

# **Report on Archaeological Monitoring during drainage work**

## **St Margaret's Church, Stanfield, Norfolk**

**ENF ref. 139399**



**Prepared for Stanfield PCC**

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<b>Project name</b>	<b>St Margaret's Church, Stanfield</b>
<b>Parish</b>	<b>Stanfield</b>
<b>District</b>	<b>Breckland</b>
<b>Grid reference</b>	<b>TF 9395 2076</b>
<b>NHER Ref.</b>	<b>ENF 139399</b>
<b>Date of fieldwork</b>	<b>20th March - 20th April 2017</b>

## **Summary**

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during drainage works at St Margaret's Church, Stanfield. It led to the recording of some of the church footings and part of one possible cut feature close to the north side of the church; its purpose was uncertain but it might, possibly, have related to previous drainage work.

Part of a burial was exposed in one of the small trenches at the south side of the church but its excavation was unnecessary as it was below the depth required for the drains.

A few fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered from the excavated trenches. They were left in the care of the church for reburial in the churchyard.

No finds were recovered during the work at the site.

## **1.0 Introduction**

St Margaret's Church is situated at the east side of Stanfield village which itself is just west of the junction between the B1145 and B1146 roads in mid Norfolk (approximately mid-way between Fakenham and Dereham) (TF 9395 2076).

Building improvements were being undertaken at the church by Nicholas Warns Architect Ltd and EFL contractors for Stanfield PCC. The work included installing new gutters and downpipes with associated drainage gullies along each side of the church. The new gullies were connected to existing drains. The only new drain required was at the west side of the south porch where a trench was dug to connect the new gully to a drain existing to the south.

A new electricity supply to the church which was proposed (Bates 2016) was not installed during the present work.

The archaeological work involved monitoring and recording during the groundworks for the new drainage scheme (Fig. 1). The work accorded to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Sarah Bates to meet the requirements of a brief set by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (NHES Generic Brief for the Monitoring of Works under Archaeological Supervision and Control).

Stanfield PCC funded the improvement work at the church.

The archaeological archive will, on completion of the project, be deposited with the Norfolk Museums Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards. An Oasis form is included below as Appendix 1.

## **2.0 Geology and topography**

The underlying solid geology of the area is chalk, overlaid by glacial moraine deposits of till and outwash sand and gravel (Lowestoft Formation and Briton's Lane Sand and Gravel Member). From these deposits are formed the relatively poor soils of the Central Norfolk Claylands on which the site is located (British Geological Survey © NERC 2017, Williamson 2005).

The church is positioned at the eastern edge of the existing village which spreads along the road to its west/north-west. Church Lane and Back Lane run respectively along the north and east sides of the churchyard the grassed bank edges of which slope down to the road (as does a bank from the existing car park on the opposite side of Church Lane). There is no boundary wall to the church yard. To the south of the churchyard are gardens of the neighbouring property and to the west there is a small bank sloping quite sharply down to pasture which then slopes down more gently westwards.

A benchmark on the north-east corner of the chancel is at 63.62m OD.

## **3.0 Archaeological and historical background**

The existing church building comprises nave and chancel of equal width, square west tower and south porch.

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER no. 7184) describes the chancel and tower as 13th century and suggests that the nave quoins may represent surviving remains of an 11th or 12th-century church. The NHER also mentions the 15th-century square-headed Perpendicular style windows in the nave and the Early English style east window – which was installed in 1864 and lists a 15th-century screen, late medieval poppyhead pew ends, and 17th-century pulpit and other woodwork.

A conservation report was written for this project by Hugh Richmond (2016). His interpretation of the structural development of the building is summarised here: the earliest parts of the building are the mid 13th-century chancel walls (up to a level just above the top of the side windows) and the chancel lancets. The nave, although not including any surviving dateable 13th-century features is the same width as the chancel and considered to be of the same period. The foundations of some buttresses on the north side of the nave probably date from the 13th century. The west window in the tower window dates from c.1300 and suggests that the church was built from east to west.

Richmond dates the chancel arch, north and south doorways and the porch date from the 14th century. The nave was remodelled in the 15th century; its walls, and those of the chancel, were probably raised during this period and new windows were installed in

the nave and new internal fittings installed as well as wall paintings made. The buttresses were also rebuilt to enable the new windows to be installed (see below).

A drawing by Ladbrooke from c. 1820 shows that the roofs of both chancel and nave were replaced in the 19th-century (the image shows the chancel with a higher pitched roof and the nave roof with a lower pitch than presently). The drawing also shows the east end of the church with a small rectangular window centrally placed within a larger pointed arch headed opening (this replaced in 1864 (see above). The porch was also re-roofed in the 19th century (Richmond 2016).

Excavation of 'dry areas' in the churchyard in the 1980s led to the recovery of sherds of Roman and medieval pottery and showed the foundations of the church to consist of flint rubble with larger flints at the buttresses (NHER). The dry areas (referred to in the NHER and hereafter), form open wide shallow lower areas alongside the walls of the nave and chancel with the ground sloping down into them from the surrounding churchyard. They are infilled with flint shingle. At the north side of the nave, two lumps of flint masonry which protrude from the base of the wall have been exposed in the area there, each one just west of an existing central buttresses. They are former buttress footings – these two buttresses appear to have been moved to allow the window replacements in the 15th century. At each end of the same nave wall the buttresses were rebuilt on their original footings.

Other sites and finds recorded in the NHER within a 500m radius of the church include Late Saxon and medieval pottery sherds from around Chapel Farm to the west and Late Saxon sherds from immediately north of the church. A medieval moated site just to the south-east of the church was complete in 1815 and is shown on a mid 19th-century tithe map (Norfolk County Council 2012) but the last surviving part of the ditch was infilled in 2003. To the west and north of the church the route of a gas pipeline was subject to archaeological survey and excavation in the late 1990s and finds of prehistoric to post-medieval date were recovered and a few features including Iron Age pits and a medieval or post-medieval ditch were excavated. A large area 300-900m to the south and south-east of the church was archaeologically surveyed and part-excavated in advance of quarrying in the 1990s and 2000s. An Iron Age pit, a Roman ditch, an Early Saxon building and post-medieval ditches were excavated and finds included prehistoric flint and Roman to post-medieval pottery, coins and metal finds. Finds of Mesolithic to post-medieval date have been recovered during fieldwalking and metal detecting slightly further from the church.

## **4.0 Methodology**

Archaeological monitoring aimed to observe and record the presence or absence, location, nature and date of any surviving archaeological deposits within the areas affected by improvement works.

The drain trenches were dug by machine and by hand by the site contractors.

The location of the trenches was recorded and trenches were assigned context numbers for the purpose of reference and description. *Pro forma* context sheets were used to record the trenches.

No articulated skeletons (or parts thereof) were found. Disarticulated bone was recorded and bagged by context. The human remains were left in the care of the church for reburial in the churchyard.

Digital and black and white film photographs recorded the archaeological deposits and the work at the site generally.

No finds of archaeological significance were retrieved and no deposits required sampling for environmental assessment.

Site conditions (weather, light and access) were generally good although there was some rain.

## **5.0 Results (Figs. 1 and 2, Plates 1-11)**

Context numbers are shown in square brackets and listed in Appendix 2.

Deposits below the topsoil which had accumulated due to the repeated digging and redeposition of material by grave-digging or other activity but where individual features were not identifiable are referred to as churchyard soil.

### **South of the church**

Four new gullies were installed along the south side of the building (Fig. 1, Plate 1). Apart from Trench [1] the gullies were positioned within the reduced 'dry area' alongside the church wall and were connected to an existing ceramic drain pipe which ran from west to east within the shingled area. This area is approximately 0.30m below the level of the surrounding grass churchyard at its west end and 0.50m deep at its east end. The footings of the buttresses were just exposed in the bottom of the dry area.

### ***Trench 1***

Located near the south-west corner of the nave Trench [1] was 0.85 x 0.60m in size but did not extend as far north as the church wall. It was dug to full depth (max, 0.60m), the new gully set in position and water had accumulated in the bottom of the open trench before observation by the archaeologist. The orange brown slightly clayey silty sand churchyard soil with occasional flints and flecks of mortar and very small pieces of slate was seen in the lower part of the trench and was overlaid by brown sandy loam topsoil.

A trench was dug from the south side of gully [1] for a drain pipe to connect with an existing clay drain pipe which was exposed in a small trench approximately 7m to the SSE (Plate 2). The trench was 0.30m wide and between 0.28m and 0.35m in depth and the existing drain pipe was exposed at a depth of 0.40m. The orange brown churchyard soil (see above) was just seen in some areas but, mostly, only topsoil was excavated from the trench. A few fragments of human bone were found together in the bottom of the trench near the clay pipe. They probably represented the 'reburial' of bone found when the drain was laid.

## **Trench 2**

Trench [2] was located at the west side of the nave's second side buttress. It was approximately 1.30 x 0.75m in size and a maximum depth (where the gully pot was to be positioned) of 0.75m.

The footings of the nave and its buttress were exposed (Plate 3). The nave footing was flush with the wall above and comprised irregular medium sized flints and, also, a large block of possible carstone. The buttress footing included larger flints and protruded 0.15m from the bottom of the buttress with one very large tabular slab protruding up to 0.25m.

Orange brown clayey silty sand churchyard soil was seen in the bottom of the pot hole. This was overlaid by mixed soils with dark brown sandy silt and orange sand, with some large pieces of brick and a lump of breeze block. These had probably been deposited when the existing drain pipe was installed. Around and above the clay pipe was the shingle infill of the dry area.

## **Trench 3**

Trench [3] was located at the west side of the nave's south-east corner buttress. It was approximately 1.20 x 0.60m in size.

The nave and buttress footing were exposed (Plate 4). The nave footing comprised a lower part with flints and orange silty sand (the bottom of which was not reached) and, above that, and flush with the face of the wall, flints (mainly quite regular cobbles) in coarse gritty mortar. The buttress footing protruded 0.15m from the bottom of the buttress and consisted a lower deposit of flints and orange silty sand and an upper more substantial and solid part of mortared medium and large flints.

In the bottom of the pot hole, at a depth of 1.00m below the bottom of the plinth chamfer on the buttress and 0.85m south of the nave wall, the articulated leg bones (possibly left leg) of a skeleton were exposed (Plate 5). These bones (femur and tibia) were left *in situ* and some soil replaced upon them before the gully pot was positioned. Above the burial was light brown silty sand churchyard soil with occasional small flints and rare medium to large flints. Large fragments from two skulls and an almost complete femur, as well as some more fragmentary human bone, were found about 0.10m above the *in situ* leg bones. They had probably been disturbed and reburied here – perhaps when the existing drain was laid or, possibly, when the lower burial was interred. Above this was the shingle infill of the dry area. The west side of a brick feature was just exposed in the lower part of the east side of Trench [3] (visible in Plate 4). It was thought to be an inspection chamber relating to the existing drains.

## **Gully at south side of chancel**

This trench was observed and photographed (see archive) but was not recorded in detail. The brown churchyard soil was seen in the deeper part of the trench dug to install the gully pot. Above that was the shingle of the dry area (and mortar dust and rubble which derived from the contractors inserting stone blocks into the wall above to support the new downpipes.

## **North of the church**

Four new gullies were also installed along the north side of the building, all but Trench [7] within the dry area there (Fig. 1). As at the south side of the building they were connected to an existing ceramic drain pipe which ran from west to east within the shingled area. The footings of the buttresses were just exposed in the bottom of the dry area and those of the former buttresses (see above) can also be seen just west of the two existing side buttresses of the nave (Plates 6 and 7).

### ***Trench 4***

Trench [4] was located near the north-east corner of the chancel. It was approximately 1.00 x 0.70m in size although a larger area was disturbed to the west in its upper part due to the removal, by the contractors, of an existing brick inspection chamber. The trench did not extend as far as the church wall; its footing was not exposed.

In the deepest part of the trench (about 0.60m below the lowest part of the dry area and about .90m below the grass to the north) some dark orange sand was seen and may have been a natural deposit (Plate 8). Above it was orange brown churchyard soil and the shingle infill of the dry area. Nothing of archaeological significance was seen.

### ***Trench 5***

Trench [5] was located just west of the nave's north-east corner buttress. It was 1.10m from north to south and 1.60m (max) wide although a larger area was disturbed to the west in its upper part due to the removal, by the contractors, of an existing brick inspection chamber. The trench did not extend as far as the church wall; its footing was not exposed.

In the lowest part of the trench (at a depth of 0.75m from surface at the bottom of the dry area) was seen orange brown sand with occasional flint gravel (Plate 9). This was thought to be a natural deposit. In the excavated sloping south side of the trench a possible cut 'feature' [8] was filled with light brown silty sand with occasional small flints and rare flecks and small fragments of mortar [9] (Fig. 2, Plate 9,). At the bottom of this feature were some fragments of human bone two of which appeared to be articulated although their position and alignment did not support their being part of an *in situ* burial; it seems likely that they were redeposited together (The bone fragments were at a depth of 0.90m below the bottom of the chamfered plinth of the buttress). The extent and purpose of the recorded feature are unknown. It is possible that it related to the existing drains (although its firm homogenous fill did not include any modern brick or other material), or it may have related to other digging close to the church wall. It seemed that the 'feature' was cut to its south by the dry area within which was the existing ceramic drain pipe and shingle infill.

### ***Trench 6***

Trench [6] was located just east of the nave's second side buttress. It was 1.40m x 0.60m in size and did not extend as far as the church so the wall footing was not exposed.



Dark orange sand was exposed in the lower 0.10m of the trench. The top of this sand, which was interpreted as a natural deposit, was 0.90m below the bottom of the lowest stone block of the buttress. It was overlaid by orange brown silty sand churchyard soil and the shingle infill (and ceramic drain pipe) within the dry area.

Nothing of archaeological significance was seen.

### ***Trench 7***

Trench [7] was located at the north-west corner of the nave. It was 1.60m x 1.20m in size and dug to a maximum depth of 0.90m (Plate 10). The sides and base of the trench were slightly irregular (and the trench larger than required for the new gully) due to the removal by the contractors of an existing brick inspection chamber.

Slightly orange brown slightly clayey silty sand churchyard soil was seen in most of the lower part of the trench. At the south side, however, close to the church and beneath the buttress and nave wall footings was gritty brownish orange silty sand with moderate numbers of small and medium sized flints. This may have been within a construction cut the south side of which sloped up and out away from the church wall and was underneath the buttress (although this is uncertain) (no section recorded – see Plate 11). The bottom of this deposit was not reached in the excavated trench. The nave footing comprised flints of various sizes with cream mortar. It protruded 0.12m north from the bottom of the nave wall and it continued eastwards ‘behind’ the brownish orange soil below the buttress footing. Thus the buttress footing, which was of larger flints laid in regular courses, butted against the nave footing and was of later date. It appeared to be of relatively shallow depth; three courses of flints, and it protruded 0.15m from the bottom of the buttress (the footing was visible prior to excavation in the bottom of the dry area).

Nothing else of interest was seen in the trench.

A trench was dug for a drain running from gully [7] to an existing brick inspection chamber/soakaway to the south-west (approximate position shown in Fig. 1). The trench was 0.30m wide and between 0.60m and 0.80m deep. Brown churchyard soil overlaid by the topsoil was exposed and nothing of significance was seen.

## **6.0 The finds**

No finds were recovered during the work at the site.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

In a few areas brownish orange sand was seen which was probably an undisturbed natural deposit.

The flint footings of the church and its buttresses were recorded in several of the trenches. In other areas the trenches did not extend as far as the church walls and footings were not exposed.

Part of the leg bones of an articulated skeleton were exposed in the bottom of trench at the south side of the nave. It was not necessary to remove the bones from the trench; they were left in place and re-covered with soil before the new gully was installed.

In one trench at the north side of the church part of a possible feature was recorded in the side of the trench. Its purpose was unknown but some fragments of human bone were found at its base. The feature may have related to the existing drains but probably predated those. It seemed unlikely to be a grave as it was very close to the wall of the church.

All human bone recovered during the work was left in the care of the church and its reburial was arranged by the churchwarden.

No other finds were recovered during the site work and no other deposits of features of archaeological significance were observed.

**Acknowledgements**

The archaeological work was commissioned and funded by Stanfield PCC. The drainage and building works were designed by Nicholas Warns Architect Ltd and undertaken by EFL site contractors.

The advice of and interest of Gethin Harvey (Nicholas Warns Architect Ltd) and Stanfield PCC is gratefully acknowledged. Information from the NHER was provided by staff of Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

Archaeological monitoring and recording was by Sarah Bates. Figure 1 is based upon a plan of the church provided by Nicholas Warns Architect Ltd.

**References:**

Bates, S., 2016	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation, Monitoring of Works Under Archaeological Supervision and Control, St Margaret's Church, Stanfield, Norfolk</i> , Prepared on behalf of Nicholas Warns Architect Ltd for Stanfield PCC
British Geological Survey 2015	<a href="http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html">http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html</a>
Norfolk County Council 2012	<a href="http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/">http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/</a>
Richmond, H., 2016	<i>The Church of St. Margaret, Stanfield, Norfolk</i> , Conservation Report. Heritage Lottery Fund Grant Ref. No. GP-14-06905
Williamson, T., 2005	'Soil Landscapes' in Ashwin, T. and Davison, A. <i>An Historical Atlas of Norfolk</i> (Third Edition)

# Appendix 1

## OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

### Printable version

**OASIS ID: sarahbat1-285497**

#### Project details

Project name	Drainage works at St Margaret's Church, Stanfield
Short description of the project	Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during drainage works at St Margaret's Church, Stanfield. It led to the recording of some of the church footings and part of one possible cut feature close to the north side of the church; its purpose was uncertain but it might, possibly, have related to previous drainage work. Part of a burial was exposed in one of the small trenches at the south side of the church but its excavation was unnecessary as it was below the depth required for the drains. A few fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered from the excavated trenches. They were left in the care of the church for reburial in the churchyard. No finds were recovered during the work at the site.
Project dates	Start: 20-03-2017 End: 20-04-2017
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	139399 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	INHUMATION Medieval
Monument type	INHUMATION Post Medieval
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK BRECKLAND STANFIELD St Margaret's Church, Stanfield
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TF 9395 2076 52.74917657828 0.87399650493 52 44 57 N 000 52 26 E Point

#### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Sarah Bates
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Sarah Bates

Project director/manager	Sarah Bates
Project supervisor	Sarah Bates
Type of sponsor/funding body	PCC
Name of sponsor/funding body	Stanfield PCC

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Norfolk Museum and Archaeology Service
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Norfolk Museum and Archaeology Service
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic", "Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Miscellaneous Material", "Plan"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Report on Archaeological Monitoring during drainage work, St Margaret Church, Stanfield, Norfolk, ENF ref. 139399
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Bates, S.
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Entered on	8 August 2017

## OASIS:



## Appendix 2; List of contexts

<b>Context</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Contractor's trench		trench for new gully
2	Contractor's trench		trench for new gully
3	Contractor's trench		trench for new gully
4	Contractor's trench		trench for new gully
5	Contractor's trench		trench for new gully
6	Contractor's trench		trench for new gully
7	Contractor's trench		trench for new gully
8	Feature	8	possible feature
9	Feature fill	9	fill of possible feature

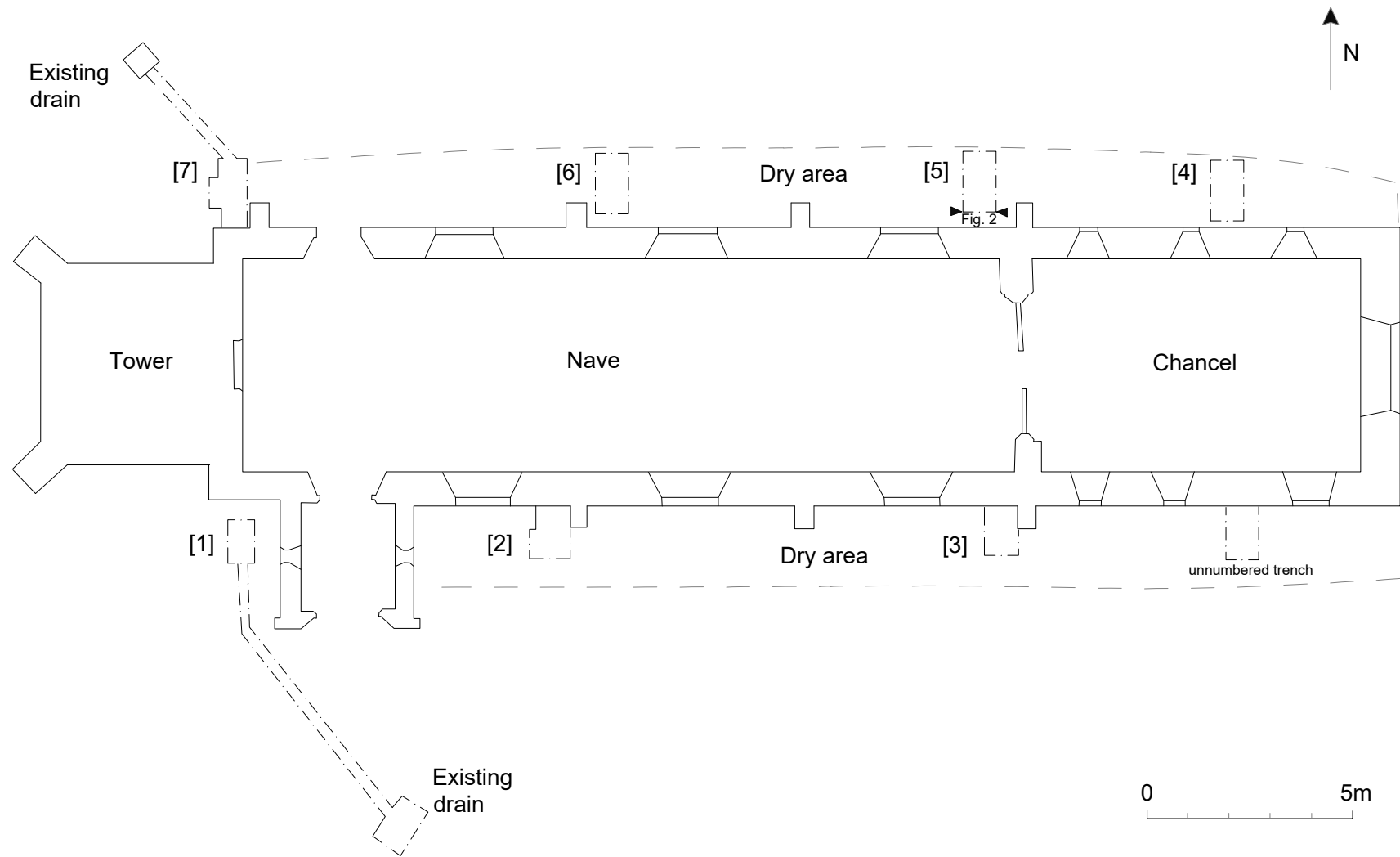


Figure 1: St Margaret's Church showing position of trenches, scale 1:150

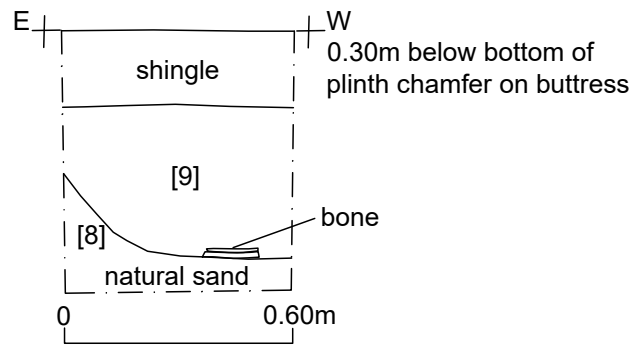


Figure 2: Trench 5; N facing section, scale 1:20





Plate 1: 'Dry area' and work in progress at S side of church, looking W



Plate 2: Trench S of S porch, looking N,  
0.5m scale



Plate 3: Trench [2]; nave and buttress footings, looking NNE, 0.5m scale



Plate 4: Trench [3]; nave and buttress footings, looking NNE, 0.5m scale



Plate 5: Trench [3]; *in situ* leg bones, looking E, 0.5m scale



Plate 6 'Dry area' at N side of church prior to work, buttress footings visible, looking SE,



Plate 7: Work in progress N of church, looking SW



Plate 8: Trench [4], looking SSE, 0.5m scale



Plate 9: Trench 5; orange ?natural sand cut by possible feature [8], looking SE, 0.5m scale



Plate 10: Trench 7; buttress footings at NW corner of nave, 0.5m scale



Plate 11: Trench 7; buttress and nave footings at NW corner of nave, looking SE, 0.5m scale