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St peter's Church, Wolvercote, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

In November 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation comprising two trenches at St Peter's Church, Wolvercote, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 496 098), on behalf of Wolvercote PCC, in respect of an extension to the Church hall, with a connecting covered walkway to the Church. In Trench 1 four inhumations, one with associated post medieval coffin fittings, and three unexcavated features, all likely to be graves, were revealed. In Trench 2, one inhumation and nine unexcavated features, all likely to be graves, were found. A grave memorial was also found in Trench 2 just below the topsoil.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November 2009 Oxford Archaeology carried out a field evaluation at St Peter's Church, Wolvercote, Oxfordshire (Figure 1) on behalf of Wolvercote PCC, in respect of a proposal for an extension to the Church Hall, with a connecting covered walkway to the Church, over the medieval and post-medieval graveyard.
- 1.1.2 An archaeological desk based assessment of St Peter's Church and its surrounding area was undertaken by OA (OA 2008), and prior to the start of the fieldwork an Archaeological Mitigation Strategy detailing the work to be completed was produced, also by OA (OA 2009). The content of this mitigation document was agreed with David Radford, the current Oxford City Archaeologist.
- 1.1.3 The proposed development site is situated at NGR SP 496 098 and comprises approximately 0.2 hectares.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The Site is located in Upper Wolvercote, on First Turn Road, within the Parish of Wolvercote, and the County of Oxfordshire. It is within the administrative area of Oxford City Council.
- 1.2.2 The site lies on Quaternary 2nd (Summertown-Radley) Terrace Deposits overlying Upper Jurassic Oxford Clay (BGS Sheet 236, Solid and Drift 1:50,000). The Site lies at approximately 68m OD, with the land to the west dropping down to c 58m OD at Port Meadow, c 200m from the church.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to St Peter's is detailed in the archaeological desk based assessment (OA 2008). A summary is provided here and concentrates largely on references to the immediate vicinity of the development.
- 1.3.2 It is likely that Wolvercote village has its origin in the Saxon period. Wolvercote is mentioned in Domesday as Ulfarcote, meaning 'Wulfgar's cottage' or cottages, which suggests the initial settlement was at first small, and probably a secondary one (VCH, 1990, 304-311).
- 1.3.3 A chapel of ease at Wolvercote is first recorded in 1236 as being subject to the church of St Peter-in-the-East, Oxford. Architectural evidence - a chancel arch - suggests that the church dates at least to the late 12th century (VCH, 1990, 320-323). The church was enlarged in the earlier 14th century when the north chapel was added. Further remodelling also took place in the 15th and 16th centuries (ibid).
- 1.3.4 In 1859 the entire church, with the exception of the tower, was demolished and rebuilt. The Victorian County History records that the nave was rebuilt upon its old foundations, the chancel was enlarged, a new south porch erected, and the north chapel was replaced by a wide north aisle (VCH, 1990, 320-323).



- 1.3.5 The historic graveyard lies on all sides of the church. Its use dates from 1414 to the 19th century (VCH, 1990, 320-323). As such, numerous intact and disturbed graves are anticipated during the excavation of the footprint of the proposed Church hall extension.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The project was managed by Dr Louise Loe of Oxford Archaeology. Fieldwork was undertaken by Mike Sims and Mark Gibson. The report was compiled by Mark Gibson.
- 1.4.2 We are indebted to the Parochial Church Council of St Peter's, Wolvercote for funding this project and Adrian James Architects for providing plans of the proposed development.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- (i) To establish the character, extent and depth of burials and any other features that lie within the footprint of the proposed development.
- (ii) To aid the design of the foundations for the Church hall extension and covered walkway by showing the ground conditions.
- (iii) To make available the results of the investigation by providing an illustrated report and ordered archive.

2.2 Methodology

Scope of fieldwork

2.2.1 The evaluation comprised two trenches, Trench 1 and Trench 2, within the footprint of the proposed development. Trench 1, a rectangular trench, 1.25 m east-west by 9.2m north-south, was situated between the western boundary of the graveyard and the north-south running path that lies to the west of the church. Trench 2, 1.3 m wide by 9.7 m long, ran from the north-western corner of the church boiler house in a northerly direction before curving round two extant grave memorials (so as to avoid disturbing them), to run roughly east-west and avoid a live electrical service (Figure 2).

Fieldwork methods and recording

- 2.2.2 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a mini 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, until the burial horizon was reached. The trenches were then cleaned by hand and the revealed burials/features were investigated to determine their extent and nature and to retrieve finds. Adrain James Architects were granted access to the deposits in order to take auger samples. Each grave group, comprising the grave cut and fill (where observable), the skeleton, coffin and coffin fittings (where present), was assigned a unique context number, although grave cuts and fills were not usually identifiable within the homogeneous graveyard soil. It was not necessary to lift any of the skeletons, nor any remains of associated coffins. Only skeletal remains exposed in the trenches were excavated, thus skeletons were not excavated beyond the limits of the trench.
- 2.2.3 Roughly a third of each trench was excavated to a depth of approximately 1.2 m, the depth at which burials were encountered. The remainder of the trenches were excavated to the top of the highest archaeological horizon.
- 2.2.4 All archaeological features, including burials, were planned and, where excavated, their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A digital photographic record was also made. All excavation and recording followed the procedures set out in the OAU Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).
- 2.2.5 A single collapsed grave memorial stone lay in the footprint of Trench 2, underneath the turf, and this had to be moved prior to the excavation of the trench. It was fully recorded following the guidelines set out by Mytum (2002). The stone was laid between the shed and the western boundary wall of the graveyard when the trenches were reinstated.



Finds

- 2.2.6 All human skeletal remains were left in situ along with their associated coffin fittings. Charnel was kept in the church prior to its reburial in the trench in which it was found. Bags of charnel were clearly marked when the trenches were backfilled. All post-medieval pottery and animal bones from the mixed graveyard soils were also re-buried in the trenches.
- 2.2.7 Minimal osteological analysis of human remains was undertaken to estimate the approximate age and sex of the skeletons and to record any obvious pathology. The condition and fragmentation of the skeletons, and burial positions were also recorded. Disarticulated human bone was not analysed. Human remains were examined by employing nationally accepted standards (Brickley and McKinley 2004).
- 2.2.8 Coffins and any associated fittings were recorded on a *proforma* coffin recording sheet. All coffin fittings were recorded with reference to the published corpus of material from Christ Church, Spitalfields (Reeve and Adams 1993).

Presentation of results

- 2.2.9 The results of the evaluation are presented below starting with individual descriptions of each trench and the features revealed, followed by separate descriptions of the human skeletal remains and coffin fittings. An inventory of all recorded deposits and features can be found in Appendix 1.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Trench 1 (Figures 3 and 5)

- 3.1.1 Trench 1 was excavated between the metal fence that marks the western boundary of the graveyard and the flagstone path that runs roughly north-south to the west of the church. Its northern limit was in line with the front of the Church Hall. Undisturbed natural subsoil was not reached in this trench, as it lay below the maximum depth of excavation (1.2 m). The earliest deposit encountered was the graveyard soil itself, a mid, grey-brown, friable, sandy clay, silt soil (103), of which a maximum thickness of 0.68 m was revealed. This contained high quantities of poorly sorted gravel, occasional post-medieval pottery sherds, CBM (ceramic building material) and animal bone, but no disarticulated human bone (charnel). It was through this layer that the graves (Table 1) were cut.
- 3.1.2 The upper deposits, (100), (101) and (102), were excavated by machine to a depth of c 0.6 m below ground level (67.05 m OD), until the burial soil (103) was reached.
- 3.1.3 Having established the extent of burial soil within Trench 1 the southern third of the trench was excavated by hand to establish the vertical extent of burials. Three west-east burials and one west-north-west – east-south-east burial with coffin fittings (Plate 1) were revealed in this sondage.
- 3.1.4 The most northerly burial (107) was that of a subadult (probably an older child) and was revealed at 1.2m below ground level (66.52 m OD). No coffin fittings nor stains indicating shroud pins were found with this burial. Burial 104 to the south, was an adolescent aged 12-14 years, and was also revealed at 1.2m below ground level. Associated with this burial was a large oval coffin breastplate (in very poor condition) 2 coffin grips and a partial coffin stain of highly decayed and mineralised wood. A reasonable amount of charnel was found just above this burial.
- 3.1.5 At the very southern end of the trench lay two more burials, 105 and 106. Burial 105 comprised a pair of partly uncovered adult lower legs and feet which ran into the western bulk. The cut for this burial was slightly truncated by the skull of burial 106. No evidence for a coffin was found with this burial. It was located 1.2 m below ground level (66.50 m OD).
- 3.1.6 Burial 106 was an adult female who had been heavily truncated by burial 104 (the charnel found in the backfill of grave 104 was probably from this individual). Only part of the left arm and skull of 106 had survived, undisturbed, in this grave.
- 3.1.7 Two unexcavated features likely to be grave cuts were found between burials 104 and 107.
- 3.1.8 It should be noted that the actual grave cuts were not visible during excavation, except for that of 104. The grave cuts of 107, 108 and 109 were only visible in plan once the sondage had been thoroughly cleaned. They were only visible in section for a small portion of their depth. This was due to the fact that the soil used to backfill the graves was the same as that through which they were cut (graveyard soil 103).
- 3.1.9 Above the graves lay a 0.28m thick, mid brownish, grey, sandy, silt (102), probably a buried churchyard soil. Along the central 5.5 m of the trench there was a 0.1m thick layer of gravel (101), a bedding layer for the current east-west running flagstone path



The latest deposit encountered within this trench was the 0.25 m thick layer of topsoil (021) overlying the churchyard soil (102) and gravel bedding (101).

Trench 2 (Figures 4 and 6)

- 3.1.10 Trench 2 was excavated from the north-western corner of the church boiler house in a northerly direction, before curving round two standing grave memorials to run roughly east-west avoiding a live electrical service. As with Trench 1, the whole trench was excavated to the level of the highest archaeological horizon (0.5 m below ground level), then part of the trench (the western third in this case), was excavated to establish the vertical extent of burials.
- 3.1.11 The undisturbed natural subsoil (203), a compact, gravel in an orange brown clay silt matrix, was revealed at 0.81 m below ground level (66.88 m OD), in the western part of the trench. Overlying the natural (203) was deposit 202, a 0.5 m thick, yellow brown clay silt with frequent gravel inclusions. This deposit was the highly disturbed burial soil. It was through this that all but one of the graves (205, see below) were initially cut. Unlike Trench 1, grave cuts were visible in this layer (in plan). A small quantity of charnel alongwith post-med pot, animal bone and CBM was recovered from 202.
- 3.1.12 The highest burial (209) (Plate 2) was revealed at 1.21 m below ground level (66.48 m OD) and was orientated west-south-west - east-north-east. It lay only partially within the sondage so only its skull and the left half of of its torso could be excavated. This burial was that of a female who had been truncated by a later grave (205). The later grave had removed the proximal half of her left humerus and the glenoid fossa of her left scapula. No coffin fittings were found with this burial.
- 3.1.13 To the east and west of of burial 209, were five other grave cuts relating to this phase of burial activity (204, 206, 207, 208 and 210). They all lay parallel to burial 209. Graves 204, 206 and 207 were excavated in the sondage to a depth of 1.17 m (66.52 m OD) and no human remains were encountered. Graves 208 and 210 were not excavated. None of the graves lay entirely within the trench, so their full dimensions could not be recorded. In eastern half of Trench 2 three other probable grave cuts were discovered (211, 212 and 213), and were orientated west-east. They and were probably of a later phase than the west-south-west – east-north-east burials because 211 appeared to truncate 210. These later burials were all truncated by the cut for a modern plastic water pipe which ran north-south across the eastern end of the trench.
- 3.1.14 Overlying the burial soil (202), was a 0.3 m thick layer of dark yellow brown, clay silt (201). This appears to have been the latest phase of burial soil as it was cut by grave 205 at the western end of the trench. Grave 205 was orientated west-south-west – east-north-east, it was 1.8 m long, 0.55m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.21 m (66.48 m OD). It truncated burial 209 on its southern side.
- 3.1.15 The latest deposit in Trench 2 was a 0.2 m thick layer of topsoil. As this was being removed a grave memorial (214) was uncovered. The memorial lay on its back and appeared to have toppled over from its original position, indicating that it may have been associated with grave 208. Details of the grave memorial can be found in section 3.3 below.



3.2 The burials

The skeletal remains

- 3.2.1 A total of five earth cut burials, containing five skeletons, was revealed during the evaluation, four within Trench 1 and one within Trench 2. A summary of the skeletons is given in Table 1. Of the five skeletons, three were adult - two females and one of undetermined sex - and two were subadults - one probable older child (6-12 years), and an adolescent (12-14 years) (Plate 3).
- 3.2.2 The preservation of the four skeletons within Trench 1 was recorded as either good, whereby the surface of the bone showed only slight to moderate erosion, or fair, whereby most of the bone surface was affected by some degree of erosion, and in places, the surface detail of the bone was masked by erosive action. All but one of the Trench 1 skeletons were minimally or moderately fragmented. The skeleton from Trench 2 was judged to be in a fair-good condition, with bones that were minimally or moderately fragmented.
- 3.2.3 Four of the skeletons were lying supine (on their back). Where it was possible for this to be observed, their arms were generally straight, by their sides and their legs were extended. Only the burial position of 107 could not be observed, as only the top half of its skull lay within Trench 1.
- 3.2.4 Pathology was observed on skeletons 104, 105 and 209. Skeletons 104 and 209 had lost several teeth including the lower right incisors and most of the molars and premolars (209). Skeleton 104 also exhibited periodontal disease affecting the bone around its molars and premolars. Periodontal disease refers to the inflammation of the soft tissues of the mouth, namely the gums, and/or the periodontal ligament and alveolar bone (Levin 2003, 245).
- 3.2.5 The only non-dental pathology was observed on skeleton 105, who had moderate periostitis on both tibiae (medial aspects of the mid shafts). Periostitis refers to new bone deposits arising from inflammation of the periosteum, a fibrous sheath which, in life, covers bone. Periostitis may be caused by numerous factors, infection and mild trauma being among them (Roberts and Manchester 2005, 126).

Table 1: Summary of burials revealed in Trenches 1 and 2

Trench	Sk	Age	Sex	Condition	Fragmentation	Body position	Comments
1	104	Adolescent	-	Good	Low	Supine extended	AMTL of upper right PM2, periodontal disease affecting all left molars and all right molars and premolars.
1	105	Adult	?	Good	Low	Supine extended	Only lower legs revealed, periostitis on medial mid shafts of tibiae
1	106	Adult	F	Fair	Medium	Supine extended	Heavily truncated
1	107	Older child	-	Good	Medium	?	Only a partly revealed skull. Age based on size and thickness of skull
2	209	Adult	F	Good-fair	Low-medium	Supine extended	AMTL of lower right incisors, upper left PM1, all PM2s, M1s, M2s and upper M3s

Key: Sk=skeleton number; PM=premolar; M=molar; AMTL=ante-mortem tooth loss

Coffins and associated fittings: Background

3.2.6 In the medieval period a large proportion of the population was buried without a coffin and laid in the grave in a simple shroud (Litten 1991). However, simple trapezoid or rectangular wooden coffins of this period are regularly discovered in churchyard excavations (Gilchrist and Sloane 2005), and hence it does appear that a small proportion of burials were coffined. Coffins of wood and/or lead became increasingly common in the post-medieval period, particularly from the early 18th century onwards. From the late 17th century onwards it became customary to cover the coffin with upholstery and to decorate the lid and side panels of coffins with studs and metal coffin fittings. By 1700-20 the funeral furnishing trade was a firmly established business, providing fittings for all classes of people and at various costs, depending on the status of the 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).

3.2.7 Single-break coffins (the modern 'coffin shape') become ubiquitous from the 1730s onwards (Litten 1991). Simple coffins comprised of a single thickness wooden case decorated with few fittings. More elaborate coffins were constructed either of a double thickness of wood; an outer wooden case and inner lead shell; a lead shell and inner wooden coffin; or a triple layer of a wood-lead-wood. Lead was the most common metal, but iron and zinc were also occasionally used for the metal shell. The outer wooden case was upholstered and decorated with elaborate patterns of upholstery studs (usually iron or brass) and metal fittings, such as escutcheons, lid motifs and departum plates (breastplates, footplates and headplates inscribed with the name of the deceased, their age, date of death and other particulars).



- 3.2.8 The number and materials used for the fittings was eloquent of the wealth and hence, status, of the deceased and family. Considerable variation may be observed across the classes of Georgian and Victorian society. However, it is important to note that even the more humble went to considerable pains to bury their loved ones with as many accoutrements as they could afford.

Coffins and associated fittings from St Peter's, Wolvercote

- 3.2.9 Only one of the burials (104) from St Peter's was found with definite evidence for having been coffined, in the form of decomposed coffin wood, iron breast plate fragments and two iron grips. These coffin fittings all indicate a late post-medieval date (late 17th to 19th century) for burial 104.
- 3.2.10 The breast plate was too corroded and fragmented for its style to be identified, except for its shape, which was oval. The two grips were less corroded and found in one piece. These were in the same style as the Christ Church Spitalfields type 2b, a plain narrow grip. Heavy corrosion meant that it was not possible to tell whether any of the coffin fittings had been coated in a black paint/laquer. Whilst colour was an important decorative factor in coffins during the post-medieval period, Litten (1991, 107) highlights the fact that black painted tin-dipped stamped iron was an expensive variant in coffin fittings, and hence carried a cachet 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 simply of iron, the cheapest material in use.
- 3.2.11 There was no evidence for coffins with the other three burials from Trench 1, nor the burial from Trench 2.

3.3 Grave memorial stone 214

- 3.3.1 During the excavation of Trench 2, a single grave memorial stone was uncovered from under the turf. It was lying on its back with its base in line with extant grave memorials, suggesting that it had collapsed and had been covered over with grass without being moved from its original location.
- 3.3.2 The stone (Plate 4) was made from a light grey limestone. It had concave shoulders and a sinuous (but damaged) top, similar to Mytum's type 5300 (2002, 112, 114). The borders to either side of the inscription were decorated with leaves and winged cherub heads were depicted on the upper section of the stone above the inscription (Plate 5). The cherub was the most common design motif throughout much of the 18th century, and a contrast to earlier symbols of mortality (including the skull, the hourglass and Father Time) that had lost favour (Mytum 2002, 30-32). The cherub was thought, in many cases, to represent a more optimistic view with an emphasis on the positive fate of the soul rather than the decaying fate of the body (ibid. 32).
- 3.3.3 The inscription commemorated three males. Although very worn in places, most of it could be deciphered:

To the Memory of / M. THOM ???? / Who departed this life / June 21 1741 / Aged 76
Years / Also two of his Sons / John and ???? / who died in the????



The phrasing of the inscription for the two sons hints that they may have died at a young age, or that they may have died and been buried (or lost) elsewhere, perhaps as a result of war.

- 3.3.4 A 1983-4 survey of grave memorials at St Peter's (Lisimore, et al 1984) records memorial 214 as present but fallen and only partly showing above the grass. It records the date of death as June 27 (or 24), not June 21, as recorded here.
- 3.3.5 The 1983-4 survey gives additional information on the inscription, including the name of the second son (Frances) and the age at death of the sons (in infancy) (Lisimore, et al 1984, 7).



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The conditions during the evaluation were overcast. Apart from services near the boiler house, there was no intrusion from modern features in the area investigated.
- 4.1.2 The location of the trenches and the percentage sample (c 20%) of the development area investigated, are believed to have given a good reflection of the overall archaeological potential of the site.

4.2 Interpretation

- 4.2.1 Within Trench 1 three west-east aligned inhumations and one west-north-west – east-south-east aligned inhumation were revealed. Their graves had been cut through burial soil 103. The general material recovered from this deposit (103) – animal bone, pottery and CBM – was of post-medieval date. One out of the five burials was associated with late post medieval (late 17th to 19th century) coffin fittings, including iron coffin grips and breast plate fragments. The other four burials had no associated post-medieval coffin fittings, nor other good dating evidence. The lack of coffins with these burials may suggest a medieval date for them, but it is also possible that they were post-medieval un-coffined burials, possibly because they were of a lower status.
- 4.2.2 Three other west-east features, probably graves, were uncovered in Trench 1, but not excavated beyond a depth of 1.2 m. No human skeletal remains were uncovered from these features. Aside from the topsoil, two other deposits were observed within Trench 1, a gravel bedding layer for a path (101) and a buried churchyard soil. The natural subsoil was not reached. The maximum revealed depth of the graveyard soil (103) within Trench 1 was 1.30 m.
- 4.2.3 Within Trench 2 one burial and nine possible burials were revealed. No dating evidence was found with the former, to say whether it was medieval or post-medieval. Four of the nine possible burials were excavated to a depth of 1.2 m, but no human remains were revealed. The natural terrace gravels (203) were encountered in this trench at a depth of 0.81m

4.3 Significance

- 4.3.1 The evaluation has provided a valuable insight into the use of the graveyard on the west side of the church. It has allowed the depths of the graveyard itself to be established in the central area of the proposed development, and has given a minimum depth of the burial soil.
- 4.3.2 There was a clear difference between the burial soils in Trenches 1 and 2, with the former being much darker, less compact and covering a greater thickness than the latter. This difference may be because the area of the graveyard covered by Trench 1 was more heavily disturbed by later burials, than that covered by Trench 2. It may also relate to the building of the church hall, some time before 1834 (OA 2008), which may have caused disturbance to the burial horizon this area.



5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

5.1 Periods represented

- 5.1.1 Post-medieval deposits and at least one post medieval burial were encountered during the evaluation. Other burials may be post-medieval or medieval. No earlier features were uncovered.

5.2 Character of archaeological remains

- 5.2.1 The skeletons from Trench 1 were generally well preserved with good potential to provide further information on the health and physical attributes of the Parish's former inhabitants, should more detailed osteological analysis take place in the future. The cuts of the graves could not be easily defined. Evidence for associated coffins comprised metal fittings, including iron grips and a breast plate. The iron breast plate was very corroded and fragmentary, thus any inscription had not survived.
- 5.2.2 In Trench 2, the skeleton was similarly preserved as those in Trench 1. Unlike Trench 1, the grave cuts could be defined, however no remains of coffins were found.

5.3 Complexity of deposits

- 5.3.1 The natural subsoil was not reached in Trench 1. The burial soil (103) was the earliest deposit revealed, into which six west-east aligned graves were cut. In terms of spatial distribution, four of the graves were closely inter-cutting (104, 105, 106 and 109) with burials starting at 1,2m below ground level (66,52 m OD). The remaining two graves (107 and 108) were separate from the others. Grave 108 was 0.02 m to the north of grave 109, and grave 107 was 0.26 m to the north of that. A buried churchyard soil (102) sealed the graves and a gravel bedding for a path (101) was present in the central 5.5 m of the trench. Topsoil (101) overlay the churchyard soil and the gravel bedding where the paths flagstones were not present.
- 5.3.2 In Trench 2, the natural subsoil (203) was reached at a depth of 0,81 m. Overlying this was the burial soil (202), through which nine graves were cut. In terms of spatial distribution, all graves were intercutting with at least one other grave, except 204 and 206. Graves 204 and 206 were in very close approximation (c 0,1 m) to other graves, but did not intercut other graves. Graves 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209 and 210 were orientated west-south-west – east-north-east and burials 211, 212 and 213 formed a slightly staggered east-west aligned row. Only one burial was encountered in the trench at a depth of 1,21 m (66,48 m OD). Burial soil 202 was overlain by a later burial soil (201) through which grave 205 cut. Overlying this was topsoil (200). The small amount of charnel recovered from this trench indicates that disturbance to the interred remains is generally low, despite the intercutting of graves.



5.4 Range and preservation of finds

- 5.4.1 Occasional post-medieval pot fragments, CBM and animal bones were present in Trench 1 burial soil 103, post-medieval pot fragments and animal bone was present in the churchyard soil 102 and some charnel was found in the backfill of grave 104. In Trench 2, occasional post-medieval pot fragments, CBM, animal bone and a fairly small amount of charnel were present in burial soil 202. The preservation of the articulated skeletons and coffin fittings is discussed in detail above (Section 3.2).

6 IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT

6.1 General

- 6.1.1 Depending on the type of foundations used for the new extension, the development is likely to impact on a number of burials. The evaluation revealed dense burial activity in the development area. The highest burial encountered in Trench 1 was at 1,2 m below the present ground level (66,52 m OD), and the highest encountered in Trench 2 was at 1,21 m below present ground level (66,48 m OD). No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified above these levels in either trench.

6.2 Number of burials

- 6.2.1 Based on the findings of this evaluation it is possible to estimate the number of burials that might be impacted upon by the proposed development.
- 6.2.2 A plan provided by Adrian James Architects shows that the footprint of the proposed extension and covered walkway covers approximately 116m². For the purposes of the present exercise it is assumed the entire footprint of the proposed development will involve excavation to a maximum depth of 1.2m, or excavation of 139,2m³.
- 6.2.3 Based on the number of burials revealed within the evaluation trenches (5) and the total volume of soil excavated (5,28m³), the density of burials is estimated to be approximately 1,06 burials per every cubic metre. This therefore suggests that a maximum of 147 burials could potentially be impacted upon by the development (1,06 x 139,2m³).
- 6.2.4 This calculation assumes that burial density will be consistent throughout the graveyard. However, this is unlikely because there differences were observed in the organisation and spacing of burials between the two evaluation trenches.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No.</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Height /thickness (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	100	Layer	9.2	1.25	0.25	Topsoil in trench 1	-
1	101	Layer	5.5	1.25	0.1	Bedding layer for modern path	-
1	102	Layer	9.2	1.25	0.28	Churchyard soil in trench 1	Post-med pot, and animal bone
1	103	Layer	9.2	1.25	0.68	Burial soil in trench 1	Post-med pot, animal bone and CBM
1	104	Grave group	1.25	0.43	66.52 (mOD)	Subadult inhumation, 2 coffin grips and 1 breastplate	Some charnel
1	105	Grave group	-	-	66.52 (mOD)	Adult inhumation, no coffin	-
1	106	Grave group	-	-	66.50(mOD)	Adult inhumation, no coffin	-
1	107	Grave group	0.16	0.35	66.52(mOD)	Subadult inhumation	-
1	108	Grave group	0.28	0.34	66.52 (mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
1	109	Grave group	0.18	0.66	66.52 (mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	200	Layer	9.7	1.3	0.2	Topsoil in trench 2	-
2	201	Layer	9.7	1.3	0.3	Burial soil in trench 2	-
2	202	Layer	9.7	1.3	0.5	Burial soil in trench 2	Post-med pot, animal bone, CBM, some charnel
2	203	Layer	1.8	1.3	0.25	Natural terrace gravels	-
2	204	Grave group	-	0.5	66.59(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	205	Grave group	1.8	0.55	66.59(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	206	Grave group	-	-	66.59(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	207	Grave group	-	-	66.59(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	208	Grave	-	-	67.24(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-



		group					
2	209	Grave group	1.7	0.55	66.48(mOD)	Adult inhumation, no coffin	-
2	210	Grave group	1.9	0.65	67.24(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	211	Grave group	-	0.6	67.24(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	212	Grave group	-	-	67.24(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	213	Grave group	-	0.6	67.24(mOD)	Grave, unexcavated	-
2	214	Grave memorial	-	-	-	Stone grave memorial, found beneath topsoil of trench 2	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Peter's Church, Wolvercote

Site code: WOLVSP09

Grid reference: NGR SP 496 098

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: November 2009, 4 days

Area of site: Total area of trenches:24,11m²

Summary of results: A total of 5 roughly W-E aligned inhumation burials were revealed. In Trench 1, four burials were uncovered, one with remains of a coffin confirming a post-medieval date for this burial. Three graves (not fully excavated) were also discovered. In Trench 2, only one uncoffined burial was uncovered, though 9 roughly W-E cuts, probably graves, were revealed. Four of these were excavated to a depth of 1.2m, but the human remains were not reached.

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, the accession number is OXCMS : 2009.105



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Figure 1: Site location

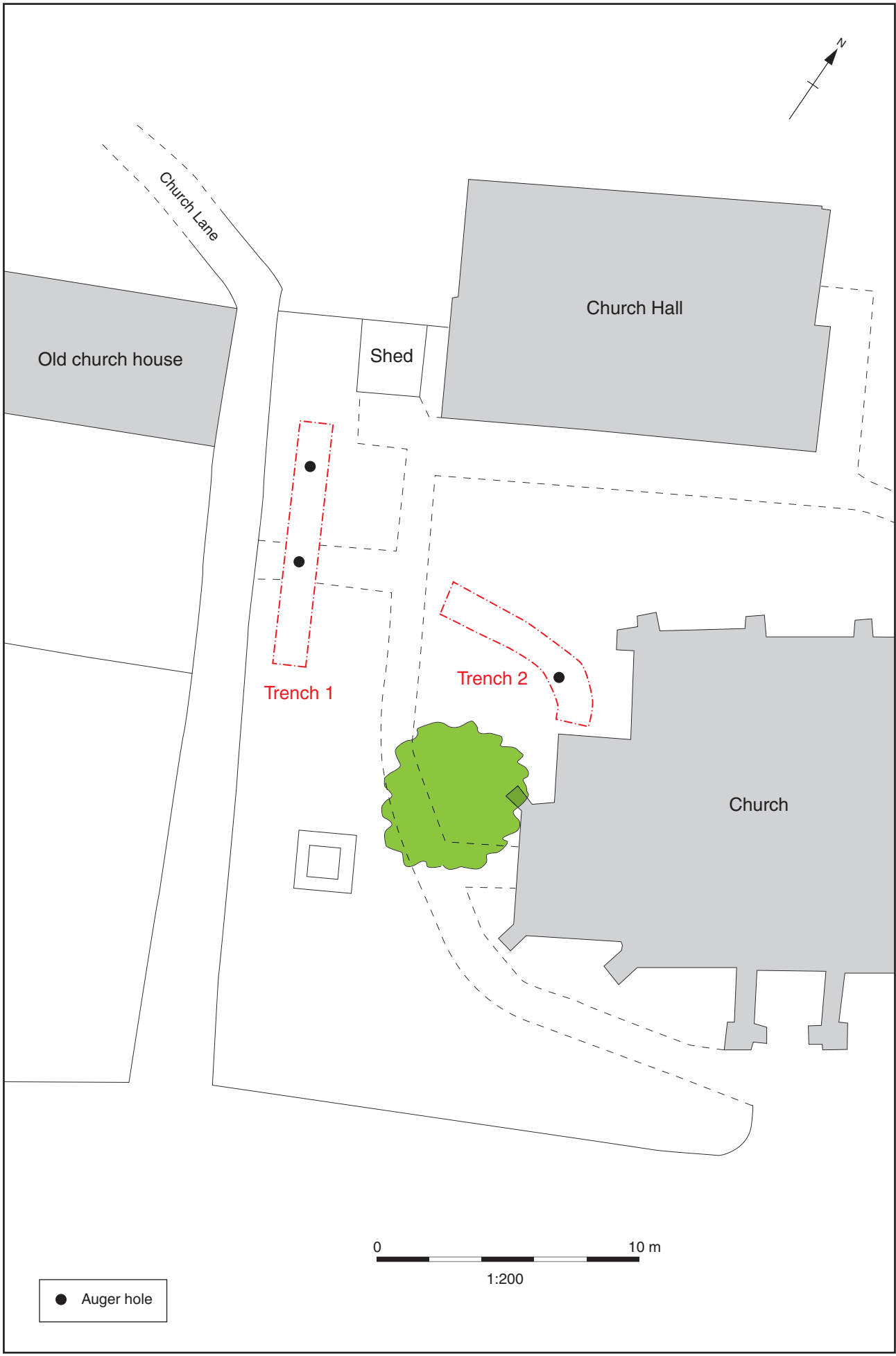


Figure 2: Location of trenches

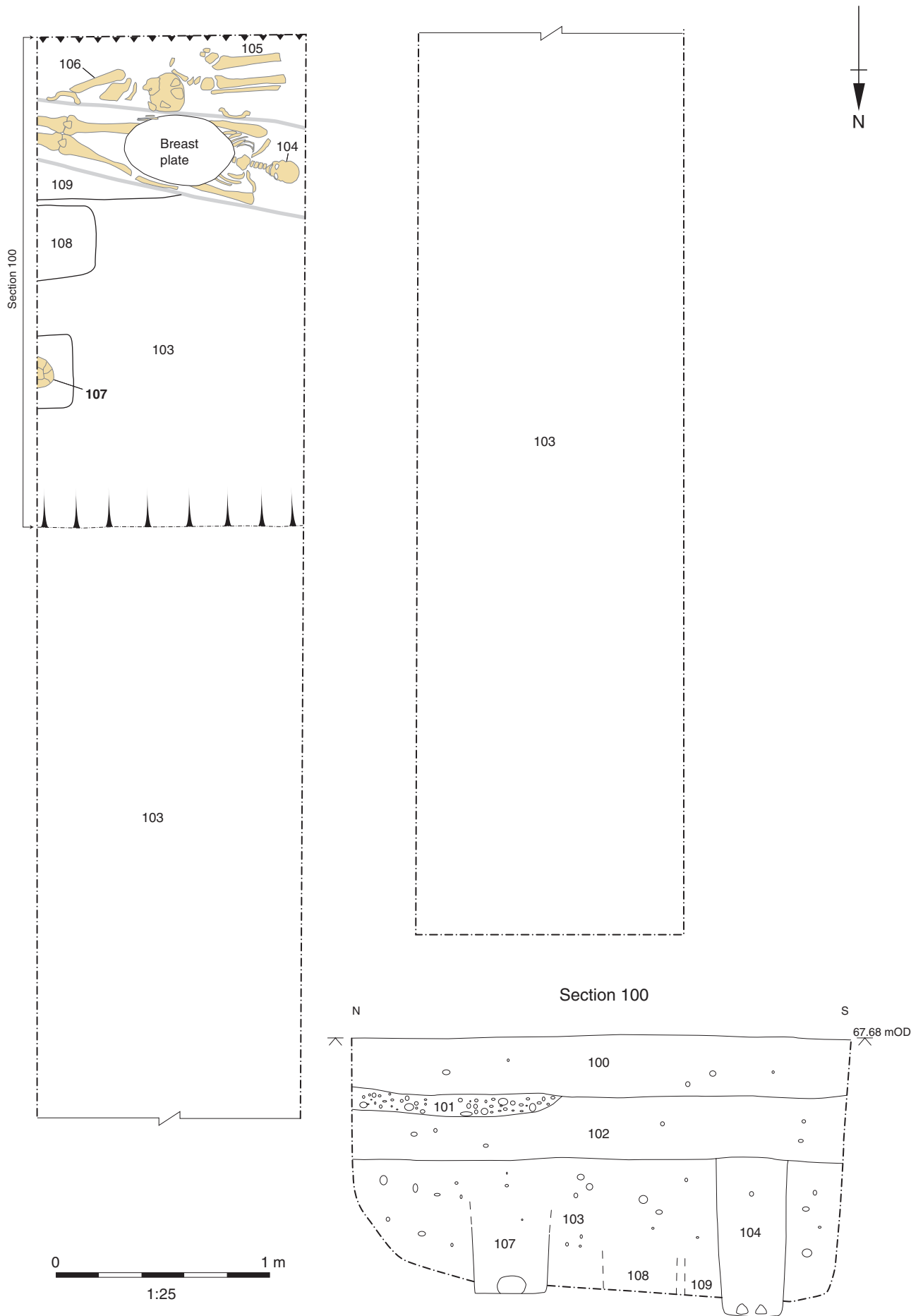


Figure 3: Plan showing trench 1 and burials 104, 105, 106, 107 and section 100

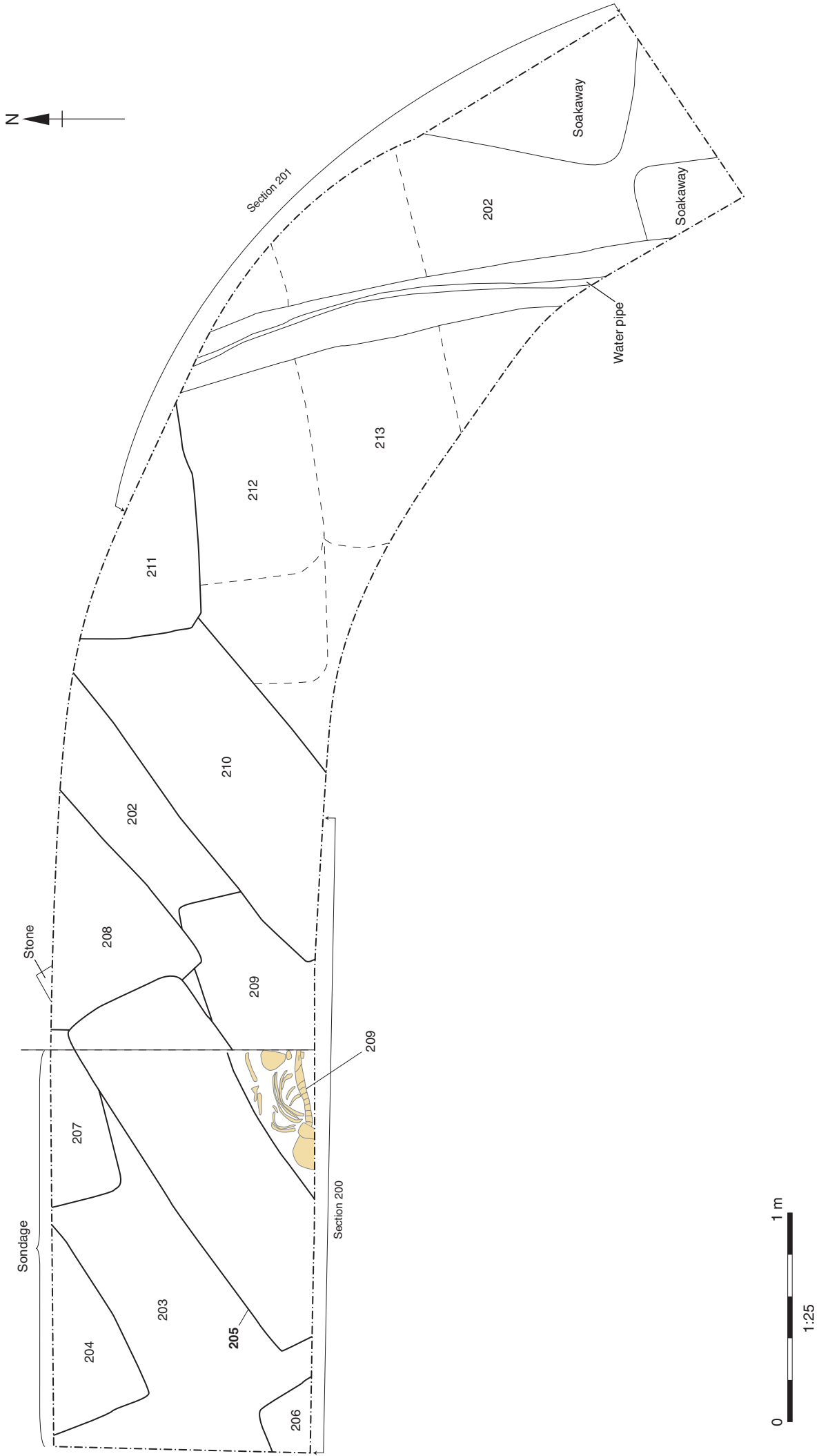


Figure 4: Plan showing trench 2 and burial 209



Figure 5: Trench 2, sections 200 and 201



Plate 1: Southern end of Trench 1 (looking south) showing burials 104, 105, 106 and 107



Plate 2: Burial 209 (looking east)



Plate 3: Burials 104 (bottom), 105 (right) and 106 (left) (looking south)



Plate 4: Grave memorial 214



Plate 5: Close up of memorial 214 (note cherub and leaf decoration)



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