

CHURCH OF ST MARY AND STOKE GABRIEL, STOKE GABRIEL, DEVON

NGR SX 84919 57134

Results of archaeological monitoring and recording

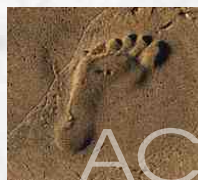
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On behalf of:
Le Page Architects

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AC archaeology

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The watching brief was commissioned on behalf of St Mary & St Gabriel PCC by Amanda le Page of Le Page Architects, and was managed for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The site works were carried out by Abigail Brown and Paul Cooke, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Leon Cauchois. Thanks are due to Mike Stott for providing information on the reference to the chapel in the churchyard recorded in Bishop Lacy's 1453 register.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out by AC archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a new porch and associated drainage at the Church of St Mary and St Gabriel, Stoke Gabriel, Devon (NGR SX 84919 57134).

A total of eight intercutting inhumation graves were exposed in the area excavated for the new porch for the church. These represented male and female individuals that were aged between approximately 1-4 years old and middle to old age. Finds recovered from the graves suggest that they were largely of 18th- to 19th-century date, while the recovery of 16th-century pottery from an early grave in the sequence of intercutting burials indicates the potential for a broader date range to be represented.

In the area to the east of the church a total of three possible stone wall footings measuring around 1m wide were exposed in the narrow drainage trench. Although poorly dated, the footings had the potential to date to the medieval period.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by AC archaeology between September and October 2017 at the Church of St Mary and St Gabriel, Stoke Gabriel, Devon (SX 84919 57134). Work comprised the monitoring of groundworks for the construction of a new porch with associated drainage, and was required under a Church of England faculty licence following consultation with the Diocesan Advisory Committee.
- 1.2 The Church of St Mary and St Gabriel is located to the south of the village and is bounded by Mill Pool, a creek lake fed by a tributary of the River Dart (Fig. 1). It is positioned on elevated ground at approximately 11m above Ordnance Datum, with the underlying solid geology comprising basaltic lava and basaltic tuff of the Ashprington Volcanic Formation (www.bgs.ac.uk).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The church of St Mary and St Gabriel is a Grade I listed building (National Heritage List for England no. 1108497). It is largely an early 15th-century rebuild but with a retained 13th-century tower (Plate 1). Much of the church was then restored in 1855. The 19th-century works also included the construction of two extensions to the south aisle. These consisted of a large vestry at the east end and a small central porch; the latter was replaced as part of current works.
- 2.2 Earlier parish records include speculation that the village housed a monastic establishment in medieval times. The Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) notes a historical reference to a former chapel dedicated to St Gabriel located within the east end of the graveyard (HER reference MDV70153), although mapping of the record has it located southwest of the church, along with a reference to a possible monastery (again east of the church), for which no detailed information is available (MDV112158). The chapel is recorded in Bishop Lacy's Register from 1453.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The principal aim of the archaeological monitoring and recording was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the scheme. This was with particular reference to:

- The potential for human remains to be present, to ensure that they were recorded and passed to the church for reburial; and,
- The potential for the buried remains of other former ecclesiastical buildings on the site.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** All works were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2016), and with reference to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (revised 2014).
- 4.2** Groundworks were undertaken by machine fitted with a toothless bucket and by hand under constant archaeological supervision. Following an initial overburden removal, where appropriate, areas were cleaned by hand to clearly identify grave outlines and other features. Where human remains were exposed by the work, they were recorded *in situ*, lifted and stored on site for subsequent re-burial.
- 4.3** All features and deposits exposed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's General Site Recording Manual, Version 2 (revised August 2012). Detailed plans were produced at a scale of 1:20.

5. RESULTS *with a contribution from Charlotte Coles*

5.1 Introduction (Plan Fig. 2)

Archaeological features were exposed during the excavation of footings for the new porch and during the excavation of the associated drainage trench. These are described below.

5.2 New porch (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 2)

The area for the new porch measured approximately 6m by 3.2m. It was initially reduced by 0.4m, with 0.8m wide footings trenches then excavated to a total depth of 1.2m below existing levels. The footings were excavated into a mixed mid brownish-red silty-loam graveyard soil (context 137), which was overlain by a 0.3m thick mid reddish-brown silty-clay levelling layer beneath 0.1m of modern gravels.

The excavations exposed a total of eight graves (F102, F105, F108, F111, F114, F117, F120 and F123) that were present between 0.3m and 0.7m below existing levels. These contained the remains of six adults and two children, that were all buried northeast to southwest and in the supine position. The graves were comprised of two intercutting groups (F111, F108, F105 and F102 to the northwest and graves F120, F117 and F114 to the southeast), with grave F123 separate to the south. These are described below in sequential order.

Grave F111 (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 3)

Grave F111 was the earliest in the northwest intercutting group of burials and as a result had been largely truncated by the later graves. It contained the *in situ* lower left leg of an adult skeleton (112) and was backfilled with a mid reddish-grey silty-clay (113). One sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from 113. Four iron coffin nails were also present.

Grave F108 (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 4)

Grave F108 measured 1.55m long and 0.55m wide. It contained the largely intact skeleton of an adult female (109). Its lower jaw displayed total ante-mortem tooth loss. The grave was backfilled

with a mid reddish-grey silty-clay (110), from which two sherds of post-medieval pottery and a scallop shell were recovered.

Grave F105 (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 5)

Grave F105 measured 1.68m long and 0.46m wide. The grave, which had been disturbed to the northeast, contained the otherwise intact skeleton of a probable female adult (106). This individual also had total ante-mortem tooth loss. The grave was backfilled with a mid greyish-red silty-clay (107). A copper alloy pin was present beneath the mandible of the skeleton and one sherd of medieval pottery and a fragment of tile were recovered from fill 107.

Grave F102 (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 6)

Grave F102 was the latest in the northeast group of intercutting graves. It measured 0.9m long by 0.26m wide and contained a child's skeleton (103) aged between 1 and 4 years old. Skeleton 103 was disturbed on the northeast side but was otherwise intact. The grave was backfilled with a mid greyish-red silty-clay (104). No finds were recovered.

Grave F120 (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 7)

Grave F120 represented the earliest in the southeast group of intercutting graves. It was not fully-exposed within the excavated area, but measured at least 1.2m long and 0.5m wide. The grave contained a poorly-preserved probable adult skeleton (120); only the fragmentary remains of the lower legs and part of the right arm and both hands were present. It was backfilled with a mid reddish-grey silty-clay (122). Four iron coffin nails were present.

Grave F117 (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 8)

Grave F117 extended in length beyond the area excavated and measured 0.6m wide. It contained an adult male skeleton (118), of which the torso, arms and upper legs were exposed. The skeleton displayed degraded disks in the spine in the lower thoracic and lumbar region as well as periostitis of the left femur and some ante-mortem tooth loss. It was backfilled with a mid reddish-grey silty-clay (119), from which a fragment of clay tobacco pipe and a mussel shell were recovered. Four iron coffin nails were also present.

Grave F114 (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 9)

Grave F114 was the latest in the southeast group of intercutting graves. It measured approximately 1.6m long and 0.54m wide. The grave contained the intact skeleton of a male juvenile of between 14 and 22 years old. Nine iron coffin nails were present and three copper alloy pins were exposed adjacent to the right foot and leg. It was backfilled with a mid reddish-grey silty-clay (116), from which one sherd of post-medieval pottery, a fragment of clay tobacco pipe and a tile fragment were recovered.

Grave F123 (Plan Fig. 3; Plate 10)

Grave F123 was located to the south of grave F114. It measured approximately 1.7m long and 0.5m wide. It contained an adult possible female skeleton (124) of which the hands and the majority of the legs were absent which was probably due to disturbance. There was some evidence for degenerative joint changes to the individual's spine. A group of 18th- to 19th-century copper alloy finds, comprising two small studs, a button and a pin, were present. Three iron coffin nails were also present. The grave was backfilled with a mid reddish-grey silty-clay (125).

5.3 Drainage trench (Plan Figs 2 and 4; Plate 11)

The drainage trench measured 0.4m wide and extended southeast from the porch area before continuing approximately east through the churchyard. It was excavated to a depth of 0.4m below existing levels into a mid reddish-brown silty-clay subsoil (136), which was overlain by a 0.26m thick dark reddish-brown silty-clay topsoil. The excavation exposed three possible stone wall footings (S128, S130 and S132) to the east of the church.

Possible footings S128 and S130 (Plan Fig. 4; Plates 12-13)

Possible footings S128 and S130 were approximately north to south aligned and spaced 3.4m apart. They measured 1m and 1.2m wide respectively and were constructed from un-faced stone rubble in a silty-clay bond. Both were within construction cuts (F127 and F129 respectively), which cut through subsoil 136.

Possible footing S132 (Plan Fig. 4; Plate 14)

Possible footing S132 was east to west aligned and was within a construction cut (F131). Its composition was not clear within the confines of the drainage trench, but it may have measured 1m wide. It was roughly faced on the south side, with stone rubble in a silty-clay bond elsewhere. The possible footing was overlain by a layer of probable collapsed stone or demolition (133). One sherd of medieval pottery and an iron bracket were recovered from layer 133.

6. FINDS by Charlotte Coles and John Allan with a contribution from Naomi Payne

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site during the monitoring and recording were retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. They have been quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage examined to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. The collection of finds is summarised in Table 1 below.

Context	Context description	Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Iron		Clay tobacco pipe		CBM		Plaster		Shell	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
101	Layer							1	5						
107	Fill of grave F105	1	8							1	22				
110	Fill of grave F108			2	1									1	2
113	Fill of grave F111			1	18										
116	Fill of grave F114			1	1			1	3	1	32				
119	Fill of grave F117							1	7					1	1
126	Layer			30	345	2	60	3	8			2	92		
133	Layer	1	27			1	15								
Total		2	35	34	365	3	75	6	23	2	54	2	92	2	3

Table 1: Summary of finds by context (weights in grams)

6.2 Medieval pottery

A total of two sherds (35g) of medieval pottery was recovered from two contexts. The first sherd is a base sherd of Totnes-type medieval jug, which is unglazed and sooted. The other sherd is a body sherd from a South Hampshire Redware globular jug with applied decoration and an external green glaze. This type of pottery is not commonly found in Devon. Both sherds date from c. 1250-1400.

6.3 Post-medieval pottery

A total of 34 sherds (365g) of post-medieval pottery was recovered from five contexts, the majority coming from layer 126. Most of the post-medieval pottery, which includes sherds of creamware, white salt-glazed stoneware, transfer-printed ware, glazed earthenwares and flowerpot, dates from the late 17th to the 20th century. The only earlier sherds are a sherd of North Devon calcareous pottery of 16th-century date from context 113 and a sherd from an

unglazed wheel-thrown Totnes-type vessel from context 126. The latter is possibly a jug fragment and dates from the 15th to the 17th centuries.

6.4 Metal finds by Naomi Payne

A total of three copper alloy pins was found in association with the lower legs and feet of skeleton 115 (grave cut F114, grave fill 116). All three pins are very similar, with spherical wound-wire heads, lengths between 27-29mm and the remains of a white metal coating, a feature which suggests a date after c. 1500 (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 299). A similar pin was recovered from underneath the mandible of skeleton 106 (grave cut F105, grave fill 107). Skeleton 124 (grave cut F123, grave fill 125) had several associated metal finds including two small copper alloy studs, a button and a pin, which were found just above the pelvis area. There was also a number of iron nails found around the skull and pelvis in this grave, the lower half of which was disturbed. The pin was very similar to those found with skeleton 115. The two studs were both circular domed coffin studs of 18th- or 19th-century date. The button was in very poor condition and cannot be closely dated. All of the finds associated with skeletons were reburied on site.

There were also three iron finds from other contexts. They include two well-made nails from layer 126 and an incomplete bracket from demolition layer 133.

6.5 Clay tobacco pipe

A total of six pieces (23g) of clay tobacco pipe was recovered from four contexts. The assemblage includes five stem fragments and one bowl and spur fragment. The bowl and spur fragment, which was recovered from context 119, is decorated with a coat of arms which features a unicorn to the right and a motto in relief under the crest. The motto cannot be read and the bowl is damaged so only a small amount of the crest survives, but it could be the Hanoverian arms. This bowl is dated the 18th century. There is a mark of AH on the spur in relief and this possibly relates to one of the Hoar family of pipe makers in Plymouth. Parallels have been found at St Andrew's Street, Plymouth, pipe number 38 (Oswald 1976) and at Shepherd's Wharf, Plymouth (Higgins 2013). The Hoar family were pipe makers in Plymouth from at least 1784-1857 (Higgins 2006).

6.6 Ceramic building material (CBM)

A total of two pieces of tile (54g) was recovered from two contexts. They include a small fragment of Normandy white ware tile with copper green glaze from context 107. This dates from AD 1490 to 1540. The other piece from context 116 is a fragment of Low Countries tile with a sandy red fabric and scraped white slip. This dates from the late-15th to the early-16th century.

6.7 Plaster

A total of two pieces of plaster (92g) was recovered from context 126. These are not closely datable.

6.8 Shell

A total of two very small fragments of shell (3g) was recovered from two contexts. They include a single piece of scallop shell from context 110 and a piece of mussel shell from context 119.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The monitoring of groundworks for the new porch and associated drainage trench have exposed archaeological features comprising a total of eight inhumation burials close to the church and three possible wall footings in the graveyard to the east.

7.2 The group of graves exposed adjacent to the entrance to the church represent individuals that range in age between a young child for F102, a young adult male for F114 and probable middle

to old age adult males and females for F105, F108, F117 and F123. The remains in graves F111 and F120 were too fragmentary to provide any diagnostic information on sex or age.

- 7.3** The earliest graves in the sequence of two intercutting groups were F111 and F120. While no finds were recovered from grave F120, the sherd of pottery from grave F111, may suggest a date range for the exposed burials that perhaps starts from the 16th century. Nevertheless, the subsequent graves in the two intercutting groups, F108 and F117, have been dated to the 18th to 19th centuries. This may suggest that the earlier date for grave F111 may be based on a residual find. Indeed, 16th-century finds were also recovered from sequentially later graves, while the medieval sherd from grave F105 is also clearly residual.
- 7.4** The possible stone footings exposed within the associated drainage trench have the potential to represent structural remains. These were demonstrated as cutting through an undated subsoil, but the excavations were not of a sufficient depth to expose their bases. While the dimensions of the excavated trench, at only 0.4m wide were limited, the exposed portion of the stone rubble features have the potential to represent wall footings of around 1m in width.
- 7.5** No structures are shown in this location on the 1840 Stoke Gabriel parish tithe map suggesting that the remains at least pre-date the 19th century. Despite the footings being poorly-dated, the sherd of 13th- to early 15th-century pottery recovered from overlying possible demolition deposit 133, could date the features. The clay (rather than lime mortar) bonding is also indicative of an early date. If the possible structural remains were of medieval origin, then their location would have the potential to correspond to the, albeit unclear, records of earlier monastic buildings to the east of the church.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1** The monitoring of the groundworks associated with the construction of the new porch and associated drainage exposed a total of eight intercutting inhumation graves. These represented male and female individuals that were aged between approximately 4 years old and middle to old age. Finds recovered from the graves suggest that they were largely of 18th- to 19th-century date, while the recovery of 16th-century pottery from an early grave in a sequence of intercutting burials has the potential to represent a broader date range.
- 8.2** In the area to the east of the church, a total of three possible stone wall footings measuring around 1m wide were exposed in the narrow associated drainage trench. Although poorly dated, the footings had the potential to date to the medieval period.

9. REFERENCES

British Geological Survey on-line viewer, www.bgs.ac.uk

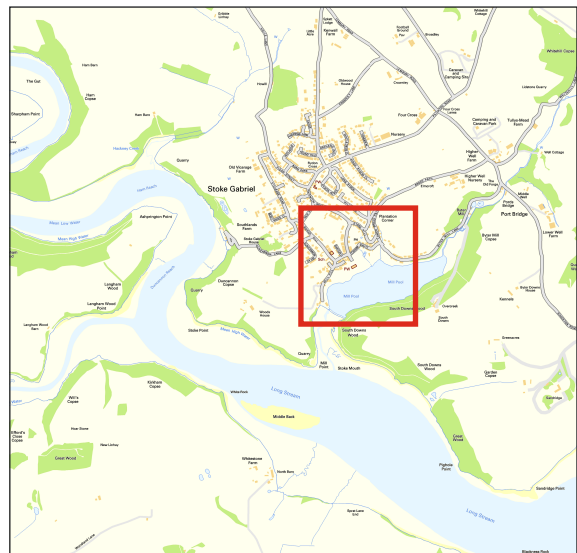
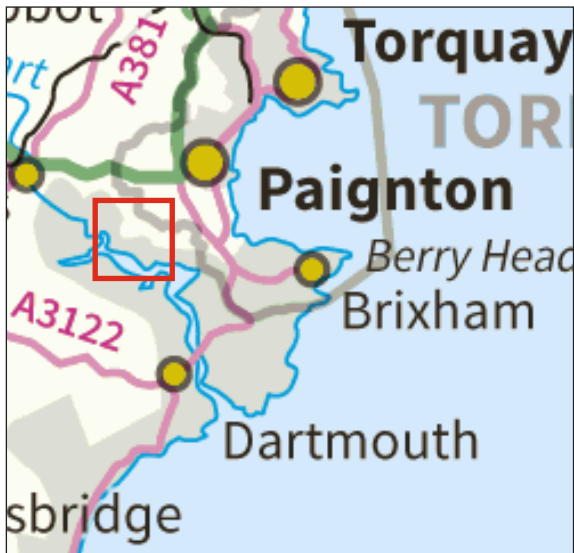
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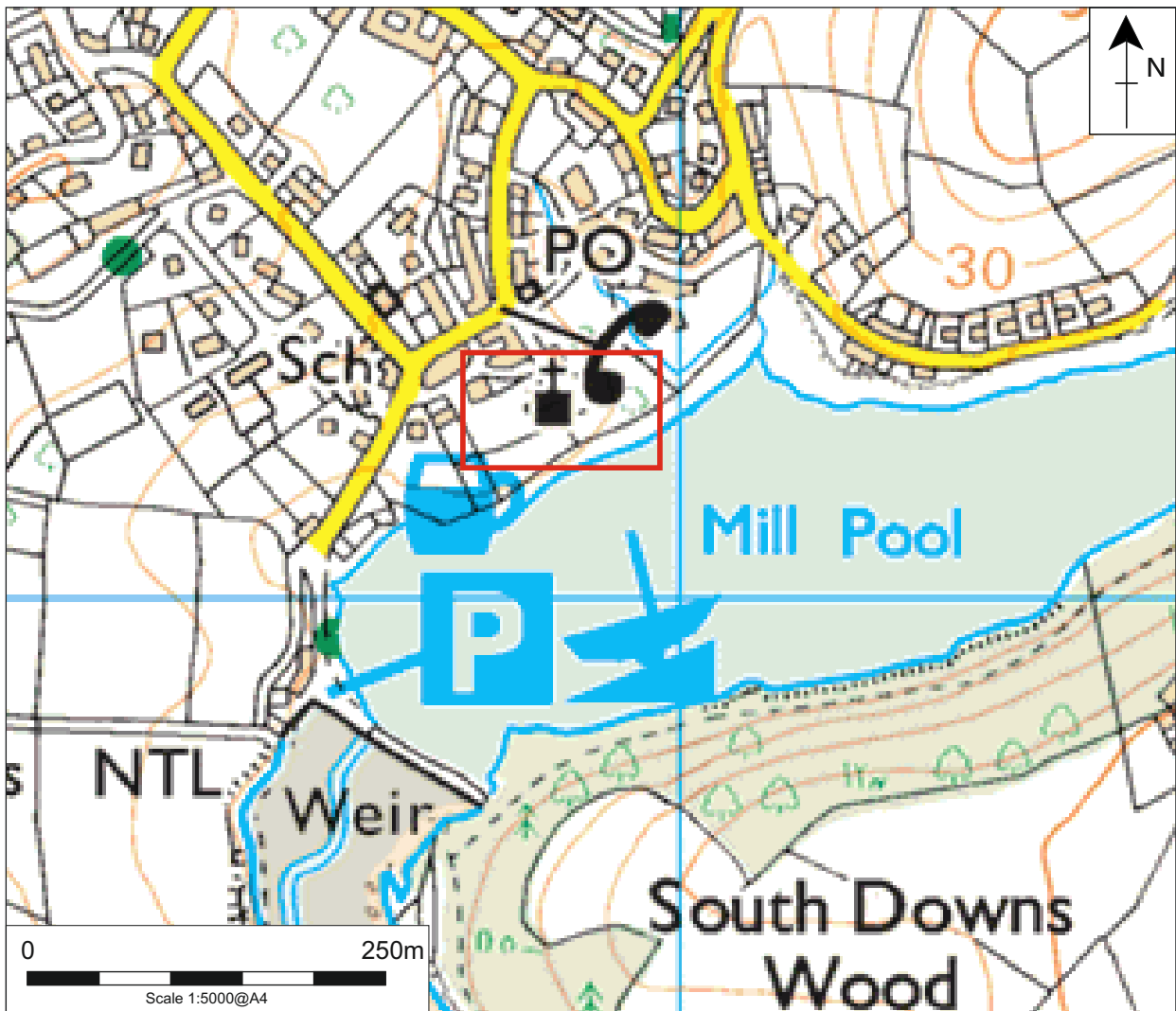
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PROJECT

Church of St Mary and St Gabriel, Stoke Gabriel, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



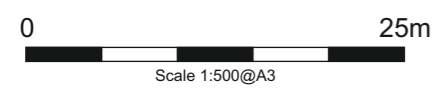
Key

- Application area
- Monitored areas

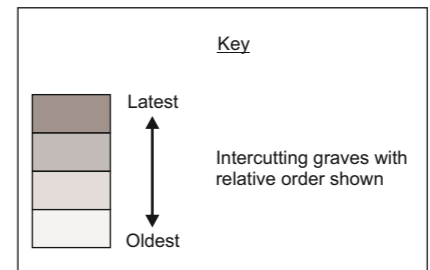
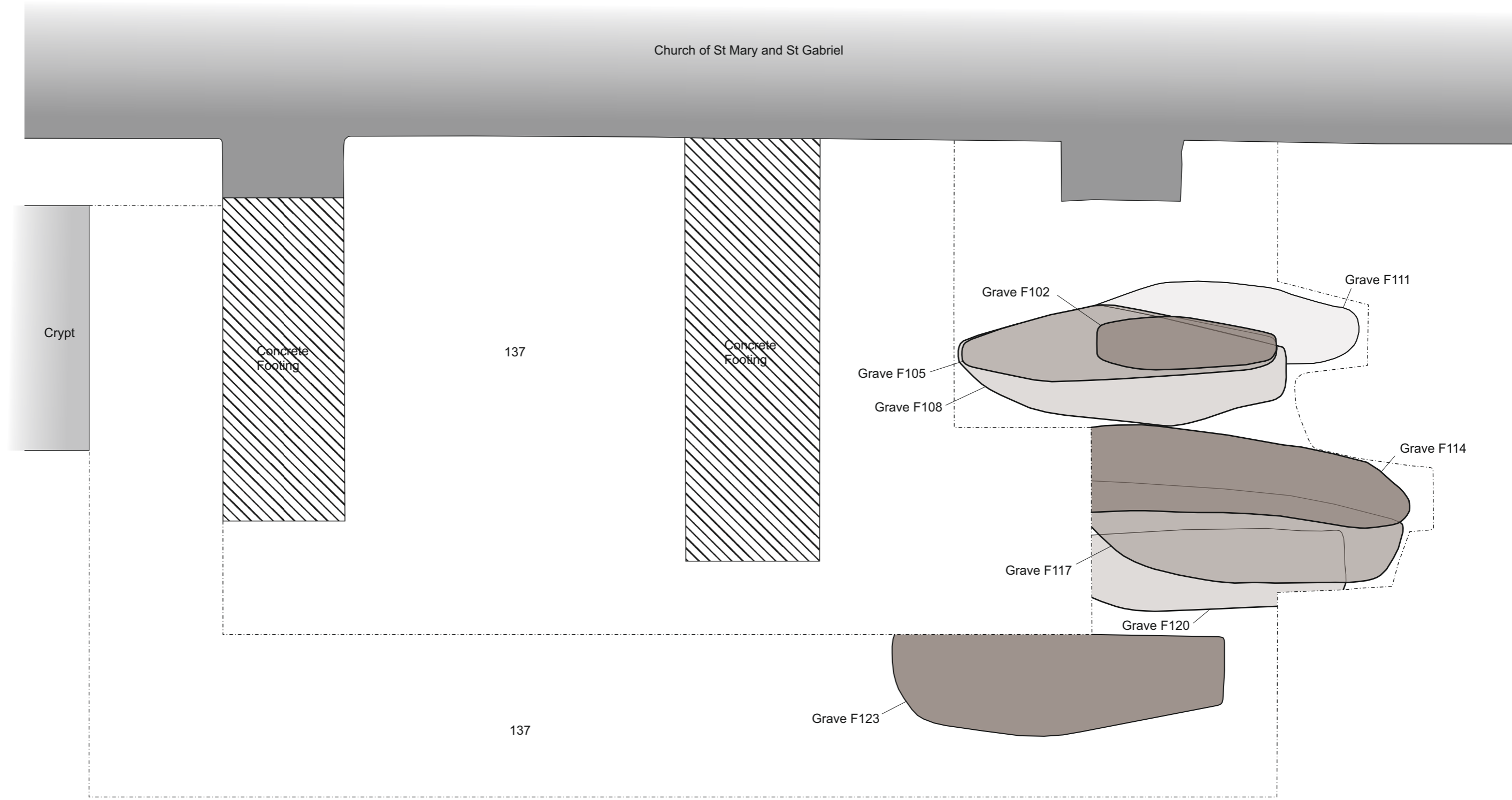
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 Fig. 2: Location of monitored
 areas

Based on drawing prepared by Le Page Architects



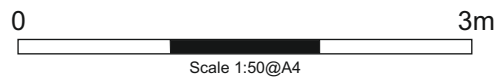
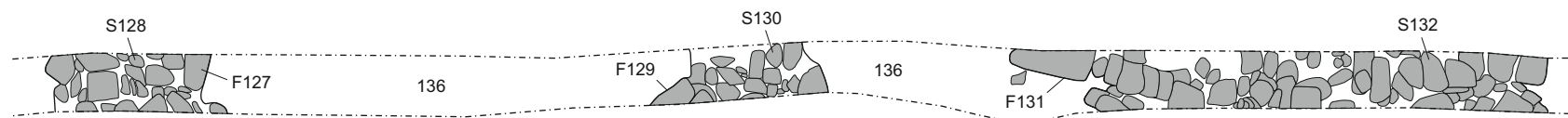
Church of St Mary and St Gabriel



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Stoke Gabriel, Devon

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Fig. 3: Plan of new porch area





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Stoke Gabriel, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 4: Plan of drainage trench





Plate 1: View looking north towards St Mary and St Gabriel Church



Plate 2: Area of new porch, looking west with grave F108 in foreground (scale 0.4m)



Plate 3: Grave F111, view to northwest (scale 0.4m)



Plate 4: Grave F108, view to northwest
(scale 1m)



Plate 5: Grave F105, view to southwest
(scale 0.4m)



Plate 6: Grave F102, view to southwest
(scale 0.4m)



Plate 7: Grave F120, view to southwest
(scale 0.3m)



Plate 8: Grave F117, view to northwest
(scale 1m)



Plate 9: Grave F114, view to northwest
(scale 0.4m)



Plate 10: Grave F123, view to southwest (scale 0.4m)



Plate 11: Drainage trench excavation, view to southwest (scale 0.3m)



Plate 12: Possible footing S128, view to east (scale 0.4m)



Plate 13: Possible footing S130, view to east (scale 0.3m)



Plate 14: Possible footing S132, view to east (scale 0.3m)

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