



St Clement's Churchyard The Plain Oxford

**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



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St Clement's Churchyard The Plain, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between the 3rd and 5th September 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on The Plain roundabout, Oxford (NGR SP 523 059). The work was commissioned by Jacobs on behalf of Oxfordshire Highways, and was carried out during roadworks on the south- eastern area of the roundabout.

The watching brief revealed part of the churchyard of the old St Clement's Church, which stood on the site until 1828. Sixteen earth- cut graves and one brick shaft grave were revealed. A small assemblage of human bone was also recovered as charnel and from graves truncated by Trench 1. The burials, all roughly west- east aligned, are thought to date to the later 18th- early 19th centuries. The quality of the coffin remains and coffin fittings are consistent with the historical information that described the population of St Clement's parish as poor and of low status.

The distribution and density of burials revealed during the watching brief was greatest in the western half of the site closest to the site of the church, but the absence of graves in the eastern half suggested that the eastern limit of the churchyard was encompassed within the study area.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

Between the 3rd and 5th September 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Plain roundabout, Oxford, on behalf of Jacobs for Oxfordshire Highways. The work was carried out during roadworks.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the Oxford clay and Kellaway beds at c. 58.74 m above OD. The site is situated on the south- eastern area of The Plain roundabout, Oxford, south- east of Magdalene Bridge, between St Clement's Street and Cowley Road.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The medieval period

- 2.1.1 The parish of St Clement fell within the Bullingdon Hundred, until it was incorporated into the City of Oxford in 1835. The three hides of land east of the Cherwell were granted to St Frideswide's Priory (now the Cathedral) by King Ethelred in 1006 AD. The royal chapel of St Clement was given to the Priory by Henry I in 1122 (<http://www.stclements.org.uk/history.htm>).
- 2.1.2 A small settlement that grew up on the southern bank of the Cherwell River at this time was originally known as *Bruggeset* (*Bridset* or *Bridgeset*) (Hibbert 1988, 383), *brycg-gesett* meaning 'bridge-settlement' (Blair 1994, 161), or *Bolshipton* (with various spellings, a shippon being a shed for cattle) (Hibbert 1988, 383). It is thought

that the *brycg-gesett* across Magdalene Bridge, was a focus of a Danish garrison at some point between Cnut's conquest (1015) and the 1050s. This is supported by the dedication of the parish church to St Clement (founded on the site by at least the 1120s), the cult of this early pope being concentrated in Denmark (Blair 1994, 170). In addition, in 1884, a rich burial was discovered to the south of the western-most arch of Magdalen Bridge, on an eyot between the branches of the Cherwell. Grave goods accompanying the burial of an adult male included brass inlaid stirrups, a spur, iron shears, a horseshoe and horse bones. It is likely to represent an elaborate late-Viking burial, as it is very similar to graves dating to the tenth century found in Denmark (*ibid.*). Association of the name of St Clement with the church on the Plain was not historically recorded until the 16th century, however (*ibid.*).

2.2 The post-medieval period

- 2.2.1 The buildings of the parish suffered much damage during the siege of Oxford in the English Civil Wars when houses and orchards were destroyed to create fortifications and bulwarks (*ibid.* 384), including a number defensive earthworks near the church. In 1643, a scheme of works designed by Richard Rallingson of Queens College led to the demolition of many houses on either side of *Bruggestreet* (the road leading from Magdalene Bridge to St Clement's Street) and the construction of a bulwark, designed to defend the bridge. Contemporary observers described how '*almoste a whole street was pulled down to make way for fortifications*' and described the demolition of all the houses lying outside the defenses to prevent the enemy taking cover (VCH 1957, 260). The church and churchyard appeared to have been left intact, however.
- 2.2.2 Following the fall of the city to the Parliamentarians, most of the fortifications were dismantled, and many of the houses near the church were rebuilt. Remodelling of the road system south of Magdalene Bridge also obscured what remained of the original medieval village plan. Aga's plan of 1578 (Fig. 2) predates the Civil War destructions but does not show great details of the organisation of the village. The church is clearly depicted within a walled churchyard surrounded by open ground. Two small roofed structures are depicted in the eastern churchyard. Loggan's map of 1675 (Fig. 3) shows the rebuilt houses near the church. The church and churchyard do not appear to have changed substantially in the intervening century.
- 2.2.3 The medieval parish church of St Clement stood until 1828, with the village grouped round it (*ibid.*) (Plates 1 and 2). Little is known of the structure of the old church building apart from its external appearance known from prints and a few general descriptions. Plates 1 and 2 show a small church with a squat tower standing within a small churchyard. The tollhouse for the bridge is shown standing next to the church on the turnpike road leading into Oxford. Thomas Hearne, the antiquary, described St Clement's as '*a very pretty little church*' (*ibid.*). In 1773, Sir John Peshall described it as having a nave of some 40 feet in length, a chancel of some 20 feet and a width of some 20 feet, with galleries on the north and west sides. Over the latter, was a small, capped tiled tower containing three bells (Hibbert 1988, 383).

- 2.2.4 The church often served fellows of the Oxford Colleges and townspeople of the parish. St Clement remained a small suburb until its sudden population expansion in the 1820s. In 1800, it contained 400 inhabitants; and in 1824 it numbered 2,000, and continued to expand rapidly. This expansion was partly due to the 'new' canals that brought commerce to Oxford before the establishment of the railways. It was also due to the clearance of densely packed houses from the centre of the city to its peripheries (<http://www.stclements.org.uk/history.htm>).
- 2.2.5 Rapidly increasing in size, the population of St Clement required a larger building, and in 1826 the present church was built on Hacklingcroft Meadow, at the southern end of Marston Road. The three bells from the old church (one dating from the thirteenth century and the oldest bell in Oxford) were taken to the new church (Jenkins 2001, 07). The original medieval church was demolished in 1828 leaving a wide, open space surrounded by buildings, just east of the Magdalen Bridge, which became known as The Plain. It is assumed that burial in the churchyard ceased at this time.
- 2.2.6 The last traces of the old churchyard disappeared when the present roundabout was constructed in 1950 (Hibbert 1988, 383), the site of the church building lying within the island of the roundabout and the eastern churchyard beneath the road. The Victoria Fountain, built in 1899 on the site of the former St Clement's toll house, was a belated commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria that had taken place in 1897, and provided a drinking fountain for people and troughs of water for horses (*ibid.*). This is still present on The Plain today.
- 2.2.7 Historical accounts described the people of St Clement as poor, the area constituting a slum in the late 18th to 19th centuries. Public amenities were minimal with their only water supply being the River Cherwell. The river water was contaminated by sewerage and large areas remained stagnant. In 1832, when a cholera epidemic spread quickly in Oxford, the poverty stricken population of St Clement's suffered a third of all recorded deaths in the town (Hibbert 1988, 383).

3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 3.1.1 The project was managed by Daniel Dodds and Dr Louise Loe of Oxford Archaeology. Fieldwork was undertaken by Ceridwen Boston and Helen Webb. The report was compiled by Helen Webb and Ceridwen Boston, with contributions by Nicholas Marquez-Grant and Cynthia Poole.
- 3.1.2 The archaeological consultant was Adam Brossler of Jacobs, acting on behalf of Oxfordshire Highways. We are indebted to Oxfordshire Highways and Oxfordshire County Council for funding this project.

4 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Aims

- 4.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development, in particular burials.

- 4.1.2 To retrieve only those human remains, coffins and coffin furniture that would be disturbed by the roadworks, collecting them for reburial at a location still to be confirmed.
- 4.1.3 To leave *in situ* all burials that would not be destroyed or damaged by the subsequent road building and road use.
- 4.1.4 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

4.2 Methodology

- 4.2.1 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Jacobs to undertake an archaeological watching brief following the disturbance of human remains during the mechanical excavation of a drainage trench (Trench 1 in this report; Figs 4 and 6), which formed part of the roadworks on the Plain. The original road surface and underlying made ground had been stripped prior to an archaeologist being on site, and ground reduction had revealed an interface layer (4) between this made ground (1) and the graveyard soil (2).
- 4.2.2 The human bone, coffin nails and furnishings disturbed during the excavation of Trench 1 were collected for specialist analysis and reburial, as were human remains disturbed during ground reduction elsewhere across the site.
- 4.2.3 A shallow drainage trench (Trench 2 in this report; Figs 4 and 6) was mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision in the north-eastern part of the site.
- 4.2.4 The upper levels of brickwork of a brick shaft grave (3) were visible on the surface of interface layer 4 in the north-western corner of the site. Although the grave had already been backfilled (presumably during previous roadbuilding), small lumens were visible, and the engineer requested that the upper three courses be removed in order to ascertain the level of compaction of fill within this feature. On being satisfied that this was adequate, no further destruction occurred and the rest of the feature remained *in situ*.
- 4.2.5 Mechanical excavation of the drainage trench (Trench 1) was abandoned as soon as it became apparent that large numbers of human remains were being disturbed. The drainage trench was relocated further to the north-west in an area where no human remains were discovered (Trench 3). The drainage pipe was planned to run over the upper courses of the brick shaft grave.
- 4.2.6 A number of *in situ* burials (including articulated skeletons and coffin remains) were visible in the interface layer in the eastern half of the site. A representative area (referred to as Area 1) was cleaned back by hand, and the features were recorded.
- 4.2.7 It was decided not to disturb surface burials but to protect them and leave them *in situ*. Following discussions between the County Archaeologist Paul Smith, Ceridwen Boston of OA and the engineers for Oxfordshire Highways, it was decided to slightly revise the road building construction in order to achieve this. This comprised the following: no further ground reduction; following archaeological recording, the area

to be covered by a thin layer of sand (intended to protect the skeletons), and then overlaid with road building material. A membrane designed to redistribute the load from overhead traffic and to limit hydrocarbon contamination formed part of the construction. Previously this strategy had been adopted by Oxfordshire Highways to protect Grandpont Causeway, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (monument number 21757), that forms part of the Abingdon Road as it enters the city at Folly Bridge.

4.2.8 Archaeological contexts were allocated a context number from a continuous running sequence. Burials were treated as a unit or grave group and a single context number was allocated. All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate. A section through the baulk of Trench 1 was planned at a scale of 1:20. The location of the trenches, shaft grave, Area 1, surface articulated skeletons and modern features was recorded by GIS. From this a site plan was generated using CAD. All excavated features were digitally photographed. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the OAU Fieldwork Manual (Wilkinson, 1992).

5. RESULTS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.1.1 The following section describes the deposits encountered during the archaeological watching brief. The earliest deposit was the graveyard soil (2), a light brown, clayey sand with moderate organic component. Post- medieval pottery, glass, clay tobacco pipe and ceramic building material (CBM), and small quantities of disarticulated human and animal bone were scattered throughout this layer. The full thickness of this layer was not determined, but within Trench 1 it was recorded to be at least 0.4 m. The natural geology was not reached in any part of the site. A layer of made ground (1) overlay the graveyard soil. This consisted of brick and mortar rubble, bitumen and stone hardcore in a matrix of sand. The interface between the two layers was also visible, where the hardcore of layer (1) had been compressed during road building and subsequent use of the road by traffic, into the softer, underlying graveyard soil (2). A number of articulated skeletons and grave cuts were seen within this interface layer, therefore, it was assigned a separate context number (4). The tarmac road surface directly overlay the made ground layer (1).

5.1.2 The above sequence- graveyard soil (2), interface layer (4), made ground (1) and tarmac - was seen across the whole site. Features cutting into layers 2 and 4 consisted of a brick shaft grave (3) and sixteen earth- cut graves (5- 20), which are discussed below by trench number or area. In addition, four *in situ* burials were revealed (identified by articulated human bone) within layer 4, two to the south of Area 1, and two further north between Trench 3 and Area 1. Other than their precise location (Fig. 4), these four burials were not recorded, as they lay just below the level of impact and were left undisturbed.

Area 1

- 5.1.3 Area 1 (Fig. 5) comprised an area *c.* 3 m (north- south) by 5 m (east- west). Within this area, at least eight intercutting grave cuts were revealed (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15), cut into the interface layer (4). The majority appeared to be orientated roughly west- east. Areas of root disturbance and the intercutting of graves masked the edges of a number of grave cuts. There was a high density of burials towards the western limit of the study area, but identifiable grave cuts certainly appeared to be less frequent towards the eastern extent of Area 1, and no burials or disarticulated bone were recovered to the east of Area 1. This absence of burials probably demarcated the eastern limit of the churchyard. Indeed, early illustrations (Plates 1 and 2) and maps of St Clement's church and parish (Figs 2 and 3) indicated that the burial ground was very small, and that it did not extend far to the east of the church building.
- 5.1.4 Human bone was visible in graves 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15, and coffin fittings (nails, upholstery pins, a breast plate and grip plates) were present in graves 12, 13, 14 and 15. Human bone fragments were also visible in the eastern extent of Area 1, where no grave cuts were identified, probably representing disarticulated bone within the graveyard soil. Whilst the bone within graves 9, 10, 11 and 13 may also simply have been disarticulated bone within the grave fills, graves 14 and 15 revealed definite evidence for *in situ*, articulated burials.
- 5.1.5 On the surface of grave 14, a right femur and a number of adult right hand phalanges (roughly overlying the femur) were revealed, as well as a number of other small bone fragments. In addition, coffin fittings comprising a small iron upholstery pin, a coffin nail and an iron grip plate, were revealed. The grave cut itself appeared to be rather long (*c.* 2.04 m), possibly indicating that this was in fact two intercutting graves (Fig. 5).
- 5.1.6 Grave 15 was that of an infant or young child (grave dimensions: *c.* 0.38 m wide x *c.* 0.90 m long). Fragments of skull, upper limb, pelvis, femur and tibia or fibula were identified, lying in roughly anatomical position, and the decayed remains of a single-break, wooden coffin were visible (Fig. 5). Corroded iron was present over the skull and chest area, possibly comprising a breastplate, and an iron upholstery pin and a small copper alloy shroud pin (probably associated with this burial) were also recovered. A tin grip plate with stamped patterning was also seen on the outside edge of the wooden coffin remains, level with the femur. No inscription was present.

Trench 1

- 5.1.7 Trench 1, orientated north- south, *c.* 0.75 m wide and *c.* 2.5 m long, revealed eight roughly west- east orientated, intercutting graves (5, 6, 7, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20), cutting the graveyard soil (2) (Figs 6 and 7). Many of the graves were heavily truncated during machining of the trench. A fairly large quantity of human bone was recovered from the spoil removed from the trench, and this underwent low- resolution osteological analysis (Section 6.4). The majority of this bone probably derived from

the individuals interred within graves identified in Trench 1 (discussed below), but a small proportion is likely to have been charnel from within the graveyard soil (2).

- 5.1.8 Only the northern edge of grave 5 was visible, protruding from the southern baulk of Trench 1. No human bone or coffin fittings were visible. In grave 6, however, the articulated femora, proximal tibiae and a patella of an adult (possibly female) were revealed. Evidence for a coffin was present, in the form of an iron breast plate, situated between the femora, and a coffin nail. The soil surrounding the skeleton was dark and stained with decayed coffin wood (Fig. 6).
- 5.1.9 The foot ends of graves 7 and 17 were revealed within Trench 1, with their western extents lying beyond the western baulk of the trench. Both contained the decayed remains of single break wooden coffins, represented by coffin stains, iron coffin nails and an iron grip plate (grip plate in grave (17) only) (Fig. 6). No human bone was revealed in either of these graves, probably the result of machine truncation, particularly in the case of grave 17.
- 5.1.10 The head end of grave 16 also lay beyond the western baulk of Trench 1. There was no evidence of a coffin, but an adult femoral shaft and lower arm bone (radius or ulna), protruding from the western section of the trench. A subadult metatarsal (possibly charnel) was contained within the fill. This grave had been also been heavily truncated during machining, and it is probable that only the base of this grave survived.
- 5.1.11 The articulated remains of an adult right leg and foot (tibia, fibula, tarsals and metatarsals) were present within grave 18, of which only the southern side of the cut was visible. The east and west limits of the grave extended beyond the limits of Trench 1, and the northern side had been truncated by a modern service pipe (Fig. 6). No evidence for a coffin was present.
- 5.1.12 Graves 19 and 20 were only visible in the eastern section of Trench 1 (Fig. 7), having been truncated away during the machining of the trench. One long bone shaft (possibly a femur) was visible in the base of grave 19, with two other bone fragments (including one skull fragment) present higher up in the grave fill (possibly charnel). No bone was seen in grave 20, although a coffin stain was visible (Fig. 7).
- 5.1.12 Disarticulated human bone was also seen in the base of Trench 1, between the areas defined as grave cuts. A femoral shaft, a femoral head and a skull fragment were present within the graveyard soil 2 between graves 6, 7 and 16 (Fig. 6), and comprised charnel.

Trench 2

- 5.1.13 NW- SE orientated Trench 2 (*c.* 0.35 m wide and *c.* 2.0 m long and *c.* 0.30 m deep) intersected the very north- eastern limit of Trench 1 (Figs 4 and 6). The majority of the trench truncated the backfill of a modern culvert to the east. Therefore, no archaeology was seen beyond this point. Between Trench 2's intersection with Trench 1 and the modern culvert, interface layer 4 and graveyard soil 2 were present within the trench. No grave cuts or human bone was seen, however. This was somewhat unexpected given the density of burial in Trench 1. A small area of softer, wetter

ground (comprised of clay) was present in the Trench. This area had been consolidated by placing two modern bricks within it, presumably during an earlier roadbuilding phase (Fig. 6).

Trench 3

- 5.1.14 Trench 3 (broadly orientated north- south and measuring c. 0.35 m wide) was dug during relocation of the drainage trench that had been abandoned when burials were encountered (Trench 1). No human bone or grave cuts were observed in the graveyard soil layer (2), revealed in the northern or southern extents of Trench 3, either side of brick shaft grave (3). Trench 3 varied in depth from approximately 0.3 m to 0.5 m below the road surface.
- 5.1.15 The brick shaft grave (3) was a rectangular structure, aligned east- west, comprising single thickness of brick and mortar walls. The cut for the grave was visible between 10 - 20 mm beyond the outer limit of the structure. The bricks, dating to the late 18th- 19th centuries (Section 6.2), were bonded with loose, yellow, sandy lime mortar. Four courses were revealed, but the structure was not fully excavated. On the grave interior the brickwork was pointed, but not plastered or whitewashed (as is often seen in brick shaft graves).
- 5.1.16 Originally the grave had been capped by sandstone ledger stones, and the lumen of the shaft grave was completely filled with broken ledger stones, brick and hardcore (Fig. 8). This material had probably been deposited when the upper courses of the brick walls and ledger stones were reduced and broken up during previous building of the road. Some dressed stone was present within the lumen, which originally may have been part of the demolished church structure.
- 5.1.17 The shaft grave was not bottomed and no human remains were recovered as excavation of this structure was abandoned at the level of impact. It is therefore assumed that any burials remain *in situ*.

6. FINDS

6.1. Ceramics and glass

- 6.1.1 A small quantity of pottery, clay tobacco pipe stem fragments and glass fragments was recovered from graveyard soil (2) and interface layer (4). All of this material appeared to be residual and of post-medieval date. No specialist examination was undertaken.

6.2 Brick (By Cynthia Poole)

- 6.2.1 The sample of a brick was taken from brick shaft grave 3 for specialist analysis and dating. The brick was found to be complete, and dated to the late 18th- 19th centuries. It was light orange in colour, completely plain (no frog) and well made, with even surfaces. It was of standard size (228 mm x 110 mm x 66 mm). The fabric could not be determined, but it was possibly laminated clay with small iron oxide inclusions. No course grits were visible. Some mortar adhered to the surfaces.

6.3 Coffins and coffin fittings (By Helen Webb)

Introduction

6.3.1 A number of the graves in St Clement's churchyard contained the fragmentary remnants of coffins and coffin fittings. Some of the coffin fittings were retained and analysed within the laboratory at Oxford Archaeology. These comprised fittings and nails recovered from the graveyard soil (2) from the machine spoil of Trench 1. These were most likely to have originated from the truncated graves. Further iron fittings and nails were recovered from the interface layer (4) from within and surrounding Area 1. A small number were seen within grave 14 but left *in situ* (Table 1).

Historical background

6.3.2 In most Christian denominations in Britain from the late 17th century onwards, it became customary to cover the coffin with upholstery of baize or velvet, and to decorate the lid and side panels of coffins with metal upholstery studs and coffin fittings. By 1700-20, the funeral furnishing trade was a firmly established business, providing coffins for all classes of people and at various costs, depending on the status and wealth of the deceased (Litten 1991). The financial investment in funerary panoply grew over the course of the 18th century, reaching its zenith in the 1840s. Even amongst the poor, the importance of providing a decent burial was keenly felt (May 2000). However, for those that could afford it, the coffin itself was just one aspect of the elaborate mourning and funerary practices surrounding the death of a loved one in this period. Funerals of the wealthy frequently involved processions of black draped hearses, black plumed horses, mutes and chief mourners, a complex symbolism surrounding appropriate mourning dress, grand memorials, and of course the heavily decorated coffin itself. Greater simplicity in funerary practice re-asserted itself in the 1840s, when such mourning displays began to be regarded as vulgarly ostentatious and in poor taste.

Results

6.3.3 The St Clement's burials dated broadly to a time when funerary ritual and coffin decoration were at their peak. The coffin fittings were fairly plain, however, consisting of a few grips and grip plate fragments, two possible breast plates, 35 coffin nails, ten upholstery pins, and a possible corner bracket (Table 1).

6.3.4 All of the fittings recovered were of iron, and nearly all were heavily corroded and too incomplete to allow styles and designs to be identified. Grip styles were the exception, and a number could be matched to the Christ Church Spitalfields typology (1 x Type 1; 2 x Type 2a; 2 x Type 2b; 1 x Type 4) (Reeve and Adams 1993). One new style not previously discovered (OXTHPL 1) was also identified and is illustrated on Plate 8.

6.3.5 Two of the iron grips had been painted black (one from context 2, one from context 4). Whilst colour was an important decorative factor in coffins at this time, Litten (1991) highlights that black painted tin was an expensive variant in coffin fittings, and hence,

carried a cachē that poorer materials did not. It is possible that in painting the iron fittings black, mourners were attempting to disguise the fact that the grips were indeed of iron, the cheapest material in use.

Coffin fittings left in situ

6.3.6 In addition to the coffin fittings retained for analysis in the laboratory, a number of coffin fittings were identified but left *in situ* within the graves. Iron fixing nails were present within graves 6, 7, 13, 14, 15 and 17, and copper alloy upholstery pins were revealed in graves 12 and 14. A corroded iron breastplate was present between the proximal femora of the skeleton within grave 6. A corroded iron plate over the skull and chest area of the infant or young child burial in grave 15 indicated that an iron breastplate had adorned the coffin. Of particular interest was a tin grip plate with stamped patterning, located on the right side of the wooden coffin stain within grave 15, at the level of the femur. An iron grip plate was visible within grave 14, level with the hand and proximal femur, and an iron grip in grave 17.

Table 1: Summary of coffin fittings examined

Context	Breastplate (N=2)	Grip (N=13)	Grip plate (N=5)	Coffin nails (N=35)	Upholstery pins (N=10)	Unidentified metal fittings (N=6)
(2)	x2. probable breastplate fragments. Fe. very corroded.	x6. Fe. very corroded. x1 very small fragment only. x2 adhered to parts of grip plates. Types: x1 Spitalfields 4 (with black paint); x1 Spitalfields 2a; x2 Spitalfields 2b; x1 new type (OXTHPL 1).	x5. Fe. very corroded. x2 adhered to grips. x3 adhered to bolts.	x27. Fe. very corroded.	x10. x8 Fe. very corroded, 1 adhered to 2 coffin nails. x2 ?brass, 1 with wood adhering to reverse.	x5 unidentified corroded Fe. fittings.
(4)	-	x7. Fe. very corroded. Types: x1 possible Spitalfields 1; x1 Spitalfields 2a; x2 possible Spitalfields 2b; x3 too corroded for type identification, one of which was a small fragment of a very substantial grip (with black paint).	-	x7. Fe. very corroded.	-	-
(14)	-	-	-	x1. Fe. very corroded.	x2. Fe. very corroded.	x1 possible bracket. Fe. corroded.

Conclusions

- 6.3.7 The coffin fittings from St Clement's churchyard were few in number and plain in design. The majority were of iron. In three graves where coffin outlines were present, the coffins appeared to be simple, single layer, single-break wooden coffins. The simplicity of these wooden coffins, the choice of metal in the coffin fittings, and the relative simplicity in upholstery design and few fittings on each coffin indicated that the mourners burying their dead in the churchyard were indigent.
- 6.3.8 Within this class, however, there appeared to have been minor differences in expenditure on coffins, with some burials having breastplates and more upholstery studs than others. A slightly more elaborate burial was that of the infant/young child (15), where decorated silvered tin grip plates were present (tin being a much more expensive metal than iron for fittings). A similar infant's coffin was seen at St Nicholas' church, Forest Hill, Oxon. (Boston 2004).
- 6.3.9 The overall poverty of coffins and fittings is consistent with the historical data that portrays the parish of St Clement as poor and rundown (Section 2).
- 6.3.10 Although no textiles survived in St Clement's burials, a small number of copper alloy pins were present, one possibly associated with infant/young child burial (15), and another within the graveyard soil (2) removed during the excavation of Trench 1. These suggested that at least some of the corpses had been buried in shrouds and/or coffin sheets, which had been fastened with these shroud pins. It is likely that many more pins were present within the graves, but given the fieldwork methodology many of these were probably overlooked. Janaway (1998) comments on the great variation in dressing corpses in the 18th and 19th centuries. A loose sheet or winding cloth was often placed under the corpse and used to line the open coffin, and later to cover the corpse, often being pinned in place. In addition, crudely made shrouds designed to look like nightgowns, often with a ruffle round the neck and down the front, came into vogue in this period. Less commonly, the deceased was dressed in personal clothing. No clothes fastenings (eg buttons, toggles or buckles) were recovered to suggest such clothing of the corpse in St Clement's churchyard.
- 6.3.11 Interestingly, no verdegris staining from copper alloy shroud pins was observed on the human bones during the osteological analysis. This may in part be due to the unwashed nature of the bones that underwent analysis.

6.4 The human skeletal remains (By Nicholas Márquez-Grant)

- 6.4.1 Standard osteological examination was undertaken on unwashed bone collected from Trench 1 and interface layer 4, in order to determine the minimum number of individuals present, their age and sex where possible. The extent of pathological conditions was also explored.

Materials and methods

- 6.4.2 The human remains derived from contexts (2) and (4) and were disarticulated. A total of 41 elements (or parts of elements) were inventoried from context 2, and 173

elements (or parts of elements) from context 4. In addition, long bone splinters, rib shaft fragments and some undetermined cranial vault fragments were only counted.

- 6.4.3 The bones were submitted to a rapid, low-resolution analysis. The skeletal material was examined in accordance with national and international guidelines (Brickley and McKinley 2004, WEA 1980, Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994). All data were recorded on skeletal recording forms.

Inventory, condition and completeness

- 6.4.4 A detailed record of bone presence and absence, condition and completeness was made for all the human remains. Presence or absence was scored according to bone segment such as, in the case of long bones, proximal epiphysis, shaft and distal epiphysis. The completeness of each element was also indicated by assigning them to one of the following categories: >75% complete, 75-50%, 50-25% and <25%.

- 6.4.5 The condition of the cortical surface of the bone was scored by employing the following grades: excellent, good, fair, and poor. Whereas 'excellent' denoted no erosion of the cortical surface, fresh appearance to bone and no modifications; 'poor' reflected heavy erosion of the surface and masking normal cortical texture.

Estimation of the minimum number of individuals, biological age-at-death and sex

- 6.4.6 The minimum number of individuals (MNI) present was calculated based on the number of most frequently repeated elements. Differences according to age and sex were also considered.

- 6.4.7 Due to the lack of dental remains in this assemblage, subadult age estimation was based primarily on epiphyseal fusion and diaphyseal long bone lengths (Scheuer and Black 2000).

- 6.4.8 With regard to the adult individuals (>18 years), the lack of complete ageing indicators such as the pubic symphysis, the auricular surface of the ilium and the wear on molar teeth, meant that epiphyseal fusion (Brothwell 1981, Scheuer and Black 2000) was the only method that could be employed.

- 6.4.9 Sexually dimorphic features of the pelvis and skull were employed to estimate, when present, the sex of adult individuals (Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994). This does not apply to immature (subadult) skeletons for whom there are currently no reliable methods available (Saunders 1992).

Metrical and non-metrical analysis

- 6.4.10 No standard cranial and post-cranial measurements were obtained during the analysis due to the incompleteness of the remains. The same applied to the scoring of non-metric traits.

Dental and skeletal palaeopathology

6.4.11 All skeletons were examined for pathological lesions based on the recommendations set out by Roberts and Connell (2004). When present, lesions on teeth or bones were described and diagnosed by employing standard definitions (eg Ortner and Putschar 1985, Hillson 1996, Aufderheide and Rodríguez-Martín 1999).

Results

Condition and completeness

6.4.12 Overall, the bones were in good condition with only minimal erosion of the cortical bone. Although the bones were not entirely complete, with many epiphyses having been lost post-mortem, generally speaking, between 50% and 75% of each element had survived. The most frequent elements were the long bones from the lower limb and especially the tibia. The number of elements represented in each context is listed below.

Minimum number of individuals, age and sex

Context 2

6.4.13 In this context (2), there was a minimum number of nine individuals. Three of these were subadults and, six of them were adults (based on left and right tibiae).

6.4.14 While no more precise ages could be assigned to the adult individuals, it was possible to identify at least one perinate/ newborn (birth- 1 month), one child between 2 and 6 years of age, and an older child, between 6 and 12 years.

6.4.15 Amongst the adults, there was at least one male individual, as indicated by a right greater sciatic notch and the mastoid process of a right temporal bone. Two other cranial traits, a nuchal crest and a supraorbital ridge, reflected a possible male individual. Whether these bones were part of the same individual or represent a number of different individuals is unclear.

Context 4

6.4.16 In context 4, there was a minimum of four individuals. Two of these were subadult (of different ages) and two were adult (repeated bone counts- two left ulnae, two left femora and two right femora). One subadult skeleton was aged between 2 and 6 years. The other was an older adolescent (15- 18 years) based on a right pubic symphysis (Brooks and Suchey 1990). No specific age range or sex could be established for the adult individuals.

Palaeopathology

6.4.17 Amongst the pathological conditions identified were marginal osteophytosis and periostitis. These fall into two broad categories respectively: joint disease and infectious disease.

Joint disease

6.4.18 Marginal osteophytosis (bone growth) on articular facets was observed on several bones from both contexts (Table 2). These bony growths may be associated with a pathological process and may accompany other skeletal abnormalities (for example, trauma); but are most commonly associated with wear and tear of joints that is part of the normal ageing process and activity-related joint damage (Rogers and Waldron 1995).

Table 2 Joint surfaces with marginal osteophytosis

Context	Element	Side	Area	Description
2	Cervical vertebra		Superior body	Marginal osteophytosis
	Thoracic vertebra		Superior and inferior articular facets	Marginal osteophytosis
	Femur	Right	Distal epiphysis	Marginal osteophytosis
	Fibula	Right	Distal epiphysis	Marginal osteophytosis
	Fibula	Left	Distal epiphysis	Marginal osteophytosis. Probably from same individual as right fibula above
	First metatarsal	Left	Head	Marginal osteophytosis
4	Rib	Left	Neck facet	Marginal osteophytosis
	Ulna	Right	Proximal epiphysis	Marginal osteophytosis
	Fibula	Right	Distal epiphysis	Marginal osteophytosis

Non-specific infection

6.4.19 Infection of bone or adjacent soft tissue may initiate an inflammatory process, which may involve the entire thickness of the bone ('osteomyelitis'), the cortical bone ('osteitis') or the fibrous sheath or periosteum that covers bone ('periostitis'). Such infections may be associated with specific diseases (such as tuberculosis, leprosy and syphilis), but most commonly the specific pathogen cannot be identified. Infection may develop from pathogens spreading from an adjacent lesion via the blood stream, or as a result of direct trauma into bone (for instance, as seen in puncture and penetrating injuries). Periostitis may be seen in other conditions of a metabolic, neoplastic or traumatic nature, however (Resnick and Niwayama 1995). The disarticulated nature of the bones did not allow for a more specific diagnosis, nor whether these lesions were focal infections or systemic in nature.

6.4.20 In context 2, osteitis was observed on a midshaft fragment of a femur and a fibula. In addition, healed periostitis was observed on a right tibia. This latter condition was present on all aspects of the midshaft of the tibia and was identified as longitudinal striations and plaque-like new bone formation.

Conclusion

6.4.21 The analysis of the disarticulated remains established that there were at least nine individuals in context 2 and four in context 4. Both subadults and adults were represented within each context. The youngest individual identified was less than one month old at the time of death. The disarticulated nature of the remains, their incompleteness and the poor representation of skulls and pelvises limited the data on age and sex in the adult samples, although at least one male was identified. Nevertheless, it appeared that the sample from the churchyard is broadly

representative of the wide distribution of ages commonly found within parish churchyards.

6.4.22 With regard to palaeopathological lesions, marginal osteophytosis of joint surfaces and inflammation probably in response to infection, were identified. The presence of non-specific infection in a population generally reflects the adaptation or maladaptation to environmental conditions, or more specifically, the presence of malnutrition, poor sanitation and generalised physiological stress (Roberts and Manchester 1995). Contaminated water supply, poor nutrition and living conditions associated with poverty would have impacted negatively on the general health of this population.

No other pathological conditions, such as trauma or congenital abnormalities, were observed. It is possible that more subtle bony modifications were missed, due to the unwashed state of the assemblage.

Table 3 Inventory of disarticulated elements

Element	Context 2		Context 4	
	Subadult	Adult	Subadult	Adult
Frontal	1	1	0	0
Left parietal	0	1	0	0
Right parietal	1	1	0	0
Left temporal	1	0	0	0
Right temporal	1	1	0	0
Occipital	1	1	0	0
Sphenoid	0	1	0	0
Maxilla	0	0	0	0
Mandible	0	0	0	0
Teeth (permanent)	1 (canine)		1 (premolar)	
Hyoid	0	0	0	0
Sternum	0	0	0	0
Vertebrae	1	5	0	1
Ribs	>1	>1	0	>1
Left innominate	0	0	0	1
Right innominate	0	2	1	0
Sacrum	0	1	0	1
Left scapula	0	0	0	1
Right scapula	0	0	1	1
Left clavicle	0	0	0	0
Right clavicle	0	0	0	1
Left humerus	1	4	0	1
Right humerus	0	1	0	1
Left radius	0	3	2	1
Right radius	0	1	0	0
Left ulna	0	2	0	2
Right ulna	1	2	0	1
Carpals	0	0	0	0
Metacarpals	0	8	1	1
Hand phalanges	1	2	0	1
Left femur	0	5	1	2
Right femur	1	4	1	2
Left patella	0	1	0	0

Right patella	0	1	0	0
Left tibia	1	6	0	1
Right tibia	0	6	0	0
Left fibula	0	5	1	0
Right fibula	0	3	0	1
Tarsals	0	10	0	1
Metatarsals	2	24	1	4
Foot phalanges	0	8	0	1

6.5 Animal Bone

6.5.1 A small quantity of animal bone, predominantly large mammal, was recovered from the graveyard soil 2 and interface layer 4. This appeared to be residual and was not subject to specialist analysis.

6.6 Palaeo-environmental remains

6.6.1 No environmental samples were taken.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Archaeological work carried out at The Plain, Oxford, revealed approximately 21 burials that originally had laid within the eastern churchyard of the old St Clement's church (1120s- 1828). Interestingly, despite the early origins of the church, none of the burials showed characteristics consistent with medieval burial practices. Most medieval burials were uncoffined, shrouded interments, and in consequence, the grave cuts were often narrow and cigar-shaped, rather than the rectangular, sub-rectangular or single break (shouldered) grave cuts of later periods. It was possible to identify the remnants of coffins in the majority of graves in St Clement's churchyard, and grave cuts in Area 1 and Trench 1 were typically rectangular or single break in shape. Similarly, where the coffin shape could be clearly distinguished, they appeared to be single break coffins, a shape that became ubiquitous after the 1730s (Litten 1991). Other material culture that dated the assemblage clearly to the later post-medieval period were the coffin fittings associated with these coffins.

7.3 The practice of decorating the coffin with upholstery studs and decorative metal plates began in the latter half of the 17th century, but became accessible to all classes from the early half of the 18th century (Litten 1991). The use of iron in coffin fittings and the lack of elaboration both in the coffin structure and the fittings revealed that burials in the churchyard were from the lower end of the market- the poor but not the destitute. Unfortunately due to considerable corrosion of the iron, no individuals could be identified from their breastplates. Clay pipe fragments and pottery, scattered across the site and found as residual material in a number of grave fills in Area 1, supported a post-medieval date for these burials.

7.3 Similarly, the extramural brick-lined grave was an 18th and 19th century phenomenon, which developed in response to concerns about body snatching, the overcrowding of churchyards, and also operated as a vehicle for social display. Burial within a brick shaft grave was more expensive than in an earth- cut grave, and hence, was most

commonly the favoured grave type of the middle classes of the day. The presence of one such structure in St Clement's churchyard is interesting, as it suggests that there was at least one family of comfortable means interred here. Typically, the grave faced onto St Clement's Street, where the surmounting monument would have been clearly visible to passersby.

- 7.4 Unfortunately, the disarticulated nature of the human bone and the small sample size precluded any meaningful palaeodemographic analysis of this skeletal assemblage. It nevertheless comprised adults, children and infants- demography typical in a parish churchyard assemblage.
- 7.5 A very large number of bones from Trench 1 were lower limb bones and lower arm bones, suggesting that machining had removed much the same body parts in a number of graves. The few bones remaining *in situ* in the base of the grave were also predominantly leg and foot bones. This suggested that at least some of the burials towards the eastern limit of the churchyard had been laid out in north- south rows of west- east orientated graves, and that at a point in the history of the churchyard, formal arrangement of burials had been in place. It was also apparent from Section 1, that burials overlay one another in that area, often truncating the upper fills of earlier graves. Considerable intercutting of graves was apparent in Area 1, closer to the church (and hence, a more desirable burial location). All this argues for intensive burial within the churchyard in the 18th and 19th centuries, probably as a consequence of the great expansion of the population of the parish in this period. It would appear that the earlier more ordered arrangement of graves had been undone by later burial.
- 7.6 A large modern culvert had truncated the eastern part of the study area, removing all archaeological remains. It appeared that this lay beyond the eastern limit of the churchyard, however, as no graves were identified within Trench 2 or the eastern third of Area 1. Early maps (Figs 2 and 3) and illustrations (Plates 1 and 2) all depict the eastern churchyard as being small in area. This appears to be confirmed by the grave distribution. No dividing wall or post line of the eastern limit of the churchyard was observed archaeologically. Nor were the foundations of the two small structures depicted in churchyard in Aga's map of 1578 (Fig. 2). Builders on site did mention discovering the foundations of a brick wall broadly orientated east- west at the far southern extent of the study area. This had been covered by hardcore and tarmac before OA archaeologists attended the site, and hence, could not be archaeologically verified. This wall may well have been the back wall of the churchyard depicted on the above two maps.
- 7.7 The human remains and coffin fittings collected during the watching brief will be reburied at a location not yet specified, but a site within the parish will be favoured.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	Variable				Made ground beneath tarmac	
2	Layer	0.4 m +				Graveyard soil	Human bone, Fe./?brass coffin fittings, pot, glass, clay tobacco pipe, animal bone
3	Structure	Unknown	0.65 m	2.40m		Brick shaft grave	
4	Layer	Unknown				Interface layer between (1) and (2)	Human bone, Fe. coffin fittings, pot, glass, clay tobacco pipe, animal bone
5	Grave group	Unknown	0.07 m +	0.47 m +		W-E grave, Trench 1	
6	Grave group	Unknown	0.27 m	0.70 m +		Adult, W-E grave, Trench 1	
7	Grave group	Unknown	0.30 m	0.20 m +		W-E grave, Trench 1	
8	Grave group	Unknown	0.45 m +	0.60 m +		W-E grave, Area 1	
9	Grave group	Unknown	0.50 m	0.95 m		W-E grave, Area 1	Pot, clay tobacco pipe, animal bone
10	Grave group	Unknown	0.50 m	1.6 m +		W-E grave, Area 1	
11	Grave group	Unknown	0.40 m +	c. 1.80 m		W-E grave, Area 1	
12	Grave group	Unknown	Unclear	Unclear		W-E grave, Area 1	
13	Grave group	Unknown	1.84 m	c. 0.62 m		W-E grave, Area 1	
14	Grave group	Unknown	0.50 m	c. 2.00 m		Adult, W-E grave, Area 1. Possibly 2 intercutting graves as very long	Fe. coffin fittings, pot, clay tobacco pipe
15	Grave group	Unknown	0.38 m	0.90 m		Infant/young child, W-E grave, Area 1	Pot
16	Grave group	0.43 m +	0.48 m	0.76 m +		Adult, W-E grave, Trench 1	
17	Grave group	Unknown	0.44 m	0.76 m +		Adult, W-E grave, Trench 1	
18	Grave group	Unknown	c. 0.48 m	0.73 m +		Adult, W-E grave, Trench 1	
19	Grave group	0.30 m	0.37 m	Unknown		W-E grave, Trench 1	
20	Grave group	0.30 m	0.30 m	Unknown		W-E grave, Trench 1	

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APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Clement's Churchyard, The Plain, Oxford

Site code: OXTHPL07

Grid reference: SP 523 059

Type of watching brief: Recording of features (including burials) revealed during roadworks

Date and duration of project: 3- 5 September 2007

Area of site: *c.* 130 m²

Summary of results: One brick shaft grave and 16 earth-cut graves identified, dating to the later 18th - early 19th century. Burials concentrated in the western part of Area 1 and in Trench 1. No graves identified in western part of Area 1 or in Trench 2, possibly demarcating the eastern limit of the churchyard. Remains of post-medieval coffins and coffin fittings present within some of the graves.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2007.129



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Figure 1: Site location

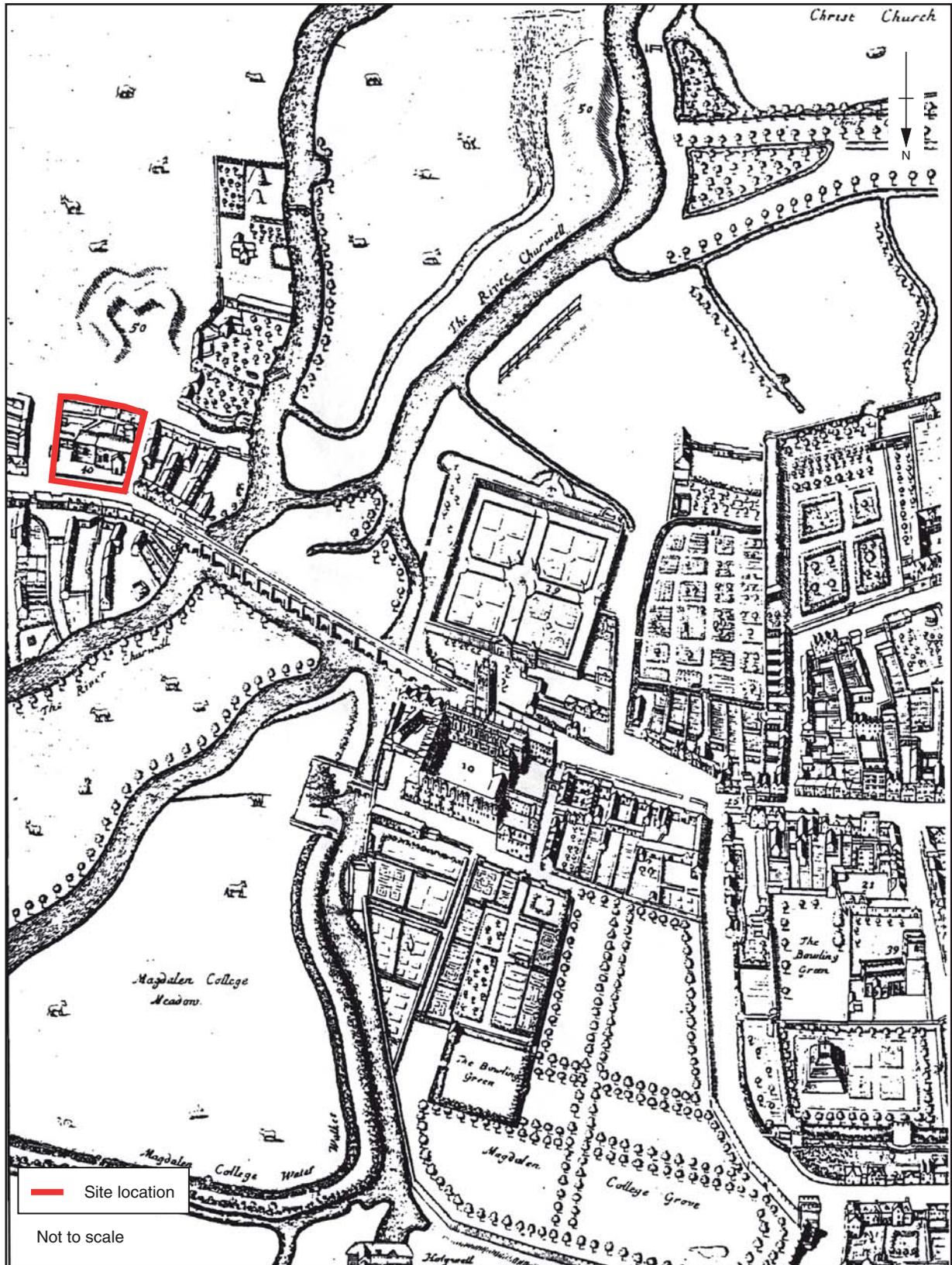


Figure 3: Loggan's Map of Oxford (1675). St Clement's Church is marked as (40)

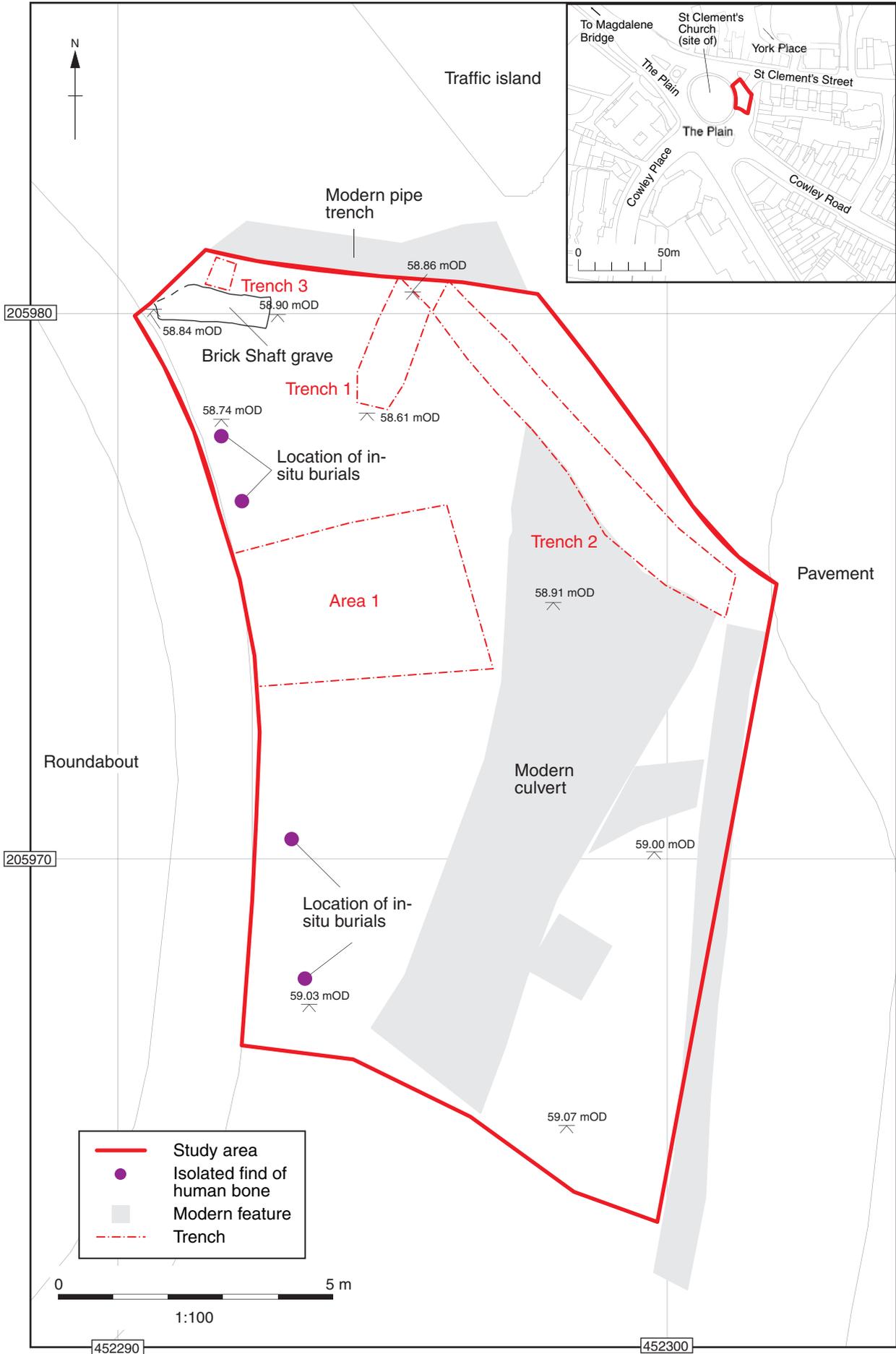


Figure 4: Plan of study area showing Trenches 1 - 3 and Area 1



KEY

- Bone
- Coffin nails
- Iron
- Coffin stain

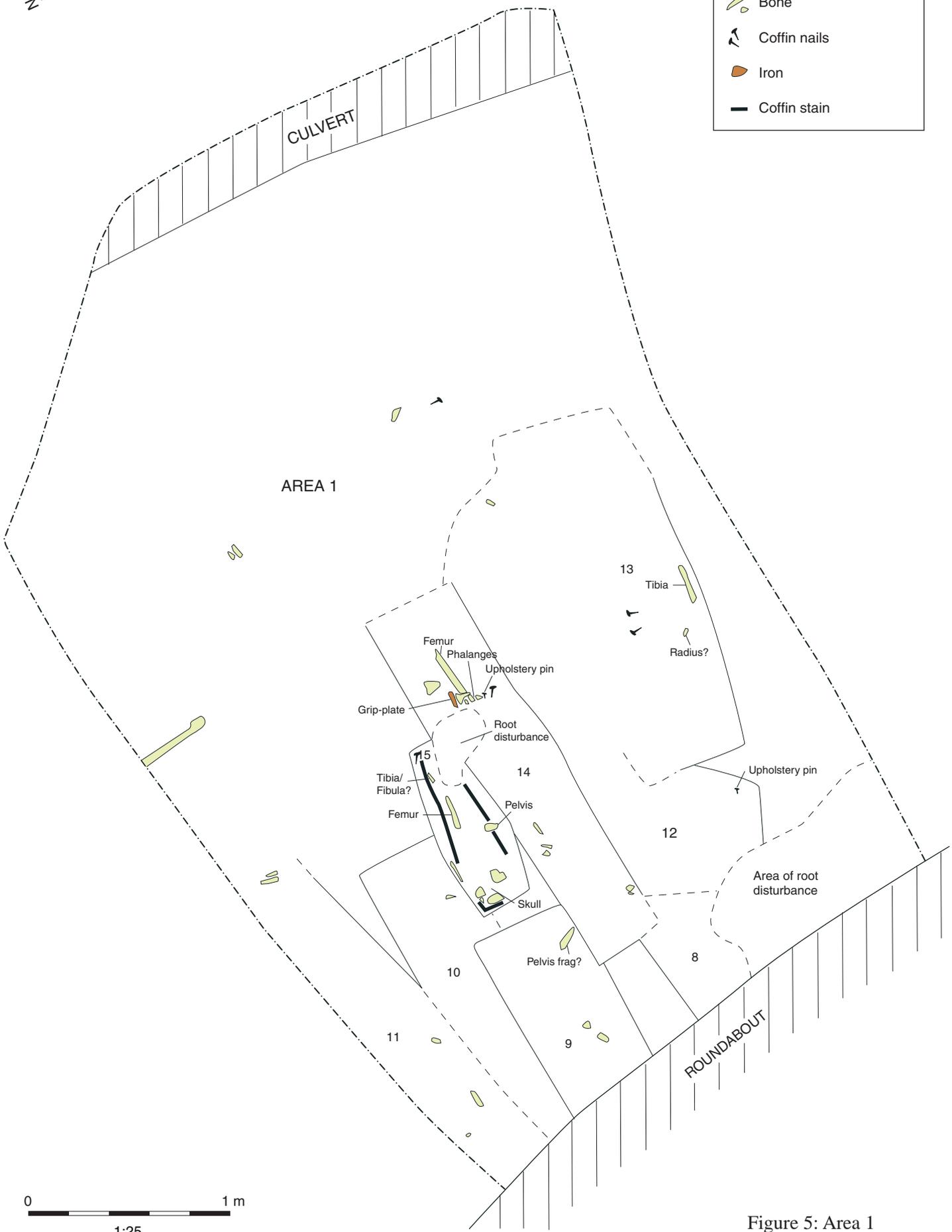


Figure 5: Area 1

Trenches 1 and 2
Plan

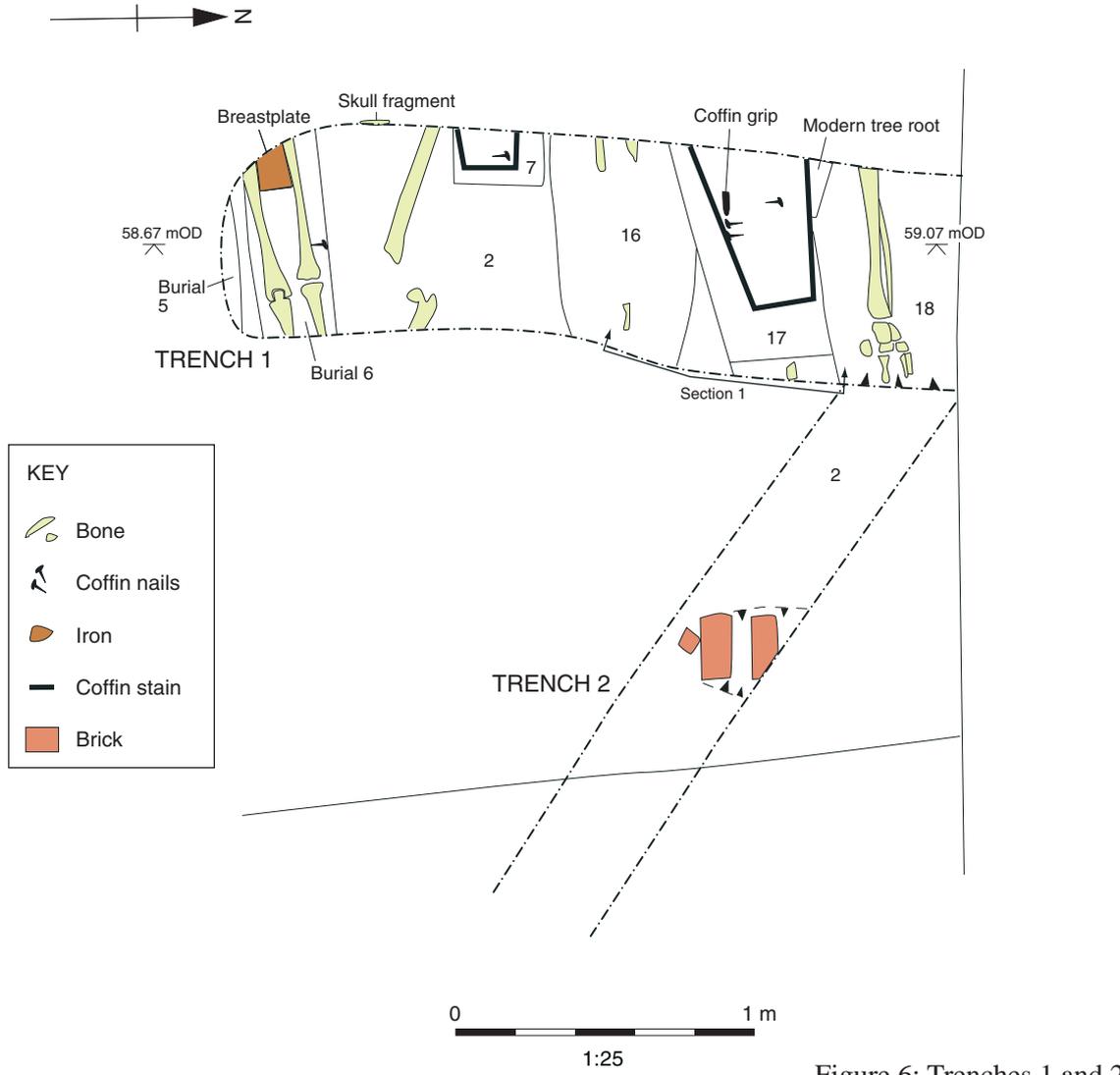


Figure 6: Trenches 1 and 2

Section 1

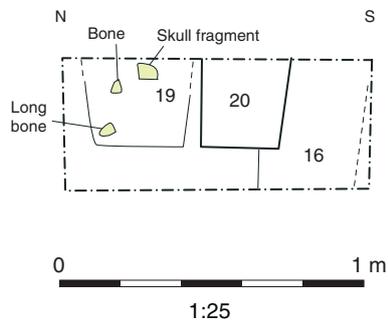


Figure 7: Section 1

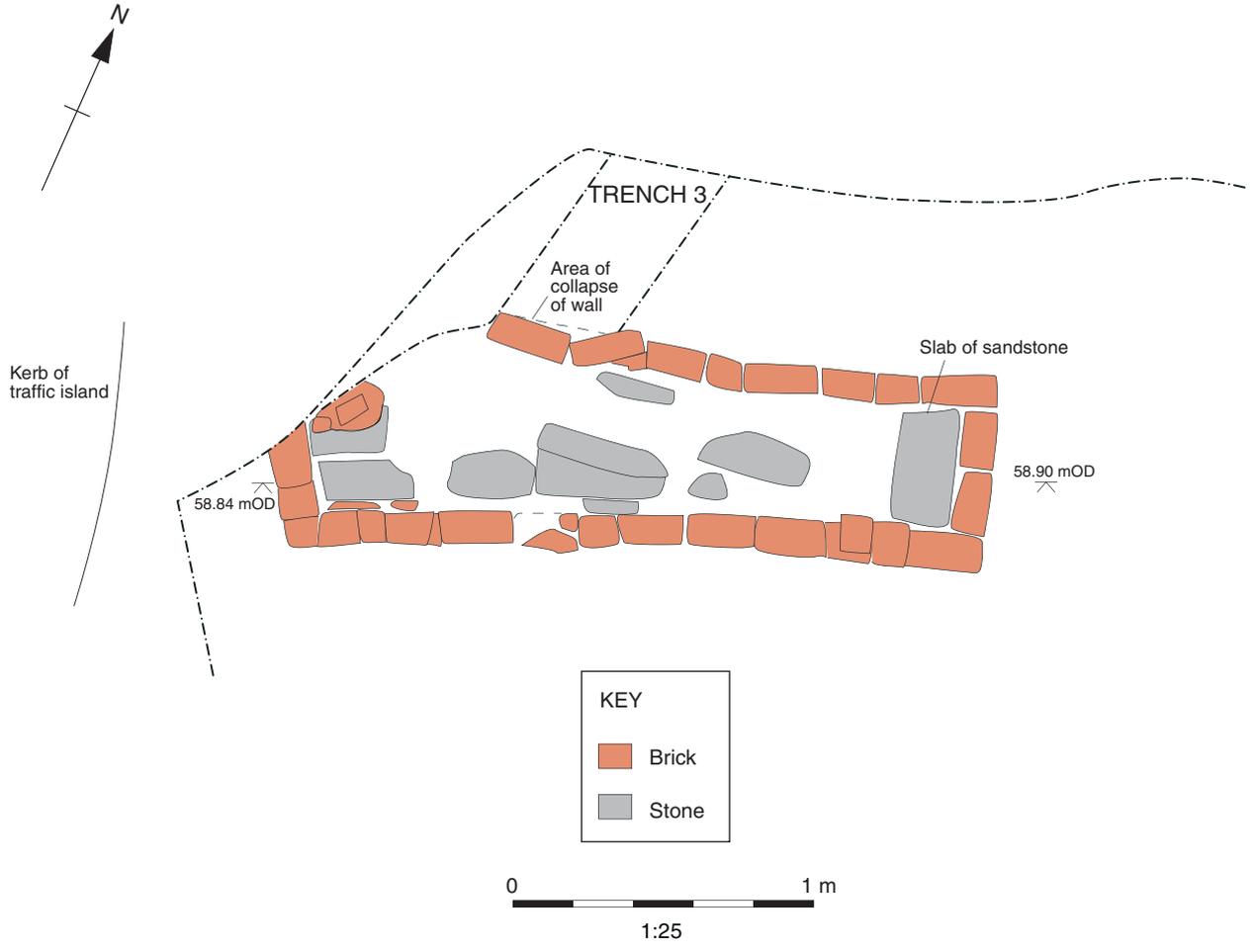


Figure 8 : Trench 3



Plate 1: Old St Clement's church and Toll Gate, Oxford; Removed 1828



Plate 2: Old St Clement's church (c.1820). Churchyard with upstanding tombstones visible on the left



Plate 3a-d: Working shots on The Plain, Oxford



Plate 4: Brick shaft grave 3 looking towards the east



Plate 5: Trench 1 showing burials in the base of the trench (looking north)



Plate 6: Trench 1 and 2 (looking towards the east)



Plate 7: Area 1 (looking towards the north-east)

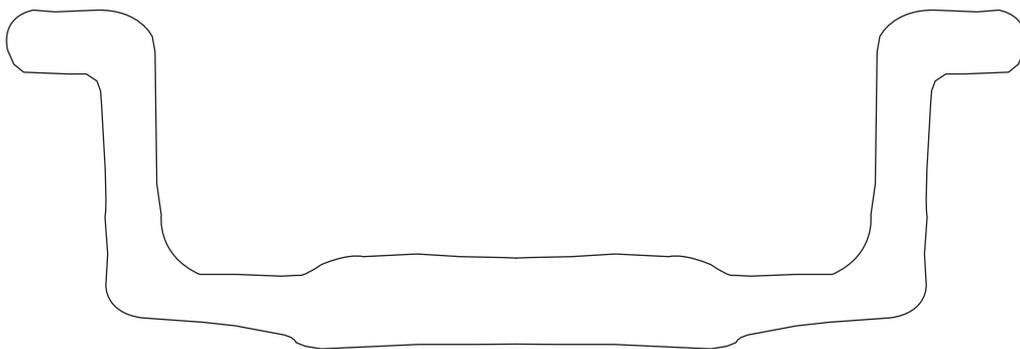


Plate 8: New grip style OXTHPL1