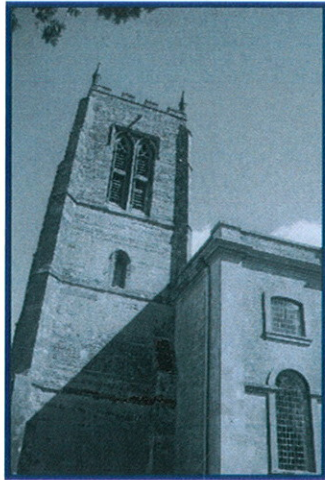


St. Michael's Church
Aynho
Northamptonshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



Oxford Archaeology

September 2004

**Client: P.R. Alcock & Son Ltd
for the Parochial Church Council**

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Cover Plate: View of church tower from the south-west.

SUMMARY

In July 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Michael's Church, Aynho, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 514 331). The work was commissioned by P.R. Alcock & Son Ltd on behalf of the Parochial Church Council in advance of the installation of a new WC and utility room within the church. The watching brief revealed the old north boundary of the graveyard pre-dating the early 18th century rebuilding of the church.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In July 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Michael's Church, Aynho, Northamptonshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by P.R. Alcock & Son Ltd on behalf of the Parochial Church Council in respect of the installation of new WC and utility room within the church.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by the Peterborough Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC 2003).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on Lower Lias sands at approximately 137 m above OD. The church is situated to the south of the village centre and to the east of Aynho Park House.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the project and is produced below.

1.3.2 The church of St Michael's was rebuilt in 1723 by Edward Wing in the style of Hawksmoor and Archer. The main body of the church was broad and squat with round arched windows in two storeys along the north and south faces. These were in seven bays, in which bays 1, 7 and the centre three and entrance way projected forward with pilasters. The east end had three large round arch windows and middle podiment. At the west end of the church the 15th century tower was retained. The tower had niched corner buttresses at its north-west and south-west corners. The doorway had fine continuous mouldings with a three-light window above. The tower had a straight hood mould around its top with battlements and pinnacles (Pevsner, 1961 and Betjeman, 1958).

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 After the new manhole was installed in the position of the old storm drain, the route of the new pipe was marked out and de-turfed. The trench was then excavated using a 1 m wide toothless ditching bucket on a mini excavator. This opened up an area of 1.5 m x 2.4 m to reach a depth of 2.4 m to join the main drain. The remaining length of trench was excavated using a 0.6 m toothless bucket. All this work was carried out under archaeological supervision.

2.2.2 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. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Service Trench (Figs 3 and 4)

- 3.1.1 A service trench was excavated from the north side of the church to an existing manhole in the churchyard. The trench was 1.5 m wide at its north end to give more room during the connecting of the sewage pipe, but narrowed to 0.8 m wide where it connected to the new manhole. The trench sloped from 0.75 m below the graveyard ground surface to 2.3 m below the surface to connect into the sewer pipe.
- 3.1.2 The trench cut into the natural sand (32) which was overlain by a 1.6 m thick layer of light reddish silty sand (5). At the southern end of the trench and cutting this layer was a grave (30), which had vertical sides and flat base measuring 1 m x 0.36 m x 0.52 m. It was filled by a dark brown silty sand (31) and an adult skeleton in the base of the fill. This was overlain by a 0.35 m- 0.50 m thick layer of dark reddish brown silty sand (4), old cultivated soil. This layer (4) had been cut by a series of graves, which were recorded in the section of the trench.
- 3.1.3 The first of these was grave (28) with vertical sides and flat base. It measured 0.36 m wide and 0.80 m in depth and had been filled by a dark brown silty sand (29) with an adult skeleton in the base of the fill. This had been cut on its north side by grave (26). It had vertical sides and a flat base, measuring 0.40 m wide and 0.72 m in depth. This had been filled by dark reddish brown silty sand with remains of an adult skeleton in its base. To the north of grave 26 was a grave (24) with vertical sides and flat base. It measured 0.40 m wide and 0.52 m in depth and contained a fill of dark brown silty sand (25) with the remains of an infant's skeleton in the base. This fill had been cut on its northern side by grave 22. It had vertical sides and flat base and measured 0.38 m wide and 0.62 m in depth, and had been filled by a dark reddish brown silty sand (23) with the remains of a skeleton in the base.

- 3.1.4 To the north of these graves was another group consisting of a small grave (20) with vertical sides narrowing to a flat base. It measured 1.5 m x 0.30 m x 0.58 m and was filled by a dark brown silty sand (21) with an infant burial in the base. This had been cut by another grave (18) with vertical sides and flat base. It measured 0.54 m wide and 0.72 m in depth with a fill of dark reddish brown silty sand (19) with a burial in the base. The grave 18 also cut another grave (33) in which only the base was observed in the section. This filled by a dark reddish brown silty sand (34) with the remains of a skeleton in the base. This grave (33) had been cut by another grave (16) to its north. This grave also cut grave 18 and had vertical sides with a concave base. It measured 0.5 m wide and 0.48 m in depth and was filled by a dark brown silty sand (17) with the remains of a skeleton in the base. Grave 16 also cut a grave (12) to the north of it, which was sub rectangular with vertical sides rounding to a flat base. It measured 1.5 m x 0.50 m x 0.58 m and was filled by a dark brown silty sand (13) with an adult skeleton in the base of the fill.
- 3.1.5 Grave 12 also cut an earlier grave (10) just to the north of it. This grave was sub rectangular with vertical sides and a flat base and measured 0.26 m x 0.42 m x 0.90 m. It had been filled by a dark reddish brown silty sand (11) with a adult skeleton in the base. The fill (11) had been also cut by a small grave (8) on its north side, which had near vertical sides and concave base. It measured 0.30 m x 0.36 m x 0.54 m and was filled by a dark brown silty sand (9) with the remains of an infant skeleton in the base.
- 3.1.6 To the north of grave 8 and at the end of the trench were the remains of a wall footing (15). This comprised limestone fragments standing three courses high, of drystone construction. The wall measured 1.5 m x 0.5 m x 0.28 m and was trench-built in a vertical sided and flat based trench (14). Overlying this and the graves was a 0.28 m thick layer of dark brown silty sand (3) with a substantial quantity of limestone and tile fragments. This layer tapered out as it spread southwards toward the church and is thought to be demolition and construction debris from the 1720s rebuild of the church. This had been cut by a service trench (6), which measured 0.3 m wide and 0.8 m in depth. It was filled by a light yellowish brown silty sand (7) with two 1 1/2" galvanised water pipes. Also in the centre of the trench on its east side a large rectangular cut (35) for a vault for the Cartwright family (dated 1874) was exposed. It measured 0.50 m x 1.30 m x 1.50 m and contained a brick-lined shaft vault (37). This was undisturbed and was of a single brick wide wall with a mortar bond, capped by reused headstones laid face down and mortared in place. It had a back fill of dark grey brown silty sand (36) filling the void between the cut and vault structure. Overlying this was the 0.20 m thick layer of very dark grey brown silty sand (2) topsoil. To the north of the side the topsoil (2) had been cut by the laying of a 0.16 m thick compact gravel surface (1) for the driveway into the churchyard.

Water pipe Trench (Fig. 2)

- 3.1.7 This pipe trench ran from the north end of the new service trench alongside the north boundary wall of the graveyard and through the churchyard gateway. It measured 0.4 m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.8 m below the surface. At the west end of the trench the natural sand (32) was exposed where it rose up. It was sealed below a 0.5 m thick layer of dark reddish brown silty sand (4) old cultivated soil, and cut

across the continuation of the boundary wall (15). To the north of this was a 1 m wide trench cut for the sewer pipe through the graveyard. These were all sealed below the compact gravel surface (1) for the driveway in the churchyard.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Finds were recovered from cultivated soil layer 4. These consisted of two fragments of glass and two abraded fragments of a coarse black local earthen ware dating to the late 11th century.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief did reveal a number of burials, which by their relationships in the service trench section appear to have extended northwards away from the church. They did not extend beyond the stone wall foundation (15), which suggests that the wall was the old north boundary wall of the church prior to its rebuilding in 1724. This is also backed up by the demolition and construction layer (3) spreading over the burials and the wall, and being cut by a late 19th century burial vault (37) of the Cartwright family. No burials or charnel was encountered within the thick cultivated soil layer 4 along the water pipe trench north of the line of the boundary wall (15) suggesting the land north of wall 15 was either part of the gardens/parkland to Aynho Park prior to becoming part of the churchyard.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer				Gravel driveway	
2	Layer	0.16-0.23m			Graveyard topsoil	
3	Layer	0.32 m			Demolition and construction layer	
4	Layer	0.35-0.50 m			Cultivated soil	Pottery and glass
5	Layer	1.60 m			Subsoil	
6	Cut	0.80 m	0.30 m	1.50 m	Service trench	
7	Fill				Fill of trench	
8	Cut	0.54 m	0.36 m	0.30 m	Grave cut	
9	Fill				Fill of grave	
10	Cut	0.90 m	0.42 m	0.26 m	Grave cut	
11	Fill				Fill of grave	
12	Cut	0.58 m	0.50 m	1.50 m	Grave cut	
13	Fill				Fill of grave	
14	Cut	0.28 m	0.50 m	1.50 m	Foundation trench	
15	Fill				Wall footing	
16	Cut	0.48 m	0.50 m		Grave cut	
17	Fill				Fill of grave	
18	Cut	0.72 m	0.54 m		Grave cut	
19	Fill				Fill of grave	
20	Cut	0.58 m	0.30 m	1.50 m	Grave cut	
21	Fill				Fill of grave	
22	Cut	0.62 m	0.38 m		Grave cut	
23	Fill				Fill of grave	
24	Cut	0.52 m	0.40 m		Grave cut	
25	Fill				Fill of grave	
26	Cut	0.72 m	0.40 m		Grave cut	
27	Fill				Fill of grave	
28	Cut	0.80 m	0.36 m		Grave cut	
29	Fill				Fill of grave	
30	Cut	0.52 m	0.38 m	1 m	Grave cut	
31	Fill				Fill of grave	

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
32	Natural					
33	Cut	0.26 m	0.34 m		Grave cut	
34	Fill				Fill of grave	
35	Cut	1.50 m	1.30 m	0.50 m	Construction cut for vault	
36	Fill				Fill between cut and vault	
37	Structure				Brick lined vault	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Peterborough DAC, 2003 Archaeological Requirements: St Michael's Church, Aynho

Pevsner, N 1961 *The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire*

Betjman, J 1958 *Collins Guide to English Parish Churches*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Michael's Church, Aynho, Northamptonshire

Site code: AYSMC 04

Grid reference: NGR SP 514 331

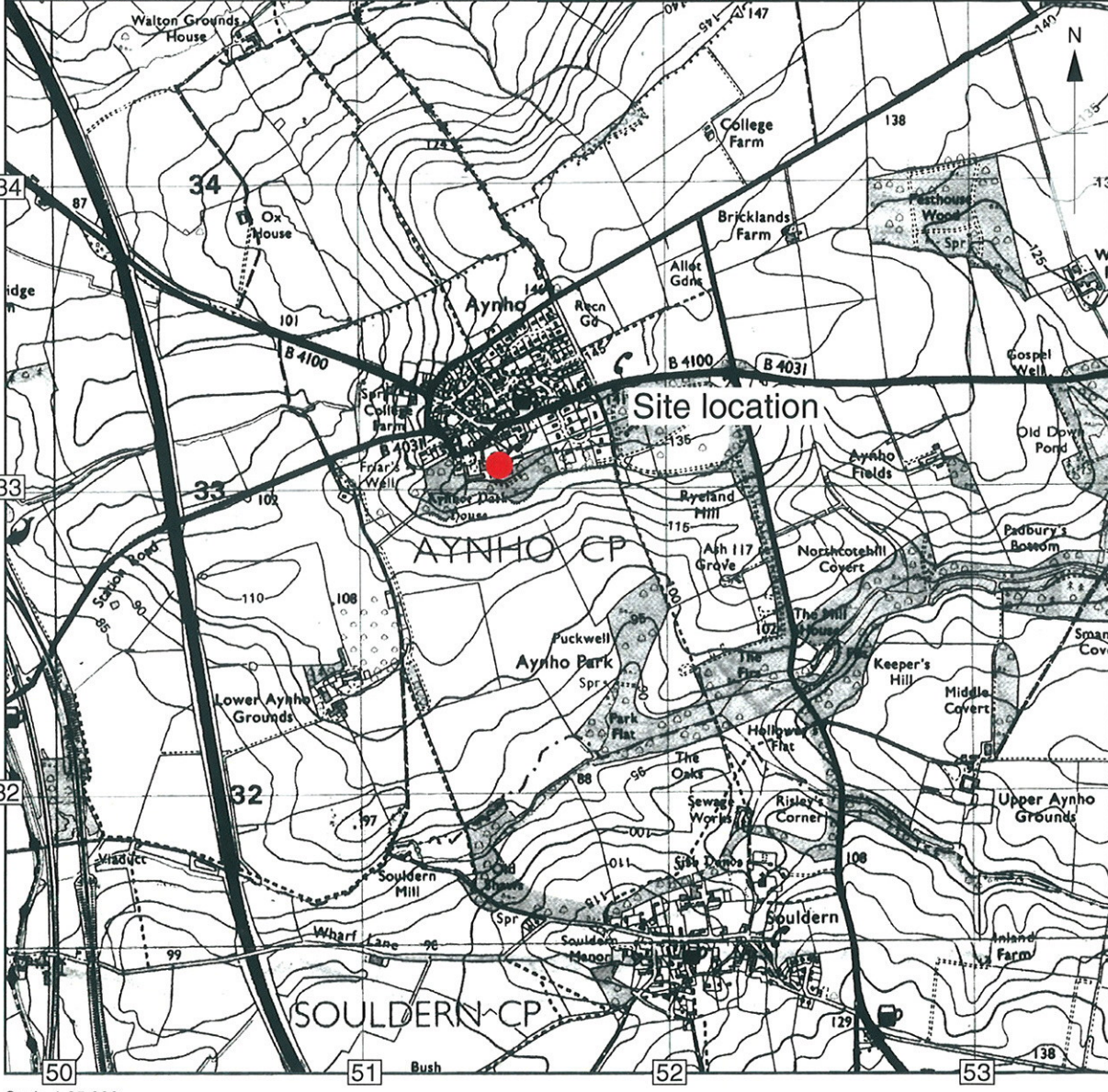
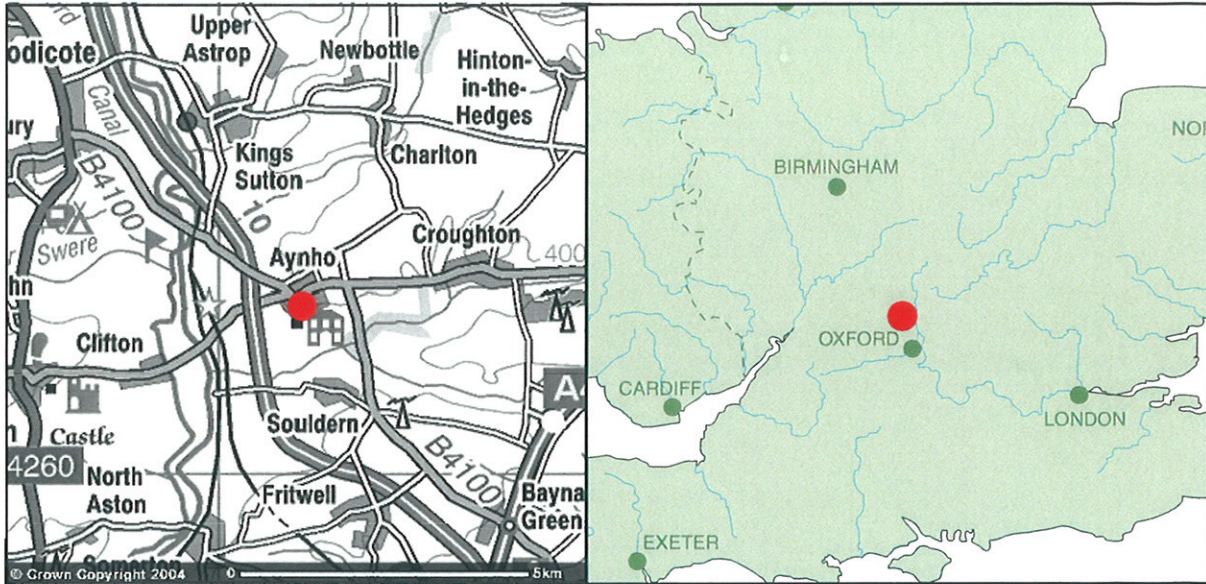
Type of watching brief: Excavation of new service trenches for new WC and utility room within the church.

Date and duration of project: Three site visits from the 8/7/2004 to the 25/8/2004.

Area of site: Pipe trench 15 m x 0.4 m x 0.8 m, service trench 7 m x 1.5 m x 2.2 m.

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed a number of burials and the old north boundary of the graveyard pre-dating the early 18th century rebuilding of the church.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. No museum in Northamptonshire is currently available to receive the archive.



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

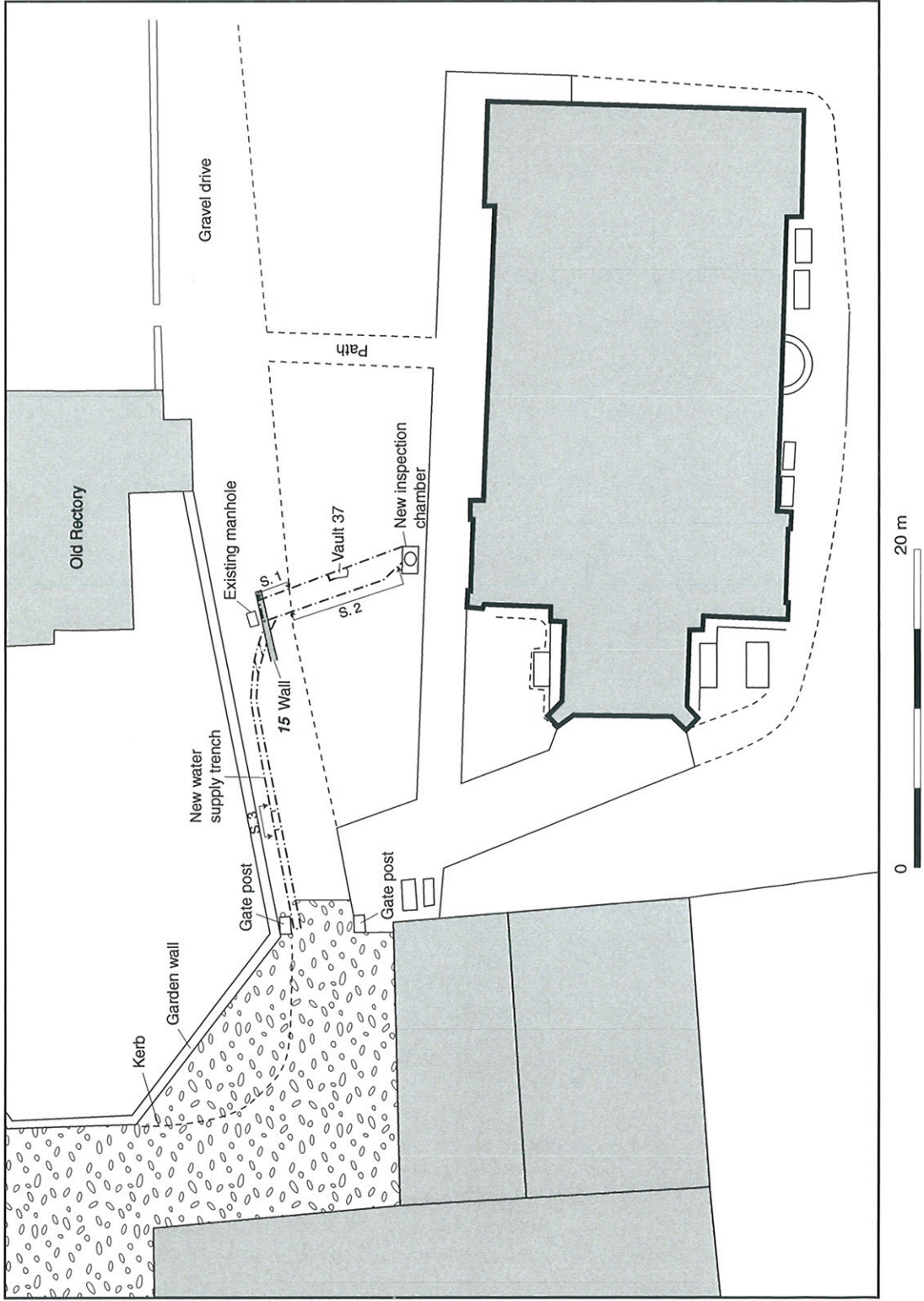


Figure 2: Site plan

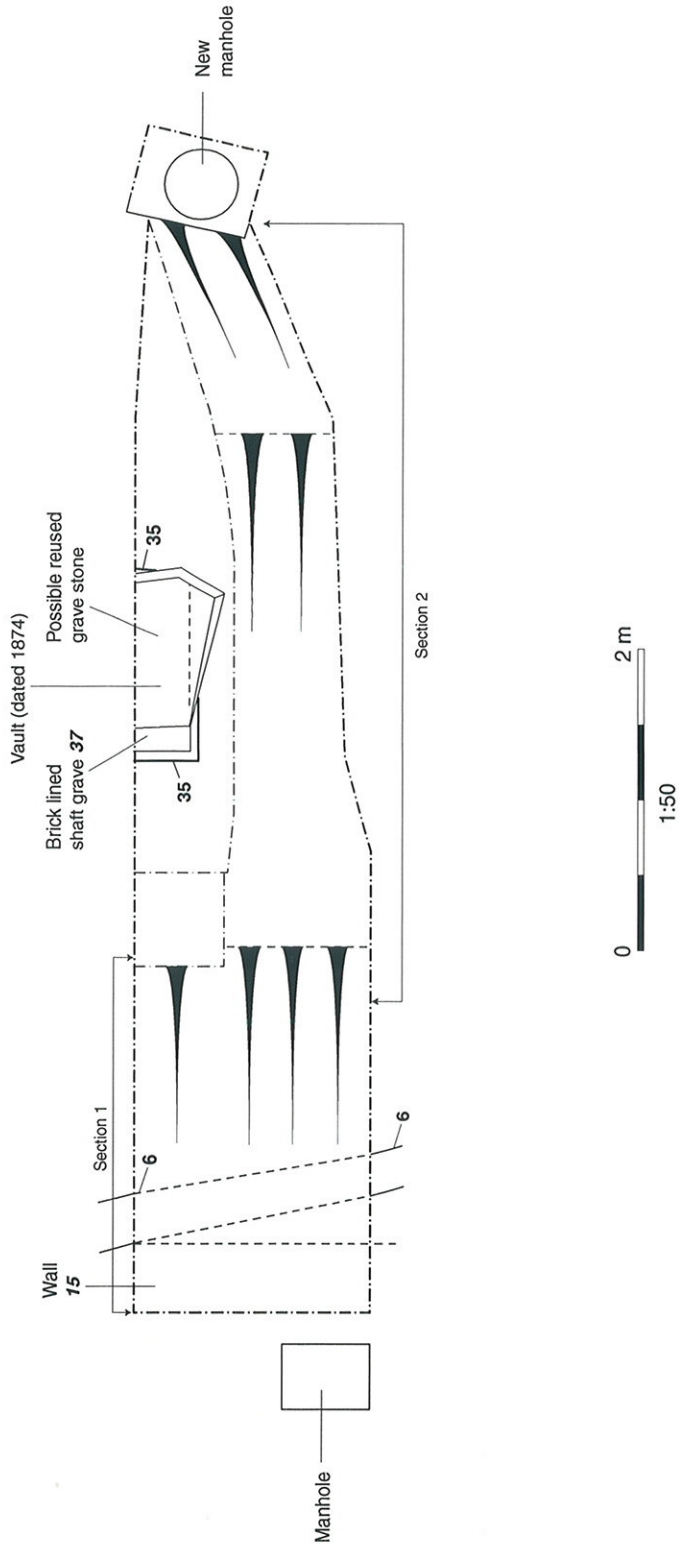
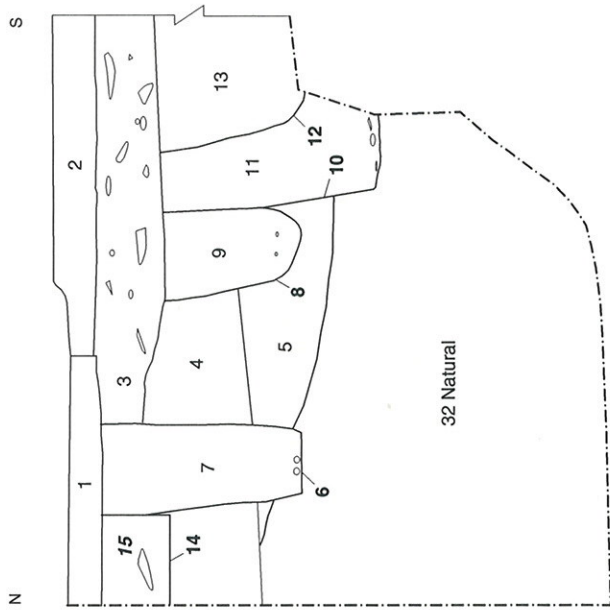
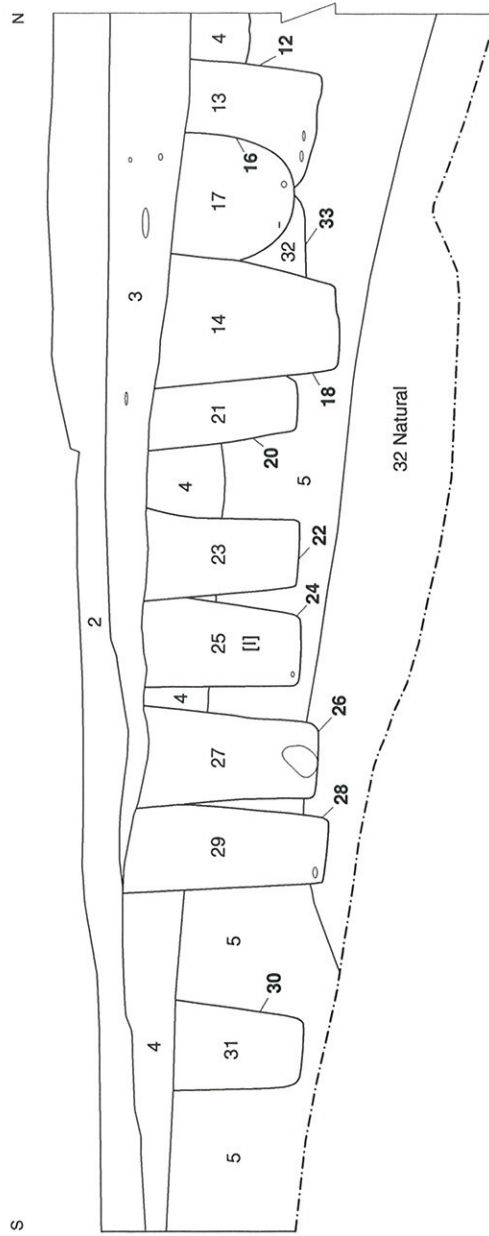


Figure 3: Trench plan

Section 1



Section 2



Section 3

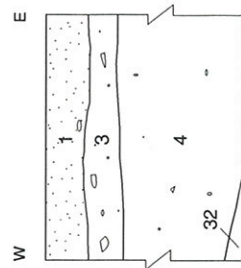


Figure 4: Sections 1-3



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