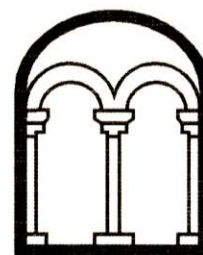


**CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN
BOZEAT
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

Albion
archaeology



**CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN
BOZEAT
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

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.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Laurane Bubbins of The Victor Farrar Partnership on behalf of the PCC. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner (Archaeological Supervisor), 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

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Non-technical Summary

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by The Victor Farrar Partnership on behalf of St Mary the Virgin Bozeat PCC to oversee groundworks associated with the installation of a French drain and soakaway pits and to investigate and record any archaeological remains that were uncovered.

The Grade I listed Church of St Mary the Virgin lies slightly north of the centre of Bozeat on Church Walk, off Mile Street and is centred on grid reference SP 90615 59205. The nave and chancel are of 12th- and 13th-century date; the aisles and porch are of 14th-century date. 15th-century fenestration was added to the chancel. 19th-century restoration of the chancel and north aisle was undertaken and the tower was rebuilt in 1880-3.

Archaeological monitoring of the hand-excavated French drain (which encompassed almost the entire footprint of the church) and machine-excavated soakaway pits took place during August 2017. The French drain trench was typically c. 0.60 wide and 0.9m deep. The soakaway pits were c. 2m long, 1.5m wide and up to 1.4m deep.

The full depth of the wall foundations were never exposed in the works, although the trench was deep enough to reveal some variations in construction. The medieval foundations that were exposed represent the upper part of foundation 'plinths' that were typically 0.05–0.2m wider than the walls they supported. The foundations appear to have been constructed within trenches of unknown depth; the limestone blocks were arranged in a fitted drystone wall fashion, with gaps being filled with clay or silt during construction. No foundations or stonework indicating earlier or additional structures were present.

The nave and chancel foundations comprised roughly hewn limestone blocks, which were tightly packed, random-uncoursed and infilled with silt. The north aisle, south aisle and porch foundations comprised roughly hewn limestone blocks that were random-coursed or built to courses and infilled with silt. The rebuilt tower foundation was lined with unfrogged bricks.

The soakaway dug to the south-west of the church revealed ten graves dug to various depths. All the graves contained human bone and five contained skull fragments. Two contained medieval pottery but this is likely to have been residual within graves of later date.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by The Victor Farrar Partnership on behalf of St Mary the Virgin Bozeat PCC to oversee groundworks associated with the excavation of a French drain around the outer walls of the church 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 (2016), setting out their requirements for the archaeological work.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The Church of St Mary the Virgin lies slightly north of the centre of Bozeat on Church Walk, off Mile Street and is centred on grid reference SP 90615 59205 (Figure 1).

The church is a building of major architectural and archaeological significance (DAA 2016). The Grade I listed building consists of a nave, chancel, north and south aisles, west tower and south porch. The nave and chancel are of 12th- and 13th-century date; the aisles and porch are of 14th-century date. 15th-century fenestration was added to the chancel. 19th-century restoration of the chancel and north aisle was undertaken and the tower was rebuilt in 1880-3¹.

1.3 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

The parish of Bozeat covers 1,050 hectares, occupying a roughly trapezoidal area against the Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire boundaries. The greater part of the parish is on Boulder Clay, except in the north-east where the Grendon Brook has exposed a large area of Great Oolite Limestone, on an outcrop of which the village is situated.

Human occupation in the parish is of long-standing. Intensive fieldwork and air photography have led to the discovery of a notable number of Iron Age and Roman settlements, mainly on the Boulder Clay areas. A possible Roman shrine 1 km north-west of Bozeat was excavated in 1964. Modern housing development immediately south of the village centre led to the discovery of a late 1st-century occupation site, with at least three pottery kilns that produced large, coarse-ware vessels (RCHME 1979).

In the 15th century there was a thriving weaving industry and by the 20th century the population of the village had risen to 1,200. It boasted a cottage lace-making industry, a shoe industry and a windmill, with many independent tradesmen. At this time Bozeat had at least 20 shops, a school, five pubs and four churches. The shoe trade dates back to the middle of the 17th century and large shoe factories were gradually constructed. Shoe manufacturing remained Bozeat's main trade until 1982 when the last factory closed (Salzman 1937).

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1040795> [accessed 15 August 2017]



2. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological work comprised the monitoring of a hand-excavated French drain around almost the entire footprint of the church and machine-excavated soakaway pits to accommodate plastic attenuation tanks. The French drain trench was *c.* 0.60 wide and 0.9m deep. The soakaway pits were *c.* 2m long, 1.5m wide and up to 1.4m deep (Figure 2).

Archaeological monitoring took place on 8th, 10th and 18th August 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 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.

The French drain trench and soakaway pit excavations were carried out by the building contractor. However, some of the soakaway pits were not available for inspection as they had been immediately backfilled for safety reasons.



3. RESULTS

The excavation of the continuous French drain and soakaway pits was recorded on site as six separate trenches (Figures 2 and 3). 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. The layers are described for each trench from top to bottom.

3.1 Trench 1 – South Porch

Trench 1 was excavated along the east and west sides of the 14th-century south porch. The French drain trench segments were *c.* 12m long, 0.6m wide and *c.* 0.5m deep.

3.1.1 Porch foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the top of the porch foundations, which continued below the base of the trench and were 0.05–0.18m wider than the porch wall. As with the chancel, it is assumed that the foundation was constructed within a trench (see Section 3.3.1 below).

The foundations comprised roughly hewn limestone blocks, which ranged from 100mm x 120mm to 100mm x 200mm. They were random-coursed and had recently been repointed with light yellow-grey sandy mortar (104) (Plates 1 and 2). The wall itself comprised, light white-grey, squared limestone blocks, measuring 20mm x 80mm to 110mm x 250mm. It was random-coursed with some areas uncoursed and had been repointed with light grey sandy mortar.

3.1.2 Layers present

The outside vertical trench face revealed similar layers to those seen in Trench 3 (see Section 3.3.2 below): topsoil (100) (as (300)), upper cemetery soil (101) (as (301)), second cemetery soil (102) (as (302)), and lowest cemetery soil (103) (as (303)).

3.2 Trench 2 – South Aisle

Trench 2 was excavated along the east, west and south sides of the 14th-century south aisle. The buttresses appeared contemporary with the original build rather than being a later addition. The French drain trench here was *c.* 18m long, 0.6m wide and 0.8–0.9m 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 0.05–0.20m wider than the wall. As with the chancel, it is assumed that the foundation was constructed within a trench (see Section 3.3.1 below).



The foundation was constructed of roughly hewn limestone blocks, which ranged from 50mm x 130mm to 100mm x 190mm. It was built to courses and infilled with light grey orange silt (204) (Plates 3 and 4). The top of the foundation was capped with one or two courses of slightly larger squared limestone blocks (205), measuring *c.* 100mm x 210mm, which formed a level surface for the wall construction.

The wall itself comprised, light white-grey, squared limestone blocks, measuring 50mm x 100mm to 130mm x 250mm. It was built to courses with cement repointing of probable 20th-century date being generally present.

3.2.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench (Plate 5) revealed similar layers to those recorded around the chancel (see Trench 3 below): topsoil (200) (as (300)), upper cemetery soil (201) (as (301)), second cemetery soil (202) (as (302)), lowest cemetery soil (203) (as (303)).

3.2.3 Nave wall foundation remnant

At the junction of the south aisle and the tower, a surviving remnant of the original nave wall was visible both as an area of jutting foundation and as a vertical variation in the outer skin of the building's stonework (Plates 6 and 7). As with the chancel, it is assumed that the foundation was constructed within a trench.

The exposed foundation was 0.15m wider than the wall. It was constructed of roughly hewn limestone blocks, which ranged from 30mm x 200mm to 120mm x 380mm; they were tightly packed, random uncoursed and infilled with light grey orange silt (207). Above this the surviving wall segment comprised, light white-grey, limestone fragments or squared blocks, which varied widely from 15mm x 70mm to 100mm to 480mm. The blocks were random-coursed and bonded with hard mid-grey sandy mortar that is probably repointing of 20th-century date.

3.3 Trench 3 – Chancel

Trench 3 was excavated along the south, east and north sides of the chancel, which has foundations of probable 13th-century date with later 14th-century piscina and buttress work and 15th-century window insertions. The French drain trench in this area was *c.* 35m long, 0.6m wide and *c.* 0.7m deep.

3.3.1 Chancel foundation

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the chancel 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 0.04–0.20m wider than the wall. The foundation appeared to be constructed within a continuous trench of unknown depth with the limestone blocks being arranged in a fitted, drystone-wall fashion with gaps infilled with silt as construction progressed.

The foundation comprised roughly hewn limestone blocks, which ranged from 50mm x 100mm to 80mm x 340mm. They were tightly packed, uncoursed and infilled with light grey-orange silt (304). The top of the foundation was capped with one or two courses of larger, squared, limestone blocks (305), measuring 50mm x 130mm to 100mm x 190mm, which formed a level surface for the wall



construction (Plates 8–10). This arrangement was best exemplified in the east-facing wall (Plate 9).

The wall itself comprised, light white-grey, squared limestone blocks, measuring *c.* 50mm x 130mm to 150mm x 250mm. It was built to courses with cement repointing of probable 20th-century date being generally present.

3.3.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench (Plate 11) revealed layers that comprised, from top to bottom: 0.15m of dark grey-brown clay silt with moderate small limestone fragments, the modern ‘turf’ surface (300); a 0.20m-thick layer of mid-grey-brown clay silt with frequent small limestone fragments, an upper graveyard soil (301); a 0.22m-thick layer of light brown-grey sandy silt with moderate small and occasional large limestone fragments, patches of mortar and occasional fragments of human bone, a cemetery soil with debris from maintenance of the church (302); a 0.2m+ thick layer of mid-orange-brown clay silt with occasional small limestone fragments and occasional fragments of human bone, a lower cemetery soil (303).

At the west end of the north-facing wall of the chancel, the undisturbed geological deposit was exposed at the base of the trench. It comprised sterile mid-brown-orange clay with moderate limestone fragments (306).

3.4 Trench 4 – North Aisle

Trench 4 was excavated along the east and north sides of the 14th-century north aisle. The buttresses appeared contemporary with the aisle construction. The French drain trench in this area was *c.* 28m long, 0.6m wide and 0.55m deep.

3.4.1 North aisle foundations

The inside vertical face of the trench exposed the north aisle foundation fabric, which continued below the base of the trench and were 0.12m to 0.2m wider than the north aisle wall. It is assumed that the foundation was constructed within a trench.

The foundation comprised roughly hewn limestone blocks, which ranged from 60mm x 80mm to 100mm x 280mm. They were random-coursed and infilled with light grey-brown sandy silt (405) (Plates 12 and 13). The top of the foundation was capped with two courses of larger, squared, limestone blocks (305), measuring 50mm x 200mm to 140mm x 340mm, which formed a level surface for the wall construction.

The wall itself comprised light white-grey, squared limestone blocks, measuring *c.* 120mm x 130mm to 90mm x 250mm. They were random-coursed and bonded with a light grey-yellow sandy mortar, which was in good condition; some areas of cement repointing of probable 20th-century date were also present.

3.4.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench (Plate 14) exposed: a 0.25m-thick dark grey-brown clay silt, the modern turfed surface (400); a *c.* 0.1m-thick mid-grey-brown clay silt with moderate limestone fragments, an upper graveyard soil (401); a 0.1m-thick layer of frequent medium limestone fragments infilled with mid-grey-



brown clay silt, a disturbed lower cemetery layer (402); a 0.10m+ thick mid-orange-brown clay silt with moderate small limestone fragments, a probable subsoil remnant (403); and a 0.02m+ thick layer of light grey-orange clay with moderate limestone fragments, the undisturbed geological deposit (only exposed in two small areas) (404).

3.5 Trench 5 – Tower and Kitchen

Trench 5 was excavated along the south and west sides of the tower and the west side of the kitchen block, which adjoins the north side of the tower. Multiple services were present immediately west of the kitchen, which resulted in the French drain trench depth in that area being reduced to *c.* 0.40m. The tower was taken down and reconstructed in 1883 due to structural defects. Around the tower the French drain trench was 17m long, *c.* 0.6m wide and *c.* 0.65m deep.

3.5.1 Tower foundations

The inside vertical face of the western trench exposed the tower foundation fabric, which continued below the trench. It comprised dark red, unfrogged bricks (Plates 15 and 16), which were stepped out wider than the tower wall by 0.2m. The bricks were *c.* 234mm long x 67mm high, bonded with mid-grey-yellow sandy mortar in good condition (504). The bricks are judged to be an outer lining, covering more substantial stone foundations beneath the tower. This interpretation is supported by the presence of a thin layer of slate and mortar (505) between the brick and the stone blocks of the tower walls — a typical method of space filling at the (never exact) join where a brick construction is butted up to an existing structure.

Above this, the outer skin of the tower wall was constructed of light grey limestone blocks, measuring 250mm x 50mm to 120mm x 480mm. They were squared, built to courses and bonded with light grey sandy mortar, which appeared to be repointing.

3.5.2 Layers present

The outside vertical face of the trench (Plate 17) exposed: a 0.15m-thick layer of topsoil (500) (as (300)), a 0.2–0.3m-thick mid-grey-brown clay silt with moderate limestone fragments (a cemetery soil (501)), a 0.08–0.2m-thick layer of light orange-brown clay silt with frequent small and moderate medium limestone fragments (502), a 0.1m+ thick layer of light grey-brown clay with frequent small and medium limestone fragments (undisturbed geology (503)).

3.6 Trench 6 – South-west Soakaway Pit

Trench 6 was a drainage soakaway pit, excavated to accommodate a plastic attenuation cage *c.* 5m south-west of the church. It was 2m long, 1.5m wide and *c.* 1.5m deep.

3.6.1 Grave cuts

The vertical faces of the trench exposed differing deposits with steep-edged, flat-based profiles that defined at least ten separate grave cuts: [603], [605], [607], [609], [611], [613], [615], [617], [619] and [621] (Figure 3; Plates 18–20). The lowest, earliest grave cuts reached the base of the trench at a depth of *c.* 1.5m below the current cemetery ground level; the later burials were sequentially cut to lower depths.



All the graves contained human bone and five contained fragmented skulls. The grave backfill deposits varied from mid-orange-grey clay silt with frequent medium-sized and large limestone fragments to dark grey-brown clay silt. Graves [603] and [619] contained single sherds (8g in total) of shell-tempered pottery (fabric type F330², which dates to the 12th–13th centuries).

The presence of the medieval pottery sherds attests to domestic activity in the vicinity during the period to which the earliest phase of church construction is dated. It is not known whether the pottery provides an accurate date for the burials — it may be residual within graves of later date and grave [619] is relatively high/late within the stratigraphic sequence.

3.6.2 Layers present

Within Trench 6, a *c.* 0.2m-thick turfed topsoil of dark brown-grey clay silt (600) sealed the graves. At the base of the trench two undisturbed geological layers (601) and (602) of light grey-orange clay silt with moderate to frequent limestone fragments were present.

² Fabric type in accordance with the Northamptonshire Ceramic Type Series



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 the trench was deep enough to reveal some variations in construction.

The 12th-, 13th- and 14th-century foundations that were exposed within the trenches represent the upper part of foundation ‘plinths’ that were typically 0.05–0.2m wider than the walls they supported. The foundations appear to have been constructed within trenches of unknown depth; the limestone blocks were arranged in a fitted drystone wall fashion, with gaps being filled with clay or silt during construction.

No foundations or stonework indicating earlier or additional structures were present in any of the trenches.

The nave and chancel foundations comprised roughly hewn limestone blocks, which were tightly packed, random-uncoursed and infilled with silt. The north aisle, south aisle and porch foundations comprised roughly hewn limestone blocks that were random-coursed or built to courses and infilled with silt. The rebuilt tower foundation was lined with unfrosted bricks.

The French drain trench revealed that separate graveyard soil layers exist to a considerable depth in some areas. The geological stratum comprised clay with moderate limestone fragments; it was observed in some of the trenches to the north and west of the church.

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

A 1.4m-deep soakaway pit, c. 5m south-west of the church, revealed ten graves dug to various depths. All the graves contained human bone and five contained skull fragments. Two contained medieval pottery but this is likely to have been residual within graves of later date.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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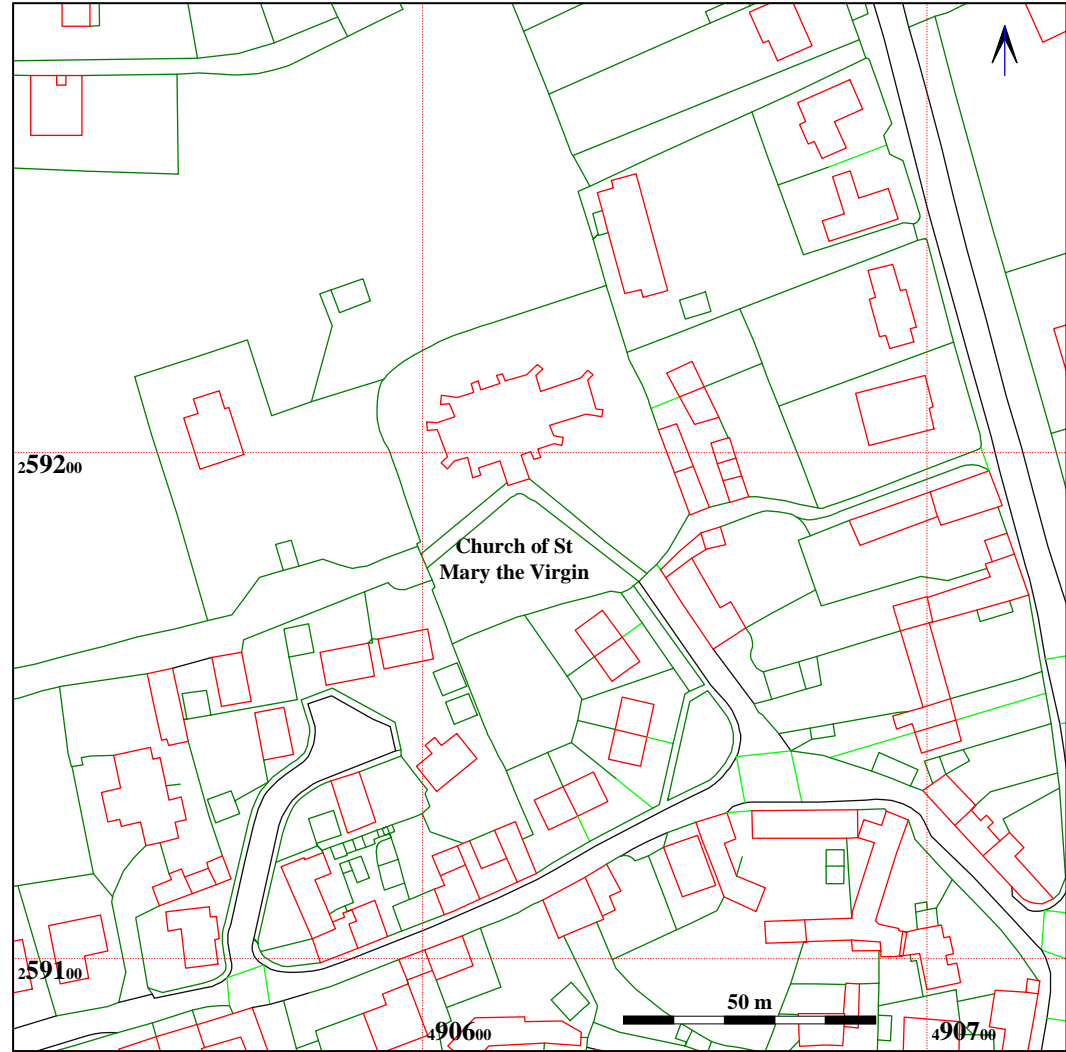
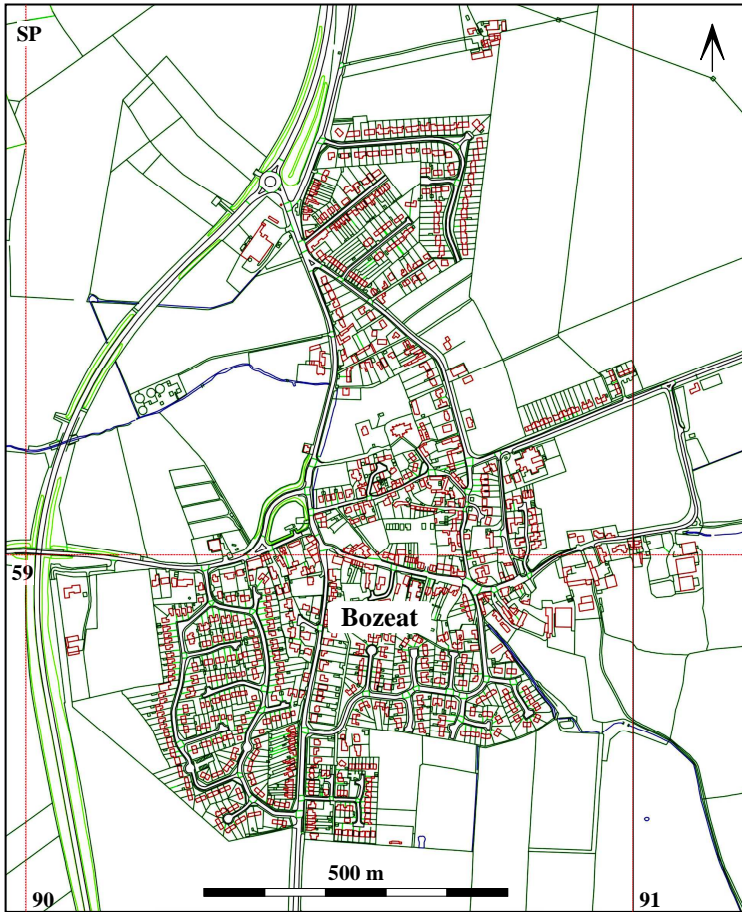
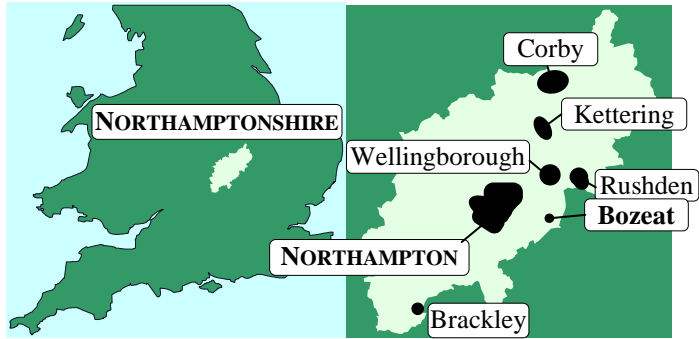


Figure 1: Site location plan

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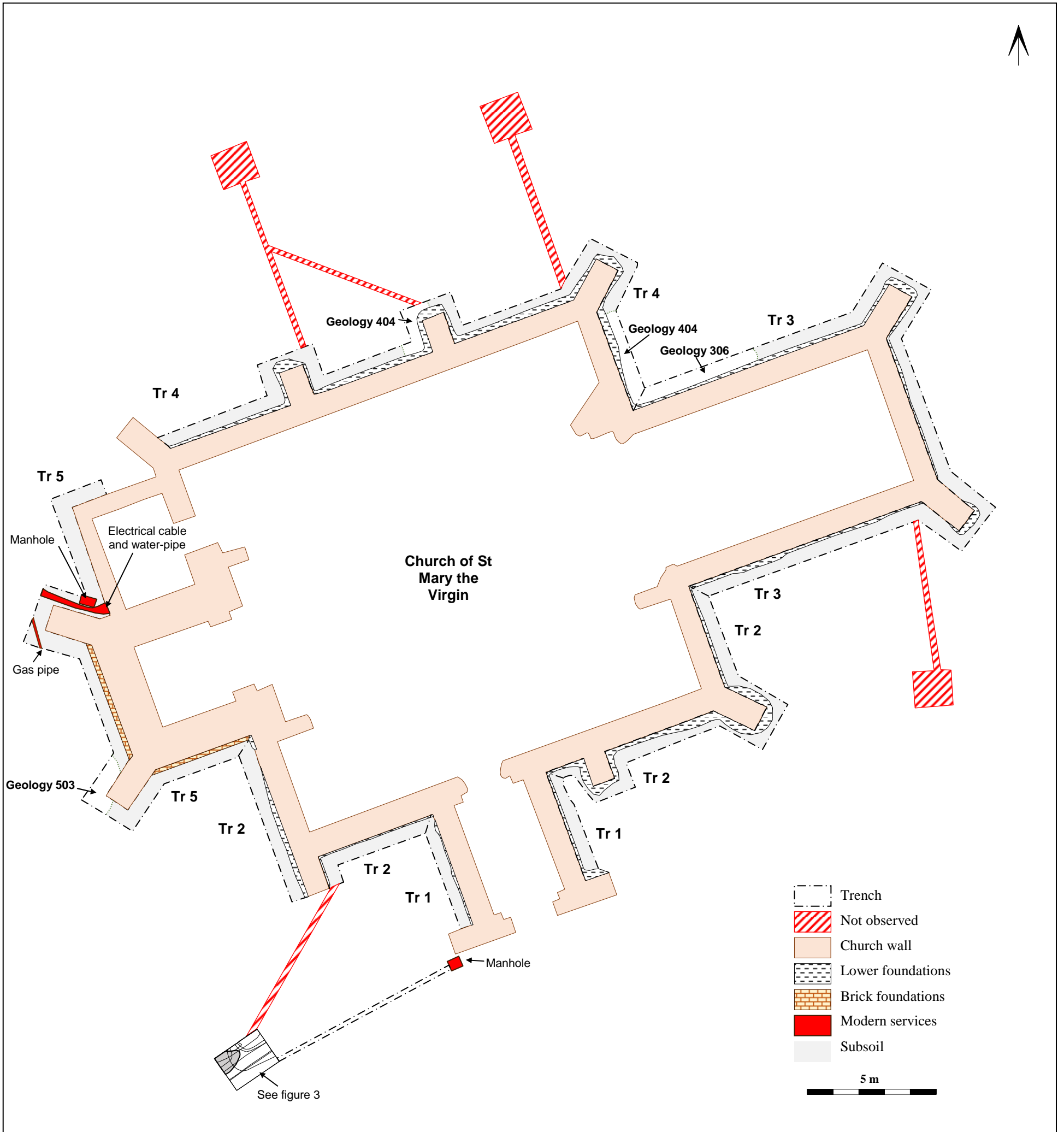


Figure 2: All-features plan

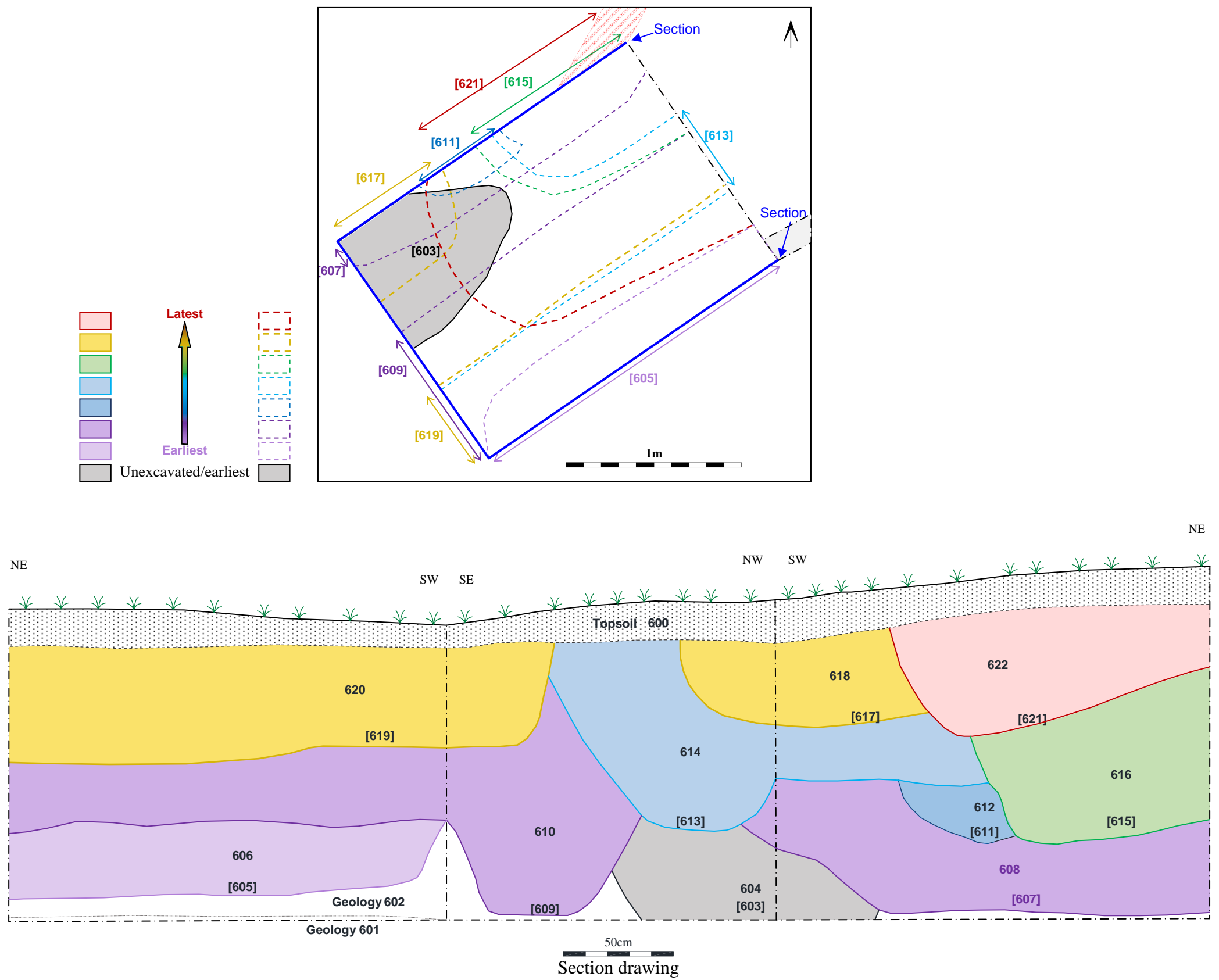


Figure 3: Plan and section of Trench 6



Plate 1: Trench 1 – south porch, west-facing foundation (104) (1m scale)



Plate 2: Trench 1 – south porch, west-facing foundation (104) (1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 2 – south aisle, south-facing foundation (204) (1m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 2 – south aisle, south-facing foundation (204), further to the east (1m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 2 – south aisle layers (200), (201), (202), (203) (1m scale)



Plate 6: Trench 2 – south aisle, nave foundation remnant (207) (40cm scale)



Plate 7: Trench 2 – south aisle with surviving nave wall segment (scale 1m)



Plate 8: Trench 3 – south-facing chancel foundation (304) (40cm scale)



Plate 9: Trench 3 – east-facing chancel foundation (304) (1m scale)



Plate 10: Trench 3 – north-facing chancel foundation (304) (40cm scale)



Plate 11: Trench 3 – chancel layers (300), (301), (302), (303) (1m scale)



Plate 12: Trench 4 – north-facing north aisle foundation (405) (1m scale)



Plate 13: Trench 4 – close-up of north-facing north aisle foundation (405) (40cm scale)



Plate 14: Trench 4 – layers (400), (401), (402), (403), (404) (40cm scale)



Plate 15: Trench 5 – west-facing tower foundation (504) (1m scale)



Plate 16: Trench 5 – close-up of west-facing tower foundation (504) (40cm scale)



Plate 17: Trench 5 – layers (500), (501), (502), (503) (40cm scale)



Plate 18: Trench 6 – north-facing soakaway pit section with grave cuts [605], [609], [619]
(1m scale)



Plate 19: Trench 6 – east-facing soakaway pit section with grave cuts [603], [609], [613] [617], [619]
(1m scale)



Plate 20: Trench 6 – south-facing soakaway pit section with grave cuts [603], [607], [611] [613], [615], [617], [621] (1m scale)

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