

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING AND RECORDING
AT
ST HELEN'S SCHOOL HOUSE,
FISH STREET,
WORCESTER

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With contributions by Dennis Williams

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Archaeological monitoring and recording at St Helen's School House, Fish Street, Worcester

Tom Vaughan

With contributions by Dennis Williams and Rosemary Adams

Part 1 Project summary

A project of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken at St Helen's School House, Fish Street, Worcester (NGR: SO 8498 5470). It was undertaken on behalf of Adult and Community Services – Social Care, Worcestershire County Council, who intends to demolish an existing toilet block and to construct a new extension, along with resurfacing works outside, lowering of kerbstones and the erection of a gate for which a planning application has been submitted. The project aimed to determine if any significant archaeological remains were present and if so to indicate its date, nature and location.

A number of medieval subsoil layers were recorded below the existing School House and toward the south-east boundary of the former churchyard. At no point were earlier deposits identified; neither Roman or Anglo-Saxon defences, nor the undisturbed, natural matrix. A stone dump, of possible late medieval date, was identified below the floor of the existing building. This contained a burnt fragment of carved limestone mullion. The pattern of burning indicates that it was part of a wall when it suffered fire damage. An unmortared brick base (predating 1784) was observed adjacent. Three further structural features were recorded between the School House and St Helen's Church: a stone wall or foundation, a tile floor or hearth and a mortar layer. They may comprise part of the medieval rectory, which was itself rebuilt in 1791, and lay on the site of, and extended north of, the School House.

No inhumations were identified and those few disarticulated bones uncovered were retained on site and re-interred. Two late 18th-mid 19th century brick vaults were uncovered to the west of the church tower. Following on site discussions, neither was excavated or investigated. The first, a single occupancy vault, was left largely intact and was simply rafted over; the second, a double-size vault, had been disturbed previously, probably in 1987, when it had been backfilled with gravel.

Unfortunately the majority of the groundworks comprised narrow and shallow service trenches, coupled with only minor landscaping across the former churchyard. Thus no archaeological deposits, structures, features or finds were identified which have the potential to address any of the research priorities identified in the urban archaeological database.

Part 2 Detailed report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

A project of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken at St Helen's School House, Fish Street, Worcester (NGR: SO 8498 5470; Fig 1), on behalf of Adult and Community Services - Social Care, Worcestershire County Council. They intend to demolish an existing toilet block and to construct a new extension, along with resurfacing works outside, lowering of kerbstones and the erection of a gate and have submitted a planning application to Worcester City Council (ref P06D0592, L06D0091), who consider that archaeological remains may be affected.

1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IFA 1999) and the *General standards and practices appropriate for archaeological fieldwork in Worcester City*.

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcester City Council (WCMAS 2006) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2007).

1.3 Aims

The aims of the project were to monitor all groundworks associated with the development, to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

More specifically the project provided the potentially opportunity to address a number of identified research priorities (WCMAS 2006, 6; WCM 2007), including the following:

- Dating and characterisation of probable late Roman defences (RP 3.13)
- Potential early Anglo-Saxon origins of St Helen's church (RP 4.3)
- Investigation of the post-Roman survival of the Roman earthwork enclosure (RP 4.7)
- Anglo-Saxon defensive circuits (RP 4.12)
- Demolition and re-planning of the burh defences (RP 4.13)
- Medieval churchyards (RP 5.3)
- The late Roman to post-Roman transition (RP 7.12)

2. **Methods**

2.1 **Documentary search**

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the City Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition to the sources listed in the bibliography, Worcestershire County Record Officer (WCRO) and the following were also consulted:

Cartographic sources

- 1610, Map of Worcester, John Speed, WCRO 4885/VI 899.x426 / British Library Kings Maps C7 C550
- 1653, An exact Ground-Plan of the City of Worcester as is stood fortified 3 Sept 1651, Vaughan
- 1742, Plan of Worcester City, J. Doharty
- 1779, Plan of the City and Suburbs of Worcester from Actual Survey, by George Young
- 1795, A Plan of the City and Suburbs of Worcester, Valentine Green
- 1808/10, Plan of Worcester, T Eaton
- 1829, A Plan of the City and Environs of Worcester, engraved by Sidney Hall
- 1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1888, scale 1:500
- 1904, Ordnance Survey, scale 25":1 mile
- 1924, Ordnance Survey, scale 25":1 mile
- 1940, Ordnance Survey, scale 25":1 mile

The following sources were not considered relevant to this project: aerial photographs.

2.2 **Fieldwork methodology**

2.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2007).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th April and 19th July 2007. The site reference number and site code is WCM 101510.

Observation and recording of archaeological deposits was restricted to areas of ground disturbance associated with the development following the progress of the construction team. Twelve interventions were archaeologically monitored across the site, comprising discrete trenches and pits, along with areas of ground reduction. The location of the areas is indicated in Figure 2. Context data is presented in Appendix 1.

2.2.2 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

2.3 Artefact methodology, by Dennis Williams

2.3.1 Artefact recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995, appendix 2). This in principle determines that all finds, of whatever date, must be collected. However, in this case only a sample of later material was collected from the spoil during machining. These comprised the majority of the finds recovered from the site. All other artefacts were recovered from stratified deposits.

2.3.2 Method of analysis

All hand retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

Pottery fabrics are referenced to the fabric reference series maintained by the Service (Hurst 1994).

2.4 Environmental archaeology methodology

2.4.1 Sampling policy

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (CAS 1995; appendix 4). In the event, no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for the retrieval of environmental material.

2.5 The methods in retrospect

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

3. Topographical and archaeological context

The site comprises a sub-rectangular area of ground to the rear of St Helen's Church on the north side of Fish Street, to the west of High Street in the parish of St Andrew's in the centre of Worcester (NGR: SO 8498 5470; Fig 1). It is currently occupied by St Helen's School House with associated rough car parking, within the former churchyard. A modern warehouse lies to the west and commercial properties off Copenhagen Street lie to the north.

Geologically the area lies on the Second (Worcester) Terrace of the River Severn, dating from the Quaternary period, although centuries of occupation have radically altered the natural topography within the city (British Geological Survey, 1993). Unfortunately, no definitive statement may be made regarding the predominant soils on the site, as it is within an unsurveyed urban area (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

The site lies within the heart of the Roman settlement, the Anglo-Saxon burh and the medieval city (Carver 1980, Figs 1 and 4).

St Helen's Church is a Grade II* Listed Building (English Heritage LBS no. 488746). It is first referred to in a synod decree of 1092. However, this describes the church as having been a vicarage to the cathedral, since the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon See at Worcester in 680. On the basis of the dedication to St Helena (traditionally the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine and born near York), it has been argued that the church may have been the seat of a British bishop ministering to the Christian population in the early post-Roman period (WCM 96035; WCM 1998, vol 6, plate 3; Baker 1980, 33-4; Adams 2006, 1). Barker identified Roman ramparts to the north-west and postulated the siting of a gate at this point, which would tie in with an early church being located here (WCM 96554, 96555 and 100284; Baker 1980, Fig 10). An indication of the importance of St Helen's in the Anglo-Saxon period is the large size of its rural parish, which included Knightwick and Doddenham, Martley, Little Witley, Holt, Wichford and Kenswick in the west, Claines, Warndon, Hindlip, Oddingley, Huddington, Churchill, Whittington and White Ladies Aston to the east, and St John and St Peter the Great to the west and south of Worcester (Adams 2006, 1).

The present church building dates from the late medieval period and retains a 15th century arcade of six arches on either side. The tower was rebuilt in the 18th century (VCH IV, 408). The church also underwent a series of large-scale restorations through the 19th century, notably by Frederick Preedy between 1857-63 and Aston Webb in 1879. Inner city slum clearance in the 1930s caused the congregation to decline sharply, such that by 1938 there were no longer regular church services. The five parishes of St Helen's, St Alban's, St Michael's, St Andrew's and All Saints' were united into one and St Helen's church was designated as a Chapel-of-Ease to All Saints'. During WWII St Helen's was pressed into service as a military club and YMCA. The latter use continued until 1957, after which the County Record Office was housed there, until 2001. It has subsequently been in use for community events, and although no longer a parish church, it remains consecrated (WCM 92250 and 96035; Adams 2006, 2 and 3).

The churchyard of St Helen's is conjectured to have originally extended northwards and southwards, beyond its present boundaries. Although the burial register starts in 1556 (VCH IV, 408), the churchyard was only formally consecrated in May 1793. The last recorded interments was in 1853, and the graveyard was closed in 1856 by Order of Council, when it was deemed to be full, following the recommendations by George Clarke, Health Inspector for Worcester in his report to the General Board of Health in 1849 (Curtis nd). Thereafter burial of parishioners was made in Tallow Hill and the new Astwood Cemeteries. Unfortunately there is no surviving churchyard plan of the burial plots (pers comm Robin Whitaker, WCRO). The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888 denotes that portion to the north-west of the church still as graveyard. During the tenure of the County Record Office the majority was tarmaced over for use as car parking, with a drive and access off Fish Street (Adams 2006 3).

Late 18th century maps of the city denote the medieval parsonage or rectory house as a long narrow north-south aligned range, set back from the Fish Street frontage and extending north to the rear of the church. It was rebuilt in 1791, although had been demolished by 1889/90, when the present School House was erected (WCM 96036). The building is Grade II* listed, primarily on the basis of its association with the church, which is similarly listed. It is known as St Helen's School House or School Room after its function as a Sunday school, however it was originally named as St Helen's Church House. Built in typical late Victorian architectural style, it comprises a single-storey building, with a main hall, a smaller room adjoining and a later lean-to toilet extension on the north-west side (Adams 2006 3).

Fish Street was known as Corviser Street in the medieval period and was the area occupied by cordwainers or leather workers (WCM 96280; WCM 1998, vol. 11, plate 1). It originally ran west from the High Street to the junction with Palace Row, Little Fish Street and Warmstry Slip, where St Alban's church is situated (WCM 96031 and 96302). In the 1990s Fish Street was bisected by the new Deansway road (WCM 96322), at the site of the medieval timber-framed Fishmongers' Hall, which was itself demolished in 1905 (WCM 1998, vol. 11, plate 1).

No archaeological investigations have been undertaken within the site itself, although a number have been conducted in the immediate vicinity along Fish Street and south of St Helen's church itself.

At 15/19, Fish Street to the south-west, a watching brief during development revealed 18th-19th century and medieval structural remains associated with surfaces and made ground deposits, an organic layer of probable 12th century date overlying a stone surface and a deposit containing Roman pottery and slag at a depth of *c* 4.3m below the present ground surface (WCM 100877; Miller et al 2002).

In 2001 a watching brief during resurfacing works along Fish Street identified truncated medieval occupation deposits immediately below the modern surface on the south side of the churchyard entrance, comprising a clay floor cut by a posthole which contained building debris; over a sequence of soil layers containing 14th-15th century pottery particularly cooking pot sherds toward the base of the horizon. The earliest identified context contained 12th-14th century pottery and glazed roof tiles. These layers were considered to be associated with the medieval rectory and probably represented the deposition of domestic waste (WCM 100820).

In 1987 a vault is reported to have been observed to the south-west of the church tower, although no further information was recorded regarding the circumstances of its discovery, its location or subsequent treatment (WCM 10083). An even more ambiguous record is of a 'deep hole' having been revealed during a watching brief of works to the south-west of the church porch in the 1990s, again about which no further information is known (WCM 100804).

4. Results

4.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figs 2-4. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Phase 1 Natural deposits

The natural matrix was not identified at any stage. The maximum depth of the ground disturbance associated with the development was 1.00-1.15m within Area 3-5; although the majority did not exceed 0.50m below the existing ground surface.

A possible disturbed subsoil, 310, was recorded within the existing School House building at a depth of 0.66m (Pit 3; Plate 7). It comprised a dark brown silty sand, with occasional mortar flecks. It was not part of a soil sequence, but was overlain by a post-medieval dump deposit 309.

A further subsoil, 504, was recorded at 0.55m depth, within the south-east end of Trench 5. It comprised a dark grey sandy silt with frequent large brick and tile frags, overlain by a mixed soil with construction debris, 502.

The topsoil deposits across the site generally were found to be heavily disturbed, overlying and/or containing frequent brick, tile and other post-medieval construction debris.

4.1.2 Phase 2 Medieval deposits

The subsoil 310, at a depth of 0.66m+ below the School House (Pit 3; Plate 7) contained medieval pottery and tile fragments, although an 18th century brick was also recovered. It lay below a dump deposit, 309, containing 16th-19th/20th century material, and was cut by a 19th century posthole, 311.

Layer 406, from 0.68m+ below the School House floor (Pit 4; Plate 8) may equate with subsoil 310 as described above, although it contained material of late 15th-18th century date. A number of rough-hewn stone blocks and fragments, 407, were recorded at a depth of >0.75m + within this layer, along with a carved mullion fragment (Area 4). This was considered to be a loose dump of stone rather than a structural feature.

Subsoil 504, toward the south-east side of the former churchyard (Trench 5), similarly contained a few medieval pottery and tile fragments, although along with late medieval or post-medieval tile fragments.

It is unclear if the medieval material within these layers is in fact residual, or if the post-medieval material is intrusive.

A single sherd of residual medieval pottery was recovered from the shallow mixed soil deposit 502 within the former churchyard (Trench 5).

4.1.3 **Phase 3 Post-medieval and modern deposits**

The general deposit identified across the former churchyard (100, 106, 502, 601, 701, 903, 1000, 1100 and 1200; Plates 1, 4, 9-12) comprised a mixed greyish/orangey brown sandy silt with variable proportions of brick and tile debris, frequently cut through for previous services. In places this was observed to a depth greater than 0.90m below the existing surface. It sealed the following notable structures and deposits:

The north edge of a tile structure, 1101, was observed to the south-east of School House entrance (Pit 11C; Plate 23). It comprised red roof tiles and a few thin green sandstone blocks laid on edge. It is interpreted to be a hearth or the edge of a floor. Unfortunately it was not identified during subsequent trenching across the same area (Trench 5), nor were deep excavations undertaken to the south where it appeared to continue.

Two other areas of laid tiles, 103 and 104, were recorded south of the church (Trench 1; Plate 2 & 3). Both comprised 19th century roof tiles (pers comm Angus Crawford), laid flat along with brick and/or sandstone, at a depth of approximately 0.45m. Neither was further excavated. They may represent simple deposition of demolition debris, or deliberate structures, such as drainage covers or scaffold pads.

A sandstone wall or foundation, 901, was recorded to the south-west of the church tower (Area 9; Plate 21), comprised of rough flat green sandstone blocks bedded in a cream-white sandy lime mortar. Although its exact location and depth was unrecorded (pers comm Adam Lee), it appears to be aligned approximately WNW/ESE and may be associated with mortar layer, 1102, recorded at the north-east corner of the School House (Pit 11D; Plate 24). This latter appeared to continue under the present building to the south and comprised a layer of yellowish cream lime mortar at a depth of 0.45m. It is unclear if it overlay stone coursing below.

The upper foundations for the church were recorded toward the corner of the nave and tower (Area 7). Below the west wall of the nave this comprised a course of red sandstone, 703, stepped out some 0.85m from main wall at a depth of 0.30m. Below the south wall of the west tower it comprised three courses of green and yellow sandstone blocks, 702, stepped out 0.50m from the main wall, 0.30-0.65m below the present surface, over a thin band of silty sand, 706 (Area 7; Plate 13). The foundations on the west side of the tower stepped out twice, 0.15m and 0.09m respectively, and comprised red sandstone blocks as in the main wall above (Area 9; Plates 19 & 20).

Three courses of a red sandstone wall or foundation, 707 and 1001, were recorded adjacent to the existing south-east boundary of the churchyard at a depth of c 0.40-0.80m (Trenches 7 & 10; Plate 22). They appear to represent an earlier wall, either wider than, or recessed from the existing brick wall.

2½” bricks, 107, dating to c 1650-1784 (pers comm Angus Crawford) were identified within the foundations for the west wall of School House, alongside the existing west boundary wall (Area 2; Plate 5).

A brick structure, 408, with an associated void, 409 (Pit 4; Plate 8), was observed within the existing School House building adjacent to the stone 407. It comprised at least seven courses of un-frogged handmade bricks (c 1650-1784) laid without mortar, at a depth of c 0.50-0.90m below the existing surface, cut into a mixed clayey sand deposit, 406, of late 15th-18th century date.

Two adjacent brick burial vaults, 806 and 900, were observed, butting the west wall of St Helen’s church tower (Areas 8 and 9). Neither was fully excavated or investigated. Both had shallow vaulted brick roofs, springing from brick walls, aligned east-west. To the north, 806, was a single occupancy structure, with rough mortared access in the west end. It contained a quantity of soil, which appeared to have fallen in following damage to the south side of the vault (Plates 15-18). To the south, 900, was double width. It had been previously cut through and entirely filled with gravel during excavation for a service pipe in the last decades of the 20th century. This latter may be the same vault as that exposed in 1987 (WCM 10083). It appears to have been disturbed during excavation of a service trench across the former churchyard to a brick boiler house to the rear of the church. No coffin remains or human bone was identified associated with either vault (Plates 19-20).

A posthole, 311, was recorded below the floor of the existing School House (Pit 3; Plate 7). It was sealed by a levelling layer, 301, of 19th century brick and tile fragments; and cut through layers containing 16th-19th/20th century debris (302-309). Although intrinsically undated, from the stratigraphy it is interpreted to be of 19th century date, and may represent activity related to the construction of the School House in 1890.

4.2 Artefact analysis, by Dennis Williams

4.2.1 Analysis

A small assemblage consisting of 75 artefacts, with a total weight of 13,732g, was retrieved from the site. The assemblage spanned the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods, and is summarised in Tables 1 and 2. The finds were spot dated and used to provide a *terminus post quem* for each stratified deposit, wherever possible.

Material	Total	Weight (g)
Bone	20	238
Glass	2	108
Brick	3	7794
Clay pipe	4	8
Drain pipe (modern)	1	105
Iron	2	108
Mortar	4	75
Medieval pottery	3	127
Post-medieval pottery	6	259
Modern pottery	9	62
Oyster shell	3	16
Stone	3	2533
Roof tile	15	2299

Table 1: Quantification of the assemblage.

The pottery group comprised 18 sherds, weighing 448g. These accounted for 25% of the assemblage by count, but only 3% by weight. Preservation of the sherds was generally good

for all types of fabric, with very little abrasion, and few signs of surface degradation, apart from loss of glaze from a strap handle found in context 504. This item is from a medieval, oxidised glazed Malvernian ware vessel (fabric 69), probably a jug dating from the 14th-15th centuries. Only two other medieval sherds were found; these were both from the body of a Worcester-type, unglazed vessel (fabric 55; context 310), with external blackening as evidence of its use as a cooking pot

Post-medieval pottery was confined to buff and red wares. The former (91) comprised a single sherd from context 502. This bore a combed decoration, and was probably from an 18th century bowl. A red ware (78) sherd from the same context had a trailed white slip decoration, under a pale brown glaze. This dated from the 17th-18th centuries. The three other red ware sherds dated from the 17th century, but were from an unstratified deposit. Their fabrics were closely matched, with very dark brown glazes, but came from at least two different vessels, one of which was a tyg, as demonstrated by its distinctive base, with one of its two handles still attached.

In context 502, there was 18th century pottery, consisting of a single tin-glazed ware (82) sherd, as well as creamware (84) with applied decoration, which dated from the late 18th century. Modern pottery in context 502 took the form of stone china (85) dating from the 19th or 20th centuries, and included the base of a willow pattern dish. Contexts 305 and 803 also contained small stone china sherds, with blue decoration on white. One of these (in context 305) had hand painted decoration, on a raised, concentric pattern, possibly from a flower holder.

Fragments of roof tiles were recovered from contexts 310, 406, 502 and 504, and all were of either medieval or post-medieval origin. These exhibited a range of sandy fabrics, which are known to have been produced in the Worcester area during the 13th-15th centuries. The examples from contexts 310 and 502 corresponded to medieval common sandy (2a) and coarse sandy (2b) fabrics, respectively. The fragment found in the former context bore traces of a pale green glaze on its upper surface. Context 504 yielded sherds with the 2b fabric, and also of the grog/pellet sandy type (2c), which was produced during a later and wider date range (late 15th-18th centuries). The latter tile fabric was also found in context 406.

Other ceramic building materials consisted of three brick samples. A part-brick from context 805 was hand made and slightly more than 3" thick, without a frog. This would probably have been manufactured after the advent of the Brick Tax in 1784, but before *c* 1850. The other two part-bricks, from contexts 310 and 408, were shallower, also without frogs, but with very uneven dimensions. One had unusually large (up to 20mm) gravel inclusions. The average thickness of these bricks was approximately 2³/₈", which is consistent with these being manufactured after *c* 1650 and before 1784.

The iron nails and clay pipe stems were undiagnostic, as were the two glass finds, one of which (a bottle neck) was recovered from an unstratified context. The mammal bones found at the site included those of cattle. Of the stone finds, two were greenish-grey pieces of sandstone, with no signs of careful working. However, the remaining stone find was masonry worthy of note. This was a large piece of carved Oolitic limestone from context 407, which had maximum dimensions of approximately 200 x 150mm, and took the form of a section of chamfered moulding, with the remains of integral, angled flanges. It is blackened on the external faces.

Fabric No.	Fabric name	Total	Weight (g)
55	Worcester-type sandy unglazed ware	2	28
69	Oxidized glazed Malvernian ware	1	99
78	Post-medieval red wares	4	252
82	Tin-glazed ware	1	1
84	Cream ware	4	18
85	Modern stone china	4	30
91	Post-medieval buff wares	1	6

Table 2: Quantification of the pottery by fabric type

4.2.2 Discussion

The earliest datable material is Worcester-type ware, produced from the late 11th to early 14th centuries, and found in context 310. However, it was noted that this context also contained later medieval tile fragments, and brick that was probably post-medieval but pre-‘Brick Tax’, thus indicating a *terminus post quem* of late 18th century.

The effect of residuality in the assemblage was also demonstrated by context 502, which was the context that yielded the largest number of finds. In this instance, the earliest dating evidence was provided by the local, coarse sandy type tile fabric, and the latest by modern stone china, suggesting a *terminus post quem* as late as the 20th century.

5. Synthesis and discussion, by Tom Vaughan and Dennis Williams

As anticipated from the site’s location, the finds, albeit forming a limited assemblage, indicate occupation and use from the medieval period onward. However, the usefulness of individual finds in providing dating evidence has been compromised, as might be expected for an urban site, by the residual nature of many, if not all, of these artefacts.

The deposits of probable medieval subsoil (Pits 3 and 4 below the School House floor; and Trench 5 along the south-east boundary of the site) lay at a depth of approximately 0.55-0.65m+ below the existing ground surface. They lay to a depth of 1m+ and at no point were earlier remains identified; neither Roman or Anglo-Saxon defences, nor the undisturbed, natural matrix.

The carved stone mullion fragment found in association with a dump of stone (from Pit 4 within the existing School House), is potentially significant, since its careful shaping indicates that it came from a substantial building, probably medieval, of some status. The smoke blackening on the external surfaces indicates that it was part of a building when it suffered fire damage. No other finds were recovered from this dump deposit, and all that can be said is that it was sealed by a soil layer containing 15th-18th century material. It *may* be conjectured to derive from the medieval rectory that stood on the site until the construction of the School House, or from St Helen’s church itself, which largely dates from the 15th century. Although there are no recorded incidences of its having been damaged by fire, it has undergone substantial alteration and restoration from the 18th century onwards.

Three structural features were identified toward the north side of the site, between the School House and St Helen’s church: a stonewall or foundation aligned approximately west-north-west to east-south-east (Area 9); a tile floor or hearth (Pit 11C); and a mortar layer (Pit 11D); along with an unmortared brick base below the School House itself (Pit 4). They may

comprise part of the medieval rectory building, which was rebuilt in 1791 and stood on the site of, and extended to the north of, the existing School House, built in 1890. However the constraints of the project did not allow for further examination or excavation of these features, so their exact date and function remains unclear.

By 1849 St Helen's churchyard was described as full, and all burial here had ceased by 1853. However, no inhumations were identified at any stage within the general mixed soils across the former churchyard, even though a number of the interventions observed ran to 80m and 1m depth. Those few disarticulated bones that were uncovered, were retained on site and reinterred.

As there is no surviving map of the burial plots, the exact dates of the two vaults exposed to the west of the church tower (Areas 8 and 9) are unknown, as are the details of the interments within them. All that can be said is that the bricks used in their construction date from the late 18th to mid 19th century. At no point was coffin furniture or any bones identified. The southern vault appears to be that noted as exposed during groundworks in 1987 (WCM 10083).

5.1 Research frameworks

Unfortunately, as the majority of the groundworks comprised narrow and shallow service trenches, coupled with only minor landscaping across the former churchyard, no archaeological deposits, structures, features or finds were identified which have the potential to address any of the research priorities, as identified in the Urban archaeological database; particularly the potential early Anglo-Saxon origins of St Helen's church (RP 4.3), the Anglo-Saxon defensive circuit (RP 4.12) and the nature of medieval burial grounds (RP 5.3) (WCM 2007; Section 1.3 above).

6. Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken on behalf of Adult and Community Services - Social Care, Worcestershire County Council, at St Helen's School House, Fish Street, Worcester (NGR SO 8498 5470; HER ref. WCM 101510) during groundworks associated with redevelopment of the existing building.

A number of medieval subsoil layers were recorded below the existing School House and toward the south-east boundary of the former churchyard. At no point were earlier deposits identified; neither Roman or Anglo-Saxon defences, nor the undisturbed, natural matrix. A stone dump, of possible late medieval date, was identified below the floor of the existing building. This contained a burnt fragment of carved limestone mullion. The pattern of burning indicates that it was part of a wall when it suffered fire damage. An unmortared brick base (predating 1784) was observed adjacent. Three further structural features were recorded between the School House and St Helen's church: a stonewall or foundation, a tile floor or hearth and a mortar layer. They may comprise part of the medieval rectory, which was itself rebuilt in 1791, and lay on the site of, and extended north of, the School House.

No inhumations were identified and those few disarticulated bones uncovered were retained on site and reinterred. Two late 18th-mid 19th century brick vaults were uncovered to the west of the church tower. Following on site discussions, neither was excavated or investigated. The first, a single occupancy vault, was left largely intact and was simply rafted over; the second, a double-size vault, had been disturbed previously, probably in 1987, when it had been backfilled with gravel.

Unfortunately the majority of the groundworks comprised narrow and shallow service trenches, coupled with only minor landscaping across the former churchyard. Thus no archaeological deposits, structures, features or finds were identified which have the potential to address any of the research priorities identified in the urban archaeological database.

7. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Bridget Kealy (Team Leader - Accommodation and Resources, Adult and Community Services – Social Care, Worcestershire County Council), Stuart Whiting (Boughton Butler LLP), Chris Haywood and Keith Greenaway (VA Williams), John Vaughan (Property Services, Worcestershire County Council) James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City Museum Archaeology Service, Worcester City Council), Chris Guy (Worcester Cathedral Archaeologist), John Dentith (Worcester DAC Secretary) and Rosemary Adams (St Helens Parish Officer).

8. **Personnel**

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Angus Crawford, Stephen Potten, Christine Elgy, Tegan Cole and Adam Lee, finds analysis by Dennis Williams and illustration by Carolyn Hunt.

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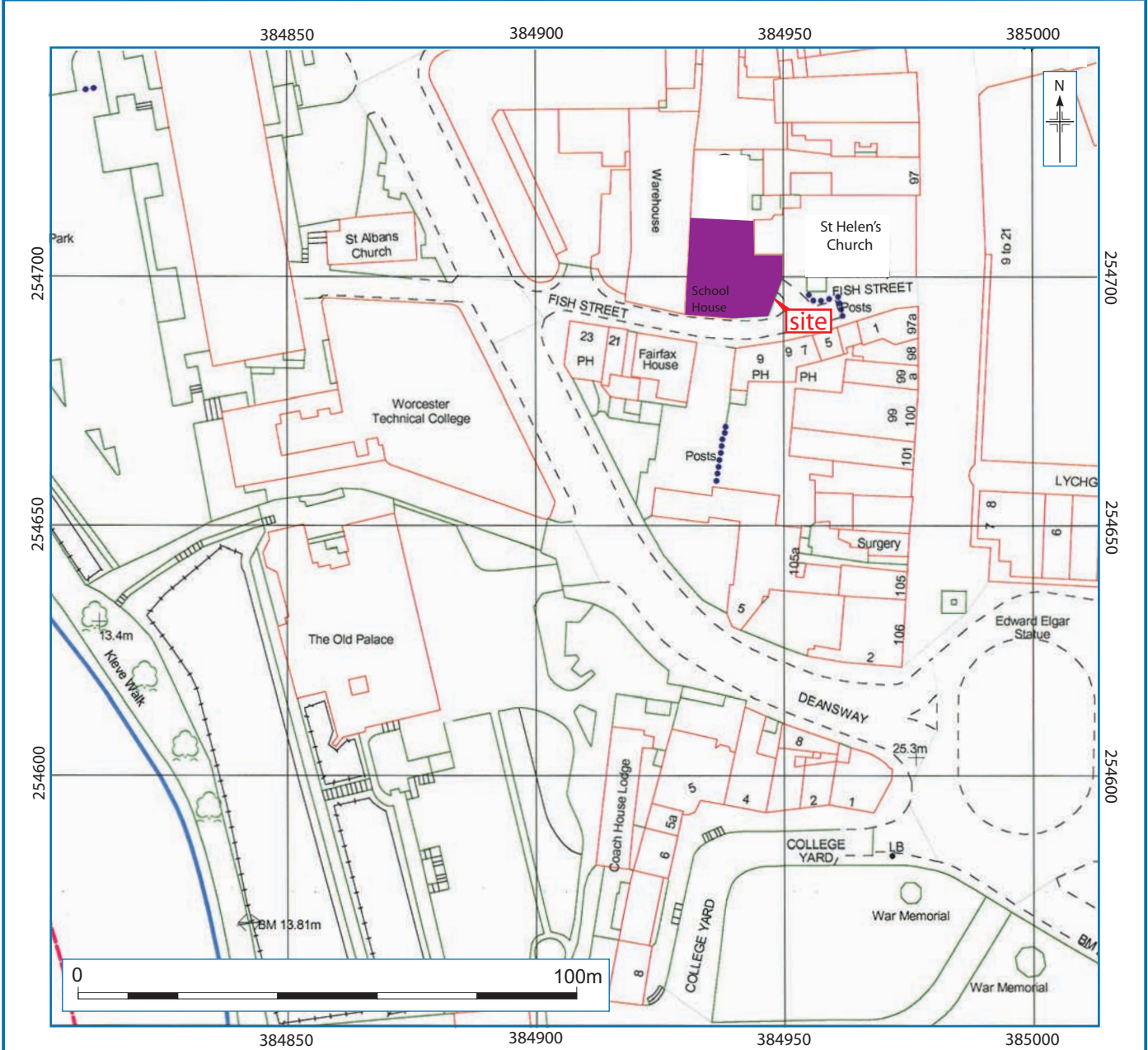
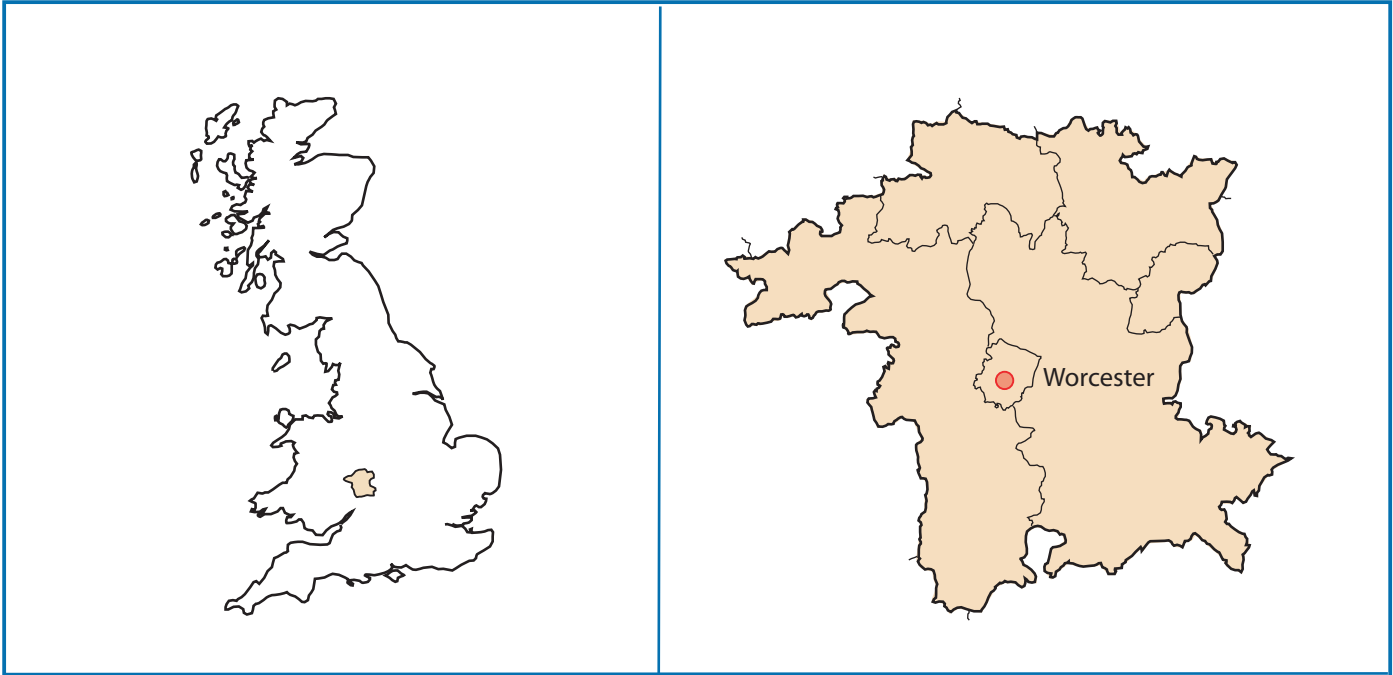
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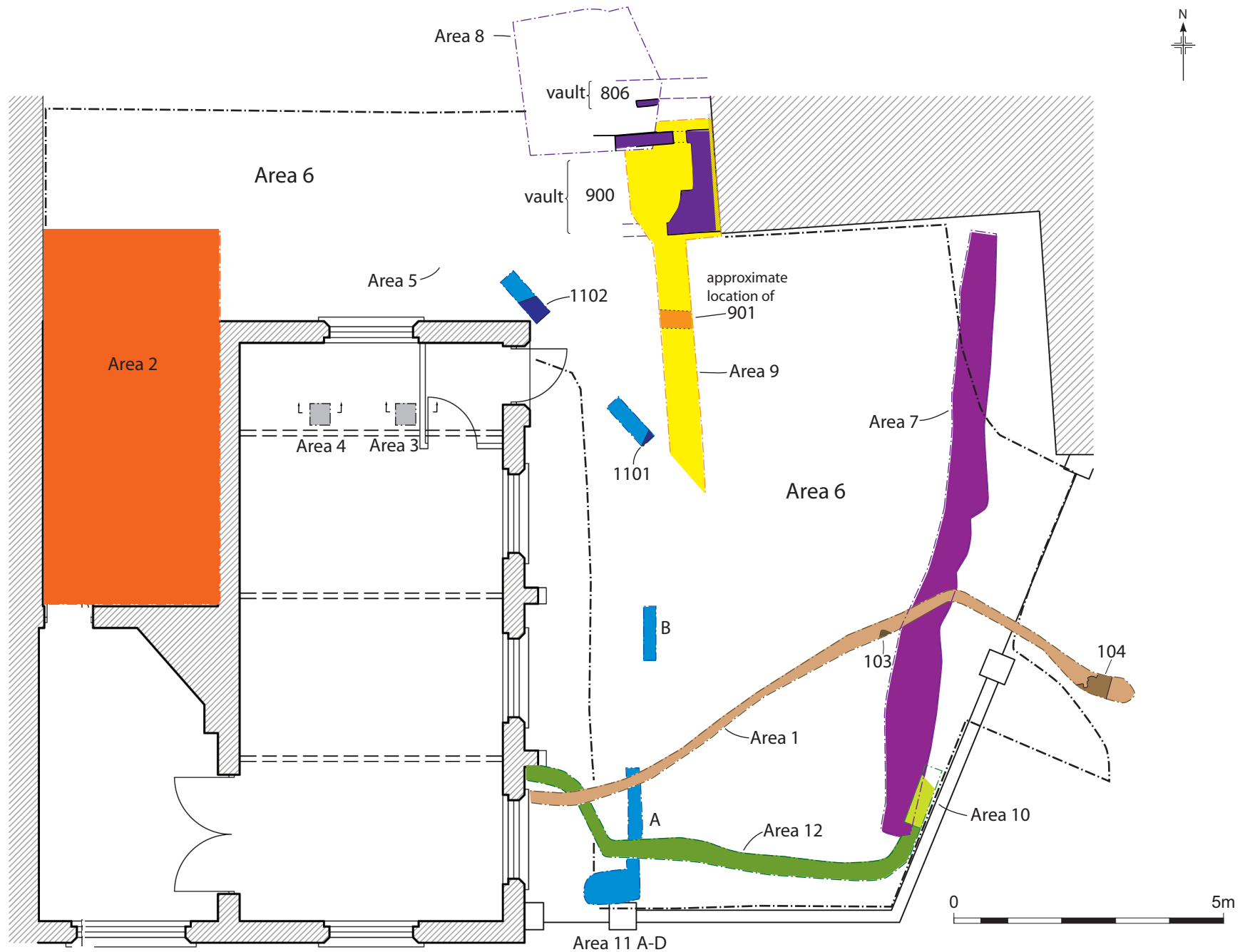
Figures



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Location of the site.

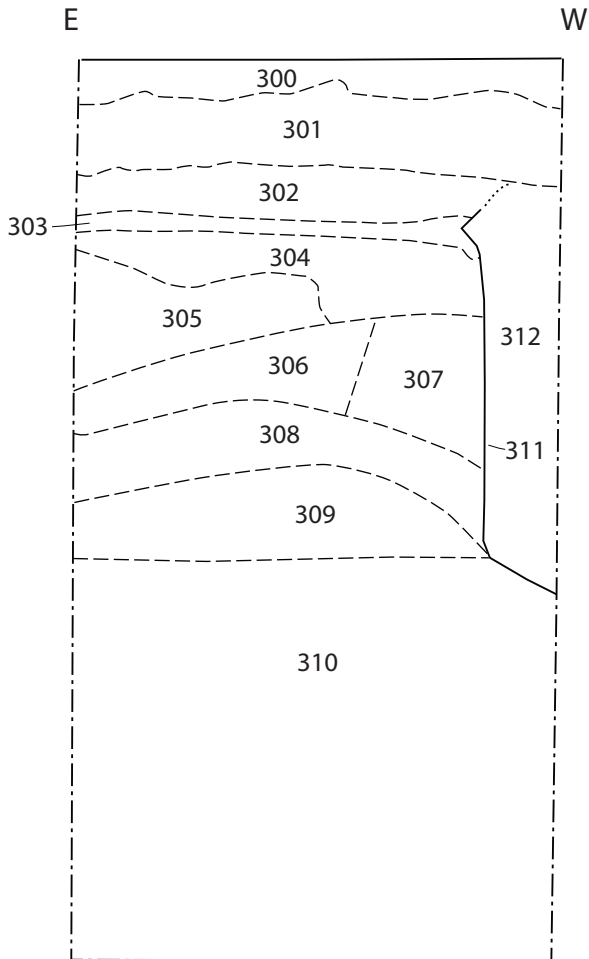
Figure 1



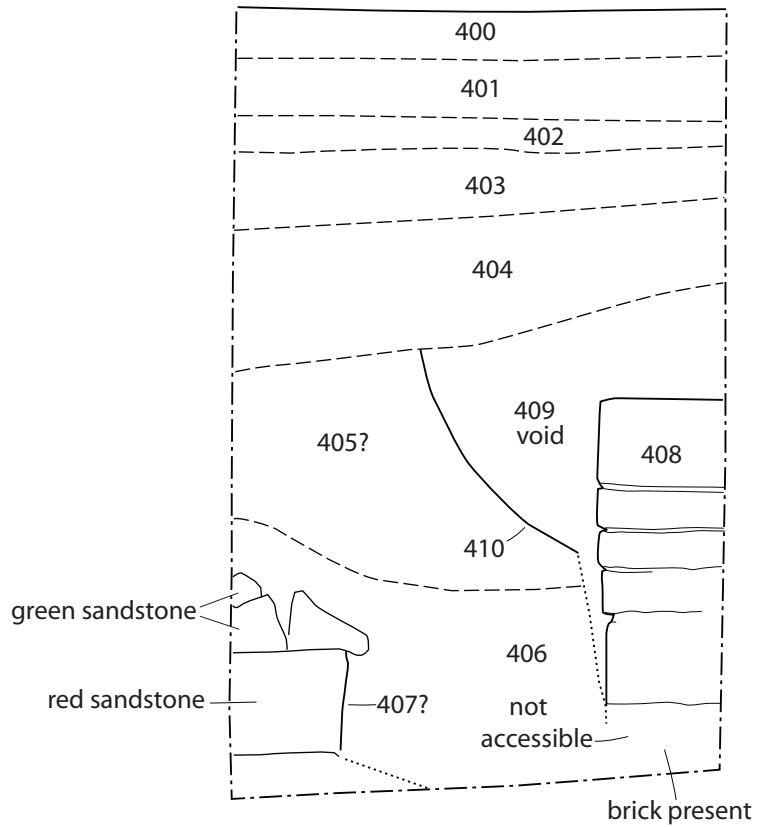
Area locations

Figure 2

TRENCH 3: SECTION



TRENCH 4: SECTION

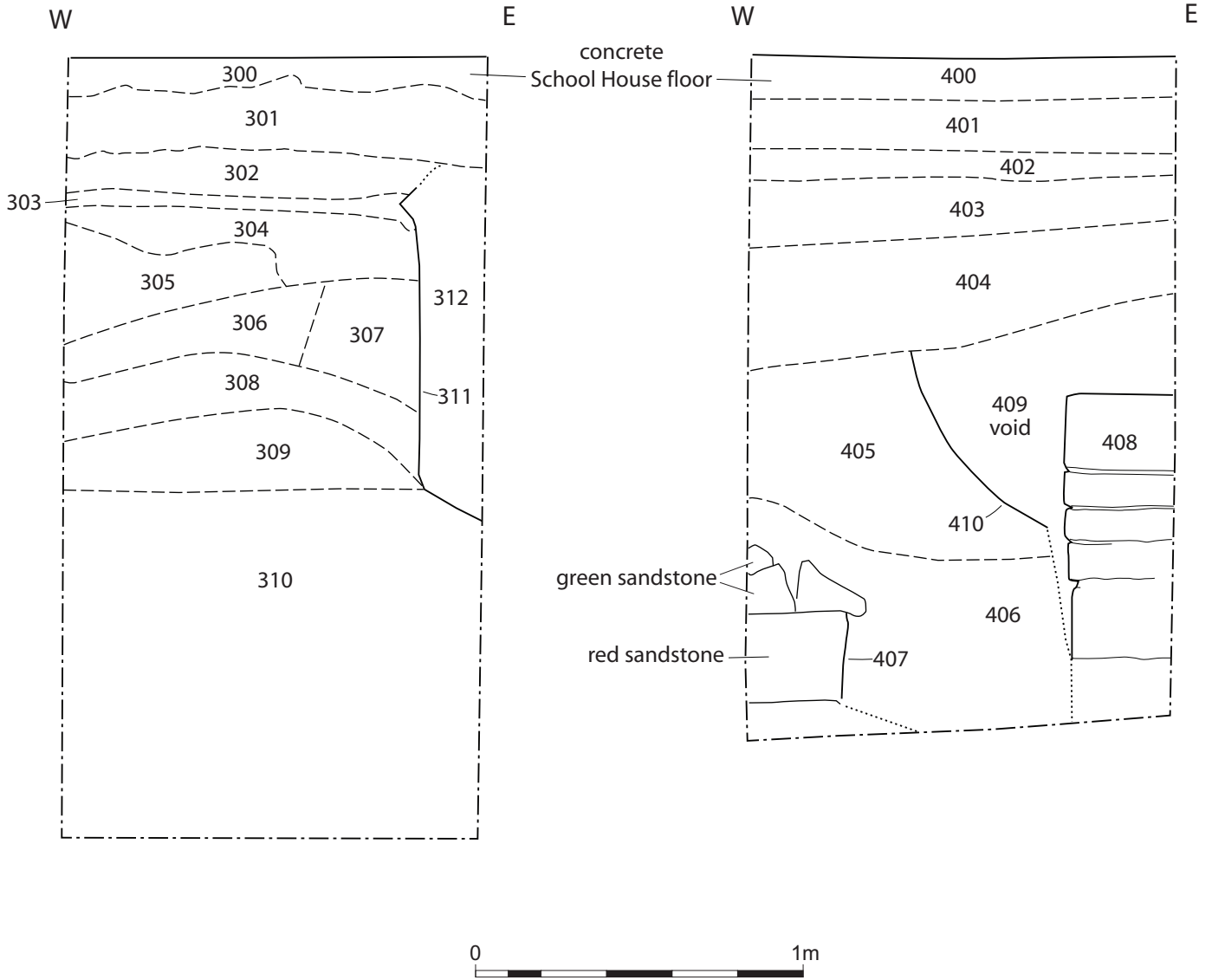


Trenches 3 and 4, sections

Figure 3

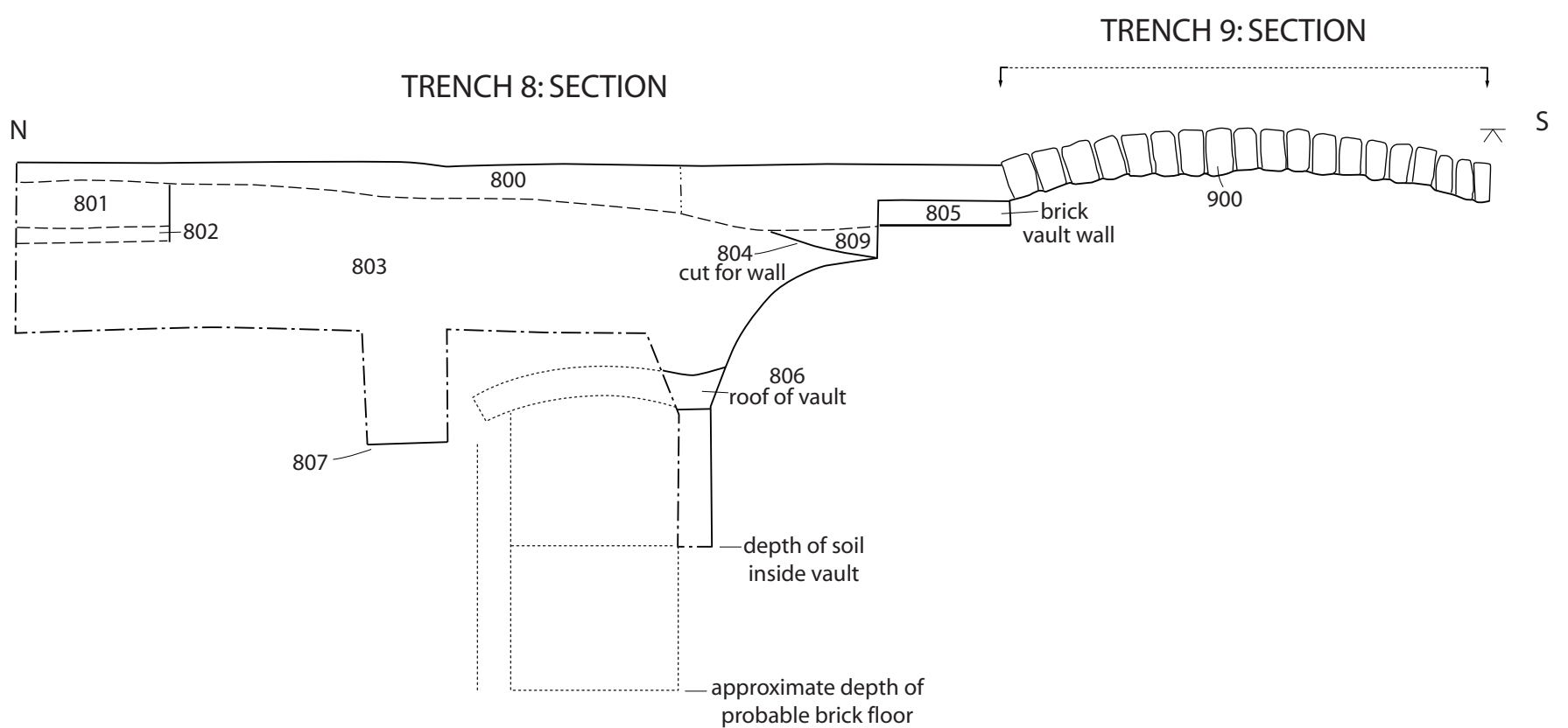
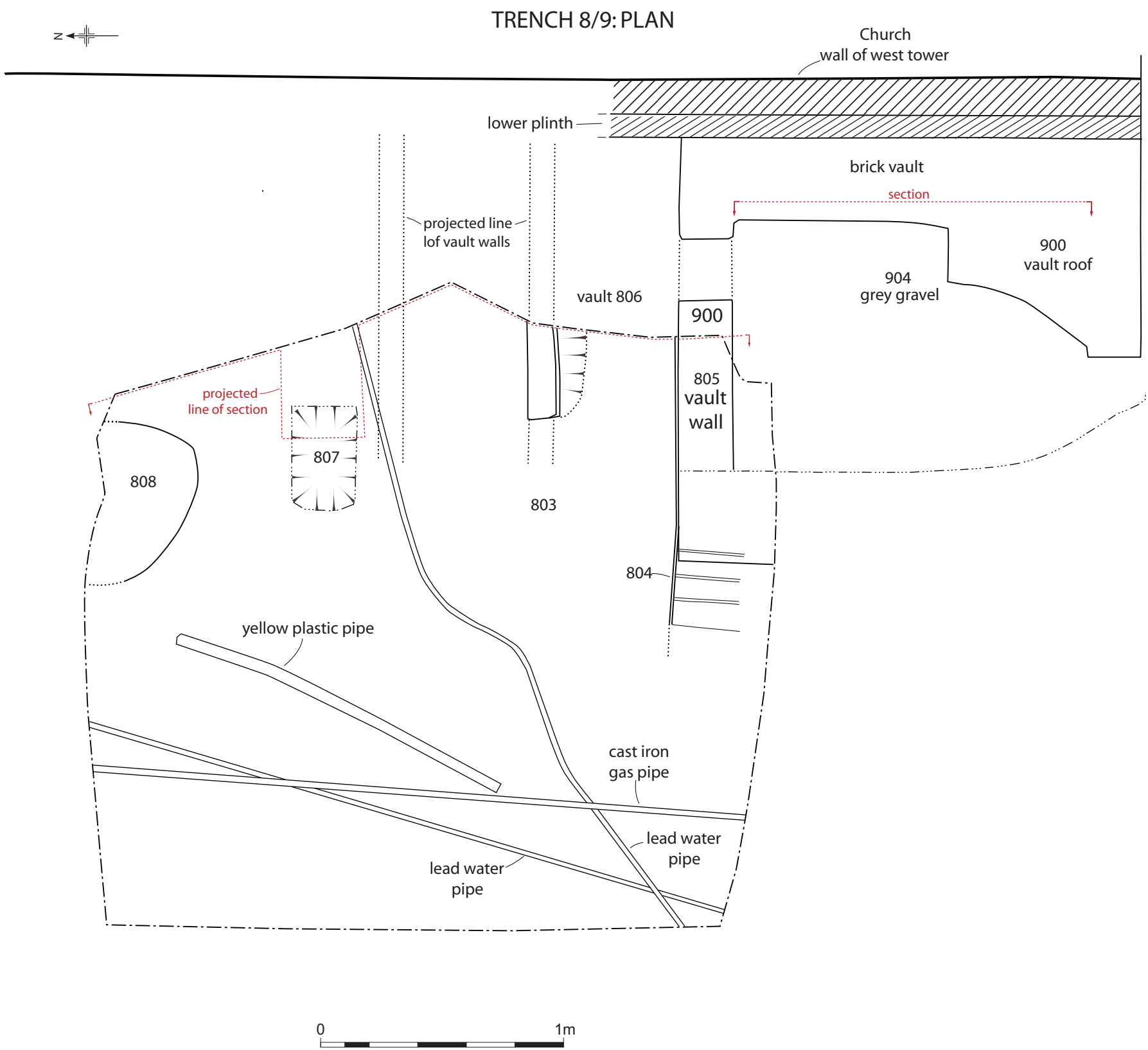
TRENCH 3: SECTION

TRENCH 4: SECTION



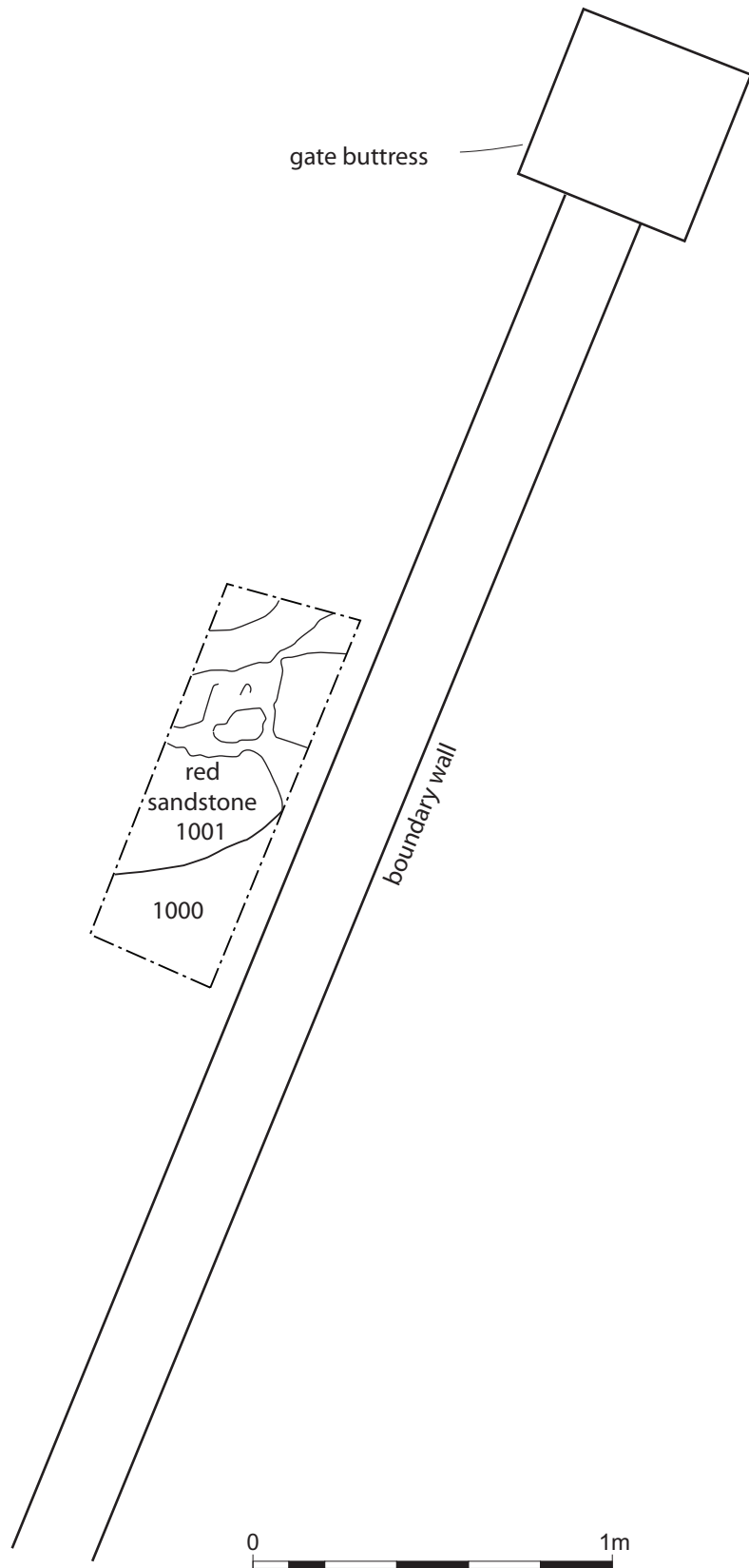
Trenches 3 and 4, sections

Figure 3



Trenches 8 and 9: plans and sections

Figure 4



Plan of Trench 10

Figure 5

Plates



Plate 1, Area 1: trench excavation in progress; view south-west



Plate 2, Area 1: roof tiles, 103; view north-east



Plate 3, Area 1: brick and roof tiles, 104, in east end of trench, view west



Plate 4, Area 2: Mixed soil and building debris, 106; view south



Plate 5, Area 2: Brick wall, 107, along west boundary below former School House lean-to, view south



Plate 6, Location of Areas 3 and 4, view north



Plate 7, Area 3: north section, view north



Plate 8, Area 4: brick wall, 408, in north section, view north



Plate 9, Area 5: General view of trench, view north-west



Plate 10, Area 6: north extent of reduced area, view south-east



Plate 11, Area 6: reduced area in front of School House, view south



Plate 12, Area 6: reduced area along southern boundary, view east



Plate 13, Area 7: sandstone foundation, 702, for south wall of church west tower, view north



Plate 14, Area 7: work in progress, view north



Plate 15, Area 8: location of north brick vault, 806, as first disturbed, view east



Plate 16, Area 8: general view over north brick vault, 806; brick wall 805 to south, view south-east



Plate 17, Area 8: south wall of north brick vault, 806, as broken through, view south-east



Plate 18, Area 8: brick vault, 806, interior, west end with rough mortared access



Plate 19, Area 9: south brick vault, 900, as exposed, view north



Plate 20, Area 9: south brick vault, 900, as excavated for service pipe, view east



Plate 21, Area 9: Sandstone wall foundation, 901, associated with 1102?, view west



Plate 22, Area 10: Sandstone wall foundation 1001, same as 707?, view north-east



Plate 23, Area 11 C: Tile hearth 1101, view south-east



Plate 24, Area 11 D: Mortar layer 1102, associated with 901?, view south-east



Plate 25, Area 12: General view of trench, view west

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Area 1

Site area: Telecomm cable trench across churchyard

Maximum dimensions: Length: 12.60m Width: 0.20-0.50m Depth: 0.40-0.50m

Orientation: approx east-west

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Mixed soil & dump deposit	Dark brown loam (?), compact surface but friable below; occasional red roof tile frags and pebbles. Within driveway lies below 102; overlies 103 and 104. Same as 502, 601, 701, 903, 1000, 1100 and 1200?	0.0-0.40m +
101	Modern surface	Tarmac driveway surface of access. Seals 102 below.	0.00-0.03m
102	Hardcore	Cotswold gravel bedding for driveway surface. Sealed by 101 above; seals 100 below.	0.03-0.30m
103	Brick and roof tile	Two red roof tiles laid flat and butting brick adjacent. Below (within?) 100. Unclear if deliberate structure or dumped debris. Victorian.	0.45m +
104	Roof tiles	Two adjacent red roof tiles laid flat along with blue/green and red sandstone frags. Below (within?) 100. Victorian debris dumped during church restoration?	0.45m +

Area 2

Site area: reduced level dig below former St Helen's School House lean-to

Maximum dimensions: Length: 5.60m Width: 3.2m Depth: 0.70-0.80m

Orientation: north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
105	Pavier floor surface	Dark blue/black brick paviors; 26x12.75x5cm; bedded in light fawn/brown sandy Portland cement without inclusions.	0.00-0.05m
106	Mixed soil and dump deposit	Mixed deposit: mid greyish brown sandy loam with black/brown sandy silt & hard off-white mortar frags, occasional orangey red brick frags. Cut by frequent modern services: brick manhole, lead water pipe, ceramic drainage and footing for school house wall to east. Same as 100?	0.05->0.65m
107	Brick wall / foundation	Bricks within School House west wall alongside west boundary of churchyard; 2½" (1650-1784). Part of or reclaimed from parson's house?	N/a

Area 3

Site area: Interior foundation pit (east)

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.82m Width: 0.64m Depth: 1.15m

Orientation: approx north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Floor surface	Concrete floor surface. Victorian. Overlies 301.	0.0-0.07m
301	Hardcore	Brick and roof tile frags. Victorian. Below 300. Overlies 302 and 312.	0.03-0.17m
302	Make up layer	Light greyish brown sandy silt. Occasional small rectangular stone. Below 301. Overlies 303 and 312. Construction layer for school house?	0.14-0.22m
303	Layer/floor?	Lime mortar. Sealed by 302. Overlies 304. Cut by 311. Floor surface for previous building? Post-medieval.	0.21-0.27m
304	Levelling layer	Mid brown clayey silt. Frequent lime mortar frags. Levelling for 303 above. Overlies 305, 306 & 307. Cut by 311. Post-medieval.	0.23-0.35m
305	Dump deposit	Mid to dark brown sandy silt with frequent ash, charcoal and mortar flecks. Below 304. Overlies 306. Post-medieval?	0.26-0.44m
306	Dump deposit	Mid brown silty sand with occasional charcoal and mortar flecks. Below 304 & 305. Overlies 308. Same as 307?	0.34-0.51m
307	Dump deposit	Light brown silty sand with frequent brick & tile frags & occasional small sub-rounded pebbles. Below 304. Overlies 308. Cut by 311. Same as 306?	0.324-0.54m
308	Dump deposit	Light to mid brown silty sand with frequent charcoal frags and rounded mortar lumps, occasional small brick and tile frags. Below 306 and 307. Overlies 309. Cut by 311.	0.45-0.66m
309	Dump deposit	Light greyish brown sandy silt with frequent lime mortar frags. Below 308. Overlies 310.	0.53-0.66m
310	Subsoil?	Dark brown silty sand with very occasional mortar flecks and a brick (c 1650-1785). Sealed by 309. Cut by 311. Late medieval ground surface?	0.66m +
311	Posthole?	Vertical sided cut, straight to sloping base. Diameter unknown. Filled by 312. Cuts 303, 304, 307, 308 & 310. Sealed by 301 & 302. Cut for scaffold pole during construction of Victorian school house?	0.17-0.71m
312	Fill	Dark brown fine to medium sand with frequent mortar flecks and brick frags. Compact. Single fill of 311.	0.17-0.71m

Area 4

Site area: Interior foundation pit (west)

Maximum dimensions: Length: 0.80m Width: 0.67m Depth: 1.05m

Orientation: approx north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Floor surface	Concrete floor surface. Victorian. Overlies 401.	0.0-0.07m
401	Hardcore	Brick and roof tile frags. Below 400. Overlies 402.	0.06-0.15m
402	Levelling layer	Sandy lime mortar. Compact. Below 401. Overlies 403.	0.14-0.19m
403	Dump deposit	Dark brown clayey silt? Frequent mortar flecks; occasional brick and tile frags. Compact. Below 402. Overlies 404.	0.13-0.30m
404	Dump deposit	Mid-dark brown clayey silt. Frequent mortar flecks and brick & tile frags. Below 403. Overlies 405 and 409.	0.25-0.49m
405	Dump deposit	Dark brown silty sand. Medium mortar, brick and tile frags. Occasional charcoal. Compact. Cut by 410? Below 404. Overlies 406.	0.45-0.77m
406	Dump deposit	Mid brown clayey sand. Loose. Below 405. Cut by 410? Overlies 407.	0.68-1.05m +
407	Sandstone	Mixed red and green frags and larger blocks. Not structural; a dump? Includes Oolitic limestone carved mullion fragment. Below 406.	0.75m-1.05m +
408	Brick structure	Unmortared brick foundation. Light pinkish red bricks 5-6x12x23cm (2-2½"x4¾"x9¼"), c 1650-1784. Within possible cut 410.	0.51-c 0.92m
409	Void	Void. Within possible foundation cut for 408. Below 409. Overlies 408.	0.36-c 0.92m
410	Cut	Possible foundation trench for 408. Sharp break of slope and curving upper side with step; then sheer slope to unrecorded base. Contains 408 and void 409.	0.44-c 0.92m

Area 5

Site area: Water pipe trench across former churchyard

Maximum dimensions: Length: 16.70m Width: 0.30-0.50m Depth: 0.60-1.00m

Orientation: east-west and north-west to south-east

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
500	Tarmac surface & hardcore	Black tarmac to 0.05m bgs; over grey & yellow gravel hardcore. Overlies 501. In northern half of trench only. Same as 600.	0.00-0.15m
501	Dump deposit	Dark brown sandy silt with very frequent brick, tile frags, slate, sandstone and mortar. Below 500. Overlies 502. In northern half of trench only.	0.15-0.35m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
502	Mixed soil & dump deposit	Dark brown sandy silt with moderate brick, tile, sandstone frags. (Occasional bone retained on site). Compact. Below 501 and 503. Overlies 504 to southern end of trench. Same as 100, 601, 701, 903, 1000, 1100 and 1200?	0.10->0.90m +
503	Modern soil	Mid red brown sandy silt. Overlies 502. Same as 501? Within all but northern third of trench.	0.00-0.10m
504	Subsoil?	Dark grey brown sandy silt with frequent large brick and tile frags. Below 502. In southern end of trench only.	0.55m +

Area 6

Site area: Ground reduction across former churchyard

Maximum dimensions: Length: c 15m Width: c 14m Depth: 0.20-0.40m

Orientation: north-south and east-west

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
600	Tarmac surface & hardcore	Black tarmac; over fine dark grey gravel hardcore. Overlies 601. In northern part of area only. Same as 500.	0.00-c 0.20m
601	Mixed soil & dump deposit	Dark greyish brown sandy silt with frequent red brick and yellowish white mortar frags, occasional small brownish red sandstone and small charcoal frags, occasional small sub-rounded pebbles, patches of brownish red sand (infill of Trenches 1 and 5). Very compact but with disturbed patches. Very occasional 19 th /20 th century china, window glass. Same as 100, 502, 701, 903, 1000, 1100 and 1200?	0.00->0.40m +

Area 7

Site area: Trench across entrance of former churchyard

Maximum dimensions: Length: 11.25m Width: 0.50-1.10m Depth: 0.70-0.80m

Orientation: north-south approx.

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
700	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown sandy silt. Occasional to moderate small sub-rounded pebbles. Loose. Overlies 701.	0.00-c 0.30m
701	Mixed soil & dump deposit	Mid orangey brown sandy silt with occasional small pebbles, moderate charcoal, brick and tile frags. Below 700. Same as 100, 502, 601, 903, 1000, 1100 and 1200?	0.30->0.40m +
702	Sandstone	Three courses of green and yellow sandstone blocks stepped out c 0.50m from	0.30-0.65m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
	foundation	south wall of St Helen's west tower. Below 701. Overlies 706.	
703	Sandstone foundation	Reddish sandstone stepped out 0.82-0.85m from west wall of St Helen's church. No defined coursing or structure. Below 701.	0.30m +
704	Clay lens	Yellowish brown clay. Loose. Few inclusions of? Lens within 704. Below 700.	0.40m
705	Topsoil	Dark grey brown loam. Moderately compacted. Below 700. Overlies 701 and 707. Alongside church wall.	c 0.30-0.50m
706	Levelling layer	Pinkish brown silty sand. Below 702.	0.65-0.70m
707	Sandstone foundation	Red sandstone; three courses visible. At south end of trench below brick boundary wall, 708. Same as 1001? Former churchyard boundary wall?	0.40-0.80m
708	Brick wall	Brick course bedded in white lime mortar, over sandstone foundation. Disturbed by footings for modern brick wall above.	0.00-0.40m

Area 8

Site area: Trench over north brick vault to west of St Helen's church

Maximum dimensions: Length: 2.80m Width: 2.66m Depth: 0.52m

Orientation: north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
800	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown sandy silt with frequent red brick and yellowish white mortar frags, occasional small brownish red sandstone and small charcoal frags, occasional small sub-rounded pebbles. Compact. Same as 502, 601 and 701?	0.00-0.14m
801	Concrete kerb	Concrete kerb. Below 800. Overlies 802.	0.05-0.20m
802	Tarmac	Black tarmac. Below 801. Overlies 803.	0.19-0.25m
803	Dump deposit	Mid-dark reddish brown - black clayey sand; frequent modern red brick and tile, occasional bone (retained on site). Below 800. Overlies 806 and 807.	0.06-0.84m
804	Cut	Concave cut. Shallow break of slope to shallow concave base. Filled by 809. Below 805.	0.18-0.27m
805	Brick foundation	Brick foundation. Bricks handmade, late 18 th /early 19 th century, 7.5x11.4x?cm (3"x4½"x?), bedded in fawn sandy mortar. Overlies 809. Same as north wall of brick vault 900?	>0.10m +
806	Brick vault	Brick wall aligned east-west with shallow vault springing to north. Bright orangey red bricks bedded in fawn grey lime mortar. South wall of vault; approx 0.50m wide & narrowed to either end; at least 1.8m long. Butts St Helen's west tower wall to east. Roughly mortared access in west end. Partially filled with loose soil. No coffin or bone visible. Augered to probable brick floor c 0.80m below vaulting.	0.60-c 1.40m
807	Dump deposit	Yellow sandy silt. Overlies 806 on north side.	0.84m +

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
808	Brick wall	Mid-dark reddish brown - black clayey sand; frequent modern red brick and tile, ash and charcoal. Discrete patch to north side of area, within 803.	0.40m
809	Fill	Light fawn silty sand. Fill of 804. Below 805.	0.18-0.27m

Area 9

Site area: Trench over south brick vault to west of St Helen's church

Maximum dimensions: Length: c 6.80m Width: 0.60-1.64m Depth: c 0.86m

Orientation: north-south

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
900	Brick vault	Brick vault aligned east-west, flush with south-west corner of church west tower; butting foundation 902 to east. Internal dimensions c 1.48 x 1.90m. East-west walls with shallow vault roof between (largely removed). Bright orangey red bricks, 80x11x23cm, handmade, late 18 th /early19th century, bedded in hard white lime mortar. Vault filled with 904. No coffin or bone visible. Same as 805?	0.40m +
901	Sandstone wall	Rough green sandstone slabs bedded in cream-white sandy lime mortar. 0.35m wide. Aligned approx WNW-ESE? Below 903. Same as 1102?	c 0.40m +
902	Sandstone foundation	Two stepped courses of red sandstone blocks directly below church wall. Church west tower foundation.	c 0.05->0.40m +
903	Dump deposit	Dark brown sandy silt with moderate brick, tile, sandstone frags. (Occasional bone retained on site). Compact. Overlies 901. Same as 100, 502, 601, 701, 1000, 1100 and 1200?	c 0.00-0.40m +
904	Modern dump deposit	Greenish grey gravel hardcore. Dumped within vault 900 when previous service pipe cut through.. Below 903.	c 0.50m +

Area 10

Site area: Water pipe trench along former churchyard boundary to south of gateway

Maximum dimensions: Length: 1.04-1.120m Width: 0.37-0.39m Depth: c 0.45m

Orientation: NNE-SSW

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1000	Mixed soil & dump deposit	Mid orangey brown sandy silt with occasional small pebbles, charcoal, brick and tile frags. Same as 100, 502, 601, 701, 903, 1100 and 1200?	0.00-0.40m +
1001	Sandstone wall	Red sandstone foundation or wall aligned approx ENE-WSW. Below 1000. Same as 707? Former churchyard boundary wall.	c 0.40m +

Area 11

Site area: Access pits A-D alongside School House frontage for gas pipe

Maximum dimensions: Length: c 13m Width: 0.50-1.20m Depth: 0.40-0.50m

Orientation: north to south and north-west to south-east

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1100	Mixed soil & dump deposit	Mid orangey brown sandy silt with occasional pebbles, charcoal, brick and tile frags. Same as 100, 502, 601, 701, 903, 1000 and 1200?	0.00-0.50m +
1101	Hearth/ floor edge?	Red roof tiles and thin green sandstone blocks laid on edge; aligned north-east to south-west. Below 1100. Within south-east corner of Pit C. Possible hearth or edge of floor?	c 0.40m +
1102	Construction / foundation layer?	Layer of yellowish cream lime mortar. Aligned approx ENE/WSW. Within Pit D. Below 1100. Same as 901?	c 0.45m +

Area 12

Site area: Electric cable trench along south boundary of former churchyard

Maximum dimensions: Length: c 8.50m Width: 0.23-0.41m Depth: c 0.67m

Orientation: generally east-west

Main deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1200	Mixed soil & dump deposit	Mid orangey brown sandy silt with occasional brick and tile frags. Same as 100, 502, 601, 701, 903, 1000 and 1100?	0.00-0.67m +

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive

The archive consists of:

- 5 Context records AS1
- 17 Fieldwork progress records AS2
- 3 Photographic records AS3
- 174 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 1 Context number catalogues AS5
- 28 Abbreviated context records AS40
- 9 Trench record sheets AS41
- 12 Scale drawings
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery
Foregate Street
Worcester
WR1 2PW
Tel. Worcester (01905) 25371
