



St Laurence Church West Challow

Oxfordshire

**Historic Building Assessment
and Recording**



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St Laurence Church, West Challow Berkshire.

HISTORIC BUILDING INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

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St Laurence Church West Challow Berkshire

Historic Building Recording and Investigation

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology has undertaken a small programme of investigation and recording at St Laurence Church West Challow Berkshire. The recording included scaled drawings, plans, elevations, photographs and written descriptions. The work concentrated on a set of stones discovered during the construction of the French drainage ditch which may have formed an extension of the nave.

The current investigation suggests that the stones are more likely to survive from an archway or tower.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Roger Pope to undertake a programme of investigation and recording during the excavation of a ditch adjacent to the west wall of the church of St Laurence in West Challow, Berkshire. A brief was issued by Roger Pope Associates, surveyor for St Lawrence church West Challow.

1.1.2 The project consisted primarily of surveying the area around the church before installing a French drain system. The trench was excavated as some stones were found when constructing the drainage system which were believed to be an extension of the nave (fig 2).

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 There were two principal objectives:

- To survey the trench which was installed for the drainage system to analyse stone remains.
- To investigate the possibility of the stones being an extension of the nave.

1.2.2 The other purpose of the project is to make the results of the record (and the archive itself) publicly accessible.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The investigation of St Laurence church consisted of three main elements: Photographic recording, building plans and a written description including context records from the site providing evidence of stone and soil types.

- 1.3.2 The **drawn survey** comprised of a general map of the area, locating the site (fig 1). A site plan of St Laurence's church (1:100) showing a section drawing of the west wall including information regarding the location of the drainage ditch. An elevation of the south wall (1:25) showing the depth of the drainage ditch was also drawn together with a plan of the west end showing the limestone in the trench (fig 3). All the drawings were produced on archivally stable permatrace using hard pencil. The **photographic survey** consisted of general photographs and specific details and was undertaken using a colour print film (35 mm), colour slide film (35 mm) and a digital camera. The **descriptive survey** given below complemented the other two surveys and added further analytical and descriptive detail.
- 1.3.3 The site recording, was undertaken on the 24th April 2002. All the material produced by the current study (site drawings, photographs, slides, photographic negatives, site notes, a copy of the current report etc) will be collected as a site archive and deposited with Oxford Archaeology.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The current project was not intended to include a comprehensive programme of historical research but the principal sources have been consulted (see Bibliography) and an account of the known history is included here.
- 2.1.2 The main studies of the church show that the building itself shows a construction date of late C12. However the contents of the church range in date from C12- C20 owing to restoration work.
- 2.1.3 The walls are covered with rough-cast with stone dressings and the roof is covered with stone slates. The west window and bell turret (plate 1) are of 14th century date while the chancel windows and the porch belong to the 15th century. The chancel was probably also rebuilt or added at that period and further restoration was undertaken to the building in 1892.
- 2.1.4 The nave has square buttresses of a single stage at the west end and on the north side a square-headed window to the east of the doorway (Fig. 4). The north doorway has a semicircular arch.
- 2.1.5 The porch is made of timber set on a stone base, however the sides have undergone restoration. The general timber work of the front remain a strong example of 15th century construction (plate 2).
- 2.1.6 The font dates to the late 12th century and consists of an unmounted bowl set on a modern base. The bowl is lined with lead and has a modern cover. This is another example of the mixture of modern and archaic construction methods and materials evident in this building.

- 2.1.7 The registers begin in 1653, but no marriage ceremonies are recorded until 1654. The first entry of burial on the church register is in 1680.

3 DESCRIPTION

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The trenches along the south and west walls were dug in order to lay the drainage pipes for the building. The drainage ditches were positioned 0.30m out from the edge of the church. The west wall (plate 3) showed evidence of stone remains which were perceived as being a continuation of the nave. Drawings of both plans and sections were compiled in order to illustrate the purpose of the stones.
- 3.1.2 In the trench along the west wall two limestone blocks were discovered. Each block measured 0.50m in width and more than 0.30m deep (more detail cannot be given as the structures disappear under the main structure of the church). A further two blocks are spaced 1.60m apart at the west end of the church. The blocks are positioned 0.16m below the base of the church (fig 4).
- 3.1.3 The fill surrounding the structure showed evidence of limestone deposits. The limestone deposits showed abundant evidence of backfill surrounding the larger more practical limestone blocks. There is also evidence of modern gravel around the limestone blocks (plate 4). Some soil from the neighbouring graveyard was found under the limestone blocks.
- 3.1.4 The buttresses at the west end have rubble foundations under the ashlar (plate 5).
- 3.1.5 The foundations of the church are exposed on the south wall which shows the former ground level was higher than now and the presence of noble foundations beneath the ashlar plinth (plate 6).

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 No firm conclusions can be made regarding the date of the stones, however assumptions can be made regarding their purpose.
- 4.1.2 The distance the blocks are set apart would indicate that they are foundations for an archway or tower structure. Another possible scenario could see the limestone block foundations supporting a redundant door.
- 4.1.3 The stones are unlikely to be an extension of the nave as they stand out from the west side of the church. The possibility of the stones being part of an earlier structure is best suited to the evidence provided by the spacing and positioning of the stones.
- 4.1.4 There is no evidence beneath the south wall of any clear phasing or building breaks.

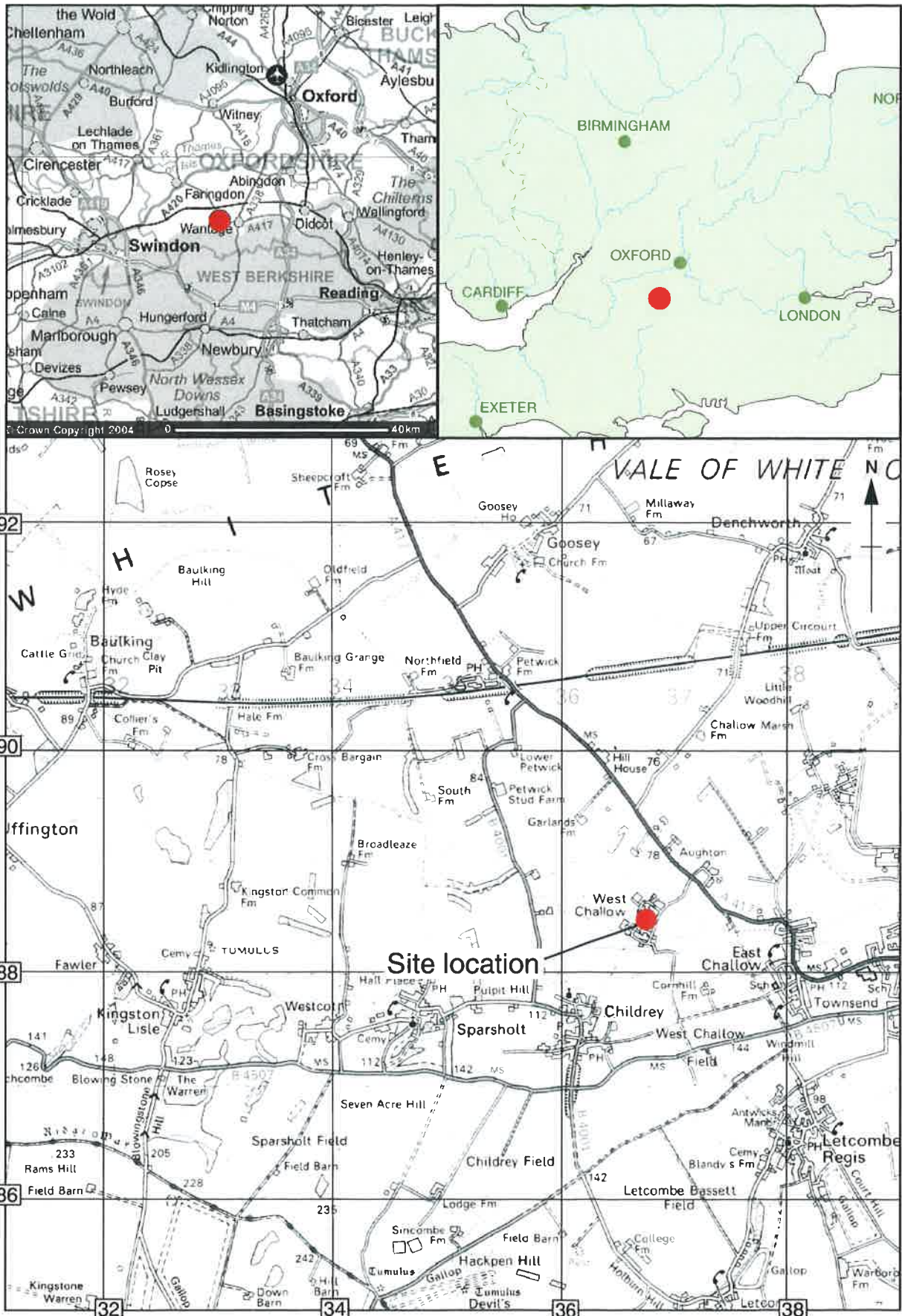
Jemma Jones
August 2006

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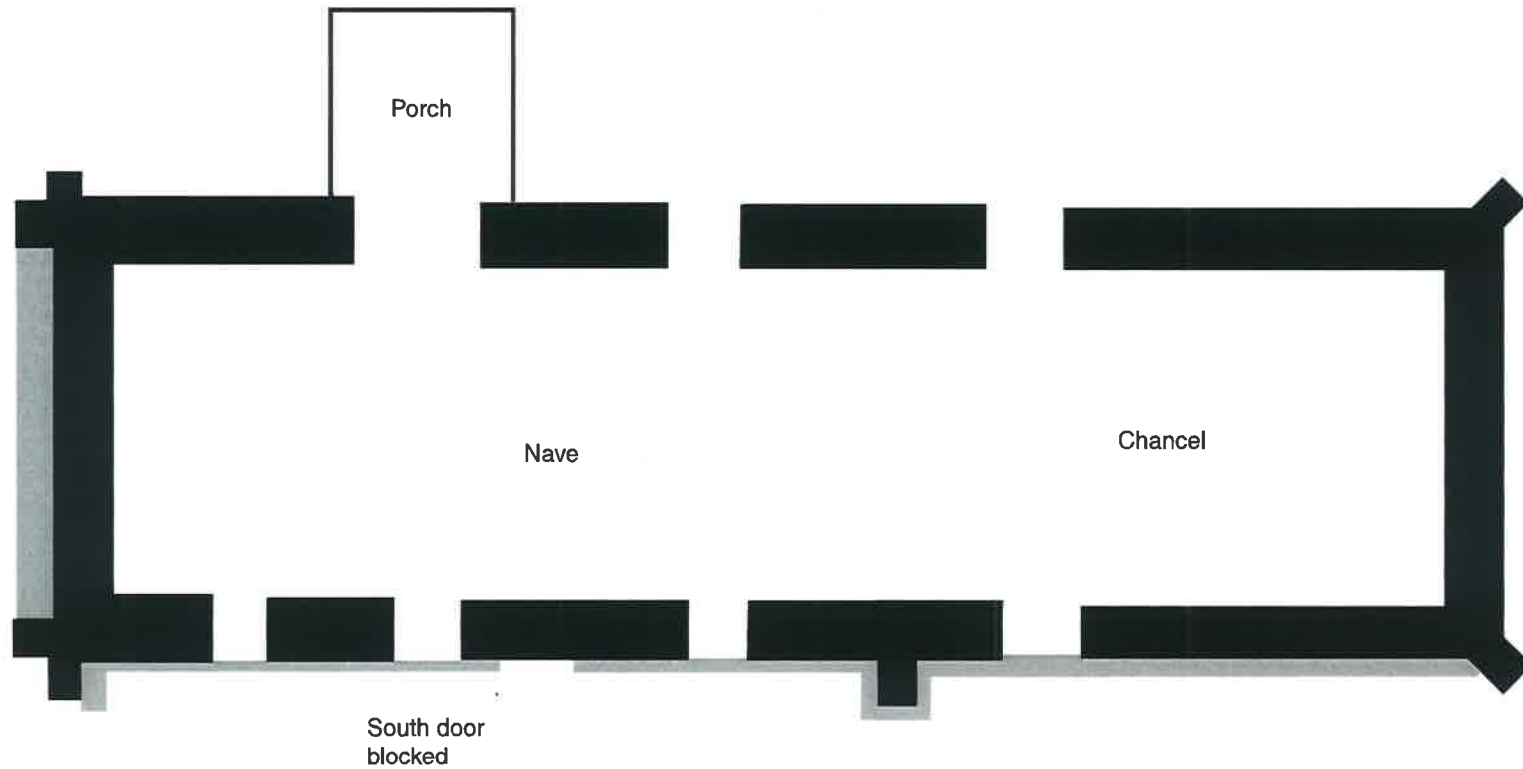
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Figure 1: Site location



 New drainage trench



Figure 2: St Laurence's Church, West Challow Site Plan

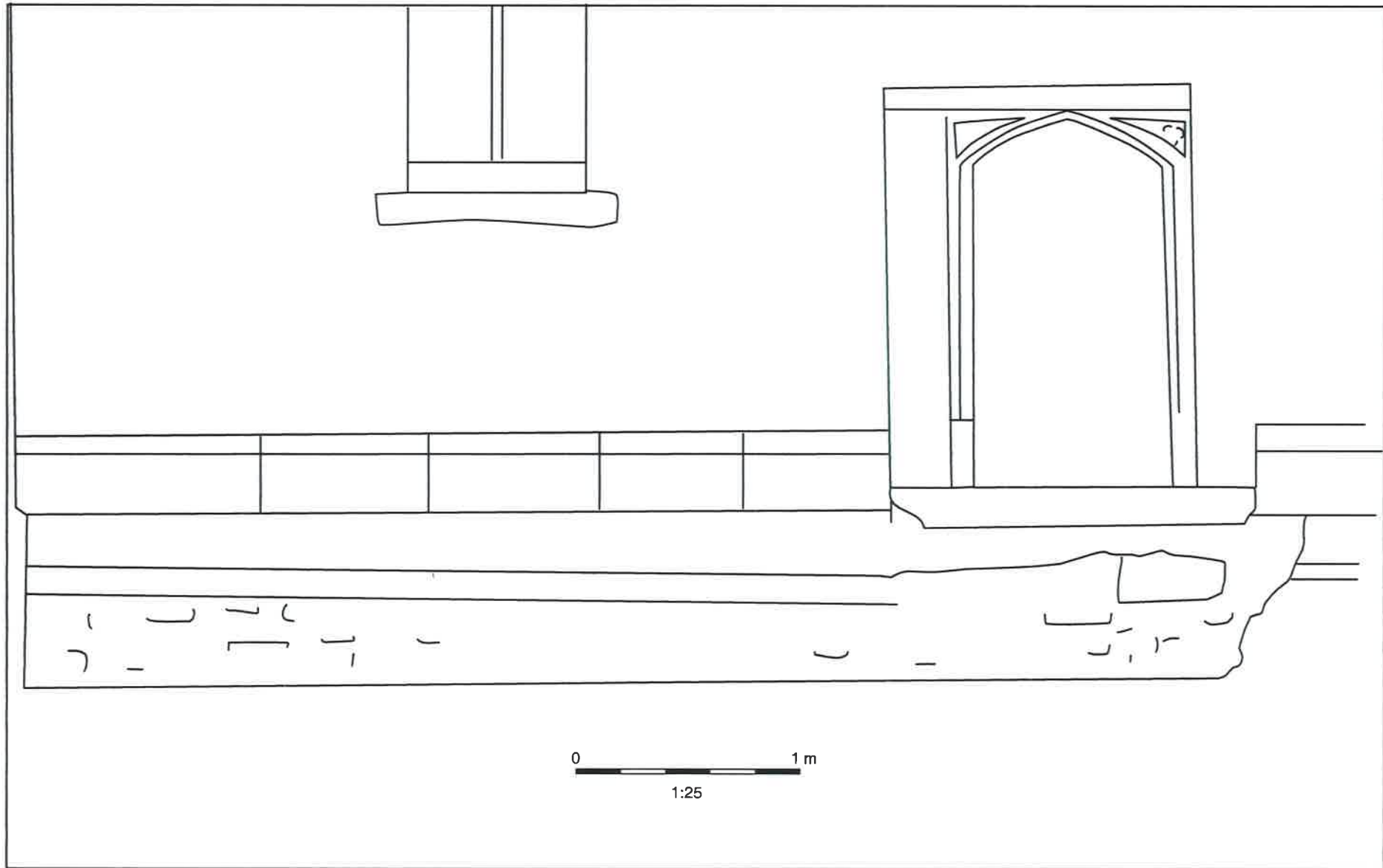


Figure 3: Saint Laurence's Church, West Challow. Elevation of South Wall

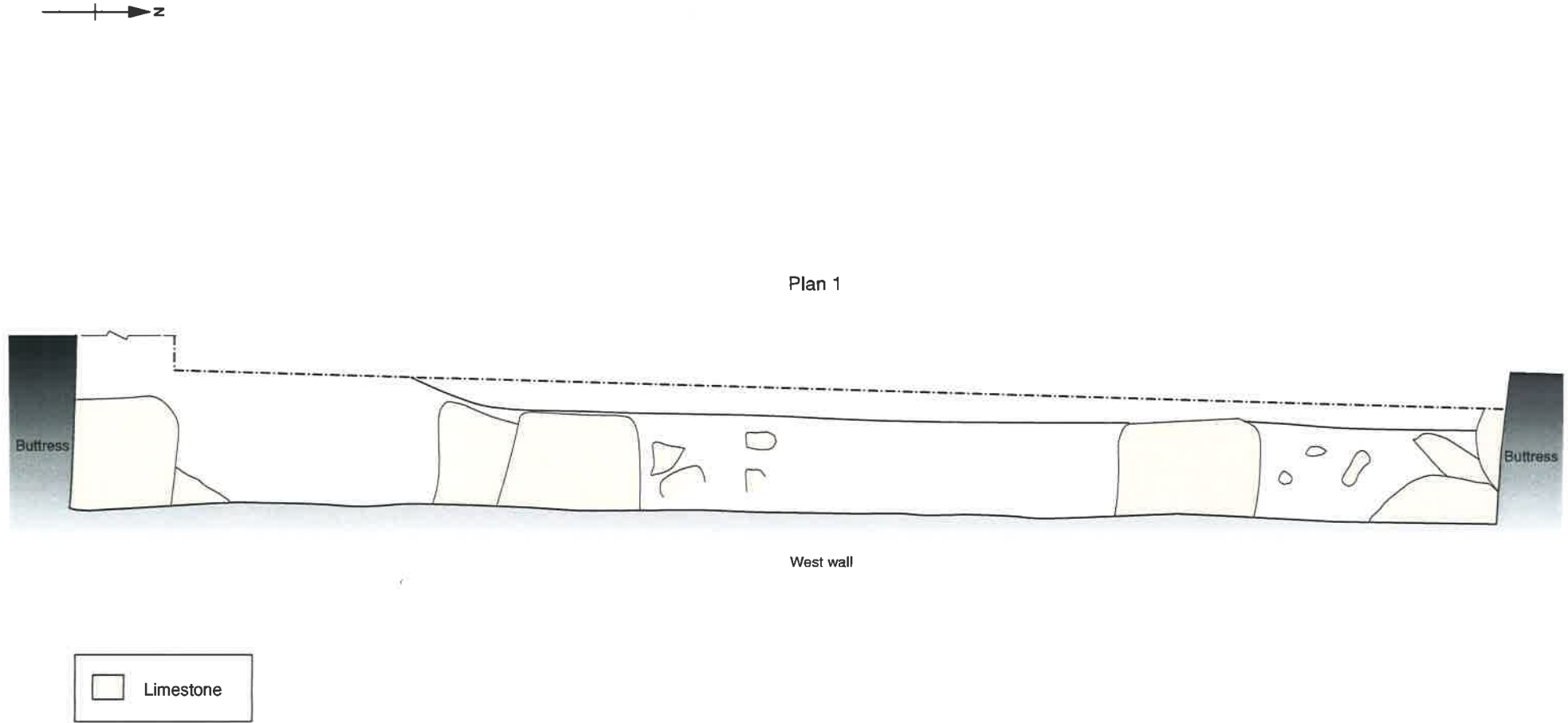


Figure 4: Saint Laurence's Church West Challow, Plan of West End



Plate 1: General view of west window and tower



Plate 2: General view of North front



Plate 3: View of west wall



Plate 4: South wall



Plate 5: South wall looking east



Plate 6: Blocked door at the east end of the south wall



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