

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY
DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

ST. FLORENCE CHURCH,
PEMBROKESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was conducted in two stages during renovations at St. Florence church, Pembrokeshire, during June and July 1997. The first stage involved recording features of archaeological significance in three areas inside the church after the pews and floorboards had been removed, but before a new central heating system was installed and the floorboards replaced. The second stage involved recording features of archaeological significance revealed after the stripping of emulsion, lime-wash, and sections of plaster from all the internal walls of the church, but before a new coat of lime-wash was applied.

Stage 1 revealed evidence of the raising of the floor level conducted in 1870. This included rubble platforms used to affix the flooring beams and seating to, and re-deposited soil containing various human skeletal remains. Stage 2 revealed no features of archaeological significance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project commission

In 1996 an application was made to Cadw and the Lottery Heritage Fund to assist in financing a renovation project at St. Florence church, Pembrokeshire. The proposed internal renovations were conducted in two stages;

- The installation of a new central heating system (mainly in the existing ducts)
- The stripping of emulsion, lime-wash, and sections of plaster, off the walls, in order that they could be re-plastered and lime-washed.

The field operations section of Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology was contracted by Cadw to conduct an archaeological watching brief during these renovations and to record any features of archaeological significance.

The installation of the central heating system was undertaken in June 1997, and the archaeological watching brief relating to this stage of the renovation scheme took place on the 10th and 11th June, 1997. The watching brief for the stripping of emulsion and lime-wash consisted of a site visit, made on July 10th, 1997, after the stripping had been completed and before re-plastering had begun.

1.2 Scope of project

The installation of the central heating system and replacement of rotten floorboards affected the following three areas of St. Florence church; (see Figure 1)

- Area 1 - North Transept
- Area 2 - South Transept
- Area 3 - South Chancel Chapel

The removal of the pews and rotten floorboards was undertaken prior to the archaeological watching brief commencing.

The removal of layers of emulsion, lime-wash, and plaster affected all the interior walls of the church.

1.3 Report outline

This report describes the physical environment of the site (Section 2) before summarising the watching brief results (Section 3) and the conclusions (Section 4) based on the results of Sections 2 and 3. Supporting data, including a catalogue of the watching brief archive is located in the appendix.

1.4 Abbreviations

Sites recorded on the county Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) will be identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Any new sites discovered during the course of the project will be allocated a new PRN and identified by their NGR.

Archaeological features and contexts will be referred to using the continuous three-figure numbering system (e.g. 001) employed by Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology Field Section.

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location

As indicated in Figure 1, St Florence is situated in Pembrokeshire, south-west Wales. The village lies six miles east of Pembroke and four miles west of Tenby, and is located on the banks of the river Ritec. The church is a central feature within the village.

2.2 Chronological History of St. Florence Church

St. Florence Church has undergone several phases of expansion since its establishment in the early medieval period (See Figure 1). In the 12th century, the village of St. Florence was a centre for the Flemish woollen trade, and the Church was the centre of the village. The church in its present form, was built by the Normans, and dedicated to St. Florencius, a fifth century Norman Saint. It consisted of a two-celled plan, comprising of an apsidal chancel and a nave, the western half of which has survived to the present day. The location of the apsidal chancel is indicated in Figure 1 by a curved dotted line.

The structural history of the church can be divided into the following seven main phases ;

Phase 1	12th Century	Two-celled plan comprised of nave and apsidal chancel. Nave comprised of three bays.
Phase 2	13th Century	New square-ended chancel constructed east of original thus enlarging the capacity of the church. Apsidal chancel destroyed and nave extended.
Phase 3	14th Century	Chapels built to north and south of nave. Squints constructed to give view of altar from chapels (only outer jambs remain). Also passage squints in south chapel / transept.
Phase 4	15th Century (early)	Vestry, organ chamber, and south porch constructed
Phase 5	15th Century (late)	South chancel chapel added.
Phase 6	16th Century (early)	Tower constructed, in transeptal position.
Phase 7	16-17th Century	North Transept constructed.

Since the completion of the seven phases of expansion, the only significant alterations were conducted during the 1870 restoration of the church. These were fairly extensive restoration works which included; raising the internal floor level by approximately 1 metre, re-roofing, re-facing several of the internal walls, rebuilding the majority of the openings, installing new windows at the west end of the nave and in the north transept, excavating the boiler-house/ cellar beneath the vestry, excavating external drains around the church, and installing under floor heating.

3. SUMMARY OF WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 Installation of new central heating system and replacement of rotten floorboards

3.1.1 - Area 1 - North Transept - see Figure 2

Contexts -

001 - Structure - Rubble Platforms

002 - Mid reddish brown friable silty sandy loam

The main feature of archaeological significance revealed by the removal of the pews and floorboards in the north transept, was evidence of the raising of the floor level, conducted in 1870. The quinquennial architectural report, conducted in 1995 by Bartosch and Stokes, stated that *"the floor levels appear to have been raised considerably, probably during the Victorian restoration."* The amount by which the floor was raised is further clarified in the Cadw Welsh Historic Churches Survey (S. Pembs ; St. Florence / Ludlow, N.D, 1996) which states that they were raised by approximately 1 metre.

The watching brief revealed rubble built platforms (context 001) protruding above a mid reddish brown, friable, silty, sandy loam (context 002). As figure 2 indicates, there were platforms along the east and west walls (1.05m and 0.3m wide, respectively), and two central, isolated platforms aligned north-south in the centre of the area (0.35m wide). The platforms protruded 0.5m above context 002, which is possibly redeposited soil used to raise the floor level in 1870, and which overlies an earlier floor surface situated 0.5m below the surface of context 002. Without excavation it was not possible however, to establish whether the rubble platforms (001) in area 1 were built on top of context 002, or whether they continued into it.

The platforms were constructed along the west wall and in the middle of the north transept, in order to support beams for the floorboards at the same level as the tiled floor laid on the eastern platform. The area beneath the floorboards and above context 002 is a void.

In the south-west corner of the north transept a human adult tibia was identified, located at the top of context 002. The bone was measured and photographed, and its location recorded (see figure 2). The policy of leaving human remains in-situ wherever possible ensured that it was not disturbed. There were no further human remains located on the surface of context 002 in area 1, and this appeared therefore to be an isolated find. Although excavation of the area may have revealed further human remains, this was not specified as part of the watching brief and therefore it was not conducted.

If, as seems likely, context 002 is a redeposited soil, it is probable that it would have originated from the immediate vicinity of the graveyard. It is possible that the gradual build-up of soil against the external walls which occurs over the centuries, was removed during the excavation of external drains in 1870, and used internally to assist in raising the floor level. It is also possible that the waste produced during the construction of the cellar / boiler-house beneath the vestry in 1870, was also used as a convenient way of raising the floor level internally. This would therefore provide an explanation for the presence of human bone, its random positioning, and the absence of any grave cut within context 002.

3.1.2 - Area 2 - South Transept - see Figure 3

Contexts -

003 - Structure - Rubble Platforms

004 - Mid reddish brown friable silty sandy loam

As mentioned in 'Area 1 - North Transept' the main archaeological feature visible in this area was evidence of the raising of the floor level in 1870. As in the north transept, platforms (context 003) had been constructed down two sides of the area (east and west), and there were three central, isolated platforms aligned north-south in the centre of the area. The platform along the eastern wall had been tiled and represents the present-day floor level, whilst the central platforms and the one along the west wall acted as supports for wooden beams onto which the floorboards and seating was fastened. A void exists between the floorboards and a layer of mid reddish brown silty sandy loam (004), which also appears to be a redeposited soil originating from the immediate vicinity of the church (see discussion of context 002, Area 1 - North Transept). The platforms protruded 0.5m above context 004, therefore suggesting 004 may lie above an earlier floor surface and is approximately 0.5m deep. An initial investigation of the surface of context 004 revealed no finds or features of archaeological significance.

3.1.3 - Area 3 - South Chancel Chapel - see Figure 4

Contexts -

005 - Structure - Rubble Platforms

006 - Mid reddish brown friable silty sandy loam

007 - Structure - Low, curved, insubstantial, rubble wall

The removal of the floorboards was limited to the western section of the south chancel chapel as the church organ was located in the eastern section, and it was not thought necessary to renew the boards beneath it. As with the previous two areas, removal of the floorboards revealed evidence of the raising of the floor level in 1870 (context 005 and redeposited soil context 006), as well as a separate curved, low rubble wall (007), and the human skeletal remains of several individuals.

A rubble platform, similar to those in the north and south transepts had been constructed along the southern wall of this area. The northern side of this area contained the southern limit of a platform which appeared to cover the entire area of the chancel. This platform was tiled within the area of the main chancel. Both of these structures can be attributed to the raising of the floor level in 1870.

A low, curved, rubble wall (007) was also present within this area, as indicated in Figure 4. This structure was much less substantial and irregular in construction, and the nature of its shape suggests its primary function may have been something other than supporting wooden floor beams.

A mid reddish brown friable silty sandy loam (context 006), was also present in this area.

In this area it was possible to determine the full height of the platform on the northern side, and the low, curved, rubble wall. The northern platform was 0.3m high, compared to the platforms in the north and south transepts which were at least 0.5m high (their full extent was not visible although some reports suggest they may have been as high as 1m). This suggests therefore that context 006 must be at least 0.2m deep, and that it was deposited there as part of the floor raising, conducted in 1870.

Initial investigations revealed that the low, curved, rubble wall was also built on top of context 006 (average height 0.4m). It follows therefore that this wall was constructed at some time during or after 1870, although the precise date of construction is not known.

During the cleaning up of context 006, for photographic purposes, it became apparent that an adult human skull was contained within the upper level of the context. Further investigation of a 1m wide area within the parameters of the low, curved, rubble wall and the northern rubble platform, revealed two additional human skulls and an assortment of other human skeletal remains. The random positioning of these human skeletal remains, combined with the loose friable nature of the context within which they were contained and the lack of any grave cut, supports the theory that this context was deposited within the south chancel chapel as part of the floor raising conducted in 1870.

No additional artefacts, which could have assisted in dating the context were located within 006, and the policy of leaving human skeletal remains in-situ, ensured that they could not be used for dating purposes. However, even if a date for the bones could be established, this would relate to the date they were originally buried rather than the date they were re-deposited.

The restoration of 1870 would have been subject to a faculty (a planning register of the church in Wales). Surviving faculties are held in the National Library of Wales as Church in Wales records, (Volume III, SD/F/). Unfortunately there is no faculty in the National Library of Wales for the St. Florence Church restoration. This would have been particularly useful as faculty bundles usually contain pre- and post-restoration plans and elevations of churches, and a written description of the restoration work conducted.

3.2 Removal of emulsion, lime-wash, and sections of plaster

As stated in the quinquennial report (Bartosch & Stokes, 1995), *"all the internal walls were plastered and somewhat damp-affected, with some flaking, loose and hollow areas, especially at low levels."* The report also stated that *"the interior of the church was emulsion painted some years ago over previous lime-wash and this has led to problems with flaking and badly adhering paint. There is much algae growth, especially on the south wall to the west of the door and the south transept, west, at low level and elsewhere."* (Bartosch & Stokes, 1995).

The recording of the condition of the interior walls was conducted once all of the stripping work had been completed. The majority of the interior walls had been stripped down to the plaster, i.e. the emulsion and lime-wash had been removed. No features of archaeological significance were identified at this stage, although a photographic record of the interior walls was compiled.

In several areas on the interior walls, sections of damp-affected, loose plaster had also been removed. These were also photographed although no features of archaeological significance were revealed. The stripping of the plaster had been concentrated along the upper section of the south wall of the nave, and several sections along the nave north wall.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 - Area 1 - North Transept

The main feature of archaeological significance revealed by the removal of the floorboards in this area was evidence of the raising of the floor level conducted in 1870. A human tibia was also located within the top of context 002, which appeared to be an isolated bone, although the nature of the watching brief prevented further excavation to clarify the situation. This would however, coincide with the situation in Area 3, where context 006 (which also contained human bone and was of a similar matrix to context 002) appears to have been re-deposited from the graveyard, inside the church as part of the raising of the floor level.

4.2 - Area 2 - South Transept

The same situation was revealed in area 2 as in area 1. No finds were located within the upper level of context 004, although it may also be the case that this context was originally located outside the church, and was re-deposited inside as part of the raising of the floor level.

4.3 - Area 3 - South Chancel Chapel

As in areas 1 and 2, area 3 contained rubble platforms (005) constructed in 1870 during the raising of the floor level. Area 3 differed from the other areas however in that the full height of the northern platform was visible. The platform was 0.3m high, compared to areas 1 and 2 where the platforms were at least 0.5m high (there full height was not visible). This suggests therefore that context 006 is at least 0.2m deep and that it was part of the 1870 floor raising. As discussed above, it is probable that this soil was removed during the excavation of the external drains, or was excavated during the construction of the cellar, and it was re-deposited within the church during the raising of the floor level. This would explain the presence of human bone within the context as well as its random positioning, the absence of a grave cut, and the friable nature of the soil. The age of the bone cannot therefore be determined by its stratigraphic positioning, although it can be assumed to predate the restorations conducted in 1870. Radio-carbon dating (C14) could establish a more accurate date of the human skeletal remains, although the nature of a watching brief and the policy of leaving human bones *in-situ* wherever possible prevented the use of this technique.

The low, curved, rubble wall (007) located within this area, had also been constructed on top of context 006. It follows therefore that this too was constructed during or after the 1870 restorations. The purpose of this wall remains unknown although it seems unlikely to have been associated with the raising of the floor level. As mentioned above, the Church in Wales faculty for St. Florence church may have provided an explanation of its purpose although unfortunately this is not held in the faculty archive at the National Library of Wales.

The original schedule of renovations, before the discovery of the human skeletal remains, was to construct a low breeze block wall across this area to act as additional support for the replacement floorboard beams. It was felt however, that this would disturb the remains, and the contractors were therefore instructed to construct a lintel across this area, thus avoiding any disturbance.

4.4 - Removal of emulsion, lime-wash, and sections of plaster

This phase of the 1997 renovation programme was conducted on all internal walls of the church. No features of archaeological significance were discovered.

APPENDIX ONE: CATALOGUE OF WATCHING BRIEF ARCHIVE

The project archive has been indexed and catalogued according to National Monument Record (NMR) categories and contains the following:

- A. Copy of final report.
- B. Site records, including context record sheets and site notebook.
- C. Drawing catalogue and site drawings.
- D. Site photographs - catalogue, colour slide and B/W contact sheets.
- E. Finds catalogue, individual finds record and finds report.
- G. List of references, including primary and secondary sources.
- I. Archive report and draft copies of final report.
- J. Publication drawings.
- M. Miscellaneous correspondence.

There is no material in categories F, H, K, L and N.

The archive is currently held by Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology Field Operations, Llandeilo, Dyfed as project record number 3539.

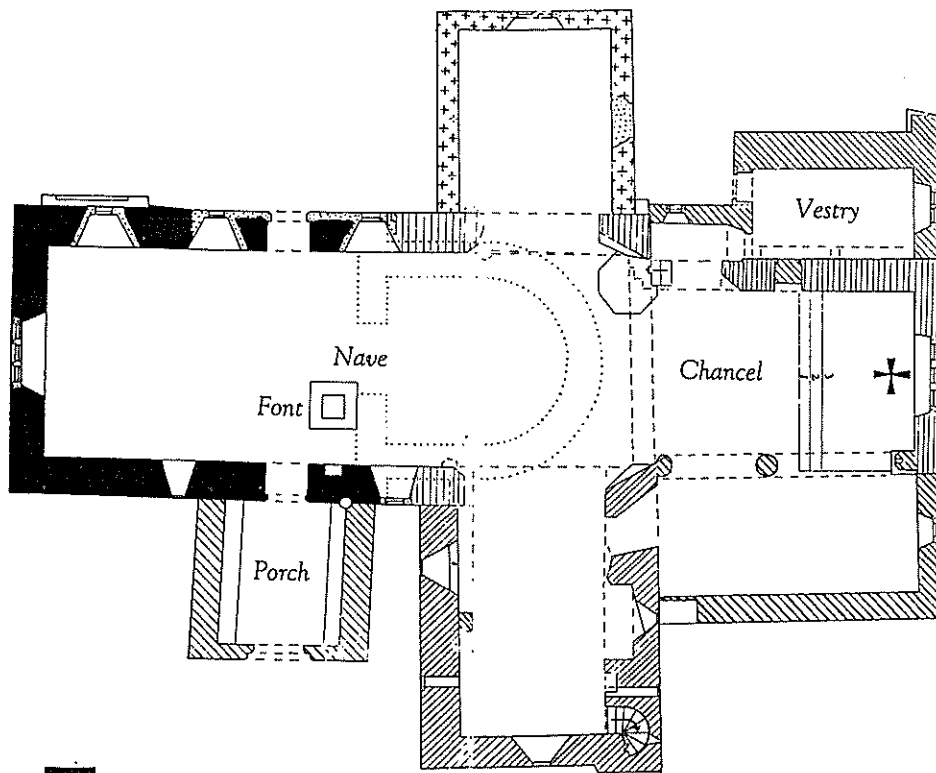
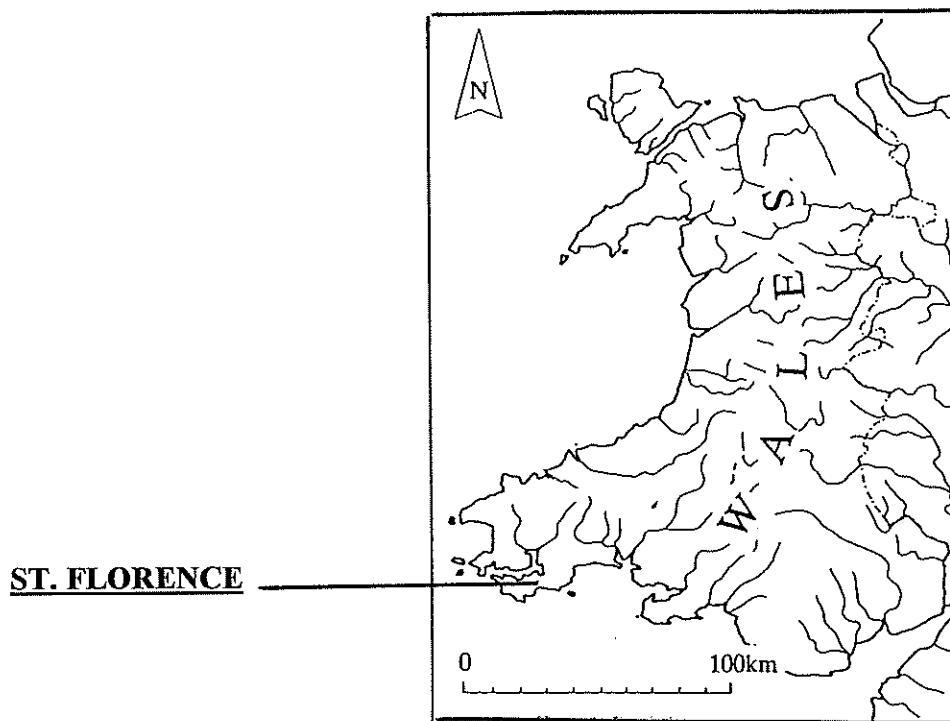
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

Bartosch and Stokes, 1995, St. Florence Church Quinquennial Report No.2

Davies, J. - St. Florence Church - Pamphlet

Ludlow, N.D, 1996, Church in Wales / Cadw Welsh Historic Churches Survey, S. Pembs ; St. Florence

**FIGURE 1 - LOCATION MAP AND SKETCH PLAN
OF ST. FLORENCE CHURCH**



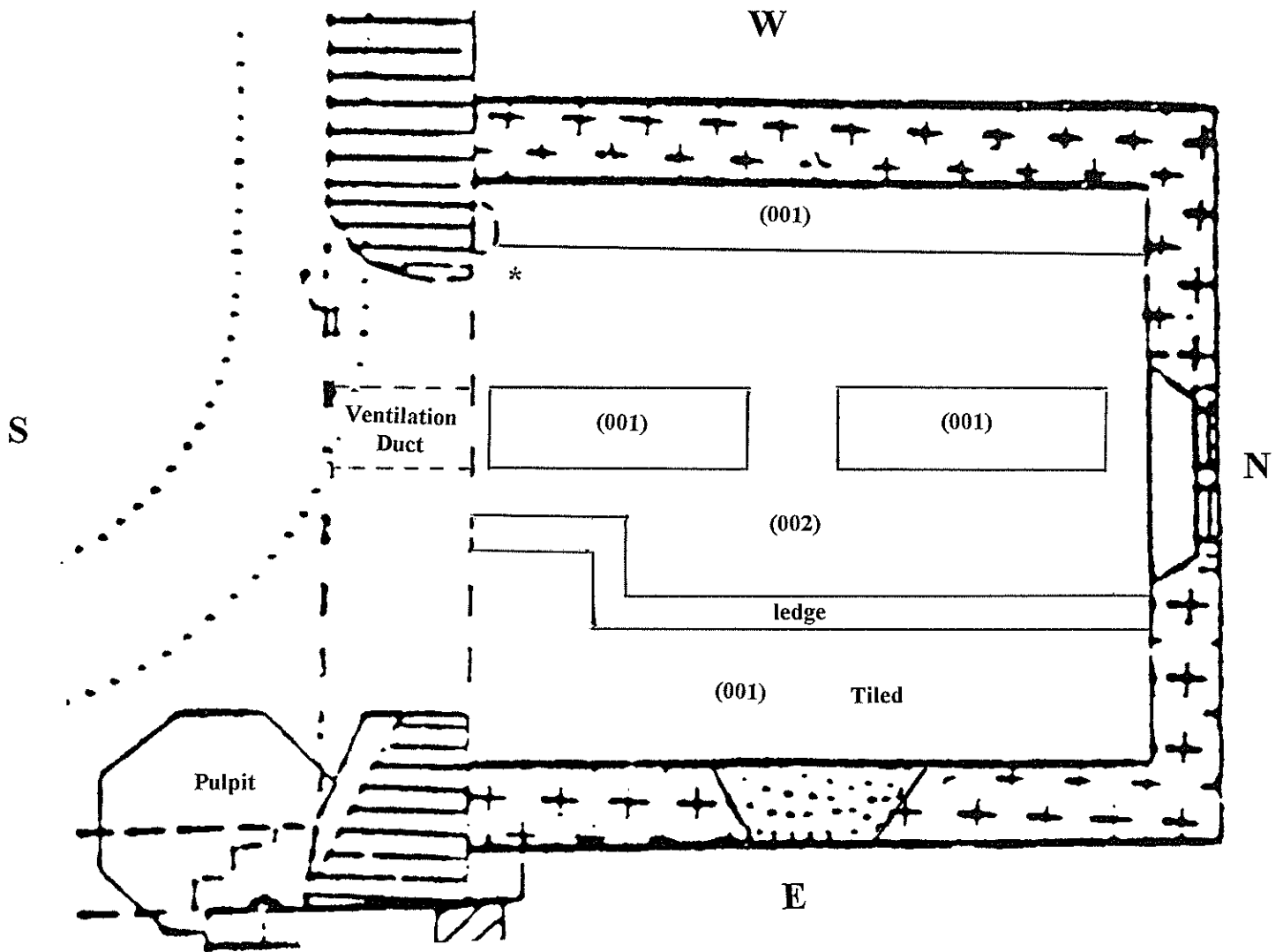
- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
|  12th Century |  13th Century |  14th Century |  Early 15th Century |
|  Late 15th Century |  16-17th Century |  Modern | |

Scale of Feet 

FIGURE 2

Area 1 - North Transept

Sketch Plan - Not to Scale



KEY

* = Location of Tibia

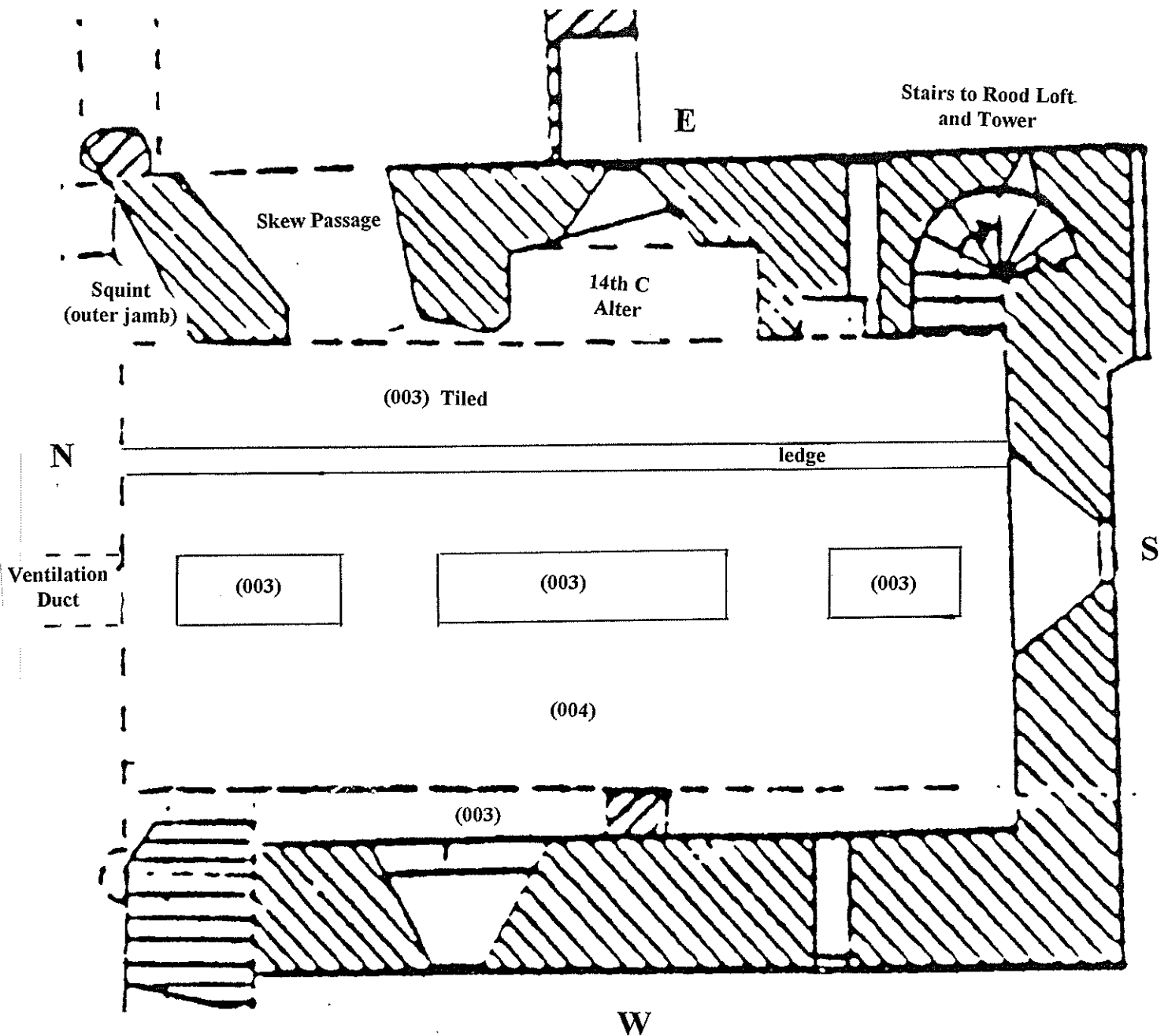
(001) = Rubble Platforms

(002) = Mid Reddish Brown Friable Silty Sandy Loam

FIGURE 3

Area 2 - South Transept

Sketch Plan - Not to Scale



KEY

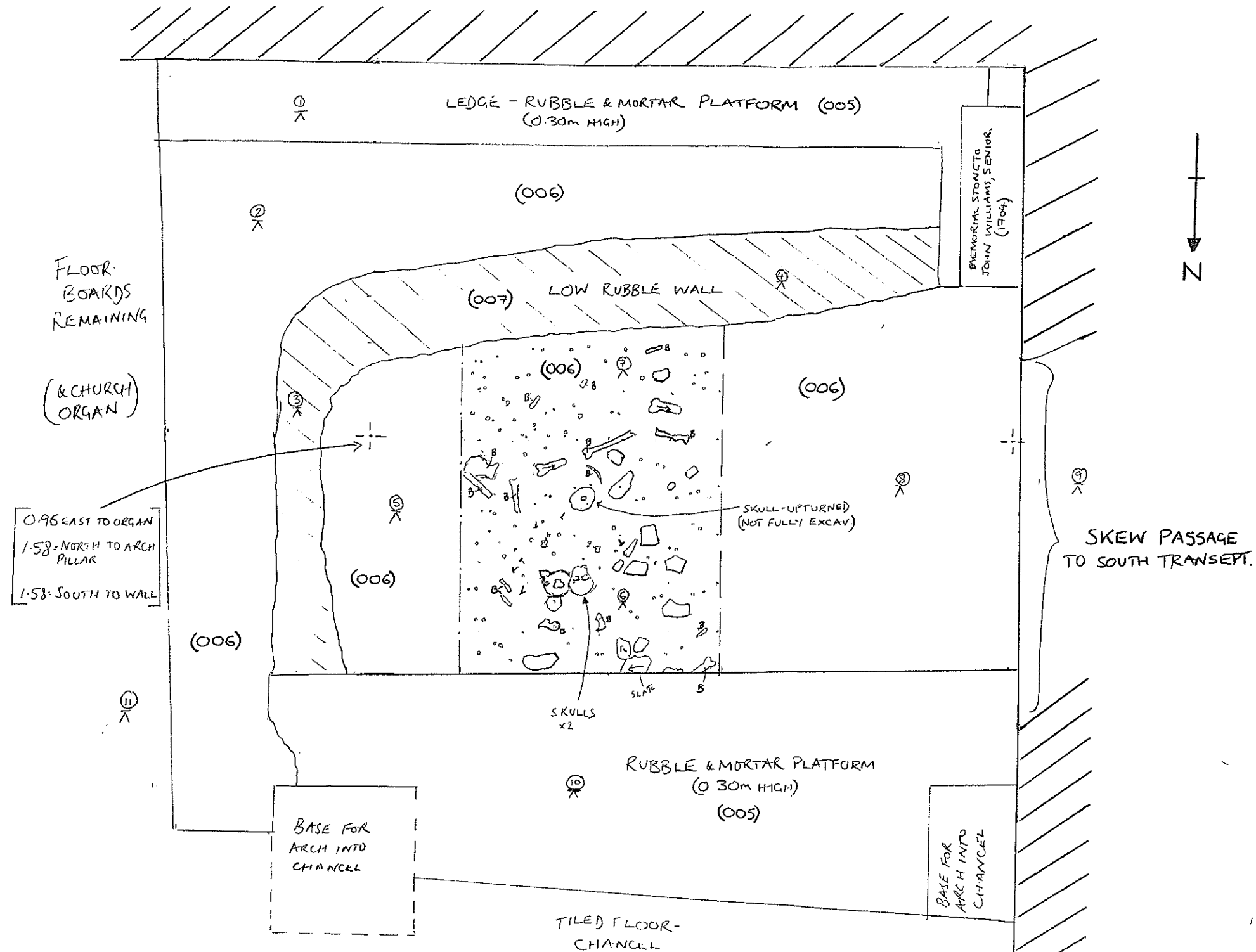
(003) = Rubble Platforms

(004) = Mid Reddish Brown Friable Silty Sandy Loam

FIGURE 4

Area 3 - South Chancel Chapel

Sketch Plan Scale 1:20



**Reduced Levels
(Metres O.D.)**

- 1 = 25.70
- 2 = 25.40
- 3 = 25.62
- 4 = 25.66
- 5 = 25.38
- 6 = 25.22
- 7 = 25.20
- 8 = 25.37
- 9 = 25.90
- 10 = 25.71
- 11 = 25.90

KEY

B = BONE