

St Michael's Church Aldbourn Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



For
Thomas Homes Limited

CA Project: 770060
CA Report: 15849

December 2015



St Michael's Church Aldbourne Wiltshire

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SUMMARY

Project Name: St. Michael's Church
Location: Aldbourne, Wiltshire
NGR: 426411 175840
Type: Watching Brief
Date: 10 February 2014
Location of Archive: CA Andover
CA Site Code: SMA14

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on 10th February 2014 by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the installation of the heating system, including service runs that extended into the churchyard at St Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire. Two trenches were mechanically excavated and a small test-pit was hand dug during the fieldwork.

No features of archaeological interest were observed during groundwork but a series of buried soil deposits were identified and recorded to a maximum depth of 0.70m below ground level. A small assemblage of finds was also recovered from the watching brief consisting entirely of ceramic building material dating to the 13th to 15th centuries. Disarticulated human bone fragments were identified and recorded but not recovered within the two trenches and small test pit. All human bone fragments identified and recorded during the watching brief were reburied prior to completion of the groundwork. The depth of natural substrata was not established.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In February 2014 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at St. Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire ('the site', centred on NGR: 426411 175840; Figure 1). The project was commissioned by Thomas Homes Limited.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to the Diocese of Salisbury Diocesan Advisory Committee Certificate, dated 13 June 2013, for proposed improvement works to include the following: installation of a new heating system comprising under-pew heaters, high level wall-mounted ceramic radiant heaters in both the South Transept and the Lady Chapel, de-stratification fans in the nave and fan convectors in the Chancel. The watching brief was to include monitoring of all groundwork associated with the installation of the heating system, including service runs contained within the 1989/90 concrete floor and the Chancel and where they extend into the churchyard.
- 1.3 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2014). The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2009), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006).

The Site

- 1.4 St. Michael's Church is located in the northern extent of the settlement of Aldbourne, to the north of Back Lane (Figure 1). The focus of the heating refurbishment is largely confined to the internal core of the church itself (as described above in section 1.2); however new water supply trenches extend into the churchyard and connect to the mains supply in Back Lane. The Church itself is set within its own curtilage of Churchyard and cemetery – the cemetery being focussed to the west and north-west of the Church. Beyond the Church's curtilage, to the west is located a school, beyond the cemetery to the north is a mixture of arable fields and pasture and to the east and south are areas of housing. Unsurprisingly, the Church is located at c. 135m above Ordnance datum (aOD), slightly higher than the centre of the village to the south.

- 1.5 Aldbourne is set within chalk downland at the confluence of six valleys, all of which are dry apart from one leading to the south-east, which carries a stream/tributary c. 5 km to the River Kennet proper (Stoodley *et al.* 2012).
- 1.6 The solid geology of the Site comprises New Pit Chalk of the Upper Cretaceous Period, overlain in places by Head (gravel, sand and clay) from the Quaternary Age (BGS Online).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Site is located within an area of known archaeological interest (Stoodley *et al.* 2012). There is considerable evidence for prehistoric activity including earthworks and field systems in the surrounding downland, and assemblages of Mesolithic and Neolithic flints and sherds of Bronze Age pottery have been found to the south-west of the Site at Pudley Cottage, Castle Street. Aldbourne is c. 3km to the south of the major Roman route of Ermin Street, and a number of Romano-British artefacts have been found previously in the vicinity of the Site including pottery at Pudley Cottage, at West Street House and at Manor Farm, and a bronze buckle and two coins were at the Old Rectory to the south. The presence of these materials suggests that Roman settlement might lie in this area.
- 2.2 The village is first recorded as *Aldinburnan* in AD 970. The earliest settlement may have been on gravel near the stream and to the south and south-east. Part of an early Anglo-Saxon (7th or early 8th-century) cemetery containing 26 inhumation burials was excavated in 2007 c. 550m to the south-west of the Site. The evaluation of the Barnes Coaches Depot site in 2008 revealed two ditches, a single potsherd of possible Anglo-Saxon date being the only datable find from one of them (CA 2008).
- 2.3 In 1086 Aldbourne was held by the King and had enough land for 45 plough teams. Medieval tax assessments show that it was the wealthiest and most populous parish in the hundred. It is likely that a fire in c. 1220 destroyed the church, which was rebuilt. Archaeological work at West Street House also revealed evidence of medieval domestic activity to the rear of the historic street frontage.
- 2.4 The Church of England parish church of Saint Michael overlooking the village green is medieval and a Grade I Listed Building (List Entry 1034152). The nave and aisles were built around 1200, although some earlier Norman arches and other traces remain. There are four arches on the north arcade and three on the south. The

chancel is Early English, with north and south chapels, and a sanctuary with lancet windows.

- 2.5 The Perpendicular Gothic three-stage tower was added in 1460. It is ashlar, has angled buttresses and transomed three-light bell openings, with gargoyles above. There are also transepts with three-light windows, a tall south porch – originally two-storey – and a bay between the porch and south transept. There was also formerly a north porch. The external walls are of flint and limestone with some chequer work and sarsen, and are crenellated. The roofs are lead and slate. The interior contains a number of monuments and monumental brasses.
- 2.6 Between the mid-16th and mid-17th centuries, the population of the village may have doubled in size. There were houses in Castle Street in the 16th century and probably earlier, and also farmsteads beside West Street. West Street is first mentioned in 1614.
- 2.7 In addition to the later medieval heritage of the church, for at least 130 years Aldbourne had a bell foundry. The village expanded in the 17th century and continued to prosper as an industrial centre in the 18th century, but the early 19th century brought several disasters including a flood in 1811 and fires in 1817 and 1819. William Cobbett, who passed through the village on one of his Rides in 1826, described it as a 'decaying place'.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The purpose of the archaeological watching brief was to monitor groundwork and identify, record and investigate, so far as reasonably practicable, any archaeological features, deposits or finds revealed during the excavation of the trenches for the new water supply.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2014). The watching brief comprised the observation by a competent archaeologist of all intrusive groundworks, associated with the installation of the new heating system



and water supply (Figure 2). The overburden was removed by the contractors under constant archaeological supervision.

- 4.2 **Test Pit 1**, which measured 0.6m x 0.5m was hand-excavated to a maximum depth of 0.65m below ground level.
- 4.3 A mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket was used during the excavation of **Trenches 2 & 3**. **Trench 2** measured 17.5m x 0.4m with a maximum depth of 0.7m and **Trench 3** measured 3.70m x 0.60m and a maximum depth of 0.58m. Depth of natural substrata was not established.
- 4.4 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007). Each context was recorded on a pro-forma context sheet by written and measured description; principal deposits were recorded by drawn plans (scale 1:20 or 1:50) and drawn sections (scale 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate). Photographs (digital colour) were taken as appropriate. All finds were bagged separately and related to the context record. No environmental samples were taken. All artefacts were recovered and retained for processing and analysis in accordance with Technical Manual 3 *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation* (CA 1995)
- 4.5 Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with the Wiltshire Heritage Museum (Devizes) along with the site archive. However the Museum is currently closed to new archives, and until this situation changes or an alternative repository is identified the archive will be held at the offices of CA in Andover. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

Test Pit 1 (Figures 2 & 3)

- 5.1 **Test Pit 1** was located next to and butting the west side of the south wall of the Tower at the western end of St. Michael's Church. The test-pit measured 0.60m east/west, 0.40m north/south and was excavated to a depth of 0.70m.
- 5.2 The recorded stratigraphic sequence comprised subsoil **101**, overlain by topsoil **100**. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed. Disarticulated human remains were observed but not recovered within subsoil **101**. Medieval floor

tile and flat roof tile fragments, dating to the 13th to 15th centuries, were recovered from topsoil **101**. Depth of natural substrata was not established in the test pit.

Trench 2 (Figures 2, 4 & 6)

- 5.3 **Trench 2** was located to the north and north-west of the tower and was 17.5m long, 0.4m wide and up to 0.7m deep.
- 5.4 The earliest deposit within **Trench 2** comprised a buried soil **202**, which was overlain by buried soil **201**. Layer **201** was cut by a modern service trench **203** which contained three modern fills (**204-206**). A final layer of topsoil **200** completed the stratigraphic sequence.
- 5.5 No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed. Disarticulated human remains were observed but not recovered within buried soil layers **201** and **202**. Medieval painted and glazed floor tile and flat roof tile fragments, dating to the 13th to 15th centuries, were recovered from topsoil **200**. The larger fragment was of a monochrome (green-coloured) glazed type and retained thick lime mortar to its underside. The depth of natural substrata was not established.

Trench 3 (Figures 2, 5 & 6)

- 5.6 **Trench 3** was located to the west of the tower and cut through an existing pathway. **Trench 3** was 3.7m long, up to 0.6m wide and up to 0.58m deep.
- 5.7 The earliest deposit within **Trench 3** comprised a buried soil **302**, overlain by buried soil **308** and **307**. Buried soil **307** was cut by a modern service trench **305** which contained a single modern fill **306**. Deposit **303** was used as a foundation layer for a cobbled and flagstone pathway **301**. Topsoil **304** completed the archaeological sequence. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed. No artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was identified. Disarticulated human remains were observed but not recovered within buried soil **307** and **308**. The depth of the natural substrata was not established.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 Finds recovered from the watching brief consisted entirely of ceramic building material.

- 6.2 Single fragments of medieval floor tile, dating to the 13th to 15th centuries, were recovered from topsoil **200** and subsoil **101**. The larger fragment, from topsoil **200**, was of a monochrome (green-coloured) glazed type and retained thick lime mortar to its underside.
- 6.3 A total of five fragments of unglazed flat roof tile were recovered from topsoil **200** and subsoil **101**. These are late medieval to post-medieval in date.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area, the watching brief identified no archaeological features within the area of observed groundworks.
- 7.2 A series of buried soils identified during the groundworks may indicate re-deposited/re-worked material built-up during the functional use of the church and churchyard. The discovery and presence of a small assemblage of unstratified ceramic building material fragments, including 13th to 15th-century flat roof tile, and disarticulated human bone fragments identified within topsoil and buried soil deposits are thought to demonstrate former re-working/disturbance to the soils within the churchyard.
- 7.3 The absence of archaeological features may indicate that any structural remains associated with St. Michael's Church either do not extend as far as or were not exposed by the groundworks. The depth of the natural substrata was not established and groundwork only penetrated into the existing subsoil deposits to a maximum depth of 0.70m.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 8.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Ed Dougherty. The report was written by Matt Nichol. The illustrations were prepared by Aleksandra Osinska. The archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Tom Rowley. The project was managed for CA by Richard Greatorex, who also edited this report.



9. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2011 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology_viewer_google/googleviewer.html Accessed 12 February 2014

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2008 *Barnes Coaches Site, Aldbourne, Wiltshire: Archaeological Evaluation*, CA Report No. 08054

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014 *St. Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Stoodley, N., Boylston A. & Mckinley J. I. 2012 An Early Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Aldbourne, Wiltshire. WANHM 105, 58-95



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey brown silty clay	0.6	0.5	>0.22	modern
1	101	Layer		Subsoil	Mid grey brown silty clay	0.6	0.5	>0.65	Disarticulated Human bone fragments identified and reinterred during backfill
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	Mid grey brown silty clay	17.5	0.4	>0.70	modern
2	201	Layer		Buried Soil	Light grey brown silty clay	13.1	0.4	>0.31	Disarticulated Human bone fragments identified and reinterred during backfill
2	202	Layer		Buried Soil	Mid grey brown silty clay	12.4	0.4	>0.24	Disarticulated Human bone fragments identified and reinterred during backfill
2	203	Cut		Modern service	E/W aligned narrow steep-sided ditch	2.4	0.4	>0.5	modern
2	204	Fill	203	Upper Fill	Dark grey brown silty clay	4.7	0.3	>0.3	Modern/redeposit
2	205	Fill	203	Middle fill	Mid orange sand	1.9	0.30	>0.22	
2	206	Fill	203	Basal Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay	0.8	0.4	>0.21	Modern/redeposit
3	300	Deposit		Stone Path	Angular fragments of grey Sarsen stone > 0.2 diameter	0.3	1.5	>0.07	
3	301	Deposit		Flagstone Floor	Rectangular Flagstones	2.8	1.8	>0.07	
3	302	Layer		Buried Soil	Mid grey brown silty clay	3.7	0.3	>0.5	Disarticulated Human bone fragments identified and reinterred during backfill
3	303	Deposit		Foundation for 301	Mid yellow sand	0.3	2.8	>0.18	
3	304	Layer		Topsoil	Mid grey brown silty clay	0.9	0.6	>0.1	modern
3	305	Cut		Modern service	Moderate/steep sides	0.6	0.26	>0.38	modern

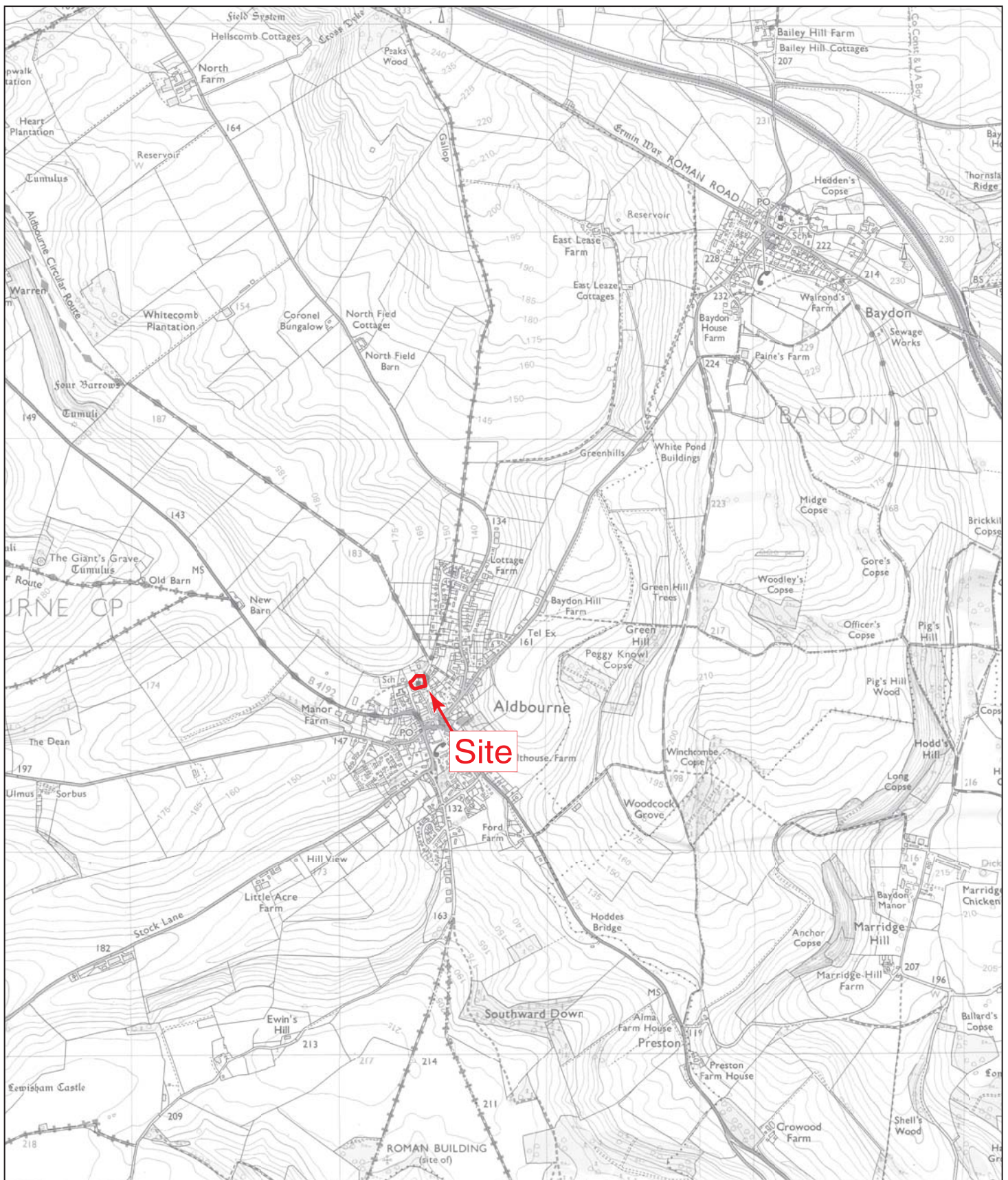
3	306	Fill		Fill	Grey brown gravel	0.6	0.26	>0.38	modern
3	307	Layer		Buried Soil	Mid grey brown silty clay	0.9	0.6	0.12	Disarticulated Human bone fragments identified and reinterred during backfill
3	308	Layer		Buried Soil	Mid grey brown silty clay	0.25	0.6	>0.09	Disarticulated Human bone fragments identified and reinterred during backfill

APENDIX B: THE FINDS

Context	Description	Count	Weight(g)	Spot-date
101	Ceramic building material: floor tile; flat roof tile	4	148	C13-C15
200	Ceramic building material: floor tile; flat roof tile	3	480	C13-C15

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	St. Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on 10th February 2014 by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks mechanical excavation of two trenches and hand excavation of a test pit associated with the installation of new service runs within the Churchyard at St Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire.</p> <p>No features of archaeological interest were observed but a series of buried soil deposits were identified and recorded to a maximum depth of 0.70m. Ceramic building material dating to the 13th to 15th centuries. Disarticulated human bone fragments were identified and recorded but not recovered within the two trenches and small test-pit. All human bone identified and recorded during the watching brief were reburied prior to completion of the groundwork. Depth of natural substrata was not established.</p>	
Project dates	10 February 2014	
Project type (e.g. desk-based, field evaluation etc)	Watching Brief	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	Unknown	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	St. Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire SN8 2EL	
Study area (M ² /ha)	9.5m ²	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	NGR: 426411 175840	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Diocese of Salisbury	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Richard Greatorex	
Project Supervisor	Eddie Dougherty	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	Medieval floor tile and roof tile fragments	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended - Wiltshire Heritage Museum (Devizes) but they are closed at present to archives.	Content
Physical	CA Andover	Ceramics
Paper	CA Andover	Trench record sheets, digital photo register
Digital	CA Andover	Digital Photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2015 <i>St Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire: Archaeological Watching Brief</i> , ref. 15849		



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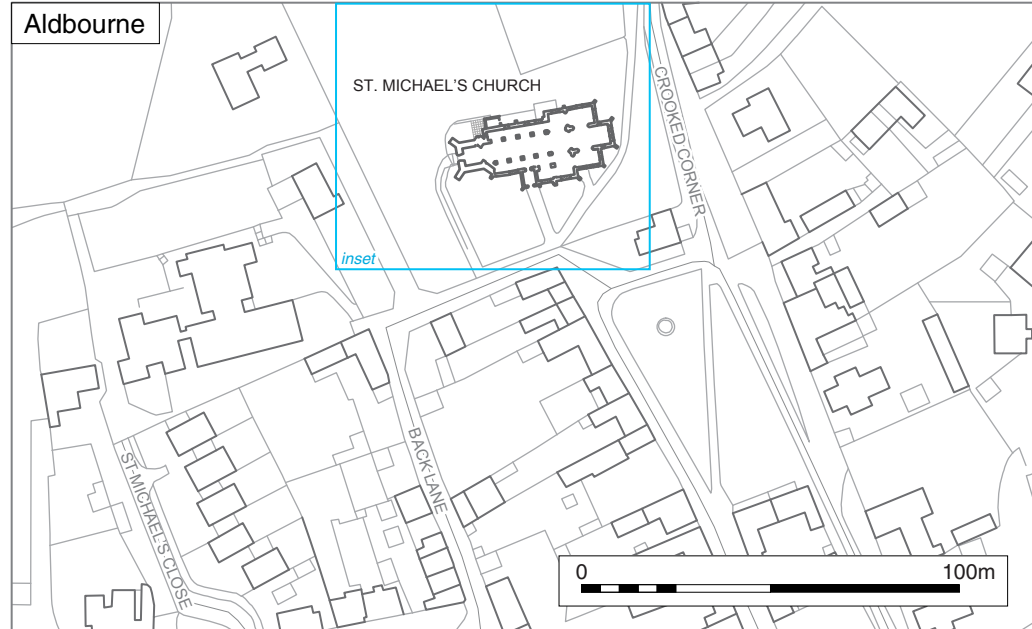
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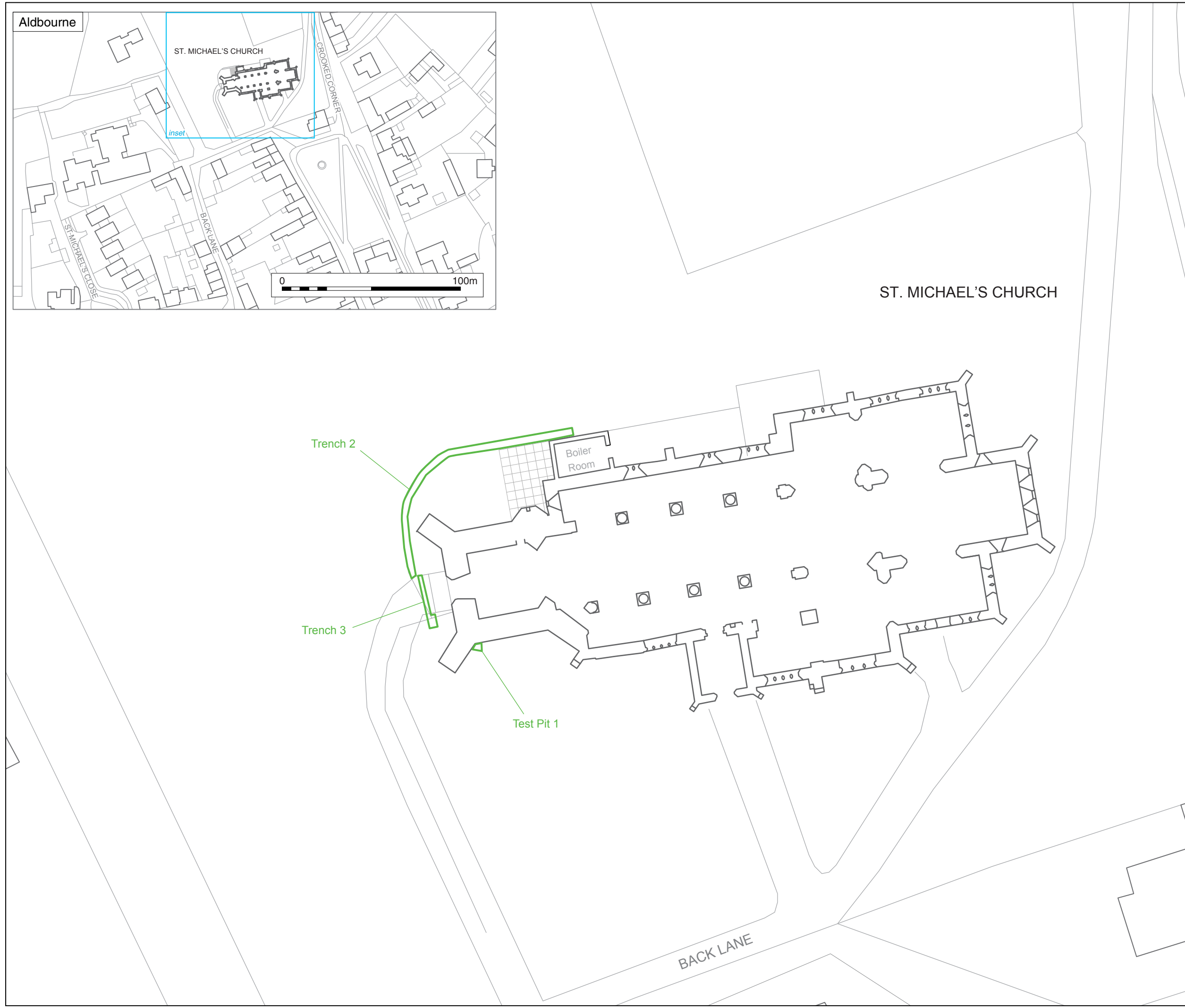
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 St. Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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 area of observed groundworks



ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH



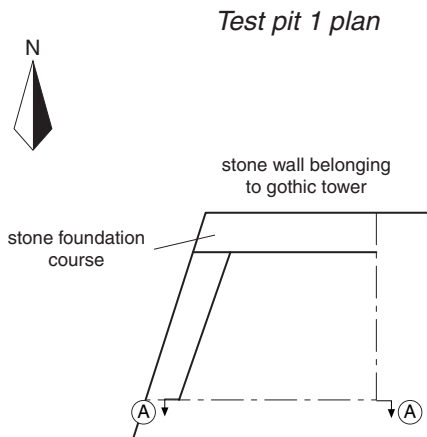
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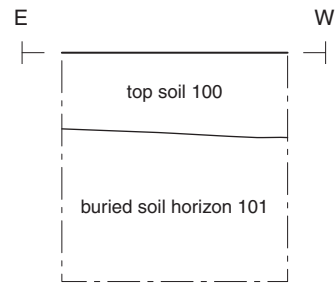
PROJECT TITLE
 St. Michael's Church, Aldbourne, Wiltshire

FIGURE TITLE
 The site showing location of groundworks

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Section AA



Test Pit 1 looking north-west



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FIGURE TITLE

Test Pit 1: plan, section and photograph

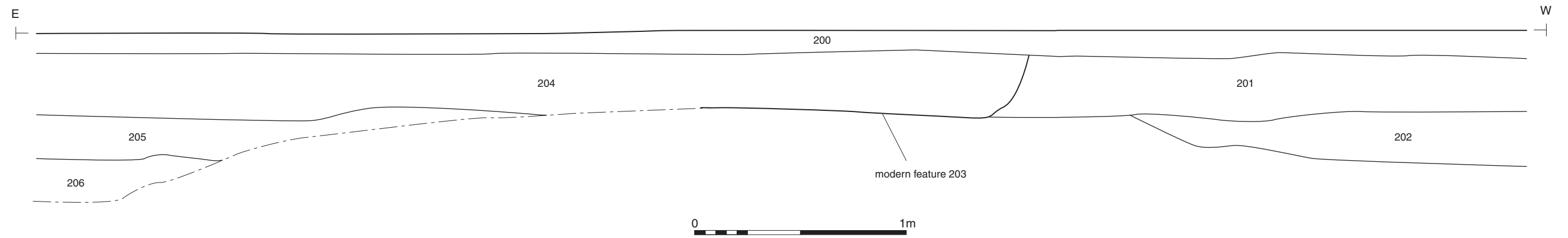


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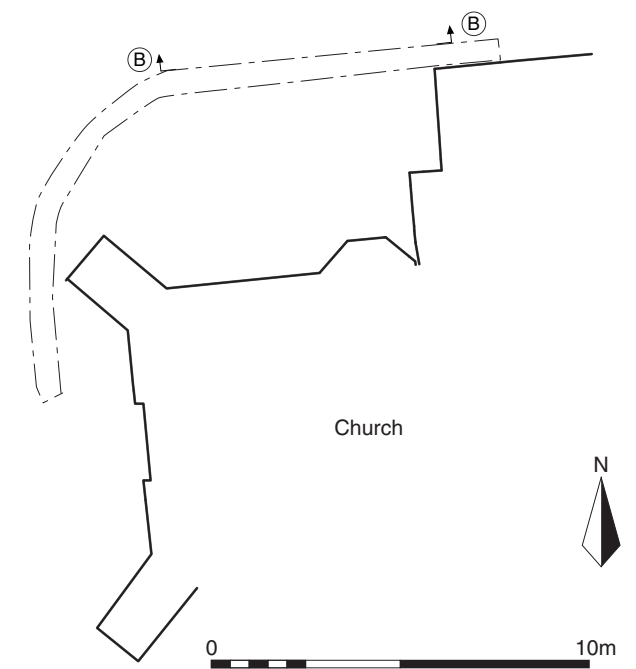
FIGURE NO.

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Section BB



Trench 2 looking north-west



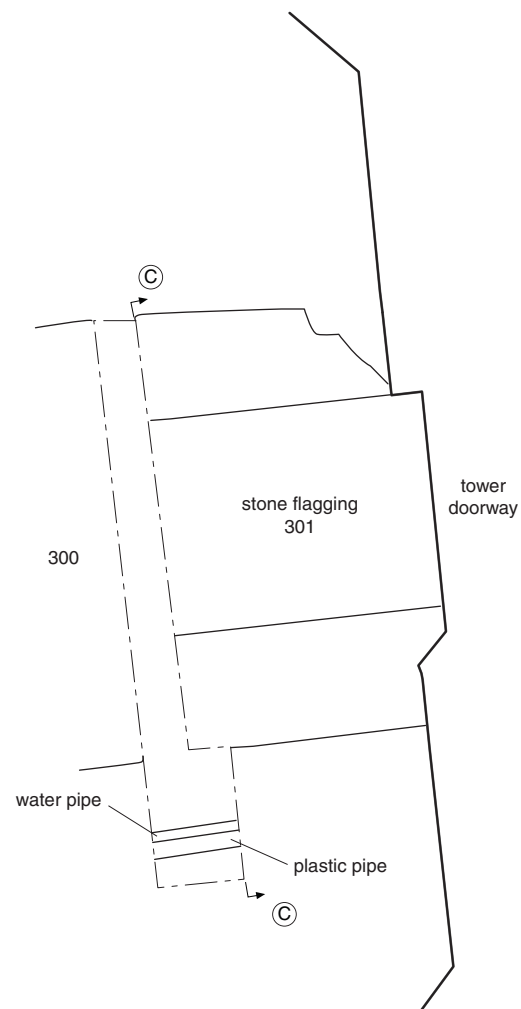
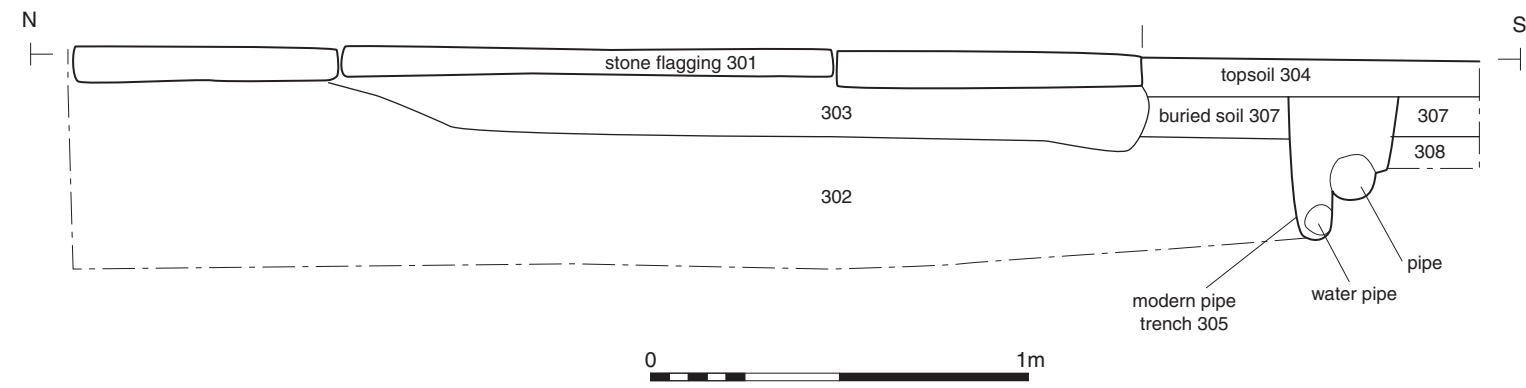

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FIGURE TITLE
Trench 2: plan, section and photograph

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Section CC



Trench 3 looking north



General view south-east of Trench 3



General view east of Trench 2



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FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

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