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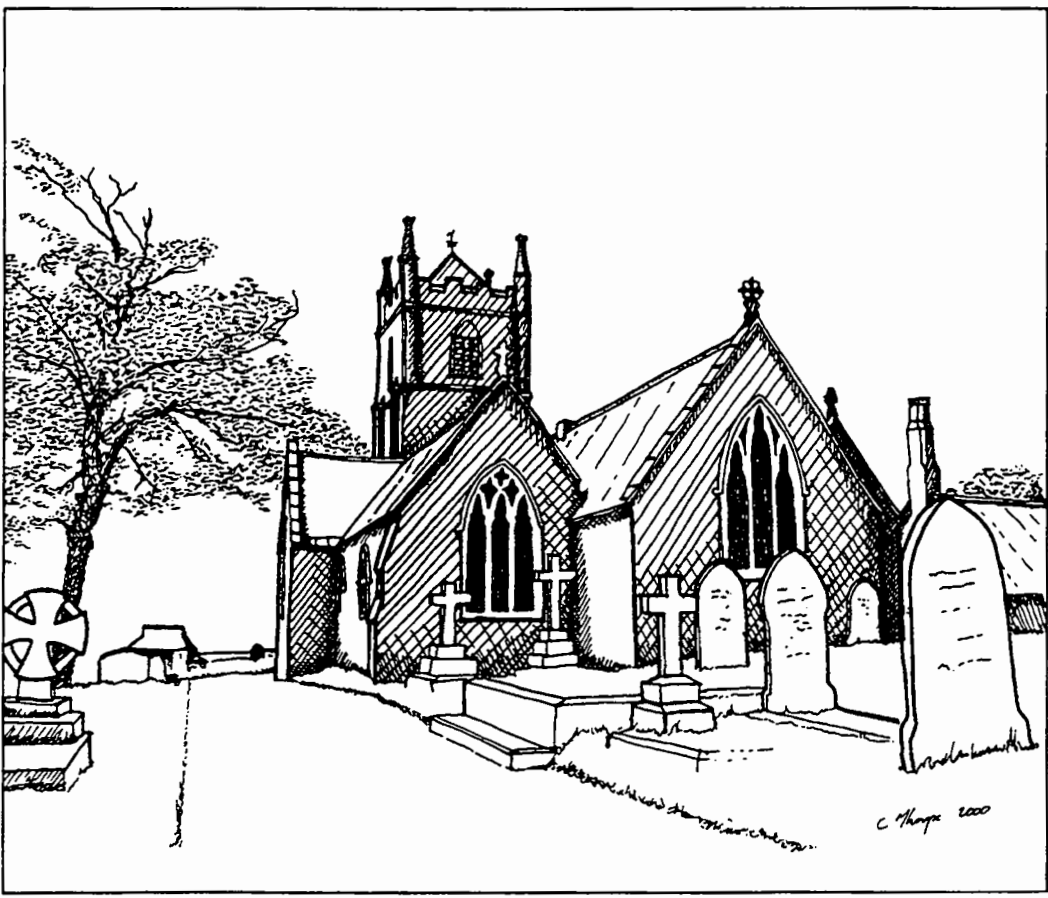
Report No:
2001 R007

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St Felicitas Church, Phillack, Cornwall

PHILLACK
ST FELICITAS CHURCH
PHILLACK, PHILLACK

Archaeological watching brief. June 2000



CORNWALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
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A Report for the Parochial Church
Council, Phillack Church

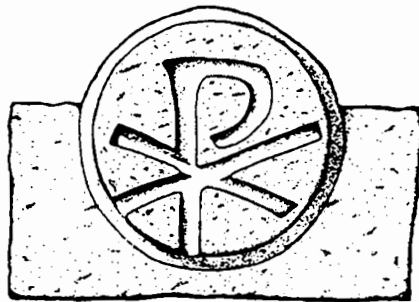
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St Felicitas Church, Cornwall

Archaeological watching brief

Carl Thorpe BSc

January 2001



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Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by Scott and Co (David Scott, Architect) on behalf of the Parochial Church Council for St Felicitas Church, Phillack (Rev Tony Neal). On site Mr Sam Quick was the building contractor.

Professor Charles Thomas kindly provided information on the history of the church and about the 1973 excavation.

Within Cornwall Archaeological Unit, the Project Manager was Peter Rose who also edited this report. The watching brief was carried out by Carl Thorpe (author) with assistance from Andy Jones.

Cover illustration

Phillack Church looking west. Pen and ink drawing by the author.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-----|---|
| BGS | British Geological Survey |
| CAU | Cornwall Archaeological Unit |
| CRO | Cornwall County Record Office |
| EH | English Heritage |
| NGR | National Grid Reference |
| RCM | Royal Cornwall Museum |
| PRN | Primary Record Number in Cornwall SMR |
| SMR | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Sites and Monuments Record |

1 Summary

Archaeological recording was carried out by CAU at St Felicitas church, Phillack, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, during groundworks in the churchyard for the construction of a disabled access ramp within the southern entrance adjacent to the vestry, and for the repositioning of the font within the south aisle. St Felicitas Church (NGR SW 5653 3842) a Grade II* Listed building (9/116) is known to be close to the site of a prehistoric pagan cemetery (PRN 31823.07), with evidence indicating that it has been the focus of Christian activity since the 5th century AD. A Norman cruciform church (PRN 31828) stood on this site until it was demolished, and the current church rebuilt in 1856-1857.

Fieldwork involved:

- Recording in plan and section all features exposed in the area cut away for the ramp.
- Lifting any human remains that would be affected by the work.
- Recording any areas within the church affected by the repositioning of the font.

The project provided considerable evidence for the history and archaeological potential of the churchyard.

- Archaeological deposits were encountered to a depth of 1.40m..
- An old landsurface, probably Early Medieval in date (producing pottery dated to the 11th century) was revealed, bounded on its eastern side by a steep sided curving bank. The possibility that this was the northern lip of a curvilinear ditch demarcating an early enclosed cemetery or *lamm* is discussed.
- A line of walling was found overlying the possible ditch, but following the alignment of the earlier bank. It is suggested that this wall represents a medieval (11th/12th century or later) Churchyard wall around the *Lamm*.
- Details of two graves and a charnel pit were recorded. Bone preservation was shown to be very good. The graves proved to be coffin burials. Though no direct dating evidence for the graves was obtained (they must post date the early medieval landsurface into which they were cut, and predate the 1826 landscaping of the churchyard) it is suggested that they are post-medieval, most likely 16th or 17th century as the evidence from an earlier excavation in 1973 within the churchyard indicates that early medieval and medieval burials took the form of cist graves or shroud burials.

It proved necessary to only lift the contents of one grave, and the charnel pit; the other grave being below the level required for the ramp could be left *in situ* and undisturbed. The bones recovered were retained for possible study, and reburial at a later date.

- Within the church a succession of three floor levels were recognised, two earlier mortar floors and the present floor dating from the 19th century. The upper mortar floor bore traces of tile impressions on its surface, the tile dimensions suggesting a late 13th or early 14th century date, implying that the lower mortar floor must be even older. Both mortar floors showed evidence of subsidence exhibiting sufficient movement to have caused severe structural damage within the south transept. This perhaps was a contributing factor in the decision to totally rebuild the church in 1856 rather than just remodelling or refurbishing it.

There was no evidence for any burials within the south transept.

- A major phase of landscaping was identified, dating from the remodelling of the churchyard in 1826. This involved the building of a new rectilinear boundary wall, and the levelling of the interior. This had severely truncated any stratification that may have helped in the dating of the graves, probably involving the clearance of medieval graves in this area and resulting in the burial of many features beneath a layer of sand.

2 Introduction

2.1 Project background

In July 1998 the Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) was contacted by Mr Richard Church of Bazeley, Miller-Williams, and Corfield architects on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to discuss the archaeological impact, and implications of building a disabled access ramp on the southern side of the churchyard adjacent to the vestry, and the moving of the font to a new position within the church.

An archaeological brief was drawn up by Mr John Gould, Senior Archaeologist (Development Control), Cornwall County Council in September 1998 and an estimate prepared by Mr Peter Rose, CAU was submitted to the PCC in February 1999. Following a change of architects, CAU was contracted by Scott and Co (David Scott, architect) in June 2000 to undertake the work.

A site visit was organised on the 27th June 2000 to discuss the project with the Field Archaeologist (author) monitoring the work. Also present were Mr David Scott the architect, and Mr Sam Quick the contractor.

2.2 Project aims

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief was to gain information about the character of activity within the area of the churchyard affected by the work, which would give an insight into the archaeological potential existing below ground. The programme of archaeological recording would:

- A) Locate and record in plan and section any archaeological features detected within the area.
- B) Sample any sealed deposits for datable remains, and geo-archaeological data.
- C) Recover any artefacts.
- D) Record and carefully lift any human remains that would be affected by the work.

2.3 Methods

The brief was carried out in two stages (see Fig 2).

2.3.1 The churchyard, south eastern entrance

The work here involved the alteration of the existing entrance adjacent to the vestry (consisting of two flights of granite steps) by the addition of a disabled access ramp. This required the removal of the lower flight of steps and their repositioning roughly 1.5m to the south; the dismantling of the western retaining wall to the steps (constructed of vitreous Scoria blocks from the 19th century Copperhouse Foundry) and the excavation of a ramped path running roughly east to west about 10.0m long, 1.80m wide, and to achieve the correct slope up to 1.40m deep at the eastern end.

The repositioning of the lower flight of steps, the dismantling of the retaining wall (the blocks being salvaged for later reuse), and the initial cutting back of the resulting section was done by hand, a mini digger (utilising a toothless grading bucket) being brought in to dig the main length of the ramp.

During the excavation CAU monitored the work, supervising the workmen, intervening to record any features, and to recover artefacts or bones. The resulting sections were cleaned, and the north facing one drawn at a scale of 1:20 recording graves and other structures revealed. Features encountered were planned at a scale of 1:20 using off-sets from fixed

points, and a full photographic record made where appropriate. A skeleton recording sheet was completed for each grave encountered.

It was agreed that where the graves survived below the level required for the new path the remains should be left *in situ* and buried; only in cases where disturbance was inevitable would the skeleton be lifted. In the event it proved necessary to remove only one body and the contents of a charnel pit; this together with a small quantity of unassociated bone was collected and kept aside for re-burial at a later date.

2.3.2 The re-positioning of the font

Within the church it was intended to remove the font from its current position at the west end of the nave and to relocate it at the western end of the southern aisle. This work involved carefully dismantling the font, the position and orientation of each piece being noted, before being individually numbered to aid reconstruction at its new site.

It was proposed that when repositioned the foot of the font would be flush with the current floor level (in its original position the font was approached up a single flight of granite steps, 0.20m high). To achieve this a rectangular hole 1.60m long and 1.20m wide (the long axis running west to east) and up to 0.40m deep would be excavated. All digging was done by hand. CAU monitored the work supervising the workmen. The resulting sections were cleaned, the south facing one being drawn at a scale of 1:10. Features were planned at a scale of 1:20 using off-sets from fixed points. A black and white photographic record was kept.

3 Background

3.1 Location and setting

St Felicitas Church (PRN 31828) lies at the centre of the settlement of Phillack (NGR SW 5653 3842) within the ecclesiastical parish of the same name, but coming under the civil parish of Hayle. It is in the district of Penwith. The churchyard is situated on the steeply sloping, southward facing hillside that forms the northern bank of Copperhouse Pool (the eastern branch of the Hayle Estuary formed by the Angarrack River). To the north are the massive sand dunes of Phillack Towans that blanket the ridge of land that separates the church from the sea, dunes that have in the past threatened to engulf the church itself (Fig 1).

The site is underlain by Devonian rock of the Portscatho Series, consisting of alternating sandstones and slate (BGS 1970, sheet 351 and 358).

3.2 Brief history of Phillack Church

The following historical summary is drawn mostly from Thomas 1990.

The settlement and church of Phillack are first recorded as the "*Ecd de Egglosheil*" circa 1170 (Padel 1988) containing the Cornish elements "*Eglos*" and "*Heyl*" meaning "Church on an estuary". The first use of *Phillacke* is in 1613.

The church was originally dedicated to St Felec (10th century Vatican MS, Olson and Padel 1986) a man's name related to the Welsh "*ffelaig*" meaning "Lord, Chief". This is of interest considering the local legends about "Teudar" and a royal seat at Riviere, just to the west of the church (Acton 1997) during the 6th century.

The Grade II* Listed church (Serial 9/116) is dedicated to St Felicitas being first recorded as *Sancta Felicitas* in 1259 (Orme 1996) which most likely represents a Norman re-dedication of the church.

It appears that the area chosen for a Christian community was the site of an existing pagan cemetery. In 1826 when the current graveyard was extended, to the north of the church (level with the church foundations) several graves (roughly walled about) associated with stone basins, and stags horns were encountered cut into the old land surface below the dune sand. In 1933, 50 to 60 further graves were uncovered north of the churchyard wall (well beyond the postulated lann boundary) when sand was being removed from the Towans for agricultural purposes. These were arranged in two rows running north to south, the bodies lying east-west within oval shaped cists. It is most likely that these graves were Iron Age or Romano-British.

The presence of an early Christian centre is evidenced by a 5th century inscribed Chi-Rho stone, the 6th or 7th century "*CLOTUALI MOBRATTI*" inscribed stone, a 9th century "coped" stone tomb cover and a 11th century churchyard cross to be seen in various parts of the churchyard.

In 1973 excavations in advance of a road widening scheme were held in the south-west of the churchyard (see Fig 11). This revealed traces of an earlier curved boundary wall, part of the lann, enclosing numerous cist graves. 10th or 11th century "grass marked" Sandy Lane domestic pottery was recovered from the lowest levels encountered, as was a single sherd of 5th or 6th century imported Mediterranean Phocian Red Slipped Ware (though this was in a redeposited context).

The earliest known church on the site was a Norman cruciform building consisting of a nave, chancel, north and south transepts. The church was extended in the 15th century by

the addition of a north aisle, and a three staged western tower. Of this church only the tower survives along with a few minor fittings (the Norman altar stone, part of an altar frontal depicting the crucifixion, the font, and various architectural fragments).

Between 1856 and 1857 the church was rebuilt and enlarged by William White in the Early English style to its present proportions, sweeping away most of the medieval building.

It is known that the churchyard was remodelled and enlarged in 1826, being depicted as subrectangular in shape on the 1842 Tithe Apportionment map of the parish with its long axis running east to west. The 1909 Second Edition OS map shows a further extension eastward, the churchyard reaching its current proportions. In recent times (pre 1963) a completely new extension was added to the north of the graveyard, taking in part of the towans.

4 Results

4.1 The churchyard. South eastern entrance

As described above, a disabled access ramp was to be built at this location. The first area to be examined was a small area of ground outside the churchyard to the south of the gateway.

4.1.1 Trench 1 (see Fig 2 and 3)

This was a small shallow trench, positioned on the existing pathway 2.0m south of the churchyard wall dug to accept the granite treads of the lower flight of steps that were to be repositioned to this point.

The trench was 2.0m long, 0.80m wide, and reached a maximum depth of 0.15m. It was found that 0.05m of grey black tarmac, and 0.10m of angular gravel hardcore overlay a grey-brown compacted clay loam that was not dug into. No archaeological features were observed.

There was no further ground disturbance in this area as the work involved building up the ground level to achieve the gradient for the ramp.

The second area to be examined was the area within the churchyard itself into which the ramp was cut.

4.1.2 Trench 2 (see Figs 2 to 8)

The first stage in the excavation of this trench was the demolition of the western retaining wall constructed of Scoria blocks that ran alongside the existing flight of steps. This revealed a section (see Fig 5) through the bank of material that had built up behind the churchyard wall. The whole section (A-B) was revealed to be composed of made up ground up to 1.40m deep, the natural bedrock not being encountered.

The earliest layer visible was a compacted yellow-brown sand with a rust red-brown mottle, context [14]. 0.10m of this context could be observed, though unfortunately its full thickness could not be determined as it lay below the level required for the base of the trench.

At the north end of the section several large quartz and shillet blocks, context [13], were observed to be embedded within the top of context [14]. Though it could not be determined from this particular section, further investigation would reveal this feature to be part of an earlier lann boundary wall (see later).

Several medium to small shillet blocks context [15] could be seen to the south of context [13] overlying or partially embedded within the top of context [14]. These were possibly blocks of stone that had fallen off wall [13].

These stones were overlain by a dark grey-brown sandy loam, context [12], that abutted the exterior face of wall [13]. It reached a maximum thickness of 0.20m at that point, becoming thinner towards the south, pinching out before the churchyard wall was reached. Overlying this was a layer of pale yellow, grey-brown sandy loam, context [11], that was up to 0.18m thick.

A layer containing medium sized shillet blocks, context [16], bonded together by a green tinged yellow-brown clay, context [10], overlay context [11]. This seems to represent another period of decay and collapse of material from wall [13].

At this point there appears to have been a major period of landscaping within the churchyard. This involved the building of the current churchyard wall of blue-black Scoria blocks context [1], and the infilling behind it with various layers of dumped material to built up and level the churchyard interior.

Churchyard wall context [1] appears to have been constructed first. It was built of Scoria blocks held together by a strong lime mortar. Scoria blocks measuring 0.48m x 0.30m x 0.40m are moulded blocks of vitreous slag derived from the smelting of copper at the Copperhouse foundry during the 19th century. Behind the wall (the churchyard interior) a thick deposit of sand was dumped to level out the surface of the churchyard, effectively burying the lann wall [13] and infilling the gap between it and the new wall [1]. Two indistinct layers could be seen in this orange, yellow-brown sand, context [9] is the lower and is compacted with few roots, while the upper context [8] is more friable and rooty. It is probable they are one and the same layer. The combined thickness of contexts [8] and [9] reaches 0.70m in the south, but becomes much thinner towards the west (see later).

Settlement of wall [1] and sand layers [8] and [9] caused a small gap to occur running down the interior face of the wall, up to 0.02m wide. This became infilled with a light grey sandy loam context [17].

Overlying this dump of sand (contexts [8] and [9]) and abutting the interior face of wall [1] was a layer of grey-brown sandy loam context [7] up to 0.20m thick. Elsewhere (Fig 6) this layer forms the subsoil below the turf; however at this location it is overlain by up to 0.24m of material composed of several different layers.

The first is a small lens of friable pale yellow-grey (windblown?) sand context [6] up to 0.04m thick. This is overlain by a dark brown sandy loam, context [5], a band of pale yellow-grey sand, context [4] (again windblown?), and finally a layer of dark brown sandy loam, context [3]. It is uncertain what these layers represent, being concentrated close to the churchyard wall (they are not observed elsewhere). Trees (especially escalonia bushes) have been planted along the top of the wall; it is possible that these layers were an attempt at soil improvement to encourage growth. The lenses of sand most likely are deposits of windblown sand derived from the Towans.

The whole of the churchyard is overlain by a dark brown rooty turf and topsoil context [2] up to 0.06m thick.

The second stage in the excavation of trench 2 involved the cutting back of section A-B (described above) to form a level landing, then cutting a sloping ramp in a westerly direction towards the south porch of the church (see Fig 3). This resulted in a trench approximately 10.0m long, 1.80m wide, reaching a maximum depth of 1.40m (in the east by the landing) in order to achieve the slope required.

The resulting running section C-D-E (the north facing side being recorded in its entirety) revealed much the same sequence of deposits (see Fig 6) as described above, though the nature of the lann boundary wall [13] was clarified.

This lann boundary wall [13] was found to survive to a height of 0.80m and was 0.80m wide at its base. A total length of 2.8m of walling was revealed trending in a NE to SW direction. Six courses survived composed of large blocks of quartz and shillet, context [13], though none appeared to have been dressed. Particular care had been taken in the way that they had been laid, such that flat surfaces formed either the inner or outer face of the wall. The stones had been bonded together by a weak friable yellow-cream sandy lime mortar, context [18].

On the northern (interior) side of wall [13] it was observed that the yellow-brown sand, context [14], into which the lowest course of walling had been embedded overlay a layer of compacted chestnut brown sandy loam, context [19]. This formed a steep slope rising towards the west for about 0.50m rising some 0.50m in height before levelling out. This layer contained numerous charcoal fragments, some small pieces of shillet and fragments of animal bone; it had all the appearance of being an old land or occupation surface. The full thickness of this deposit was not determined (it was not bottomed throughout the length of the trench) though a depth of 0.40m was observed. At the junction between the yellow-brown sand context [14] and the slope of context [19] two small sherds of "grass marked" Sandy Lane ware pottery was recovered, located close to the base of wall [13].

The gap formed between the slope in context [19] and the interior face of wall [13] was infilled by a grey, yellow-brown sand context [20] that reached a maximum thickness of 0.50m.

Overlying contexts [19], [20] and [13] was a layer of compacted yellow-brown sand context [8/9] (see above). This layer of sand to the west of wall [13] maintained a uniform thickness of 0.14m. This does seem to suggest that this particular layer was dumped as levelling during a major episode of landscaping.

As described above, this layer of sand [8/9] was overlain by a grey-brown sandy loam subsoil context [7] up to 0.20m thick and a rooty turf and topsoil context [2].

Apart from wall [13] the excavation of the ramp revealed several other features (see Fig 4).

At a distance of 0.60m north west of wall [13] (above the crest of the slope seen in context [19]) a grave was uncovered with most of the skeleton *in situ*. Unfortunately part of the skull, and right leg were damaged by the machine. It was found that in uncovering this grave the machine had exceeded the depth required for the ramp so it did not prove necessary to lift the skeleton, instead it was just cleaned to reveal the grave cut and as many of the exposed bones as possible.

The grave cut, context [21], was subrectangular in shape with squared ends. It was 1.80m long, 0.60m wide, the long axis being orientated WSW to ENE, with the head placed at the western end. Though damaged by the machine, the high calcium content of the soil (derived from the shells found in the sand from the Towans) ensured that the skeleton was in a good state of preservation. It could be seen that the arms had been crossed over the pelvis. Though no nails were recovered (note that the grave was not emptied) the broad nature of the grave cut, roughly rectangular in shape with squared ends, the parallel humerus bones, and a linear dark stain to the north of the body suggest a coffin burial (Rodwell 1989).

The grave, lying at a depth of 1.24m below the current ground surface had been cut into the chestnut brown sandy loam [19] and infilled with a grey brown sandy loam, context

[22]. Unfortunately because later activity has truncated or totally removed many of the soil layers within the churchyard it could not be determined from what level the grave had been cut. The grave was overlain by compacted yellow sand, context [8/9], a levelling layer recognised as part of a major landscaping episode in sections A-B, and C-D-E. No grave cut was observable in this layer so the grave must predate its deposition.

1.8m to the west another grave was encountered. The level was above that required for the pathway so the remains had to be lifted (see Figs 4 and 8) enabling the entire grave to be excavated.

The grave cut, context [23], was subrectangular in shape with squared ends. It was 2.0m long, 0.60m wide, with the head placed at the western end. Again the skeleton was in a good state of preservation, though it had been damaged in antiquity in the region of the lower pelvis and thighs (perhaps animal burrowing, most likely rabbit or rat?). The arms were placed alongside the body with the hands lying beside the pelvis. The body had been clearly placed within a wooden coffin. On cleaning, a dark black-brown staining composed of compacted carbonised wood and black-brown silt (up to 0.02m thick) could be seen to the west of the head, and running in a straight line just south of the body. This was the last remnants of the wooden coffin. 14 coffin nails, each of iron, hand forged, square headed (roughly 0.01m x 0.01m) with a square sectioned shank up to 0.05m long were recovered. Eight nails certainly still *in situ* came from the head region; four forming a straight line were found to be still standing vertically, point uppermost, the head at the bottom, interleaved with four nails lying horizontally at the nail head level of those standing vertically. This must mark the join between the bottom board of the coffin and the head end board. The other six nails lay horizontally at various locations (see Fig 4) along the long sides of the grave cut (3 on each side) again probably fixings for the bottom board. It is not certain that there was a lid. No nails were found at the feet end; however this area had been slightly damaged by the machine.

Grave [23] had been cut through a layer of yellow-grey, brown mottled sand, context [27], and into the compacted chestnut brown sandy loam context [19]. It had been infilled with a grey, yellow-brown sandy loam, context [24]. The base of the grave was indicated by a slightly more compacted nature to the fill, and by flattened fragments of shillet and broken roofing slate.

Landscaping has severely truncated the archaeological deposits making it impossible to determine from which level the grave had been cut (see Fig 8).

It is uncertain what the layer of yellow-grey, brown mottled sand [27] represents. Cut by grave [23] it does not appear in the north facing section, and is of only limited extent in the southern facing. It is only visible for a distance 1.0m west of, and 1.5m east of grave [23]. This layer overlies context [19] and is itself overlain by the sand of context [8/9]. It is possibly a deposit of wind blown sand infilling a hollow within the possible old land surface [19].

A single bodysherd of "grass marked" Sandy Lane ware was recovered from the southern edge of grave cut [23].

The period of landscaping associated with the building of the churchyard wall [1] is represented by the layer of sand context [8/9]. In section (F-G) it can be seen that it was itself further truncated when the east to west pathway was laid. The pathway is composed of a hard core layer context [28] up to 0.09m thick overlain by 0.02m of cream-brown sandy cement context [29] and 0.02m of tarmac context [30].

It could clearly be seen in section F-G (Fig 8) that when the coffin had been laid within the ground, it had not been lying flat, the head end being distinctly lower than the feet. The

base of the grave (marked by the flattened shillet) at the skull end lay at a depth of 0.50m below current ground level, the pelvis area was at 0.40m, while the feet lay at 0.35m.

The reason for this became apparent once the skeleton had been lifted. In the region of the pelvis and towards the feet was revealed a pile of haphazardly placed bones, the remains of at least two individuals (the bones recovered included 4 femurs).

These bones sat within an irregular shaped pit context [25] 1.20m long, 0.45m wide, and 0.24m deep, that appears to have been dug into the bottom of grave [23]. It is most likely that this was a charnel pit into which bone disturbed during the digging of grave [23] was thrown before the coffin was laid to rest. The pit was infilled with a grey, yellow-brown sandy loam context [26] identical in nature to, and perhaps the same as grave fill [24]. The contents of the pit were to be disturbed by the current work so they were carefully lifted to be kept aside for later reburial.

Shallow foundation trenches 0.20m wide and up to 0.30m deep were dug within, and along the length of the bottom of Trench 2, to take the retaining walls for the ramp. No additional features were observed in the south facing section; however, when the north facing section was dug a partial section collapse revealed the top courses of two brick built vaults associated with modern graves (most recent burial being in 1985).

These lay 0.45m below the current ground surface. Being of recent date their positions (see Fig 4) were recorded, then they were rapidly reburied as the vaults would not be affected further by the current work.

4.2 The repositioning of the font

This involved ground disturbance within the church itself. Both the original font position and its proposed relocation site lie within the footprint of the Norman cruciform church as determined by Professor Charles Thomas (see Fig 12), the former within the nave, the latter within the southern transept (Thomas 1960). These areas were examined to see if any features relating to the earlier church still survived.

4.2.1 Original position of font.

This small shallow trench, situated within the nave, 1.30m south west of the westernmost pillar of the northern arcade resulted from the dismantling of the font and the removal of the stepped platform on which it had stood. The trench was approximately 1.70m long, 1.30m wide and reached a depth of 0.20m. It was found that 0.04m of 19th century ceramic tiling overlay 0.02m of orange brown sand and 0.14m of hard white-grey lime mortar, the full thickness of which was not observed the trench being of insufficient depth. No archaeological features were seen. There was no further ground disturbance in this area the ground being built up with cement and resurfaced utilising 19th century reclaimed ceramic tiles and flagstones removed from the area of floor chosen as the new font location.

4.2.2 Trench 3 (see figs 13 and 14).

This trench was dug to accept the font. Situated at the west end of the southern aisle it was 1.60m long, 1.20m wide and reached a maximum depth of 0.40m. The whole section (H-I) was revealed to be composed of made up ground, natural not being encountered.

The earliest layer visible was a compacted dark brown sandy loam, context [41], containing fragments of roofing slate, and occasional flecks of charcoal and mortar. Only 0.04m of this context could be observed; its full thickness was not determined as it lay below the level required for the base of the trench. This deposit was overlain by a layer of pale grey-brown sandy loam, context [40], up to 0.06m thick.

Above these lay a friable cream-yellow coarse grained lime mortar, context [39], up to 0.03m thick and a layer of compacted hard, fine grained crystalline mortar 0.02m thick, context [38]. These two layers appear to form a floor surface and its bedding layer. It was very ephemeral in nature only occurring throughout the length of the trench in its northern section (H-I) and in small abraded patches in plan, some 0.27m below the current ground surface. For most of the length observed this lay horizontally, but 0.35m from the west end it dipped steeply westwards dropping some 0.07m, probably the result of subsidence. No dating evidence was obtained and there was no indication of tiling.

This floor surface was overlain by a light grey-brown clay, context [37], up to 0.02m thick, and a dark brown clay loam, context [36]. These two deposits appear to have been levelling layers for another floor some 0.20m below the current ground surface. This was formed by a compacted layer of hard fine grained crystalline cream-white lime mortar 0.01m thick context [35]. This floor's survival was more complete being encountered over three quarters of the trench area. It was observed that there was subsidence towards the south west, the floor dropping some 0.10m such that in the south west corner of the trench it lay some 0.30m below the current floor. Faint impressions of tiles could be seen on the upper surface, the rows running diagonally from north west to south east. The tiles had been manufactured from a soft red-brown clay fabric (traces of which were seen in the corners of a couple of the impressions) and were roughly square in shape measuring approximately 0.13m x 0.13m. Again no direct evidence for dating was obtained.

Above this lay the current 19th century floor. This comprised a layer of soft grey-brown lime mortar 0.07m thick, context [34], a hard white-grey lime mortar 0.07m thick, context [33], and finally a thin layer of orange-brown sand 0.01m thick, context [32]. Bedded into the sand were 19th century ceramic tiles and sandstone flagstones up to 0.04m thick, context [31]. This floor showed no evidence of subsidence.

Throughout the depth of the trench and in plan no evidence for any burials was observed.

5 Discussion

This project has provided several valuable insights into the archaeological potential, history and burial practices utilised at St Felicitas Church, Phillack.

The earliest feature encountered was context [19] the layer of compacted chestnut brown sandy loam that underlay three quarters of the area investigated within Trench 2. It contained numerous flecks of charcoal, small fragments of roofing slate, sea shells (cockles) and some animal bone (including part of a sheep's jawbone?). Two small co-joining bodysherds of "grass marked" pottery were recovered from this layer. Though small in size, the fabric is that of Sandy Lane Style 1 (Thomas 1991) the curvature of the sherds indicating that they were derived from a cooking pot. Dating of this material is still debatable, but is probably 11th to 12th centuries AD.

All this material is of domestic origin, this suggesting that context [19] was an occupation or old land surface. The eastern limit is clearly defined by a steep, convex slope (up to 0.60m high) that curves in a NE to SW direction. It is uncertain as to what this bank represents; it is possible that it is the northern lip of a ditch marking the periphery of the early ecclesiastical enclosure or lann. Unfortunately the trench did not reach a sufficient depth to elucidate this.

If a ditch was present, it was soon infilled (perhaps by wind blown sand?) the compacted yellow-brown sand, context [14], being the uppermost layer of this fill. Onto this sandy layer [14], boundary wall [13] was built running parallel with the slope of the bank

described above. Constructed of shillet, granite, and quartz rubble blocks, surviving to a height of 0.80m and a width of about 1.0m, it was held together by a weak, friable sandy lime mortar, context [18].

Traces of this wall were also located in the 1973 excavation (Thomas 1990) along with the remains of a blocked southern entrance (see Fig 11). It is known that the churchyard cross (dated stylistically to the 11th century) originally stood just to the east of this blocked entrance prior to 1856 where it was portrayed as being buried up to its head (Blight 1856) and thus most likely still *in situ* (Fig 9). This relationship suggests that the wall was in existence by the 11th century, supported by the occurrence of "grass marked" Sandy Lane pottery from context [19] below it. No direct dating evidence was obtained from the wall itself. Utilising the evidence from the current project and the 1973 excavation, it can be shown that at one time the church was surrounded by a curvilinear boundary wall forming a lann, though it is possible that it may have been truncated in the south when the churchyard was remodelled in 1826 and the current churchyard wall (of scoria blocks) erected (Fig 11).

The two graves encountered both appear to be coffin burials. No direct dating evidence was obtained for either grave. Both were cut into the old land surface [19] and a sherd of "grass marked" Sandy Lane ware was obtained from the cut of grave [23] so both probably post date the 11th/12th centuries. The graves also predate the landscaping marked by the deposition of sand layer [8/9] as no grave cuts were visible within this layer.

The graves encountered in the 1973 excavations and identified as being medieval (12th to 15th centuries) were either cist graves, or shroud burials, no coffin burials apparently being discovered. This suggests that graves [21] and [23] are most likely post-medieval in date possibly of the 16th or 17th centuries. It is clear, however, that there was also an earlier phase of burials in the area of Trench 2, which was swept away by the 19th century landscaping. The evidence for this comes from the charnel pit in Grave [23], as the bones presumably came from burials disturbed by and predating Grave [23], but later than the 11th / 12th century land surface [19]. Graves [21] and [23] survived only because they were dug somewhat deeper than the others.

As noted above, there appears to have been one major phase of landscaping within the churchyard that involved the building of the scoria block boundary wall [1] and the levelling of the interior including depositing a layer of sand [8/9] over the entire area. This most likely occurred between 1826-1830 (Thomas 1990) when the churchyard was remodelled, a sub rectangular shape being adopted, probably in response to continual encroachment of sand overwhelming the old lann boundary, and the need for a larger graveyard to accommodate the burials involved with a then rapidly expanding congregation.

Less likely, is that this landscaping occurred during the 1856/1857 rebuild of the church itself. Certainly it is known that some earth moving was involved as the churchyard cross (until then buried up to its neck) was exhumed and placed in a position south of the church porch (as portrayed by A. Langdon in 1896, Fig 10).

As discussed above Trench 3 lay within the southern transept of the Norman cruciform church. A succession of three floors were recognised, two earlier mortar floors, and the present floor surface composed of 19th century ceramic tiles and flagstones.

The two early levels are not directly dated but must relate to building phases within the church from the 12th to 15th centuries, prior to the complete rebuilding of the church in 1856. The upper mortar floor [35] preserved traces of the impressions of tiles. Tile pavements composed of decorated tiles became popular in the late 13th early 14th centuries

(Eames 1996) especially in ecclesiastical buildings, when production techniques became commercially viable, the popularity continuing throughout the 15th century but declining by the mid 16th century. Plain single colour tiles continued in use through to the present day, though there was a revival in decorated tiles in the 1830's with the coming of the Gothic revival movement. The dimensions recovered from the tile impressions suggest a date c1280 to 1330 based on examples of tiles and pavements found at Exeter (Allan 1984 p 232).

In 1282 the living of Gwithian was amalgamated with Phillack, the latter becoming the centre of quite a rich parish (Thomas 1960). This upper mortar floor [35] may indicate a refurbishment of the church at this period to reflect its increased affluence and status.

The underlying floor must thus be older but to what extent could not be determined. Its abraded patchy nature could suggest a prolonged period of use before being replaced. As the trench was not bottomed, it is not known if further floor surfaces lay beneath this one.

Both these floors exhibited the possible effects of subsidence, dropping steeply to the south and west by up to 0.10m. The degree of movement shown by the change in floor level could have caused structural damage to the southern transept, and may have been a contributing factor in the decision to totally rebuild the church in 1856. Unfortunately the cause of subsidence was not determined.

There was no evidence for any burials within Trench 3 with no grave cuts being observed within the levels investigated, there is though the possibility that they may exist at depth.

This work has shown that the archaeological potential for features surviving below ground is very high both within the church and around its exterior, it is thus highly desirable that any future work involving ground disturbance should be monitored archaeologically.

6 Finds Report

A total of 20 artefacts, including pottery, bone, shell and metalwork, were recovered during this project though none came from Trench 3. The finds have been noted above in discussing the context with which they were associated, but can be summarised as follows:

6.1 Pottery

Three sherds of pottery were recovered, two from context [19] and one from grave cut [23]. Though all were undiagnostic bodysherds all three can be identified from fabric type as being *Sandy Lane Style 1* "Grass marked" ware. This ware is hand made, the fabric generally gabbroic often with large amounts of feldspar. The firing is variable (often plain bodysherds are indistinguishable from prehistoric pottery), but generally well fired with distinctive "grass marking" - the impressions of chopped grass on the base, sometimes continuing over the exterior, and even at times reaching the rim.

Two forms of vessel dominate, a squat, flat based, vertically sided cooking pot, and a flat based platter or dish with very low sides (often absent completely). Cooking pots frequently have vertical pulling marks on the interior close to the rim which is often roughly beaded and slightly everted. Finger marking, and smoothing using a knife or spatula on the exterior is common. Decoration is rare, but where present consists of "nicking" of the rim with the back of a knife, fingernail marking also around the rim, or moulding the rim with the fingertips to form a "pie crust" ornament (Thomas 1963, 1991). The curvature observed on the sherds recovered during this project suggest they originated from cooking pots.

Dating is still debatable (Preston-Jones and Rose 1986), though Thomas assigns an 11th to 12th century date for this ware (Thomas 1991).

6.2 Bone

The fragmentary remains of an animal's jawbone (146g) possibly sheep was recovered from context [19].

6.3 Shell

Two cockleshells were found in context [19]. This coupled with the animal bone suggests that this layer may have been a domestic occupation surface.

6.4 Iron coffin nails

A total of 14 iron coffin nails (187g) were recovered, all from grave [23]. Each was hand forged, square headed (0.01m x 0.01m) with a square sectioned shank up to 0.05m long. Several bore the traces of wood on the corrosion products, part of the coffin board.

6.5 Human bone

During this project, only the contents of grave [23] and charnel pit [25] had to be lifted. Though the grave [23] had been previously disturbed (see above) resulting in some damage, the bone (3263g) was in very good condition. A total of 5550g of bone, representing at least two individuals was recovered from charnel pit [25].

It was decided on the grounds that there was an insufficient sample of burials that the bones did not warrant further examination, and that retaining the bone for a radiocarbon date was not necessary due to the apparent post-medieval nature of the graves. Arrangements will be made with the parish for the future reburial of the bone.

7 Bibliography

7.1 Primary Sources

- 1842 Tithe apportionment map of the parish of Phillack
1880 First Edition Ordnance Survey map
1909 Second Edition Ordnance Survey map
1930 Revised Edition Ordnance Survey map
1969 Plan, scale 1:100 by County Surveyor showing proposed changes to road.
Drawing no. C.R. 858.3
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7.2 Publications

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8 Project archive

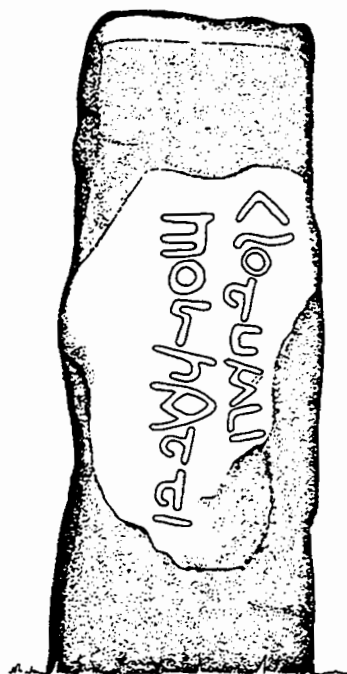
The CAU project number is 2000054.

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall County Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. An administrative and information file containing project correspondence and copies of documentary/cartographic source material.
2. Field drawings are stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE 398/1-11).
3. Finished plans and sections are stored as GRH 334/1-7
4. Black and white photographs are archived under the following index numbers:
GBP 12154 and 1255
5. No colour photographs were taken.
6. Finds site code is PCH2000.

All the artefacts and bone recovered are temporarily stored in the CAU finds store. They are stored in sturdy acid free cardboard boxes, and kept under stable conditions. Arrangements should be made for the return of artefacts to the landowner, or if they consent, for the final deposition of all objects within a registered museum, probably the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro. The reburial of the human bone should also be arranged with the parish and the local incumbent.

7. This report held in digital form as: H:\DOCUMENT\SITES\SITES \PHILLACK CHURCH WB 2000054\WB REPORT.DOC.



Phillack Churchyard, Inscribed Stone

APPENDIX 1

List of contexts

| Context No | Type | Dimensions | Description | Comments |
|------------|-----------|--------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Structure | 1.80m high 0.48m wide | Wall constructed of vitreous scoria blocks | Current; southern churchyard wall |
| 2 | Layer | 0.08m thick | Dark brown sandy loam with frequent roots | Topsoil |
| 3 | Layer | 0.05m thick | Dark brown sandy loam | |
| 4 | Layer | 0.07m thick | Pale yellow-grey sand | Wind blown sand? |
| 5 | Layer | 0.10m thick | Dark brown sandy loam | |
| 6 | Layer | 0.6m thick | Pale yellow-grey friable sand forming a lens | Wind blown sand? |
| 7 | Layer | 0.20m thick | Grey brown sandy loam, some roots | Subsoil |
| 8 | Layer | 0.38m thick | Orange, yellow-brown sand, friable with some roots | Landscaping, levelling layer |
| 9 | Layer | 0.50m thick | Orange, yellow-brown sand, compacted with no roots | Landscaping, levelling layer, same as context [8] |
| 10 | Layer | 0.06m thick | Green tinged, yellow-brown clay, contains context [16] | Collapse from wall [13] |
| 11 | Layer | 0.18m thick | Pale yellow, grey-brown sandy loam | Infill |
| 12 | Layer | 0.20m thick | Dark grey-brown sandy loam | Infill, abuts context [13] |
| 13 | Structure | 0.80m high 1.0m wide | Wall of shillet, granite, and quartz blocks, bonded by context [18] | Medieval lann Boundary wall |
| 14 | Layer | Not determined | Compacted yellow-brown sand with a rust red-brown mottle | Bedding layer for wall [13]. Possible infill of ditch |
| 15 | Layer | - | Numerous medium to small shillet blocks within context [10] | Collapse of wall [13] |
| 16 | Layer | - | Numerous medium to small shillet blocks embedded within context [14] | Collapse of wall [13] |
| 17 | Layer | 0.02m thick | Light grey sandy loam | Infill |
| 18 | - | - | Weak, friable yellow cream sandy lime mortar | Part of wall [13] |
| 19 | Layer | Not determined | Compacted chestnut brown sandy loam, with flecks of charcoal, | Possible occupation or old land surface |

| Context No | Type | Dimensions | Description | Comments |
|------------|-------|--|---|---|
| | | | animal bone, and pottery | |
| 20 | Layer | 0.50m thick | Grey, yellow brown sand | Infill |
| 21 | Cut | 1.80m long 0.60m wide, depth not determined | Sub rectangular cut orientated east to west with squared ends | Grave cut. Not fully excavated, left in situ |
| 22 | Fill | - | Grey brown sandy loam containing an articulated human skeleton. Head at west end | Grave fill. Not fully excavated, left in situ |
| 23 | Cut | 2.0m long 0.60m wide 0.50m deep | Sub rectangular cut, orientated east to west with flat bottom and squared ends | Grave cut |
| 24 | Fill | - | Grey, yellow brown sandy loam containing an articulated human skeleton. Head was at the west end. Traces of coffin visible. | Grave fill |
| 25 | Cut | 1.20m long 0.45m wide 0.24m deep | Irregular shaped pit, within cut [23] | Cut of charnel pit |
| 26 | Fill | - | Grey, yellow brown sandy loam, containing disarticulated human bone (minimum of 2 individuals) | Fill of charnel pit |
| 27 | Layer | 0.18m thick | Yellow-grey, brown mottled sand | Wind blown sand? |
| 28 | Layer | 0.09m thick | Grey, brown shillet rubble | Hardcore for pathway |
| 29 | Layer | 0.02m thick | Cream-brown sandy cement | Bedding layer for pathway |
| 30 | Layer | 0.02m thick | Grey black tarmac | Surface of pathway |
| 31 | Layer | 0.04m thick | Glazed ceramic tiles | 19 th century floor surface |
| 32 | Layer | 0.01m thick | Orange-brown sand | Bedding layer for tiles |
| 33 | Layer | 0.07m thick | Hard white-grey lime mortar | Foundation layer for 19 th century floor |
| 34 | Layer | 0.07m thick | Soft grey-brown lime mortar | Foundation layer for 19 th century floor |

| Context No | Type | Dimensions | Description | Comments |
|------------|---------|--------------|---|---|
| 35 | Surface | 0.01m thick | Hard compacted fine grained crystalline mortar. Tile impressions on the upper surface approximately measuring 0.13m x 0.13m | Floor surface, tile dimensions suggesting a late 13 th or early 14 th century date. |
| 36 | Layer | 0.04m thick | Dark brown clay loam | Foundation, levelling layer for floor [35] |
| 37 | Layer | 0.02m thick | Grey-brown clay | Levelling layer for floor [35] |
| 38 | Surface | 0.02m thick | Hard compacted fine grained crystalline white lime mortar | Floor surface |
| 39 | Layer | 0.03m thick | Friable cream-yellow coarse grained lime mortar | Foundation layer for floor [38] |
| 40 | Layer | 0.06m thick | Pale grey-brown sandy loam | Bedding layer ? |
| 41 | Layer | Not bottomed | Dark brown sandy loam | Infill |

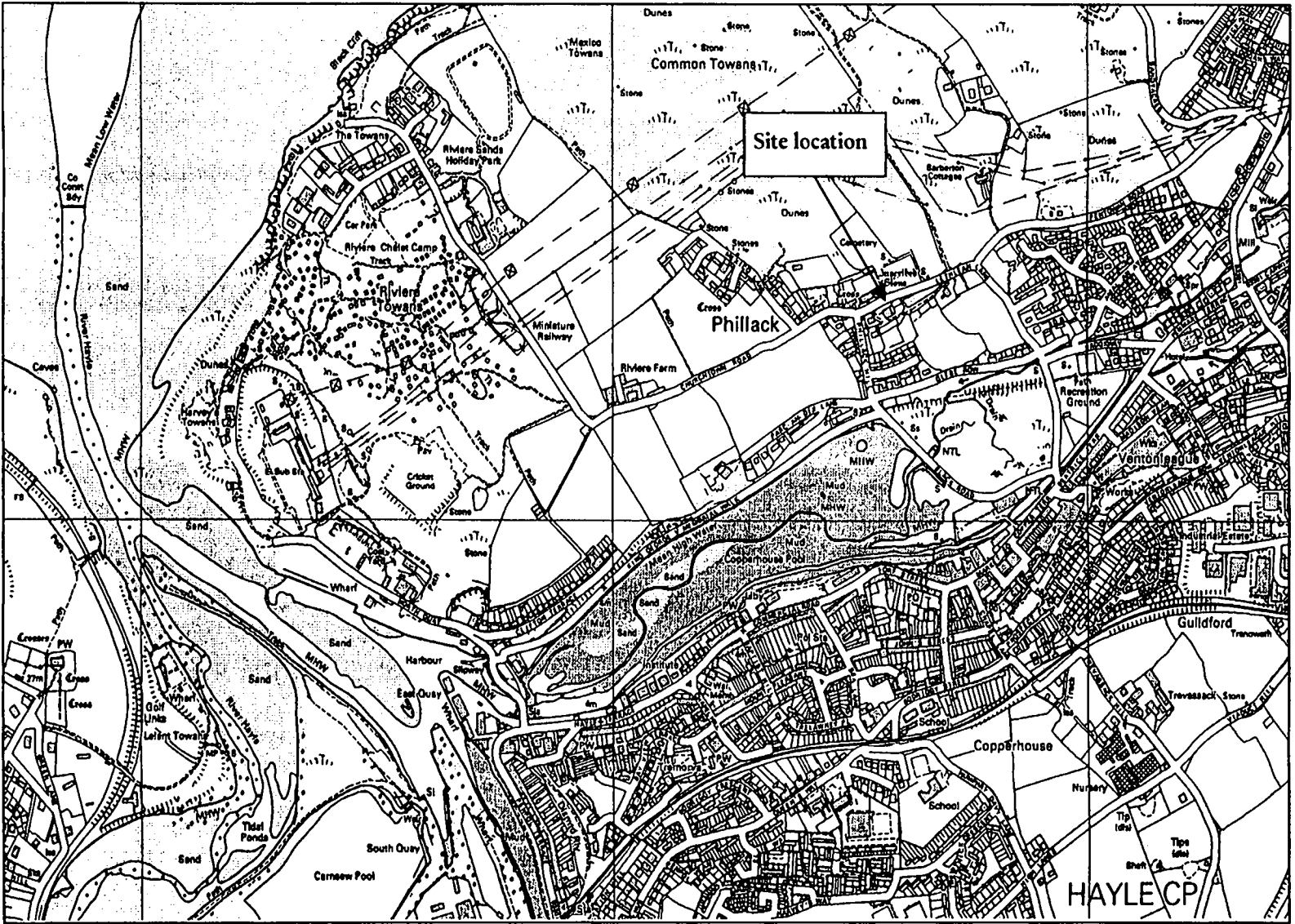


Fig. 1. Map of Phillack and Hayle showing site location, based on OS 1:10000 map (reduced so not to scale) with the permission of HM Stationery Office. Crown copyright Cornwall County Council LA 076528

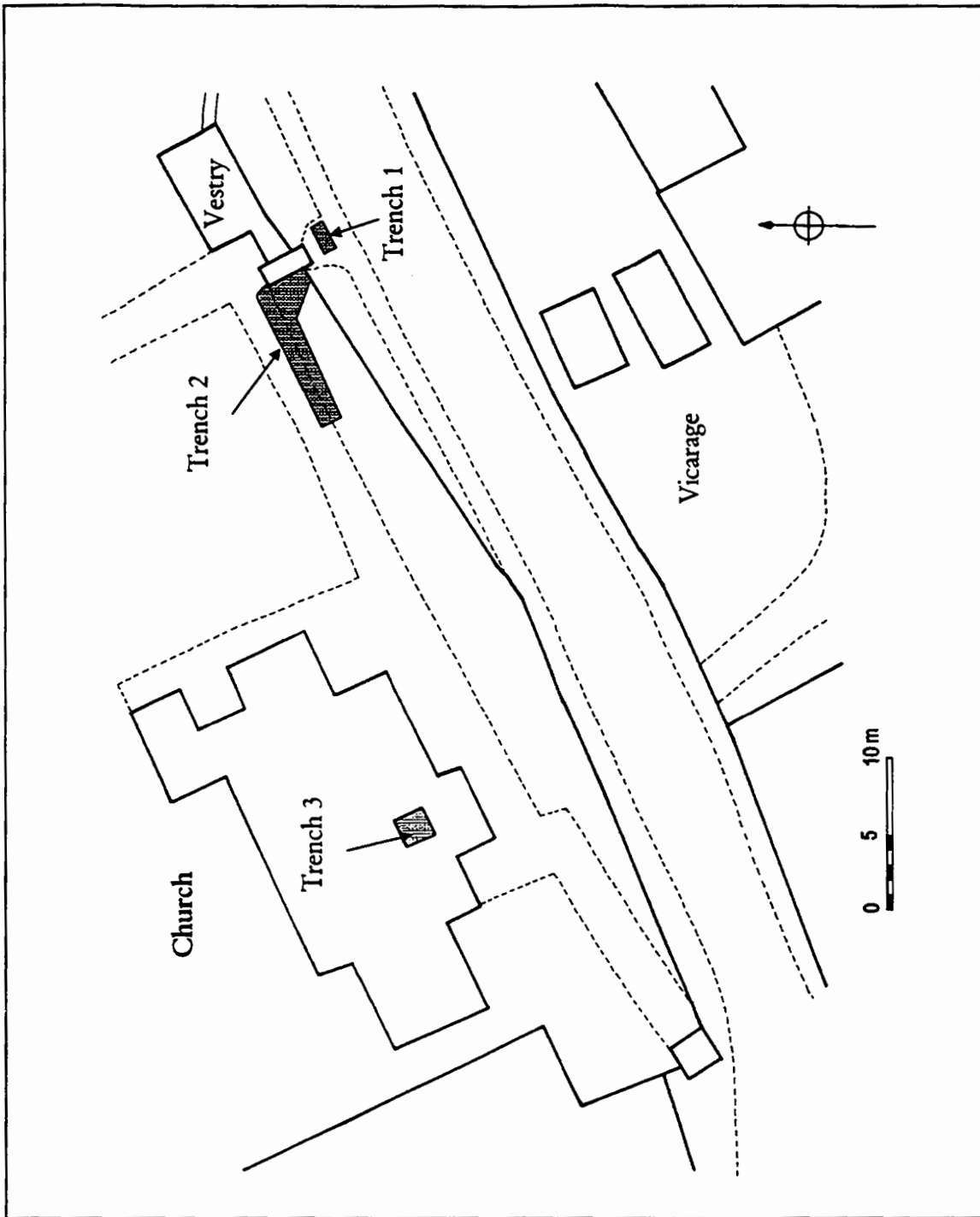


Fig 2. Site location showing areas investigated archaeologically based on OS Landline mapping with the permission of HM Stationary Office. Crown copyright. Cornwall County Council LA 076528.

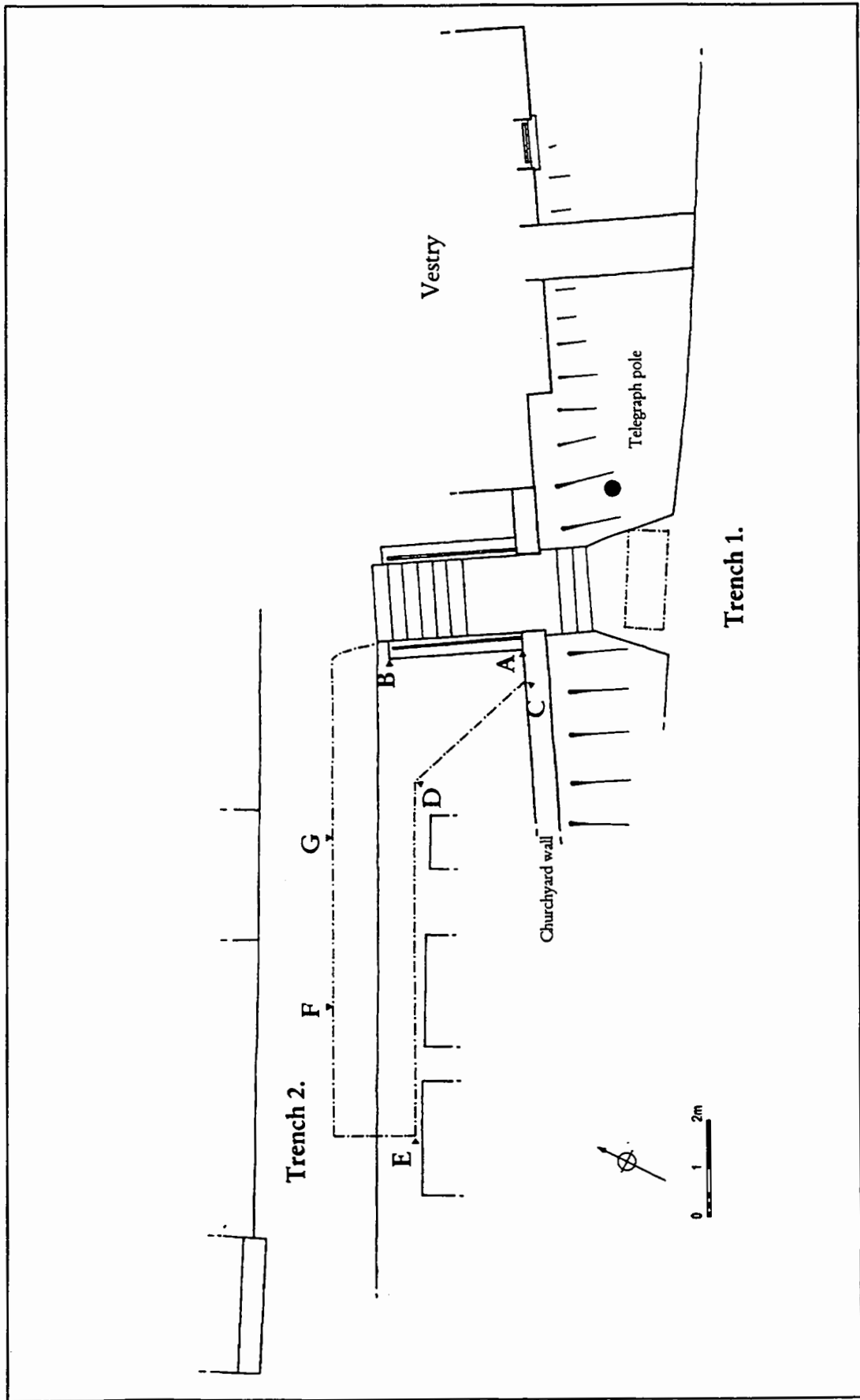


Fig 3. Pre excavation plan of Trenches 1 and 2 showing the location of described sections.

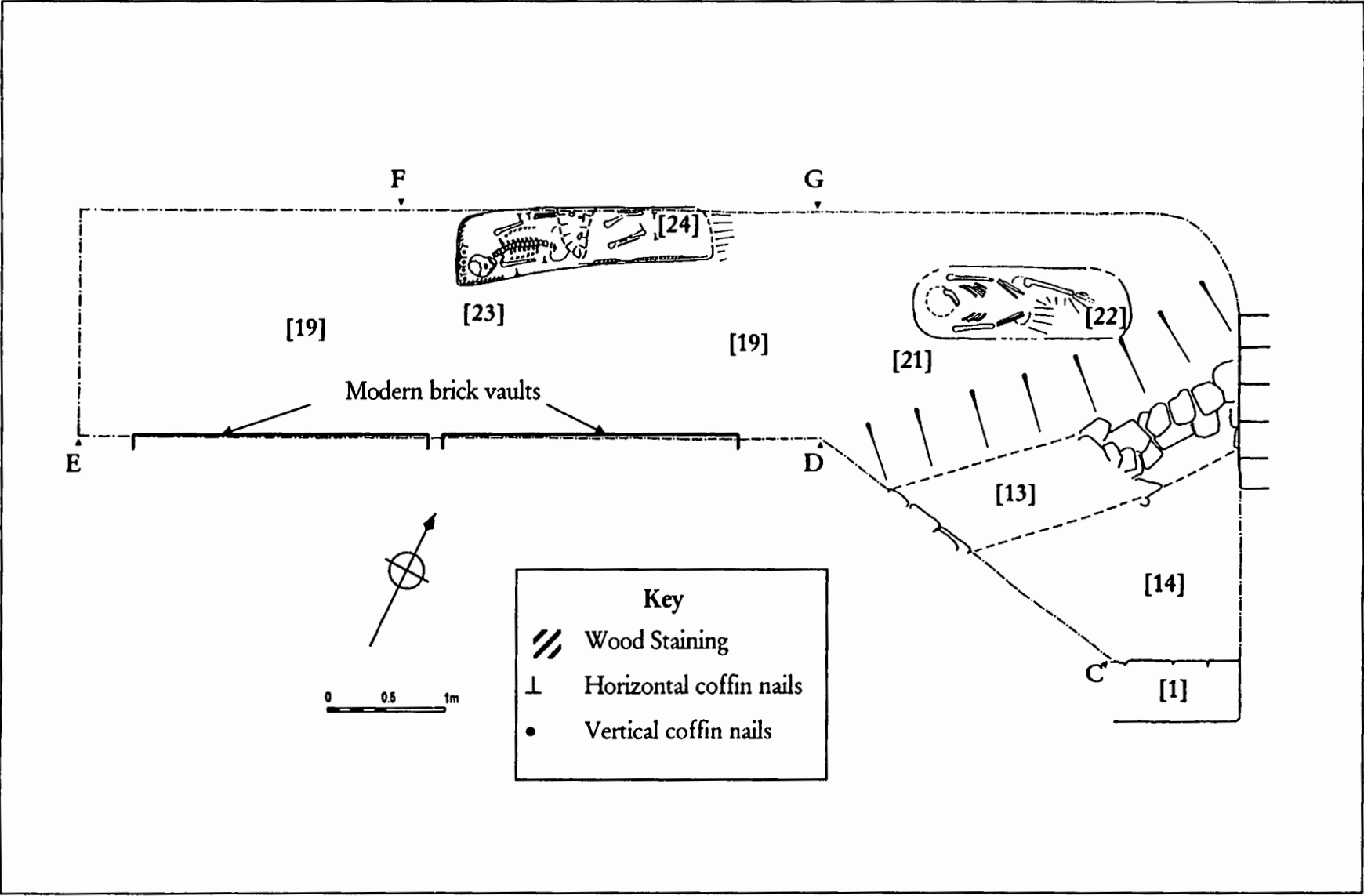


Fig. 4. Post excavation plan of Trench 2 showing earlier Lam boundary wall [13] and Graves [21] and [23].

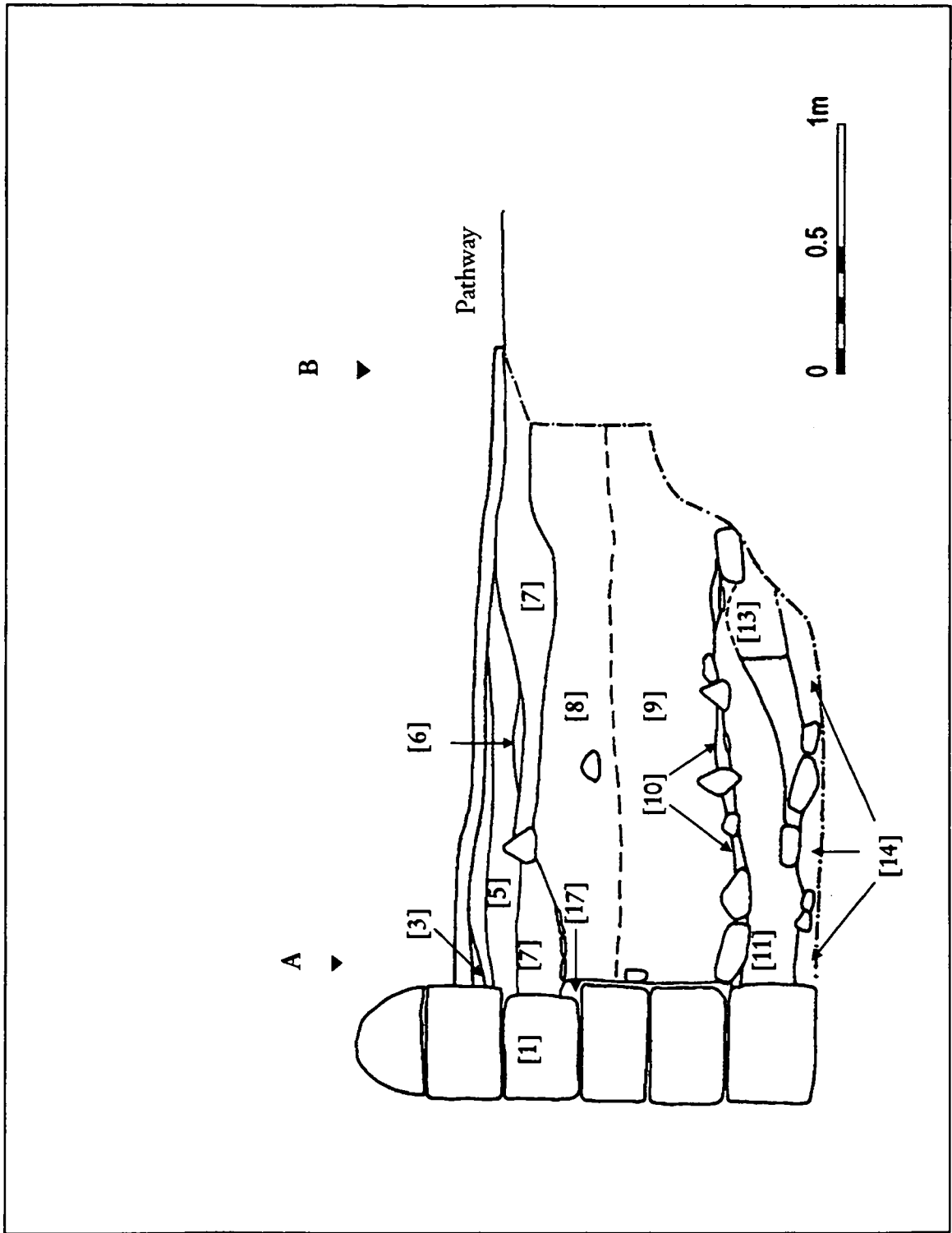


Fig 5. Section A to B.

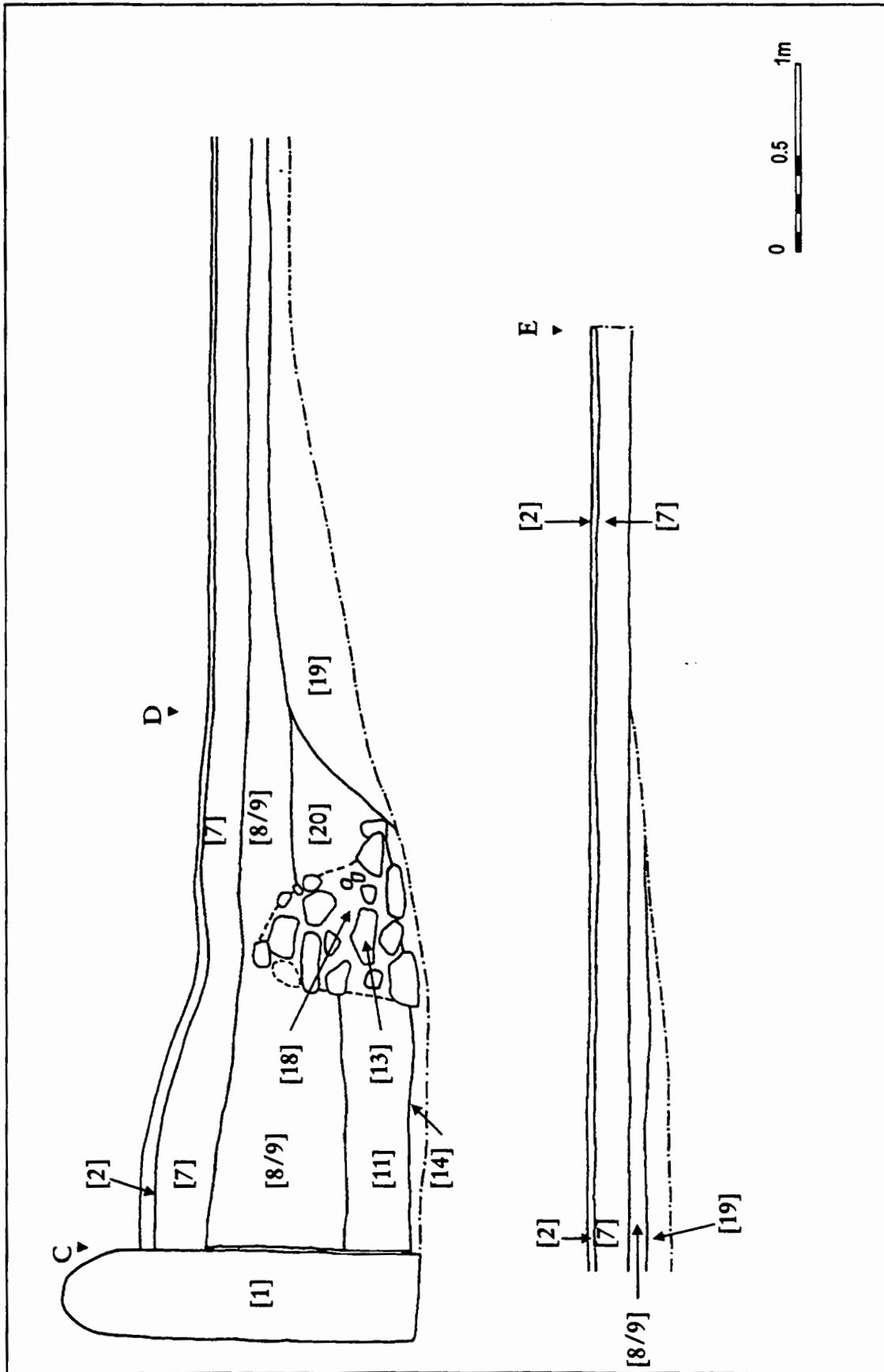


Fig 6. Section C to D to E.

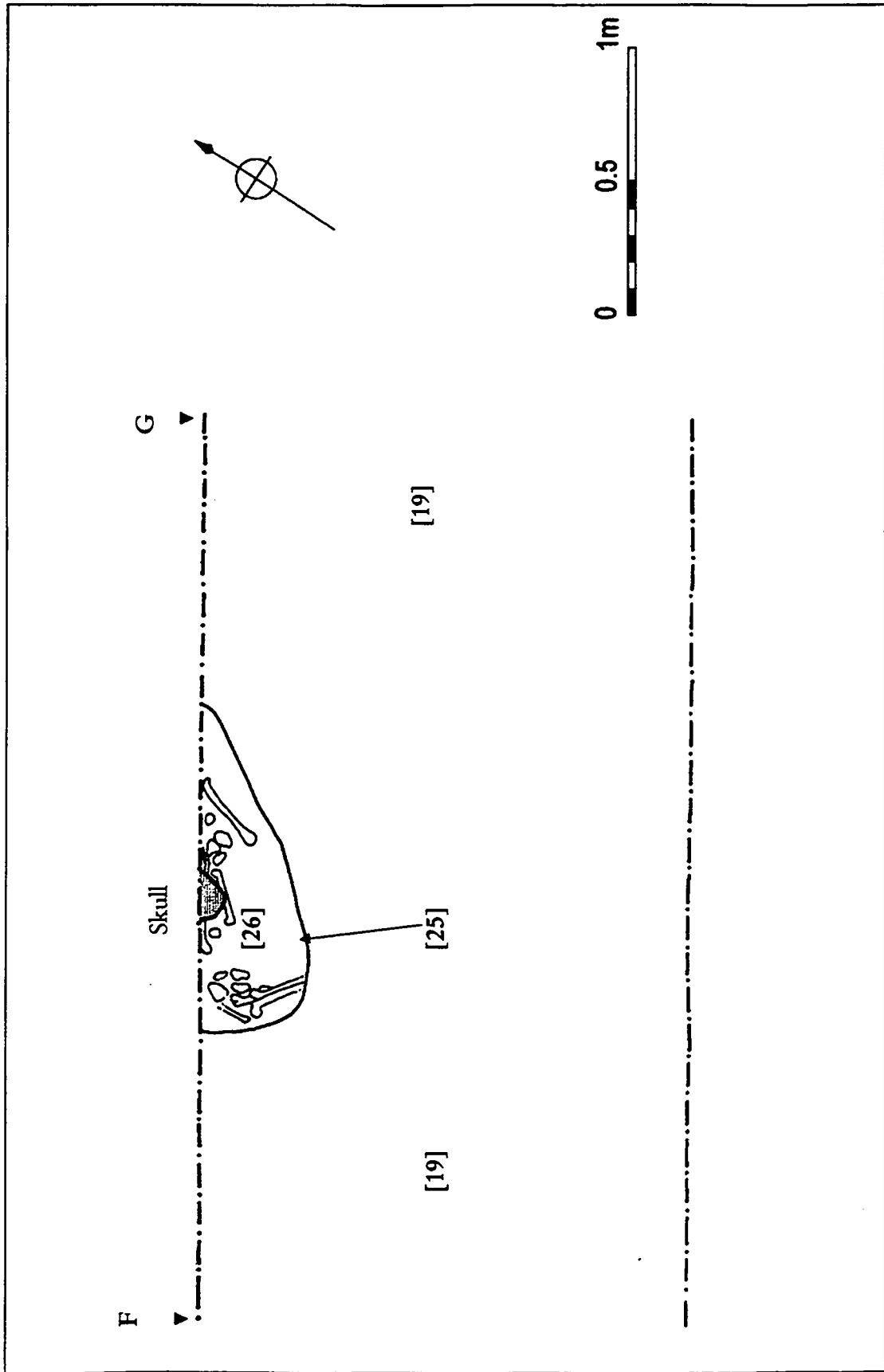


Fig 7. Plan of charnel pit.

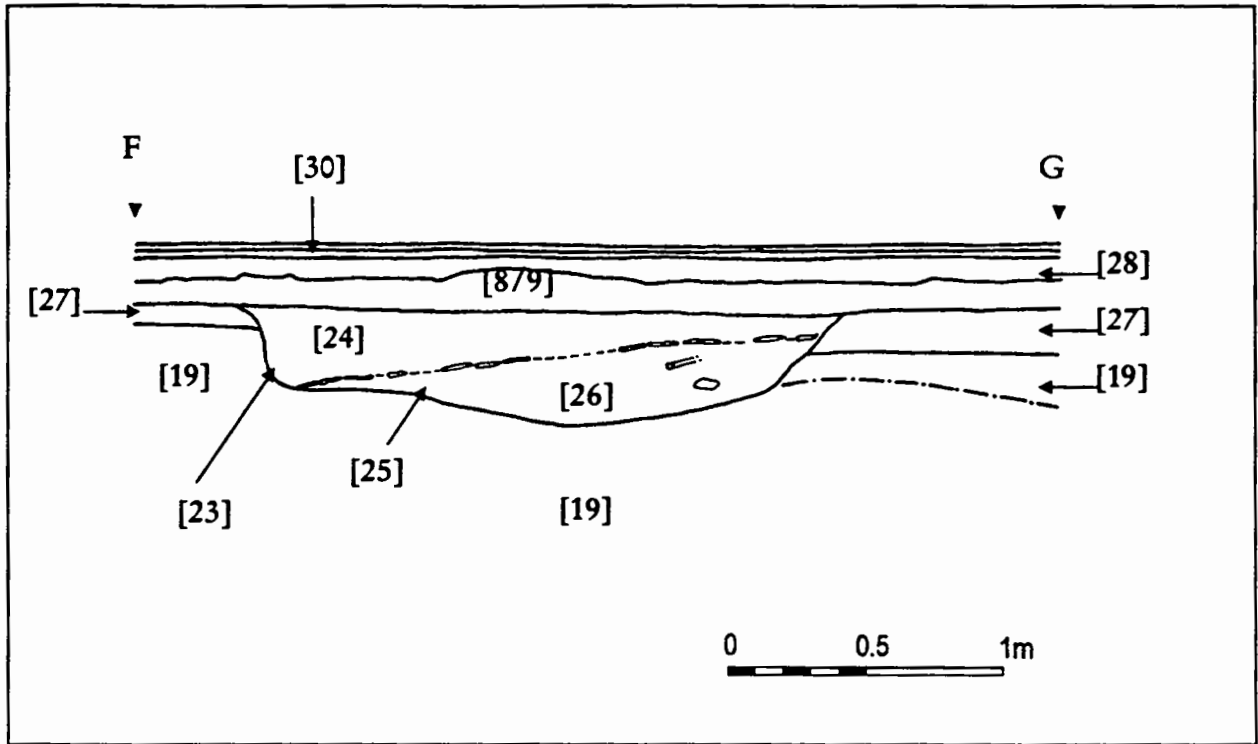


Fig 8. Section F to G.

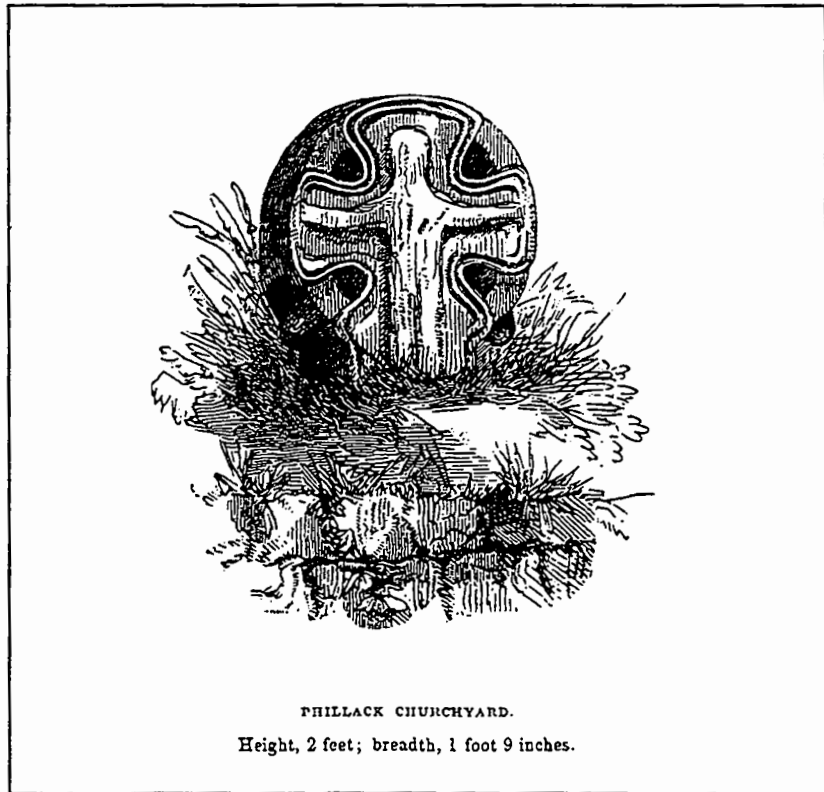


Fig 9. Churchyard Cross as portrayed by J.T. Blight in 1856.

PHILLACK, NO. 6. IN THE CHURCHYARD

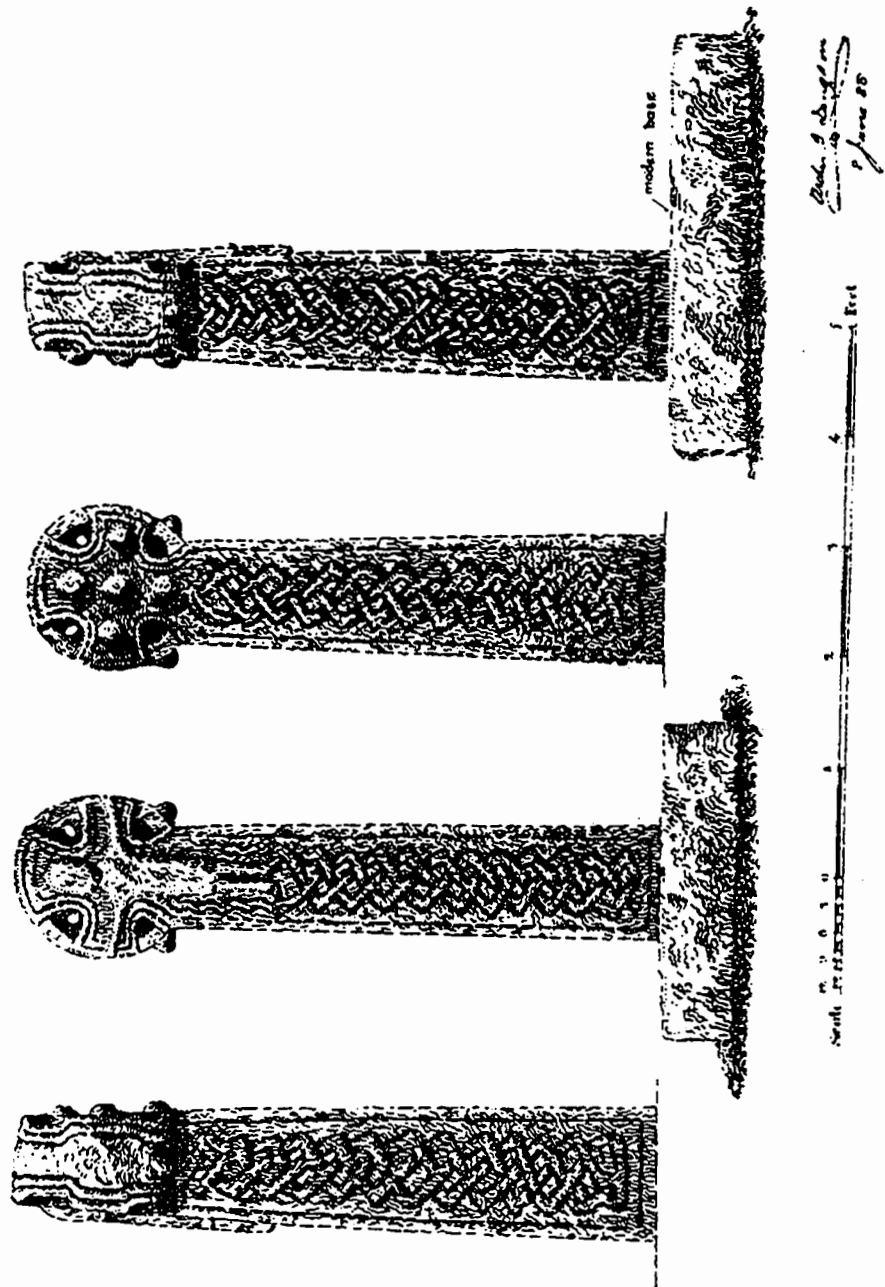


Fig 10. Churchyard cross as portrayed by Arthur Langdon in 1896.

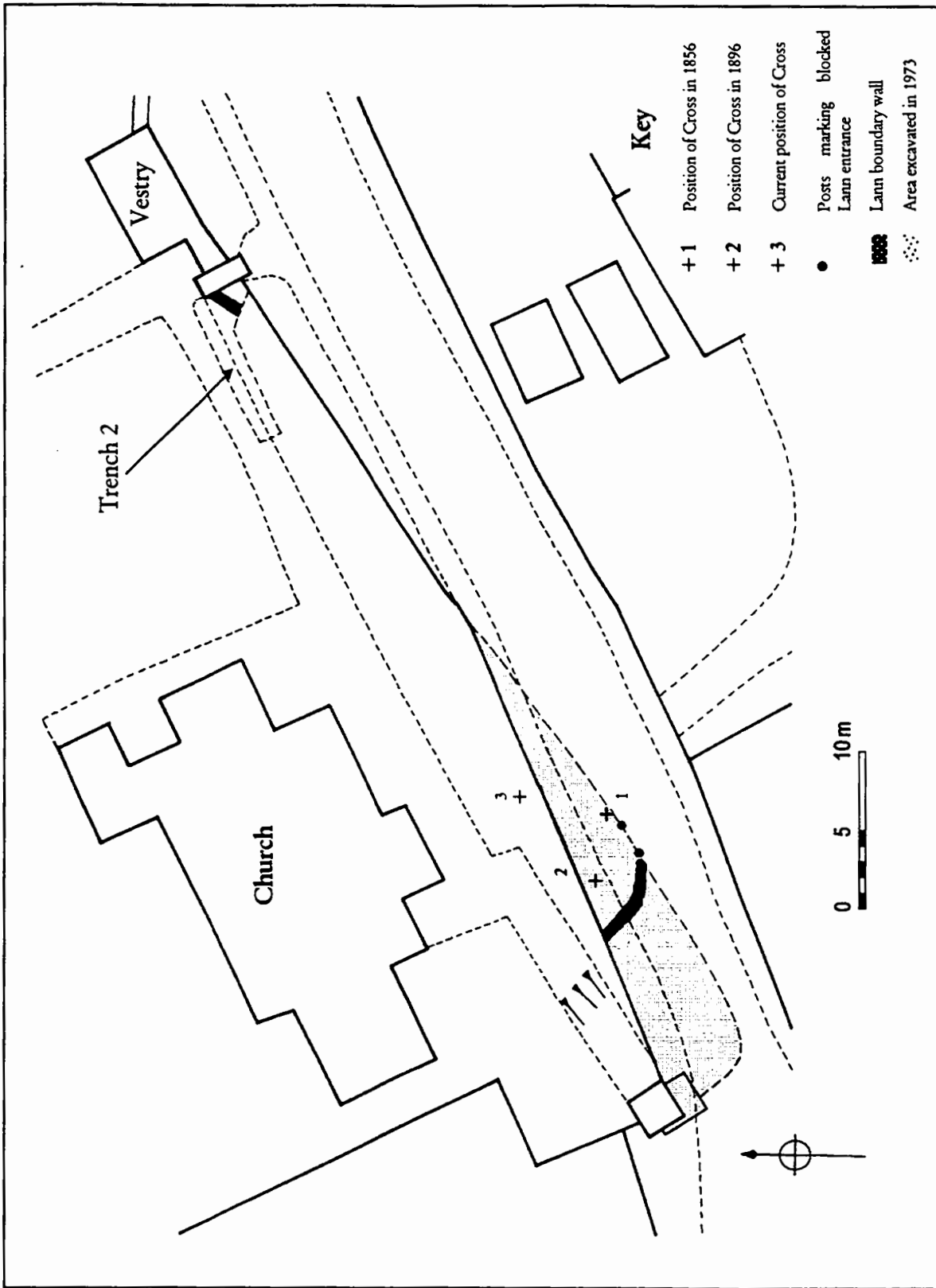


Fig 11. Churchyard. Areas investigated in 1973 and 2000 showing line of Lann, blocked southern entrance, and the various positions of the churchyard cross.

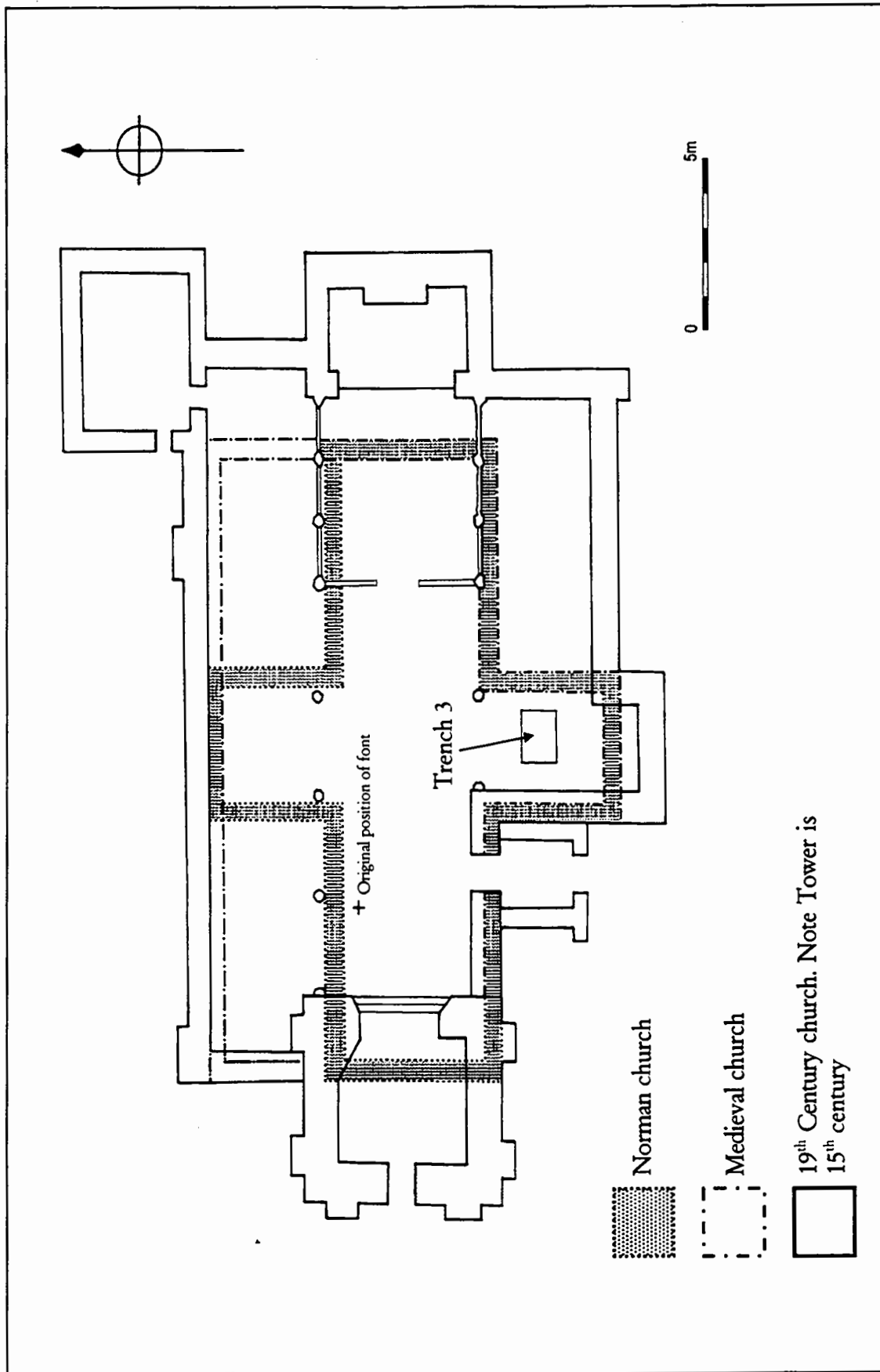


Fig 12. Plan showing the Norman cruciform church, later Medieval building and the Present day outline. Locations of Trench 3 and the original font position are also depicted (based on Thomas 1960).

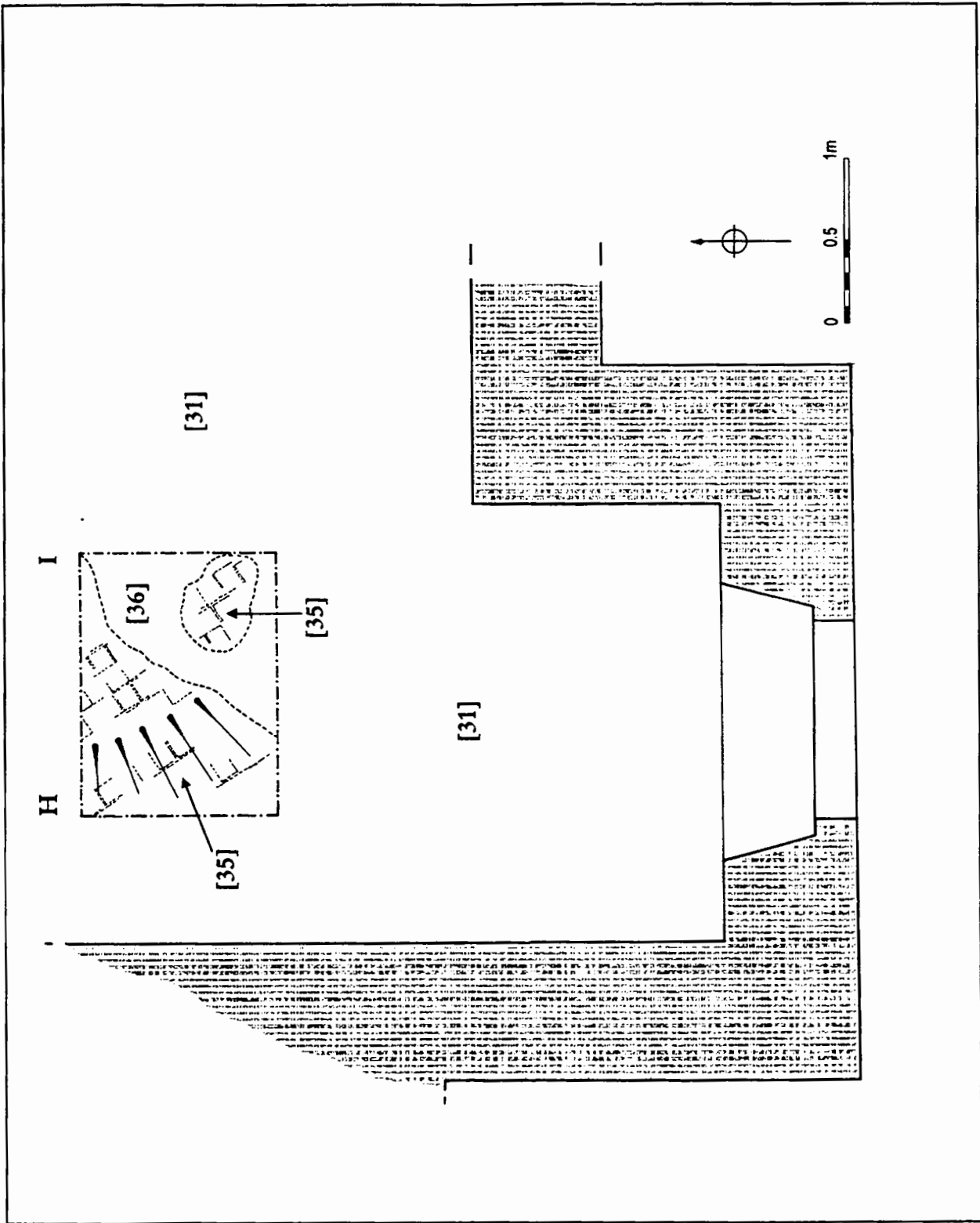


Fig 13. Plan of Trench 3 showing floor surface [35] and location of section H-I.

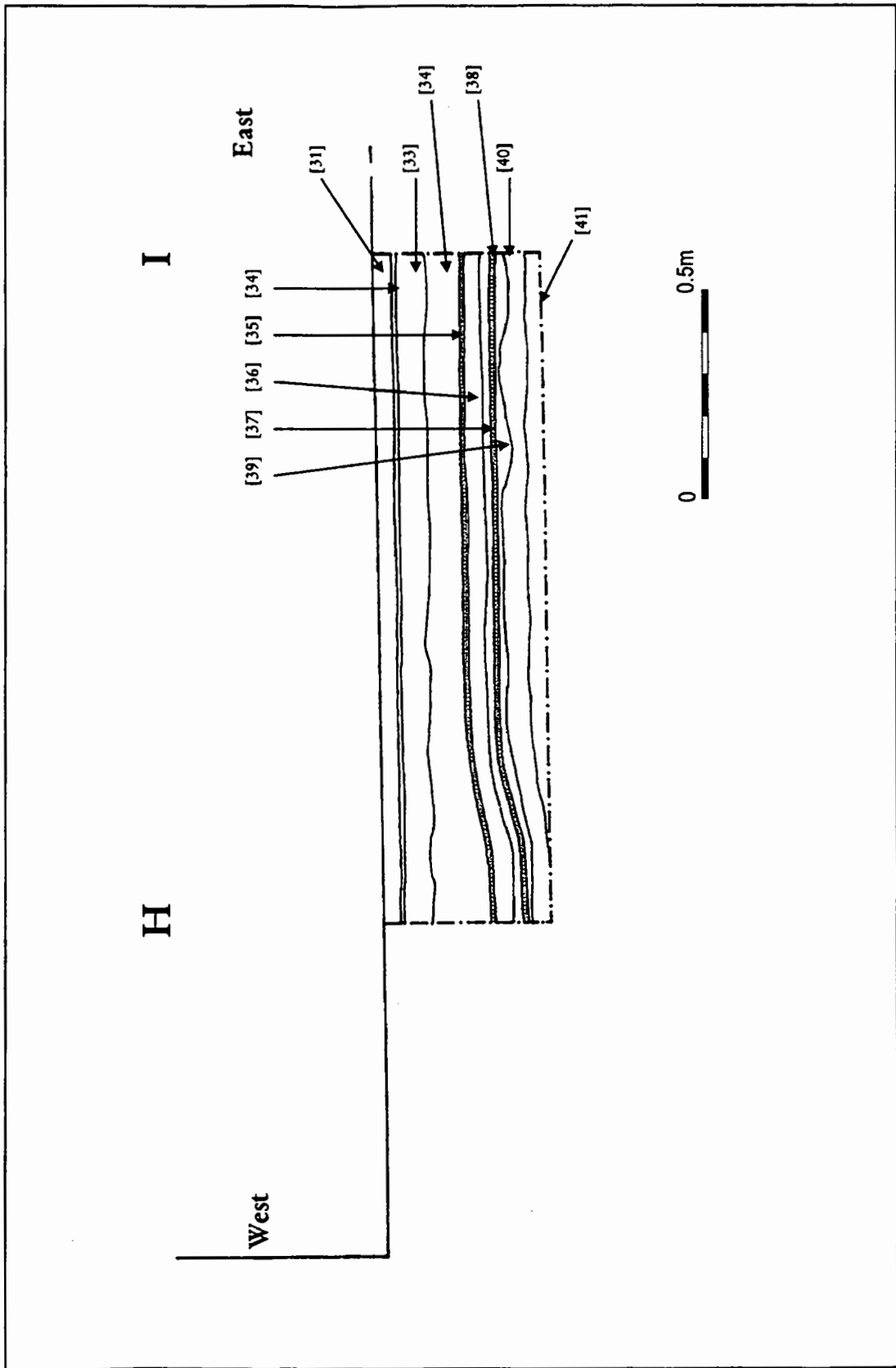


Fig 14. Section H-I.

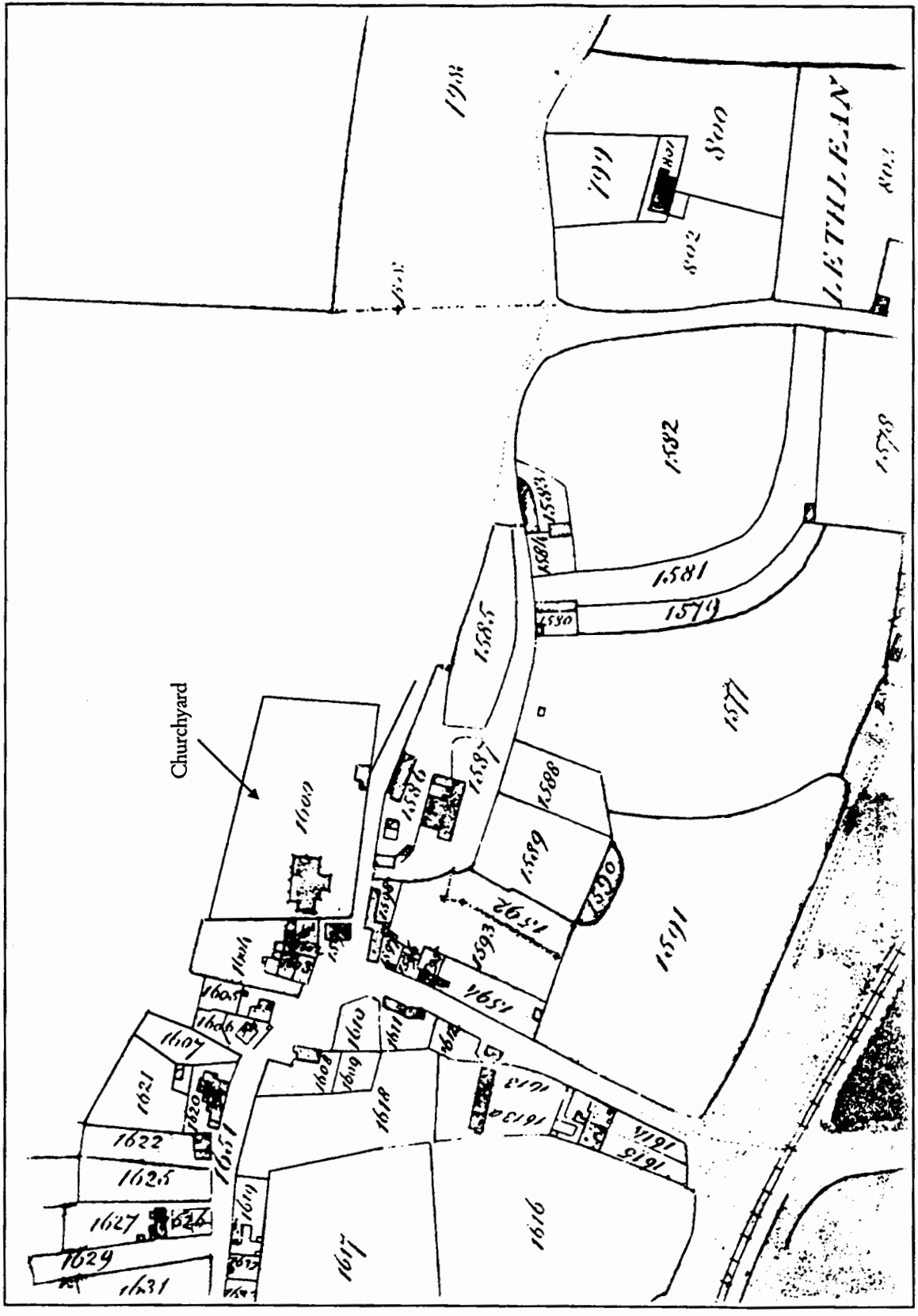


Fig 15. Phillack, 1842 Tithe apportionment Map

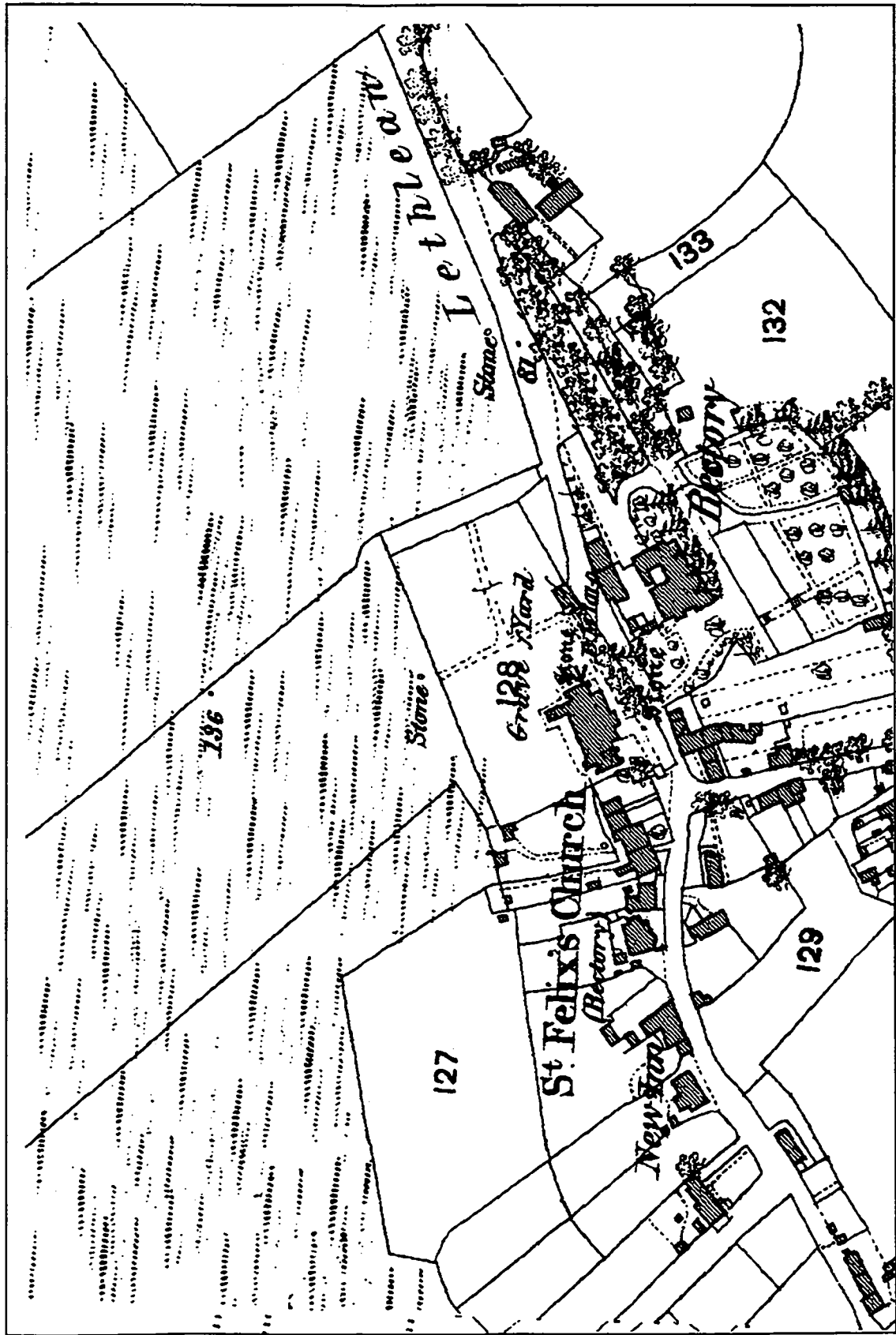


Fig 16. Phillack. 1880 First edition Ordnance Survey map.

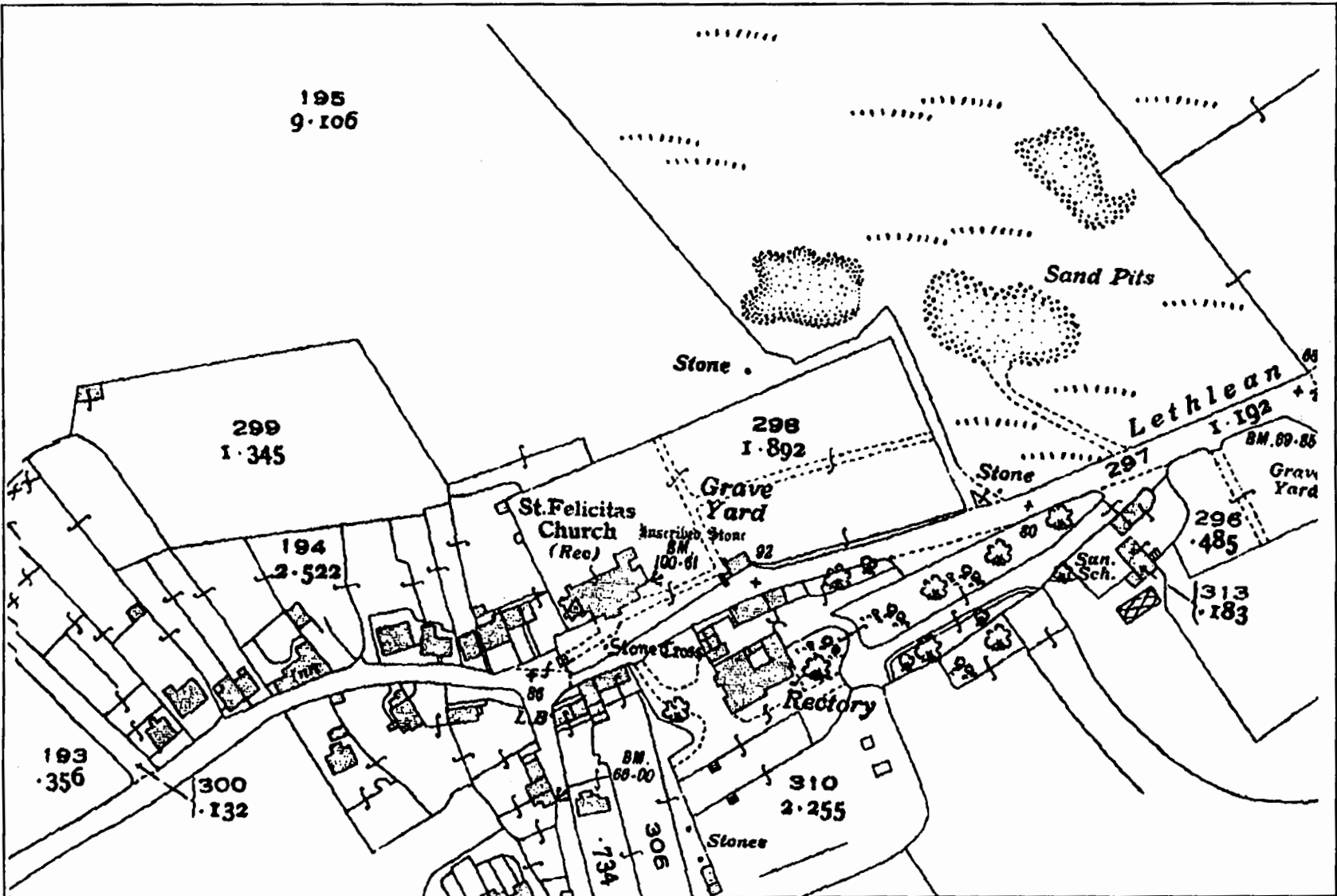


Fig. 17. Pillack. 1909 Second edition Ordnance Survey map.

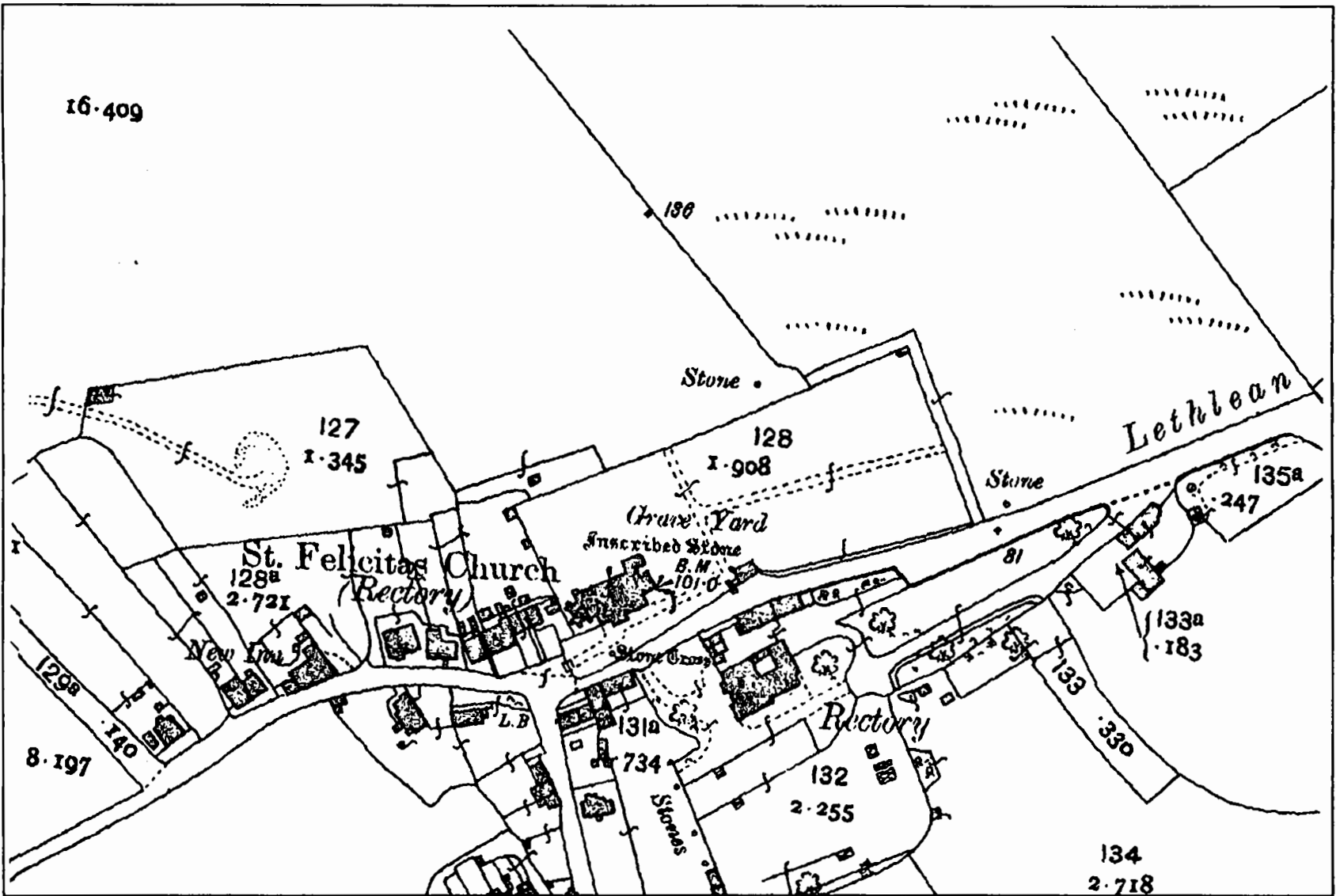


Fig 18. Phillack. 1930 Revised edition Ordnance Survey map.

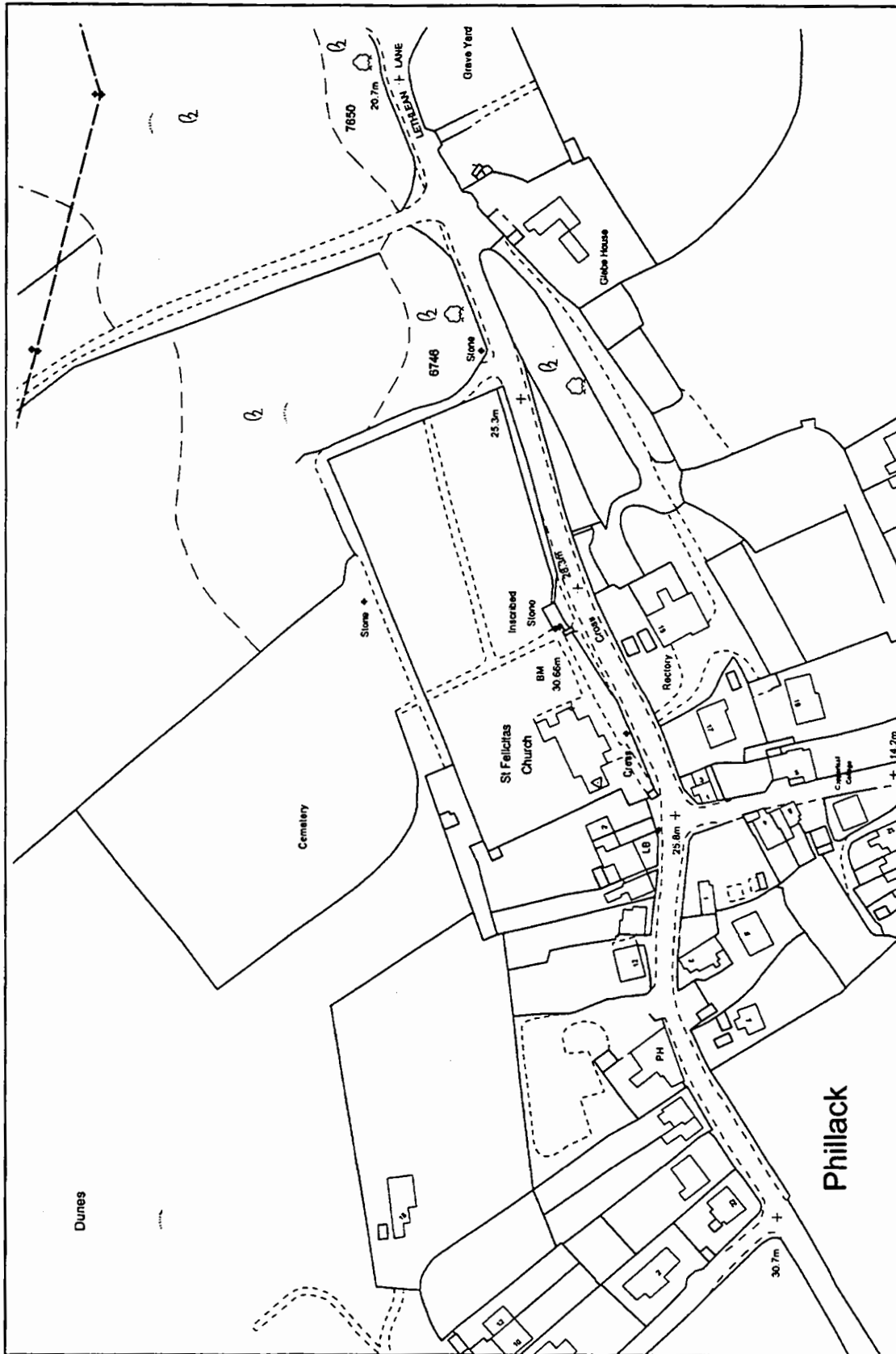


Fig 19. Phillack. Current GIS Landline map.

HUMAN BONE SUMMARY SHEET

Site name **Phillack Church**
 Site Sub Div **Trench 2**
 Skeleton no **A**
 Period/Phase/Context **Post Med?**
 Context no **[21]**
 Recorded by **C. Thorpe**
 Date **6/7/2000**

Treatment of Bone **Cleaned. Left in situ.**
 Photo no **As such this sheet records**
 X-Rays **bones observed.**
 Sample Nos

Skeleton Details
 Sex **?**
 Age **Adult**
 Stature
 State of preservation Good Fair Poor

Burial Details
 Articulation Complete Partial Disarticulated
 Type Extended Flexed Semi-flexed
 Reburial Cremation Part cremated
 Other

Position
 Orientation (spine) E N W S E
 Head facing Right Left Centre
 Position Prone Supine
Arms Crossed over pelvis.
Head at west end.

Grave Details
 Type Pit Cist Platform Coffin
 Pot Other
 Coffin type Wood Stone Lead Brick Other
 Grave goods
 Fill **[22] Grey brown sandy loam**
 Stratification Inclusive Extrusive Disturbed
 Associated skeletons

Skeleton damaged by machine, skull crushed, bones of right leg missing. Coffin indicated by a linear dark stain.

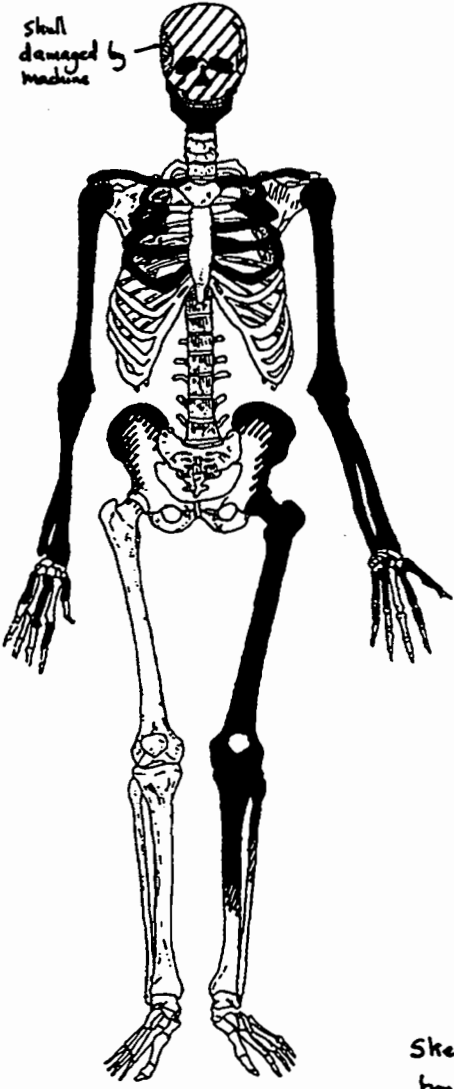


Fig 20. Grave [21]. Skeleton recording sheet.

HUMAN BONE SUMMARY SHEET

Site name *Phillack Church*
 Site Sub Div *Trench 2*
 Skeleton no *B*
 Period/Phase/Context *Post Med?*
 Context no *[23]*
 Recorded by *C. Thorpe*
 Date *7/7/2000*

Treatment of Bone *Grave completely excavated.*
 Photo no
 X-Rays
 Sample Nos

Skeleton Details

Sex
 Age *Adult*
 Stature
 State of preservation Good Fair Poor

Burial Details

Articulation Complete Partial Disarticulated
 Type Extended Flexed Semi-flexed
 Reburial Cremation Part cremated
 Other

Position

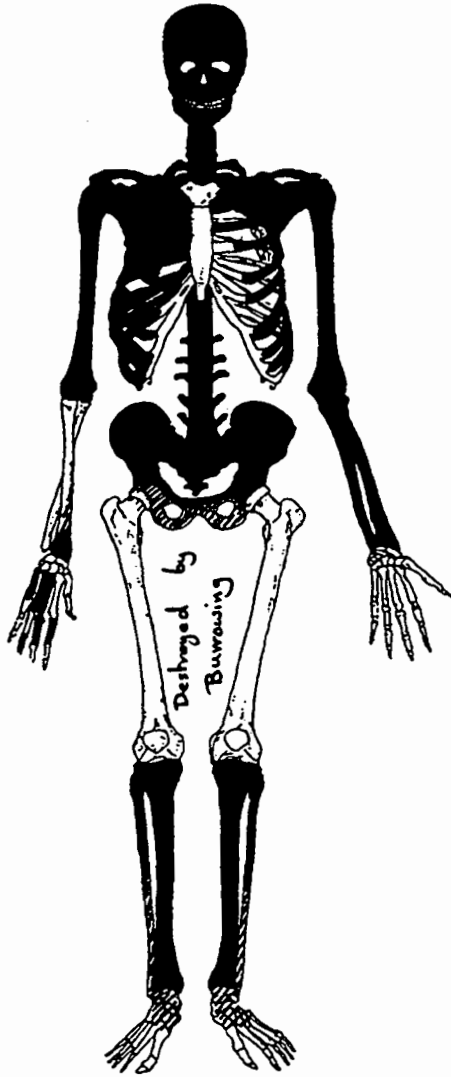
Orientation (spine) E N W S E
 Head facing Right Left Centre
 Position Prone Supine
Arms alongside body.
Head at West End.

Grave Details

Type Pit Cist Platform Coffin
 Pot Other
 Coffin type Wood Stone Lead Brick Other
 Grave goods *14 hand forged coffin nails*
 Fill *[24] grey brown sandy loam.*
 Stratification Inclusive Extrusive Disturbed

Associated skeletons

Skeleton damaged in antiquity in region of lower Pelvis - animal burrowing?
Feet damaged by machine.
Coffin indicated by wood staining.



feet damaged by machine.

Fig 21. Grave [23]. Skeleton recording sheet.



Fig 23. Photograph of channel pit [26] looking west.



Fig 22. Photograph of Grace [23] looking west.