

# St.Peter's Church Iver Slough Buckinghamshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief



**Oxford Archaeology**

1 November 2001

**Diocese of Oxford/St. Peter's Church**

Issue N<sup>o</sup>: 1  
OA Job N<sup>o</sup>: 1085  
NGR: TQ 0500 8130

Diocese of Oxford

**St Peter's Church, Iver, Slough, Buckinghamshire**

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT***

**NGR TQ 0500 8130**

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November 2001

**Client Name:** Diocese of Oxford/St. Peter's Church

**Client Ref No:**

**Document Title:** St. Peter's Church, Iver, Slough, Buckinghamshire

**Document Type:** Watching Brief

**Issue Number:** 1

**National Grid Reference:** TQ 0500 8130

**Planning Reference:**

**OA Job Number:** 1085  
**Site Code:** IVPC01  
**Invoice Code:** IVPCWB  
**Museum Accession No:** 2001.95CAS0846

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**Document File Location** U:\OAU\oau\WS\WBEVALNEW\Bucks\IVERchurchW  
B\IVERCHURCHWBreport.doc

**Graphics File Location** oau all drawings - Server4 (W):/oaupubs1/All  
drawings/IVPCWB\*StPeter'sChurch, Iver\*PL\*23.10.01

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## St Peter's Church, Iver, Slough, Buckinghamshire

### *ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*In October 2001, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Peter's Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire (NGR TQ 0500 8130). The work was commissioned by the Diocese of Oxford, in advance of a planning application for an extension to the north side of the church. The watching brief revealed that the area had been heavily disturbed by graves and burial chambers, and also construction debris from later alterations to the church and services.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Peter's Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire (NGR TQ 0500 8130). The Diocese of Oxford commissioned the work prior to a planning application for an extension to the north side of church.

1.1.2 The watching brief was requested by the church to establish if surviving remains of earlier archaeological features relating the Saxon church or pre-dating the church construction were present. It was necessary to establish the extent of disturbance by burials in the proposed area and if earlier burials and features survived the later intrusions.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The investigation site lies on a glacial sand and gravel terrace above the Colne Brook, in a sheltered, well-drained location amidst fertile soils. The site is situated within the churchyard of St Peters at c 36.5 m above OD.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to this watching brief has been used from an adjacent project at the site of the new Vicarage at Delaford Close (OA, 2001). The background was compiled from a visit to the Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record Office, and is summarised below.

1.3.2 There are several known sites and locations with archaeological remains near to the site of St Peter's.

1.3.3 Trenches dug between Iver Churchyard and the M25 to re-route electricity services in 1983 uncovered a Saxon grass-tempered sherd, ten medieval sherds and undated burnt daub. In addition 4 test pits dug as part of the Iver-Arkley water pipe by RPS Clouston in 1994 recovered a retouched flake in one pit and charcoal in another.

- 1.3.4 Buckinghamshire SMR identifies a few prehistoric finds from this period in the study area. These are two Palaeolithic handaxes (SMR 2397 and 5982) and a Mesolithic tranchet axe (SMR 5319). The geology of the site would have also favoured settlement of the area from the prehistoric period onwards.
- 1.3.5 There are no records held by the SMR that indicates a Roman presence in the study area. However, the presence of some Roman brick used in the eastern angles of the nave of St. Peter's church (SMR 0846) may indicate Roman occupation nearby.
- 1.3.6 The first known reference to Iver appears in the *Chronicle of Aethelweard* under the year AD 893. The discovery of a Saxon grass-tempered sherd during the building of the M25 near the churchyard of St. Peter's also indicates a Saxon presence in the area at this time.
- 1.3.7 During the early medieval period, Buckinghamshire SMR records the presence of three mills (SMR 2829) and four fisheries (SMR 1680) within the parish; both are recorded in the Domesday Book.
- 1.3.8 The other place of interest close to the site of development is Delaford Park (SMR 4385). This comes from de la ford, meaning "place or person of the ford", referring to the crossing of the Colne brook. Records show that the earliest recorded residents of the manor of Delaford were known by the name Ford and it is likely that they took their family name from the place name.
- 1.3.9 The earliest documentary reference to Delaford was in about 1250-1260. The house at Delaford is not on the site of the original medieval manor. This was burnt down in 1845 and the present house built on top of its foundations.
- 1.3.10 While rapid expansion of Iver is evident from the 1801 Enclosure map when compared with the modern map of the area, this has not been as prominent around the church and is more noticeable to the west and south-west of St. Peter's church.

## 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA's thanks are extended to the two local gravediggers that assisted with the excavation of the test pit with their mini excavator.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To determine whether earlier graves or pre-Saxon buildings or archaeological features survive below the later renovations of the church and later burials.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

## 2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A test pit was excavated by a mini excavator in the only assessable area along the proposed wall alignment of the new extension.

2.2.2 The test pit was to be 2 m x 0.5 m x 1 m, but had to be extended to the west after a service pipe was located 0.35 m below surface. This was cut to a depth of 0.95 m.

2.2.3 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made, and recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (Ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The test pit was cleaned by hand and revealed, below a thin (0.05m) turf line, a friable dark reddish brown silty sand loam which was very mixed with nodules of flint (15%), coarse flinty gravel (20%), fragments of CBM (5%), small fragments of mortar (2%) and a few fragments of charnel bone. This soil was well mixed and became lighter and cleaner near the base, but no cut lines for the two services and brick lined vault were observed.

3.1.2 In the east side of the test pit under the tarmac path the rear face of the west end of a brick lined vault was exposed. It was constructed of brick (0.23 m x 0.10 m x 0.065 m) bonded with a coarse whitish mortar with a rough finish. Only the upper two courses were exposed to a height of 0.17m and width 0.6m.

### 3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No finds were retained from the test pit; the charnel bones were reburied when the test pit was back filled.

### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken from the test pit.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The results from the test pit suggest that the ground in that part of the churchyard has been disturbed continuously by grave digging, and construction works in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and later services.

- 4.1.2 At least one brick lined burial chamber is present here with another possible chamber to the west, within the proposed area of development. Due to the limited area of investigation, earlier fragments of archaeology may also survive in the form of islands between the later intrusions, and at depth.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Cut	0.95 m	1.2 m		Test Pit	-
2	Structure	0.17 m	0.6 m		Brick burial vault	-
3	Layer	0.95 m	-		Churchyard soil	-

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2001 *Iver, Buckinghamshire, Thorney Lane, Delaford Close, new vicarage. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Investigation.*

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1<sup>st</sup> edition, ed. D Wilkinson)

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** St. Peter's Church, Iver, Slough, Bucks

**Site code:** IVPC01

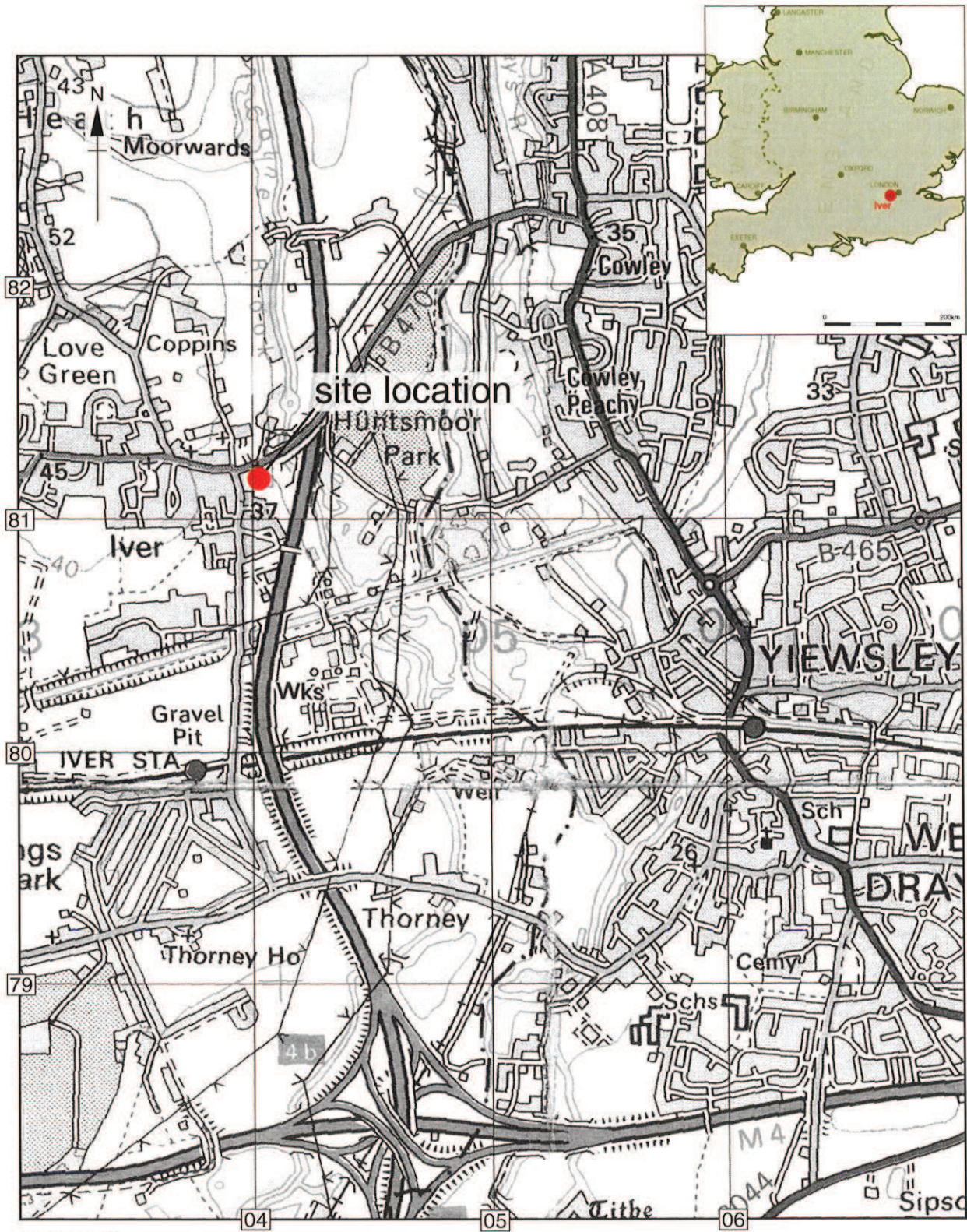
**Grid reference:** TQ 0500 8130

**Type of watching brief:** test pit

**Date and duration of project:** 22/10/01 - half day

**Summary of results:** test pit revealed that graves and burial chambers have heavily disturbed the ground; demolition/construction debris was also noted.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museums Service in due course.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location.

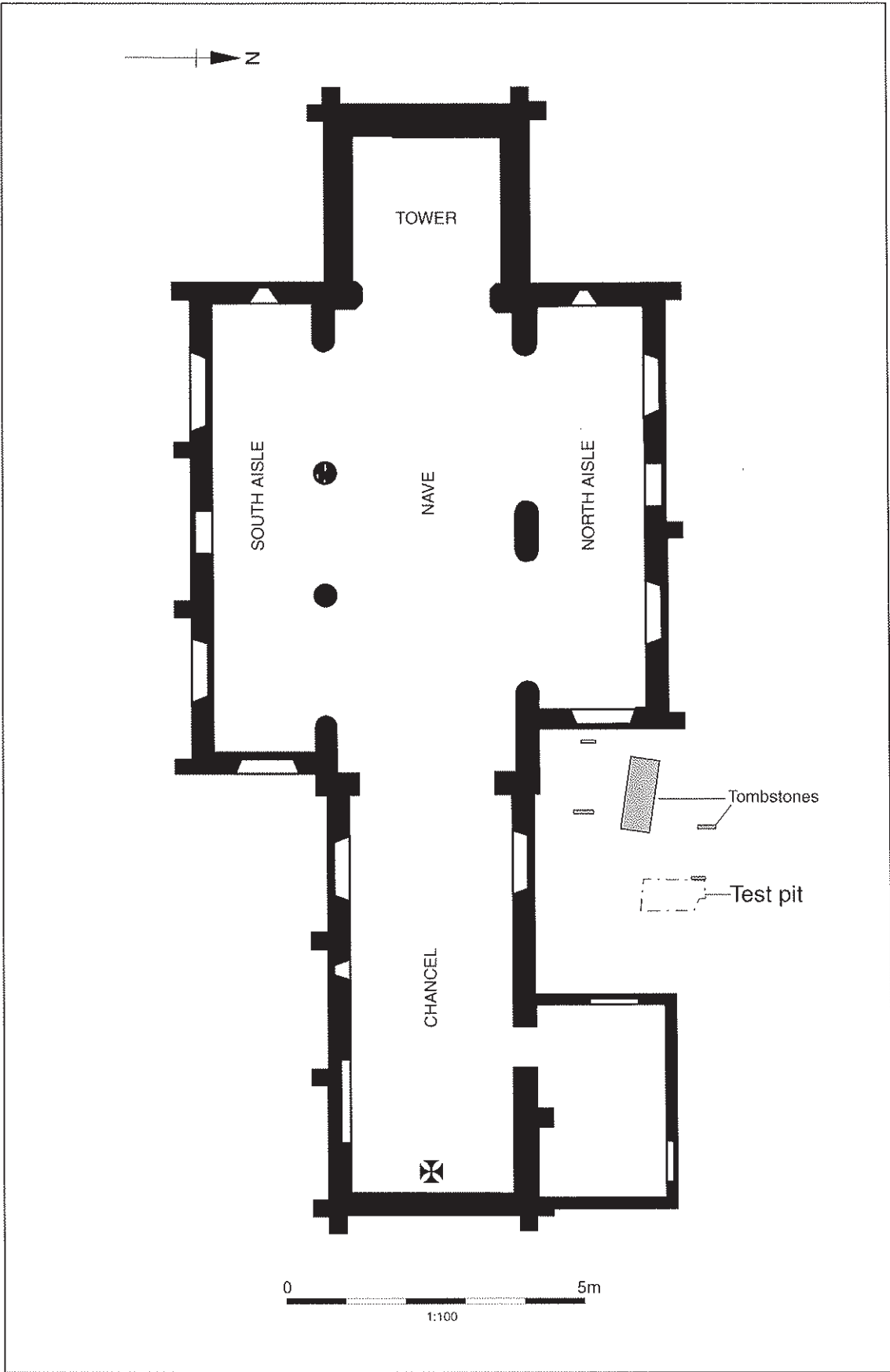


Figure 2: Plan of St Peters, Test pit location

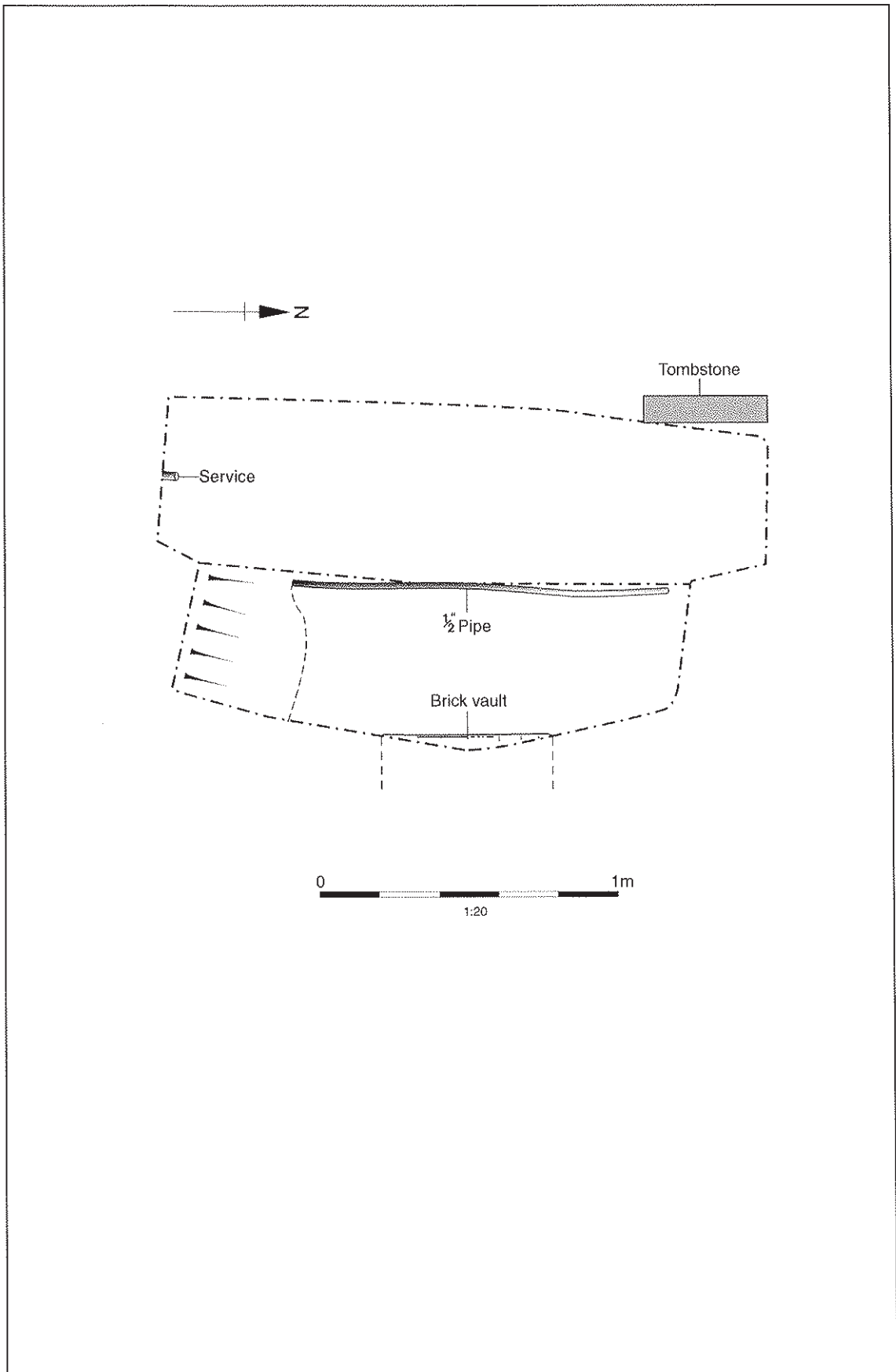


Figure 3: Plan of Test pit



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