

**REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION WORK:**

**PRIORY CHURCH OF ST. MARY AND ST. MARTIN,  
BLYTH, NOTTS.**

Site Code: BSMM10

Scheduled Monument No.: NT78

Faculty: 16735

National Grid Reference: SK 6240 8729

PCAS Job No.: 691

Report for:

**PCC of St. Mary and St. Martin s Church, Blyth**

By

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## **CONTENTS**

<b>Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Site location and description</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Archaeological and historical background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. Planning background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5. Aims and objectives</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6. Methodology</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>7. Results</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8. Discussion and conclusion</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>9. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>10. Site archive</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>11. Bibliography</b>	<b>5</b>
 <b>Appendix 1: Plates:</b>	 <b>6</b>
1. Drain run on north side of the church, looking west	
2. Drainage trench with brick burial vault (13), looking northwest	
3. Drain run on the north side of the church, looking west	
4. Drain run at the north-west corner of the church, looking west	
5. Buttress (14) within west-facing elevation of pump chamber pit	
6. South-facing section of pump chamber pit	
7. Test pit to west of tower, looking north	
8. Test pit section, looking west	
9. Blocked doorway in the west wall of the north aisle, looking west	
10. Wood panelling detail in the vestry, looking west	
 <b>Appendix 2: Context descriptions</b>	 <b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Finds list</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Oasis documentation</b>	<b>13</b>
 <b>Figures</b>	
1. Site location map	
2. Location of test pits	
3. Location of drainage trench, pump chamber pit and blocked doorway (after Frith Moxon Ltd)	
4. South-facing section of pump chamber pit	
5. Elevation of buttress 14 within west-facing section of pump chamber pit	
6. Elevation of wall 13 within north-facing section of pump chamber pit	
7. Photograph locations (not to scale)	

## **Summary**

*The Priory Church of St. Mary and St. Martin, Blyth (NGR: SK 6240 8729) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No.: NT78). In November and December 2010, Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) conducted archaeological mitigation works on behalf of Blyth PCC. The works were carried out during alterations and drainage works, in accordance with an approved specification.*

*Archaeological monitoring of a drainage trench revealed the top of a post-medieval brick vault. The lower courses of the north wall of the church and an adjoining stone buttress were encountered within a hand-dug pump pit. Inside the church, the remains of a blocked stone doorway were identified in the west wall of the north aisle. These features were recorded and preserved in situ. No other archaeological remains, structures or artefacts were observed during the monitoring works.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

In November and December 2010, Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) carried out archaeological mitigation works within the churchyard of St Mary and St Martin's Priory Church, Blyth, Notts. (Fig.1). Works included the archaeological excavation of test pits, and the monitoring and recording of all contractors' groundworks, including reconfiguration works both inside and outside the church (Fig. 2).

## **2.0 Site location and description**

Blyth is a large Nottinghamshire village located c. 10km north-east of Worksop. The church of St Mary and St Martin is a Grade I listed building sited at the northern end of the village. The site elevation is approximately 20m AOD.

The church is positioned against the northern boundary of the churchyard and has an extensive graveyard to the south and east. The northern side of the church and part of the graveyard on the eastern side contain the remains of an 11<sup>th</sup> century Benedictine priory and are a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM Notts. NT78), (Appendix 1).

## **3.0 Archaeological and historical background**

The priory associated with Blyth church was founded in 1088 by Roger de Builli of Tickhill. The church was subject to St Katharine's Abbey in Rouen. It originally consisted of a seven-bay nave with north and south aisles, a transept with a central tower and an eastern wing with an apse. Only the nave and north aisle survive today.

In the mid 13th century, long-running disputes with the priory monks resulted in changes to the church fabric, in the form of an extended south aisle that became

used as the nave by the congregation, with the original nave retained for use by the monks.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Henry IV severed the priory connection with Rouen. The two halves of the church passed into separate ownership and a great east wall was erected. The west tower was built at this time.

With the Dissolution, the priory lands on the eastern side of the church were confiscated and passed into private ownership. In 1635 they were purchased by the Mellish family and adapted for private use. The claustral buildings to the north were cleared to make way for Blyth Hall. The hall became derelict by 1951 and was demolished in 1973. Its site and gardens were subsequently developed as a housing estate (Blyth Church Statement of Need).

#### **4.0 Planning background**

Scheduled Monument Consent (Ref.: S00005468) was granted in March 2010 for the provision of toilets and associated works at Blyth Church (Southwell and Nottingham Faculty No.: 16735). The consent was conditional on the commissioning of a programme of archaeological mitigation work. A specification prepared by PCAS Ltd., in August 2010 was approved by English Heritage (EH) and the Nottinghamshire Archaeological Officer.

Following subsequent discussions and a site visit with all the above parties, the proposed drainage route and methodology was revised. The EH Inspector indicated that the revised scheme was acceptable as a Variation to the pre-existing consent.

#### **5.0 Aims and objectives**

The primary aim of the project was to minimise the potential adverse effects of the alterations and groundworks on surviving archaeological remains within the Scheduled area. It also sought to identify, record and interpret any archaeological remains disturbed or destroyed by the groundworks.

#### **6.0 Methodology (see Appendix 1, plates 1-10)**

The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with:

*Archaeological Specification (PCAS, August 2010);*  
*PPS 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, DCLG (2010)*  
*IFA Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation (2008);*  
*IFA Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs (revised 2008);*  
*IFA Code of Conduct (1994 as revised).*

An experienced archaeologist attended the site to hand-excavate and record the test pits and pumping-station pits required within the Scheduled area (see Fig. 2). Each pit was hand dug to 1m diameter and c. 0.60m deep.

The revised drainage scheme was located to the north and west of the church building, before being drilled through a tower buttress and moled below the churchyard (outside the scheduled area). Continuous archaeological monitoring was carried out during the excavation of this trench, which was c. 30 metres long, 0.40m wide and a maximum of 0.50m deep (plates 1-4). The moling operation could not be monitored except where access pits were excavated.

Monitoring and recording of architectural features was also conducted during alterations to internal areas of the kitchen and vestry located within the north aisle.

## **7.0 Results** (see Appendix 1, plates 1-10)

Part of a convex brick surface, probably representing the upper (external) surface of a brick burial vault (12) was encountered during monitoring of the new drainage trench (Fig. 3, plates 1-4). The vault, located c. 0.30m below existing ground level and exposed for c. 3m, was preserved in situ (Appendix 2). A quantity of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery and tile; and a hand-made brick was recovered from topsoil (10) above the vault (Appendix 3).

A large pump chamber pit was excavated at the eastern end of the drainage trench against the north aisle (Fig. 4, plates 5 & 6). The pit was approximately 1.5m<sup>2</sup> and 1.3m deep. It contained two deposits. The earliest was a sand and mortar demolition deposit (11) containing fragments of roof tile and vessel glass, including the base of an early 18<sup>th</sup>-century 'Onion' bottle (see Appendix 3). Above layer 11 was 0.35m of dark brownish-black topsoil (10) containing 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery. The west-facing elevation of the church's easternmost buttress (14) was recorded within the eastern pit section (Fig. 5). Part of the lower north aisle wall (13) was recorded within the southern pit section (Fig. 6).

A hand-dug test pit was excavated for a drilling run, c. 3.5m to the west of the tower (Fig. 7, plates 7 & 8). The test pit was 0.90m deep. It contained sandy brown loam overlain by subsoil and dark brown topsoil. No finds were recovered from this pit.

Monitoring conducted during alterations to the kitchen and vestry recorded a blocked doorway with a stone arch located in the west wall of the north aisle (kitchen area) (see Figure 3 and Appendix 1, plates 9 & 10). The door originally led outside to the west of the church. It had been blocked relatively recently with 20<sup>th</sup> century plasterboard and covered.

## **8.0 Discussion and conclusion**

On the north side of the church, archaeological monitoring of the contractor's hand-dug drainage trench revealed the top of a likely post-medieval brick vault. The lower courses of the north-facing wall of the church and an adjoining west-facing buttress were located within a hand-dug pump pit. Inside the church, the remains of a blocked stone doorway were identified in the west wall of the north aisle.

All of these structures were recorded in detail and preserved in situ. No other archaeological remains, structures or artefacts were observed during the monitoring works.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

PCAS Ltd., would like to thank Jon Humble (English Heritage Inspector, East Midlands Region, representing DCMS); Ursilla Spence (Nottinghamshire County Council Senior Archaeological Officer); and Chris Moxon (Frith Moxon Ltd, Architects).

## **10.0 Site Archive**

The Blyth church archive is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd. This will be deposited at the receiving museum within six months of completion of this report.

Copies of this report will be sent to Nottinghamshire Historic Environment Record (NHER). English Heritage / DCMS; and Newark and Sherwood District Council.

## **11.0 Bibliography**

English Heritage. *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*. (MoRPHE)

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd. *Proposed Internal and External Works, St. Mary and St. Martin's Church, Blyth, Notts. Revised Method Description and Mitigation Strategy*. (12/08/2010. Lincoln: PCAS)

<http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/articles/>

## Appendix 1: Photographs (for locations see Fig 7)



1. Drain run on north side of the church, looking west



2. Drainage trench with brick burial vault (13), looking northwest





3. Drain run on the north side of the church, looking west



4. Drain run at the north-west corner of the church, looking west





5. Buttress (14) within west-facing section of pump chamber pit



6. South-facing section of pump chamber pit



7. Test pit to west of the tower, looking north



8. Test pit section, looking west



9. Blocked doorway in the west wall of the north aisle, looking west



10. Wood panelling detail in the vestry, looking west

## Appendix 2. Context descriptions

CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	RELATIONSHIPS
10	Layer	Dark blackish-black, silty sand topsoil with root material	Above 11
11	Layer	Sandy demolition deposit containing common building material	Below 10
12	Masonry	Top of brick burial vault exposed within pipe trench	Below 10
13	Masonry	Lower courses of north-facing church wall, exposed within pump pit	Butted by 14
14	Masonry	Lower courses of west-facing stone buttress, exposed within pump pit	Butts 13

### Appendix 3. Finds list

Context	Location	Type	No. of	Description	Spot Date
10	Drainage trench, above vault	Brick	1	hand-made brick. 24cm x 11.5cm x 6cm. Oxidised calcareous fabric, part vitrified; mortar pres. on all surfaces.	19th C
10	Drainage trench, above vault	Pottery	3	body sherds from same vessel of large yellow & green glazed, decorated whiteware bowl	19th/20th C
10	Drainage trench, above vault	Pottery	1	base sherd of transfer print ware (TPW), whiteware fabric, blue floral int.	19th/20th C
10	Drainage trench, above vault	Pottery	1	rim sherd of TPW	20th C
10	Drainage trench, above vault	Pottery	1	sherd of English Porcelain (ENPO)	19th/20th C
10	Drainage trench, above vault	Pottery	2	sherds of whiteware plate;	20th C
10	Drainage trench, above vault	Pottery	1	base sherd of stoneware ginger beer bottle	L19th/ E20th C
10	Drainage trench, above vault	Tile	1	fragment green-glazed kitchen/fireplace tile	20th C
10	Pump pit	Tile	2	fragments of peg/nib/ridge (PNR) roof tile; sandy fabric with calcareous inclusions; oxidised, sand bedding.	18th / 19th C
10	Pump pit	Worked Stone	1	fragment of whetstone with smoothed/ worn surfaces; sandstone with mica inclusions.	
10	Pump pit	Pottery	1	fragment of stoneware; grey fabric, brown glazed exterior (rim fragment)	19th/20th C
11	Pump pit	Glass	1	fragment green vessel glass	19th C
11	Pump pit	Glass	1	dark green base fragment of onion shaped bottle	early 18th C?
11	Pump pit	Tile	2	fragments of PNR roof tile, 1.4cm and 1.3cm	18th / 19th C



## Appendix 4: Oasis documentation

OASIS ID: preconst3-94902

### Project details

Project name	REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION WORK:ST. MARY AND ST. MARTIN S CHURCH, BLYTH, NOTTS.
Short description of the project	In Nov. / Dec. 2010, Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) conducted archaeological mitigation works on behalf of Blyth PCC during alterations and drainage works. Monitoring of a drainage trench revealed a post-medieval brick vault. A hand-dug pump pit recorded part of the north wall of the church and an adjoining buttress. Inside the church, the remains of a blocked stone doorway were identified in the north aisle. These features were recorded and preserved in situ. No other archaeological remains, structures or artefacts were observed during the monitoring works.
Project dates	Start: 10-03-2009 End: 28-02-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	BSMM10 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	NT78 (Consent S00005468) - SM No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	BURIAL VAULT Post Medieval
Monument type	PARISH CHURCH Medieval
Significant Finds	POT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	GLASS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	WHETSTONE Uncertain
Significant Finds	ROOF TILE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Post Medieval
Investigation type	Watching Brief

Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent
Status	Complete
<b>? Project location</b>	
Site location	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE BASSETLAW BLYTH PRIORY CHURCH OF SAINT MARY AND SAINT MARTIN
Postcode	S81
Study area	0.50 Kilometres
Site coordinates	NGR - SK 6240 8729 LL - 53.3785078139 -1.061861777530 (decimal) LL - 53 22 42 N 001 03 42 W (degrees) Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 19.00m Max: 20.00m
Status	Complete
<b>? Project creators</b>	
Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd
Project brief originator	ENGLISH HERITAGE / DOE
Project design originator	Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd
Project director/manager	Will Munford
Project supervisor	G. Tann
Type of sponsor/funding body	Parish Council
Name of sponsor/funding body	Blyth PCC
Status	Complete
<b>? Project archives</b>	
Physical Archive recipient	The client
Physical Contents	Glass , Worked stone/lithics , other



Digital Archive recipient	English Heritage
Digital Contents	none
Digital Media available	Images raster / digital photography
Paper Archive recipient	Bassetlaw Museum, Retford
Paper Contents	Stratigraphic , other
Paper Media available	Context sheet , Plan , Report , Section , Unpublished Text

## Figures



Fig.1. Location of St Mary and St Martin's Church, Blyth, Notts., based on the 1:25,000 OS Explorer map sheet 120, 2006.

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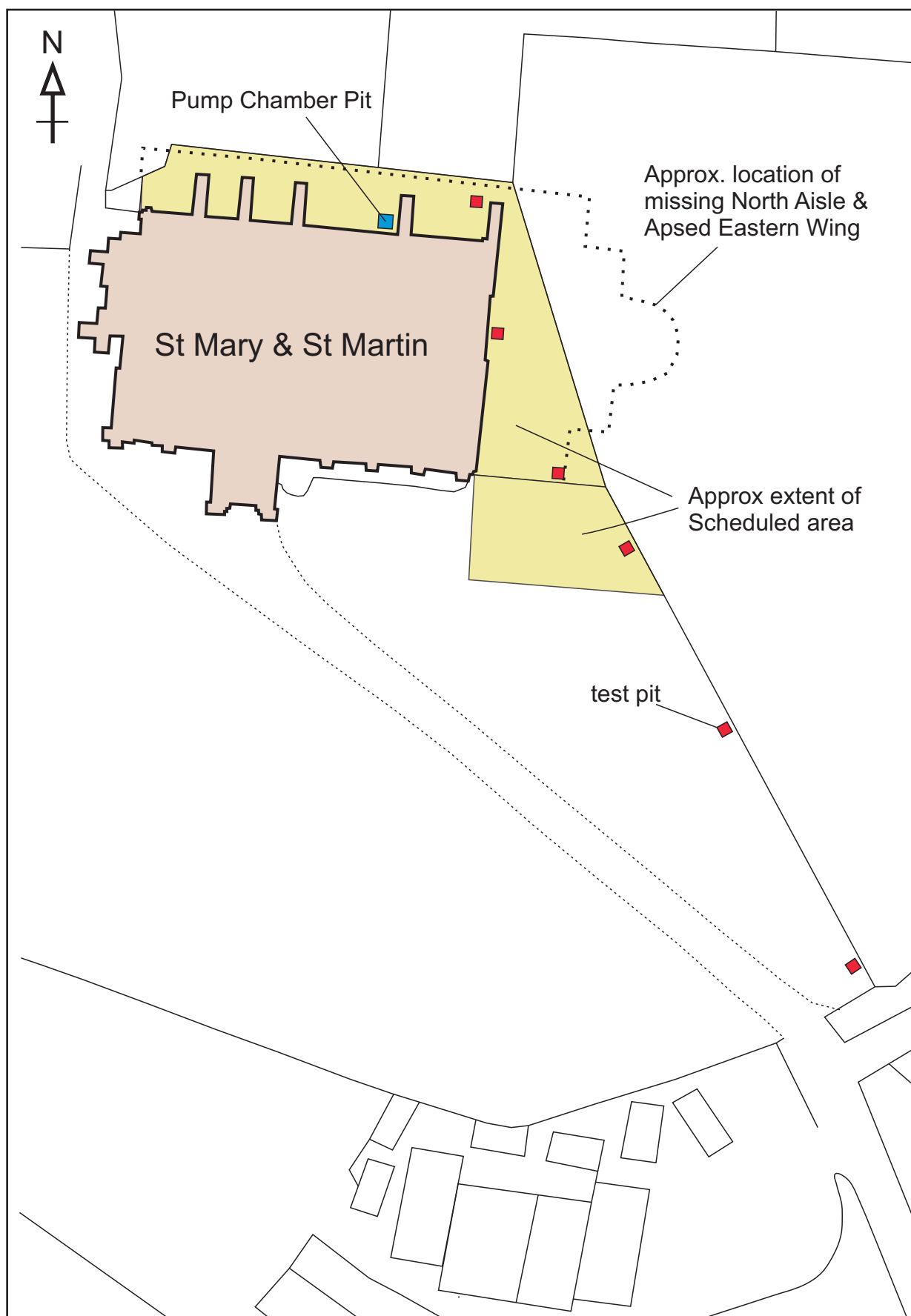


Fig. 2. Location of test pits (not to scale)



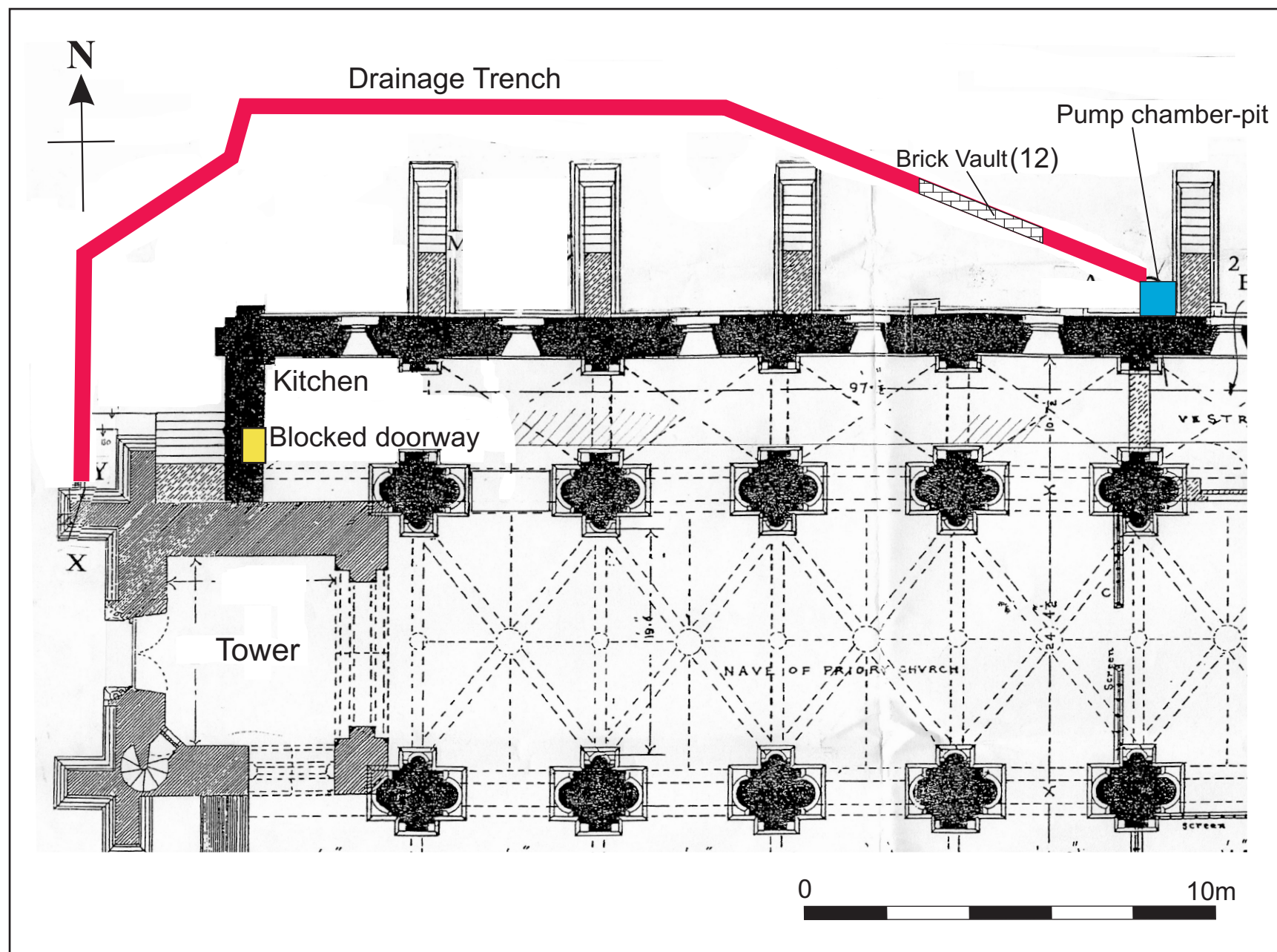


Fig. 3. Location of drainage trench, pump chamber pit and blocked doorway (after Frith Moxon Ltd.)

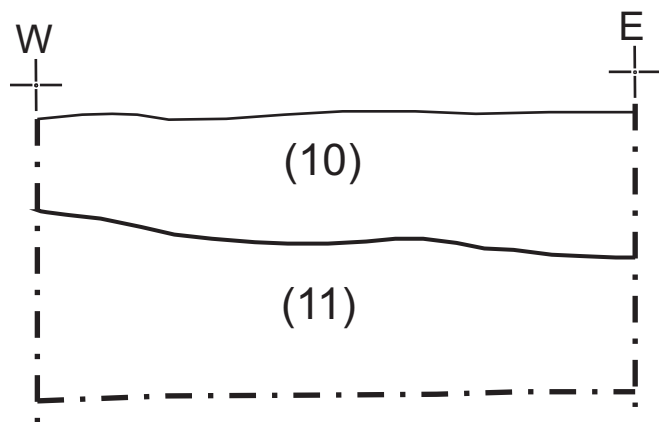


Fig.4. South-facing section of pump chamber pit



Fig.5. Elevation of buttress 14 within west-facing section of pump chamber pit

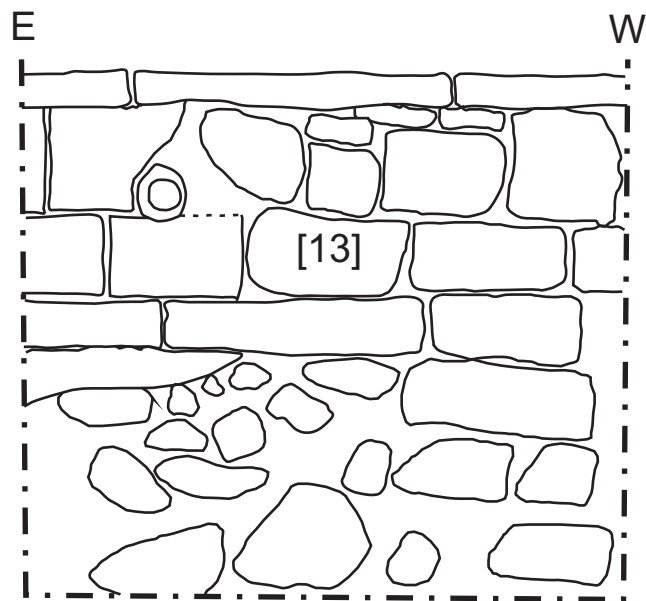


Fig.6 Elevation of wall 13 within north-facing section of pump chamber pit



Figs. 4, 5 & 6. Representative sections of deposits and structures visible in pump chamber pit

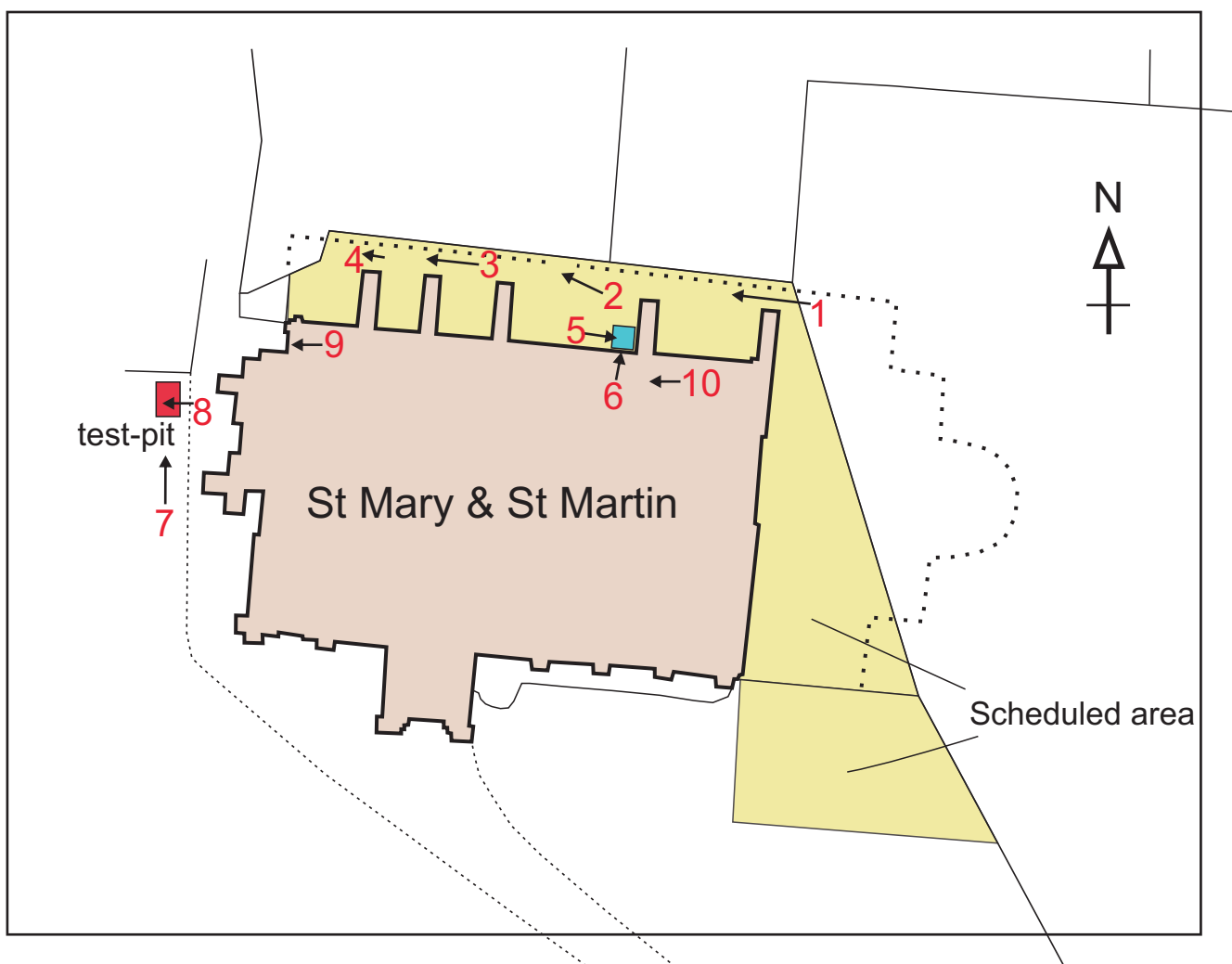


Fig.7. Photograph locations (not to scale)