

ST. NICHOLAS AND ST. GILES CHURCH, SIDMOUTH
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING



STEWART BROWN ASSOCIATES
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SUMMARY

Excavations carried out during the laying of a new floor uncovered wall foundations dating from the earliest stone church, built probably in the 12th century, as well as three later medieval phases of alterations and additions. The early church is likely to have comprised nave, tower and sanctuary, to which first transepts were added, and then a north aisle. A chancel replaced the tower and sanctuary in the 15th century, when the present tower was erected at the west end. A south aisle was added in 1822. Medieval floor levels and other stratified deposits which would once have been associated with the foundations were removed in 1859 by groundworks carried out during a restoration of the church. The excavations also located six brick-vaulted burial chambers dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries and a number of other graves.

THE PRESENT CHURCH (Fig. 1)

The oldest parts of the present church are its west tower and aisle arcade on the north of the nave, which date from the 15th century. The south aisle arcade is an addition of 1822. The remainder dates from a restoration of 1859-61 by William White.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A documentary history of the church was compiled in the year 2002 on behalf of the PCC by Keystone Historic Buildings Consultants (Keystone 2002). The history was prepared with particular reference to the Victorian restoration and subsequent decorative scheme, but includes earlier evidence. The Victorian restoration was witnessed and recorded in considerable detail by Peter Orlando Hutchinson, a resident antiquarian who became the town's most celebrated historian, albeit a rather eccentric one. Hutchinson took photographs and made drawings before and during its restoration, including a plan. He published an account of the restoration in 1860. He also compiled a richly illustrated history of Sidmouth in five volumes, including references to the early church, which is now preserved in manuscript form in the Westcountry Studies Library at Exeter.

The medieval manor of Sidmouth formed part of a large estate centred on nearby Otterton. The estate was granted by William the Conqueror to the abbey at Mont St Michel in Normandy, who established a priory at Otterton to oversee their property. The earliest surviving record preserved in the priory's cartulary is dated 1175 and relates to a vicar at Sidmouth, one William, who was to pay an annual rent to the prior for a small landholding in the locality (Hutchinson's MS History of Sidmouth Vol. IV, 7). It is therefore clear that Sidmouth already had a church by this time. Architectural fragments from the Norman church were uncovered during the Victorian restoration and recorded by Hutchinson (Plate 1).

Formal consecration of the church appears to have been neglected until 1259, when Bishop Walter Bronescobe performed the ceremony on 7th December, dedicating the church to St. Giles. The dedication was to St. Giles solely, not to St. Nicholas and St. Giles. The present association of St. Nicholas with the church arose from a misunderstanding regarding the consecration in the Bishops' Register at Exeter, which records that the ceremony took place on the day following St. Nicholas' day (Hutchinson MS History 16-18).

During the wars between France and England, the Otterton estate, including the manor and church of Sidmouth, were often seized by the crown until 1415, when King Henry V gave the property to Syon Abbey in Middlesex, an abbey which he had founded himself. Syon abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1540, and the manor again passed into the hands of the crown. It was bought by the Mainwaring family in the early 17th century, then the Prideaux family (1620's), and in 1778, it was sold to the Jenkins family (Sidmouth Museum 2000, 36, 46). Thereafter, the land was sold off to individuals in parcels.

From the late 17th century onwards, there are written and drawn records relating to alterations made to the church. These are kept at the Devon Record Office. One record describes the addition of the present south aisle in 1822. Others relate to the restoration by William White in 1859-60. White drew preliminary plans relating to the proposed development, showing the church both before work began, and as it would appear following restoration (reproduced in Keystone's 2002 documentary history as Figs. 5 and 6). These plans are inaccurate in a number of details, probably because White was at that stage unfamiliar with the building and much more concerned with the seating arrangements, which were to be expanded. In particular, they show four aisle windows on each side of the church, whereas there were only three, as is clear from contemporary photographs contained in Hutchinson's notebooks. White also shows diagonal buttresses at the corners of the tower, whereas they project at right angles. He also omits the stair turret on the south side of the tower entirely. Fortunately, Hutchinson's plan of the building before restoration (reproduced here as Fig. 2) is much more reliable, and can be confirmed in its detail by comparison with his photographic evidence.

THE PROJECT

The archaeological monitoring and recording project was carried out by Stewart Brown Associates over four weeks in May and June 2009. The archaeological work was required as a condition attached to a faculty for re-ordering the internal arrangements of the church which included replacing the floor surface. Initially, it was intended that the floor should be reinstated at the existing level, and that excavation to a general formation depth of 250mm would be required to provide a suitable sub-base for the new floor. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) for the archaeological project was prepared on this basis in January 2009 (reproduced here as Appendix 2). After one week's excavation, a number of brick burial vaults had been exposed and it became clear that these would be damaged by and interfere with the proposed works. It was decided that the new floor level should be raised in order to bridge over them. Consequently, the formation level for the floor's sub-base was also raised, so further excavation was no longer required. Archaeological features and deposits which had already been uncovered were investigated so far as possible and recorded. The remainder of the area was left unexcavated. Excavation plans were made at scale 1:20 using standing parts of the church as reference points, and were then transferred onto an overall site plan provided by the architect John Scott. A temporary bench mark for levelling was established on the top step leading up to the chancel (the steps have since been replaced). The temporary bench mark was measured as 8.398m OD, referring to the OS bench mark surviving on the south side of the church tower, which is 8.876m (29.12ft). The chancel floor was left intact, so its level (8.528m OD) can be used for future reference.

The project was funded by the churchwardens and PCC of St. Giles and St. Nicholas church, Sidmouth.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

In 2004, an archaeological evaluation was carried out in order to examine the character and survival of archaeological remains beneath the stone and wooden floors. The evaluation comprised three 1m-square keyhole excavations 250mm deep (Brown 2004). The evaluation established that beneath suspended wooden floors (pew platforms), most of the archaeological remains and deposits had been removed to an average depth of c. 250mm. Some masonry wall foundations dug into natural clay had survived. Beneath the stone floor of the central walkway, natural clay was exposed at a depth of only 120mm. This was overlain directly by construction levels associated with the 1859-61 restoration, showing that all earlier archaeological remains and deposits had been swept away in Victorian times. Two post-medieval graves were located. A trench opened within the present south transept, an area which lay outside the church up until its 19th-century rebuilding, was found to contain post-medieval infant burials.

The main conclusion of the evaluation was that the building works carried out during the Victorian remodelling of the church had caused significant damage to earlier archaeological remains, but that burials and some stone foundations survived.

DESCRIPTION

Archaeological survival

The excavations of 2009 confirmed the findings of the 2004 evaluation by showing that the Victorian building works had caused extensive damage to earlier archaeological remains. In many places, Victorian construction levels were found to overlie natural clay directly, all earlier stratified deposits having been entirely removed. No trace of earlier floor levels was uncovered apart from fragments of broken late medieval floor tiles which were found scattered throughout the 19th-century construction levels (see Appendix 1, Finds, below).

Some remains dug deeply into the natural clay were preserved however, comprising masonry wall foundations and burials. These had largely been left *in situ* by the Victorian builders, although there was evidence for stone robbing along some of the wall foundations, and a number of burials appear to have been lifted and removed for reburial elsewhere. Other burials had clearly been disturbed more casually since human bones were found strewn across much of the site.

The wall foundations and burials were exposed so far as possible within the limitations of the project (Figs. 3 and 4). The 19th-century works also included the insertion of two successive under-floor heating systems and a drain (Fig. 5), the construction of which caused further damage to the earlier archaeology.

Wall foundations (Fig. 3)

Phase 1

The earliest wall foundations were built in a very distinct manner. They comprise large water-worn boulders, cobbles, and beach pebbles set in friable brown clay and laid in a trench 1.2m – 1.5m wide and more than 0.4m deep (Plates 2-6). Their extent is shown in Fig. 1 (coloured blue; foundations 4, 11, 34, 37, 44, 45, 48, 49, and 60). In places the foundations

had been robbed of their large stones, leaving behind only the beach pebbles and clay which formerly surrounded them (robber-trenches 22 and 82). One of the foundations (11) had a narrow rectangular footing 1.2m long and 0.45m wide projecting from its north side (footing 12; Plate 5), evidently for a pilaster buttress. The footing was continuous in construction with foundation 11, but much more shallowly founded (14cm deep), showing that the buttress was built up from only a little below ground level. Shallow foundations for buttresses elsewhere around the church could have been lost during the Victorian building works.

It seems clear that the foundations once extended continuously along both sides of an aisleless nave. At the east end of the nave, the foundations turn inward to form a cross-wall interrupted by an opening at its centre (Plate 4), where there must have been an archway some 2m wide above ground. To the east of the archway there would have been a chancel, choir, or tower. It is likely that there was a tower in this position since foundations for what appears to have been a round stair-turret were found projecting 1.5m to the south (foundations 44 and 45; Plate 6). Foundation 45 consisted of large water-worn boulders like those used in the phase 1 foundations elsewhere. The overlying masonry (foundation 44) was bonded with white mortar containing coarse gravel aggregate, evidently remains from the above-ground Norman masonry. A small remnant of the tower's southern foundations was located a little further to the east, where large cobbles (49) projected from beneath a later medieval wall.

Phase 2

Phase 2 foundations are associated with the addition of north and south transepts to the west of the tower. The foundations were built largely of cobbles with inclusions of local Greensand stones set in compact red-brown clay, and are on average 1m wide (Fig. 3, coloured green; foundations 14, 33, 46, and 57; Plate 7). The foundations are different in character from those of phase 1, indicating that they belong to a subsequent phase of construction. Foundations 46 and 57 have rounded ends typical of walls built up against an earlier standing structure.

Phase 3

In Phase 3 the nave was rebuilt and the north transept was enlarged to form an aisle. The Phase 3 foundations overlie those of Phase 1, and were built of mass masonry bonded with white mortar containing gravel aggregate (Fig. 3 coloured brown; foundations 5, 20, and 55). The stone types comprise Salcombe stone, local Greensand, Beer stone, and beach cobbles.

The north wall of the nave was taken down and replaced by foundations 5 and 20 (Plate 5). These were built a little further to the north than the old north wall, thereby increasing the width of the nave. Foundation 5 originally extended further to the north and west, but was reduced in size by the digging of later graves. However, the right-angled corner surviving on its northwest side indicates the point at which the aisle projected outward from the nave. Foundation 20 was roughly square and isolated from the other foundations. It clearly supported a free-standing pier. The foundations at the east end of the aisle were replaced in Phase 4 (below). The aisle comprised two bays with an arcade of two arches supported by the central free-standing pier and a respond at each end. Some of the east wall of the earlier north transept (foundation 33) appears to have been left standing and incorporated into the new aisle.

The south wall of the nave was rebuilt on its former line. Some of the large cobbles from the Phase 1 foundations were lifted and re-used in the construction of the new wall foundation 55, which was a little narrower (1m; Plate 8). At its east end, foundation 55 terminated in a square-shaped pad of mass masonry similar to foundation 20 on the north of the nave, with which it aligns on a north-south axis. This probably provided a base for the jamb and respond of a new stone archway leading into the south transept.

Phase 4 (15th century)

The church was extensively rebuilt in Phase 4. At the east end, the old Norman tower and sanctuary were taken down and replaced by a more open and spacious chancel. A new tower was built at the west end of the nave, and the north aisle was doubled in size. Both the tower and the north aisle arcade are still standing. Phase 4 foundations were built in a similar manner to those of Phase 3, ie Salcombe stone, local Greensand, Beer stone, and beach cobbles bonded with white mortar containing gravel aggregate (Fig. 3, coloured pink; foundations 8, 19, 31, 32, 35, 38, and 43).

The foundations for the north and south walls of the new chancel (35 and 43 respectively) were 0.9m-1m wide (Plate 9). At the junction of the chancel with the nave, foundation 35 turned southward to form a projecting base for a chancel arch (foundation 31). Remnants of another base for the corresponding jamb of the arch survived to the south (foundation 38). Projecting from the north side of foundation 35, and built into the external corner between the chancel and north aisle, was a further contemporary foundation (32), probably for a buttress.

The two easternmost piers in the north aisle arcade were set on the earlier Phase 3 masonry bases 5 and 20. A few stones beneath the pier bases provided sufficient levelling (foundations 8 and 19). The western respond of the arcade is integral in construction with the tower so the two are contemporary in date.

Phase 5 (1822)

It is known from documentary evidence that the south aisle was added to the church in 1822 (Keystone report 2002, 5). The present south aisle arcade survives from this time, but the aisle's external wall was rebuilt above plinth level in 1859-60 (Phase 6, below). Construction of the south aisle swept away the south transept which had survived from the 13th century (Phase 2) until 1822. The foundation of the aisle's east wall was built of stone rubble bonded with white mortar, the stone types comprising Salcombe, Beer, Greensand, and beach cobbles (Fig. 3, coloured yellow; foundation 47; Plate 6).

Phase 6 (1859-61)

The rebuilding of 1859-60 includes the present external walls of the north and south aisles, the north and south porches, the transepts, the piers of the crossing, and the entire east end of the church (Fig. 3, coloured black). Documentary evidence shows that the ground beneath the boarded floors was excavated to a depth of 10 inches (Keystone report 2002, 18). The new wooden pew platforms and some parts of the stone flooring were raised on sleeper walls comprising local hand-made bricks bonded with white sandy mortar. The sleeper walls were one brick wide and two or three bricks high, spaced on average 0.3m apart. Two post-holes found to each side of the chancel arch and filled with Victorian building debris were almost certainly associated with the dismantling of the arch.

Burials (Fig. 4)

Numerous burials were located across the site. These were uncovered only so far as to identify their nature, but not fully exposed or excavated, owing to the limitations of the project (see The Project, above). Those which were located were plotted in outline (Fig. 4). Further burials doubtless survive in parts of the site which were not cleared of Victorian construction levels.

A number of burials had been interred within brick-vaulted chambers. These date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The bricks are hand-made local bricks dating from this period. The condition of the burials inside was investigated as part of the works programme. Small openings made through the vaults showed that these contained lead coffins, some with wooden outer coverings (the vaults were soon afterwards re-sealed and strengthened prior to laying the new floor). The largest brick-vaulted chambers were built to contain two tiers of four coffins (21, 71, and 72). One of these had a flight of brick steps leading down to it (burial chamber 21, steps 10; Plate 10). Other vaulted chambers contained only single lead coffins (2, 3, and 65; Plate 11). At least one contemporary brick-lined burial was covered by flat stone slabs rather than a vault (75). Two other similar burials appear to have been disinterred in Victorian times for reburial elsewhere (13 and 74), since their backfilling comprised loose building waste comparable in composition with the Victorian construction levels.

Another burial chamber with a brick lining was located in an area which lay outside the church until the rebuilding of 1859-60 (73, now within the south transept). This was probably originally associated with a graveyard chest tomb, the above-ground parts of which would have been dismantled when the church was enlarged.

Other burials had been made in earth-dug graves (9, 16, 17, 23-29, 51, 52, 76, 77, 80). Most of these probably date from the post-medieval period, although some may possibly be earlier. Three had been dug through medieval wall foundations (17, 51, 52), as had one of the brick-vaulted burial chambers (2).

Remains of infant burials were uncovered in the south transept. Some were located by the archaeological evaluation carried out in 2004 (78), and others in 2009 (79). These, like the nearby brick-lined burial 73 mentioned above, had been interred in the graveyard to the south of the church before this area was covered over in the Victorian rebuilding. The remains comprised disarticulated bones in considerable quantities, lying directly below the Victorian construction levels, showing that shallow burials had been made repeatedly in the same area, one dug through another.

All human remains recovered from the excavations were passed to David James, the present vicar of the church, for reburial in the churchyard.

Victorian under-floor heating systems and drain (Fig. 5)

The Victorian rebuilding of the church in 1859-60 is known from documentary evidence to have included the laying an under-floor heating system comprising two furnaces heating flagstones above ducts in the north and south aisles (Keystone report 2000, 19). This was known as 'Mitchell's patent apparatus' and was installed at a cost of £50. The system proved a failure, and following efforts to improve its efficiency, it was abandoned in favour of a

completely new system for warming air with a furnace house installed beneath the north transept in 1864. The warm air was conducted to floor grilles in the north transept and crossing. Remains of both systems were uncovered by the excavations and found to have been built with brick walls and slate capping above the heating ducts.

A late Victorian feature uncovered in two places toward the west end of the church was a brick-lined and slate-capped drain. This had been laid from the south porch, outside which water still puddles today following heavy rain, to the north porch where there must have been an outlet. The drain was found choked with silt, so it must have ceased to function properly after a period of use.

DISCUSSION

Structural development of the church (Figs. 3 and 6)

The surviving foundations represent a number of different phases of construction. Some phases can be dated by association with standing parts of the church, ie the present north and south aisle arcades date from the 15th century and 1822 respectively. The foundations underlying the arcades are clearly earlier, but difficult to date closely. There are, however, physical relationships existing between the foundations, ie some were built overlying or against others, which allow a relative chronology to be built up showing which are earlier and which later. The earliest building phase (Phase 1) has been ascribed to the 12th century on the basis of documentary evidence for a vicar at Sidmouth by the year 1175 and finds of Norman masonry made during the Victorian restoration (Historical Background, above). Phases 2 and 3 are earlier than the 15th-century north aisle, so must date from the 13th and/or 14th centuries.

Phase 1 (12th century)

The first church comprised a nave, tower, and probably a sanctuary beyond the tower. Norman parish churches were usually small simple structures containing no more than a nave and chancel. Some were larger and had a choir between the nave and chancel, the three compartments being separated by arches. Where the chancel or sanctuary was square-ended rather than apsidal, a tower was sometimes raised above the choir, as at nearby Branscombe, where a Norman tower and its round stair turret are still standing (Plate 12), and at Studland in Dorset, where remarkably, the Norman church layout survives virtually intact (Plate 13). The early church at Sidmouth would have been similar in appearance. The main entrance is likely to have been in the south wall of the nave, the most common position in Norman churches.

Phase 2 (13th century)

The addition of transepts in Phase 2 transformed the church into one with a cruciform plan. This type of plan increased in popularity during the 12th and 13th centuries and continued into the later medieval period. When new churches were built in this manner, they had central towers ingeniously supported only at their corners, with arches leading into the transepts as well as the nave and chancel. At Sidmouth, the tower already existed, and it was probably considered too dangerous to open new arches through its north and south walls, so the transepts were added to its west. This is an unusual arrangement, but one paralleled at Branscombe, where both the north and south transepts are still standing, having been added to the west of the tower in the mid 13th century (Plate 12). It would not be surprising if this was

about the time that transepts were added at Sidmouth. The length of the transepts to north and south was not established, but if they were square, as is the case at Branscombe and many other parish churches, they would have projected outward as far as the present aisle walls. Transepts were generally used as chapels and often contained altars.

Phase 3 (14th century)

Phase 3 alterations were associated with an increase in the capacity of the church, doubtless to accommodate a growing congregation. The rebuilt nave probably extended westward as far as the present west tower. The most likely form of the pier supporting the new north aisle arcade is octagonal. The responds at the ends of the arcade would have been half-octagonal, as would those of the new archway leading into the south transept.

When aisles were first added to parish churches they were generally narrow passages often no more than six feet wide, but in the 14th century they were often 12 or 14 feet wide and in some cases as wide as the nave, accommodating not only more worshipers, but also an increasing number of processions (Brown 1998, 88).

Phase 4 (15th century)

Reconstruction of the Phase 4 church is more complete than that of preceding phases since more evidence is available. In addition to the excavated foundations, there are the surviving west tower and north aisle arcade, as well as the wealth of records made by Hutchinson in 1859, when the church still retained much of its 15th-century fabric.

The tower is Perpendicular in style and can be dated to after *c.*1400 by the form of its buttresses (type B, right-angled and set back from the corner; Cherry and Pevsner 1989, 44). The mouldings of the north aisle arcade are also Perpendicular (type A; *ibid.*, 45). The arches of the arcade are acutely pointed, suggesting a date of construction earlier in the 15th century rather than the later 15th or early 16th century, when arches generally became lower and more rounded or four-centred (*ibid.*, 45). Hutchinson's plan (Fig. 2) shows the church after the south aisle and vestry were added in 1822, but the rest is probably much as it was rebuilt in the 15th century. The Phase 2 south transept evidently survived the 15th-century rebuilding intact, since a sketch plan made of it in 1797, when a gallery was installed, shows a small rectangular structure projecting southward from the nave in the same position as the 13th-century foundations (DRO Faculty cause 6). A topographical print dated 1819 shows the transept still standing (Plate 14). The transept may originally have been used for some special purpose such as a chapel associated with a guild or a chantry.

It is known from documentary sources that there was a screen across the chancel arch with a rood loft above it until 1776, when the screen was removed (Keystone 2002, 3).

Phase 5 (1822)

Little now survives above ground of the 1822 south aisle apart from its arcade. This was built to resemble the 15th-century arcade of the north aisle, but there are differences, one of the most prominent being that the four shafts of the piers are not carried down to floor level, but terminate higher up, above the level of pews. The vestry shown on Hutchinson's plan on the north side of the chancel is another addition of 1822. It replaced an earlier vestry sited to the north of the nave, where previously there had been a porch (Keystone 2002, 4). It can be

deduced from illustrations made of the church between 1822 and 1859 that most of its medieval windows had been replaced, apart from the east window and another 15th-century window at the north-west corner of the chancel.

Phase 6 (1859-61)

William White rebuilt the church with new north and south aisles, transepts, and porches. The chancel was moved eastward by a little over 3m and provided with aisles. The nave was heightened by adding a clerestory above the earlier arcades. An important patron of the rebuilding was the Earl of Buckinghamshire, a resident of the town. He donated the east window and reredos. The west window was donated by Queen Victoria in 1865, and in 1867, the piers of the arcades were made more elaborate by inserting black marble shafts with capitals into the original hollow mouldings (Keystone 2002, 24, 28).

The rebuilding was far more extensive than Hutchinson, who was a member of the restoration committee, believed necessary. He made clear his opinion and dismay at the outcome in his published account of the rebuilding (1860), as well as his notebooks and manuscript *History of Sidmouth*. He rescued what he could of the east end masonry and re-erected it on a smaller scale beside his home in nearby Coberg Terrace. The 15th-century east window is now visible from the town's bowling green. He also salvaged some of the architectural fragments and built them into the structure, which subsequently grew over the next thirty years by further addition of reclaimed architectural items from other old buildings into a house in its own right, known as 'Old Chancel'. Hutchinson saved some of the medieval painted glass from the east window and had it re-set in the Lady Chapel. The medieval piscina was re-set high in the south wall of the chancel.

Burials

Hutchinson's plan of the church before restoration shows the location of known tombs associated with particular names (Fig. 2). Some names can be associated with the vaulted burial chambers exposed by excavation (Fig 4). Hutchinson's manuscript history records details concerning other burials disturbed by the building works and by an associated lowering of the ground level in the surrounding graveyard, which took place between 1859 and 1861.

ARCHIVE ASSESSMENT

In view of the complete absence of archaeological stratigraphy dating before the Victoria period, as well as finds apart from residual fragments of floor tile and a few sherds of late post-medieval pottery found amongst the Victorian construction levels, it is considered appropriate that the record compiled in the present report is sufficient and that no site archive is required. The plans of all excavated features are reproduced in the report. The photographic record of the excavations is adequately represented in the report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Martin Fletcher (Archaeological Advisor for the Exeter diocese) provided a brief which became the basis for the Written Scheme of Investigation (Appendix 2). He also kindly agreed to visit the site and offer his advice regarding the burial chambers. Dave Robinson and Mary Dale provided assistance with the excavation and recording. Many thanks are also due to the site staff of Ellis and Co Ltd., Martin, Chris and Duncan, whose patience and help with the removal of spoil was greatly appreciated. John Allan (Exeter Archaeology) identified the finds. Fig. 2, and Plates 1 and 14 are copies of original illustrations held by the Westcountry Studies Library at Exeter, and are reproduced here with their kind permission.

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APPENDIX 1
FINDS (identifications by John Allan)

Context	sherds	description	date
1 (Victorian construction levels)	5	Low Countries floor tile with dark green glaze and nail holes	15 th /early 16 th century
	1	as above but with yellow glaze	15 th /early 16 th century
	9	E. Devon/S. Somerset floor tile with punched square nail holes on the back	14 th – early 16 th century
	1	as above but with keying scoops on the back instead of nail holes	14 th – early 16 th century
	2	clay pipe stems	18 th /19 th century
	3	local coarseware	18 th century
	1	Delft white tinglazed	18 th century

Plus one coin – Victorian silver sixpence 1888

83	1	cream ware	late 18 th /19 th century
	1	S. Somerset coarseware	18 th /19 th century
	4	ridge tile	17 th /18 th century
	1	E. Devon /S. Somerset thin floor tile	15 th /16 th century

Plus 1 architectural fragment – Beer stone nosing of window mullion

All finds were discarded following identification since none were of archaeological interest.

The three different kinds of late medieval floor tile present amongst the finds indicate three separate campaigns of flooring in the late medieval period.

Feature 83 dates from the Victorian restoration of 1859-61 and was associated with the insertion of underfloor heating ducts. It was the only excavated feature to produce pottery finds. It appears to have been backfilled with material imported from outside the church.

APPENDIX 2
WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING AND RECORDING DURING REPLACEMENT OF THE
FLOOR AT ST GILES AND ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, SIDMOUTH

Stewart Brown Associates January 2009

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This written scheme of investigation has been prepared on behalf of Sidmouth church PCC. The archaeological works are required as a condition attached to the faculty for re-ordering the internal arrangements of the church.
- 1.2 Sidmouth church has a long history stretching back to Norman, and possibly Saxon times. Sidmouth was a Domesday manor attached to the nearby manor of Otterton. In 1206, the church was granted by Henry Marshall, bishop of Exeter, to the Abbot of Mount St. Michael. The church was extensively rebuilt in the 15th century and again by William White in 1859-60. The 15th-century tower is still standing.
- 1.3 Proposed works for the new floor in the nave and aisles include removal of existing suspended timber flooring (pew platforms) and excavation of sub-floor between pew platforms to an approximate general depth of 250mm. It is thought that the two areas at the west end of the church now covered by woodblock flooring were previously covered by pew platforms, so probably contain hardcore infill to a depth of c. 100mm-200mm. This will also be reduced or replaced. A new floor comprising a sub-base of quarry scalplings, concrete slab and stone finish is then to be laid incorporating reclaimed stone paving and ledger stones from the previous floor.

2. PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

Three evaluation trenches were opened within the church in 2004 (Brown 2004). In summary, these showed that:

- 1/ masonry wall footings associated with the 15th-century church still survive beneath the suspended timber flooring, at depths ranging between 0.16m and 0.24m below present floor level;
- 2/ natural clay was located at a depth below floor level of only 120mm within the central walkway, ie in an area of solid flooring between pew platforms;
- 3/ areas which before the 19th-century rebuilding lay outside the south wall of the church, but now lie within the south aisle, retain graveyard soils containing infant shroud burials at shallow depths (c. 200m below present floor level);

4/ the 19th-century rebuilding works and contemporary excavation for pew platforms removed/damaged at least some of the earlier archaeology.

3 OBJECTIVES

3.1 The principal objectives of the programme are to:

- i) limit disturbance of existing archaeology to a minimum. The extent of necessary excavation is to be agreed with the architect on site following the removal of existing floors.
- ii) monitor groundworks associated with the development to allow exposed archaeological features and deposits to be investigated and recorded.

4. PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

4.1 Following removal of existing floors by the building contractors, any loose rubble, mortar and other deposits associated with the 19th-century rebuilding of the church will be cleared away and the surface of earlier archaeology cleaned by hand. Exposed archaeological features and deposits will then be investigated and recorded at an appropriate scale. Areas of archaeology surviving as upstands between pew platforms will then be excavated and reduced in level to the required depth. Should remains of the Norman/medieval church, such as wall footings and floor surfaces survive within the upstands, these will be left in place and the architect informed so that an agreement can be reached as to how to proceed.

Important remains will need to be preserved and protected from damage wherever possible. This protection may involve reinforcement and packing suitable materials around the remains, as well as reducing the depth of the new sub-base and/or concrete slab floor so as to leave the remains intact.

4.2 *Level of archaeological recording*

Following consultation with Martin Fletcher, the diocesan archaeological advisor, it has been agreed that masonry wall footings and other features which will be preserved in the ground and not removed by the works will be recorded in outline, whilst selected areas will be chosen for stone-for-stone recording to represent their typical construction.

It is standard archaeological practice for the upper parts of all features exposed by development works to be recorded, even if the lower parts of the features are to be left unexcavated. This will entail cleaning with a trowel or brush, planning, levelling and photographing.

4.3 A photographic record will be made in B/W print for archive purposes, supplemented by digital. Inkjet prints of digital images will be included in the report. The drawn site records will be made on drafting film and copied onto a digital medium.

- 4.4 Should deposits be exposed that contain palaeoenvironmental or datable elements specialist advice will be sought and appropriate sampling strategies initiated.
- 4.5 Unarticulated and small human remains found during the excavation will be passed to the Rector for reburial in the churchyard. Articulated human remains will initially be left *in situ*, covered and protected. Removal will only take place under appropriate Ministry of Justice and environmental health regulations. Such removal will be in compliance with the relevant primary legislation.
- 4.6 Should gold or silver artefacts be exposed these will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act 1996. Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft.
- 4.7 The work will be carried out in accordance with the relevant IFA Standards and Guidance for archaeological excavation.

5. **TIME ALLOCATION**

The length of time needed to make an adequate archaeological record will depend upon how much archaeology has survived the 19th-century rebuilding, and how much of that lies within the excavation zone for the new floor sub base. This will not be fully apparent until the existing floors and 19th-century building debris have been removed. A provisional allocation of 4 weeks should be allowed within the works programme for archaeological recording to proceed unhindered. It is anticipated that this will be sufficient, but the time allocation may have to be revised should important, substantial remains survive. Should less survive, then the necessary time allocation will be reduced.

Mechanical assistance

It would be very useful and time-saving if a mini-digger with driver could be made available for archaeological purposes immediately following the removal of existing floors. Likewise, assistance with removal of spoil from the excavations would reduce the time required for archaeological works.

6. **REPORTING**

- 6.1 A report will be prepared collating the written, graphic, and recorded information outlined above. The report will include a written description and drawn plans of the archaeological features and deposits, including their location, together with their interpretation.
- 6.2 The report will be prepared within three months of completion of fieldwork dependent upon the provision of specialist reports, radiocarbon dating results etc the production of which may exceed this period. If a substantial delay is anticipated then an interim report will be produced.

- 6.3 On completion of the report in addition to copies required by the client, hard copies of the report will be supplied to the Devon County Council's archaeological section (HES) on the understanding that one of these copies will be deposited for public reference. In addition to the hard copies of the report, one copy will be provided to the HES in digital format, on the understanding that it may in future be made available to researchers via a web-based version of their records.
- 6.4 Should particularly significant historic fabric, architectural features, below-ground remains, or finds be encountered, then publication of a short note or summary of the excavation results will be required. Such notes are normally sent to the Devon Archaeological Society for publication.

7. **FINDS**

Finds from the excavations will at minimum need to be assessed and identified by relevant specialists (eg pottery, metal, stonework). The specialists will contribute individual specialist reports as appendices to the final site report. Should any of the finds require specialist conservation treatment, this will be sought from the Conservation Lab at Exeter Museum.

8. **PERSONNEL**

The work will be carried out under the control of Stewart Brown, who is a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA). Monitoring and recording of groundworks will be carried out by Stewart Brown and one or more site assistants. A list of specialists who can be consulted if required appears at the end of this document.

9. **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Archaeological work will be carried out in accordance with guidelines issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Unless specifically agreed otherwise, the owners will be responsible for general safety on the site, checking for live underground services, and for preventing access by unauthorised persons to the area of excavation.

10. **SITE ARCHIVE AND DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE AND FINDS**

A project archive will be prepared containing project records and finds in a permanently accessible form within a reasonable time of the completion of works (normally three months). The structure of the archive will follow the specifications outlined in 'Management of Archaeological Projects 2' (English Heritage). The archive, including the finds, will be deposited with Exeter Museum (Accession number to be sought before excavation begins). The museum's guidelines for archive preparation and storage will be followed. It is usual practice for ownership of the archive and finds to pass into the hands of the museum in order to guarantee permanent safekeeping (the museum cannot

accept the archive unless ownership has been transferred; written permission for transference of ownership will be requested from Sidmouth PCC).

11. LIST OF SPECIALISTS WHO COULD ADVISE OR CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PROJECT IF REQUIRED:

Medieval and post medieval finds - John Allan (Exeter Archaeology);
Roman finds - Paul Bidwell (Tyne & Wear Museums, Arbeia Roman Fort);
Prehistoric lithic finds - John Newberry (Paignton);
Prehistoric ceramic finds - Henrietta Quinzel (Exeter);
Bone artefacts - Ian Riddler;
Clay tobacco pipes – David Higgins (Liverpool);
Coins and tokens - Norman Shiel (Exeter);
Finds conservation - Exeter RAM Museum Conservation Service (contact Alison Hopper-Bishop);
Environmental sampling - Vanessa Straker (English Heritage, Bristol);
Faunal remains - Southampton University Faunal Remains Unit;
Plant remains - Julie Jones (Bristol);
Geological identification and mineral analysis – Roger Taylor (Exeter Museum).

12. INSURANCE

- 12.1 Stewart Brown Associates has insurance cover in the following areas: Public Liability, Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity, All Risks, and Personal Accident.
- 12.2 Stewart Brown Associates will not be liable for any damage caused to the site which unavoidably results from archaeological site operations being carried out within the agreed scope of works.

13. PERMISSIONS

Sidmouth PCC (or their agent John Scott) will be responsible for obtaining any necessary permissions or consents required for the purpose of archaeological excavation and recording.

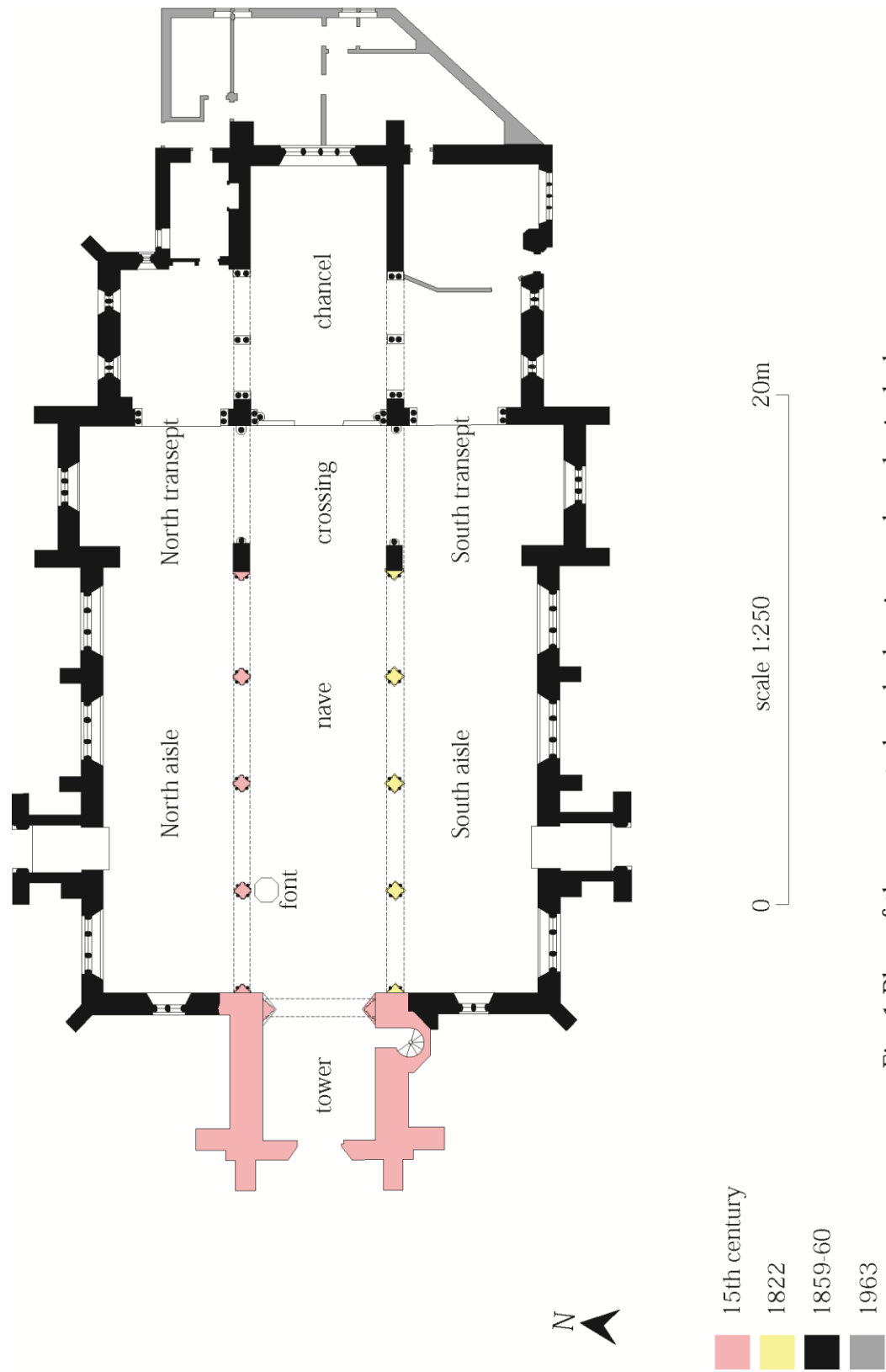


Fig. 1 Plan of the present church showing archaeological phases.

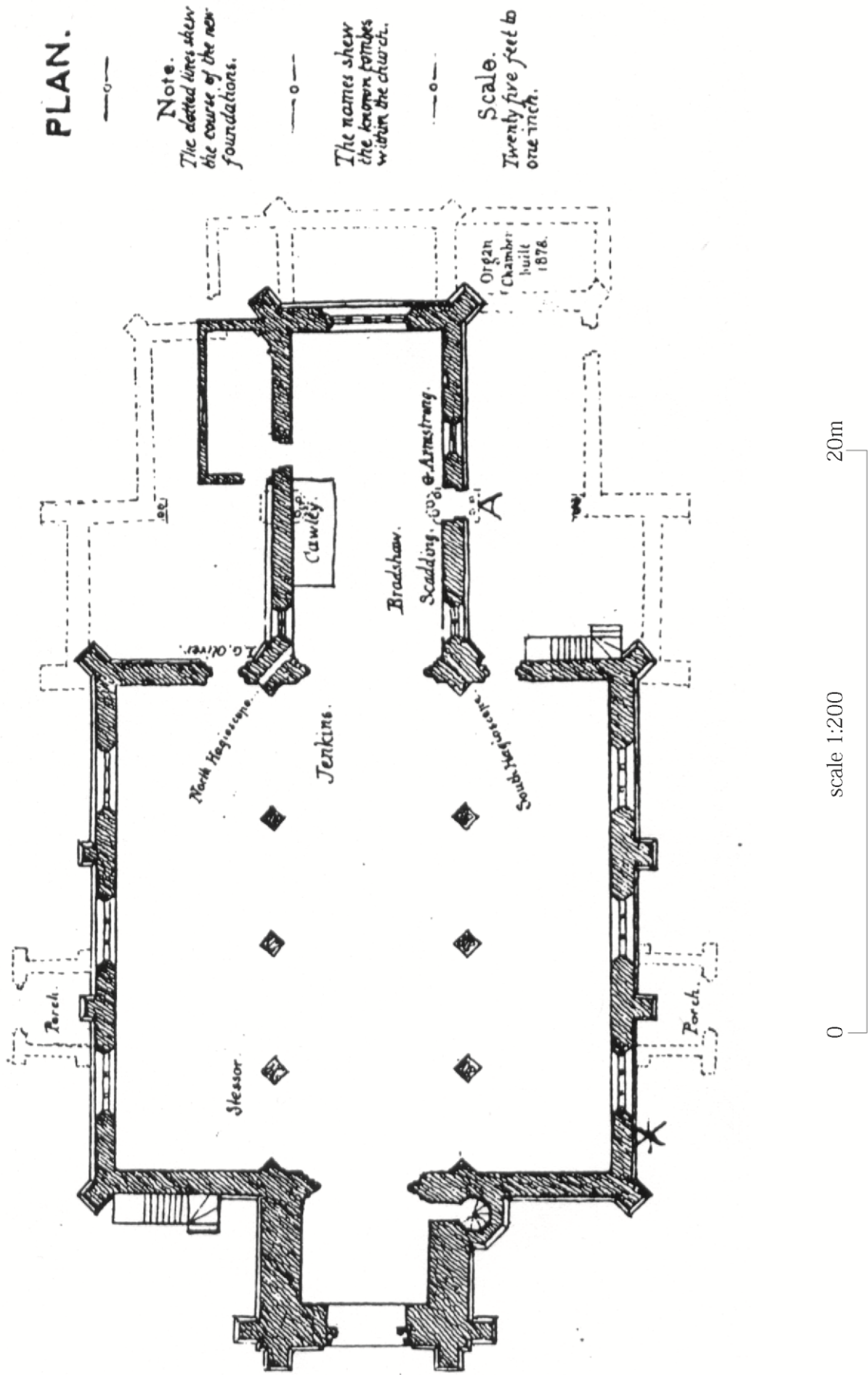


Fig. 2 Plan of the church in 1859 before restoration - the dotted lines show the course of foundations built 1859-61. Reproduced from Hutchinson's MS History of Sidmouth, Vol IV, by kind permission of the Westcountry Studies Library.

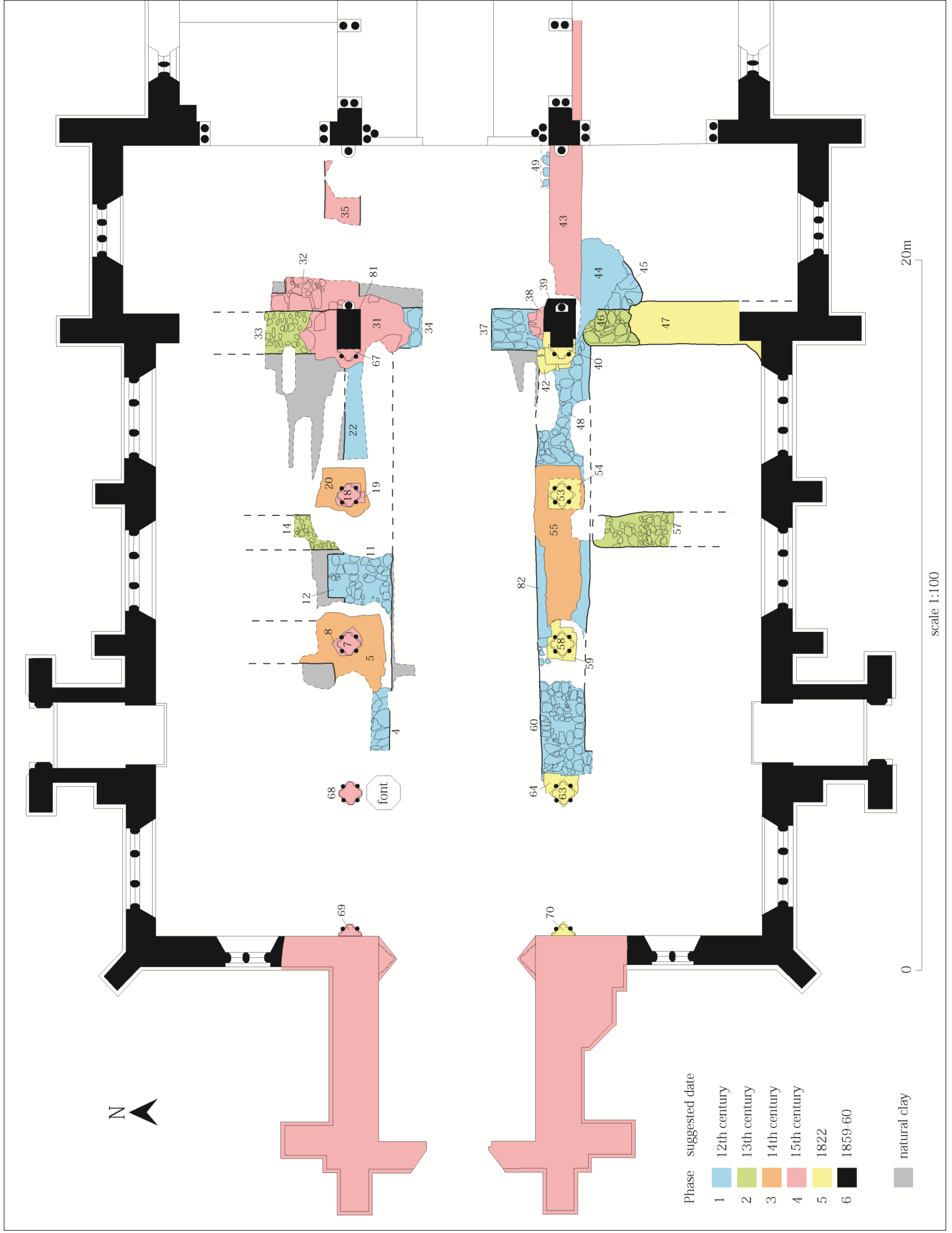


Fig. 3 Plan showing located masonry wall foundations and their phasing.

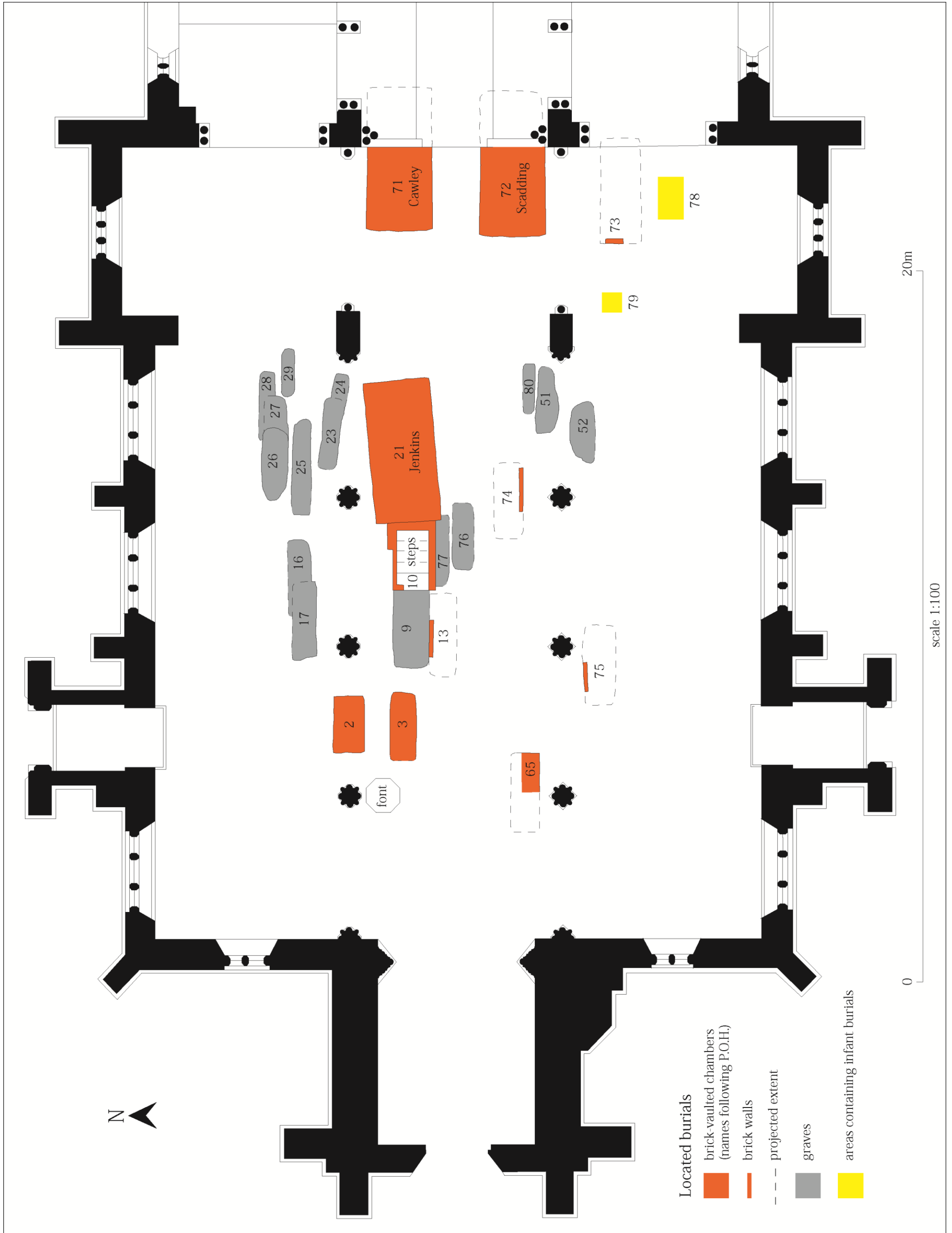


Fig. 4 Plan showing located burials.

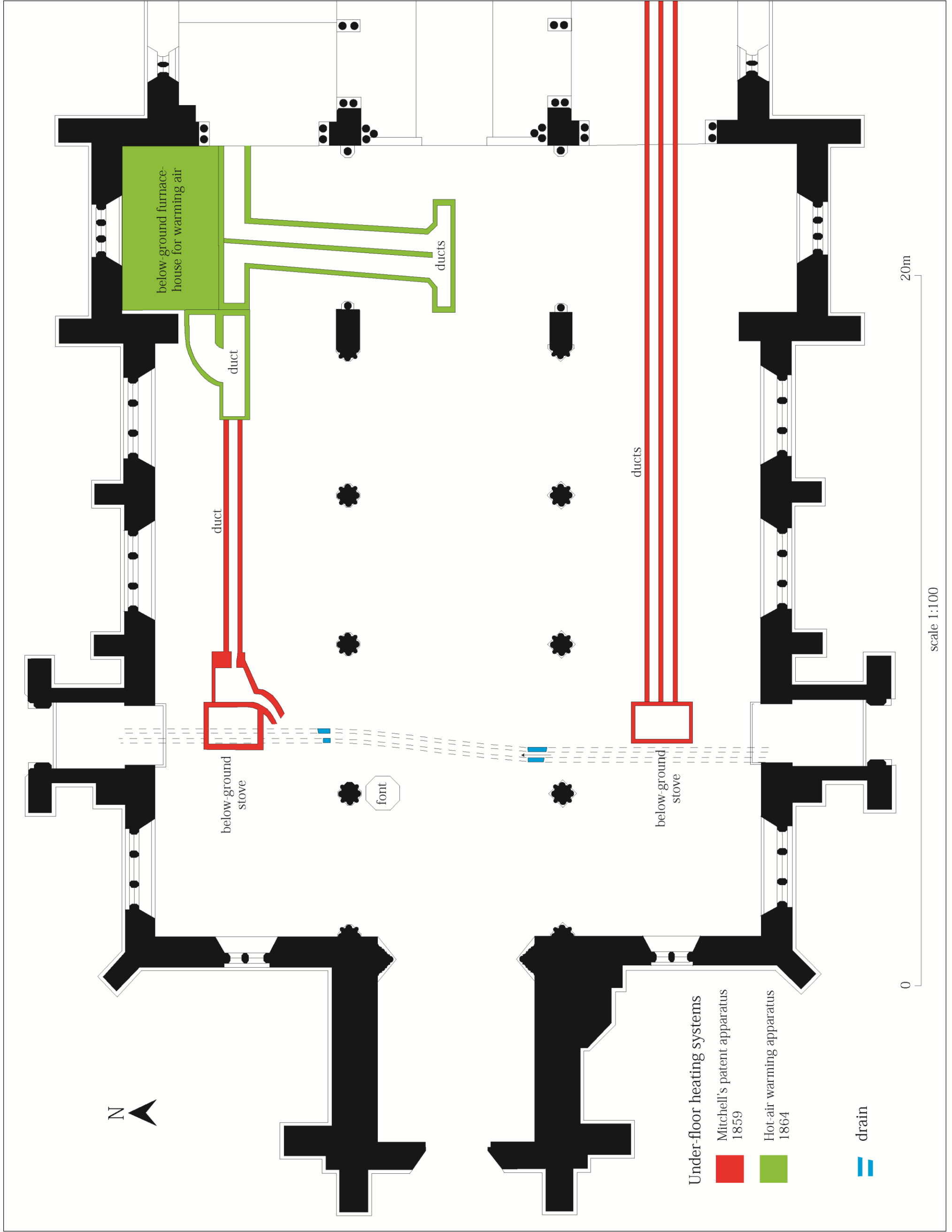


Fig. 5 Plan showing 19th-century heating systems and drain.

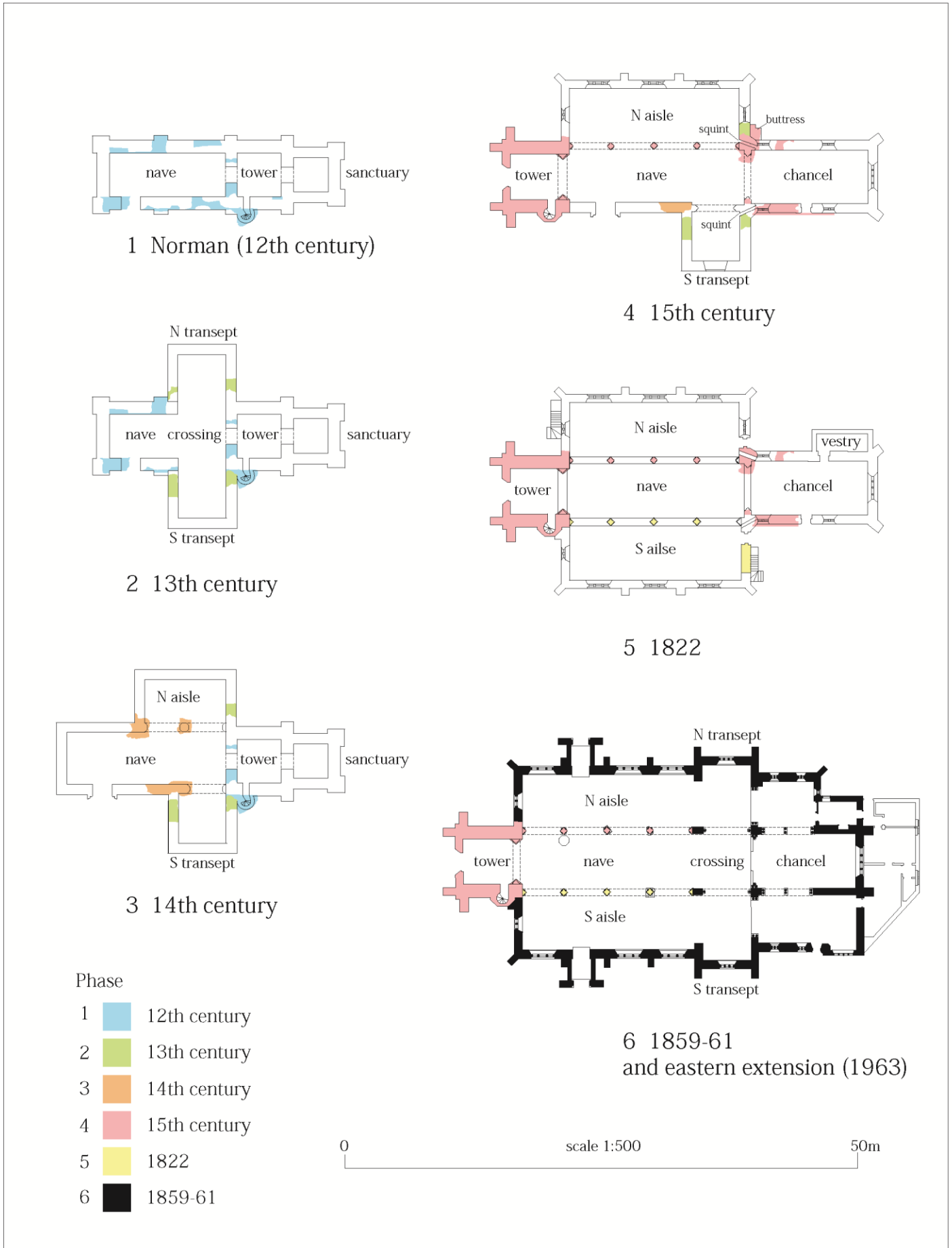


Fig. 6 Phase plans showing development of church.

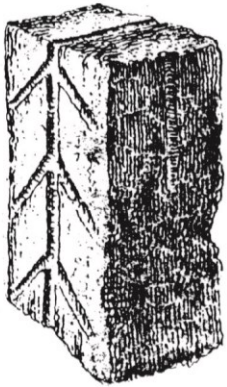


Fig. 1.
Now preserved in
the west wall of the
Old Chancel, outside.

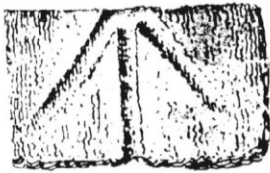
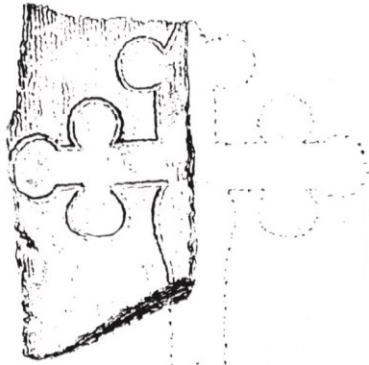


Fig. 2.
Lost sight of.

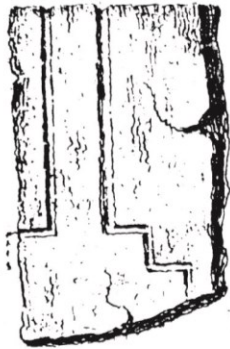
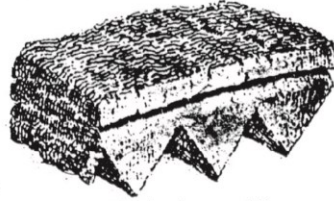
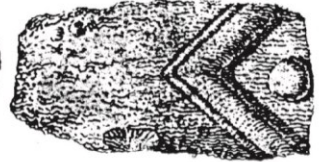


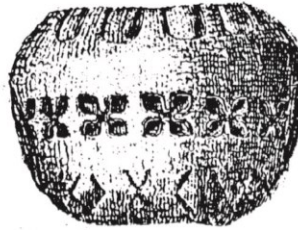
Fig. 3.
Two fragments of an incised
Cross.
In the Vestry floor?



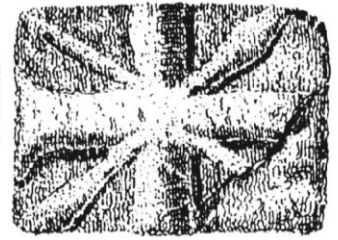
Toothed moulding.
Put in point of nave gable, outside.
Since lost.



Norman zig-zag.
In the point of north transept
gable. Another in south gable



Spherical Capital of
Column.
Fixed loosely against south
front of Old Chancel.



Carved stone now over
south door of Chancel.



Successive coats of plaster coloured and inscribed,
found under the whitewash over the old Chancel
arch in the nave. — since gone to pieces.

T.O. Hutchinson fecit.

Plate 1 Architectural fragments and painted plaster found during the restoration of 1859-61.
Reproduced from Hutchinson's MS History of Sidmouth Vol IV, by kind permission of the
Westcountry Studies Library.



Plate 3 12th-century foundation (48)
cut by two graves, looking east.



Plate 2 12th-century foundation (60), looking west.



Plate 4 12th-century foundation (37), looking south.



Plate 5 12th-century foundations (11 and 12), and 14th-century aisle foundation (5), to rear, looking west.



Plate 6 12th-century stair turret foundations (45 and 46) to right, 13th-century transept foundation (46), centre, and 1822 south aisle wall foundation (47) in foreground, looking north.



Plate 7 13th-century transept foundation (57), looking north.



Plate 8 14th-century nave foundation (55), looking west.



Plate 9 15th-century chancel foundation (43), looking east.



Plate 10 Late 18th-/early 19th-century brick-vaulted burial chamber (21), looking east.



Plate 11 Late 18th-/early 19th-century brick-vaulted burials (2 and 3), and between them, a remnant of 12th-century foundation (4), looking west.
The slate stone bridging burial 3 provided a base for the font.
The metal ties were inserted in 2009 to strengthen the vaults.



Plate 12 Branscombe church Norman tower and stair turret, looking southwest.



Plate 13 Studland church, Dorset, looking southeast.

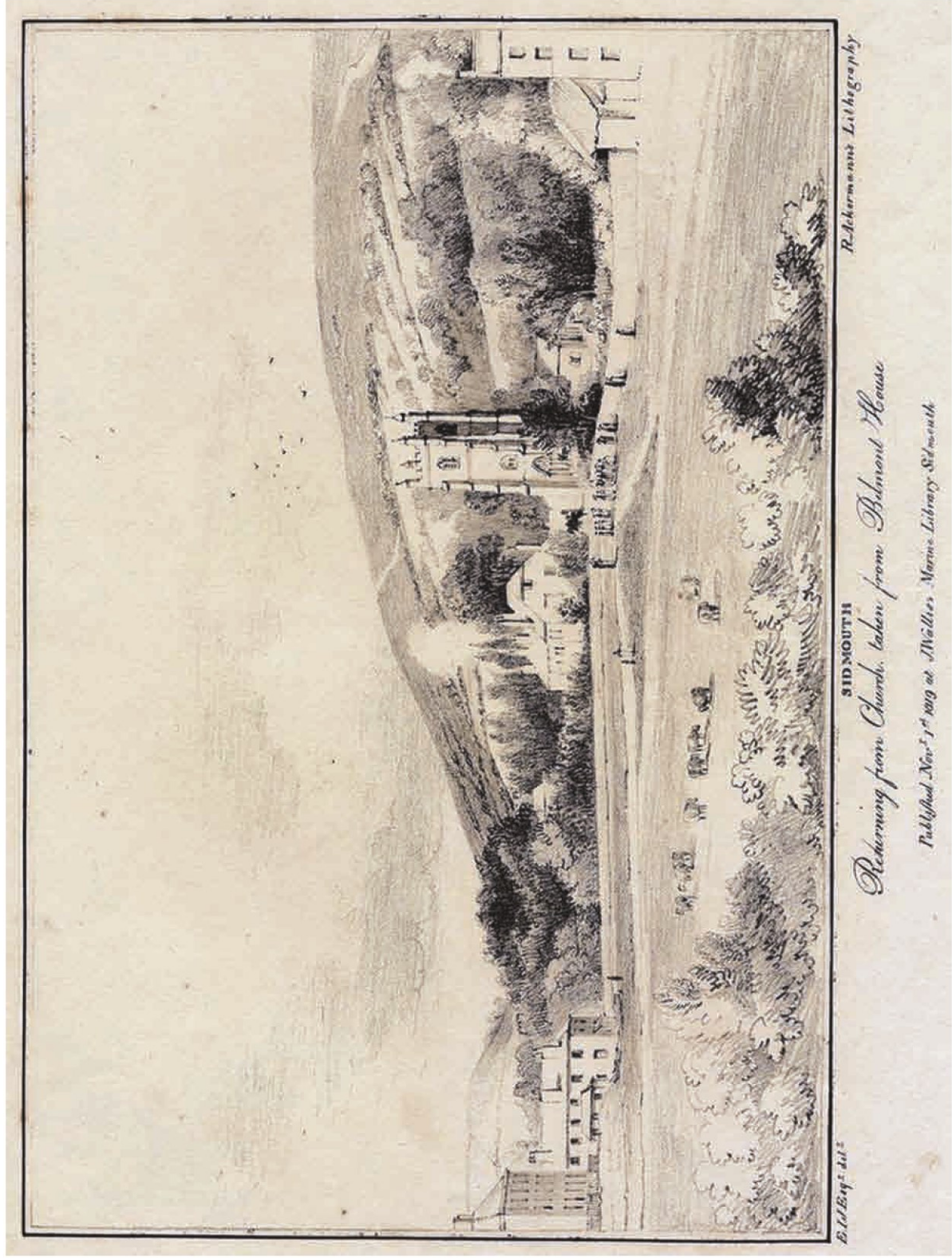


Plate 14 The church in 1819, showing the south transept still standing, looking north-east. (Reproduced from the original lithograph by R. Ackerman & Co. by kind permission of the Westcountry Studies Library)