

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

SAINT PETER'S CHURCH,

HOOK NORTON,

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 35510 33123

On behalf of

Norman and Underwood

FEBRUARY 2012

REPORT FOR Norman and Underwood
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CONTENTS

	Page
Summary	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	3
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	5
3 STRATEGY	5
3.1 Research Design	5
3.2 Methodology	5
4 RESULTS	6
4.1 Phase 1: Early Medieval, pre 10 th century probably 8 th -9 th centuries	6
4.2 Phase 2: Early Medieval, 10 th -11 th centuries	6
4.3 Phase 3: Undated, probably 8 th -12 th centuries	12
4.4 Phase 4: High Medieval, 11 th -12 th centuries (Norman)	12
4.5 Phase 5: High Medieval, 12 th century (Norman)	17
4.6 Phase 6: High Medieval, 14 th century (Decorated)	17
4.7 Phase 7: Post-Medieval, 16 th century (Tudor)	18
4.8 Phase 8: Post-Medieval, 16 th -18 th centuries	18
4.9 Phase 9: Industrial, 19 th century (Victorian)	18
4.10 Phase 10: Modern, 20 th century	18
5 FINDS	19
5.1 Pottery	19
5.2 Animal Bones	19
6 DISCUSSION	19
6.1 The Church Site	19
6.2 The Morphology of the Village	22
6.3 Hook Norton: the wider context	22
7 ARCHIVE	25
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	26

FIGURES

Figure 1	Site Location	2
Figure 2	Location of new drainage channels around chancel	7
Figure 3	Location of new drainage around south aisle	8
Figure 4	Location of new drainage system on north side of north aisle	9
Figure 5	Elevation of south chancel wall and plans of earlier foundation	10
Figure 6	Plan and elevations of wall 23	13
Figure 7	Early walls in churchyard and a map showing the morphology of the village	21
Figure 9	Probable larger territory / <i>parochiae</i> associated with Hook Norton church	24

PLATES

Plate 1	The remains of wall 19, 8 th -9 th centuries	11
Plate 2	Wall 19 in context to the rest of the elevation	11
Plate 3	Wall 23 under buttress, from south	14
Plate 4	Wall 23, west side	14
Plate 5	Wall 23, east side	14
Plate 6	Wall 08, part of the 12 th century chapel wall	15
Plate 7	East wall of transport containing part of the Norman arch into the chapel	15
Plate 8	Blocked Norman, 12 th century doorway	16
Plate 9	Wall 04, an undated wall to the north of the north aisle	16

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief at the location of Saint Peter's Church, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 35510 33123) during the insertion of new drainage. The investigation was extremely productive in that it confirmed an earlier phase of the building that was previously unknown, possibly relating to a 8th or 9th century phase of the church. There are also indications of a series of other structures in the churchyard, which are essentially undated but must presumably be High Medieval (1066-1400) or earlier. The church has previously been associated with the location of a minster church. The new evidence is for an early church but defining a proper status for this church is more problematic in the light of certain historical developments.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at the church of Saint Peter at Hook Norton (NGR SP 35510 33123). The site lies on a spur of land above a tributary above the river Swere between 160-163m OD. The underlying geology is a Lias marlstone of the middle Lias beds deposited in the Jurassic period (BGS 1968, sheet 218).

1.2 Planning Background

New drainage was inserted around Saint Peter's church, Hook Norton (NGR SP 35510 33123), which was not carried out under planning authority guidance. However, due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a watching brief was to be maintained during the course of building operations or construction works on the site. This was in line with PPS 5 (the planning policy current at the time) and other Local Planning policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The finds of later prehistoric material are sporadic around the parish of Hook Norton, none of this has so far been noted in the village of Hook Norton.

The first reference surviving to Hook Norton historically is in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles which in the Parker Chronicle (version A) is placed in the year 917, and in the Worcester Chronicle the year 914 (Garmonsway 1972, 98-99). The account refers to the forces of Leicester and Northampton riding forth and breaking the peace when they slew many men at the site of Hook Norton and in the area around.

The etymology of the place-name is of interest and fits into a wider group of place-names derived from folk-names. The earliest references come from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and take the forms *Hocneratune* and *Hocenertune* (Gelling 1954, 353-4). The first component is *Hoccan ōra*, Hocca's hill slope. The additional components turn this into *tūn of the people at Hoccanōra*. The hill in question is the ridge on which the Rollright stones are located.

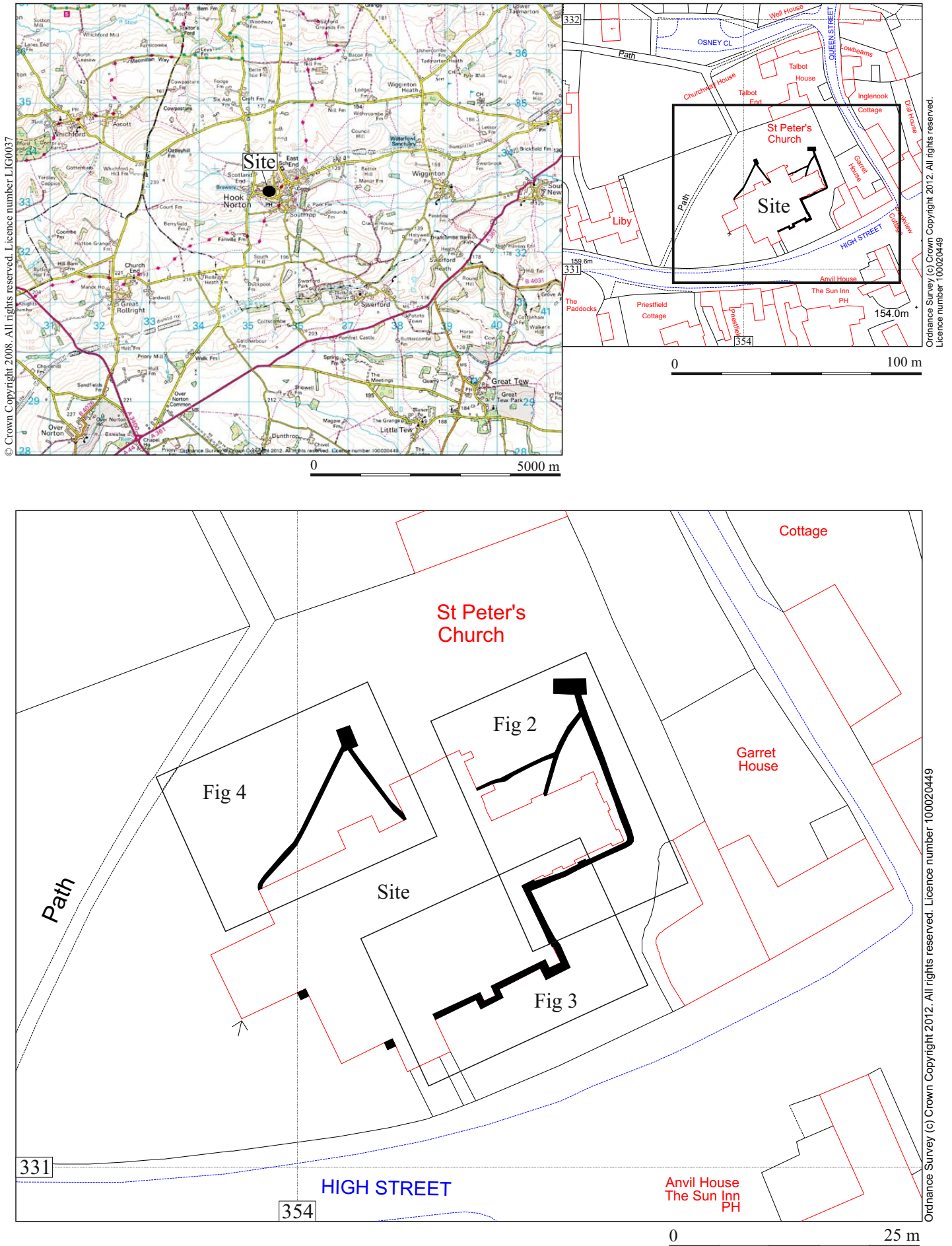


Figure 1. Site location

The neighbouring parish of Wigginton takes its name from *Wicga*, and a *Wicga's* Tumulus has been identified in Hook Norton parish (VCH 1969, 159-70), this has been used to suggest a larger Wigginton territory.

A history of the parish of Hook Norton has not yet been published by the Victoria County History series; however, two articles concerning the history of the village and parish have been published elsewhere. The first of these was by Blair (1986, 63-8) which discussed the attack on Hook Norton and attempted to lay out a pre-Conquest history of the village. The basic claims made here were that Hook Norton was part of a royal villa and hence the reason for its attack in the early 10th century. Here Blair prefers the date 913 for the attack. His main arguments concern the idea that Hook Norton formed part of a large royal estate that extended from the Cherwell near Adderbury to Hook Norton and that the original centre of the estate was at Tadmarston camp on the northern boundaries of the parish. Blair suggested that this large estate fragmented in the 10th century, leaving the centres of Bloxham and Adderbury. Blair mentions that the *Villa regia* should contain an important church, a royal hall with satellite buildings. He admits that the evidence that this was originally located at Tadmarston camp is only tentative, and provides an account of the following data: a holy well, an Anglo-Saxon burial, which he couples to the fact that the earliest area of glebe land lay at Priestfield on the ridge. Place-name evidence indicated that there was a chapel in the vicinity. In the light of the surviving evidence that Blair had at the time his arguments would appear to be highly plausible, but the subsequent observations of this watching brief suggest that there are some serious problems with the suggestion and that an early church is evident at the village of Hook Norton.

The second account by Biddle and Blair (1987, 186-95) is concerned with the identification of the location of a coin hoard of the late 9th century discovered c. 1841. This they suggest through research of personal relationships to have been from a garden at Southrop to the south of the village of Hook Norton. There were some 23 coins recovered along with two large skeletons. The coins that survive are recognised as coins of Burgred (852-74) and Alfred (871-99). This caused Blair to comment on his earlier text that the site of the royal centre had migrated, and that there must have been a royal centre in the valley, although it may have been associated with the fortification at Tadmarston. Here there is recognition of the quoins recently identified on the church and the suggestion that these features may be no earlier than the 11th century at the latest. Further coins were identified as coming from the *parish of Swerford and Hook Norton* in 1848, and the remains of a silver armlet was also found in Oxfordshire about this time. It is suggested in the article as coming from the Hook Norton hoard although this cannot be confirmed. These two articles suggest that Hook Norton was a royal vill in the early 10th century but that in later accounts this association had been lost.

In 1066 the manor of Hook Norton was held by three unnamed brothers (Morris 1978, 28.1), but in 1086 it had come into the hands of Robert D'Oilly. The manor contained 30 hides and contained 76 villagers, 3 smallholders, and 5 slaves. There is also a reference to 2 mills, 140 acres of meadow, and pasture 5 furlongs by 2 furlongs, and a spinney 2 furlongs by ½ furlong.

In c.1127 there was a confirmation by Henry III over 2 parts of the tithes of the manor of Hook Norton (Salter 1934, no.6A) to the abbey of Osney, an arrangement granted

by Henry d'Oilly. In 1151 there is further confirmation that two parts of the tithes of Hook Norton belonged to Osney Abbey (Salter 1934, no.36) along with tithes from Bereford, Wigginton and Swerford. This seems to be part of a process occurring in the area where the d'Oilly family granted part of the tithes from their manors to their ecclesiastical foundation of Osney Abbey; the VCH recognises this process in respect to Wigginton c.1210 (VCH 1969, 159-70), here it is apparent that the abbey is allowed a percentage of the manor tithes.

In the 13th century it is apparent that Osney Abbey continues to hold part of the tithes receiving two thirds of them (Salter 1934, no.33), besides this 1 virgate is mentioned in Hooknorton and land in Wigginton and Swerford. This arrangement continues into the early part of the 13th century when there are a number of texts dated 1219-26 (Salter 1934, nos.86, 86A, 92) confirming it. There is also evidence of fraudulent claims in 1220 that included the manors of Hook Norton, Sweford, Barford and Wigginton besides other locations (Salter 1934, no.1A).

The church of Hook Norton was granted to the abbey founded at Osney, Oxford, by Robert d'Oilly. One of the earliest charters that survived was dated c. 1130-5 which shows the granting of the churches at Kidlington, Weston-on-the Green, Hook Norton, and Chastleton in Oxfordshire, Claydon in Buckinghamshire and Shenstone in Staffordshire (Salter 1929, no.1). A further confirmation of the church holding is dated 1129-33 (Salter 1934, no.10). Confirmations of this arrangement also occurs in c. 1143 by Alexander, bishop of Lincoln (Salter 1929, no.2), by the bishop of Winchester in 1143 (Salter 1929, no.3) and by Robert de Chesney in 1156-66 (Salter 1929, no.4). The church's holding of land include ½ hide and 1 virgate of land. The latter grant adds a number of other churches and also mentions land at *Prestefeld* and *Buterhella*, in Hook Norton. Two further confirmations for the holding of the church at Hook Norton in the 12th century are dated 1154-63 (Salter 1934, no.13) and 1145-7 (Salter 1934, no.15). In 1154-63, 1183-5, c.1165, and 1186-91 documentation appears to indicate that there are three hides held by the church of which some of the land is at *Prestefeld* and *Buterhul* (Salter 1934, nos.20, 21, 22, 32).

In the 13th century it is apparent that Osney Abbey continued to be in the possession of Hook Norton church, which is confirmed in 1206 (Salter 1934, no.16), 1203-6 (Salter 1934, no.32A) and a confirmation of the earlier land holding dated to the 13th century (Salter 1934, no.17). In c.1205 it is apparent that the church of Hook Norton held ½ hide in Hook Norton village (Salter 1934, no.192). This would be a sizable area in the centre of the village.

In the 14th century the abbey of Osney held the church of Hook Norton in 1319/20 and also the neighbouring church and chapel of Wigginton (Salter 1934, no.33C). In 1344 the churches of Hook Norton and Wigginton are mentioned in a visitation to Osney Abbey by Bishop Thomas, in this text portions are mentioned in the church of Wigginton. In 1350 it is apparent that Osney Abbey held the churches of Hook Norton, Wigginton, and Swerford (Salter 1934, no.33E). In 1337 there is an agreement between the abbey of Osney and the vicar of Hook Norton (Salter 1934, no.242B).

A papal bull of Leo X (1475-1521) agrees that the rectorie of Kidlington and Hook Norton should be united to that of Osney Abbey (Salter 1931, 356-8). It is apparent

after this date that any information concerning Hook Norton church and its association with neighbouring parishes would become even more obscure.

Lewis' Topography of England (1840, iii.391) recorded that the church of Hook Norton was a perpetual curacy under the patron-ship of the bishop of Oxford.

In 1981 Oxford Archaeology Unit carried out investigation of the internal structure when Victorian plaster was removed from the inside of the church (Chambers 1983, 130-1). This revealed a blocked archway in the east wall of the north transept and a blocked doorway from the chancel; both features are described as Norman and given a construction date in the 12th century. Further research on the church of Hook Norton was carried out in the later part of the 1980s (Chambers 1987, 90: 1988, 80-81). This work revealed that long and short work had been identified at the original juncture of the chancel and nave, thus indicating a 10th or 11th century date for the church at that time. A rough ironstone foundation was identified under the buttress on the east side of the north transept wall under the buttress which blocked this archway. It was suggested by Chambers that the cell was built for a hermit in the latter part of the 12th century, c.1180. The Norman rebuild, it was plausibly suggested, was carried out after the church was awarded to Osney Abbey.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To record any archaeology not previously noted.

In particular:

- To contribute to the phasing of the building and site.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation of the site which was agreed with the parochial church council and faculty and carried out in accordance with PPS5. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

All trenches excavated for the new drainage were observed by an archaeologist.

4 RESULTS (Figures 2-6, Plates 1-9)

Deposit (03) was a highly compact yellow and red clay brash with frequent fragments of limestone. Deposit (17) was a moderately compact red brown silt clay with limestone fragments measuring 0.45-0.55m deep. This deposit was identified to the north of the church. Deposit (31) was a moderately compact orange brown silt clay with limestone fragments identified to the south of the church. These deposits were a continuation of each other; however slight variation was discernible in colour. On the south side of the church the deposits were lighter with more of a yellow brown colouring. It could be the case that the different variation in these soils was a result of the more frequent use for burials in the area, although only a limited number of these cuts could be properly identified. All medieval wall cuts are interpreted as being truncations of this deposit, although it is possible that each of these cuts may be from a slightly different level in the grave soils, though with persistent grave disturbance it is difficult to completely establish this.

4.1 Phase 1: Early Medieval, pre 10th century probably 8th-9th centuries

Foundation cut 20 was only partially visible but must originally have consisted of four linear cuts forming a rectangle (Figures 2, 5, Plates 1-2). The remaining visible section was over 1.16m in length with steep sides. The fill masonry 019 was the remains of limestone foundations and part of a wall. The feature contained ashlar blocks at the top of the foundation with more irregularly cut stones below. Set on the foundation was the remains of a quoin stone from what has to be an earlier building phase. Alongside the quoin was evidence of a rubble wall. The wall was mortared.

The quoins on the wall were out of alignment with the later 10th-11th century walls of phase 2 and 4. Part of the foundation contained one stone set into the main foundation which could give tentative evidence that there was previously a porticus attached (a side chapel on an Early Medieval church).

The feature is not precisely dated, but from features recognised as surviving in the rest of the building it is likely that this structure was pre-10th or 11th century, and thus a possible 8th to 9th century date may be attributed to this church.

4.2 Phase 2: Early Medieval, 10th-11th centuries

The early church must have been demolished or raised to the ground in some way, but there is no surviving physical evidence to indicate if this was through violence or if deliberately dismantled because there was a decision to rebuild the church. The foundations, or at least some of them, must have remained in situ and have been reused (see phase 1). Masonry 22 represents the rebuild of the nave in the 10th or 11th centuries (Figures 5, Plates 1-2). This is part of a limestone rubble wall containing the remains of long and short work quoins at an earlier junction of the nave and chancel.

In the 1980s research on the building carried out by Chambers (1987, 90; 1988, 80-1) identified the remains of long and short work quoins near the junction of the nave and chancel. The late Anglo-Saxon date proposed by Chambers has been generally

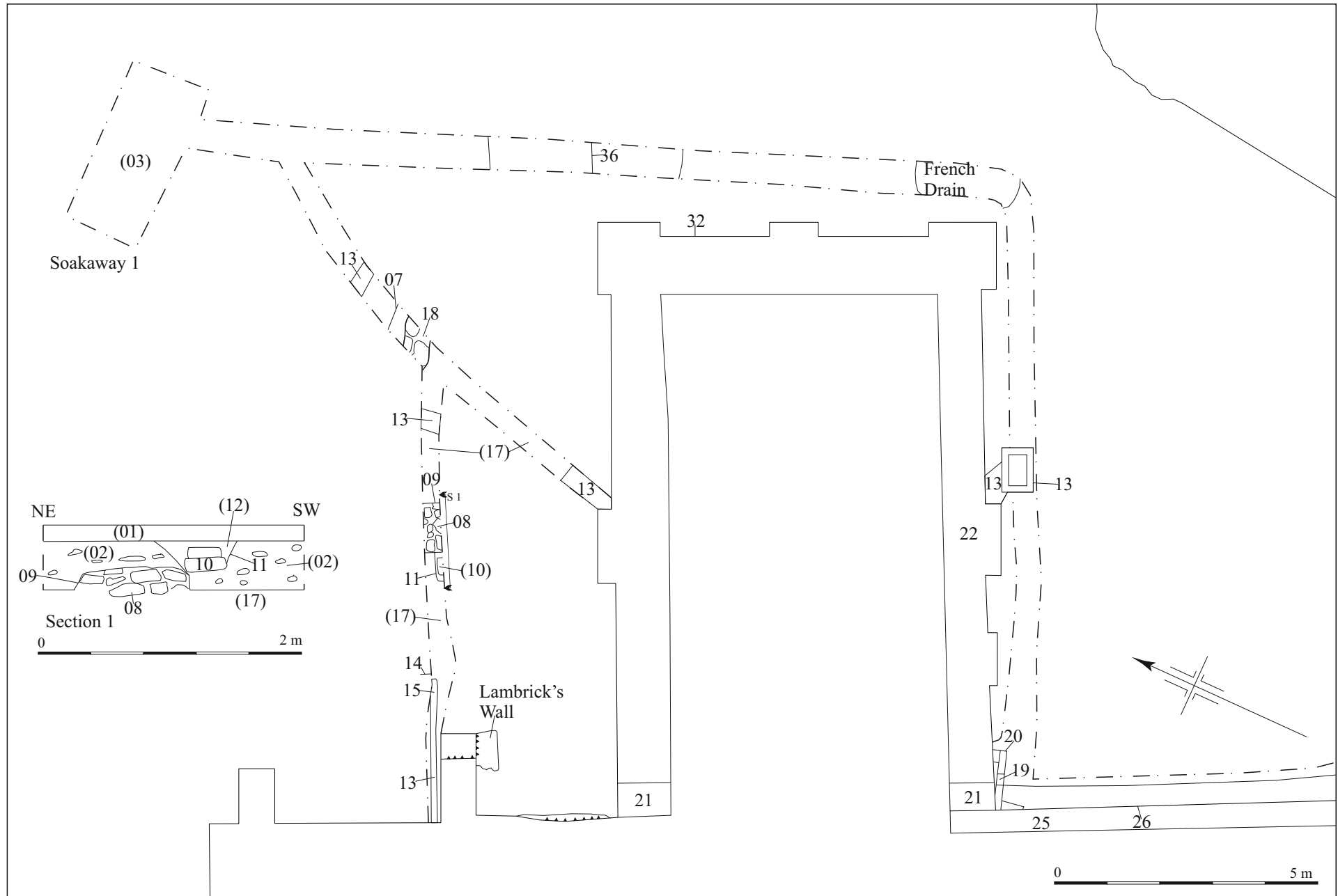


Figure 2. Location of new drainage channels around chancel

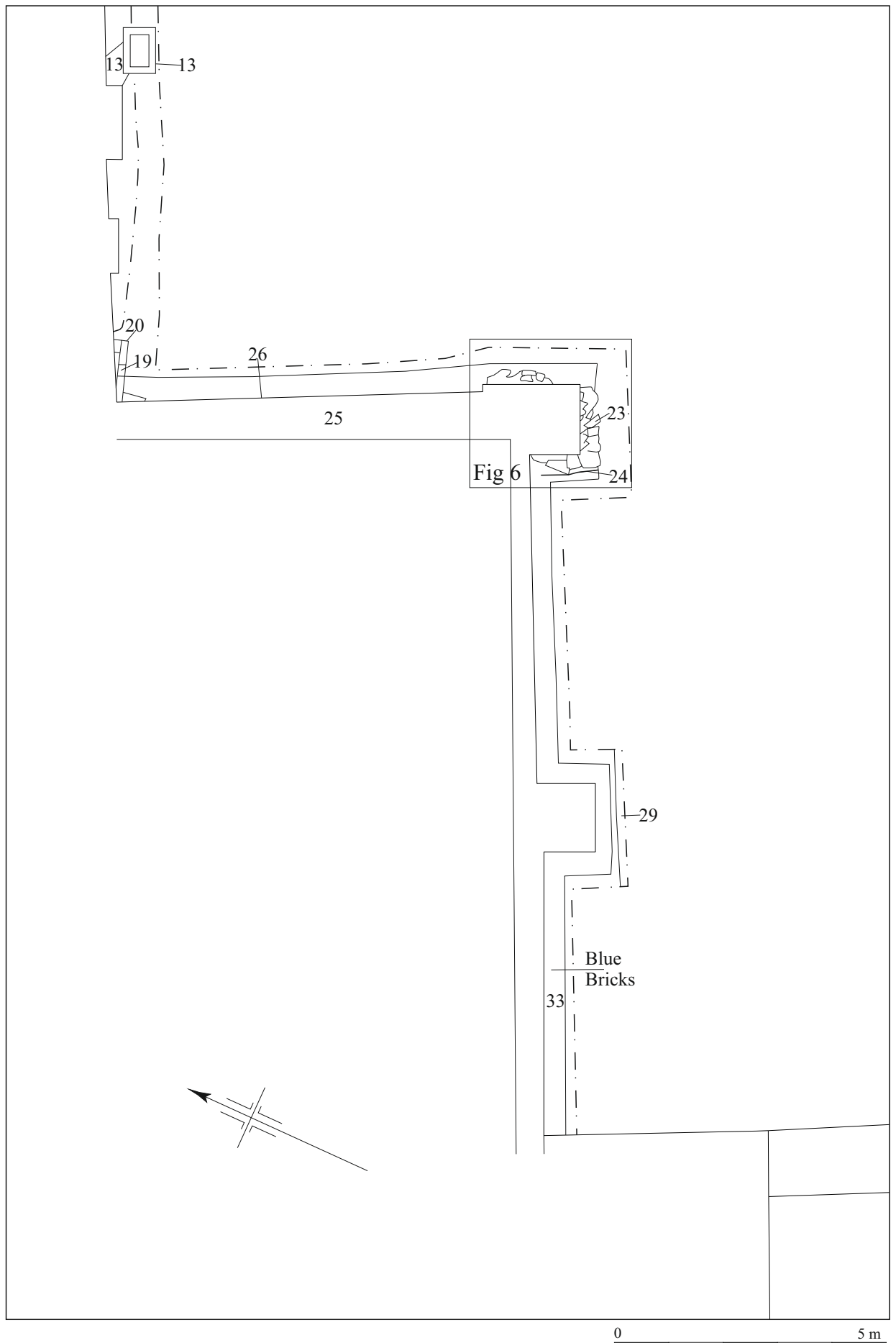


Figure 3. Location of new drainage around south aisle

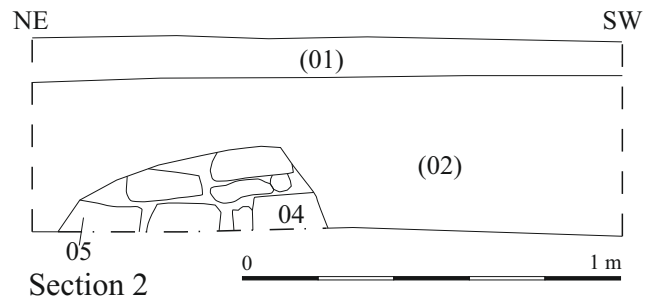
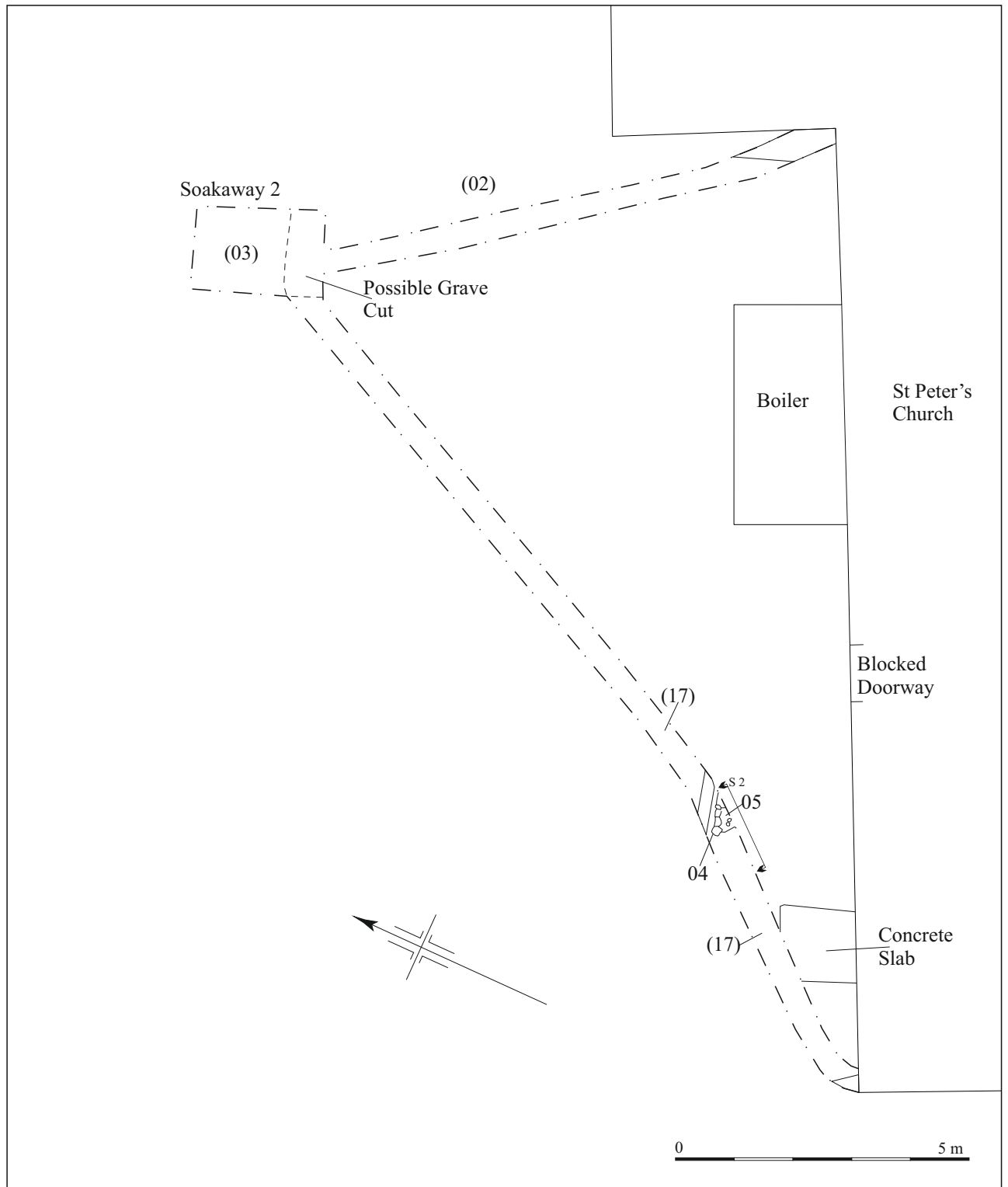


Figure 4. Location of new drainage system on north side of north aisle

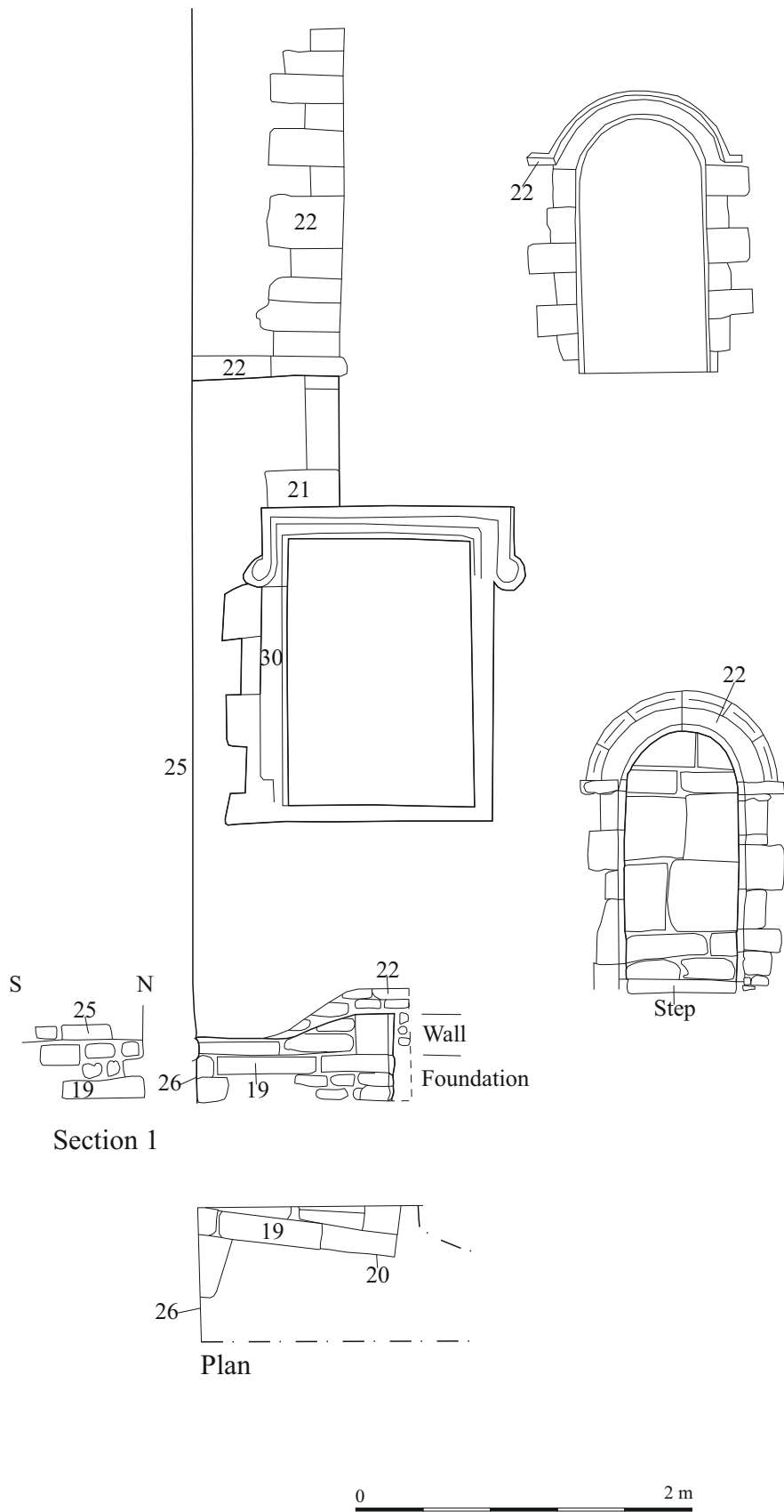


Figure 5. Elevation of north Chancel wall & plans of earlier foundation



Plate 1. The remains of wall 19, 8th-9th centuries



Plate 2. Wall 19 in context to the rest of the elevation

accepted as it does contain a recognised architectural feature of the 10th-11th centuries. It is the relationship of these quoins with the quoins of wall 19 that is crucial to the sequence of phasing as they do not line up with each other and thus are suggestive of there being two different phases.

4.3 Phase 3: Undated, probably 8th-12th centuries

There are a number of walls that are essentially undated in their period of construction. It is possible that some of these may be early in date, though some may be later in date. They are all treated here as if they were cut into the lower cemetery soils called (17) on the north side of the church and (31) on the south side of the church.

Foundation cut 24 survived as a T-shaped feature although it was probably part of something far larger (Figure 3, 6, Plates 3-5). The surviving part covered an area of over 2m by 1.7m and was uncovered to a depth of about 0.40. The fill was masonry 23 which was built of roughly squared limestone blocks of which the majority were laid flat, but some on the northern edge may have been pitched. The foundation was bonded by brown yellow clay. The later decorated period buttress, part of wall 25, sat on top of this foundation. The structure was considered to be unsafe and the buttress in danger of collapse. The early wall was left in situ and covered in terram, a soft concrete was then placed around this feature but with no aggregate in, so if it ever has to be removed in the future it is possible for it to be revealed (see engineer's report).

Masonry 18 contained a series of flat roughly shaped laid stones, which could represent the base of a wall or an earlier cobbled surface bonded with, or set in, a light brown clay (Figure 2). The feature is essentially undated.

Foundation cut 05 was a linear feature for which the dimensions were not fully known, but which probably had steep sides and a flat base (Figure 4, Plate 9). The fill was masonry 04 the remains of a limestone wall built with rubble, bonded with white lime mortar and orientated east to west. The wall was probably 0.55m wide at least, it was sealed by deposit (02).

4.4 Phase 4: High Medieval, 11th-12th centuries (Norman)

Foundation cut 32 contained three linear lengths forming a rectangular shape attached to the nave (Figures 2, 5, Plates 2). Masonry 22 was a rough limestone wall with carved ashlar masonry inserted. This included the Norman Romanesque round headed windows of the south chancel door, the round headed windows, new quoins above wall 21, and typical 11th or 12th century buttresses. Earlier features associated with this build were identified by Chambers (1981; 1987; 1988). Chambers suggested that this phase of construction should be associated with the granting of the church to Osney Abbey in c.1129, there is no reason to doubt this and it is possible to envisage the construction work being carried out after this date c.1130 and afterwards.

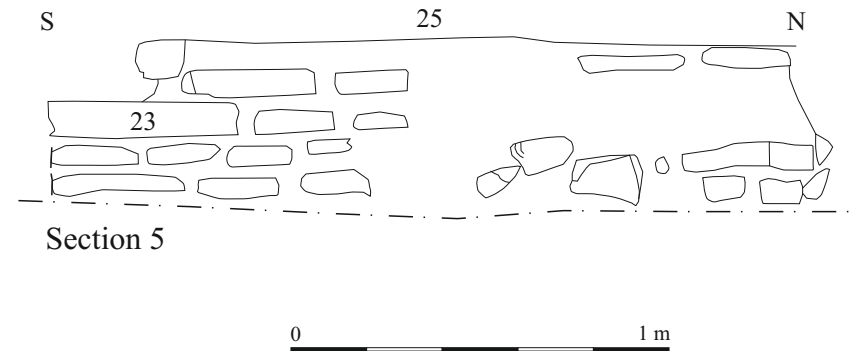
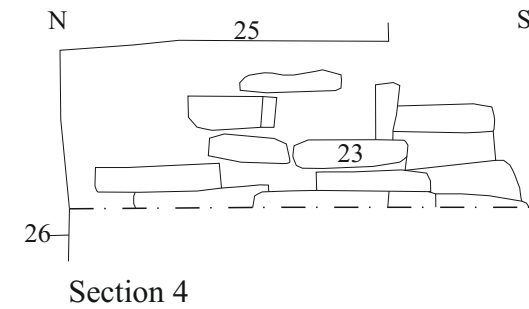
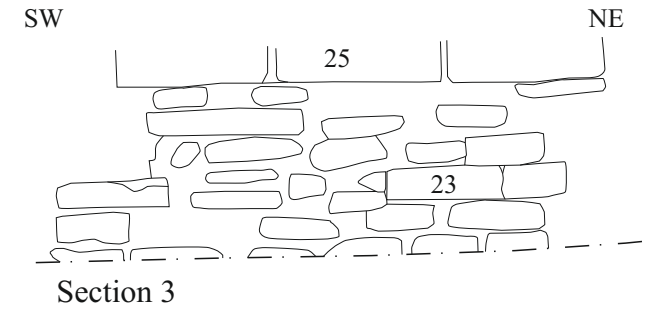
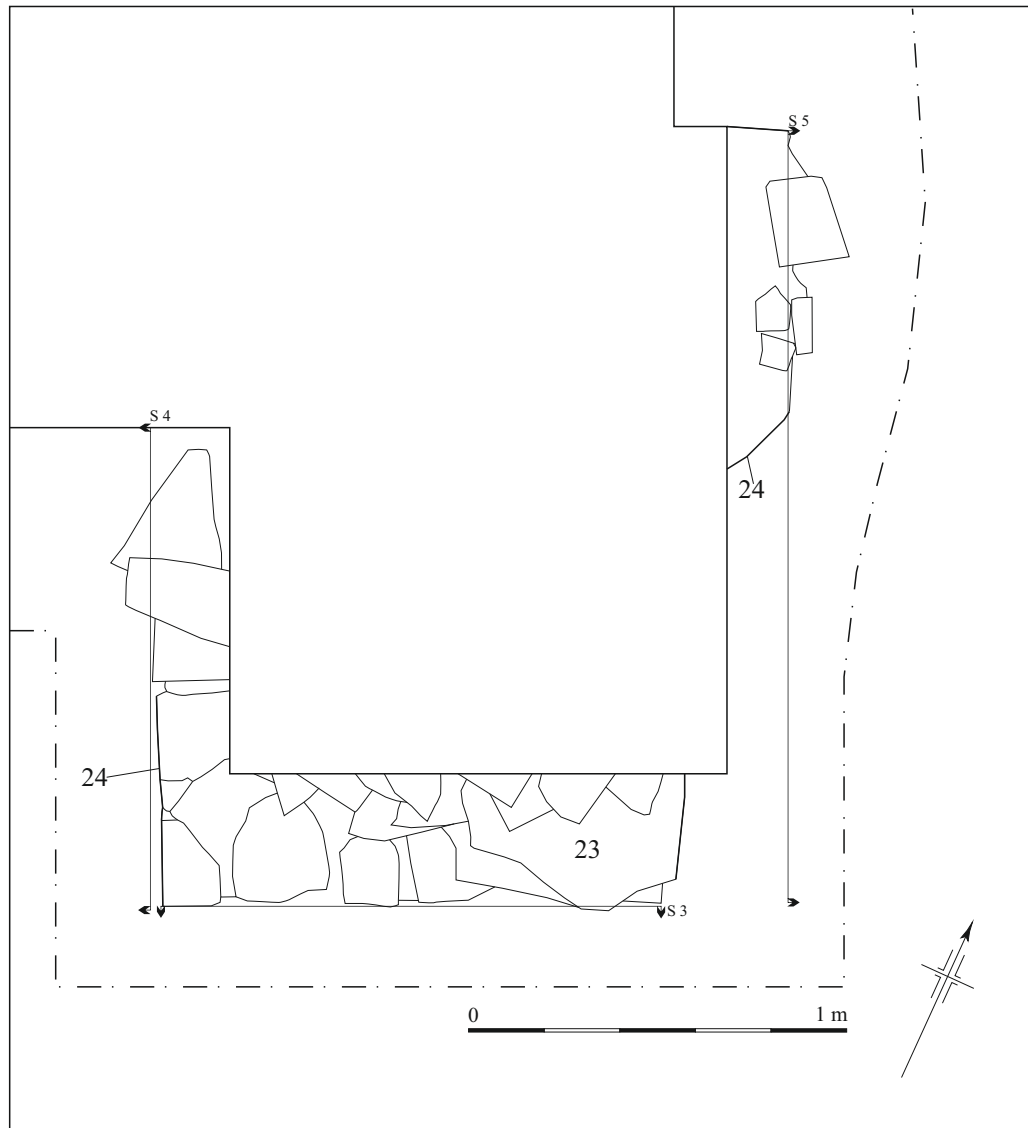


Figure 6. Plan and elevations of wall 23



Plate 3. Wall 23 under buttress, from south



Plate 4. Wall 23, west side



Plate 5. Wall 23, east side



Plate 6. Wall 08, part of the 12th century chapel wall



Plate 7. North wall of transept containing part of the Norman arch into the chapel



Plate 8. Blocked Norman, 12th century doorway



Plate 9. Wall 04, an undated wall to the north of the north aisle

Phase 5: High Medieval, 12th century (Norman)

Foundation cut 09 was a linear feature measuring 0.9m wide with presumably vertical sides and a flat base, although the profile was not observed (Figures 2, Plates 6-7). The fill masonry 08 was a limestone wall built of rubble bounded with a mortar clay. The wall was orientated north to south.

The north transept and north aisle contain a number of distinct phases, and considerable periods of rebuild. The exact date attributed to these phases has not been properly determined. Architecturally the north aisle contains the remains of a crude Norman doorway of the 11th to 12th century (Plate 8), and the windows inserted at a later date are of the 14th century Decorated period. The north wall of the transept contains the remains of a crude spring of an arch; however, the ashlar carved stones which would have been located below this rubble springing, and would stylistically have dated it, are no longer extant on the outside. Investigation by Chambers (1983, 130-1) internally determined that this archway was of a Norman style and 12th century in date. The remains of a blocked doorway from the chancel to the chapel was also noted and was attributed a similar style and date. A buttress blocks the remains of this arch, and overlies an earlier wall which I suspect is the wall Chambers (1987, 90; 1988, 80-1) believed formed part of a small cell dated to the early 12th century. Chambers described his wall as being located below a buttress. The relationship between the wall arch and wall 08 is significant as the features indicate that there was probably a large chapel on the north side of the chancel of which part of the east wall and archway through the east wall of the transept survive. There is no clear indication of this wall being joined to the chancel in a contemporary fashion so it is being treated as if it is a later Norman period phase and hence being butted up to that wall.

The cell under the later buttress must be another phase in this area, but without uncovering more of the footings it is difficult to determine how they all relate to each other.

The wall 08 is probably 12th century Norman, probably c.1140-70. The north aisle was probably constructed at a similar date. The date at which the transept originated is more difficult to determine and may be part of an earlier cruciform arrangement. The north transept and north aisle probably reached their final phase by the 14th century and the Decorated period. Thus we have a terminus post quem of the 14th century.

4.5 Phase 6: High Medieval, 14th century (Decorated)

The south aisle is classed as being of a Decorated Gothic style and has subsequently been attributed a construction date in the 14th century. The foundation consisted of a series of linear cuts 26 forming a rectangle attached to the south side of the nave. The cuts would have contained steep sides and a flat base. The wall and foundation 25 was made of limestone with squared blocks with ashlar quoins and two buttress, one of which rested on the undated wall 23 (Figure 2).

4.6 Phase 7: Post-Medieval, 16th century (Tudor)

The remains of a square headed window 30 was inserted into the south aisle (Figure 5, Plate 2), the remains of an ashlar carved surround survives, but the window has

subsequently been blocked. The window has been inserted through part of the 10th to 11th century wall and the later 11th to 12th century wall butted up to it.

4.7 Phase 8: Post-Medieval, 16th-18th centuries

Graveyard soil (02) was a moderately compact red brown silt clay with limestone fragments with a depth of about 0.3m deep. There was very little difference between this deposit and the lower grave soils (31), but stratigraphically the buildings have to be cut originally from somewhere in the build-up of soils in the cemetery.

Drainage cut 34 consisted of a series of linear runs (not illustrated) along the outside of wall 25. The cut consisted of steep sides and a rounded to flat base. The fill was 35 a series of squared flat limestone slates which were laid in an attempt to take drainage along the side of the church. This phase was probably associated with a piece of stoneware that can be dated from the 17th to early 19th century and a piece of brown glazed earthenware.

Grave cut 07 was not fully uncovered but was presumably rectangular with steep sides and a probable flat base, however, the profile was not fully observed. Fill (06) was a moderately compact black red clay silt which measured over 0.3m deep and was 0.6m wide (Figure 2).

Grave cut 27 was presumed to be rectangular in shape with sharp sides and a flat base. It presumably truncated grave soils (02). The fill (28) was a moderately compact yellow brown silt clay which must represent a grave fill.

4.8 Phase 9: Industrial, 19th century (Victorian)

Foundation cut 11 was a linear feature measuring 0.66m wide at the top and 0.4m wide at the base, with gently sloping sides and a rounded profile and a flat base (Figure 2). The cut was orientated north to south. The fill was masonry 10 constructed of brick and bonded by white mortar and plaster. The foundation was 0.3-0.4m wide at the base and had 1 brick set on it. The cut was backfilled by deposit (012) a moderately compact black brown clay silt containing fragments of plaster and mortar and was 0.1m deep. This feature was probably part of a late funerary monument, although the cut for the grave was not recognised.

Truncating drainage fill 35 was cut 29 a linear cut with a series of stretches extending around the south aisle of the church. The fill 033 was formed by a series of blue engineering bricks designed to carry water away from the church. The engineering bricks date the construction to post 1850, but they were probably laid before 1900.

4.9 Phase 10: Modern, 20th century

Deposit (01) was a moderately compact black brown silt with a depth of 0.1m and was found sealing all deposits across the graveyard. Cut into this deposit (01) was the service trenches for the drainage system which was inserted in the late part of the 20th century, cuts and deposits 13 and 36. Also cut through deposit (01) was a linear cut 14 over 3m long and 0.02m deep that had been cut east to west. The fill (16) was a moderately compact brown black silt with gravel inclusions. Bedded into this deposit was masonry 15 a series of limestone gravestones that were probably 18th century in

date. They had been inserted face down to form a path. A modern soakaway was detected on the northeast corner of the chancel.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

Very little in the way of artefacts were found, those that were being placed in a bag and left for the church authorities. Only two sherds of pottery could probably be described as being stratified came from deposit (35). These included a sherd of stoneware and a brown glazed piece of red earthenware. Such pottery is often commonly dated to the 17th to early 19th century.

5.2 Animal bones

Most of the bones recovered from the cemetery were fragments of human bone, but the remains of a goat or sheep horn core was noted amongst the finds.

6 DISCUSSION

The finding of early remains on the site of the church means that significant historical features have been identified, but also means that our historical understanding of Hook Norton and the wider context of the later Early Medieval period (8th-11th centuries) can be discussed. There are, therefore, three major points that should be discussed here. The first of these is the development of the church site itself. The next is the morphology of the village and the latter is the correction of erroneous claims which have been discussed in academic publications.

6.1 The Church Site

The church site is complicated, first it is sensible to discuss the alterations we can make to the construction of the main church on the site, that of Saint Peter. The digging of the drainage on the south junction of the nave and the chancel revealed the remains of an earlier limestone church foundation. It is evident due to the lack of alignment of the foundation and the quoins it is earlier than Phase 2, and that the style of Phase 2 can be dated to the 10th or 11th century. Historically we only have very few references to Hook Norton prior to 1066, but the date and event that we do have, generally given as 913, is significant. At this time the forces of Northampton and Leicester united to attack Hook Norton and the surrounding area (Garmonsway 1972, 98-9). Blair (1986, 63-8) noted the significance of the event with the movement of the armies although with little context around it we probably do not really comprehend fully what went on at this time. The event referred to may possibly be the horizon which we are looking for to suggest dates at which time the phases of these churches may have originated. The Phase 1 church was either dismantled or destroyed and then levelled. A date for the construction of the Phase 1 church prior to 913 is highly probable, and may hint at the establishment of a church in the late 7th to 8th century; a period when minster churches and lay church or royal churches were systematically established in parochiae across the landscape. The construction of the Phase 2 church is presumably in the early 10th century, post 913, after the destruction of Hook Norton. Not enough information is available to discuss the full dimensions and design

of these churches, but the recognised long and short work can be attributed a 10th century date.

What else was going on in the church precinct at this time is difficult to ascertain due to the constant process of burial truncation and destruction. The fragment of wall to the north of the present north nave would fit into no known evidence of features that could be associated with the post-Norman church. One could suggest that it may be an unfinished attempt to expand the north aisle like that of the south aisle, but one would suspect that if this was started there would have been more evidence. One could suspect that there was a double range of early side chapels, which would be extremely rare or that this represents the remains of an earlier free standing structure in the graveyard of which very little of the plan may remain.

The foundation under the buttress of the south aisle is also problematic in that it cannot easily, due to its distance from the surviving church be associated with a post-Conquest feature that could be planned into the church. The wall is undoubtedly pre-14th century stratigraphically. The date of the north transept is not known, but may have originated as part of a cruciform church. The foundation could be part of an earlier south transept, but I suspect that this is slightly too far out for this to match exactly, it is certainly too far away from the church to be part of an earlier Norman aisle or even part of an Anglo-Saxon porticus arrangement. That the earliest recognised aisle was constructed on the north side of the church may provide circumstantial evidence that this is a pre-Norman structure, with the area to the south of the church already being occupied. The foundation is large, perhaps it is the fragmentary remains of a second church in the graveyard, such a suggestion would be indicative of this being a minster site rather than a royal church.

These walls, discussed above, don't necessarily make sense in a post 1066 cemetery, and no documentary evidence has so far been located to indicate further standing structures in the church precinct other than that of Saint Peter's. No Roman material has come from the site to suggest that the church was constructed on a villa. The limited information that we do have is indicative that the site is that of an early medieval church complex that had potentially a number of structures of which we can identify fragmentary remains around the churchyard (Figure 7).

As no evidence of these structures is apparently recorded or can be recognised historically one has to perhaps envisage that they are pre-Conquest. The remaining features recognised can easily be fitted into a post-Conquest development of the church. The chancel was rebuilt and the 10th century nave heightened in the Norman period. Chambers proposed a date in c. 1129 and there seems no reason to disagree with this proposal, building work of this phase may have commenced about this time and continued for a decade. A secondary Norman period of construction, Phase 5, can be hypothesised which saw the construction of the north aisle and the north chapel. When the chapel was dismantled or destroyed is not known, and neither is the date of the small foundation in the corner of the present chancel and north transept.

The south aisle was added in the 14th century, Phase 6, and alterations were made at this time to the north aisle and transept. The remaining phases noted are minor and make no major structural alterations to the church. Phase 7 saw the insertion of a window in the 16th century, while drainage around the church seems to have been carried on from the 17th century.

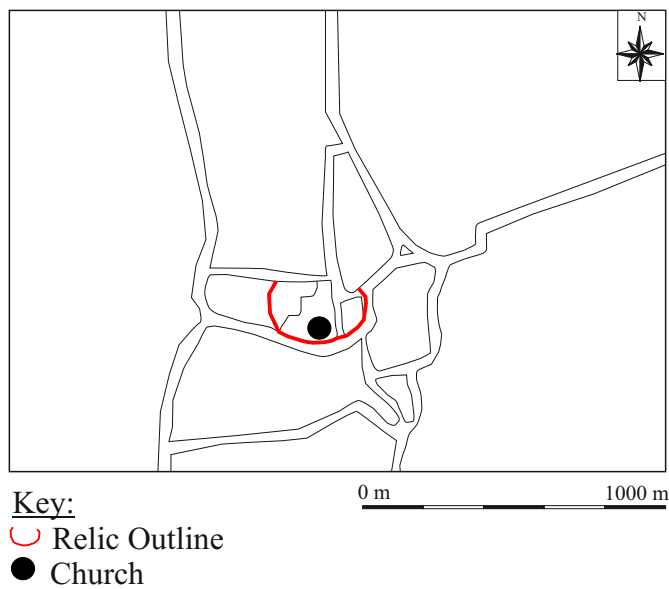
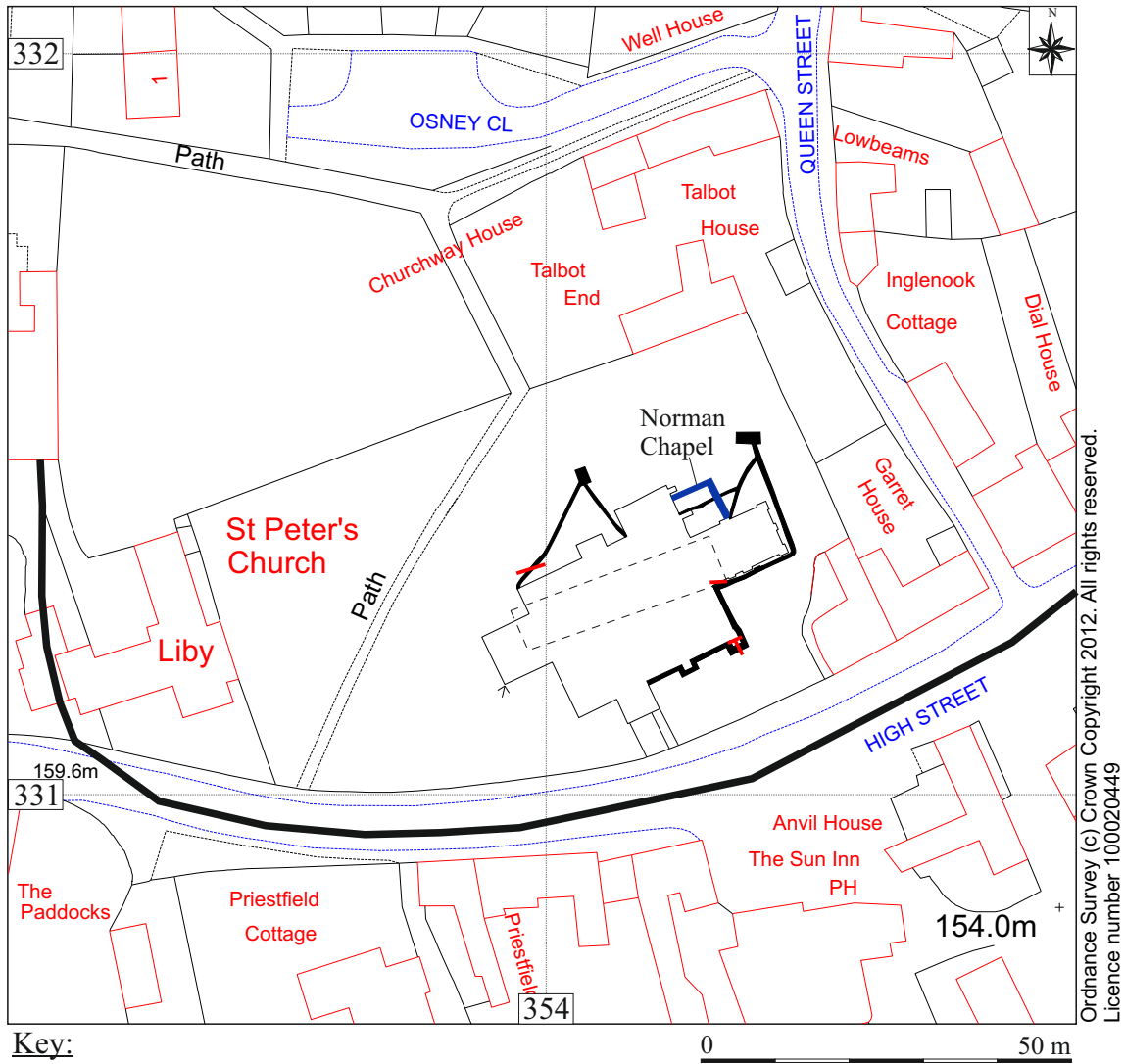


Figure 7. Early walls in church yard & a map showing the morphology of the village

6.2 The morphology of the village

The excavations around the church revealed that the early remains of a pre-10th century church, which possibly was destroyed in 913. There were other foundations which could not readily be interpreted as the remains of post-Conquest structures in the church precinct. This leaves the possibility that Hook Norton churchyard originally had a number of distinct buildings located across the later cemetery and could well have been a multiple church site; in essence this would make it an early monastery complex.

If these fragmentary undated walls are part of a complex with a major church dedicated to Saint Peter, and a further church on its south side, then we can suggest that the church would have contained a monastic vallum or defensive circuit. This at other contemporary sites across the Cotswold is often recognised as originating as later prehistoric or Roman enclosures (Yeates 2006, i.71-74; 2008, 147-56). With this in mind it is perhaps interesting to note the following about the morphology of the village; first that the main road to the south of the church curves as if it could be a relic of a boundary bank running around the spur on which the church stands. Various other property boundaries to the north of this may mark the remaining outline of an enclosure (Figure 7). No Roman material has been recovered from the site; it is feasible therefore to suggest that Hook Norton was previously a defended enclosure and that the early medieval centre was founded in an earlier Iron Age defended enclosure.

Hook Norton contains the place-name suffix *tūn* (Gelling 1954, 353-4). Rivet and Smith (1979, 274-5) have discussed the Celtic word **dūnōs-* and *dūnōn*, which is treated as being derived from hill or mountain, and eventually developed into a word with an etymology of fort. This is cognate with the Germanic word *tuna-*, from whence Old English *tun* and English *town* derive. In this context the final place-name component may apply to fortifications of an early nature in which the later monastic site and town developed.

6.3 Hook Norton the wider context

The articles by Blair (1986) and Biddle and Blair (1987) put forward a number of ideas of which the main suggestion was that Hook Norton was the seat of a royal vill and that the site of the settlement had been relocated from Tadmarston Camp. The recent investigation at Hook Norton church has led to considerable doubt being placed on the speculative claims of the first of these papers. The long and short work identified in the 1980s would indicate that a church of the 10th or 11th century was located on the site. The excavations identified the remains of an earlier phase to this structure which presumably has to be part of an 8th or 9th century church. We only know of one event that occurred in the 10th century and this is an assault on the site of Hook Norton by the armies of the Danelaw based in Northampton and Leicester. Though dating is not precise it is tempting to suggest that the earliest recognised phase of the church was damaged and subsequently levelled after this assault in 913 and that a new church was constructed on the site at this time. This would mean that the surviving long and short work is likely to be part of an early 10th century church.

The term minster has been used for the church (Blair 1986), it is difficult to determine precisely the nature of the church but there is certainly evidence that there was previously more than one structure in the precinct.

Blair (1986) suggested that Hook Norton was part of a large and extensive royal estate extending from the Warwickshire to the Northamptonshire borders. Little evidence exists in the form of chapels to indicate that Hook Norton's church parish could be extended, however, it should be noted that the number of churches which were held by Osney Abbey in the area besides Hook Norton, may conceal earlier holdings associated with Hook Norton church. Yeates (2006, ii.265-9, 417-24, iii.901-5: 2008, 59-89) suggested that there was an underlying archaeological settlement pattern developing in the Iron Age and extending through to the early medieval period. Yeates (2006, ii.265-9, 417-24, iii.901-5), in opposition to Blair (1986), put forward suggestions that a number of earlier territories were located in the area possibly focused on Hook Norton, Adderbury and Bloxham, but this argument was part of an interim suggestion based on knowledge of the evidence at the time.

The analysis of these territories relies chiefly on the identification of nucleated Roman settlements, one has been clearly recognised in the drainage system of the river Swere at Swalcliff (Yeates 2006, ii.265-9, 417-24, iii.901-5), however, there are surviving place-names that indicate that two other nucleated settlements lie in this river system. A significant place-name type was identified that was associated with Roman small towns that were dominated by the word *wicham*, which is derived from the Latin word *vicus* (Gelling 1967, 87-104; Coates 1999, 75-116), a town, used as a name for a designated division of a civitas or colonia territory. Two of these names occur in the Swere Valley system, the one lies on the parish boundary between Banbury and Bloxham (Gelling 1954, 413-4) and the other is unlocated at South Newington (Gelling 1954, 278; Yeates 2006, iii.901-5). Recent indications have been found of significant later Prehistoric or Roman settlement to the east of the village of Wigginton adjacent to the South Newington parish boundary. The sites include the Wigginton Roman villa (NMR SP33SE2: SP 3936 3356), an enclosure of Iron Age or Roman date to the south of the villa (NMR SP33SE44: SP 3940 3331), an extensive Iron Age and or Roman settlement (NMR SP33SE27: SP 3882 3468), and finally there is a scatter of Roman coins, plaster and pottery 150m to the N of the villa (NMR SP33SE17: SP 392 336). Figure 8 shows the distribution of these sites in the Swere Valley.

The church associations or ties are more difficult to ascertain in respect to Hook Norton church, but it is likely to be one of the major churches established in the territory of the former Roman settlement at Wigginton, lying adjacent to the South Newington boundary. One has to assume that the parishes of Hook Norton, Wigginton, Swerford, Milcombe, South Newington, and Barford Saint Michael probably were associated with each other through the later holdings of Osney Abbey. The holding of a number of these churches by Osney Abbey was mentioned in the history discussion (see above).

Swerford church was held by Osney Abbey in 1350 (Salter 1934, no.33E) and in 1389 (Salter 1934, no.33F). Showell, now in Little Tew parish, was a chapel attached to the church of Swerford in 1246 (Salter 1934, no.295). The holdings relating to the parish of Swerford can be shown to exist if not satisfactorily demonstrated.

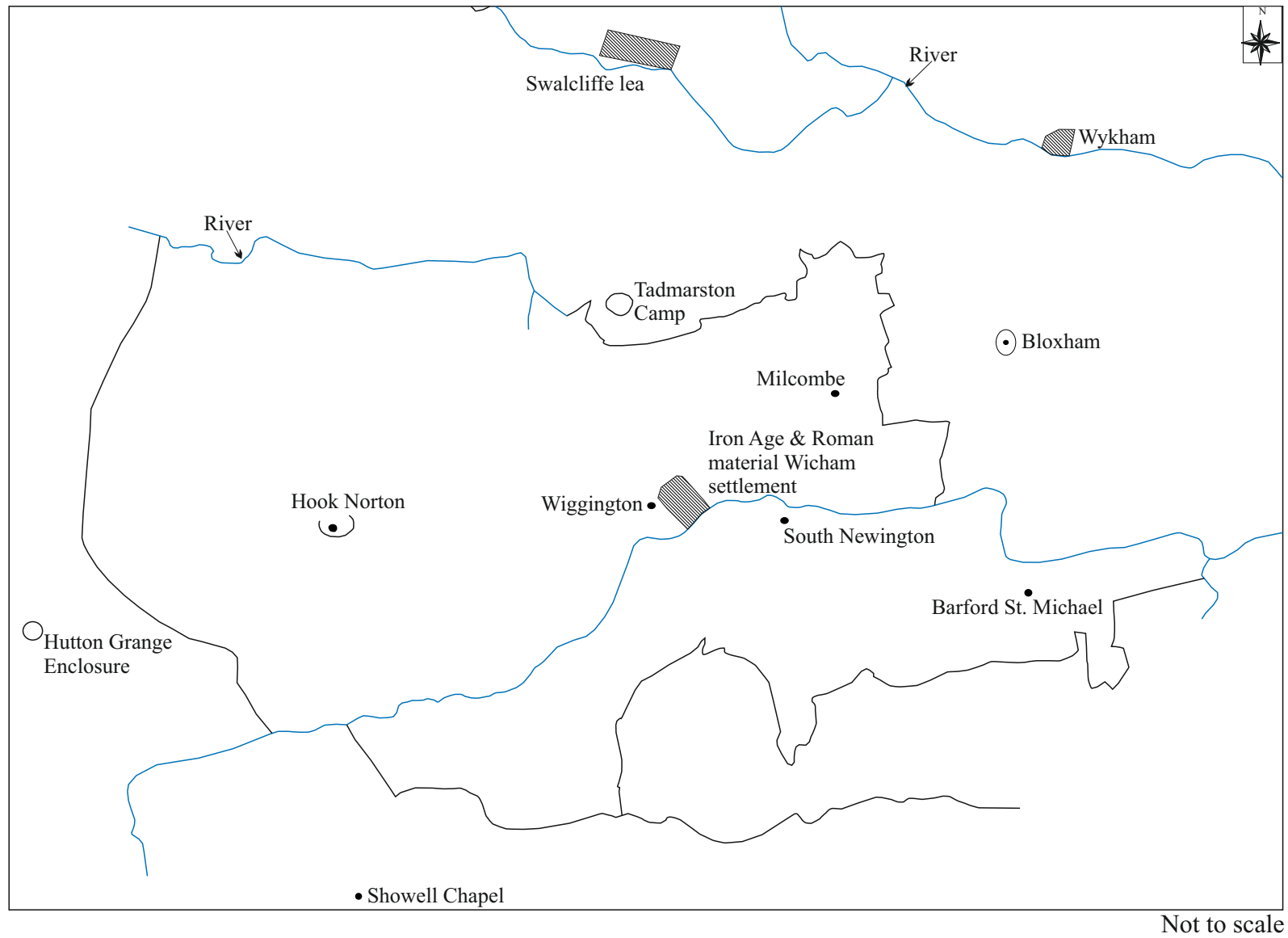


Figure 8. Probable larger territory / parochiae associated with Hook Norton church

Wigginton church was held by Osney Abbey in 1350 (Salter 1934, no.33E) and in 1389 (Salter 1934, no.33F). The tithes of Wigginton were commuted for a payment to Osney Abbey in 1270 (Salter 1936, no.246). A document from the cartulary of Osney mentions a church and chapel of Wigginton in 1319/20, the chapel in this text is unnamed and unidentified (Salter 1934, no.33c). The chapel mentioned in this text could be Milcombe (discussed after), but it may also be a reference to the church of Wigginton being a church or chapel. The church of Wigginton is known to have had an interest in the chapel at Milcombe, over which there were a series of disputes with Bloxham church dating back to 1200, which is first recorded in the texts of Godstow Priory (Yeates 2006, ii.422-3). The later disputes over the chapel of Milcombe are well documented in 1708 (VCH 1969, 78), 1793 (VCH 1969, 73) and in 1921 (VCH 1969, 73). Milcombe chapel was, therefore, annexed to Wigginton church.

In respect to South Newington it is stated in *c.*1250 that Osney Abbey held land in this parish including an acre of land called *Wychem* and 2 virgates at an undated location (Salter 1936, nos. 1058, 1059). The church at Barford Saint Michael was held by Osney Abbey in 1389 (Salter 1936, no.33F).

These parishes form a unified block of land which one could argue originated as a unified territory. There are certain problems with other ties associated with Bloxham and that the chapel of Showell lies outside the area of these parishes, but these relationships could be argued away by other processes. Rather than there being a single large territory it is possible to argue that there were three original territories in the Swere valley system and that Hook Norton acted as one of the major churches or the monastic centre of one of these churches.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site record

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums' Store under accession number 2012.8

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