

Archaeological Watching Brief Phases 3 & 4

at

**ST MARY REDCLIFFE CHURCH,
BRISTOL.**

for

St Mary Redcliffe Church Parish Office



Report No. 2625/2012

BHER No. 25098

By Cai Mason



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services



St. Nicholas Church, St. Nicholas Street, Bristol, BS1 1UE. Tel: (0117) 903 9010



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at
**ST MARY REDCLIFFE CHURCH,
BRISTOL.**

Centred on
N.G.R. ST 59132 72264

Client: St Mary Redcliffe Church Parish Office
Agent: St Ann's Gate Architects LLP

<i>Author:</i>	Cai Mason
<i>email:</i>	cai.mason@bristol.gov.uk
<i>Approved by:</i>	John Bryant
<i>Signature:</i>	 
<i>Date Issued:</i>	18 April 2012

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Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	Km	Kilometre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	m	Metre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NGR	National Grid Reference
BC	Before Christ	NMR	National Monuments Record
c.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government		
HER	Historic Environment Record		

NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

April, 2012.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during pathway re-surfacing works at St Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol. A small number of disarticulated human bones were uncovered during the course of the work; the bones were re-buried in the churchyard.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) at St Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned by St Ann's Gate Architects LLP, on behalf of the St Mary Redcliffe Parish Office in order to record any archaeological features or deposits uncovered during phased re-surfacing works on the south-west path in the southern churchyard.
- 1.3 The archaeological work took place between the 17th of February and the 13th of March 2012.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery under the Accession Number BRSMG 2011/32 and a digital copy of the report will be sent to the National Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The project has been entered in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as: BHER 25098 and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1-120269.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site (centred on NGR ST 59132 72264) is located in central Bristol, in the southern churchyard of St Mary Redcliffe. The site is bounded by Redcliffe Way to the north, Redcliffe Hill to the east, Colston Parade to the south, and Pump Lane to the east (**Figs 1 & 2**).
- 2.2 All of the groundworks, which involved lifting and re-laying cobbles and repairing an existing drain, were carried out within the footprint of an existing cobbled path, which is coloured in green and red on the architects site plan (**Fig. 3**). The path measured *c* 46m long and up to 2.25m wide (*c* 104m²) and sloped gently from 17.50m aOD in the south-west corner of the churchyard, to 15.97m aOD near the southern porch of St Mary Redcliffe church.
- 2.3 According to the British Geological Survey (2011), the solid geology of the site is Triassic Redcliffe sandstone.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 St Mary Redcliffe church was probably established in the late 12th century. However, although some 12th century fabric survives towards the western end of the church, the majority of the present building dates from the 13th and 14th centuries, with some 15th century additions (Quinton Smith 1995). The church was extensively restored in the mid 19th century.
- 3.2 The church officially functioned as a chapel-at-ease to the mother church of St John at Bedminster until 1851, but in practice has for centuries effectively been a full parish church. It had a rich parish and numerous benefactions enabled a large edifice to be constructed over several centuries.
- 3.3 The southern churchyard formerly contained a Chapel of the Holy Spirit, and an associated formal garden; the chapel was demolished in 1763 (St Ann's Gate Architects 2011b).
- 3.4 Although St Mary Redcliffe is depicted in several maps dating from the late 16th century (Smith 1568) onwards, even Lyon's 1717 plan of the church and schoolroom gives no indication as to the arrangement of paths in the churchyard. Rocque's 1742 map does show paths within the churchyard, including one path on or close to the present route. Plumley and Ashmead's 1828 map also records the paths, although they not shown on Ashmead's 1854 or 1874 maps. By the time the 1883 OS 1:500 plan was produced, a north-east to south-west aligned path shown on the 1742 and 1828 maps had been removed, leaving the remaining two paths, the westernmost of which is the subject of the present works.
- 3.5 The southern churchyard is bounded by a stone wall to the east, and early 19th-century railings to the south and west, with contemporary gateways in south-east and south-west corners. The gates in the south-west corner are original; those in the south-east corner are later 19th-century replacements (St Ann's Gate Architects 2011b).
- 3.6 Construction of the Bristol Harbour Railway in 1868 between Temple Meads and the dockside necessitated the digging of a cut and cover tunnel across the south-eastern corner of the churchyard. This work involved the removal and re-interment of all burials in the path of the tunnel. The remains were re-interred at Arnos Vale Cemetery (The Bristol Railway Archive 2011). The cobbled pathway across the tunnel must also have been laid or re-laid during or after these works.

- 3.7 Recent archaeological work within the churchyard includes a watching brief carried out when new saplings were planted alongside the paths (King 2002) and a watching brief undertaken during re-surfacing of the south-eastern path (Mason 2011). Small quantities of disarticulated human bone were uncovered during both watching briefs. Stone foundations of an early 19th-century gate were uncovered next to the south-eastern entrance to the churchyard during the 2011 path re-surfacing; a grave ledger-slab was uncovered during the 2002 works.

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology outlined in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Bryant 2012) and followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits uncovered during the course of the re-surfacing work.
- 4.2 The watching brief involved monitoring all intrusive groundworks. Disarticulated human remains uncovered during the course of the construction work were retained on site and re-buried before the new paving was laid.
- 4.3 The site was recorded in accordance with the *BaRAS Site Manual* (BaRAS 2005). A photographic record of the site was made using a digital camera.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 All groundworks were either hand dug or carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket.
- 5.2 The construction work involved removing the existing pitched stone cobbles and lowering the ground level by up to 0.30m in order to lay a new path surface on a firm base (**Cover & Plate 1**). Two small pits were also dug near the southern porch of the church, in order to install new gully pots on an existing surface water drain (**Plate 2**).
- 5.3 The vertical sequence of deposits comprised pitched stone cobbles overlying a very dark brown ashy bedding layer (100), up to 0.12m thick, which contained occasional small angular stones and some 19th-century pottery. Layer (100) overlay a mottled brown, red and yellow layer of sandy clay (101) that contained disarticulated human bones, 19th-century pottery and small angular sandstone and Bath stone inclusions. Most of the bones were uncovered near the southern porch.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered during the construction work. A small number of disarticulated human bones were collected from beneath the churchyard path; the bones were re-buried on site.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

Maps and plans

Smith's map	1568
Millerd's map	1673
Millerd's map	1715
Lyon's map	1717
Roque's map	1742
Plumley and Ashmead's map	1828
Ashmead's map	1854
Ashmead's map	1874
Ordnance Survey	1883 1:500 plan

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8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BaRAS would like to thank the Vestry of St Mary Redcliffe Parish for funding the archaeological work. We would also like to thank Helen Martin (St Ann's Gate Architects LLP), and Bob Jones (Senior Archaeological Officer BCC). The watching brief was managed by John Bryant (Acting Manager, BaRAS). Plans, figures, and plates in this report were prepared by Ann Linge (Design and Production Officer, BaRAS). The archaeological work was undertaken by Roy Krackowicz, Tim Longman and Simon Roper (Project Officers, BaRAS).

APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

National Planning Policy (England)

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) for England published by the UK Government in March 2012 states that the historic environment, which includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, is an irreplaceable resource and, as such, should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities when considering and determining planning applications. This is taken to form part of a positive strategy set out in the respective Local Plan to ensure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The assigned significance of heritage assets will be key factor in terms of their conservation.

Given their irreplaceable nature, any harm to, or loss of, a heritage asset, or heritage assets, should be clearly and convincingly justified as part of a planning application. As part of this, applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. Where a heritage asset, or assets, are to be harmed or lost as the result of a proposal, the applicant will be required to record and advance the understanding the significance of that asset or assets, to include making the evidence arising publicly accessible, but this will be in proportion to the significance of the asset/assets in question.

While the NPPF takes into account the historic environment as a whole, additional protection is afforded to designated heritage assets under current English Law. Any proposal that would result in harm or loss of a designated heritage asset is also required to be justified by the applicant in meeting strict criteria set out in the NPPF.

DISTRICT POLICY

Bristol City Council Local Plan (adopted 16th December 1997) states (policy B22):

- (i) There will be a presumption in favour of preserving any archaeological features or sites of national importance, whether scheduled or not.
- (ii) Development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desktop study, and where appropriate a field evaluation. Where there is evidence of archaeological remains, development will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that the archaeological features of the site will be satisfactorily preserved in situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals upon important archaeological remains and their settings; or, if this is not possible and the sites are not scheduled or of national importance, provision for adequately recording the site prior to destruction is made, preferably by negotiating a planning agreement to ensure that access, time and financial resources are available to allow essential recording and publication to take place.



Fig.1 Site location plan 1:25000

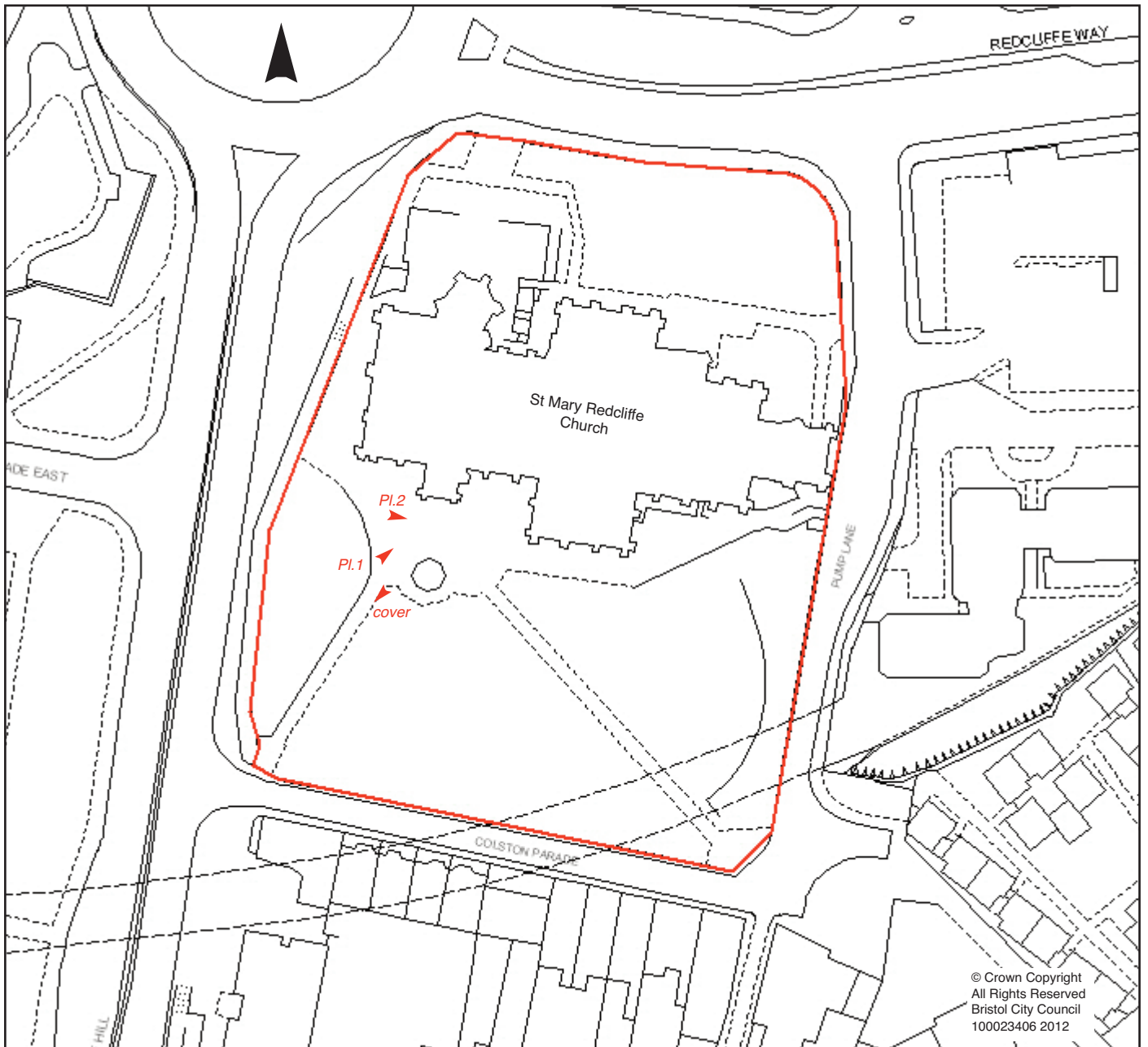


Fig.2 Site plan, scale 1:1000, with plate directions

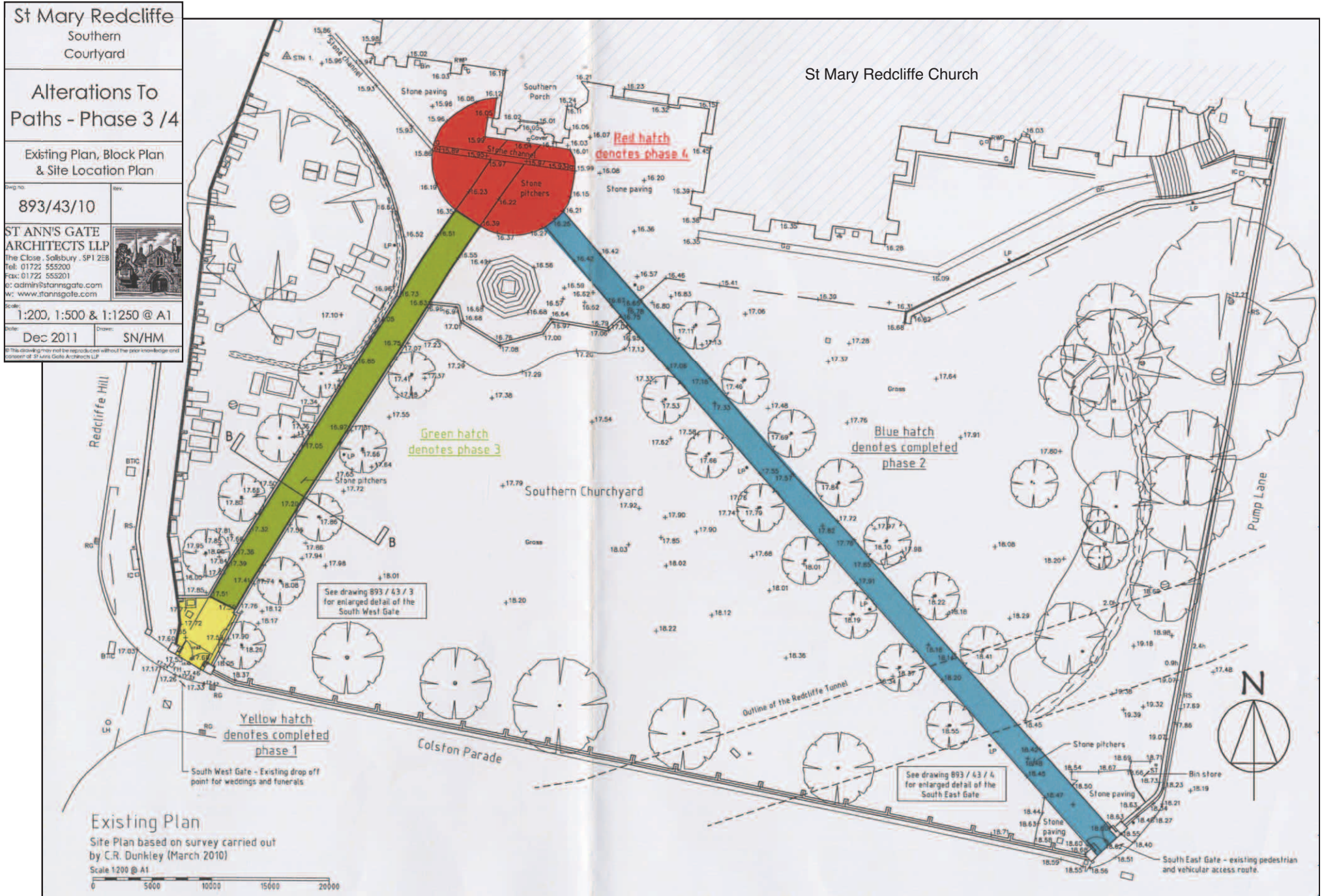


Fig.3 Architect's site plan showing phased alterations to the pathways (St Ann's Gate Architects 2011a)



Plate 1 The south-west path near the southern porch, viewed from the south-west



Plate 2 Trenches adjacent to southern porch for new drainage gully pots