

# Church of St Firmin North Crawley Buckinghamshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief



**Oxford Archaeology**

29th November 2001

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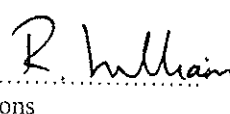
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# The Church of St Firmin, North Crawley Buckinghamshire

NGR SP 9270 4475

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*In October 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Church of St Firmin, North Crawley, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 9270 4475).*

*The work was commissioned by Peter Gilbert Scott, architect, on behalf of the Archdeaconry of Buckinghamshire in advance of laying a new tile floor. The watching brief revealed 19th century floor make up deposits and service ducting beneath the present floor of the church. Several gravestones had been reused in the floor of the church.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In October 2001 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Church of St Firmin, North Crawley, Buckinghamshire (Figs 1 and 2).
- 1.1.2 Peter Gilbert Scott, Architect, commissioned the work on behalf of the Archdeaconry of Buckinghamshire, in respect of the laying of a new tile floor in the church.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the faculty conditions of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on Oxford clays and Kellaway beds at 96 m above OD. The site is situated in the centre of the village of North Crawley.
- 1.2.2 The church is centred at NGR SP 9270 4475.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The church of St Firmin is believed to be a minster church, and was recorded in the Domesday Book.
- 1.3.2 The church is dedicated to the patron saint of bullfighters and was originally constructed towards the end of the 11th, though none of the original fabric remains.
- 1.3.3 The Nave and the Chancel (rebuilt in the thirteenth century) are of 12th century date.
- 1.3.4 The South Aisle dates to the early 13th century and this was extended, along with the Nave a little later. A tower was also built at this time.
- 1.3.5 The North Aisle, the font and the top stage of the tower were added in the 14th century. Both aisles were remodeled and a clerestory (and therefore a new roof) was added during the 15th century.
- 1.3.6 The earliest existing pews date from the 16th century (Pevsner, 1960).

## 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA extends its thanks to Bob Reed, the site contractor, Peter Gilbert Scott Architect for plans of the work and Mr J Samson, the Churchwarden.

## 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 make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The floor of the church was lifted and the floor make up beneath was reduced by c 0.1 m. The stone floor slabs were to be reused with the new floor materials. The extent of the floor reduction was monitored by an attending archaeologist, prior to the new floor being laid.
- 2.2.2 A plan of the operation was made at a scale of 1:100. A colour slide and black and white print film photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 During the lifting of the church floor, a number of stone slabs (Fig. 3) were observed to be reused gravestones. There were also a number of slabs, which could mark location of burial vaults in the church, though no burials were observed during the work here. Two slabs were found beneath the concrete floor in the south aisle, in front of the pulpit. The larger one had the imprint for a brass cross? to one side, suggesting it was part of a larger monument from elsewhere in the church. The second had an inscription (see below) and was part of a gravestone.

Here Lie (eh) Elizabeth  
Homas U  
Life march  
^  
outh  
onoc (r)  
  
in  
11

- 3.1.2 The floor tiles of the church had been laid on a 0.02 m thick layer of light grey fine sandy lime mortar, which was bedded on a floor make up of a dark yellowish brown sand with flecks of cement and mortar with stone fragments. Cut through this layer

and sealed below the slab and tile floor were service ducts (Fig. 4). These comprised cast cement channels set in small trenches that were 0.48 m wide and 0.2m deep. The heating pipes were laid in the channels, which were then covered with reused roof tiles bonded with a coarse light yellowish mortar.

### 3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No finds were recovered.

### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No samples were taken.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The impact depth for the construction of the new floor revealed no evidence relating to the medieval church. The floor make up dates to the 19th or 20th centuries, with a relatively modern heating system incorporated.

## 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	Layer	0.02m			Old tile bedding	None
2	Layer	0.07m+			19 <sup>th</sup> C floor make-up	None
3	Cut	0.20m	0.48m		19 <sup>th</sup> C Floor ducting for services and heating	None

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Pevsner, N 1960 *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*

OAU 1992 *Fieldwork manual*, (ed. D Wilkinson, August 1992)

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** The Church of St Firmin, North Crawley, Bucks

**Site code:** NCFIR 01

**Grid reference:** SP 9270 4415

**Type of watching brief:** Observation of removal of church floor, prior to the laying of new surface.

**Date and duration of project:** three site visits, summer 2001.

**Summary of results:** The removal of the old floor exposed 19th century floor make up and service ducting for the old heating system.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum: Accession No 2001.70.



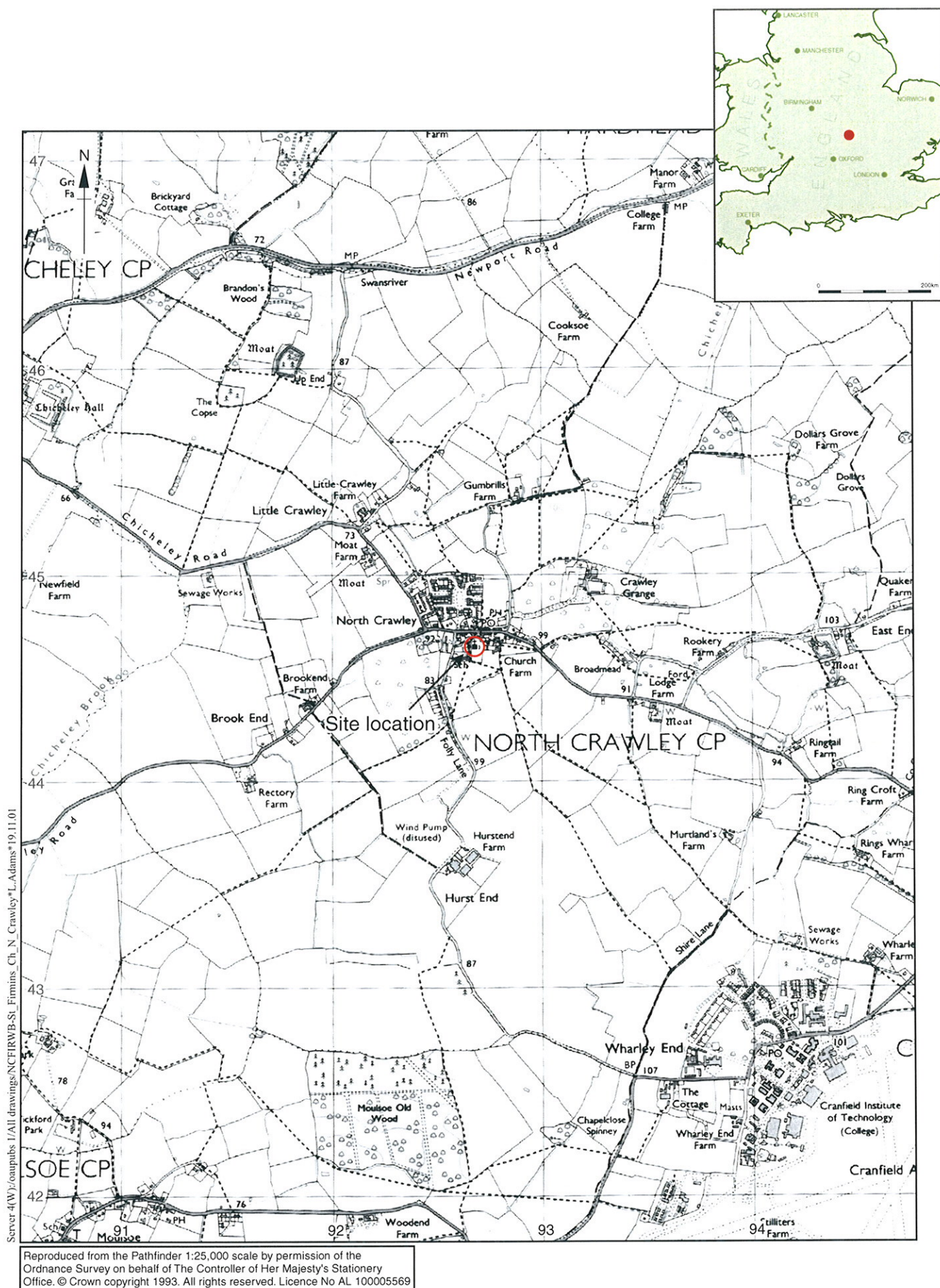


Figure 1: Site location plan



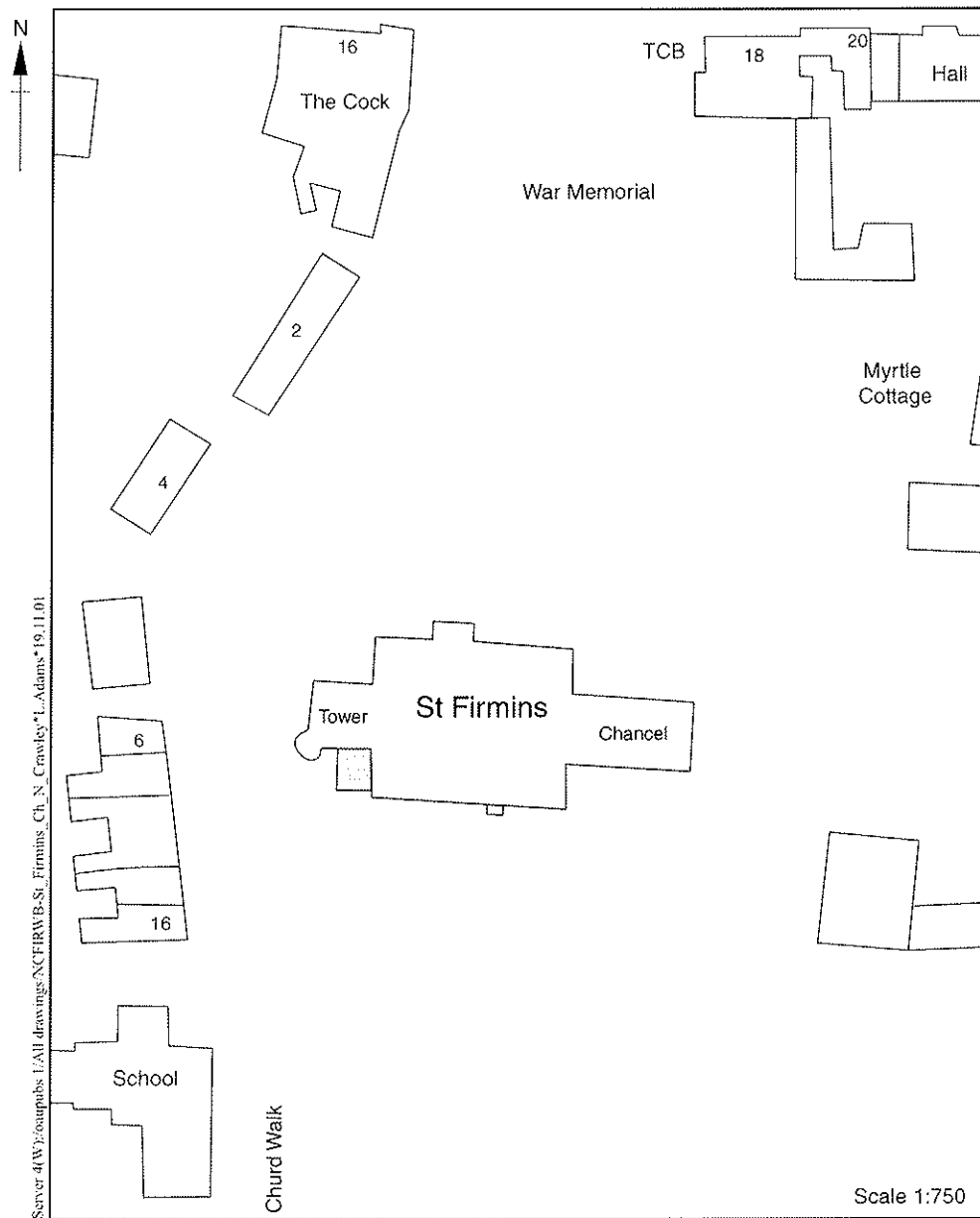


Figure 2: Site location

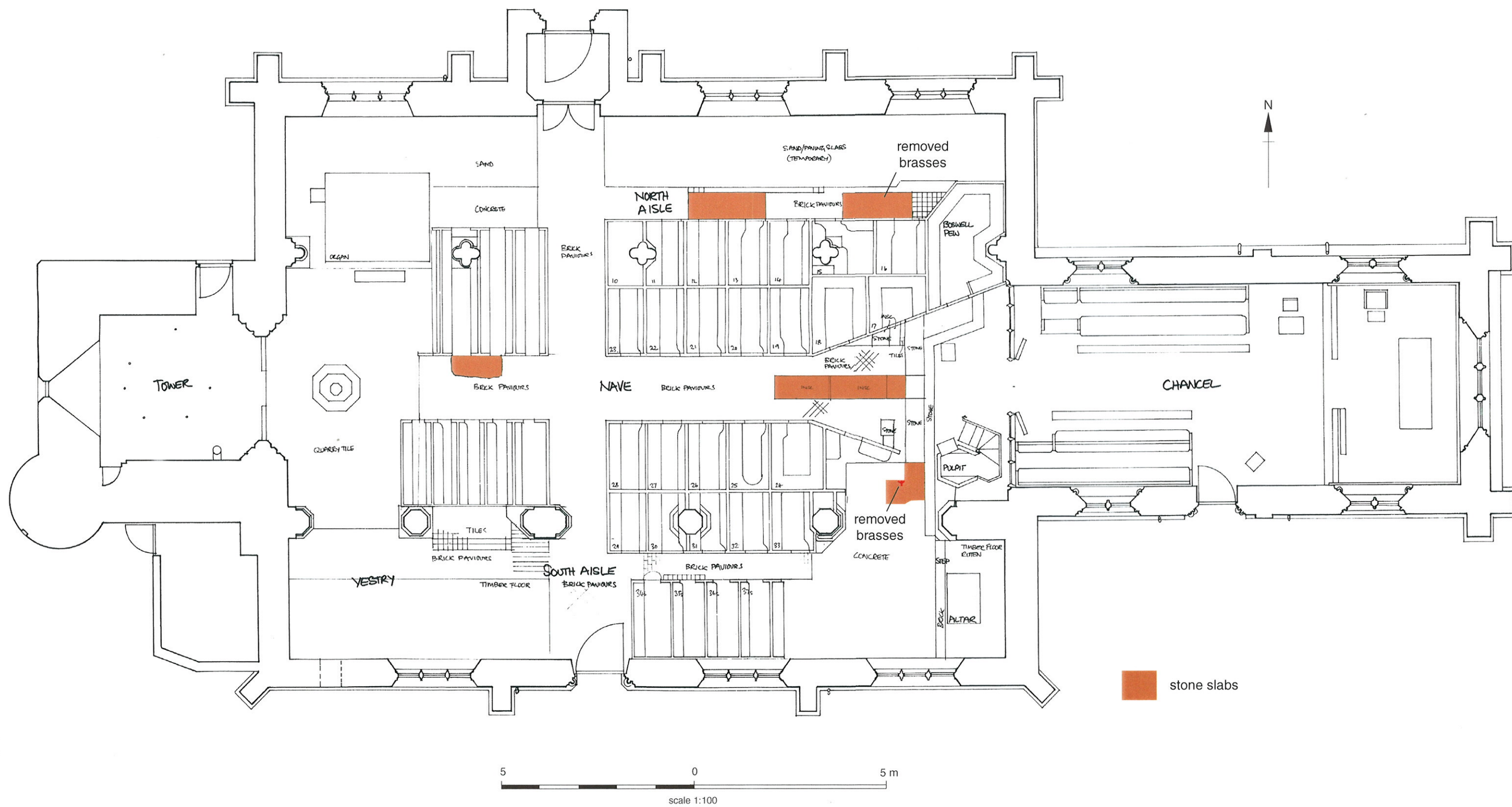
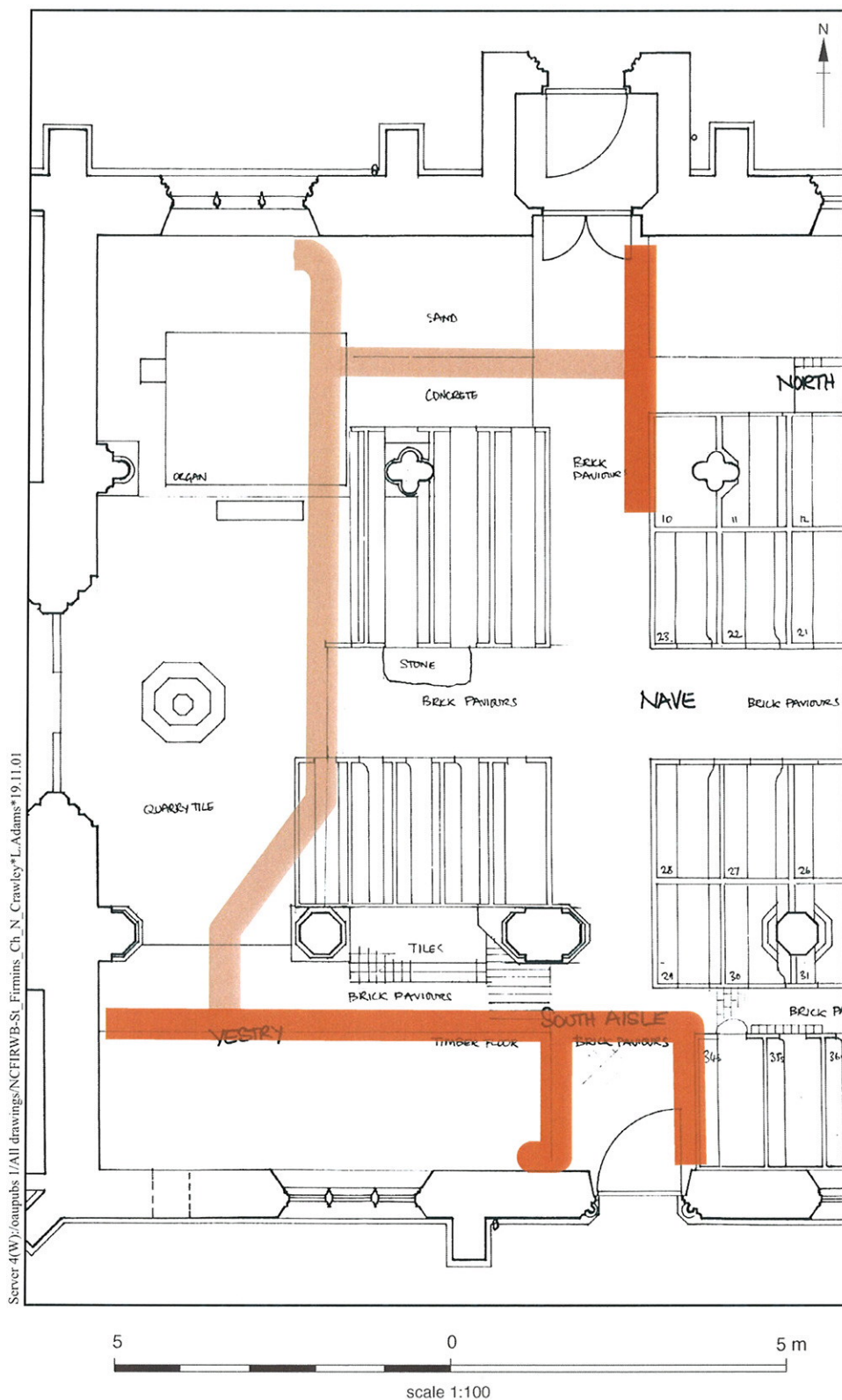


Figure 3: Plan of church showing stone slabs



- Ducting exposed
- Ducting located by CATSCAN

Figure 4: Location of ducting



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