

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**THE CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS THE MARTYR,  
THOMAS LANE, REDCLIFFE,  
BRISTOL.**  
for  
Corbel Conservation Ltd.



Report No. 2098/2009  
BHER No. 24710

By Heather Hirons



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services

St. Nicholas Church, St. Nicholas Street, Bristol, BS1 1UE. Tel: (0117) 903 9010 Fax: (0117) 903 9011



Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**THE CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS THE MARTYR,  
THOMAS LANE, REDCLIFFE,  
BRISTOL.**

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 59115 72766

Client: Corbel Conservation Ltd

## CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	
1.	Introduction..... 1
2.	Results..... 1
3.	Conclusion..... 2
4.	Bibliography and Sources Consulted..... 2
5.	Acknowledgements..... 2
Appendix 1: Policy Statement	
Appendix 2: Context Descriptions	
Illustrations and Plates	

### 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.

February, 2009.

### COPYRIGHT NOTICE:-

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services retain copyright of this report under the *Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act*, 1988, and have granted a licence to Corbel Conservation Ltd. and their agents to use and reproduce the material contained within, once settlement of our account has been received.

Plans reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Bristol City Council, Licence Number LA090551, 2009.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Figures

- Figure 1 Site location plan, scale 1:2500
- Figure 2 Plan showing study area in detail, scale 1:250

### Plates

- Cover View of the 15th-century tower of the Church of St. Thomas the Martyr, looking north-east from Thomas Lane
- Plate 1 North-east vestry service pit, looking north during excavation
- Plate 2 Burial chamber, from above
- Plate 3 Vestry service pit after excavation, looking north
- Plate 4 Long Walk service pit, looking west
- Plate 5 Brick arch in south-western vestry, looking west

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Corbel Conservation Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the installation of a toilet, kitchenette and associated services in the north-east vestry of the Church of St. Thomas the Martyr, Thomas Lane, Bristol. The fieldwork followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999), with the aim of recording any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundworks.
- 1.2 The site (**Fig. 2**), centred on NGR ST 59115 72766, lies within the Redcliffe Conservation Area at a height of approximately 8.5m aOD. The Church of St. Thomas the Martyr is a Grade 2\* listed building and was first founded at some point in the 12th century. The church was repeatedly rebuilt and extended several times over the years. Of the building now standing, the tower is 15th century in origin and Bristol stonemason James Allen built the rest of the current building between 1789 and 1793.
- 1.3 The site is bounded to the north by Beckett Hall, the church burial ground and No. 31 St. Thomas Street. St. Thomas Street bounds the east side of the site, Thomas Lane the south and Little Thomas Lane the west. The geology of the study area comprises estuarine alluvium of the Pleistocene and Recent periods (British Geological Survey 1962).
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery under the Accession Number BRSMG 2009/3 and a copy of the report will be made available to the National Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The project has been entered in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as: BHER 24711 and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1- 53786.
- 1.5 The fieldwork was undertaken between the 14th and the 27th of January 2009 under the supervision of Heather Hirons who also wrote this report. Ann Linge (Design & Production Officer) compiled the report and prepared illustrations and Bruce Williams (BaRAS Manager) managed the project.

## 2. RESULTS

- 2.1 During the course of the watching brief two pits were excavated for services and one floor was lifted, all of which was done by hand.
- 2.2 The first pit (**Plate 1**) to be excavated was located in the northwest corner of the northwest vestry of the church. The pit was 1m square by 1.75m deep and revealed an empty brick built burial chamber with Pennant sandstone capping (**Plate 2**) and the footings for the walls of the current church. A width of approximately 0.40m of the north side of the burial chamber was removed for services to run through (**Plate 3**).
- 2.3 A second pit (**Plate 4**) was excavated through Long Walk, the path for the old graveyard, measuring 1.40m by 1m by 1.58m deep. This trench was heavily truncated by services but did reveal the footings of the north wall of the current church as well as a reddish brown silty clay deposit and a wall running east to west. The colour of the mortar in the wall does suggest an early date and it would be on the right alignment for the wall of the previous church. However this cannot be determined for definite as no artefacts were recovered and both the deposit and the wall were heavily truncated.

- 2.4 The removal of the timber floor in the south-west vestry revealed the edge of a brick built wall and arch (**Plate 5**). The nature of the arch and wall suggests that this may have been a filled-in crypt entrance.
- 2.5 Full details of all the contexts are contained in Appendix 2.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 The watching brief revealed an empty burial chamber and a possible crypt entrance associated with the current 18th-century church as well as a wall, possibly part of the earlier medieval church. Little can be said of these features as only small sections of them were seen, however, they do indicate the presence of further archaeological remains in the area.

### **4. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED**

#### **Published Works**

English Heritage, 2007, *PastScape, Church of St. Thomas The Martyr*, [Online](updated 2008) Available at: [http://pastscape.english-heritage.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob\\_id=1008163](http://pastscape.english-heritage.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=1008163) [accessed 12 February 2009].

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*.

Taylor, C. S., 1904, The Old Church of St Thomas the Martyr, Bristol. *The Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol. 27.

#### **Unpublished Material**

Bryant, J., 1994, *Archaeological Desktop Study of 25-31 Victoria Street, Beckett Hall and St. Thomas Churchyard, Bristol*, (BaRAS Report No. BA/C090; unpublished client report).

Burchill, R., 1994, *St. Thomas' Burial Ground, St. Thomas Street, Bristol, Avon*, (BaRAS Report No. BA/D132; unpublished client report).

### **5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

BaRAS would like to thank Corbel Conservation Ltd for their assistance and co-operation and Bob Jones (BCC Archaeological Officer) for his advice.

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement**

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

### **NATIONAL POLICIES**

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work which would affect a SAM.

### **ODPM PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE**

The Planning Policy Guidance of Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) consolidates advice to planning authorities. The Guidance stresses the non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource, details the role of the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), encourages early consultation with county and district archaeological officers and sets out the requirement for developers to provide sufficient information on the archaeological impact of development to enable a reasonable planning decision to be made.

PPG 16 also indicates the circumstances where further work would be necessary and outlines the use of agreements and conditions to protect the archaeological resource.

### **DISTRICT POLICY**

Bristol City Council Supplementary Planning Document (2006) states (policy SPD No.7, p4):

- (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.

## APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

### North-east vestry service pit

Context No.	Description
100	Backfill around burial chamber: very dry, dusty silt with frequent mortar and charcoal flecks, 1.75m deep at limit of excavation.
101	Empty burial chamber: brick built sides, with pail grey mortar with occasional crushed stone, capped with Pennant sandstone slabs. The bricks measure 0.07 x 0.11 x 0.22m, and the removed slab measured 0.58 x 0.58 x 0.08m. The top 0.46m of the head end of the burial chamber was opened, measuring 0.50m at the widest part and 1.53m deep. A width of approximately 0.40m of the north side of the burial chamber was removed for the services.
102	Current walls of the vestry: plastered so no detail could be seen, running north-south and east-west forming the edges of excavation.
103	Footings for wall 102: stepped out by 0.12m from wall 102, well constructed block footings made with Pennant sandstone blocks, averaging 0.64 x 0.28m, bonded with pail grey mortar with crushed stone flecks. The footings extended 0.80m below the surface level.
104	Rubble footings for footings 103: Pennant sandstone rubble footings for wall 103 bonded with pail grey mortar with crushed stone, footings extended to the limit of excavation at 1.75m below the floor surface.

### Long Walk service pit

Context No.	Description
200	Concrete surface.
201	Pipe trench for iron water pipe. cut through (203).
202	Pipe trench for iron water pipe, cut through (203).
203	Previous surface: layer of rubble and charcoal in sooty silt, 0.05-0.08m thick.
204	Sewer pipe trench, 0.85m wide at the top, the whole depth of the trench.
205	Deposit: reddish brown, silty clay with occasional stones up to 0.10 x 0.10 x 0.05m diameter, deposit depth up to 1m bellow the surface, truncated at the top and at the north side by pipe trenches.
206	Current wall of church: same as (102)
207	Footings for wall (206): same as (103)
208	Rubble footings for footings (207): same as (104)
209	Wall: running east-west, constructed with Pennant sandstone slabs up to 0.45 x 0.45 x 0.05m in size with a sandy red mortar, starts bellow (205) at 1m and excavated to 1.58m bellow the ground surface, very heavily truncated.

### South-east vestry

Context No.	Description
300	Backfill or crypt: very dry, dusty silt with frequent mortar, charcoal, rubble fragments and oyster shell.
301	Brick built arch and wall: constructed with 0.07 x 0.11 x 0.22m bricks with pail grey mortar. Running north south across the southeast vestry 1.86m from the west wall, with an arch visible from 1.65m from the south wall for 0.80m after which both are obscured. The arch was 0.24m thick at the top and the void beneath was up to 0.63m deep bellow the floor surface.



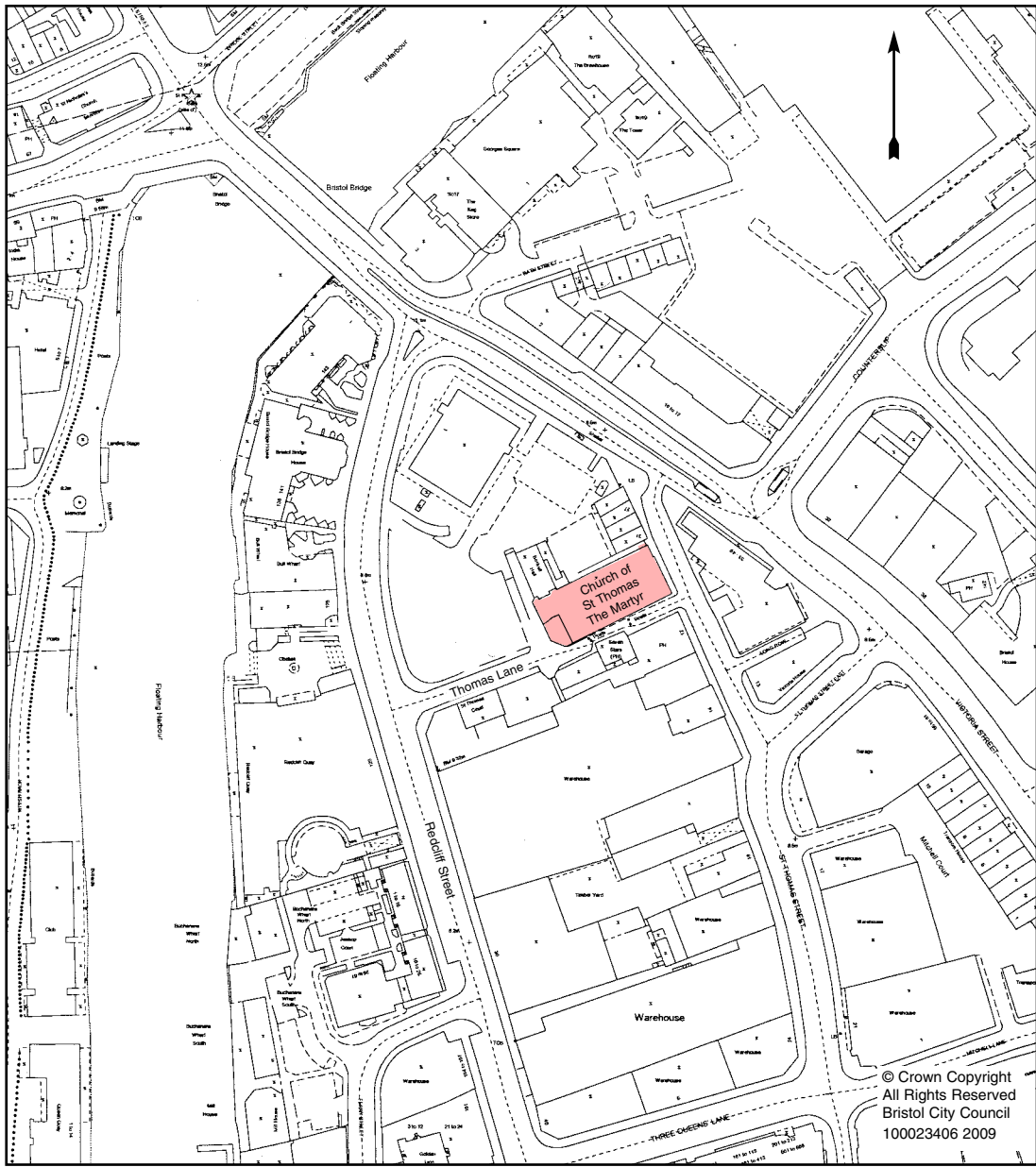


Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:2500

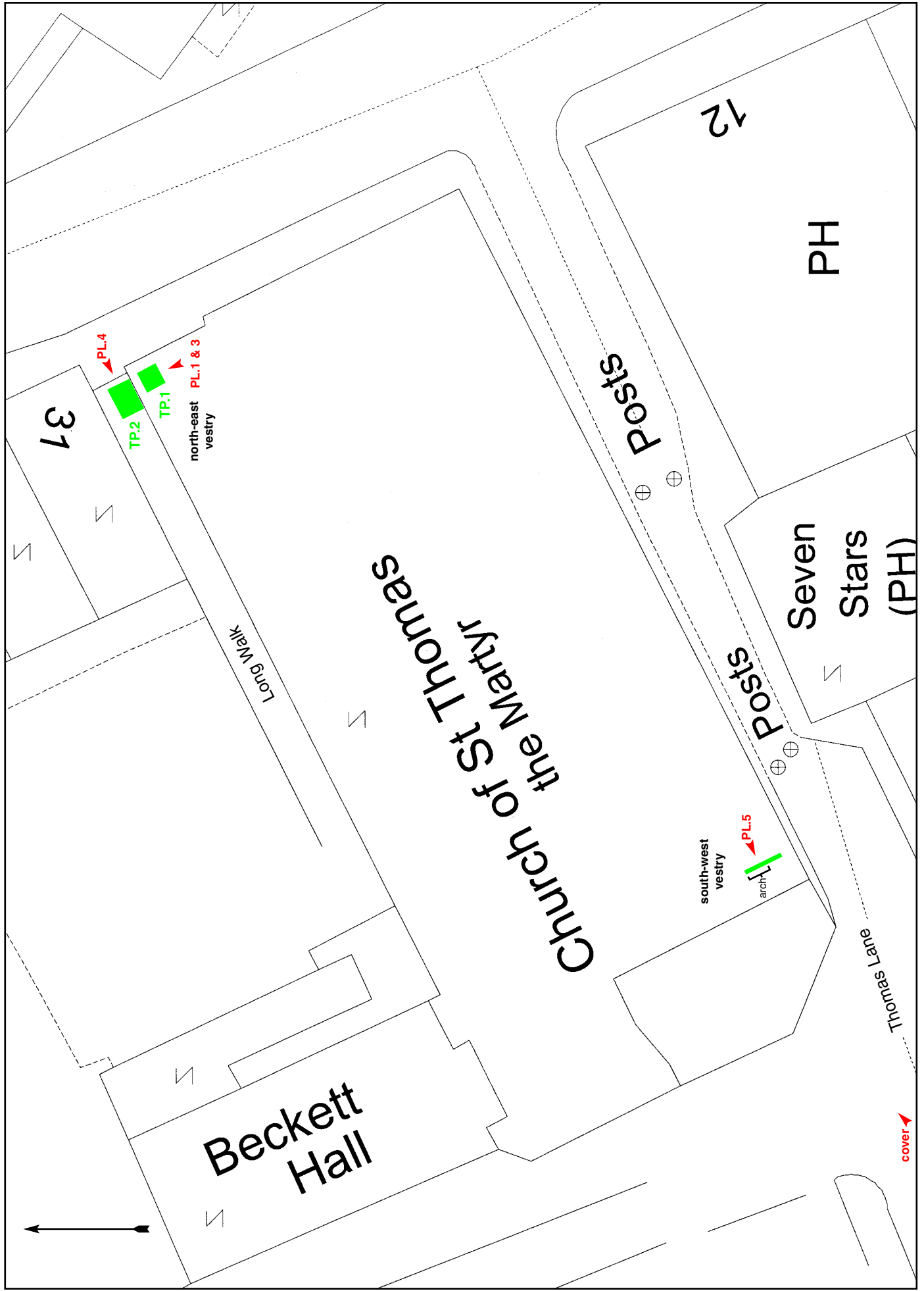


Fig.2 Plan showing study area in detail and plate directions, scale 1:250



Plate 1  
North-east vestry service  
pit, looking north during  
excavation



Plate 2  
Burial chamber, from  
above



Plate 3  
Vestry service pit after  
excavation, looking north



Plate 4  
Long Walk service pit,  
looking west



Plate 5  
Brick arch in south-west-  
ern vestry, looking west