

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, MILLOM, CUMBRIA

Stones Recording Project



Client: Millom and District Local
History Society

NGR: 317103 481304

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November 2022



The Site	
Site Name	Holy Trinity Church, Millom
County	Cumbria
NGR	317103 481304

Client	
Client Name	Millom and District Local History Society

Archiving	
Relevant Record Office(s)/Archive Centre(s)	Barrow-in-Furness
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Summary

Greenlane Archaeology was commissioned by the Millom and District Local History society to carry out a project to investigate Holy Trinity Church, Millom, in order to establish the presence of previously unrecorded inscribed and worked stones of historical and archaeological interest. The project was undertaken in June and October 2022, with local volunteers working under supervision from staff at Greenlane Archaeology.

Holy Trinity Church is known to have at least 12th century origins, although fragments of crosses found during renovation work in the late 1920s, indicate that a structure was present there from at least the 10th century AD. The site is located in an extensive area of archaeological remains, dating from at the Neolithic period onwards, and there has been considerable debate about the nature of activity at the church from the Roman period.

The recording project involved a systematic investigation of the external elevations and detailed digital photography in order to produce rectified elevations of the building. It identified 20 different inscribed stones, which could be broken down into a number of different types, including post-medieval graffiti and bench marks, but also medieval features such as architectural fragments and mason's marks, the already known cross fragments, and a number of other features of less certain date. In addition, features relating to the historical development of the building were also identified and recorded.

While the project did not reveal any elements that definitely add further evidence for pre-12th century activity, there are plenty of tantalising clues, and it has provided a valuable record that can be built on by subsequent research. It has certainly added to the understanding of the building and shown further evidence for medieval fabric, albeit often reused in later phases.

Acknowledgements

Greenlane Archaeology would like to thank the Millom and District Local History Society for commissioning the project, in particular Jan Bridgit with her help throughout. Special thanks are due to the volunteers who undertook the recording, and church for providing accommodation and refreshments, and Adam Stanford at Aerial-Cam for processing the photographs to produce the rectified elevations. Particular thanks are due to Iain McNicol and Richard Wilson for their invaluable help during the project.

1. Introduction

1.1 Circumstances of the Project

1.1.1 Greenlane Archaeology was commissioned by the Millom and District Local History Society to carry out a community project at Holy Trinity Church, Millom, examining the exterior of the building in order to identify examples of inscribed and worked stones of historical and archaeological interest. This was intended to provide further information about the development of the building and a record of the structure for future researchers.

1.2 Location, Geology, and Topography

1.2.1 The site is located on the northern outskirts of Millom, a little over 0.5km from the centre of the town, and immediately adjacent to Millom castle to the north. The church and castle are located on a raised area of ground approximately 10m above sea level (Ordnance Survey 2010).

1.2.2 The underlying solid geology is complex, comprising Ordovician deposits of Coniston limestone, Eycott and Skiddaw volcanics, and Silurian Bannisdale slate (Moseley 1978, plate 1). The solid geology is overlain by glacially derived drift deposits and boulder clay; sands and gravels are also present (Countryside Commission 1998, 27), although the essentially urban nature of the immediate area is likely to have disguised all of this. The overlying drift deposits comprise glacial material such as boulder clay, which forms a hummocky rolling landscape outside of the urban area (Countryside Commission 1998, 27).

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The 'Stones Project' was carried out as a small community project intended to investigate the exterior of Holy Trinity Church and identify any stones of historical or archaeological interest present within the fabric. As far as is known, no systematic investigation of the building has ever been carried out, although a range of stones were discovered during renovation work in the 1920s/1930s (Warriner 1931), mason's marks had been identified prior to that (Sykes 1900), and a fragment of inscribed stone below the westernmost window in the Huddleston aisle had been described and potentially identified as part of a consecrational cross similar to examples in St Kentigern's Church, at Crosthwaite in Keswick (Bracegirdle 2007, 4). The aim of the project was therefore to carry out a form of archaeological building recording, specifically looking for inscribed or worked stones in order to add to the understanding of the church at its development. The work was carried out according to the guidance provided by Historic England (Historic England 2016) and the guidelines of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014). A suitable archive has also been compiled to provide a permanent paper record of the project and its results, also in accordance with CIfA guidelines (CIfA 2014b).

2.2 Desk-Based Assessment

2.2.1 No specific desk-based research was carried out as part of the project, but published secondary sources had been gathered, principally by Jan Bridget, relating to previous historical investigations into the church, specifically by WS Sykes (1900; 1924) and Frank Warriner (1931), but also Mary Fair (1937) and the Rev Robert Bracegirdle (2007). These were intended to put the results of the project into their historical context.

2.3 Building Recording

2.3.1 The building recording was carried out in two phases, the first, on the 11th June 2022, to introduce participants to the project to the church and to initially identify any stones of interest, produce a plan of the church and locate these, and take enough photographs to allow the production of a 3D model and rectified images of the principal elevations. The second phase, carried out on the 24th October 2022, involved the systematic recording and photographing of each stone and the annotating of the rectified elevation images. The recording comprised the following elements:

- **Written record:** descriptive records of all parts of the building were made using Greenlane Archaeology *pro forma* 'inscribed stone record sheets' (Plate 2);
- **Photographs:** photographs in colour digital format (as both 12meg jpegs and RAW files) were taken of the main features of the building, its general surroundings, and any features of architectural or archaeological interest. A selection of the colour digital photographs is included in this report, and the remaining photographs are in the project archive;
- **Drawings:** a plan was produced of the by the church by hand at a scale of 1:100 on draughting film. Rectified images were produced of the principal elevations using photographs. These were then printed on paper at a scale of 1:100 and annotated to show the locations of each of the stones that was recorded and any other features of historical or archaeological interest.



Plate 1 (left): Volunteers taking part in the initial day of the project (photo by Ethan Elliot)

Inscribed Stone Record Sheet 1 of 1

Greenlane Archaeology Ltd

Project Name:	Holy Trinity Church Millom	
Project Code:	G1518	Site Code: HT22
Location:	South side corner by claustrum west bulwark	
Stone type:	Sandstone	
Dimensions:	15cm x 15cm x 23cm	
Photo No.:	1	
Description/sketch:	<p>Cross and two smaller diagonal lines and one vertical line</p> <p>18cm</p> <p>15cm</p> <p>23cm</p>	
Compiled by:	LIZ NORTH	Date: 24.9.22

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Plate 2 (right): Example of a completed 'inscribed stone record sheet'

2.4 Archive

2.4.1 The archive of the project will be deposited with the relevant Record Office or Archive Centre, as detailed on the cover sheet of this report, together with a copy of the report. The archive has been compiled according to the standards and guidelines of the ClfA guidelines (ClfA 2014b). In addition, details will be submitted to the Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS (OASIS) scheme. This is an internet-based project intended to improve the flow of information between contractors, local authority heritage managers and the general public. A copy of the report will be provided to the client and a digital copy of the report will be provided for the relevant Historic Environment Record, as detailed on the cover sheet of this report.

3. Site History

3.1 Early History

3.1.1 While the area is located within a wider landscape full of evidence for human activity from the end of the last Ice Age onwards, particularly the Neolithic and Bronze Age (Barrowclough 2010; Ibbotson 2021, 85-89), the origins of the church site are less certain. While it was undoubtedly the case that settlement continued in the area through the Iron Age and beyond, the debate about a Roman military presence in Millom is still ongoing, and can be paralleled to the situation in Furness (Elsworth 2007). The piece of stone inscribed 'ANTEF', discovered during renovation work in the late 1920s, was suggested at the time, by RG Collingwood, to be a Roman inscription (Warriner 1931, 120). Even Collingwood didn't see it as necessarily proof of a Roman site at Millom, and more recent consideration suggests it is not actually Roman at all (Roger Tomlin pers comm). It is perhaps more likely that it is part of an early Christian post-Roman inscription, of a type more typically found in Wales and Scotland (Thomas 1971, 91-131), but likely to also exist in Cumbria given its evidence for Christianity from an early date (e.g. Petts 2003, 132-133; Haynes and Wilmot 2020, 218-219). Regardless of the arguments regarding the site in the immediate post-Roman period, it is clear from the cross fragments found in the late 1920s (Warriner 1931) that there was a Christian establishment on or near the site of the current church by at least the 10th century (Bailey and Cramp 1988). What form this now took cannot be stated with any certainty but it would probably have been a smaller structure than what now stands, and, depending on its origins, probably acted more like a small monastery than a parish church. The recent publication of excavations at St Michael's church in Workington have shown the potential longevity of the use of sites of this type (Zant and Parsons 2019).

3.2 The Church

3.2.1 What is known from investigation of the standing church and related documents (Sykes 1900; 1924; Warriner 1931; Fair 1937; Bracegirdle 2007 and summarised in Salter 1998, 76) is that the earliest remaining fabric, considered to be 12th century, comprises parts of the north wall. This was variously extended in the 13th and 14th centuries, in particular with an aisle added to the south, and it probably at one time had a tower on the west side, as shown by the large blocked arch. No evidence for this was found during an archaeological watching brief carried out in 2020, although the area around the west wall was heavily disturbed by modern service trenches (Greenlane Archaeology 2020).

4. Results

4.1 Stones

4.1.1 During the project 20 different stones showing one or more area of working or inscription of possible historical or archaeological interest were identified. These ranged from examples of evidently quite modern date, such as bench marks (**Stones 15 and 18**) or areas of graffiti (**Stones 04, 08, 12, 14** and part of **07**), to inscribed stones of considerable antiquity – the two fragment of 10th- 11th century cross fragment first recorded by Warriner in 1931 (**Stones 16 and 17**). Other examples represent pieces of architectural stone, such as a pair of medieval window heads reused in the south elevation (**Stone 06**), stones with mason's marks inscribed into them (**Stones 05, 07 and 09**) and pieces of less certain function (**Stones 01, 02, 11, 13 and 20**).

4.1.2 The different types of stone are summarised in Table 1 below and illustrated in the gazetteer in Section 4.2 below.

Type	Stones	Date
Cross fragment	16, 17	10 th - 11 th century AD
Architectural fragments	03, 06, 10, 19	Medieval
Mason's mark	05, 07, 09	Medieval
Graffiti	04, (07), 08, 12, 14	19 th century
Benchmarks	15, 18	19 th -20 th century
Uncertain	01, 02, 11, 13, 20	Early medieval – medieval?

Table 1: List of types of stones revealed during the project

4.2 Gazetteer

4.2.1 All 20 stones are illustrated below (Plate 3 to Plate 22) and their locations are shown in Figure 1 to Figure 5.



Plate 3 (left): Stone 01



Plate 4 (right): Stone 02



Plate 5 (left): Stone 03



Plate 6 (right): Stone 03



Plate 7 (left): Stone 04



Plate 8 (right): Stone 05



Plate 9 (left): Stones 06

Plate 10 (right): Stone 08 (and graffiti in Stone 07)



Plate 11 (left): Stone 08



Plate 12 (right): Stone 09



Plate 13 (left): Stone 10



Plate 14 (right): Stone 11



Plate 15 (left): Stone 12



Plate 16 (right): Stone 13



Plate 17 (left): Stone 14 (zoomed in)



Plate 18 (right): Stone 15



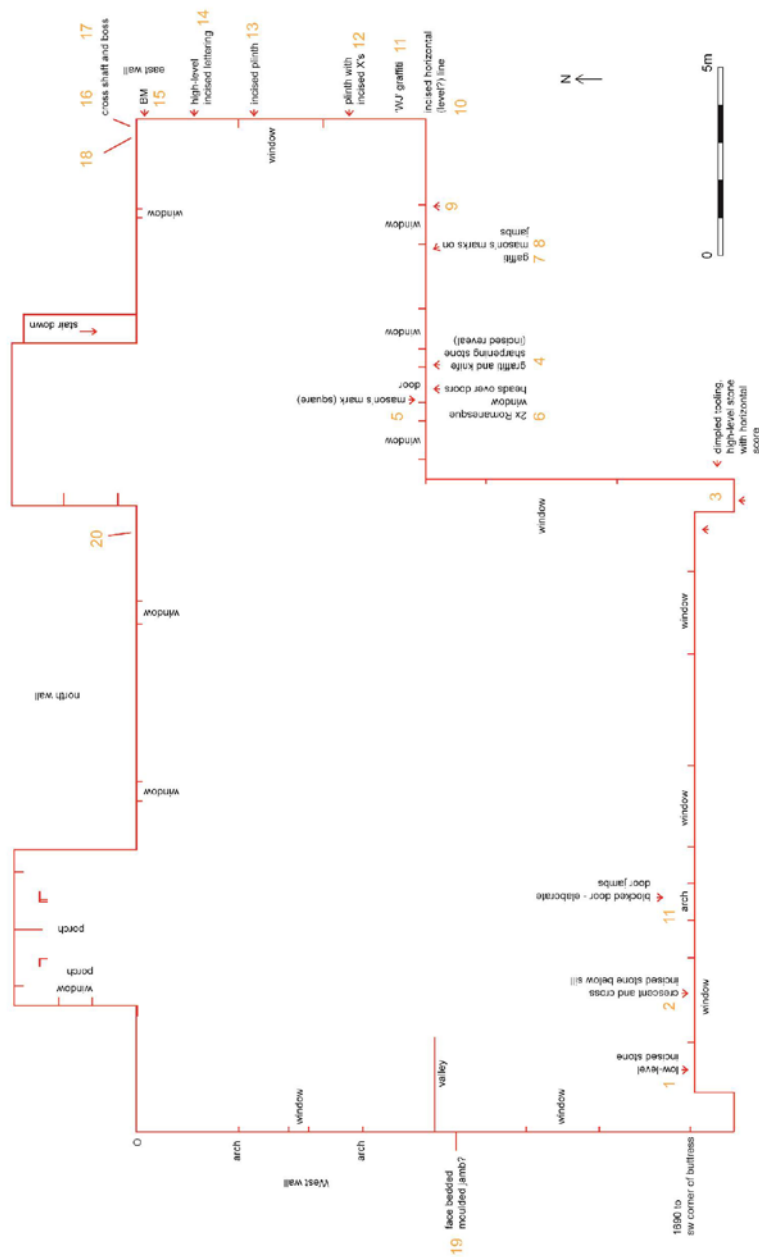
Plate 19 (left): Stones 16 and 17

Plate 20 (right): Stone 18



Plate 21 (left): Stone 19

Plate 22 (right): Stone 20



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Holy Trinity Church, Millom, Cumbria

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the exterior of the church showing the location of the recorded stones

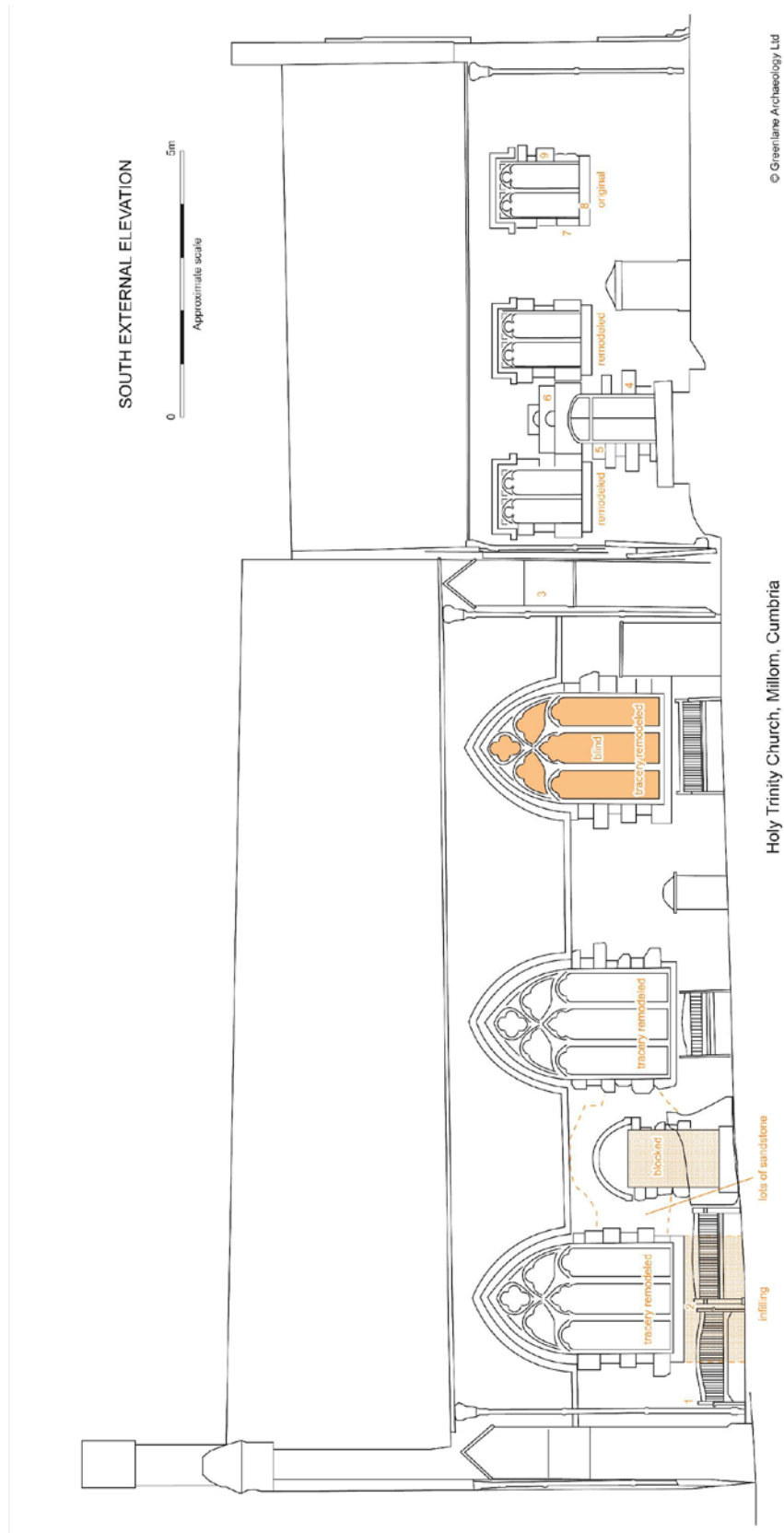


Figure 2: South external elevation showing the location of the recorded stones and features of historic interest

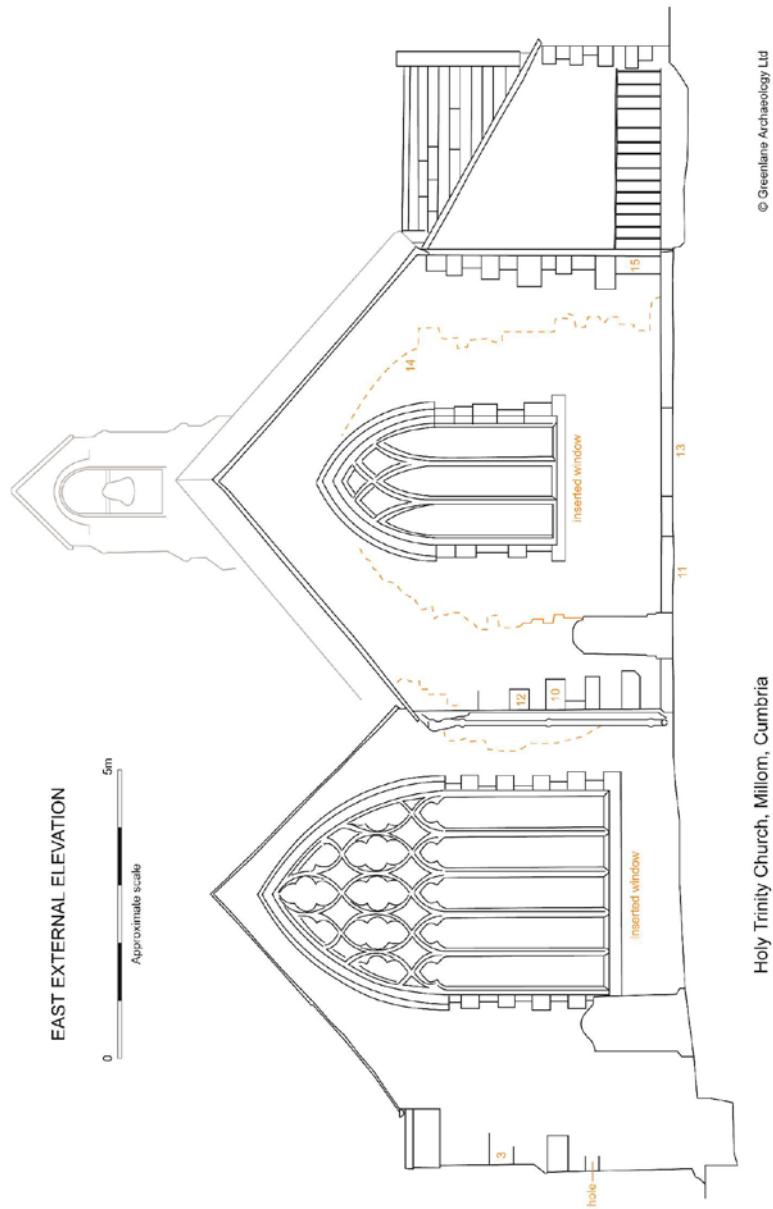


Figure 3: East external elevation showing the location of the recorded stones and features of historic interest

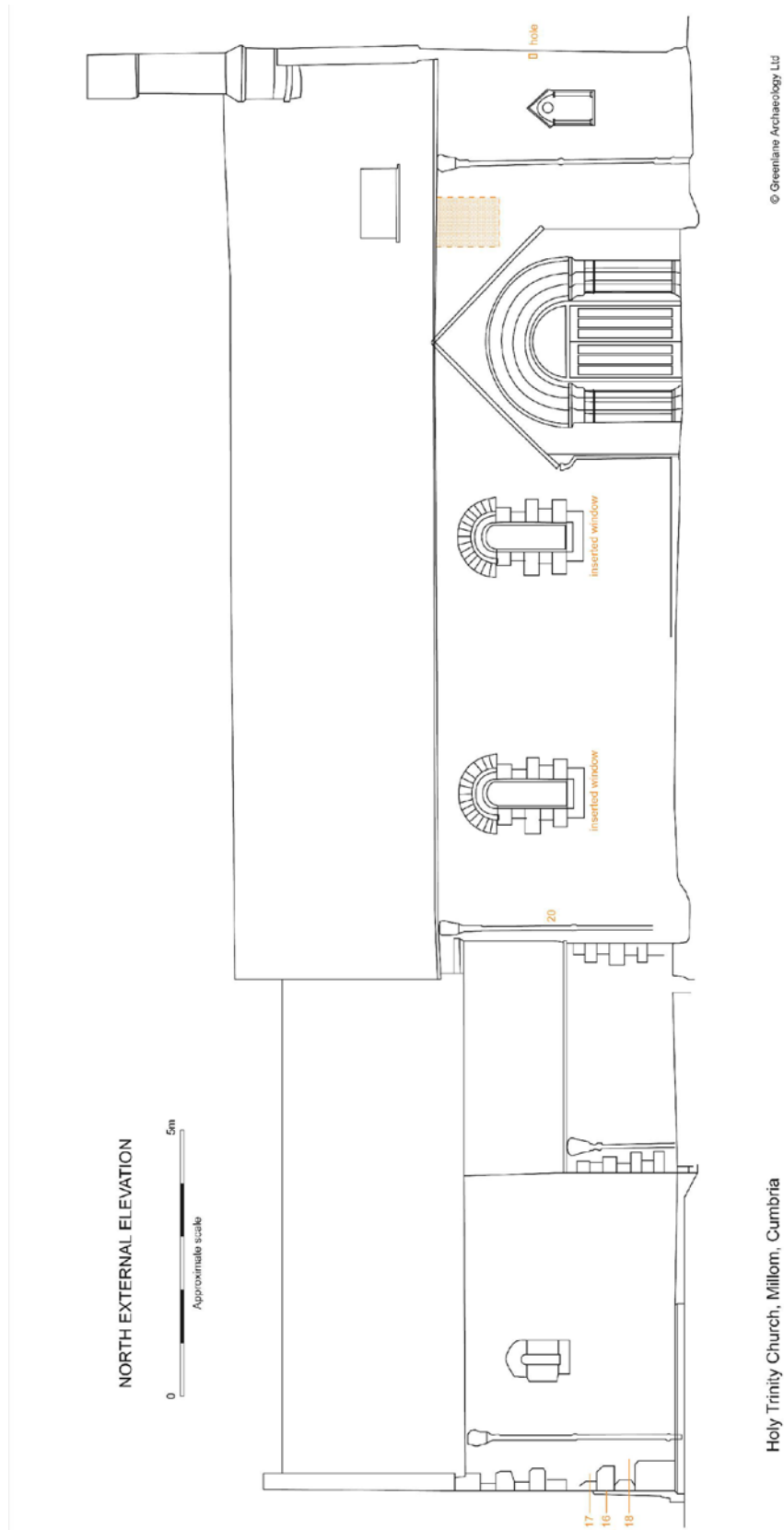


Figure 4: North external elevation showing the location of the recorded stones and features of historic interest

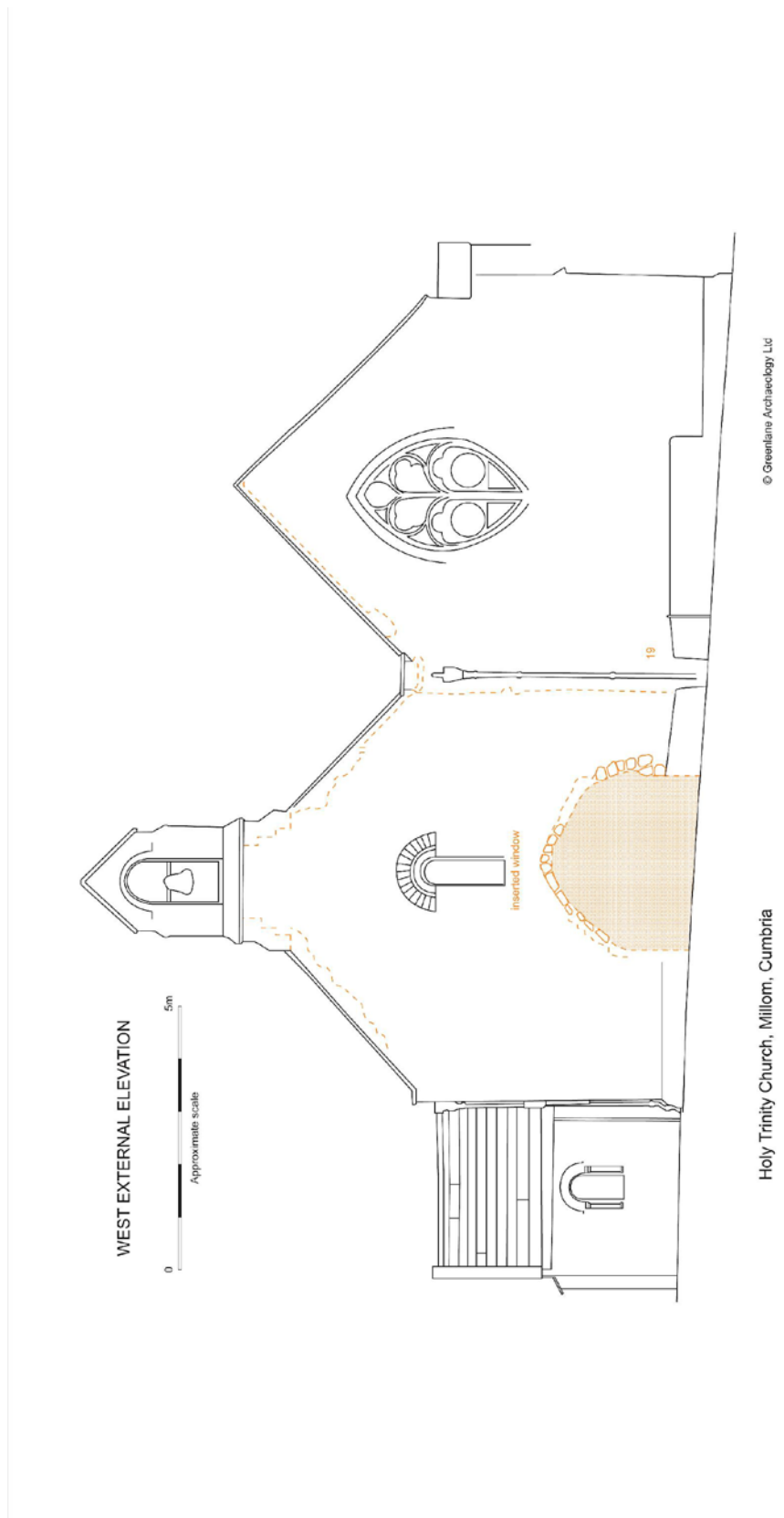


Figure 5: West external elevation showing the location of the recorded stones and features of historic interest

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The project revealed a considerable number of stones of interest; many are not especially old and have limited potential for revealing more about the development of the building. Others are, however, clearly medieval or earlier and their recording, combined with other evidence and the known history of the building, has the potential to further our knowledge of the development of the current church building and the wider site.

5.3 Significance

5.3.1 The two most important stones are the two best known – the pieces of early cross of 10th to 11th century date (**Stones 16** and **17**). These demonstrate that a site of Christian worship, presumably an earlier church, existed here or nearby before the current building was constructed. Other stones, such as the mason's marks (**Stones 05, 07** and **09**) and the architectural fragments (**Stones 03, 06, 10** and **19**) all demonstrate the presence of a medieval structure, which is largely what the church consists of at present, although much altered in the late 1920s. The later elements such as the graffiti (**Stones 04, 07, 08, 12** and **14**) have the potential to reveal more about the manner in which the church was modified in the post-medieval period. The elements of uncertain date and function (**Stones 01, 02, 11, 13** and **20**) are the most tantalising. These potentially represent a range of dates, from the Roman period to the medieval, and while individually none is convincing of activity on the site from the Roman or Early Medieval period, they add tantalising clues that further research might elucidate.

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1 The purpose and expectation of the project was not that it would necessarily find definite evidence for activity on the site prior to the medieval period, rather that it would provide additional information with which to interpret the church and its development. Nevertheless, it did provide potential clues about the history of the site over a long period of time. This information is now available to be built upon in the future, and can add into subsequent archaeological, historical, and architectural research.

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