



# Cheltenham Minster Gardens, Gloucestershire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

November 2022

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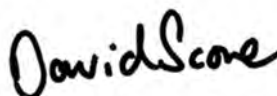




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## Cheltenham Minster Gardens, Gloucestershire

### *Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

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## Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council to undertake archaeological monitoring during improvement works to Cheltenham Minster Gardens. The work took place on an intermittent basis between April and November 2022.

The construction work revealed at least 16 shaft graves distributed across the site, as well as a small number of headstones and ledger stones. The remains survived in varying states of preservation, but the majority of the shaft graves had been truncated and then backfilled. This evidence suggests that much of cemetery was reduced in height at some stage during the 19th or early 20th century, although no record of any such works has been identified.

A total of five shaft graves were exposed largely intact during the works. These required backfilling to ensure the ground was suitably consolidated for the development to continue. The human remains revealed within these graves represented the only *in situ* burials to be observed during the monitoring. Disarticulated remains were uncovered throughout the groundworks and reburied as the work progressed.

Despite the presence of several headstones and ledger stones, the inscriptions were poorly preserved. Only a single burial could be dated precisely, with a breastplate indicating interment in 1811. The other remains were undated, but appeared to be broadly contemporary in date, from the 18th and 19th centuries.

No medieval remains or structural remains from earlier phases of the church were recorded during the monitoring.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Mark Dodd and Richard Brown. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ben Attfield, Paul Murray, Gary Evans, Mark Dodd, Tom Black, Lauren McIntyre, Rebecca Peacock and Daniel Pond. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.



## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Scope of work

- 2.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council to undertake a watching brief during improvement works to the churchyard at Cheltenham Minster, Cheltenham.
- 2.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of planning permission (planning ref. 21/02019/FUL) and in accordance with a faculty issued by the Diocese of Gloucester.
- 2.1.3 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by OA detailing the local authority's and diocese's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition and adhere to the faculty (OA 2022).

### 2.2 Location, topography and geology

- 2.2.1 The site is situated in the historic centre of Cheltenham, a large spa town and borough on the western edge of the Cotswold escarpment in the county of Gloucestershire, c 12km northeast of Gloucester. The site comprises the Grade I-listed Cheltenham Minster and its associated grounds. It is bounded by recent development on all sides.
- 2.2.2 The north-east part of the site lies at c 64m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and slopes gently downwards from this point towards the south-west corner, which is situated at c 63m aOD. The River Chelt, which flows under and through the town, is located c 260m south-west of the site.
- 2.2.3 According to the British Geological Survey (BGS nd), the underlying bedrock geology is mudstone of the Charmouth Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 183–99 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. Overlying superficial deposits are recorded as Cheltenham sand and gravel, formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary period (*ibid.*).

### 2.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 2.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in a desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site (OA 2021) which is summarised below.
- 2.3.2 There are no known heritage assets of prehistoric date within the site boundary, though a small number of assets recorded within the DBA study area suggest that the landscape surrounding the site was utilised during the prehistoric period. While it is possible that there may once have been prehistoric remains within the site, it is likely that such remains would have been truncated or removed by groundworks associated with the site's use as a medieval and post-medieval churchyard. The site was therefore considered in assessment to have a low potential to contain prehistoric remains.
- 2.3.3 There is limited evidence of Roman activity within the immediate vicinity of the site, though recent archaeological investigations in the south-west of the study area revealed the remains of several Roman ditches and pits attesting to Roman settlement or agricultural land use. In addition, archaeological remains indicative of Roman occupation, agricultural and burial activity have been found more widely across the

modern town. Any potential Roman remains within the site are likely to have been significantly truncated or removed by groundworks associated with the site's use as a medieval and post-medieval churchyard, and as a result the site has low potential to contain Roman remains.

- 2.3.4 Evidence of early medieval activity is restricted to documentary references to the presence of a monastic establishment or minster church within Cheltenham from at least the late 8th century. This is postulated to have been located close to the present site, although the exact location of the church is unknown. As with archaeological remains from the prehistoric and Roman periods, early medieval remains, if present within the site, would have been affected by the later usage of the site, and as a result the site is considered to have a low potential to contain early medieval remains.
- 2.3.5 The Grade I listed Cheltenham Minster, formerly the parish church of St Mary, was constructed on site in the first half of the 12th century, possibly on the site of an earlier church. The church was rebuilt in the 14th century and contains surviving medieval fabric. In addition, the churchyard contains a standing stone cross of probable 14th-/15th-century date, which is both a scheduled monument and Grade II listed building and is of national significance. As the location of a medieval burial ground, the site has a high potential to contain surviving medieval burials, although these burials may have been truncated by the creation of post-medieval graves. The site also has moderate potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the construction of the various phases of the church.
- 2.3.6 The overall layout of the site remained consistent throughout the post-medieval period, and the site contains several Grade II listed post-medieval structures associated with the site's use as a churchyard. The site has a high potential to contain post-medieval burials and archaeological remains associated with the use of the church during the post medieval period.

## **3 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Aims**

3.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To aid the project in minimising impact to any archaeological remains that may be present and specifically human remains where possible.
- ii. To determine or confirm the nature of any remains revealed by the restoration works.
- iii. To notify the archaeology advisors when archaeological remains (specifically human remains) have been revealed by the works
- iv. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- v. To record archaeological remains revealed by the restoration works in consultation and agreement with the planning and diocesan archaeological advisors in accordance with the methodologies set out below.

### **3.2 Methodology**

3.2.1 Liaison was maintained with the works contractor to ensure potential archaeological and human remains were subjected to the minimum impact.

3.2.2 Any archaeological remains (and specifically articulated human remains) that were revealed by the works was communicated to the archaeology advisors.

3.2.3 Disarticulated human remains (charnel) were not removed from the consecrated site. Charnel was reburied at suitable locations within the works.

### **3.3 Infilling of brick tombs**

3.3.1 Several unexpected voids were exposed during the works within shaft graves distributed across the site. Following discussions with the planning and diocesan archaeological advisors, it was agreed that any remains that they contained should be protected with a breathable geotextile membrane and then backfilled with sand to consolidate the ground.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction and presentation of results

4.1.1 The areas of the site that were monitored during the construction works are identified in Figure 2. These included existing pathways that were removed and enlarged (Plate 1), cable trench excavation (Plate 2) and topsoil strips across larger areas for new seating areas and pathways (Plate 3). A full photographic catalogue of each structural feature observed is provided below in section 3.4. More detailed descriptions of the structures that required dismantling and backfilling are presented in section 3.3 with a stratigraphic description of the archaeological remains where applicable. The full details of all contexts, with dimensions and depths of all deposits, can be found in Appendix A.

### 4.2 General soils and ground conditions

4.2.1 The soil sequence was largely consistent across the site. Due to the limited impact of the works the geological horizon was not encountered. The general sequence of deposits comprised soft, grey-brown sandy silt, with variable percentages of small stones, sandstone fragments, ceramic building material (CBM) and slate.

4.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the watching brief were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout much of the groundworks activity. Owing to the structural nature of the remains encountered, these were easy to identify. However, individual grave cuts were not identified due to the mixed nature of the deposits through which they were cut.

### 4.3 Brick vaults, shaft graves and grave structures

4.3.1 In total 11 brick-built structures were recorded (Fig. 2). Five of these (1, 27, 28, 53 and 65) needed to be fully exposed to record them prior to backfilling to ensure that future collapse would not be possible. Where visible, the coffin fittings have been identified using the typology developed for Christ Church, Spitalfields (CCS), as part of the Spitalfields Project (Reeve and Adams 1993).

#### *Vault 1, coffins 2, 3*

4.3.2 Tomb 1 was exposed beneath the footpath to the southeast of the Minster (Plate 1). The tomb was rectangular, aligned northeast-southwest with a vaulted roof. It measured 2.5m x 1.65m x 2.2m in depth. It was constructed from unfrosted bricks measuring 230mm x 140mm x 70mm. An entrance at its southwest end was blocked with two sandstone slabs (4 and 5) (Plate 2), measuring 0.76m x 0.53m x 0.035m and 0.86 x 0.46m x 0.04m. There was a hole in the roof which was probably damaged during the installation of electric cables which were laid directly on the roof of the vault.

4.3.3 Vault 1 contained two adjacent coffins (2, 3). It was too hazardous to enter the vault and detailed recording was not possible, but both coffins were moderately well preserved, though had collapsed due to debris from the roof (Plate 3).

- 4.3.4 To the north, coffin 2 was tapered and constructed from a single layer of wood. It measured 1.86m x 0.46m x 0.36m. Two stamped iron depositum plates were visible on the lid. Typically there are three (head, breast, and foot), but in the case of coffin 2, the foot of the coffin had been obscured by fallen rubble. The head plate was in the same style as the grip plate, a sunburst (CCS type 12). A rectangular breast plate with an outer border floral motif was partially exposed. It was customary for the breast plate to have an inscription, which in this case may have been obscured by corrosion. Double rows of iron studwork were evident on the sides, lid, and west end of the coffin, almost certainly used to affix baize upholstery, which was preserved in a fragmentary state. The coffin also had iron grips (CCS type 6) and grip plates (CCS type 14) fixed to the sides. The grip and grip plate, although largely corroded had remnants of gold colored gilding (Plate 4). A further grip plate on the side of the coffin was evident, although had become detached.
- 4.3.5 Coffin 3 was a smooth-shouldered coffin constructed with two layers of wood. It was slightly larger than coffin 2, measuring 1.86m x 0.57m x 0.4m high. It had a decorative pattern of gilt brass studwork in double rows across the lid and sides of the coffin (Plate 5). Fragments of baize were also visible and originally would have covered the exterior of the coffin. The end and lid of the coffin were decorated with gilt brass escutcheons in a floral design (CCS type 1). Two copper grip plates were visible, one on its end and one on the side, although more would have been present. The grip plate on the side of the coffin depicted two cherub heads (CCS type 3). The lid of the coffin had two gilt brass lid motifs. The head plate depicted two angels playing trumpets beneath a crown with a cherub praying between them. These did not match any of the styles recorded by Reeve and Adams (1993) and possibly represent a new type (Plate 6). The footplate was visible, though not accessible to record in detail, but appeared to depict an urn holding flowers. The breastplate was in the style of a shield with an inscription. The inscription read: *"Mary Bastin died Jan 13th 1811 aged 35 years"* (Plate 7).
- 4.3.6 Just to the west of the entrance to the vault an iron object (6) was partially exposed. It comprised a large plate resting vertically in the soil, of which at least 0.57m x 0.55m was visible. Attached to the top of the plate and extending horizontally to the southwest was a corroded length of iron. Although the full extent of the object was not realised, it is likely to represent part of a mort safe, which would have been installed as a security measure against resurrectionists (body snatchers).

### ***Shaft grave 27***

- 4.3.7 Shaft grave 27 was recorded in the western area of the churchyard, on a NW-SE alignment, its location appearing to respect the adjacent footpath. The main structure was 2.3m long, 0.9m wide and 1.3m deep. It was constructed from unfrosted bricks measuring 237mm x 114mm x 80mm, laid in an English garden wall bond. The grave was capped with two layers of stones 26 and 24. The lower stones (26) comprised five sandstones with overall dimensions of 2m x 1.15m. They were between 0.09m and 0.14m thick. The three westernmost stones were removed by the contractor to facilitate the consolidation of the grave. Directly resting on the stones was a substantial grey limestone slab (with a prominent crack running across it), measuring 1.71m x 0.9m and 0.15m thick. The stone was roughly hewn with chisel marks and smooth

chamfered edges. Two large (estimated 0.5m x 0.8m) vertically placed sandstones were at the northeast end of the grave blocking the original access to the grave.

- 4.3.8 The grave was filled with disarticulated human remains (Plate 9) appearing to represent at least three individuals. Two largely complete skulls and a fragmented skull were visible, along with numerous long bones and other bones. A few fragments of decayed wood, presumably representing a coffin or coffins, were also evident. Three large, and numerous smaller sandstones have fallen into the grave, apparently causing damage to the remains. The origins of these later additions were not evident but were probably introduced during a phase of disturbance in the area.

### ***Shaft grave 28***

- 4.3.9 Shaft grave 28 lay immediately to the southwest of grave 27. It measured 1.4m x 0.7m in plan and 1m deep. It was constructed from unfrosted bricks measuring 0.23m x 0.12m x 0.07m, laid in an English garden wall bond. The grave was capped by four limestones of slightly variable dimension but overall measured 1.41m x 0.76. The thickness of the stones was between 0.09m and 0.15m.
- 4.3.10 At the base of the shaft grave was a shouldered lead coffin (25). The coffin measured 0.9m long and 0.31m wide and was estimated to be 0.2m high. The outer wooden coffin had largely disintegrated, leaving large fragments of wood with iron studs along the sides of the coffin (Plate 10).

### ***Shaft grave 53***

- 4.3.11 Shaft grave 53 was recorded several metres to the north-east of shaft graves 27 and 28. The structure measured 2.4m in length, 1.63m wide and at least 0.4m deep. The northeast and southwest sides of the structure (walls 58 and 56) consisted of unfrosted bricks measuring 230mm x 115mm x 45mm. The narrow north-west end was abutted by large limestone slabs (59) the largest of which measured 0.4m x 0.42m and 0.04m thick. The south-east end was also abutted by a large limestone slab (57) of similar dimensions to slab 59. Covering the structure were the remains of a barrel-vaulted brick roof, constructed from similar bricks to walls 58 and 56. The central portion of the vaulting had, however, collapsed and the shaft was filled with a combination of brick rubble and loose soil. This loose material was reduced by 0.4m to ensure there were no voids beneath the remains of the vaulted roof but was not excavated to a depth that could reveal any human remains or elements of a coffin.

### ***Shaft grave 65***


- 4.3.12 Located at the southern limit of the site was shaft grave 65. The structure was revealed following the removal of table tomb 262 (number assigned by Cliveden Conservation). This structure survived in a fragmentary state, comprising two courses of brick wall and a small portion of a barrel-vaulted roof. Only the north-west corner of the structure remained *in situ*, measuring 1.1m x 0.6m in plan. It was constructed from unfrosted bricks measuring 240mm x 111mm x 60mm. It is likely that construction work associated with the development to south during the 1990s heavily disturbed this area and led to the truncation and subsequent infilling of this shaft grave. It was






overlain by a large slab (17) measuring 1.9m x 0.9m and 0.09m thick. The slab of dressed sandstone bore the remnants of an inscription on its surface, but the outer margins had since been chiseled away to create a flat surface onto which the table tomb had been constructed. This was evidently a reused ledger stone from elsewhere in the cemetery.

#### 4.4 Photographic catalogue of structures

4.4.1 The table below provides a catalogue of each structure revealed during the groundworks. The locations of these structures are presented on Figure 2.

Structure Number	Photograph	Description
Vault 1		Brick vault containing coffins 2 and 3.

<p>Shaft grave 8</p>		<p>Brick built shaft grave. Brick dimensions 240mm x 111mm x 60mm. Roof removed or collapsed. Abuts shaft grave 9 to the south.</p>
<p>Shaft grave 9</p>		<p>Brick built shaft grave. Brick dimensions 240mm x 111mm x 60mm. Roof removed or collapsed. Abuts shaft grave 8 to the north.</p>
<p>Shaft grave 15</p>		<p>Brick built shaft grave, with limestone slab at end, potential opening. Brick dimensions 240mm x 111mm x 60mm. Roof removed or collapsed.</p>



Ledger 17 (part of vault 65: Table Tomb 262)






Probably reused gravestone/ledger to construct table tomb. 1.9m x 0.9m x 0.09m. reworked around edges. Partial inscription

*"..Ann Wife of...  
... Middle...  
Died February 27  
Aged 30  
...Middle..  
...Dec 26<sup>th</sup> 18..  
...Aged 48..  
...ARD HULB...  
...1 Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 18..  
...ged 30 Yea..  
...RLA daughter..."*

Stone 18



Blank sandstone slab. Possible part of tomb construction, no inscription on either side. 1.9m x 0.92m x 0.08m

<p>Feature 19</p>		<p>Possible disturbed and broken capping stones or infill of shaft grave. Fragments of limestone and brick. 1.1m x 0.8m.</p>
<p>Structure 20</p>		<p>Part of grave surround or reused element of other structure. Multiple recesses for iron railings. Possibly reused to form part of shaft grave. Hewn sandstone, 1.35m x 1.38m.</p>
<p>Structure 21</p>		<p>Brick shaft grave with vaulted roof. Top course truncated away and infilled, dimensions 2.03m x 0.9m. Bricks 237mm x 114mm x 80mm.</p>

Shaft grave 27  
(with capping  
stones 24 and  
26)



Structure 24, slab overlying capping stones 26






Capping stones 26 sealing shaft grave 27




Sandstone slab 24 -  
overlying capping  
stones 26. Measured  
1.71m x 0.9m x 0.15m.

Capping stones 26 -  
comprising four slabs  
of limestone overlying  
shaft grave 27.




Shaft grave 27 -  
Contained  
disarticulated human  
remains and rubble  
collapse. Bricks  
237mm x 114mm x  
80mm. Structure  
measured 2.3m x 0.9m  
and 0.9m deep.





	 <p>Interior of shaft grave 27</p>	
<p>Shaft grave 28 (with stone capping 23)</p>	 	<p>Brick shaft grave with stone capping and limewashed interior. Bricks 230mm x 120mm x 70mm. Structure measured 1.4m x 0.7m.</p>

<p>Gravestone 29</p>		<p>Sandstone 0.39m x 0.032m x 0.55m. Potentially <i>in situ</i>.</p>
<p>Structure 30</p>		<p>Limestone block, 0.32m x 0.36m visible. Presumed foundation for pillar on western side of southeast entrance.</p>
<p>Gravestone 31</p>		<p>Broken sandstone base, 0.62m x 0.2m x 0.08m. No inscription.</p>



<p>Structures 32 and 33</p>		<p>Presumed capping stones for shaft graves (not exposed). Fragments of sandstone, interpreted as forming two separate structures.</p>
<p>Vault 34</p>		<p>Roof of vaulted shaft grave, 2.64m in length. Bricks 222mm x 111mm x 65mm.</p>
<p>Structure 35</p>		<p>Two sandstone slabs forming capping over shaft grave. Possibly a reused gravestone or ledger but no inscription. 1.18m wide.</p>

<p>Structures 36, 37, 38 and 39</p>		<p>Multiple sandstone slabs presumably lain as ledgers and part of monuments. Evidence of fittings for iron railings. Ledger 36 is visible at southern extent (left of photo). Partial inscription on ledger 36 reads  <i>“...of          ..RTS          ...ollege          ..e          ..his life          ...6 years”</i></p>
<p>Brick Vaults 40 and 41</p>		<p>Eastern end of two abutting brick shaft graves with vaulted roofs. Bricks 220mm x 106mm x 0.66m on both.</p>



Structures 44,  
43, 22, 42 and  
45



Row of sandstone  
slabs supporting  
ledger stones 43, 22  
and 42 beneath extant  
bank.

Partial inscription of  
ledger 22 reads

*"...unto the late Sir  
Isaac Heard and  
universally esteemed  
by all who knew him."*



Partial inscription of  
ledger 42 reads




*"...aged  
GARDNER"*



Detail of ledger 22 and supporting slabs.



<p>Brick vault 46</p>		<p>Small portion of brick shaft grave vaulted ceiling revealed. No dimensions defined, excavated area 0.44m in diameter (0.57m bgl). Void beneath measured to a depth of 2.2m</p>
<p>Gravestone 47</p>		<p>Sandstone headstone revealed during vegetation clearance at western edge of the site. Unclear if <i>in situ</i>. Inscription reads:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <i>“WILLIAM GRELL...              LT COLONEL ROYAL              ARTILL...              AND C.D              WHI DIED AT              CHELTENHAM ON THE              22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER              AGED...”</i> </p>

<p>Shaft grave 53</p>		<p>Brick and stone shaft grave with partially collapsed vaulted roof. 1.63m x 2.4m in plan.</p>
<p>Ledger slab 54</p>		<p>Headstone or ledger, possibly reused as capping for a shaft grave. Sandstone, 1.6m x 0.83m x 0.06m</p> <p>Partial inscription reads</p> <p><i>"...emory of ...RNARD ...R of this POOLE"</i></p>
<p>Shaft grave 65</p>		<p>Collapsed remains of brick shaft grave beneath ledger/slab 17. Most likely disturbed during construction of adjacent building. Bricks 240mm x 111mm x 60mm</p>

## 4.5 Finds summary

- 4.5.1 During the monitoring works, fragments of clay pipe, ceramic building material and 19th century pottery were identified. These were in addition to disarticulated human remains that were associated with the disturbed soils prevalent across the site. No finds were retained during the works and artefacts and bones were reburied as the work progressed.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Watching brief objectives and results

- 5.1.1 The general aims of the project were established in the WSI for the works (OA 2022) and are outlined again in section 2.1 of this document. The primary aim of minimising the impact to archaeological remains was achieved by monitoring all intrusive groundworks and maintaining good communications with the contractors on site. On the occasions when the groundworks would have an unavoidable impact on the remains, discussions with each of main stakeholders and advisors led to an approach that was agreed by all parties. Consequently, all *in situ* human remains were protected and the need for exhumation was avoided. The disarticulated human remains uncovered across the site were reburied within the cemetery as the works progressed.
- 5.1.2 The main result of the watching brief was the identification of numerous shaft graves across the site. These graves survived in varying states of preservation, the most intact example was Vault 1 which contained the well-preserved remains of two wooden coffins. Other similar structures, such as shaft grave 53 had collapsed and been infilled. Or in the case of shaft grave 27, later activity had led to the addition of disturbed remains from elsewhere, resulting in disarticulated remains of at least three individuals.
- 5.1.3 Due to a scarcity of artefactual evidence directly associated with the remains, most of the graves are undated. The most notable exception is the coffin of Mary Bastin which was identified from the breastplate recording her death in 1811. The partial inscription on Ledger 17 indicates it was originally associated with individuals interred in the 19th century and the two individuals mentioned on Gravestone 29 appear to have died in the second half of the 18th century. Based on the similarities in the construction of these shaft graves they appear to be broadly contemporary and 18th-19th century in date.
- 5.1.4 The probable mort safe adjacent to Vault 1 is also 19th century in date and would have been inserted over a burial interred during this broad period. These devices were first invented in 1816 and the peak of body snatching occurred in the early 1830s which led to the Anatomy Act being introduced in 1832.
- 5.1.5 The rows of ledger stones revealed in the raised embankment at the west of the cemetery represented a different character to the rest of the site. No dates were present on the inscriptions revealed so their dating is unknown. However, the reference to Sir Isaac Heard in the partial inscription on ledger 22 is of note. In Norman's History of Cheltenham (Goding 1863), there is a reference to the memorial of Sir Isaac Heard, Garter King at Arms who is known to have died in April 1822. However, he was buried at St George's Chapel, Windsor, so the partial inscription recorded on ledger 22 is more likely to relate to an associate of Sir Isaac Heard during this period.

### 5.2 Interpretation

- 5.2.1 Despite the medieval origins of St Marys church presented in the DBA for this site, none of the remains recorded were identifiable as earlier than post-medieval in date.

A large quantity of charnel was observed both in the soil and inserted into shaft graves, and these remains may have derived from medieval interments, but none were identified *in situ*.

- 5.2.2 A notable feature of the various tombs was the shallow depth at which they were revealed. Many had also been truncated, as was evident with structures 8, 9 and 15 which had clearly been infilled following the removal of their vaulted roofs. When considered in conjunction with the relatively flat topography which sits at an unusually low-level in comparison to the church, it appears likely that the churchyard was reduced in height at some point.
- 5.2.3 The plan of burials produced by Rawes (1983; Fig. 3) was compiled from data accumulated between the 18th-20th centuries but many of the tombs and gravestones he recorded are no longer present. It is also difficult to correlate any of the excavated tombs with this record, suggesting again that the churchyard had undergone significant alterations during this period. However, the publication from which this plan derives (Rawes 1983) provides no account of any such event. A series of restoration programmes are known to have been undertaken throughout the 19th century, including the construction of the south porch in 1890 (OA 2021), so it is possible that the truncation of the cemetery occurred during one of these events, even though no record has been identified to date.
- 5.2.4 The row of ledger stones recorded at the western edge of the site beneath the embankment do however correlate with Rawes' plan of burials, which records four neat rows, tightly packed against the western boundary. The overall layout of these tombs, the similarity in the construction style and material implies they were part of a planned phase of interments that are likely to have taken place over a short period of time. These were perhaps the result of an event in which numerous people died in quick succession, such as conflict or disease, or was a response to overcrowding of the cemetery, prior to the use of what is now Winston Churchill Memorial Garden from 1831 onwards.

### 5.3 Significance

- 5.3.1 The observations of numerous shaft graves and associated remains are not unexpected in this context. With the absence of any medieval remains associated with the earlier phases of the church, these results, although interesting, are of local significance only.

## APPENDIX A DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context register						
Context No.	Type	Dimensions m	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Grave Structure	2.5m x 1.65m		Vaulted brick tomb. Contains coffins 2, 3.	-	-
2	Coffin	1.86m x 0.29m		Coffin in Tomb 1.	-	-
3	Coffin	1.86m x 0.32m		Coffin in Tomb 1.	-	1811
4	Structural element	0.76m x 53m x 0.35m		Sandstone slab blocking entrance to vault 1.	-	-
5	Structural element	0.86m x 0.46m x 0.04m		Stone slab blocking entrance to vault 1.		
6	Structural element	0.57m x 0.55m		Iron plate and brake possibly forming mort safe at west end of 1		
7	Grave Structure	0.6m x 0.3m (as seen) 0.35m BGL		Probable brick-built shaft grave? Only partially exposed. Brick dimensions 0.111m x 0.24m x 0.06m.		
8	Grave Structure	0.77m x 0.7m 0.26m BGL		Brick built shaft grave? Only partially exposed. Brick dimensions 0.111m x 0.24m x 0.06m. Filled by 10.		
9	Grave Structure	0.35m x 0.24m x 0.2m		Brick built shaft grave? only partially exposed. Brick dimensions 0.111m x 0.24m x 0.06m. Filled by 11.		
10	Layer		0.7m	Fill of 8 and general levelling deposit formed when graveyard was landscaped. Loose, grey sandy silt with frequent mortar particles, occasional fragments of roof slate.		
11	Layer		0.3m +	Fill of 9. Loose, grey sandy silt with frequents of roof slate and mortar.		
12	Layer		0.2m	Levelling layer. Overlies 8, 9, 15. Compact, light brown with frequent mortar particles and sandstone fragments.		
13	Layer		0.14m +	General grave yard soil. Friable, brown sandy silt.		



14	Layer		0.1m – 0.2m	Topsoil. Friable, mid greyish brown sandy silt.		
15	Grave Structure	1m x 52m		Partially exposed, rectangular brick-built shaft grave. Bricks dimension 0.24m x 0.111m x 0.06m		
16	Fill			Fill of 15. Loose, mid grey sandy silt, occasional roof slate and CBM.		
17	Gravestone	1.9m x 0.9m x 0.09m		Gravestone with inscription, dated to 19 <sup>th</sup> century. Under chest tomb No 262.		
18	Gravestone	1.9m x 0.92m x 0.08m		Blank gravestone within layer 50. Aligned E-W. Lifted by contractor. No evidence of grave underneath. Smooth surface, underside has prominent chisel marks.		
19	Feature	1m x 0.8m		Probably the west end of a grave. Appears to have been backfilled with rubble. Not fully exposed.		
20	Structure	1.38m 1.35m		Grave structure within layer 50. Six dressed rectangular stones forming a rectangle. Stones have sockets for railings. Truncated to the east.		
21	Structure	2.03m x 0.9m		Brick structure. Possibly the top of a grave or base for an above ground structure. Brick dimensions 0.237m 0.114m x 0.08m		
22	Grave Structure	1.61m wide x 0.58m. Base stone 0.19m thick. Inscription stone 0.08m thick.		Three gravestones. Two capping stones with inscription stone on top. Part of a row of five graves (42, 43, 44, 45). Overlain by 51.		
23	Grave Structure	1.41m x 0.76m		Four roughly hewn rectangular sandstones of variable dimensions. Capping brick shaft grave 28.		
24	Grave Structure	1.71m x 0.9m x 0.15m		Blank gravestone directly overlying capping stones 26. Capping of brick vault 27.		

25	Coffin	0.9m x 0.31m		Lead coffin within brick shaft grave 28. Grave not accessible but decayed wooden lining noted.		
26	Grave Structure	2m x 0.56m		Four roughly hewn sandstones under gravestone 24. Variable dimensions. Capping brick tomb 27. Only one of the stones was removed to allow backfilling, so not accessible.		
27	Grave Structure	2.3m x 0.9m x 1.3m deep.		Brick shaft grave containing disarticulated human remains. Capped with Structures 26 and 24. Entrance at NE end is blocked with two sandstones. Brick dimensions 0.237m x 0.114m x 0.08m. Garden wall bond. Tomb not accessible		
28	Grave Structure	1.4m x 0.7m		Brick shaft grave containing coffin 25 and capped by sandstones 23. Brick dimensions 0.23m x 0.12m x 0.07m. Garden wall bond.		
29	Gravestone	0.39m x 0.32m (as seen) x 0.055m thick		Gravestone with inscription. Base of gravestone not exposed.		c. 1767
30	Structure	0.36m x 0.32m as exposed.		Sandstone pillar foundation. Would have been the west side of south entrance to churchyard. Extant pillar forming east side of entrance is 2.48m to the east.		
31	Gravestone	0.62m x 0.2m (as exposed) x 0.08m thick.		Gravestone. Upper part has been broken off. Levelled as part of landscaping?		
32	Gravestone	1.5m wide x 0.08m thick		Fragmented gravestone? Exposed in 0.4m wide culvert trench. Blank as seen. Removed by contractor. Northeast of 33. No evidence of grave beneath.		
33	Gravestone	0.5m wide x 0.08m thick		Gravestone. Exposed in 0.4m wide culvert trench. Blank as seen. Removed by contractor. Southwest of 32. No evidence of grave beneath.		



34	Grave? Structure.			Remains of partially exposed brick shaft grave(?). Below impact of development. Brick dimensions 0.222m x 0.11m x 0.065m		
35	Grave Structure	1.18m long x 0.3m width exposed.		Grave capping stones. Two roughly hewn sandstones partially exposed in 0.3m wide duct trench. Gap in stone reveals void beneath.		
36	Gravestone	2.06m long x 0.3m as exposed.		Gravestone with inscription. Adjacent to 38 and 39.		
37	Grave Structure	0.63m x 0.63m as exposed.		Gravestone resting on, and part of, 38. Hewn with chipped area in centre, possibly where plaque was removed.		
38	Grave Structure	1.03m x 0.82 as exposed.		Two hewn, smooth stones with square sockets for railings (?), which appear to have been reused.		
39	Grave Structure	1.4m x 0.2m as exposed		Southeast corner of gravestone. Has seven sockets for railings. Corner has been repaired.		
40	Grave Structure	1.32m wide, 0.28m of length exposed.		Southeast end of brick vault. Abutted by 41 to southwest.		
41	Grave Structure	1.64m wide, x 0.5m of length exposed.		Southeast end of brick vault. Abutted by 40 to northeast.		
42	Grave Structure	1m wide, x 0.6m as exposed.		Two smooth flat gravestones. Built onto brick structure. Part of inscription exposed.		
43	Grave Structure	1.38m wide, x 0.56m as exposed.		Two smooth flat gravestones (0.08m thick).		
44	Grave Structure	0.3m x 0.2m exposed.		Northeast corner of gravestone. Just the corner exposed.		
45	Grave Structure	0.52m x 0.44m exposed. 0.15m thick.		Southeast corner of gravestone.		

46	Grave Structure			Top of brick vault (?). Exposed at the base of 0.44m diameter hole, 0.57m deep. Voids in structure revealed it to be 2.2m deep. Brick dimensions not definable.		
47	Gravestone	0.68m wide x 0.09m thick, 0.88m of height exposed.		Extant, upright gravestone with inscription leaning against northwest wall of churchyard. Revealed during vegetation clearance.		
48-49	Void					
50	Layer			General graveyard soil. Exposed in seating area of development. Cut by all structures exposed in area. Loose, soft mid grey silty sand with 10% small stones. Occasional fragments of gravestones. Occasion charnel.		
51	Layer		0.34m	Deposit overlying Gravestones 22, 42-45. Landscaping deposit that forms raised area on west side of churchyard. Firm, mid brown sandy silt 15% small stones, 5% CBM		
52	Charnel			Disarticulated human remains in base of shaft grave 27. Represents minimum of 3 individuals based on skull fragments. Mixed material also included sandstone rubble.		
53	Grave structure			Comprises 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61		
54	Ledger stone/fallen headstone	1.6m x 0.83m x 0.06m		Limestone headstone or ledger stone lain horizontally. Potentially capping a shaft grave but not removed. Partial inscription <i>"...emory of        ...RNARD        ...R of this"</i>		
55	Brick vault	1.63m x 0.3m x	0.11m	Brick vaulted roof of structure. Bricks 230mm x 115mm x 45mm, yellow lime mortar. Partially collapsed		
56	Shaft grave wall (N)	2.4m x 0.24m	0.4m	Wall of shaft grave 53, Bricks 230mm x 115mm x 45mm		
57	Shaft grave wall (E)	1.63m x 0.4m	0.05m	Wall of shaft grave 53, Bricks 230mm x 115mm x 45mm		

58	Shaft grave wall (S)	2.4m 0.24m	x	0.4m	Wall of shaft grave 53, Bricks 230mm x 115mm x 45mm		
59	Shaft grave wall (W)	1.63m 0.4m	x	0.05m	Wall of shaft grave 53, formed of roughly hewn limestone slabs, approx. 420mm x 400mm x 45mm		
60	Fill	2.2m 1.2m	x	>0.4m	Collapsed infill of shaft grave 53. Soil and bricks from roof.		
61	Cut	2.4m 1.63m	x	0.4m	Construction cut for tomb 53		
62	Layer			0.3	Garden soil		
63	Concrete foundation			0.4	Foundation of building to south of cemetery		
64	Layer				Yellow sand deposit overlying vault of tomb 262 – presumed protective deposit lain down during construction of adjacent building		
65	Brick vault				Two surviving courses of brick vault beneath table tomb 262. Bricks 240mm x 111mm x 60mm.		
66	Fill				Collapsed debris within structure 65.		

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## APPENDIX B      BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## APPENDIX C

## SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

<b>Site name:</b>	Cheltenham Minster Gardens
<b>Site code:</b>	OACHMG22
<b>Grid Reference</b>	SO 94831 22543
<b>Type:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>Date and duration:</b>	April to November 2022
<b>Area of Site</b>	0.5ha
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with The Wilson, Cheltenham in due course.
<b>Summary of Results:</b>	<p>Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council to undertake archaeological monitoring during improvement works to Cheltenham Minster Gardens. The work took place on an intermittent basis between April and November 2022.</p> <p>The construction work revealed at least 16 shaft graves distributed across the site, as well as a small number of headstones and ledger stones. The remains survived in varying states of preservation, but the majority of the shaft graves had been truncated and then backfilled. This evidence suggests that much of cemetery was reduced in height at some stage during the 19th or early 20th century, although no record of any such works has been identified.</p> <p>A total of five shaft graves were exposed largely intact during the works. These required backfilling to ensure the ground was suitably consolidated for the development to continue. The human remains revealed within these graves represented the only in situ burials to be observed during the monitoring. Disarticulated remains were uncovered throughout the groundworks and reburied as the work progressed.</p> <p>Despite the presence of several headstones and ledger stones, the inscriptions were poorly preserved. Only a single burial could be dated precisely, with a breastplate indicating interment in 1811. The other remains were undated, but appeared to be broadly contemporary in date, from the 18th and 19th centuries.</p> <p>No medieval remains or structural remains from earlier phases of the church were recorded during the monitoring.</p>







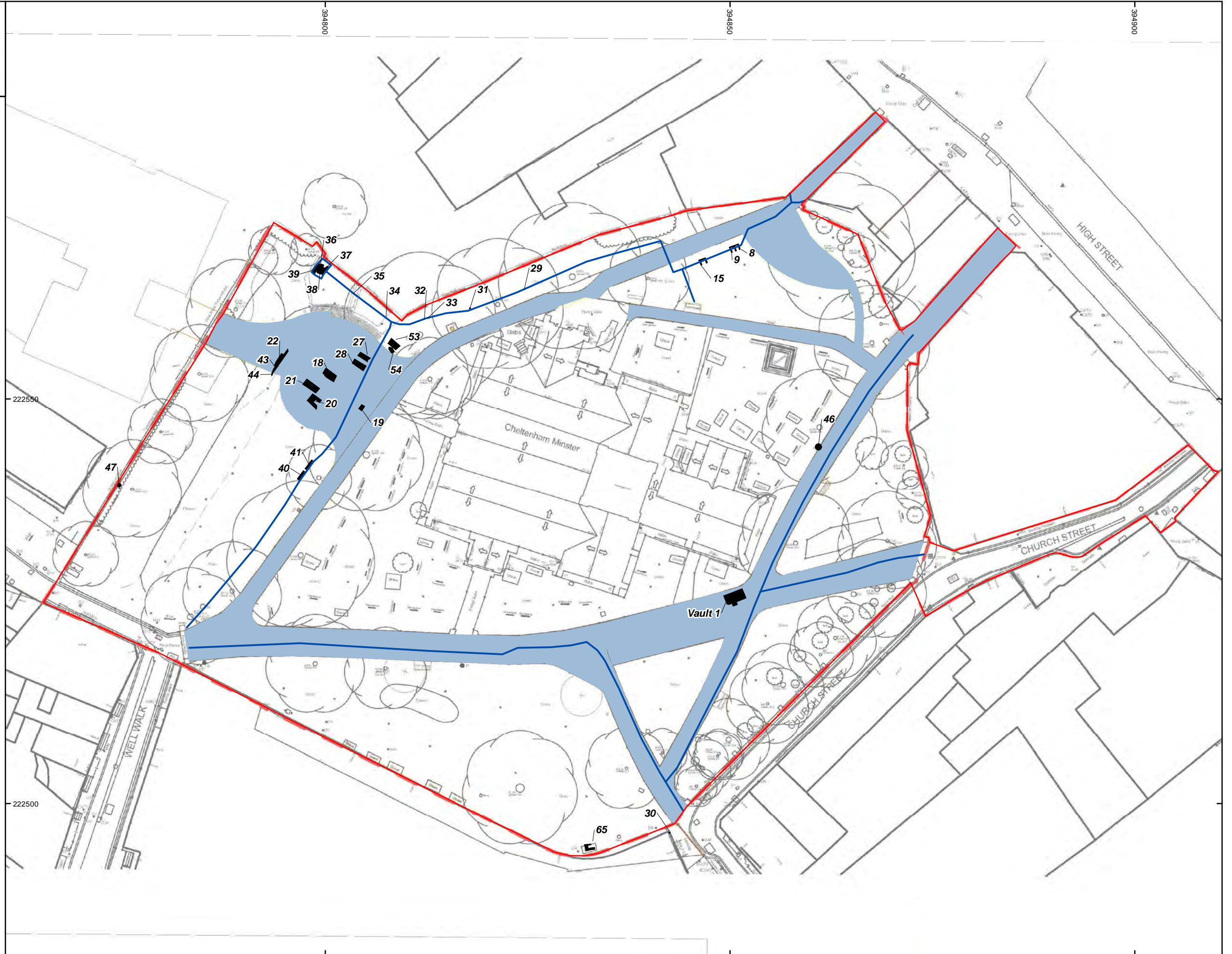
X:\c:\Cheltenham Minster Gardens\_OACHMGWB\Geomatics\02\_GIS Projects\Figures\2022-11-10\OACHMGWB\_Fig1\_Sitelocation.mxd\*marjaana.kohtamaki\*10/11/2022

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018  
 Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020  
 Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

Figure 1: Site location



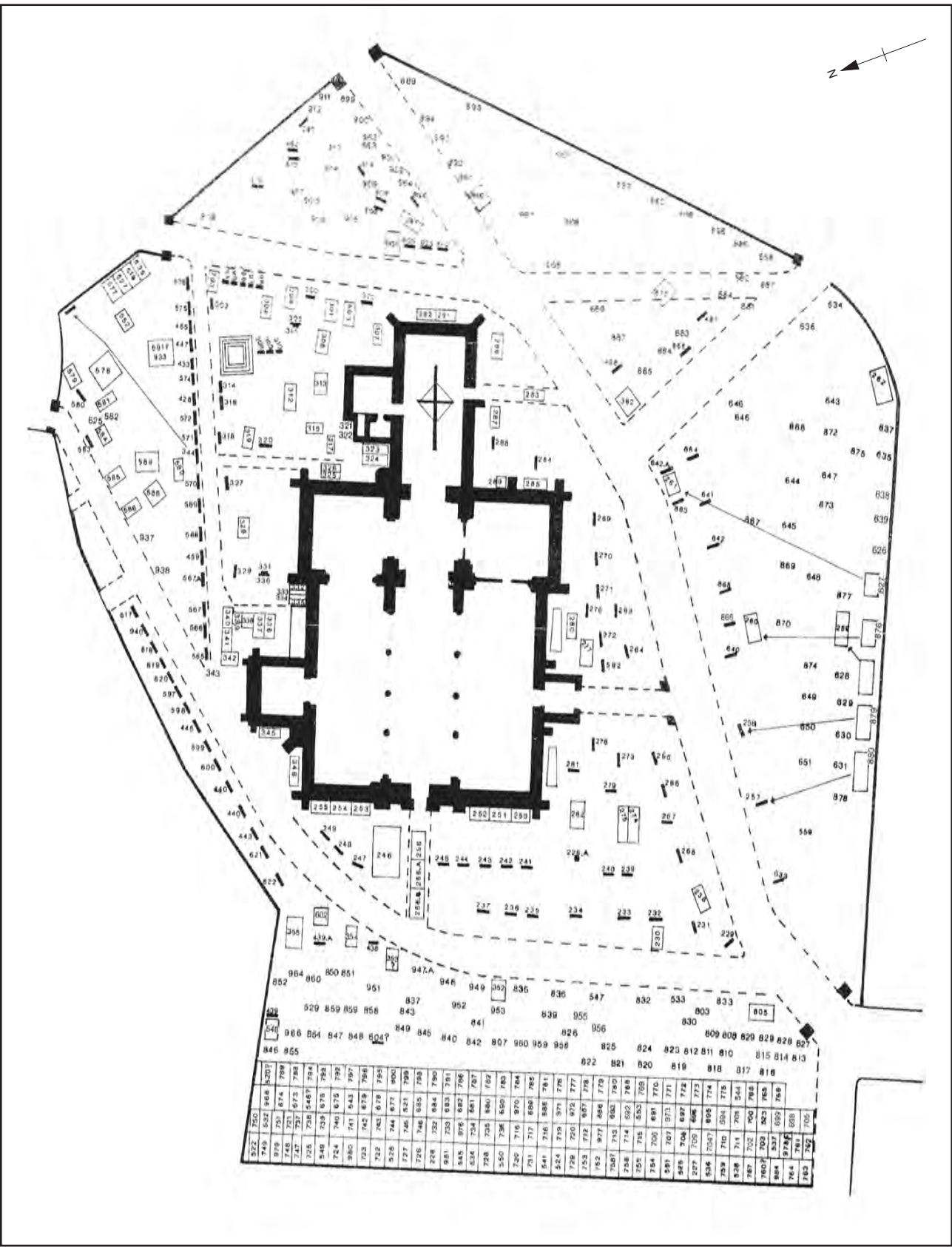
- Site boundary
- Structure
- Area of groundwork
- Ducting trench



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Figure 2: Extent of groundworks monitored and structures identified





Not to scale

Figure 3: Plan of burials at Cheltenham Minster (Rawes 1983)





Plate 1: Pathway removal to the south of the Minster, looking east



Plate 2: Cable trench excavation to east of the Minster, looking south



Plate 3: Topsoil stripping for seating area west of the Minster, looking south-west





Plate 4: General view of vault 1, revealed to the south-east of the Minster



Plate 5: Sandstone slabs 4 and 5 blocking the entrance to Vault 1





Plate 6: Coffins 2 and 3



Plate 7: Grip plate on coffin 2





Plate 8: Grip plate, studwork and escutcheons on coffin 3



Plate 9: Lid motif from coffin 3



Plate 10: Lid motif from coffin 3





Plate 11: Mort safe (6) (view to south-west)



Plate 12: Disarticulated human remains in shaft grave 27





Plate 13: Lead coffin within shaft grave 28



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