

# Archaeological evaluation at Gideon Chapel, Hudnalls, The Common, St Briavels, Gloucestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology  
*for Andrew and Caroline Langdon*

December 2019



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# GIDEON CHAPEL, HUDNALLS, THE COMMON, ST BRIAVELS, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name:	Gideons Chapel
Site code:	P5696
Local planning authority:	Forest of Dean District Council
Planning reference:	P1221/19/FUL
Central NGR:	SO 54509 03617
Commissioning client:	Andrew and Caroline Langdon (via Brodie Planning Associates)
WA project number:	P5696
WA report number:	2772
HER reference:	-
Oasis reference:	fieldsec1-375523
Museum accession number:	-

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### DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	17/12/2019	Elspeth Iliff	Draft for comment	Tom Vaughan

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# Archaeological evaluation at Gideon Chapel, Hudnalls, The Common, St Briavels, Gloucestershire

By Elspeth Iliff

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

## Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Gideon Chapel, Hudnalls, The Common, St Briavels, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 54509 03617). It was commissioned by Andrew and Caroline Langdon, in advance of proposed groundworks in association with a change of use of the building from a redundant chapel to a residential dwelling. A planning application has been submitted to Forest of Dean District Council.

The site is located on St Briavels Common, about 1.6km east of the river Wye. It currently consists of a small parcel of scrub land immediately east of the Gideon Chapel. One trench was excavated down the centre of the site to determine the presence of archaeological activity, and specifically to confirm if the land had been used as a cemetery, as indicated on historic maps. A single archaeological feature was encountered: a small, irregular pit that contained no dating evidence. A stone rubble layer of probable construction debris from the chapel was found at the western end of the trench, likely to have been laid as a levelling deposit.

No evidence of this land being used for burials has been found in this evaluation. It is considered that the results of this evaluation provide an accurate characterisation of the site, and that the potential for further archaeological activity to exist is low.

# Report

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in November 2019 at Gideon Chapel, Hudnalls, The Common, St Briavels, Gloucestershire (NGR SO 54509 03617). This comprised the excavation of one evaluation trench. The project was commissioned by Andrew and Caroline Langdon (the Client), in advance of proposed groundworks in association with a change of use of the building from a redundant chapel to a residential dwelling. A planning application has been submitted to Forest of Dean District Council (planning reference P1221/19/FUL).

The Archaeologist for Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), the advisor to the local planning authority, considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon potential heritage assets.

No brief was provided but a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019) and approved by the GCC Archaeologist. The evaluation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014).

### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located on St Briavels Common adjacent to a public footpath. It sits c 1.4km south-west of the town of St Briavels, and c 1.6km east of the River Wye. The site is a sub-rectangular parcel of scrub land immediately east of the chapel, measuring 96m<sup>2</sup>. It is surrounded by pastoral land, largely consisting of small, irregular fields. The site is relatively flat, at c 246m AOD (above Ordnance Datum). The underlying geology comprises Tintern Sandstone Formation (BGS 2019).

## 2 Archaeological and historical background

### 2.1 Introduction

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (Connolly 2019). The findings are summarised below.

### 2.2 Prehistoric

There is sparse evidence of prehistoric activity in the area, consisting mainly of lithic implements of Late Mesolithic and Neolithic date found 1.6km south-east of the site (GLO-8F0632). A flint scraper was found 140km north-east of the site at Hudnalls Cottage (HER 25410).

### 2.3 Roman

There is also limited evidence of Roman activity in the area. A possible Romano-British settlement (HER 21533) has been suggested from place name evidence c 1km north-west of the site, and there is a reference to a possible Roman mound or barrow somewhere in the parish of St Briavels (HER 5029). Roman pottery has been found 1.3km south-east of the site (GLO-8F5EA1) and a possible Roman coin has been found in a garden near the moat of St Briavels Castle (HER 6021).

### 2.4 Medieval and post-medieval

The site is 240m to the south of Offa's Dyke, a scheduled monument constructed towards the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century as a boundary marker and consisting of a bank with a ditch to the west. The name St Briavels has been in use since 1130 and St Briavels Castle, also a scheduled monument, is thought to date to the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. The castle was strengthened in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was frequently visited by a number of kings of England. The Church of St Mary, a Grade I listed church, is situated

near by the castle, and dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Several areas of ridge and furrow earthworks dating to the later medieval and post-medieval periods have been found within the area, including some recorded within 80m south-west and 110m south-east of the site.

Gideon Chapel was built in 1852 and extended in 1880. The 1902 and 1921 Ordnance Survey maps denote the plot of land to the east of the chapel as 'burial ground', and a weathered grave stone has reportedly been found at Chapel Cottage. However, no other records of burials have been found.

### 3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project were to undertake sufficient fieldwork to

- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- Identify their location, nature, date and preservation;
- Assess their significance;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development (where plans and impact depths have been provided to Worcestershire Archaeology).

### 4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken on 28 November 2019.

One trench, amounting to 23m<sup>2</sup> in area, was excavated over the 96m<sup>2</sup> site, representing a sample of 24%. The location of the trench is indicated in Figure 2.

The trench was positioned down the middle of the site area in order to test for the presence or absence of burials and other archaeology. Although the WSI specified a trench measuring 20m long, due to the presence of a number of trees at the eastern end of the site, it was only possible to excavate 15m. This trench was also excavated in two halves due to site constraints, with the eastern side excavated first, then backfilled before the western end was excavated.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a JCB 3CX type wheeled excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a differential GPS with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through structural evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Dean Heritage Centre.

## 5 Archaeological results

### 5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trench are shown in Figures 2 and 3 and Plates 1-5. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

## 5.2 Phasing/Trench descriptions

### 5.2.1 Natural deposits

The natural substrate was identified as a pinkish red silty clay, at 243m AOD at the east end of the trench, dropping to 242m AOD at the west end, towards the Chapel.

### 5.2.2 Phase 1: Modern

A topsoil layer was identified across the entirety of the trench, consisting of a greyish brown clayey silt, measuring 0.42m in depth. At the western end of the trench, next to the chapel, a layer of stone rubble sat beneath the topsoil, measuring 0.3m deep, which continued for 6m along the trench (Plate 5). The stone appeared to be very similar to that used to build the Chapel and is considered likely to be a levelling deposit consisting of construction waste. Below this layer, and immediately below the topsoil at the eastern end of the trench, was a brownish red silty clay subsoil measuring 0.33m in depth.

A modern geotechnical test pit was encountered near the east end of the trench, which is understood to have been excavated in association with the present proposed development.

### 5.2.3 Undated

Part of a shallow, irregular pit [104] was identified at the southern edge of the trench (Plate 4). The full extent of this feature is unknown, but the visible extent measured 1.06m wide and 0.22m deep. It produced no finds and was filled with a sterile, orange silty sand fill. It was considered possible that this feature may represent infilling of a natural hollow or depression.

## 6 Artefactual evidence

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts predating the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were identified which were considered to be suitable for analysis.

## 7 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis. No bones were recovered from the soils, either animal or human.

## 8 Discussion and Conclusions

The only evidence of archaeological activity identified in this evaluation was a stone rubble layer and an undated pit. The stone layer sat between the topsoil and subsoil and is considered to relate to debris from the construction of the Chapel in 1852, possibly laid as a deliberate levelling deposit. The pit was irregular and considered probably to be a natural hollow. No finds pre-dating the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were recovered.

No evidence of burials was found within the trench, nor any indication of re-working of the soils, or any disarticulated bones recovered. If the stone layer does date to the construction of the Chapel, this further reduces the potential of there having been any burials at the western end of the site, adjacent to the Chapel, as there was no indication of it having been disturbed subsequently (for example for the excavation of grave shafts).

It is therefore considered that there is a low possibility for burials or other significant archaeological features to exist within areas not covered by the trench, which sampled 24% of the site.

Overall, the methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable to identify the presence or absence of archaeological



features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provide an accurate characterisation of this area of the development site.

## 9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Peter Lovett, ACIfA, assisted by Elspeth Iliff, PCIfA.

The project was managed by Tom Vaughan, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Elspeth Iliff. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

## 10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Andrew and Caroline Langdon (the clients), Wendy Hopkins (Brodie Planning Associates), and Charles Parry (Archaeologist, Gloucestershire County Council).

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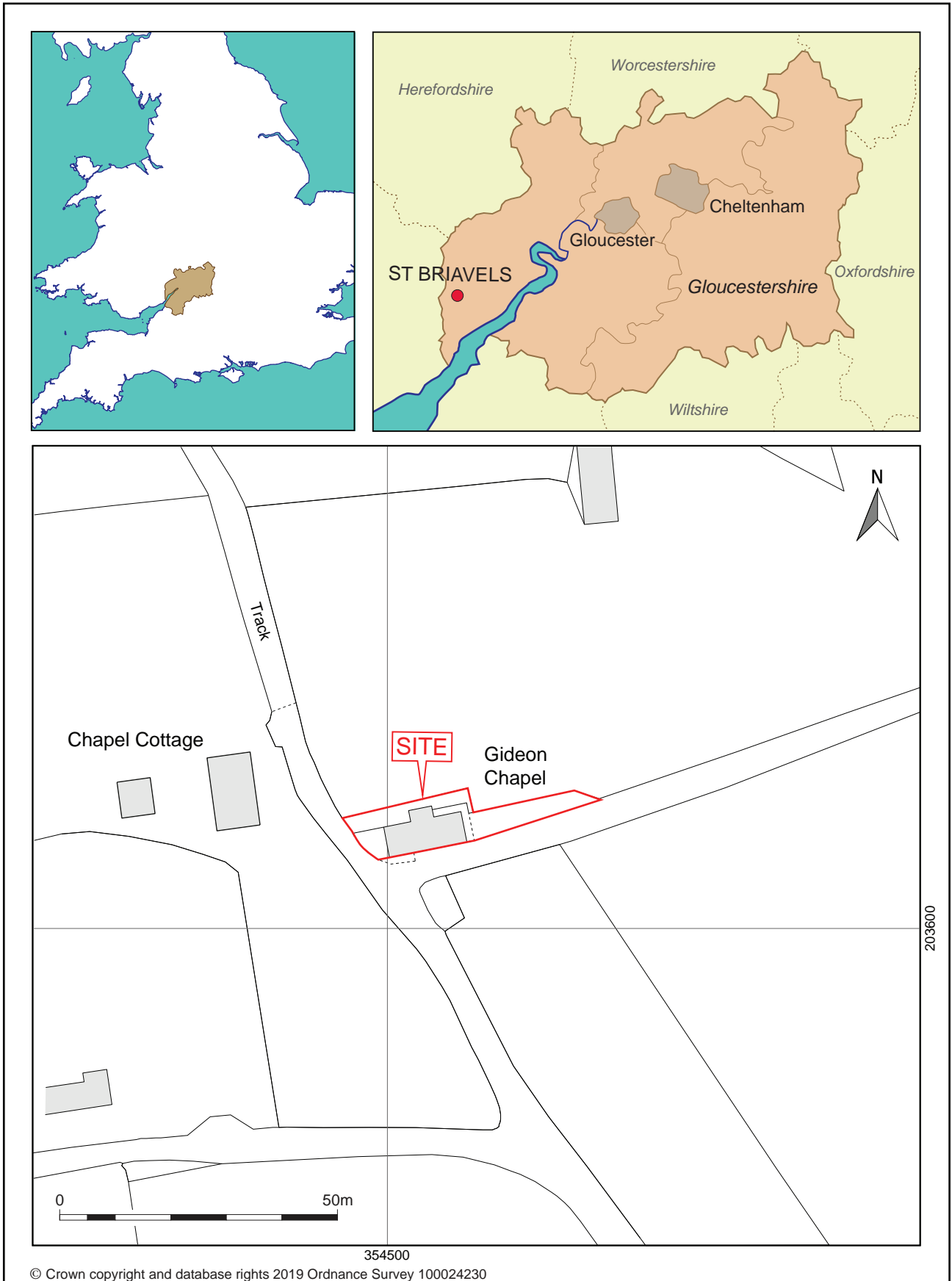
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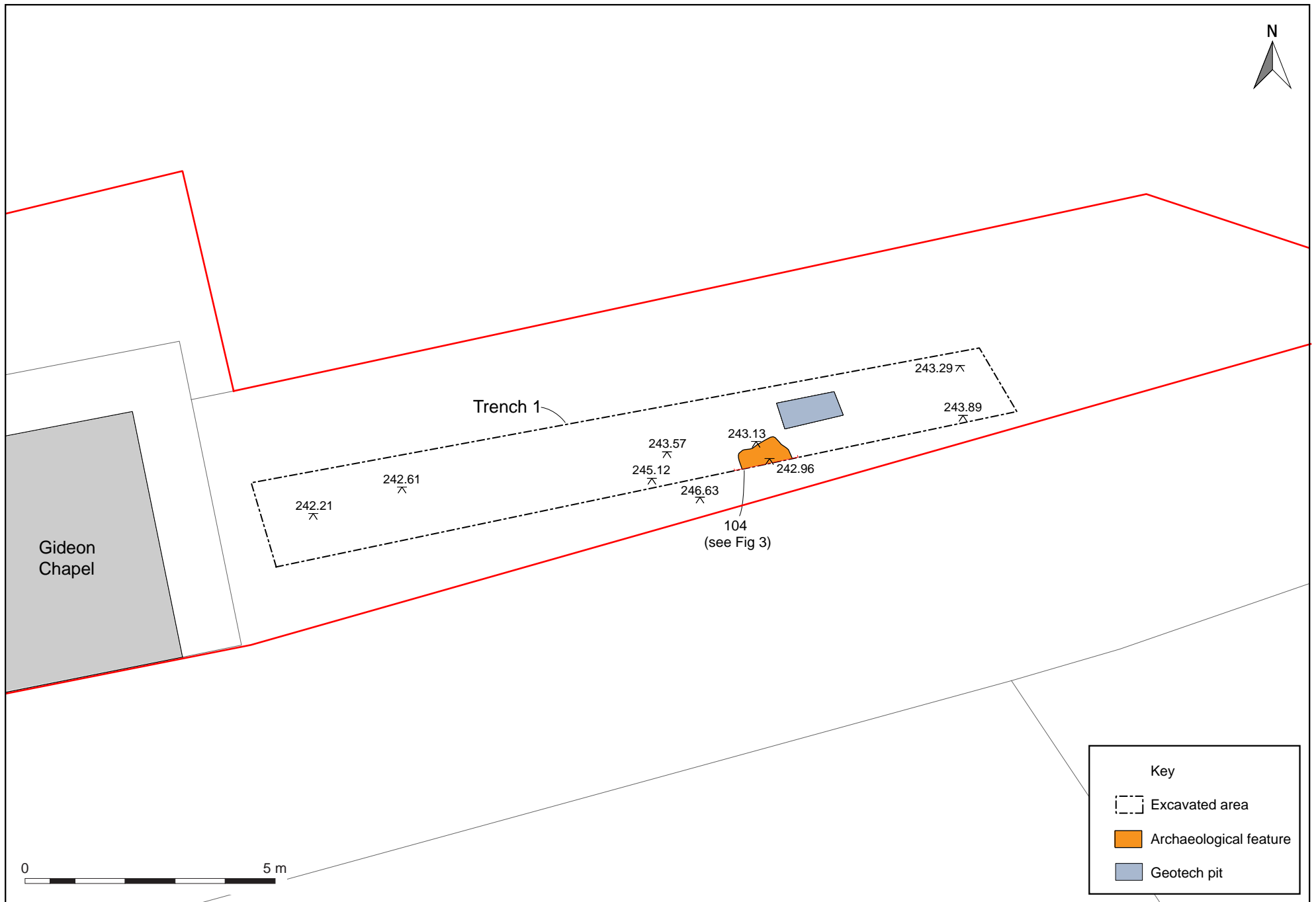
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## Figures

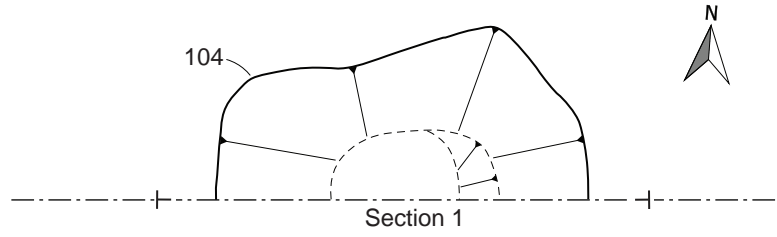


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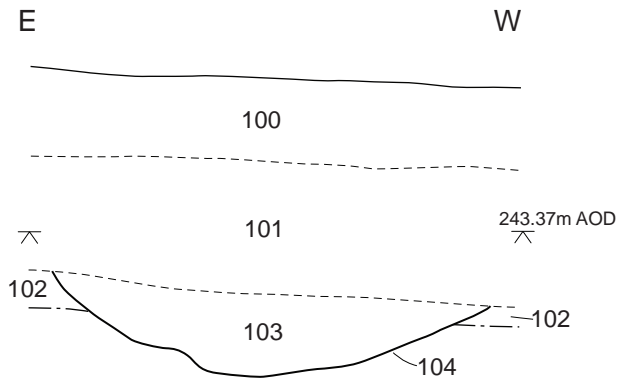
Location of the site (based upon Brodie Planning Associates Drg no. 19.018-100) Figure 1



PLAN OF PIT 104



SECTION 1: PIT 104



Plan and section of pit 104

Figure 3

## Plates



*Plate 1: Gideon Chapel and the site, looking north-west, before excavation (no scales)*



*Plate 2: East end of Trench, looking west (2x 1m scales)*



*Plate 3: West end of Trench, facing west (2x 1m scales)*



*Plate 4: Pit [104], looking south (1m scale)*



*Plate 5: South facing section of Trench, with stone rubble layer (105), facing north-west (1m scale)*



# Appendix 1: Trench and context descriptions

## Trench 1

Length: 15m      Width: 1.5m      Orientation: East to west

<b>Context</b>	<b>Feature type</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Height/ depth</b>	<b>Deposit description</b>
100	Layer		Topsoil	0.42	Friable Mid greyish brown clayey silt
101	Layer		Subsoil	0.33	Mod compact Mid brownish red Silty clay
102	Layer		Natural		Compact Light pinkish red Silty clay
103	Fill		Fill of pit [104]	0.2	Soft Mixed grey and orange Silty sand
104	Cut		Cut of pit	0.2	
105	Layer		Stone rubble layer	0.3	Friable Mid greyish brown Clayey silt

## Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Paper	Context Sheet, Correspondence, Diary (Field progress form), Drawing, Photograph, Plan, Report, Section
Digital	Database, GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

\*OASIS terminology