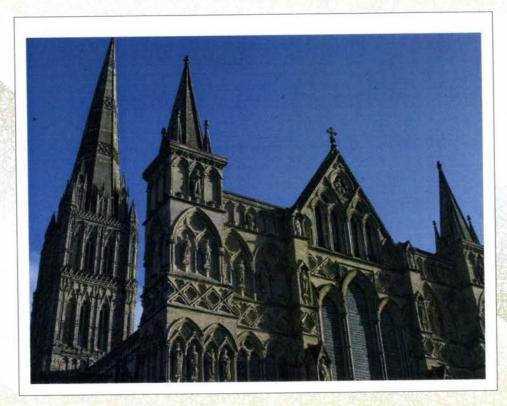
CAMBRIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS LTD.

Salisbury Cathedral Font

Archaeological Excavation



By Kevin Blockley MIFA MPhil FSA



CAP Report No. 513

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> Prepared for: Dean & Chapter

CAP Report No: 513

Date: 15 April 2008



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SALISBURY CATHEDRAL NAVE: EXCAVATIONS FOR THE NEW FONT 2008

By Kevin Blockley MIFA MPhil FSA

Summary

Excavations in the nave and south aisle of Salisbury Cathedral were undertaken in January 2008 in advance of the insertion of footings and drainage for a new font. Recorded were the substantial 13th century footings of the south aisle wall and south arcade wall and a robbed grave in the arcade wall, probably of medieval date. Four graves of medieval to post-medieval date were uncovered, as well as five brick-lined burial vaults dating to the mid 18th to mid 19th centuries. Also recorded was the work relating to the insertion of a cast-iron fire hydrant and substantial below-ground disturbance associated with the re-laying of the nave floor in 1878.

Introduction

Historical background

The Cathedral was built in 1220-58 by Bishop Poore shortly after the sealing of the Magna Carta (in 1215). Cloisters were added in 1240-70 and the Chapter House built in c.1260-66. Later works include the addition of the tower and spire in c.1300-20.

Several major phases of restoration of the Cathedral have taken place, the largest being first in 1788-1791 under James Wyatt, the second in c.1862-1878 under Sir George Gilbert Scott.

In 1950 the upper 9m of the spire was re-built.

The dean & Chapters' current 20-year programme of repairs, with some funding from English Heritage, commenced in 1991, under Cathedral Architect Michael Drury, with Tim Tatton-Brown as Archaeological Consultant.

Reasons for the excavation (Fig 1; Plate 1)

As part of the 750th anniversary of the consecration of the cathedral a new font and water feature has been commissioned. This will be set centrally in the nave in the fifth bay from the west, opposite the north porch, possibly on the site of the original medieval font which was probably removed in the 17th century. A new font, further west was put in in 1662.

The new water feature being inserted in 2008 was designed by William Pye and will have a below ground reservoir and services. The reservoir sits below the font base and incorporates a pump housing, whilst the water feed extends from the font across the nave and south aisle and through the south wall into the Plumbery.

The archaeological excavation was undertaken between the 2nd and 18th January 2008 by Cambrian Archaeological Projects, directed by Kevin Blockley.

The site lies at National Grid Ref SU 14259 29518.

The nave floor (Fig 2; Plates 2 -3)

Prior to lifting the floor slabs, a 1:50 scale plan of the slabs in the bay, from the north porch across to the south aisle wall was drawn by Jill Atherton. The excavation started with the numbering of the floor slabs on a copy of the floor plan and each stone was marked with its respective number in chalk for ease of relaying. The floor was lifted by hand to minimise noise and dust.

The mortar on the back of each stone was recorded to hep phase the alterations to the floor. The thickness of each slab was measured and any tool marks on the sides and rear of the slabs was recorded. Treleven Haysom, who quarries new Purbeck marble and stone, visited once the floor slabs had been lifted and gave valuable advice on the stone types and possible date of the various sizes of slabs. It was noted that the thicker 12 inch square slabs of Purbeck marble are likely to be medieval in date, whilst the larger 18 inch square slabs of Purbeck stone, Portland stone, etc, are likely to be 17th/18th century additions. More recent stones, invariably quite thin and machine cut, appear to have been added when the floor was re-laid in 1878 and 1965. Recorded were 11 varieties of paving stone, but the majority of the paving was in Purbeck marble, Purbeck stone or Portland stone.

Around 10% of the stones were damaged during lifting, partly because of the tight jointing, but also because many of the stones had been re-set in hard cement in 1965. Given that insertion of the font will reduce the number of stones being re-laid, it was calculated that no new stones would be required during re-laying of the floor.

Acknowledgements

Tim Tatton-Brown, the cathedral's Archaeological Consultant, monitored the excavations on behalf of the Dean & Chapter and provided invaluable advice and historical references for the various phases of work on the cathedral. Michael Drury, the cathedral's Architect, and his assistant Andy Pragnell were most helpful during the course of the work.

The Works Department of the cathedral, most notably its manager Ted Hillier, were most generous with their advice and organising keys for access to the clerestory for photography. At the cathedral office, Peter Edds, the Clerk of Works, oiled the wheels of bureaucracy and helped the excavation run smoothly. The excavation was visited by a delegation from the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England on 16th January.

The excavation team from Cambrian Archaeological Projects comprised Irma Bernardus, Hywel Keen and Jeffrey Nichols, without their hard work little would have been achieved.

Finally thanks go to the vergers, clerics and guides of the cathedral who not only put up with the noise and dust, but provided visitors with never ending information that enabled the excavation team to work with few interruptions.

Phasing of the excavated remains

Five archaeological phases were identified as follows:

- Phase 1 Construction of the original cathedral nave foundations in *c*.1220
- Phase 2 Insertion of burials between the 13th and the 17th centuries
- Phase 3 Insertion of brick-lined burial vaults in from the mid 18th to mid 19th centuries
- Phase 4 Insertion of a fire hydrant and re-laying of the paving of the nave floor in 1878, after the major restoration by GG Scott
- Phase 5 Repairs to the floor and insertion of services in the 20th and 21st centuries

Note

All depths reported here are in relation to the surface of the nave floor, unless otherwise noted. The site records have been tied into ordnance datum, with the floor of the nave lying at 45.21m above OD.

Description of excavated remains

Natural river gravel (Figs 3 & 6)

At a depth of just 0.18m below the floor surface was recorded the highest level of river gravel surviving in the excavations (layers 29 and 44). Elsewhere the gravel was disturbed or cut by archaeological deposits.

The river gravel overlies a firmer gravel deposit down onto which the footings of the cathedral had been built (Skempton 1983). This firmer gravel has been recorded in boreholes cut in the area of the cathedral and lies at a depth of around 1.15m below floor level.

Phase 1 (13th century cathedral)

A number of context relating to the construction of the 13th century cathedral nave were excavated, comprising the foundation below the south aisle wall, the foundation below the south arcade and contemporary construction deposits.

The base of the south aisle wall incorporates a stone bench and 0.22m of this wall was exposed below floor level overlying the wall foundation (31, Figs 3 & 6; Plate 7). The faced stone below floor level was of Chilmark-Tisbury stone with distinctive broad, comb tooling clearly visible. This lay on a wall foundation which stepped out 0.12m from the face of the wall and was composed of flint nodules set in a hard buff/yellow lime mortar capped by a thin layer of Chilmark-Tisbury stone fragments as a levelling course for the upstanding wall. A 0.6m depth of the wall foundation was exposed during the excavation, showing layering of the foundation, using remarkably consistent materials, in marked contrast to the foundation of the arcade wall (below).

Extending 0.5m from the south aisle foundation was a 0.05m thick layer of hard buff/yellow mortar (30, Figs 3 & 6; Plate 8) similar to that used in the foundation (31). This marks the construction level of the nave.

Below the south arcade of the nave was found a substantial wall foundation 2.5m wide (24) on which was set a plinth 1.65m wide (Figs 3 & 6; Plates 5-6). The section of plinth in the bay under excavation had been cut away when the floor was re-laid in c.1790, but would originally have extended across this bay, as can be seen in

Biddlecombe's 1754 engraving of the nave (Cocke & Kidson 1993, plate 8, page 17; Bucker's 1810 view, *ibid*, plate 45, page 60) shows the cut already made.

The arcade foundation, located just 0.16m below floor level, comprised a mix of fragments of Chilmark-Tisbury stone, Upper Greensand (re-claimed from Old Sarum), and flint nodules bonded in buff/yellow lime mortar. As noted above, this is in marked contrast to the foundation for the south wall which used just flint and mortar, with no other stone evident, save a shallow levelling layer. The south face of the foundation was vertical, but on the north side the foundation stepped out some 0.15m at a depth of 0.42m below floor level.

Approximately centrally placed in the arcade foundation was a grave cut (15, Figs 3 & 6; Plate 4), robbed in *c*.1790. The grave cut measures 0.65m wide and extended into the foundation to a depth of 0.16m (0.32m below floor level). Given that an arcade plinth originally ran across this bay of the nave, to a height of 0.45m above floor level, then the grave would originally have been 0.77m deep.

Similar burials are still *in-situ* in most of the arcade bays of the nave, covered with ledgers for brasses. The elaborate chest tombs on top were all put here in c.1290. The graves below are medieval in date indicating that the grave cut (15) is likely to have been for an important medieval personage. For the indents themselves, see Sadler (1890).

No dating evidence was recovered for this phase which relies on dating from documentary sources and interpretation of the dates of the brass indents (Sadler 1980).

As noted above, the nave floor has been relaid, but significant numbers of the thicker stone slabs, cut by had, were reused from the original medieval floor. This stone was from a number of beds of Purbeck marble and Purbeck stone, the following being identified: Grub, Downien, Thornback, Roach, Greenbed, and Sawnbatch.

Phase 2 (medieval to post-medieval burials)

Four graves (27, 51, 53 and 64) were recorded which were probably inserted between the 13th and 17th centuries.

Grave 27, 1.36m wide, lay in the south aisle (Figs 3 & 6). The west end of the grave was exposed and excavated to a depth of 0.35m into the natural gravel. The fill of the grave was of layers of pale-mid brown clayey loam containing frequent flint nodules and flecks of white lime mortar. The grave was only excavated to the level required for the insertion of the services to the new font, and did not locate a burial, which remained *in-situ*.

Grave 53, 0.4m wide was situated in the nave, cut by grave 51 (Figs 3 & 6; Plate 9). The fill of grave 53 was of compact clay and flint nodules with flecks of white lime mortar. This was only excavated to a depth of 0.35m and no burial found at this depth, and presumably remains *in-situ*.

Grave 51, which cut grave 53, measured 0.7m wide (Figs 3 & 6; Plate 9). The fill was excavated to a depth of 0.18m, but not bottomed. The fills were of loose mortar rubble and fragments of medieval tile (52), a layer comprised of fragments of

Chilmark-Tisbury stone (66), a layer of mid brown loam containing flecks of white lime mortar and gravel (67), and a layer of loose pale brown loam containing mortar flecks and coffin nails (68). Once the coffin nails were located the excavation was stopped as they appeared to indicate that a burial remained *in-situ*.

Grave 64 was represented by a fragment of chalk block wall (63, Figs 3 & 6) in a grave cut filled with mixed loose gravel and mortar (65). Part of this wall was recorded in 2007 by Tim Tatton-Brown (Archaeological Consultant to Salisbury Cathedral) when a small test pit as excavated to investigate the nature of deposits below the floor.

No dating evidence was found for the graves, save re-deposited medieval floor tiles in the fill of grave 51. The chalk-wall lined grave may well be medieval in date, but the other three could be later additions to the cathedral. The use of flint nodules in graves 27 and 53 would indicate that considerable thought had been given to likely subsidence of grave fills and are more likely to be post-medieval in date. The same, post-medieval date would therefore seem likely for grave 51, which cut grave 53.

Phase 3 (mid 18th to mid 19th century burial vaults)

Five brick-lined burial vaults were recorded in the nave, all utilising fine rubbed bricks of 18th to 19th century style. The vaults recorded were 37, 47, 60, 72 and 75.

Vault 37 extending into the east side of the trench (Figs 3 & 6; Plate 10). The bricks were fine, rubbed red bricks measuring 225x110x70mm. A burial appears to remain *in-situ* at a depth of 0.75m. This was probably in a wooden coffin. The brick lining survived to within 0.17m of the surface of the floor indicating that this vault must have been capped with a ledger slab directly on top of the brick lining, rather than their having had a vaulted roof. This was probably the method of construction for all of the vaults recorded, since the high water table below the nave precluded deep excavation for burials.

Vault 47 was fully exposed. The bricks were fine, rubbed red bricks measuring 220x110x70mm. Inside the vault was evidence for a triple-layer coffin (Fig 3; Plate 12). The outer layer was of wood, most of which had decayed, with brass studs around the perimeter on leather strips. A single brass handle (plate 15) was visible on the south-west side, whilst two brass plates lay on the coffin. The plate near the foot-end of the coffin was a thick, shield-shaped brass plate engraved and in-filled with black material to make the inscription stand out (Plate 13). The lettering was obscured with lime mortar but has been made complete [in brackets] from the inscription on a nearby ledger slab...

Edward Rudge DIED 28 [May] 1790 Aged [73] The plate near the shoulder of the coffin was a very thin, pressed brass plate with ornate decoration (Plate 14) and the motto...

SALVE~ME~DOMIE

Inside the outer wooden coffin was a lead coffin, intact, but distorted. It is assumed that a further wooden coffin lay inside the lead one, but this was not visible.

This burial related to one of the black Belgian Marble ledger stones set in the floor of the nave, just a short distance to the east of the vault. It was presumably moved during the re-flooring in 1878.

Vault 60 was represented with only a small part of its west end extending into the excavation (Figs 3 & 6). The bricks were fine, rubbed red bricks measuring 225x110x70mm.

Vault 72 had its west end below the west section and the east end cut by vault 75 (Figs 3 & 6; Plate 11). The bricks were fine, rubbed red bricks measuring 240x120x75mm. On cleaning rib bones were noted, indicating an *in-situ* burial, with the lower half destroyed by vault 75.

Vault 75 extending into the east section (Figs 3 & 6; Plate 11). The bricks were fine, rubbed red bricks measuring 225x105x70mm. On cleaning a skull was seen indicating that the burial remains *in-situ*.

It is evident that only vault 47 contains an elaborate triple-layer coffin, the remainder probably being in wooden coffins.

Given the bricks used for the linings are all similar in size, save those on vault 72, which are larger than the others, it is likely that three of the vaults date to the 18th century, with vault 72 and 75 perhaps being 19th century in date. The adjacent black Belgian ledger slabs, re-laid in the 1878 paving, may relate to these burials. It has been seen above that one of the slabs, that of Edward Rudge who died in 1790, relates to vault 47 (Plate 20).

Other adjacent slabs are recorded as follows:

- Jane, wife of Thomas Phipps, died 1768, aged 47
- Henricus Hele, died 26 June 1778, aged 89
- Jane, wife of Henry Hele, died 21 October 1769, aged 71
- James Lewis, died 1844, aged 79
- The final slab is too worn to be legible

Phase 4 (works associated with the re-flooring in 1878)

The re-laying of the nave floor was a significant event in the cathedral which caused major disturbance to below ground deposits (plate 19).

The earlier floor was evidently lifted and all loose material removed, cutting down to the undisturbed gravel, and reducing most grave fills to their maximum, evidently without removing any *in-situ* burials save that in the south arcade wall (Phase 1, above).

The resulting 'clearance' craters were between 0.17 and 0.65m deep (Figs 4 & 6; Plate 18). At the base were three layers (42 of white mortar flecks, 43 of Chilmark-Tisbury stone chippings, and 48 of broken chalk blocks). These layers mark the lower level of disturbance and were spreads of waste materials.

At this level a cast iron water main had been laid along the centre of the nave, with a stop cock and fire hydrant connection in the centre of the bay (Figs 4 & 6; Plates 16-17). The pipe was 0.125m in diameter with lead filled flanges. It had cut through Phase 3 vault 37 and along the north side of Phase 3 vault 47, re-using some of the bricks from the latter to support the pipe.

The area of clearance had then been backfilled with layers containing a mixture of crushed brick, stone (Chilmark-Tisbury), soil and mortar flecks (few fragments greater than 0.08m across were evident and much labour had been expended in creating the fine rubble. The rubble layers were laid in bands between 0.08m and 0.14m thick. Principally, the area was made up with two layers of rubble (14 and 19) with other layers (23, 25 and 26) filling the deeper areas.

Since the rubble contained large quantities of lime mortar, and the fact that the water table was frequently close to the nave floor, the mortar had reformed into a very hard concretion bonding the rubble together.

The rubble was levelled and then sealed with a buff lime bedding mortar (layers 3 and 11) up to 0.05m thick onto which the floor slabs (1) were set (Plates 21-24).

The 1878 paved floor (noted above) was laid out by starting with a long east-west strip (0.6m wide) on the axis, and then by setting out a pattern of linear stips across the nave to mark out the bays and the arcade. The infill of these rectangular borders was then in-filled by east-west rows of paving of varying widths. Some diagonal patterning was evident. The paving used in 1878 was a mixture of mostly earlier paving (medieval Purbeck marble, Purbeck stone, Portland stone, etc) and a little new paving (Plate 28).

Phase 5 (20th and 21st century features)

Features in this phase all relate to electrical and heating services inserted at various times, and also a test excavation undertaken in 2007.

In the south aisle was recorded a 1.4m wide duct for electrical pipes made in 1965 (Parsons 1965). This cut to a depth of 0.88m, had concrete walls and floor and was capped with sheets of steel (16, Figs 5 & 6; Plates 27). The north side had metal tubes protruding through the concrete wall, evidently for use in a planned underfloor heating scheme for the nave (which was not introduced). The floor slabs above the duct were re-set in concrete as were later repairs to adjacent floor slabs that had subsided above the metal tubes on the north side of the duct.

Tim Tatton-Brown has found a record of the electric ducts being inserted in 1965, in the Clerk of Works Report (Parsons 1965).

Other recent disturbance to the floor were minor, but comparison. Two pairs of heating pipes were set into the floor, and on the south side of the arcade a further

pair of earlier pipes were also found. The more recent pipes were insulated (9, Figs 5 & 6; Plates 25-26).

An electrical wire had been chased into a joint between the paving (12), this was no longer in use (Figs 5 & 6).

The temporary, trial font had been supplied with an electric feed placed in a blue pipe (13) and also a second feed (4) in a grey, flexible plastic.

The final event in the nave floor was a trial excavation (38) undertaken by Tim Tatton-Brown in 2007 which investigated the disturbed levels below the floor in the cast-iron pipe trench.

Finds from the excavation

Pottery

A total of four fragments of pottery were recovered from the excavations. Two of these are post-medieval in date and two possible medieval fragments. The latter will be report fully in the final report.

Tile

A total of 84 fragments of floor tile were recovered from the excavations. Five of these are post-medieval in date, the remainder decorated medieval tiles. All are very work and little of the decoration can now be seen. The latter will be fully reported in the final report.

Glass

Four fragments of post-medieval vessel glass were recovered and one fragment of window glass. The latter will be fully reported in the final publication.

Mortar samples

Samples were taken from all mortared walls and from each of the different bedding mortars below the floor. These have been used to look at composition and colour in natural light. They will be discarded once the report has been completed.

Stone samples

Samples of the various stone types were taken during the course of the excavation. These comprised Purbeck marble, Purbeck stone, Portland stone, Chilmark-Tisbury stone, chalk, and Upper Greensand. They will be retained in Cambrian Archaeological Projects stone collection, for future reference.

Discussion and requirements for further study

The archaeological excavation for the water feature although limited in size, has successfully recorded the nature of the foundations of the medieval nave and south aisle and located a hitherto unknown grave in the south arcade wall. Various beds of Portland marble and Portland stone used in the medieval floor have been identified from a study of the re-used floor slabs. Also of significance is the recording of the location of 13th to 17th century burials in the nave and south aisle and the recording of 18th and 19th century brick-lined burial vaults in the nave.

Full Analysis of the medieval pottery and floor tiles will be undertaken by Paul Courtney and this information integrated into the final, published report.

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Saddler A G 1980 'Three recently uncovered indents in Salisbury Cathedral', Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society, XIII, 132-40.

Skempton A W 1983 Salisbury Cathedral, report on Foundation Settlements and Bearing Capacity (unpublished report for Dean & Chapter).

Salisbury Cathedral Font Excavation

Context List

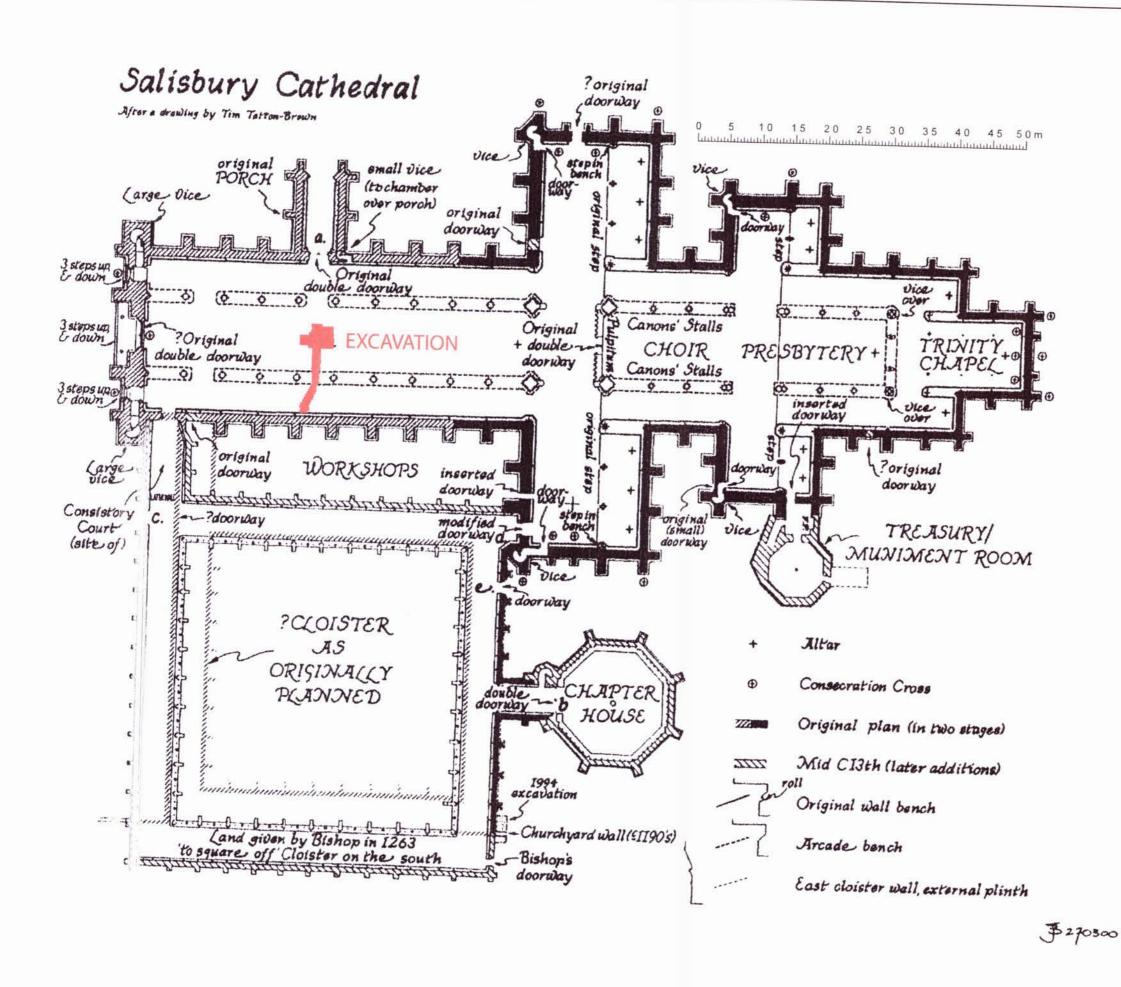
Phases:

Natural Gravel

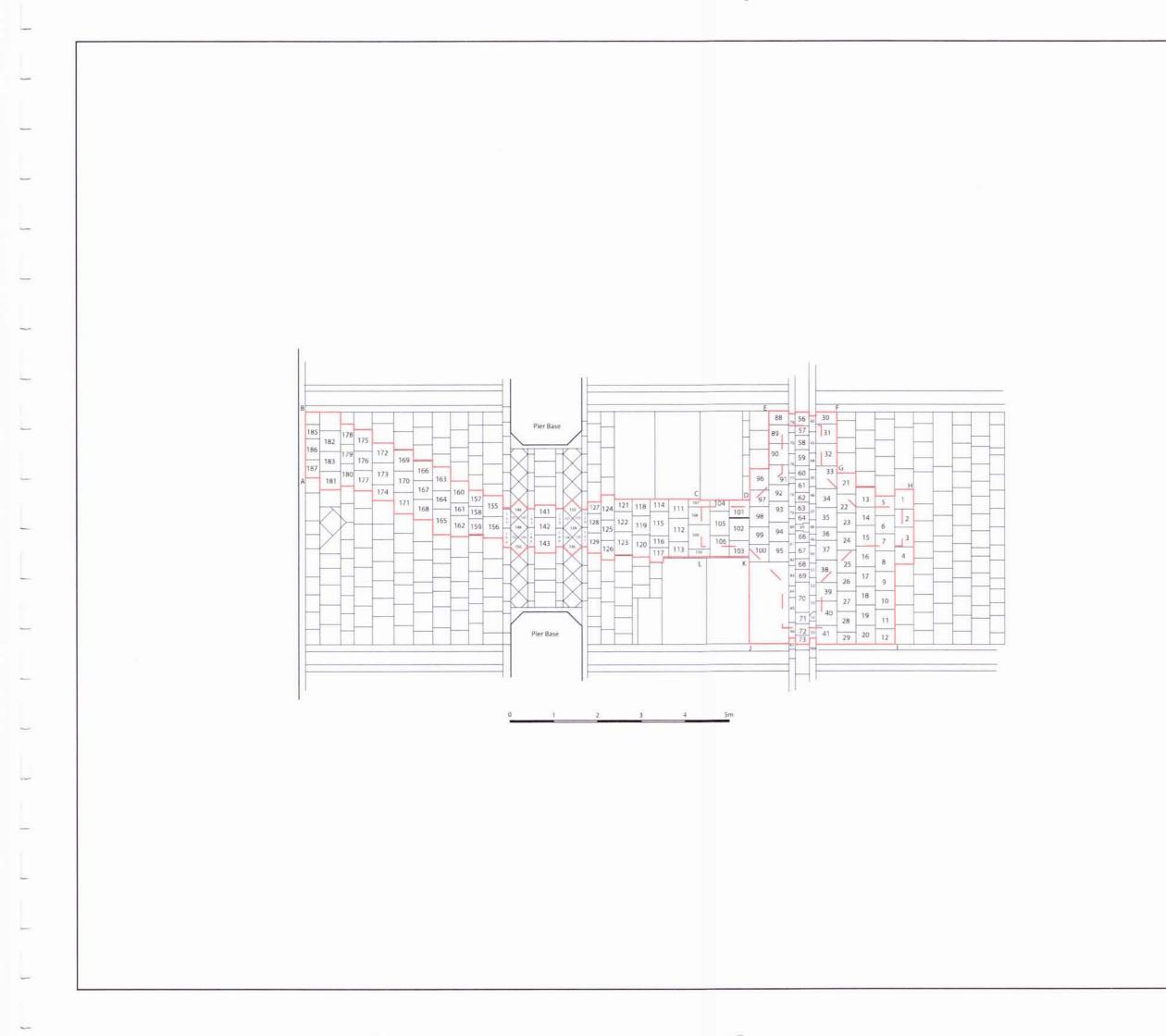
- 1
- 2
- Medieval cathedral *c*.1220 13th to 18th century burials mid 18th to mid 19th century burial vaults 1878 re-paving 20th and 21st century repairs 3
- 4
- 5

Context Descri	ption	Phase
1 Floor		5
2 Mortar floor b		4
3 Mortar floor b		4
4 Mortar floor b	edding	5
5 Mortar floor b	edding	4
6 Mortar floor b	edding	5 5 5 5 5 4
7 Cement floor	bedding	5
8 Upper fill feat	ure 16	5
9 Heating pipes		5
10 Mortar floor b	edding	5
11 Mortar floor b	edding	4
12 Electrical cable		5
13 Electrical cable		5
14 Make up layer		4
15 Grave cut		1
16 Duct cut		5
17 Fill of 16		5
18 Fill of 16		5
19 Make up layer		4
20 Sheet steel pla	ites in 16	5
21 Cement lining	to 16	5
22 Fill of 16		5
23 Make up layer		4
24 Medieval arcad	le footing	1
25 Make up layer		4
26 Make up layer		4 2 2
27 Cut for grave		2
28 Fill of 27		
29 Natural gravel		0
30 Mortar spread		1
31 Medieval found	lation (S wall)	1
32 Pipe trench		4
33 Fill of 32		4
34 Cast iron hydra	int pipe	4
35 Grave cut		3

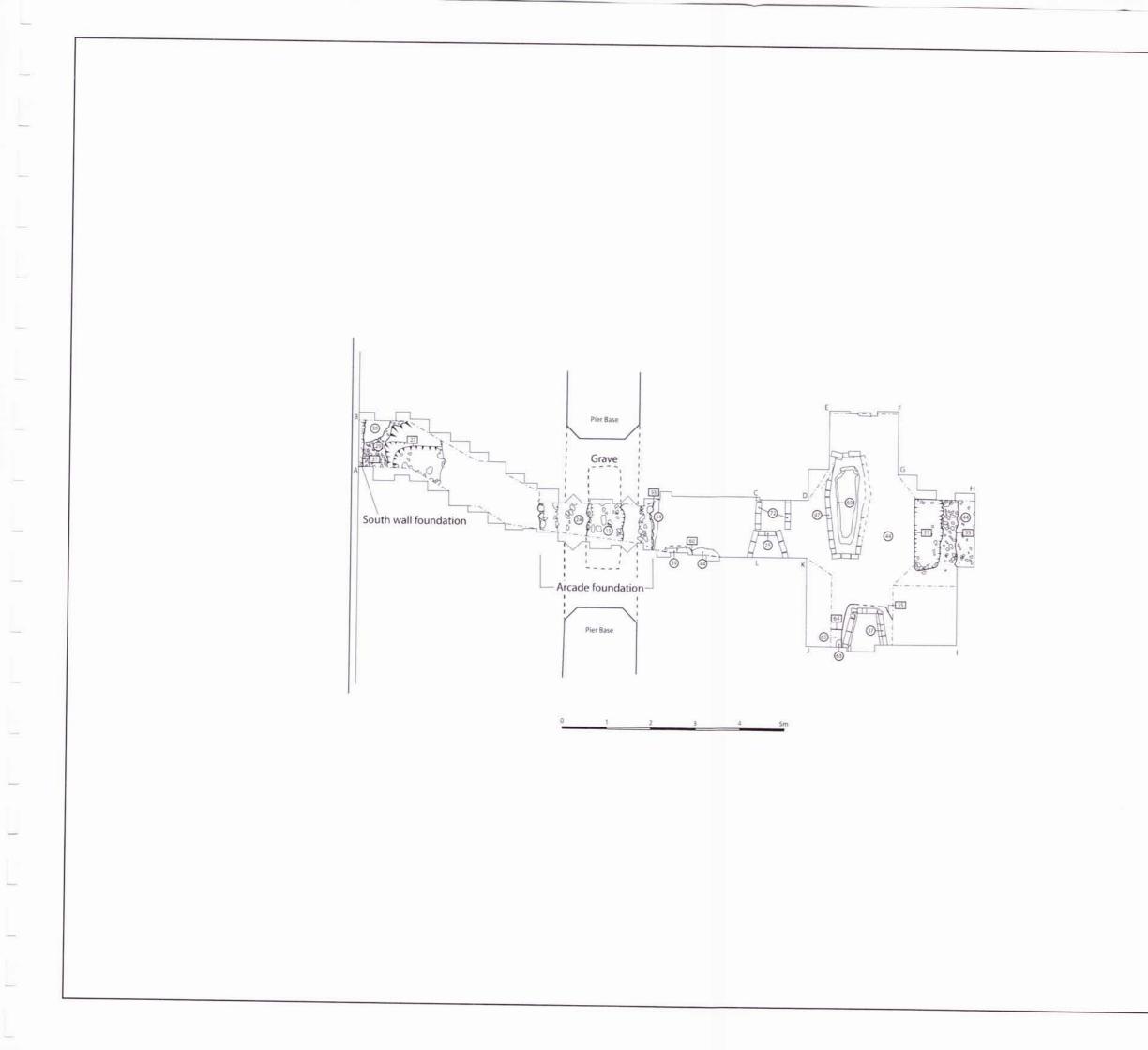
36	Fill of 35	3
37	Brick vault in cut 35	
	Tim Tatton-Brown trench	5
	Fill of 38	5
40	Cut feature	4
	Fill of 40	4
42	Demolition rubble	4
	Demolition rubble	4
	Natural gravel	0
	Grave cut	3
	Fill of 45	3
	Brick vault in 45	3
	Make up layer	4
	Cut feature	4
	Fill of 49	4
	Cut for grave	2
	Fill of 51	2
	Grave cut	2
54	Fill of 53	2
	Cut for arcade wall	2 2 2 2 1
	Fill of 55	1
	Stakehole	4
	Fill of 57	4
	Fill of 16	5
	Brick vault	5 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 3
	Grave cut	3
	Fill of 61	3
	Chalk wall fragment	2
64	Cut for burial	2
	Fill of 64	2
	Fill of 51	2
	Fill of 51	2
	Fill of 51	2
69	Lead coffin	3
	Grave cut	3
71	Fill of 70	3
	Brick vault in cut 70	3
73	Grave cut	3
74	Fill of 73	3
	Brick vault in cut 73	3 3 3 3 3 4 4
	Fill of 40	4
81	Layer in 73	4



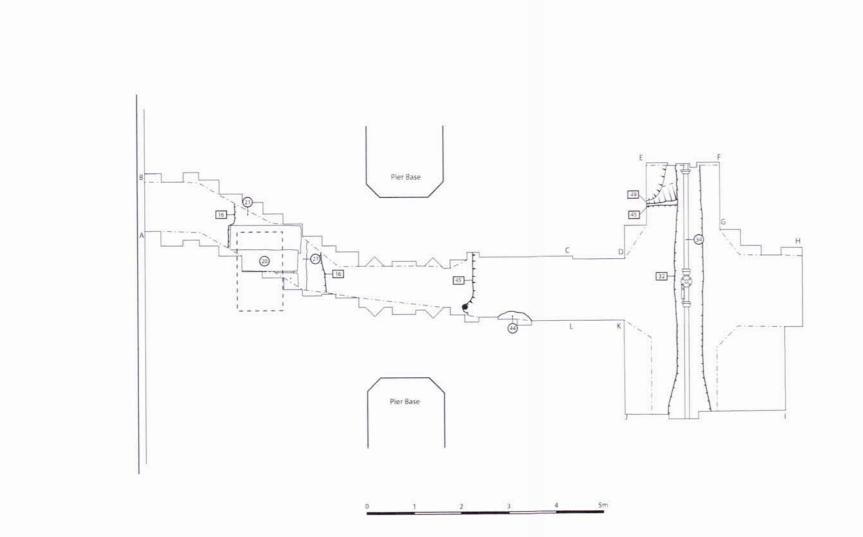
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Figure 01:	
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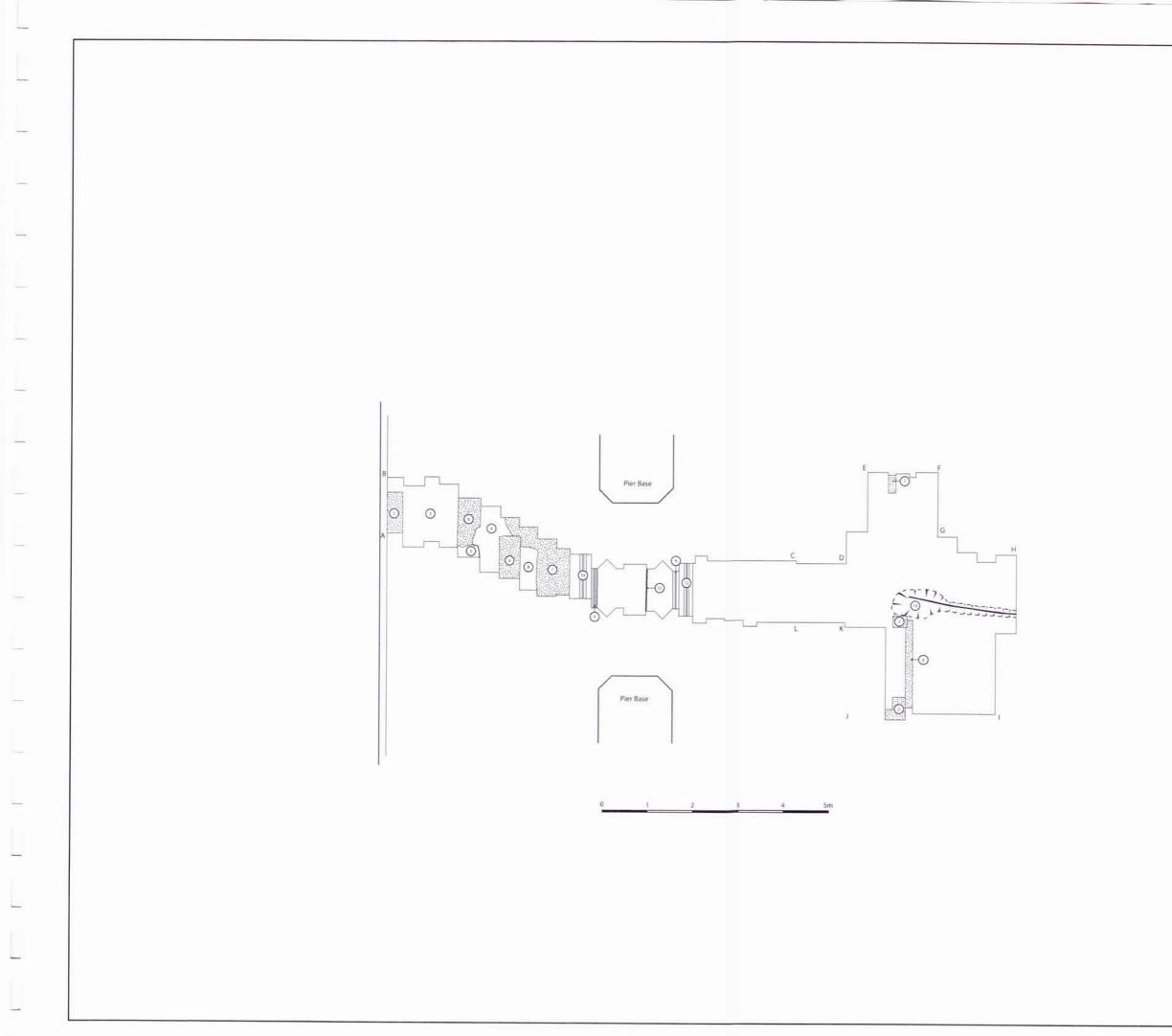
	Outline of excavation
	Outline of font foundation
A-L	Section lettering
1-187	Numbering of raised floor slabs
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Drawing Ti	tle: Floor plan
Date:	09/03/08
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Figure 02:	
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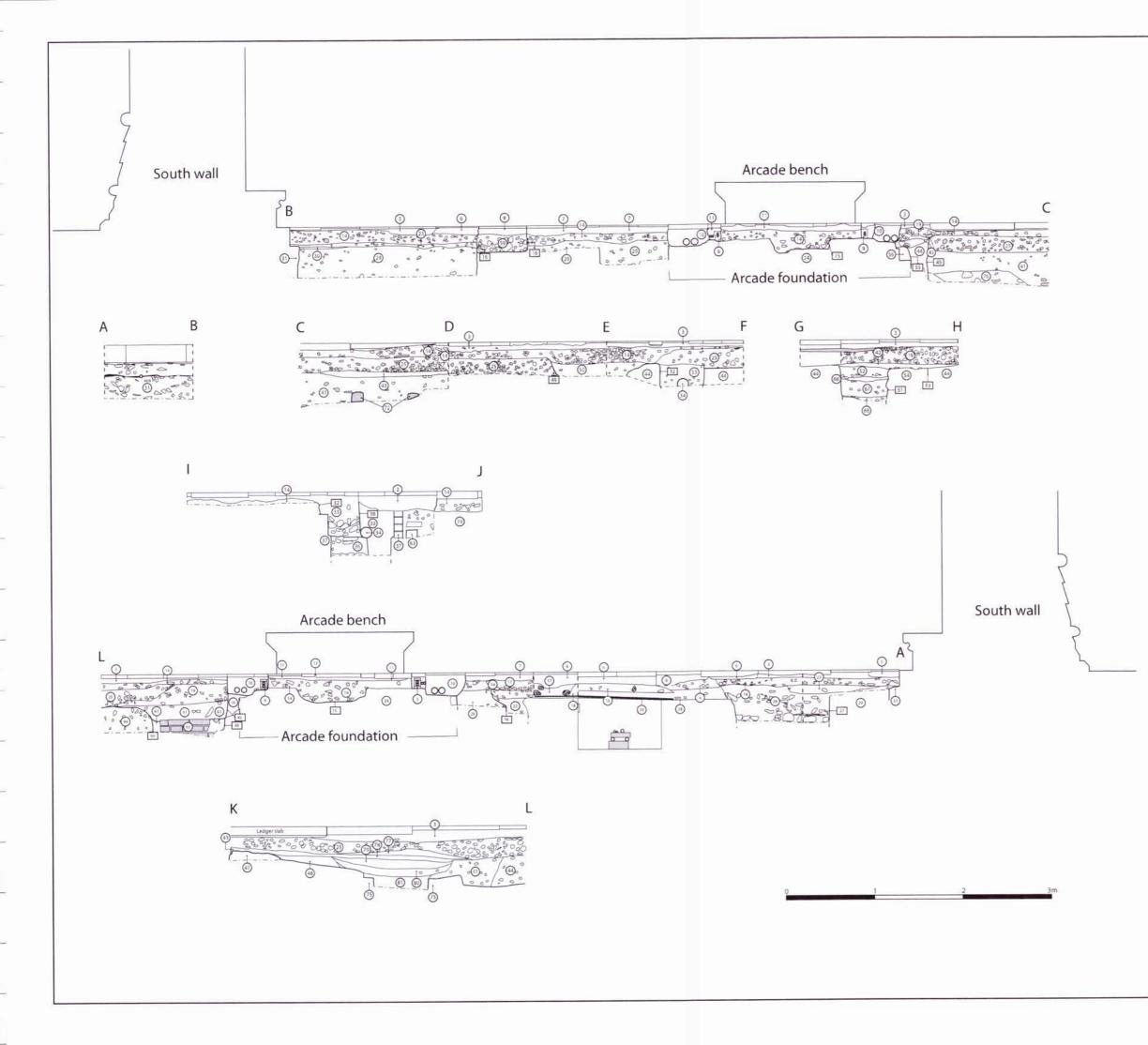
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Job Title: Salis	sbury Cathedral
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Drawing Title:	19th century
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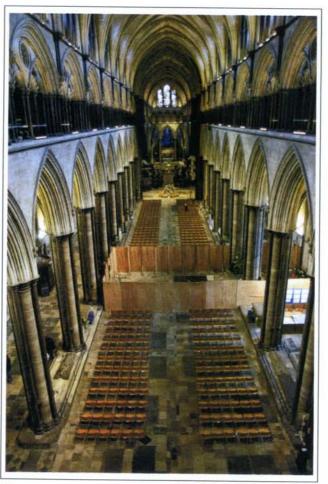


Plate 1: View showing area of excavation

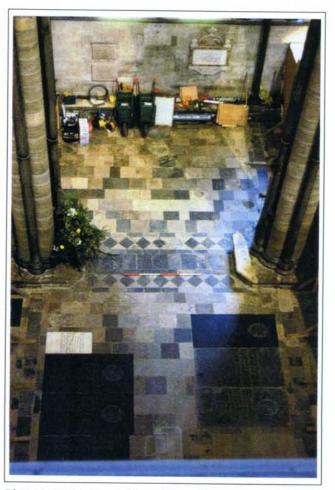


Plate 2: Pre-excavation view of area



Plate 3: Pre-excavation view of north part of floor



Plate 4: View of Grave 15, Scale 1x1m



Plate 5: View of south edge of arcade wall

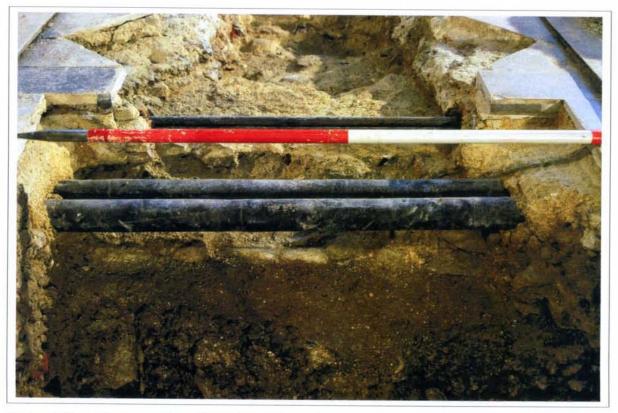


Plate 6: View of north edge of arcade wall, Scale 1x1m



Plate 7: View of south wall and footing, Scale 1x1m



Plate 8: View of mortar 30 and gravel, Scale 1x1m

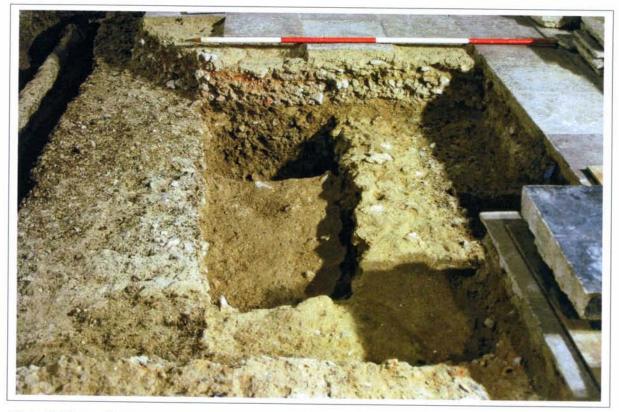


Plate 9: View of graves 51 and 53, Scale 1x2m



Plate 10: View of vault 37, Scale 1x1m



Plate 11: View of vaults 72 and 75, Scale 1x1m



Plate 12: View of lead coffin, Scale 1x1m



Plate 13: View of name plate



Plate 14: View of decorated plate, Scale 1x0.1m



Plate 15: View of handle, Scale 1x0.1m

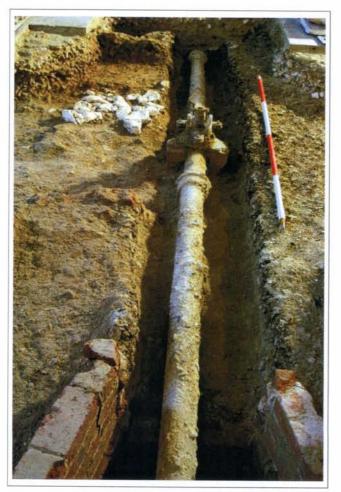


Plate 16: View of cast hydrant pipe Scale 1x2m



Plate 17: View of hydrant fitting, Scale 1x0.1m



Plate 18: View of levelling, Scale 1x1m

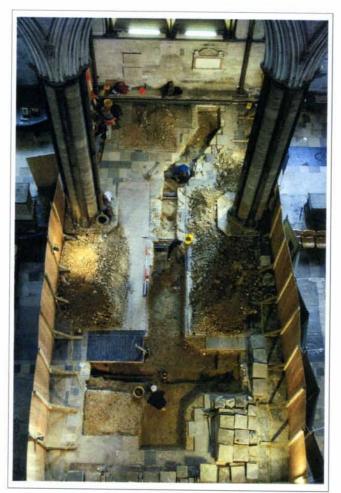


Plate 19: View of excavated 19th century levelling, Scale 1x2m



Plate 20: View of ledge, Scale 1x1m



Plate 21: View of mortars being excavated

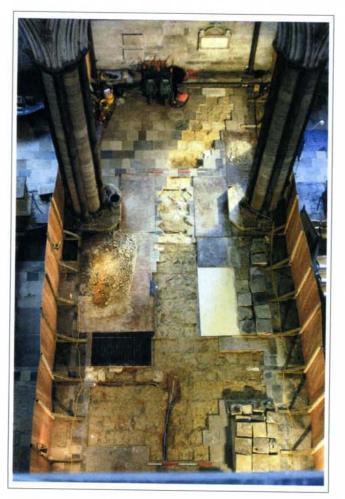


Plate 22: View of mortars below floor, Scale 1x2m

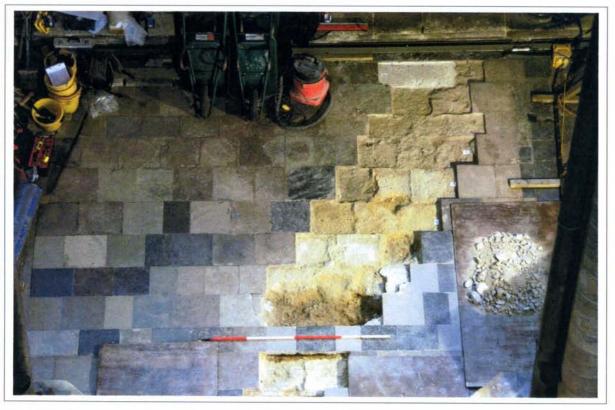


Plate 23: View of mortars below south aisle, Scale 1x2m



Plate 24: View of mortars over arcade. Scale 1x2m



Plate 25: View of pipes on south side, Scale 1x1m



Plate 26: View of pipes on north side, Scale 1x2m



Plate 27: View of electric pit, Scale 1x1m



Plate 28: View of floor slabs

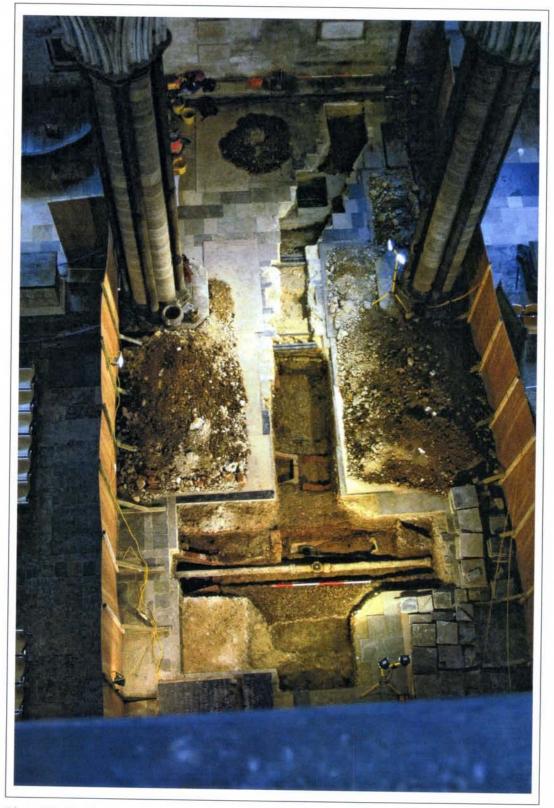


Plate 29: Final post excavation view of area, Scale 1x2m



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