



# St Mary's Church, Bampton, Oxfordshire

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

December 2017

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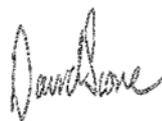
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## St Mary's Church, Bampton, Oxfordshire

### *Archaeological Evaluation Report*

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## Summary

*In November 2017, an evaluation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology at St. Mary's Church, Bampton, Oxfordshire, to investigate the potential for burial archaeology below the current flagstone floor of the church. The work was undertaken on behalf of the church to assess the archaeological impact of two new glass screens at the edges of the North Transept.*

*The excavations reached a maximum depth of 0.6m below current ground level before identifying archaeological deposits. Although there is the potential for the presence of burials (e.g. earth cut graves, brick lined tombs), no evidence was found. Archaeological activity comprised two floor surfaces of unknown date, most likely associated with earlier phases of the church.*

*Based on the evaluation results, the foundation of the glass screens can be accommodated under the current floor surface without impacting either the earlier surfaces or disturbing articulated human remains. The archaeology found underneath the flagstone floor can therefore be preserved in-situ.*

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## Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank David Pendery, Pendery Architecture & Heritage Ltd, for commissioning this project.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Carl Champness. The fieldwork was undertaken by Lauren McIntyre. The archive was prepared under the management of Nicky Scott.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Scope of work**

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology were commissioned by Pendery Architecture & Heritage Ltd on behalf of the church to undertake an archaeological evaluation at St Mary's Church, Bampton. The investigation comprised three trenches to investigate the potential for burial remains beneath the current church floor, in lieu of the installation of two glass screens in the North Transept of St. Mary's Church in Bampton, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 A brief was set by Julian Munby, Archaeological Adviser for the Oxford Diocese, recommended an investigation as part of the proposed works. The trenches were located along the south and west edges of the North Transept. Works combined hand lifting of stone flagstones with further hand excavation below, to ensure no damage would be caused to either the flagstone floor or any underlying archaeological deposits.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching briefs (2014) and local and national planning policies.

### **1.2 Location, topography and geology**

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the west side of the village of Bampton, Oxfordshire, on the south side of Church Close and the west side of Church View (Figure 1: SP 31264 03324). Bampton is located on the west side of Oxfordshire. The church floor level lies at approximately c 72m OD.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology is mapped as Kellaways Formation and Oxford Clay Formation, comprising mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet no. 201).

### **1.3 Archaeological and historical background**

- 1.3.1 The Church of Saint Mary the Virgin is the parish church in Bampton, Oxfordshire, and the Diocese of Oxford (Plate 1). The church is a Grade I listed building (ref: SP3003-3103). The church dates from the 12th century. It is on the site of a late Saxon Minster, the tower of which survives in the present church. It has a 13th-century spire, and a carved stone reredos of Christ and his Apostles from about 1400.
- 1.3.2 It is likely that the earlier late Saxon church was severely damaged in the siege of Bampton that took place in 1142. The only surviving element of the church from before that time is the Anglo-Saxon tower (now housing the staircase to the bell ringing chamber) evidenced by the fine herringbone stonework. It seems likely that rebuilding work began in 1153.
- 1.3.3 The church was again restored in 1870 under the direction of Mr Ewan Christian, architect, the parish advancing £1,000 for the purpose. The present church floor surface would have been installed during this period, but also mostly likely lifted during the installation of modern services.

## **2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Project aims and methodology**

- 2.1.1 The primary aim of the archaeological investigation was to ascertain, as far as practicable, the chronology, form and function of archaeological features and deposits affected by the proposed development. Also to ensure that no articulated human remains would be impacted by the proposed works.
- 2.1.2 A total of three trenches were excavated to investigate the potential for below-floor archaeological burial deposits in lieu of the installation of two glass screens in the North Transept (Fig. 2). These trenches were located on the west (Trench 3) and south (Trenches 1 and 2) sides of the North Transept, and were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.25m (Trench 1), 0.6m (Trench 2) and 0.45m (Trench 3).
- 2.1.3 Stone floor slabs were lifted by stonemasons from Natural Stone Craft Ltd., under archaeological supervision. Trenches were then hand excavated by the archaeologist until the first archaeological horizon was reached.
- 2.1.4 All intrusive work was recorded through digital photography. A drawn record was also kept, with all excavations being drawn in plan at a scale of 1:20 and in section at a scale of 1:10.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The three trenches were located according to the proposed positioning of the two glass screens. Trench 1 in particular was located to investigate an area where three memorial stones were set into the church floor (Plate 2). All three memorial stones were engraved with an 18th century date. It was unclear whether these stones were in their original location or whether they had been moved and re-laid during 19th century refurbishment of the church. All trenches were located in positions that would avoid disturbance of modern services.

### 3.2 Trench 1 (Figs 2 and 4; Plate 3)

3.2.1 The earliest archaeological horizon identified was a compact layer of reddish brown sandy silt mixed with pale buff-white mortar, with sub-angular limestone inclusions measuring <30mm (104: Figures 2 and 4). Layer 104 extended beyond the limit of excavation in all directions. The compactness of this layer suggests that it may represent an earlier floor surface. No finds were present: this surface remains undated.

3.2.2 Context 104 was overlain by a 0.05m thick layer of friable pale buff-white mortar (103). This layer extended beyond the limits of excavation.

3.2.3 Context 103 was overlain by a 0.08-0.1m thick layer of friable pale reddish brown sandy silt mixed with pale buff-white mortar (102). Frequent angular limestone rubble inclusions were present, measuring <150mm.

3.2.4 Context 102 was overlain by a 0.05m thick layer of fine pale buff-white mortar bedding (101). This extended beyond the limit of excavation.

3.2.5 Layer 101 was sealed by 0.04m thick flagstone floor (100: the current church floor surface).

### 3.3 Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 5; Plates 4-6)

3.3.1 The earliest archaeological horizon reached was a W-E running structure comprising roughly hewn angular limestones measuring 0.15m x 0.1m (Figures 3 and 5; Plates 5 and 6). Only one course of masonry was exposed, and the overall structure measured >0.4m N-S (extending beyond the limit of excavation on both sides) and 0.26m W-E. The limited trench size meant that it was not possible to determine whether this structure ran underneath adjacent structure 207, or whether 208 butted 207. Furthermore, the date and function of structure 208 was unclear.

3.3.2 Structure 208 was adjacent to (and possibly overlain by) a N-S running structure (207) comprising irregular, sub-angular limestone blocks measuring between 0.15m x 0.1m x 0.08m – 0.25m x 0.2m x 0.12m. The west side of the structure was roughly faced. This structure was more than two courses high, but these two courses were rather irregularly placed. The limestone blocks were bonded with a coarse light brown mortar with rounded pebble inclusions. Overall, the visible structure measured 0.45m long, 0.35m wide and >0.17m deep. It is possible, but not confirmed, that this structure

represents part of the Transept's archway foundation. The structure continued beyond the limit of excavation to the north.

- 3.3.3 Structure 207 was overlain by a friable pale-mid brownish red silty sand layer, mixed with powdered pale buff-white mortar and frequent sub-angular limestone inclusions measuring <80mm (209). This layer was >0.25m deep and measured 0.5m x 0.4m. It is unclear whether 209 is the same as context 203, located to the south.
- 3.3.4 Context 209 was overlain by two contexts: a compact reddish brown sandy silt mixed with pale buff-white mortar with occasional rounded pebbles measuring <40mm and frequent sub-angular limestone inclusions measuring <40mm to the north (202); a coarse pale buff-white mortar layer with sub-angular limestone inclusions to the south (211). Context 202 measured 1.55m long and 0.4m wide, and was likely the eastern continuation of floor surface 104 from Trench 1, being extremely similar in both composition and depth within the trench. Service trench 204 cut through 202 on the north and west sides. Context 211 was only visible in the south facing section, measuring 0.6m in length and 0.09m in depth, and running below context 210 to the south. It is unclear whether 211 was a heavily disturbed continuation of floor 202.
- 3.3.5 Layer 211 was overlain by foundation structure 210: part of the foundation for the extant church structure. This context was only visible in the south facing section, with the north face butted by 202.
- 3.3.6 Floor surface 202 was overlain by friable pale reddish brown sandy silt mixed with pale buff-white powdered mortar, with frequent sub-angular limestones measuring <100mm, frequent chunks of sub-angular mortar measuring <60mm, and occasional red brick fragments measuring <80mm (201). This layer was 0.1m in depth, measured 1.85 x 0.5m, and was cut by modern service trench 204 on the north and west sides. This deposit was very similar to 102 in Trench 1, and may also be a levelling deposit for current flagstone floor surface 206.
- 3.3.7 Layer 201 was overlain by a layer of fine pale buff-white mortar, measuring 1.85m x 0.5m and 0.07m in depth (200). This was cut on the north and west sides by service trench 204. This was the bedding layer for flagstone floor 206.
- 3.3.8 Layer 201 was overlain by a 0.04m thick flag floor (206, same as 100).
- 3.3.9 Modern service trench 204 cut through layers 200, 201, 202 and 206, and was located along the north and west extents of Trench 2. This cut measured >1.85m by >0.5m, was up to 0.46m wide and >0.2m in depth. After service installation, the cut was backfilled with a loose pale brownish red sandy silt mixed with pale buff-white powdered mortar with frequent sub-angular limestone inclusions measuring <150mm (205). The installation of these services had caused a small amount of disturbance at the east end of Trench 2, recorded as deposit 203 (a friable pale brownish red sandy silt with frequent sub-angular limestone inclusions <150mm). Context 203 is highly likely to be the same as service trench backfill 205.

### **3.4 Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 6; Plates 7 and 8)**

- 3.4.1 The earliest archaeological horizon in Trench 3 was a compact layer comprising flat angular limestones measuring <0.16m x 0.12m bedded into, and in places partially

covered by a coarse mortar with frequent rounded pebble and angular limestone inclusions <30mm (303: Figures 2 and 6; Plates 7 and 8). This layer was mid reddish brown in colour: it was difficult to distinguish whether this was because earth was mixed into the layer, or whether overlaying deposit 302 had discoloured layer 303. Layer 303 extended beyond the limit of excavation in all directions. Layer 303 likely represents a floor surface. No finds were recovered: layer 303 thus remains undated.

3.4.2 Context 303 was overlain by a friable mid reddish brown sandy silty containing frequent angular and sub-angular limestone inclusions <40mm and occasional rounded flint nodules <80mm. This layer extended beyond the limit of excavation in all directions and measured 0.35m in depth. Occasional fragments of disarticulated human bone were present.

3.4.3 Context 302 was overlain by a pale yellowish grey coarse mortar (301). This layer extended beyond the limit of excavation in all directions and was 0.07m in depth. This layer was the mortar bedding layer for overlying stone flag flooring 300 (same as 100 and 206).

### 3.5 Human Remains

3.5.1 A small number of disarticulated bone fragments were recovered from context 302 in Trench 3. These constituted one fragment of unsided parietal, one unidentified cervical vertebrae, one left first rib, one fragment of unsided rib midshaft, and one unsided ulna midshaft fragment. These comprised the remains of at least one adult individual. All human remains were reinterred in Trench 3.

### 3.6 Finds

3.6.1 No finds were recovered during the evaluation.

### 3.7 Environmental Remains

3.7.1 No deposits were encountered which required sampling. Therefore, no environmental remains were recovered during the project.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Interpretation

- 4.1.1 Evidence for two floor surfaces was recorded during the excavations. The surfaces observed in Trenches 1 and 2 are likely to be the same. Both this and the surface found in Trench 3 are likely to pertain to earlier phases of the church building. No dating material was recovered, thus both floor surfaces remain undated.
- 4.1.2 Very little evidence of burial archaeology was found. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was recovered from Trench 3: this likely derives from earth cut graves disturbed during construction or renovation of the extant church building. All human remains were reinterred in Trench 3.
- 4.1.3 In consultation with the architect the foundations of the glass screens can be accommodated under the current floor surface without impacted either the earlier surfaces or disturbing any articulated human remains. The archaeology found underneath the flagstone floor can therefore be preserved *in-situ*.

## APPENDIX A ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

### Trench 1

Context	Type	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Comments	Finds	Date
100	Structure	0.04	>0.66	>1.6	Current stone flag floor surface	-	Post-medieval
101	Layer	0.05	>0.66	>1.6	Mortar bedding for 100	-	Post-medieval
102	Layer	0.08-0.1	>0.66	>1.6	Possible levelling deposit	-	-
103	Layer	0.05	>0.66	>1.6	Mortar layer	-	-
104	Layer	-	>0.66	>1.6	Floor surface	-	-

### Trench 2

Context	Type	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Comments	Finds	Date
200	Layer	0.07	0.5	1.85	Mortar bedding for 206	-	Post-medieval
201	Layer	0.1	0.5	1.85	Levelling deposit	-	-
202	Layer	-	0.4	1.55	Floor surface	-	Post-medieval
203	Layer	-	0.34	0.5	Rubble layer	-	-
204	Cut	>0.18	>0.5	>1.85	Construction cut for modern services	-	Modern
205	Fill	>0.18	>0.5	>1.85	Fill of 204	-	Modern
206	Structure	0.04	>0.5	>1.85	Current stone flag floor	-	Post-medieval
207	Structure	0.17	0.35	>0.45	Foundation structure?	-	-
208	Structure	>0.1	0.26	>0.4	Structure – unknown function	-	-
209	Layer	>0.29	0.4	0.5	Rubble layer	-	-
210	Structure	0.18	-	>1.85	Foundation structure	-	-
211	Layer	0.09	-	0.6	Mortar layer	-	-

### Trench 3

Context	Type	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Comments	Finds	Date
300	Structure	0.04	>0.76	>0.9	Current stone flag floor	-	Post-medieval

301	Layer	0.07	>0.76	>0.9	Mortar bedding for 300	-	Post-medieval
302	Layer	0.35	>0.76	>0.9	Rubble layer	-	-
303	Layer	-	>0.76	>0.9	Floor surface	-	-

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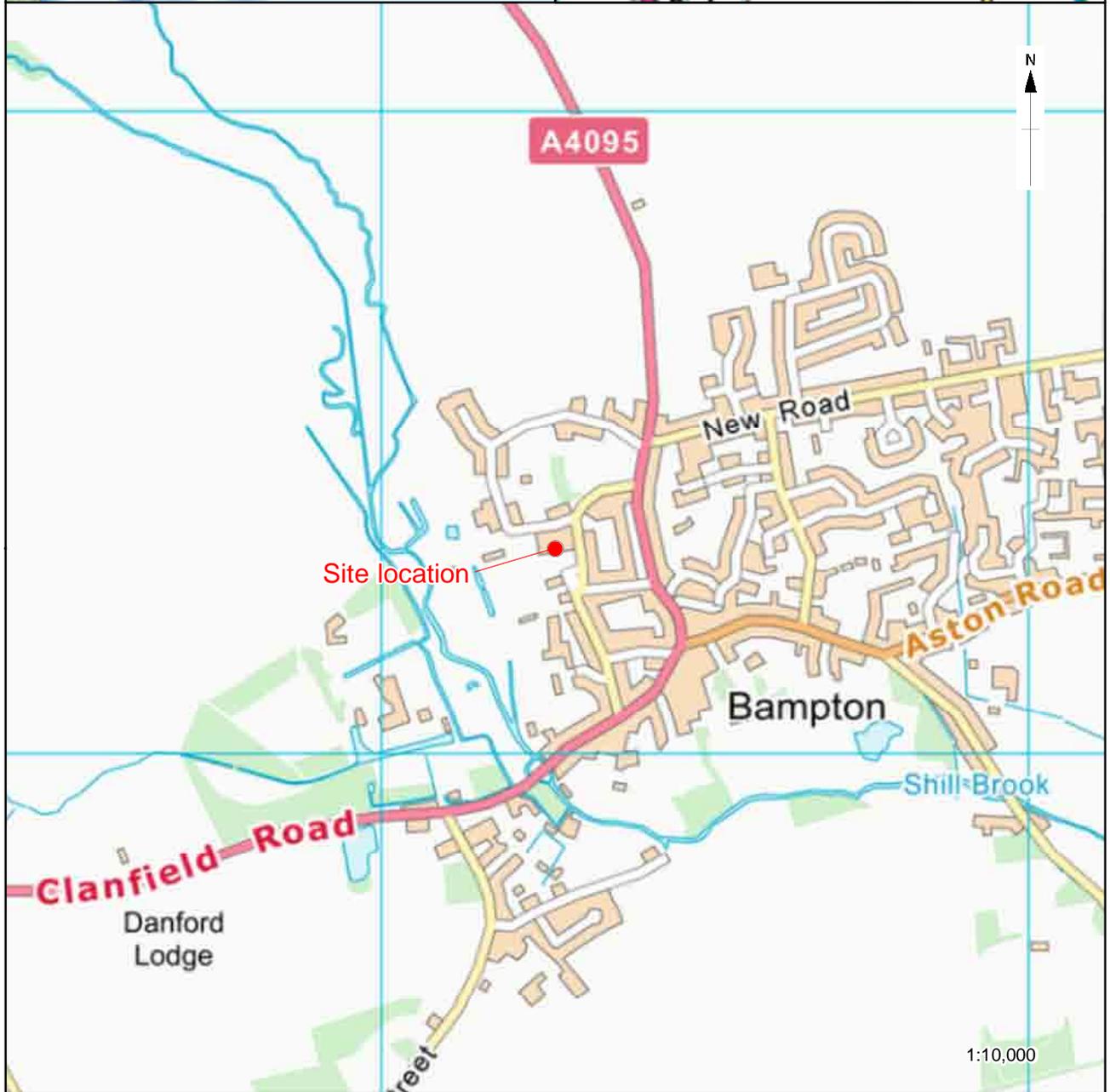
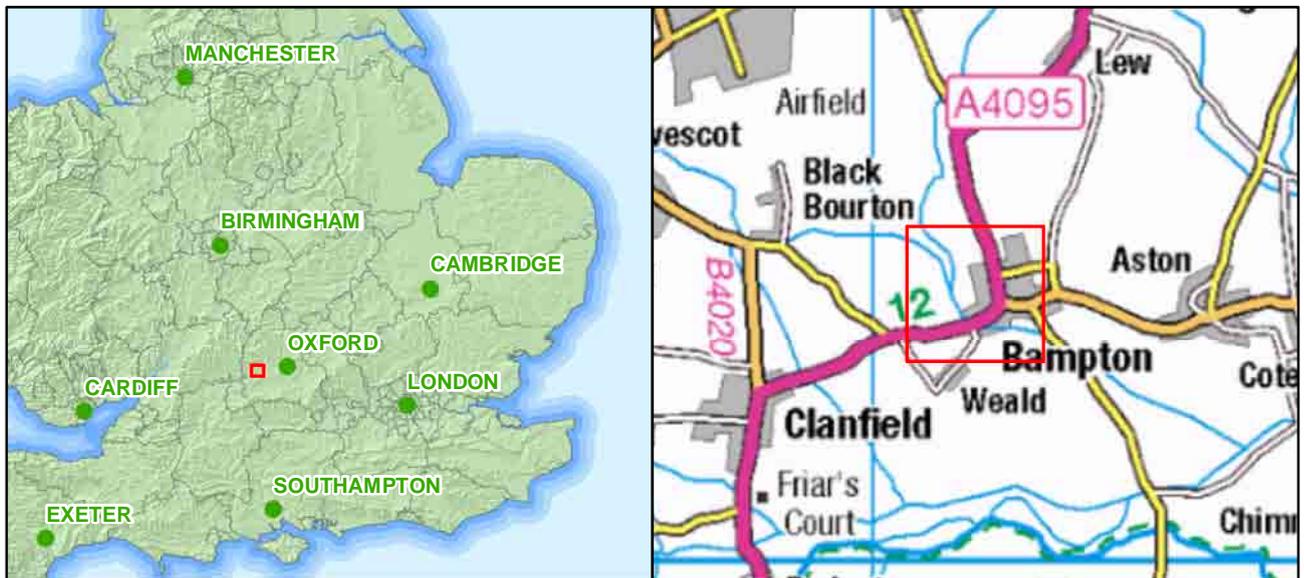
## APPENDIX B      BIBLIOGRAPHY

CIFA, 2014 Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief  
([https://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CifAS&GWatchingbrief\\_2.pdf](https://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CifAS&GWatchingbrief_2.pdf))  
Heritage Gateway, 2017 (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/>)

Munby J 2017 Brief for an archaeological investigation at St Mary's Church, Bampton, Oxfordshire.

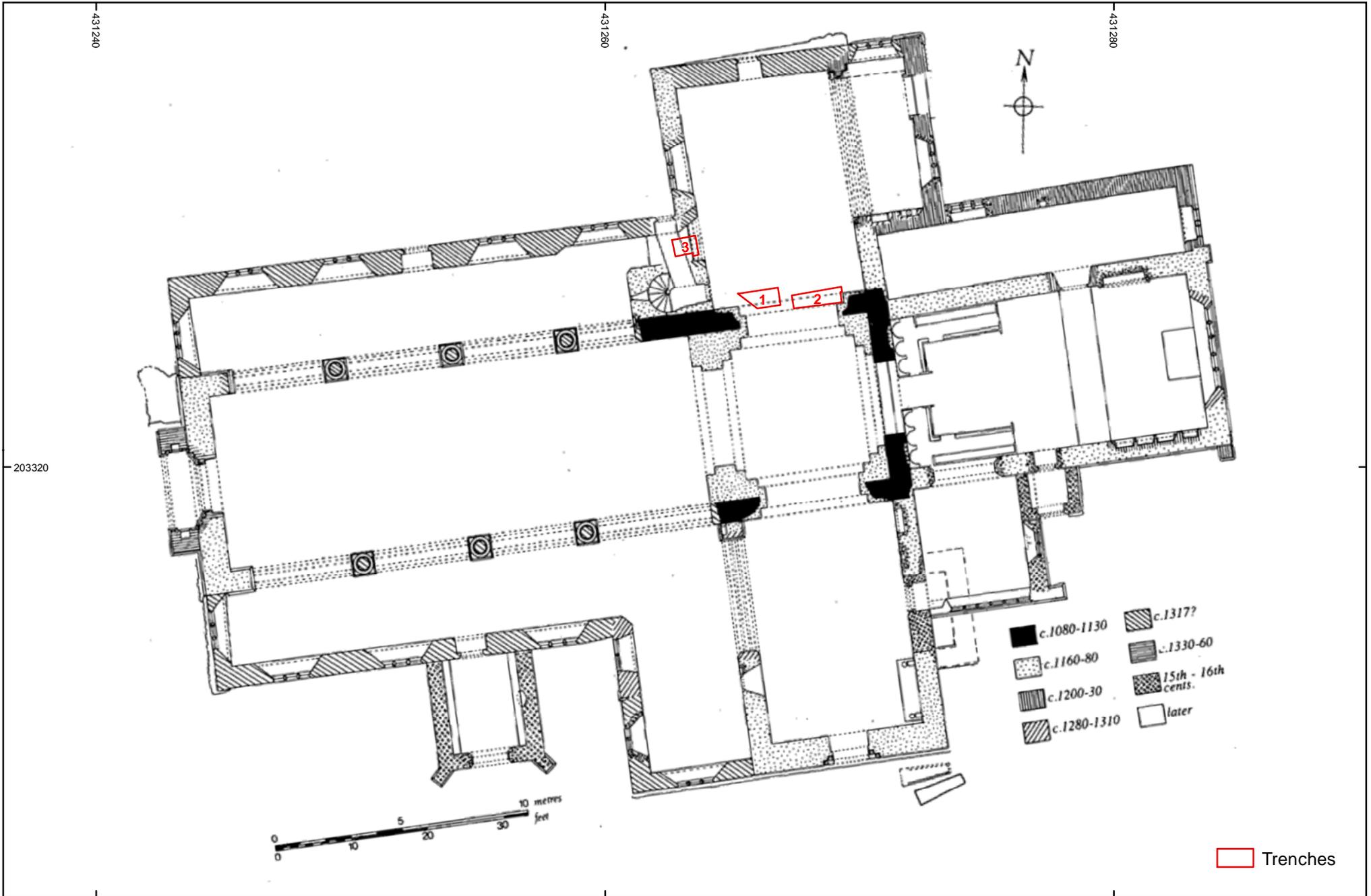
**APPENDIX C****SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

<b>Site name:</b>	St Mary's Church, Bampton, Oxfordshire
<b>Site code:</b>	BAMC17
<b>Grid Reference</b>	NGR: SP 31264 03324
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date and duration:</b>	November 2017
<b>Area of Site</b>	Three trenches
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.
<b>Summary of Results:</b>	<p>The excavations reached a maximum depth of 0.6m below current ground level before identifying archaeological deposits. Although there is the potential for the presence of burials (e.g. earth cut graves, brick lined tombs), no evidence was found. Archaeological activity comprised two floor surfaces of unknown date, most likely associated with earlier phases of the church.</p> <p>Based on the evaluation results, the foundation of the glass screens can be accommodated under the current floor surface without impacting either the earlier surfaces or disturbing articulated human remains. The archaeology found underneath the flagstone floor can therefore be preserved in-situ.</p>



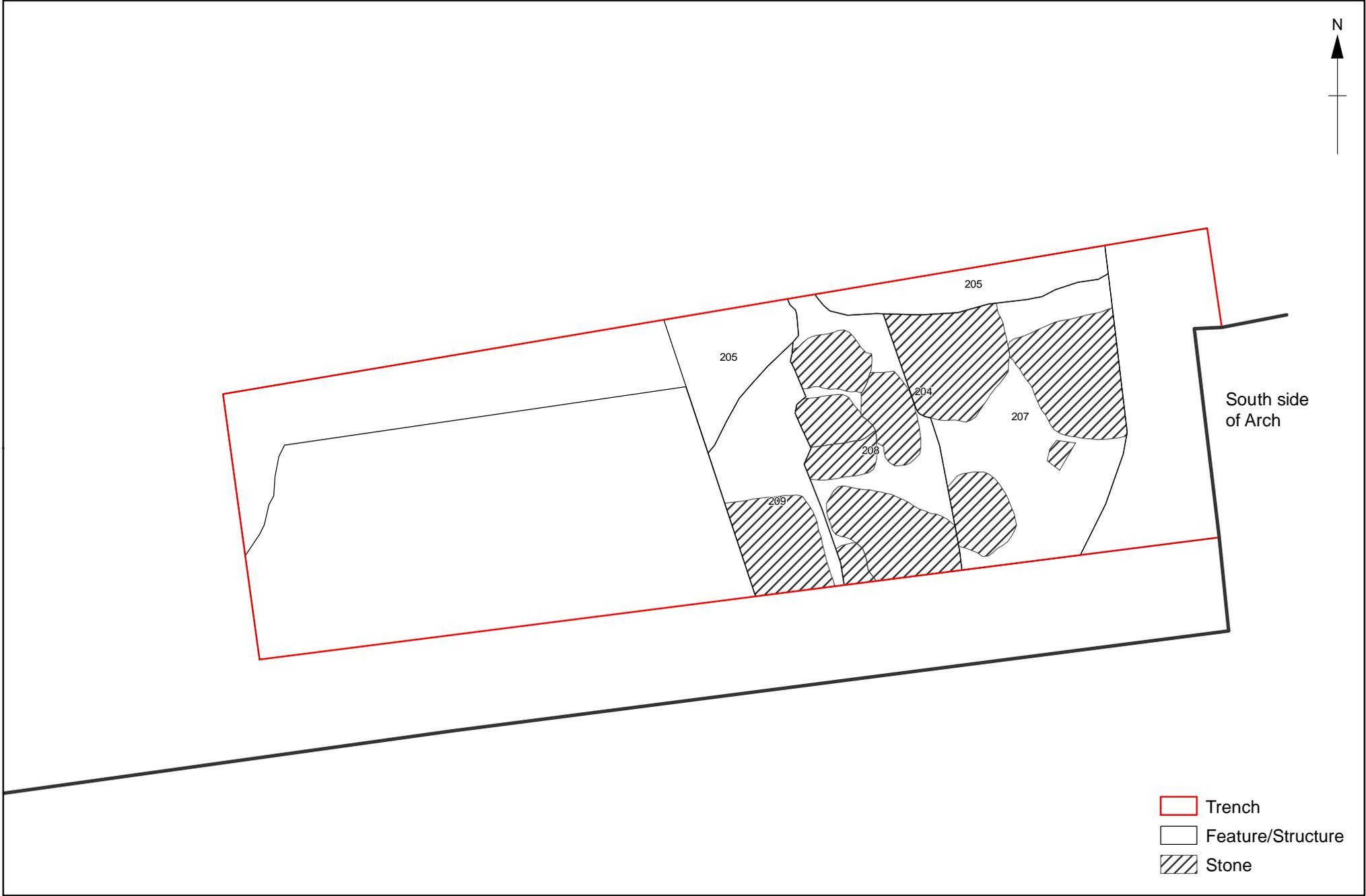
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Figure 1: Site location



Church plan before c.1870 restoration, drawn and dated by J. Blair A P Baggs, Eleanor Chance, Christina Colvin, C J Day, Nesta Selwyn and S C Townley, 'Bampton and Weald: Churches', in A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 13, Bampton Hundred (Part One), ed. Alan Crossley and C R J Currie (London, 1996), pp. 48-57. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol13/pp48-57> [accessed 12 December 2017].

Figure 2: Trench location plan



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Figure 3: Trench 2

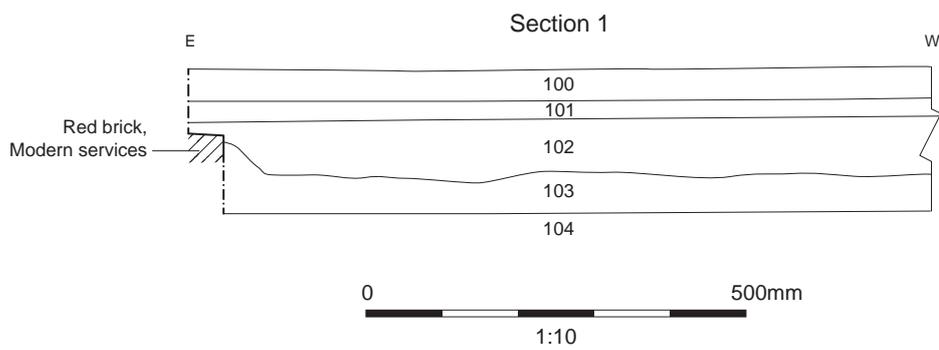


Figure 4: Sample section Trench 1

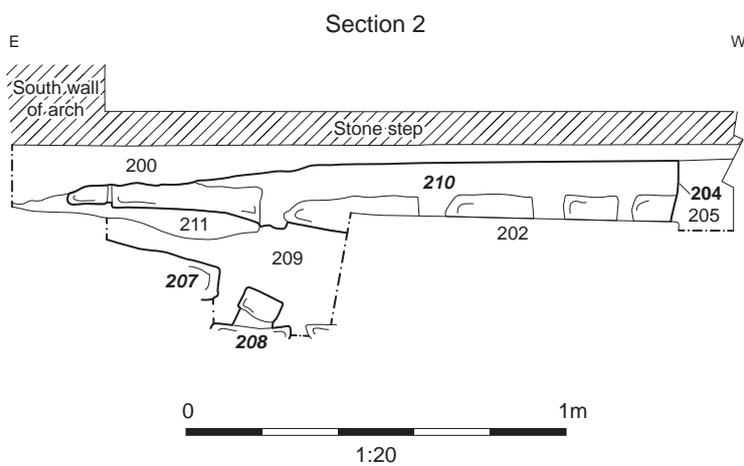


Figure 5: North facing section Trench 2

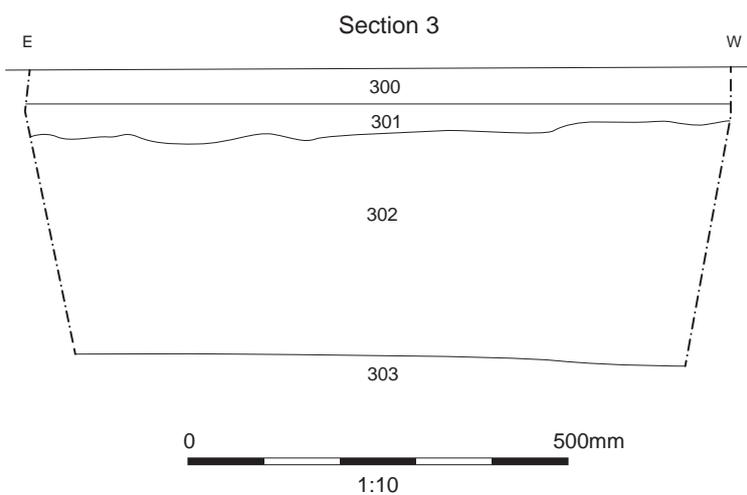


Figure 6: South facing section Trench 3



Plate 1: St Mary's Church, Bampton



Plate 2: 18<sup>th</sup> century memorial stones





Plate 3: Trench 1 with the memorial stones removed (1m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 2 with the floor slabs removed





Plate 5: Excavation within Trench 2 (1m scale)

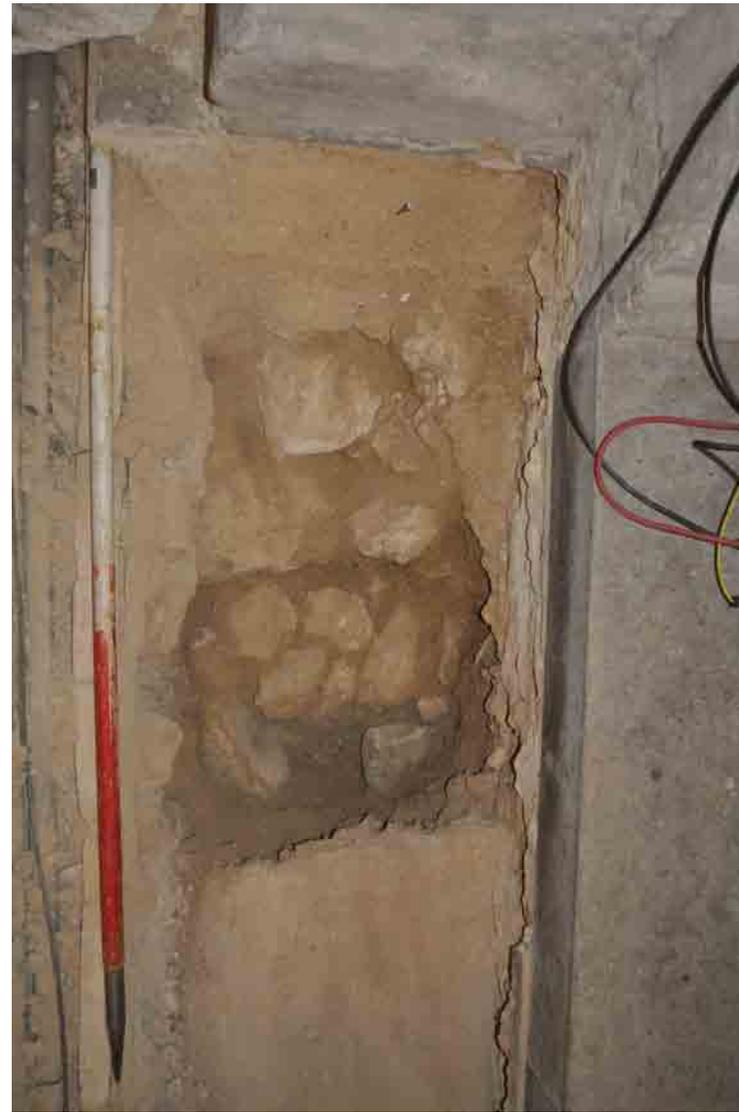


Plate 6: Earlier floor surface within Trench 2 (1m scale)



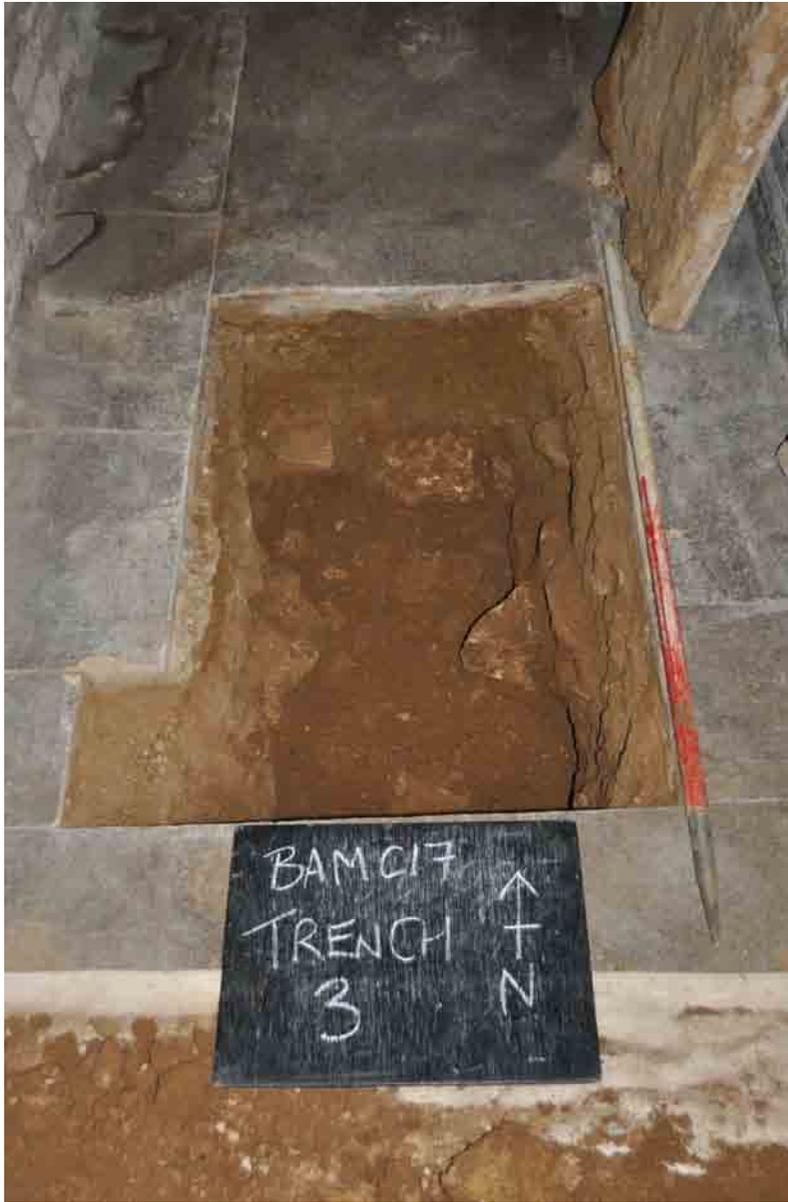
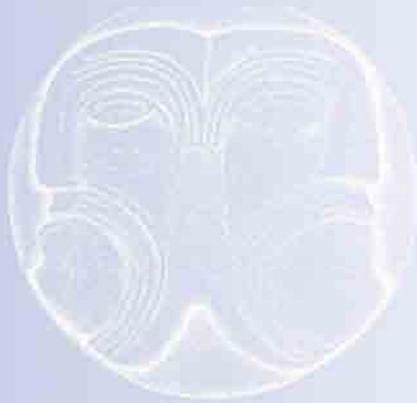


Plate 7: Excavation of Trench 3 (1m scale)



Plate 8: Trench 3 section (1m scale)





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