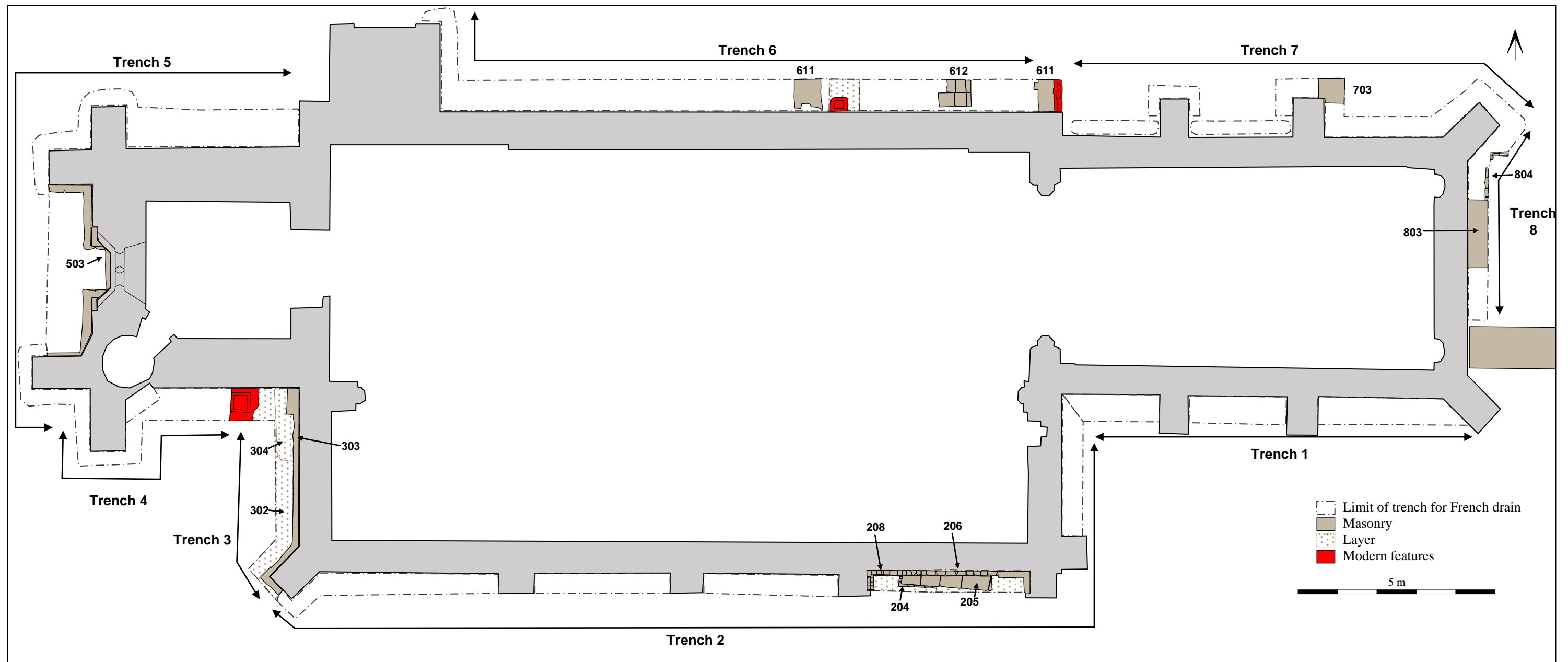


Figure 2: All-features plan

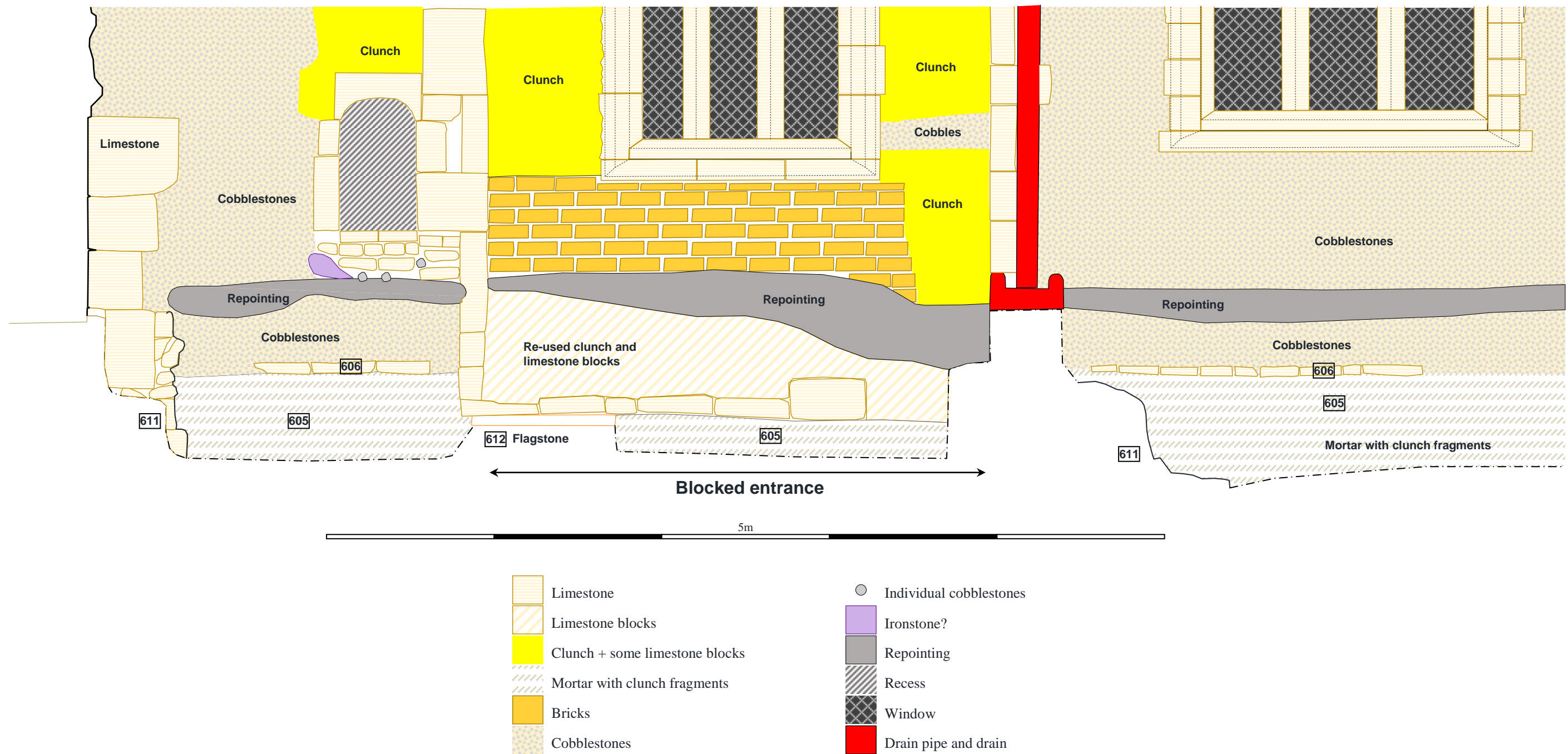


Figure 3: Elevation of blocked doorway in north wall of the nave



Plate 1: Trench 1 – chancel foundation (102) and bricked-up opening



Plate 2: Trench 2 – burial vault (204) with stone capping (205) (1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 2 – iron bars within burial vault (204)



Plate 4: Trench 3 – reduced buttress (304) where west end of south aisle abuts tower (0.40m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 4 – graveyard soil layers (400), (401), (402) (1m scale)



Plate 6: Trench 5 – tower foundation (503) with gap indicating location of former west door (1m scale)



Plate 7: Trench 6 – demolished chapel foundations (611) in foreground and at end of trench. Stone floor remnant (612) towards centre. (1m scale)



Plate 8: Trench 6 – western arm of demolished chapel foundations (611)
(1m scale)



Plate 9: Trench 6 – side view of western arm of demolished chapel foundations (611)
(20cm scale)



Plate 10: Trench 6 – eastern arm of demolished chapel foundations (611)
(1m scale)



Plate 11: Trench 6 – side view of eastern arm of demolished chapel foundations (611)
(20cm scale)



Plate 12: Trench 6 – remnant of clunch stone floor (613) of demolished chapel
(20cm scale)



Plate 13: Trench 6 – side view of remnant of clunch stone floor (613) of demolished chapel (20cm scale)



Plate 14: Recess in nave north wall, formerly within now-demolished chapel (1m scale)



Plate 15: Trench 7 – brick burial vault (703) north of the chancel (1m scale)



Plate 16: Trench 8 – brick burial vault (803) at east end of chancel (1m scale)



Plate 17: Trench 8 – brick burial vaults (803) and (804) at east end of chancel (1m scale)



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