

**ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

**ST. FLORENCE CHURCH,**  
**PEMBROKESHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**  
**PHASE II - APRIL 1998**

**PRN 3539**

Prepared by  
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## **SUMMARY**

Phase II of the renovations at St Florence church, Pembrokeshire, involved the excavation of two construction trenches necessary to construct two buttresses to support the north wall of the vestry. An archaeological watching brief was conducted during the excavation of these trenches in order to record any features of archaeological significance and retrieve any human skeletal remains for reburial at a later date.

The watching brief revealed two main features of archaeological significance. A cut of what appeared to be a pit of unknown shape was visible within both construction trenches. The pit was filled with building debris including mortar fragments, and roofing slate fragments. Also contained within the fill was a sherd of late medieval ridge tile. It is therefore possible that the pit and its fill are associated with the construction of the vestry in the early 15th century.

The second feature of archaeological significance was the presence of human skeletal remains, including an articulated burial, within the disturbed subsoil. It was not possible however to identify any grave cuts associated with these remains. The most likely explanation for the absence of any grave cut appears to be the thoroughly mixed nature of the disturbed subsoil due to the extensive use of the graveyard.

Any human skeletal remains retrieved during the excavation of the construction trenches were placed within the church, where they will be stored until reburial has been arranged.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The fieldwork and report preparation for this project was conducted by M Trethowan, Project Assistant, Archaeolog CAMBRIA Archaeology Field Operations. Acknowledgements to Mr Owen Thomas for his co-operation throughout both phases of the archaeological watching brief.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 PROJECT COMMISSION**

In 1996 an application was made to Cadw and the Lottery Heritage Fund to assist in financing internal and external renovations of St Florence Church, Pembrokeshire. The Field Operations section of Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology was contracted by Cadw to conduct an archaeological watching brief during these renovations to record any features of archaeological significance.

**Phase I** of the renovation programme was conducted internally and consisted of the following 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 archaeological watching briefs for these renovations were conducted in June and July of 1997, and the results can be seen in the following report a copy of which is held in the Sites and Monuments Record at Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Llandeilo.

*St. Florence Church Pembrokeshire - Archaeological Watching Brief, July 1997, by M Trethowan)*

**Phase II** of the renovation programme was conducted externally and consisted of the excavation of two construction trenches in order to install buttresses to support the northern wall of the vestry. The archaeological watching brief for this phase was conducted on Tuesday 31st March and Wednesday 1st April, 1998. The results of this phase can be seen below.

### **1.2 SCOPE OF PROJECT**

The construction of two buttresses to support the north wall of the vestry at St Florence Church involved the excavation of two construction trenches in the location indicated in Figure 2. The excavation of the trenches was contracted to Abbey Masonry of Crosshands, who sub-contracted the work to PRL Plant of Tenby. The archaeological watching brief was conducted throughout the excavation of these trenches.

### **1.3 REPORT OUTLINE**

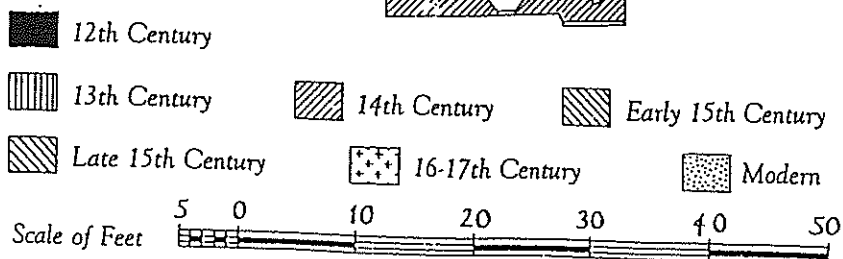
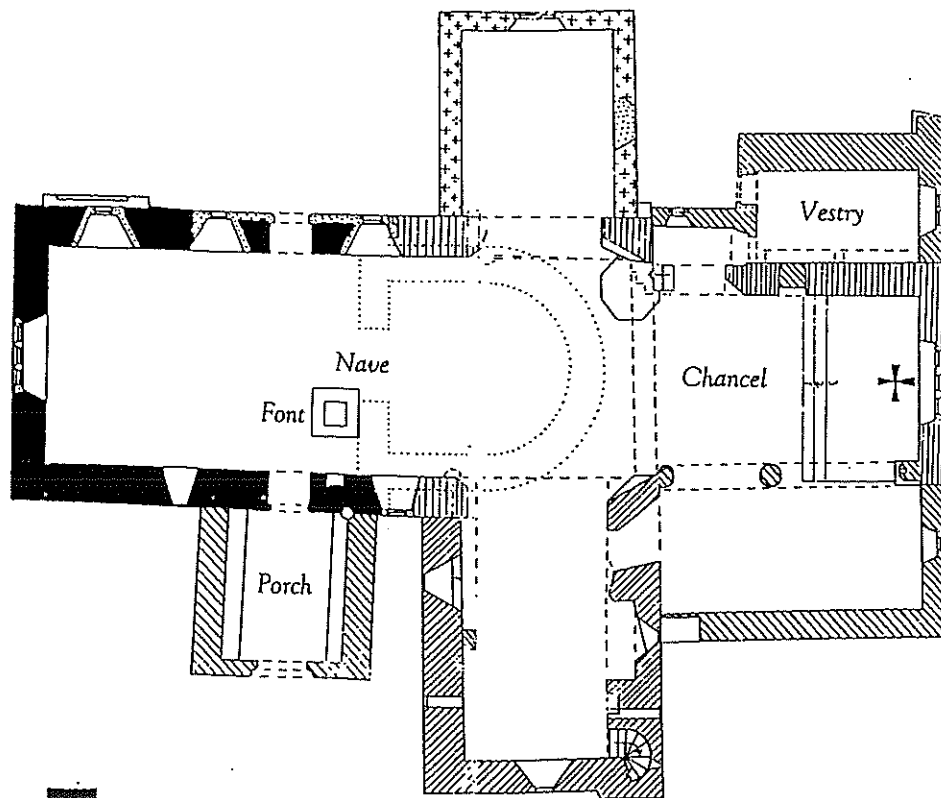
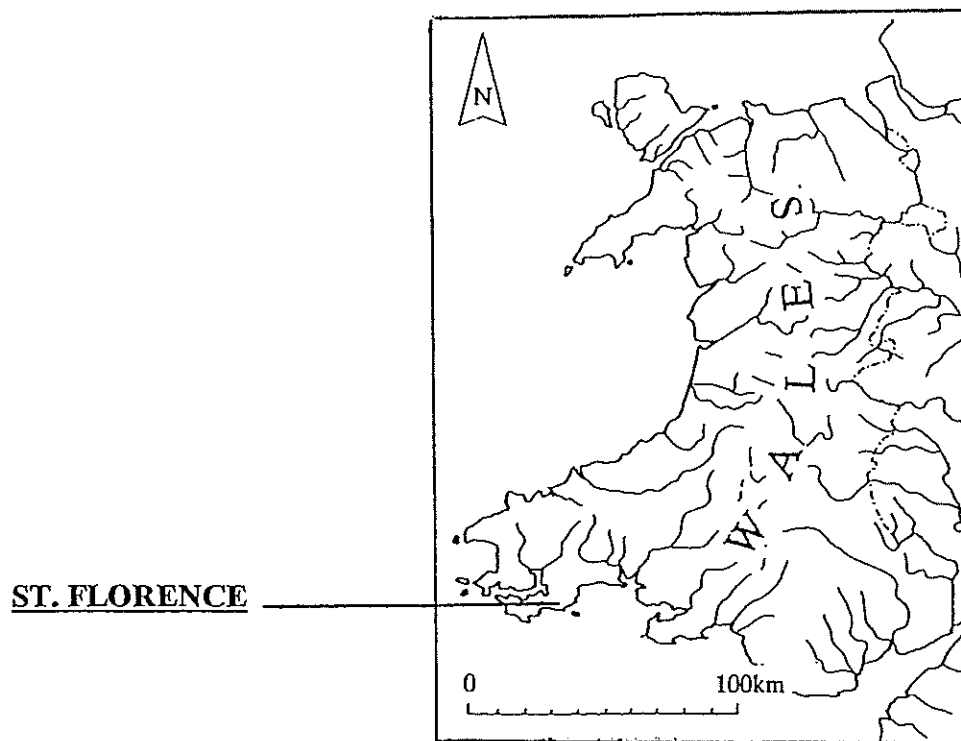
This report describes the physical environment of the site (Section 2) before summarising the watching brief results (Section 3) and the conclusions (Section 4) based on the results of Sections 2 and 3. Supporting data, including detailed records of the watching brief (Appendix One), are given in a series of appendices.

### **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.

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



## **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 ;

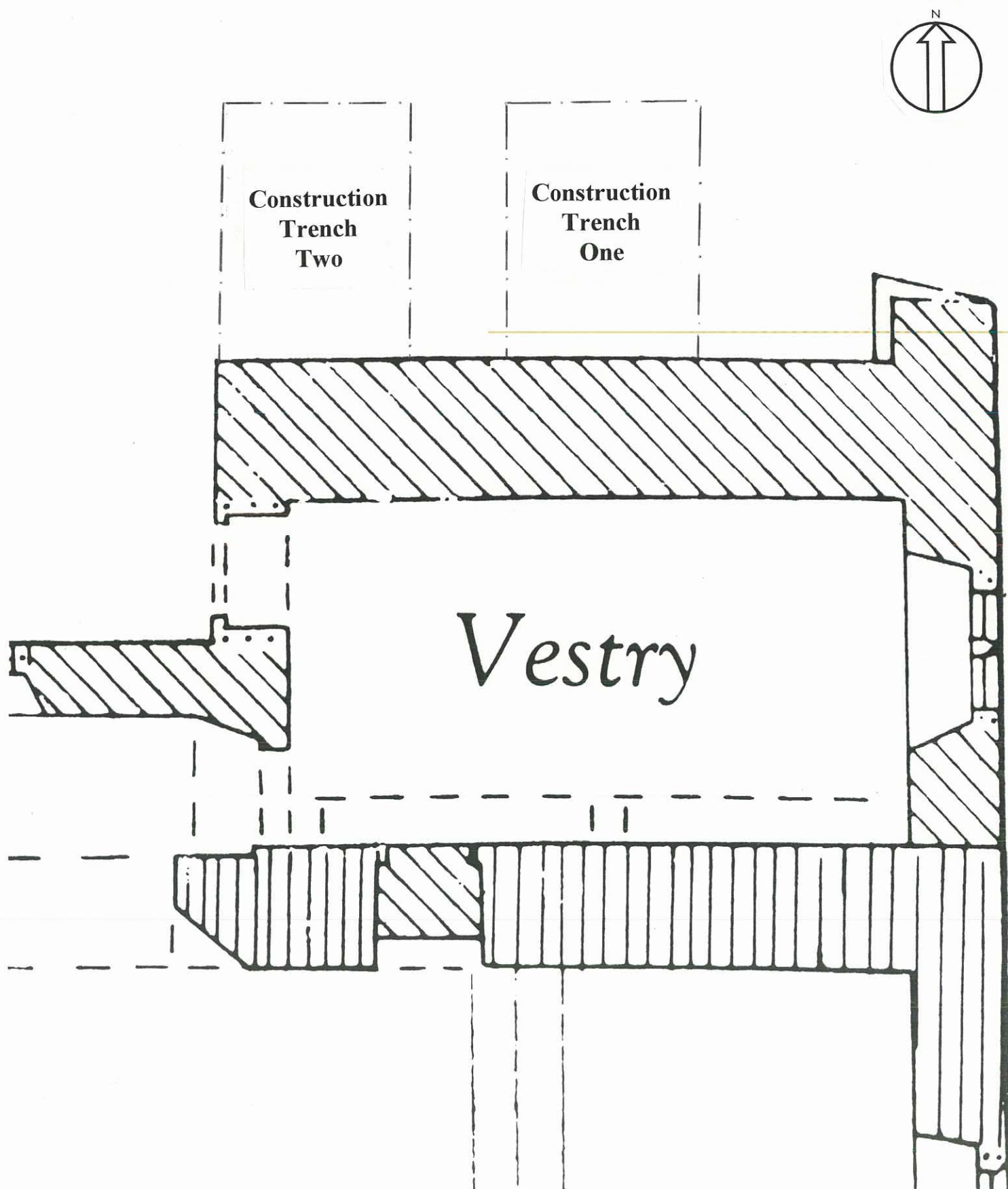
Phase 1	12th Century	Two-celled plan comprised of nave and apsidal chancel. Nave comprised of three bays.
Phase 2	13th Century	New square-ended chancel constructed east of original thus enlarging the capacity of the church. Apsidal chancel destroyed and nave extended.
Phase 3	14th Century	Chapels built 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.



**FIGURE 2 - LOCATION OF BUTTRESS  
CONSTRUCTION TRENCHES**

Sketch Plan - Not To Scale



### **3. SUMMARY OF WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS**

#### **3.1 CONSTRUCTION TRENCH ONE**

Due to the limited space available within the construction trenches (dimensions approx. 1.3m wide x 2.10 m long x 1.90m deep) and the nature of the watching brief, the majority of the archaeological recording was conducted after the trenches had been excavated. This involved recording the sections which had been exposed and interpreting the archaeological significance of these. The results can be seen below.

During the excavation of the construction trenches the main objective of the watching brief was to retrieve any material which was considered to be of archaeological significance, including human skeletal remains. These will be stored within the church until reburial has been arranged.

The west facing section of construction trench one (see Figure 3) revealed the following contexts :

001 = Topsoil - Dark greyish brown, friable, loose, silty soil, with high organic content. Maximum depth 0.15m

002 = Mid reddish brown silty clay loam, friable, with frequent small and medium angular shale inclusions. Frequent bone visible in section within this context. No apparent grave. Occasional charcoal flecks.

003 = Shale bedrock. Lower Avonian limestone shale.

004 = Fill of cut 005. Mid reddish brown silty clay loam, friable and very loose, containing extensive building debris. Building debris contains frequent mortar fragments, roofing slate fragments, and bone fragments. Frequent small and medium angular shale inclusions. Also contained one sherd of late medieval ridge tile.

005 = Cut containing fill 004. Unable to identify the shape of the cut within the confines of the construction trench, although it appeared to be a U-shaped cut with a flat base (see Figure 3).

006 = Fill of cut 007 for installation of modern water pipe. Fill consists of a mix of contexts 001 (topsoil) and 004.

007 = Cut containing fill 006 and modern water pipe. Cut has vertical sides (maximum depth 0.64m) and a flat base (0.22m).

008 = Masonry including single course brick foundation and concrete lining to drain.

009 = Shallow cut for installation of external drain along north wall of vestry. (see Figure 3).

The main features of archaeological significance within construction trench one are therefore, cut 005 and its fill 004, and the human skeletal remains contained within context 002. Both of these features will be discussed in more detail below.

It was not possible, within the confines of construction trench one, to establish the overall shape of cut 005, which somewhat hampers the interpretation of its purpose. It is possible however, by examining the fill (004) of this cut to offer a possible explanation of its intended use. As the fill consisted of a large amount of building debris (particularly mortar and roofing slates) it is possible that this was a pit, excavated in order to dispose of discarded building materials, possibly generated during one of the church's seven phases of expansion. The sherd of ridge tile found within the lower deposits of context 004, appears to be medieval in origin, and it is therefore possible that cut 005 and fill 004 are associated with phase 4, or later, in the structural history of the church (see above). Phase 4 occurred in the early 15th century, and involved the construction of the vestry, adjacent to the location of the pit.



FIGURE 3 WEST FACING SECTION OF BUTTRESS TRENCH ONE

SCALE 1:20

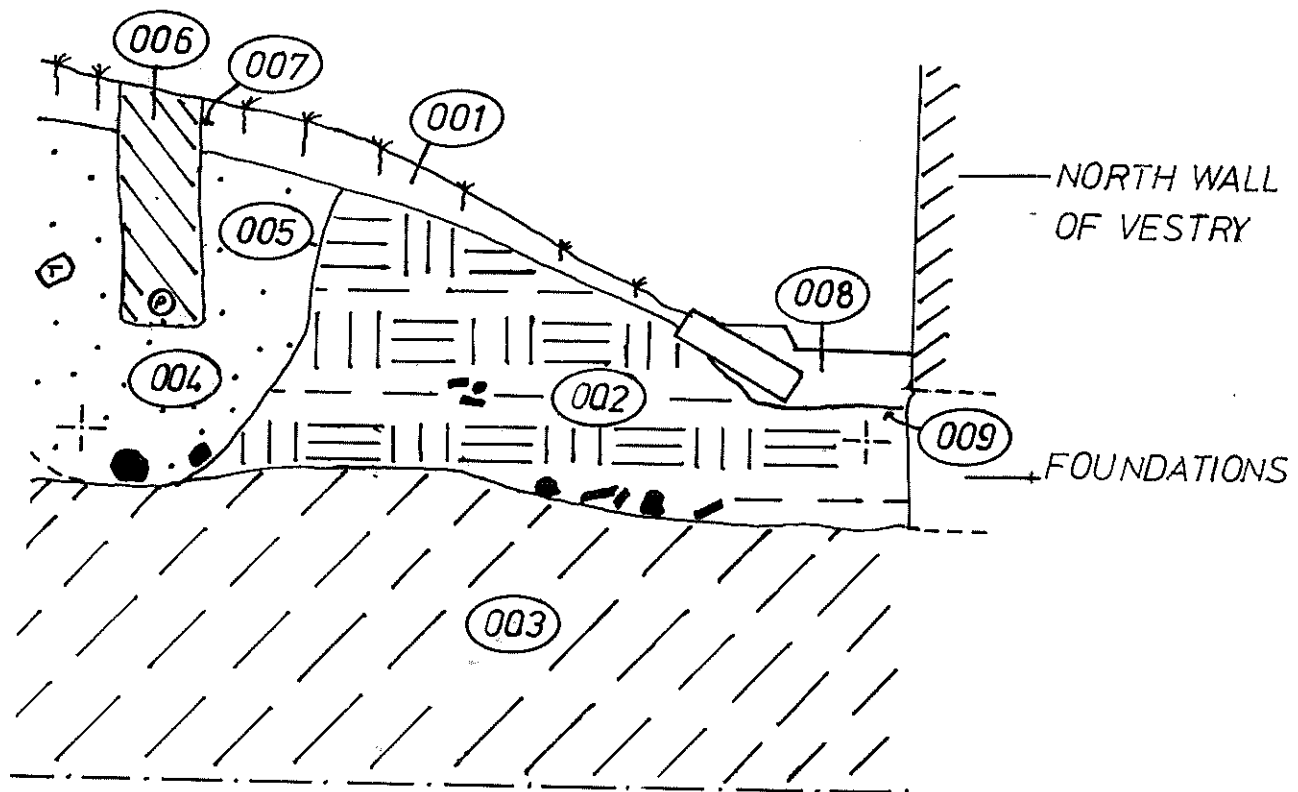
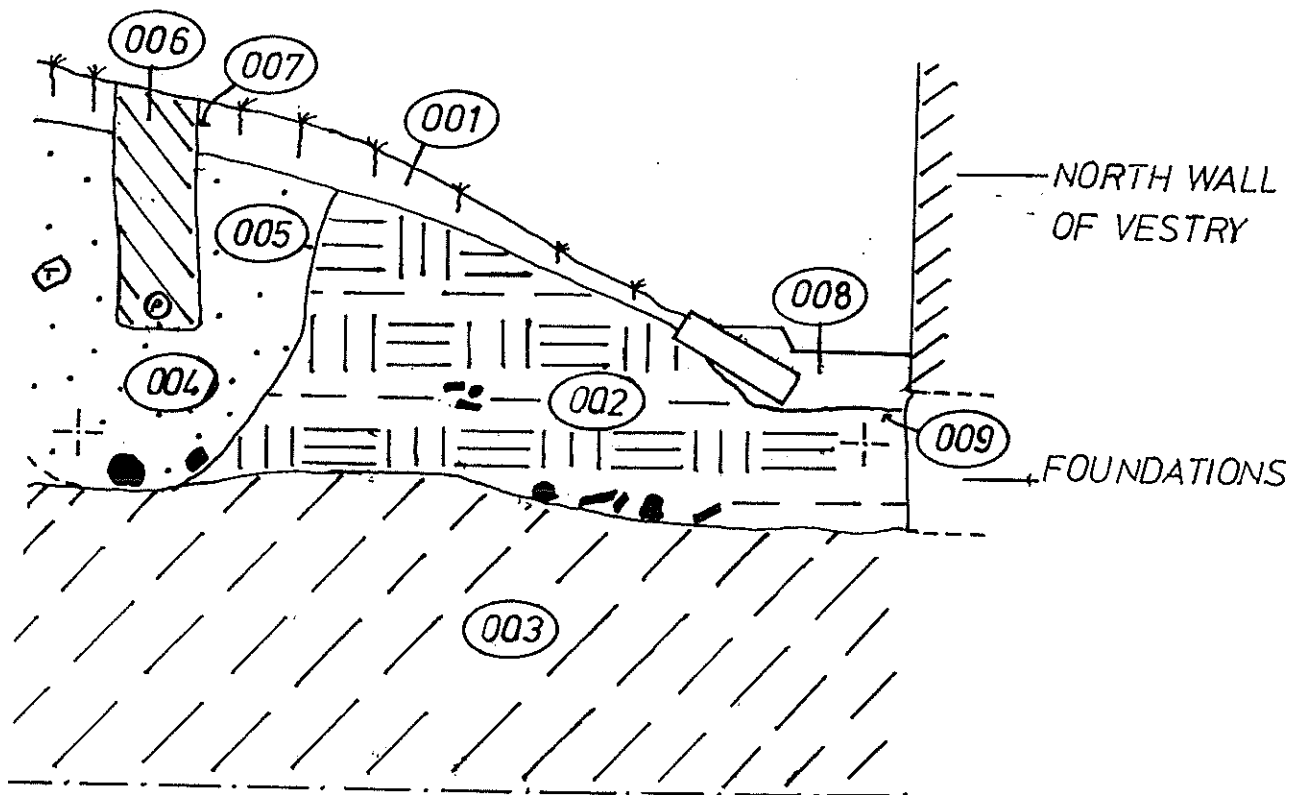
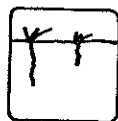


FIGURE 3 WEST FACING SECTION OF BUTTRESS TRENCH ONE

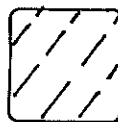
SCALE 1:20



KEY



001  
TOPSOIL



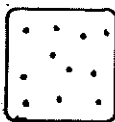
003  
LIMESTONE SHALE  
BEDROCK



006  
SILTY CLAY, MORTAR  
& TOPSOIL



BONE



004  
BUILDING  
DEBRIS



TILE



002  
SILTY CLAY  
LOAM



WATER PIPE

**FIGURE 4**  
**WEST FACING SECTION OF BUTTRESS TRENCH ONE**



There appears to be at least two feasible explanations for the presence of human skeletal remains within context 002 but no visible grave cut. One is that the extensive use of the graveyard has led to a thorough mixing of the soil. This is a common occurrence within graveyards due to the quantity of burials, and as a result it is not unusual for no grave cut to be visible. This would be particularly applicable to the west facing section of buttress construction trench two (see below), where what appeared to be the remains of an articulated burial were visible in the section but no grave cut was visible.

The alternative explanation for the presence of human skeletal remains within context 002 is that it is a redeposited soil which originated from another area of the graveyard. This would account for the presence of fragments of bone located within the trench and visible within the section, and that there did not appear to be any grave cuts associated with these bones. This explanation does however leave several questions unanswered. One is that there is no documented evidence within the history of the church, of the large scale deposition of soil adjacent to the vestry. However, as this is a relatively common occurrence within graveyards it may have been excluded from the documented history of the church. Another anomaly associated with the redeposition of soil in this area, is that context 002 is lying directly on top of the Lower Avonian limestone shale bedrock. In normal circumstances the redeposition of soil within a graveyard is deposited on top of an existing subsoil in order to increase the quantity of sub-soil present, rather than directly on top of the bedrock.

It also seems unlikely that if context 002 is a redeposited soil, that an articulated human skeleton (see below) would have either been placed at the interface of this context and the bedrock, before the soil was deposited, or that it would have survived redeposition substantially intact.

It is not however possible to substantiate whether context 002 is a redeposited soil without knowing its full extent. This information could not be obtained within the limits of the watching brief, and would require further excavation in order to verify this hypothesis.

It appears therefore that the first explanation of the presence of human skeletal remains within context 002 is the most plausible, however, as with many archaeological watching briefs, the full picture cannot be obtained without conducting a larger scale evaluation of the area.

### **3.2 CONSTRUCTION TRENCH TWO**

The west facing section in buttress construction trench two (see Figure 5) revealed the following contexts, which are comparable to those in Buttress Construction Trench One :

001 = Topsoil - Dark greyish brown, friable, loose, silty soil, with high organic content. Maximum depth 0.15m

002 = Mid reddish brown silty clay loam, friable, with frequent small and medium angular shale inclusions. Frequent bone visible in section within this context including what appeared to be the remains of an articulated burial (see Figure 5), although no grave cut was visible. Occasional charcoal flecks.

003 = Shale bedrock. Lower Avonian limestone shale.

004 = Fill of cut 005. Mid reddish brown silty clay loam, friable and very loose, containing extensive building debris. Building debris contains frequent mortar fragments, large roofing slate fragments, and bone fragments. Frequent small and medium angular shale inclusions.

005 = Cut containing fill 004. Unable to identify the shape of the cut within the confines of the construction trench, although it appeared to be a U-shaped cut with a flat base (see Figure 5).

006 = Fill of cut 007 for installation of modern water pipe. Fill consists of a mix of contexts 001 (topsoil) and 004.

007 = Cut containing fill 006 and modern water pipe. Cut has vertical sides (maximum depth 0.64m) and a flat base (0.22m).

008 = Masonry including single course brick foundation and concrete lining to drain.

009 = Shallow cut for installation of external drain along north wall of vestry. (see Figure 5).

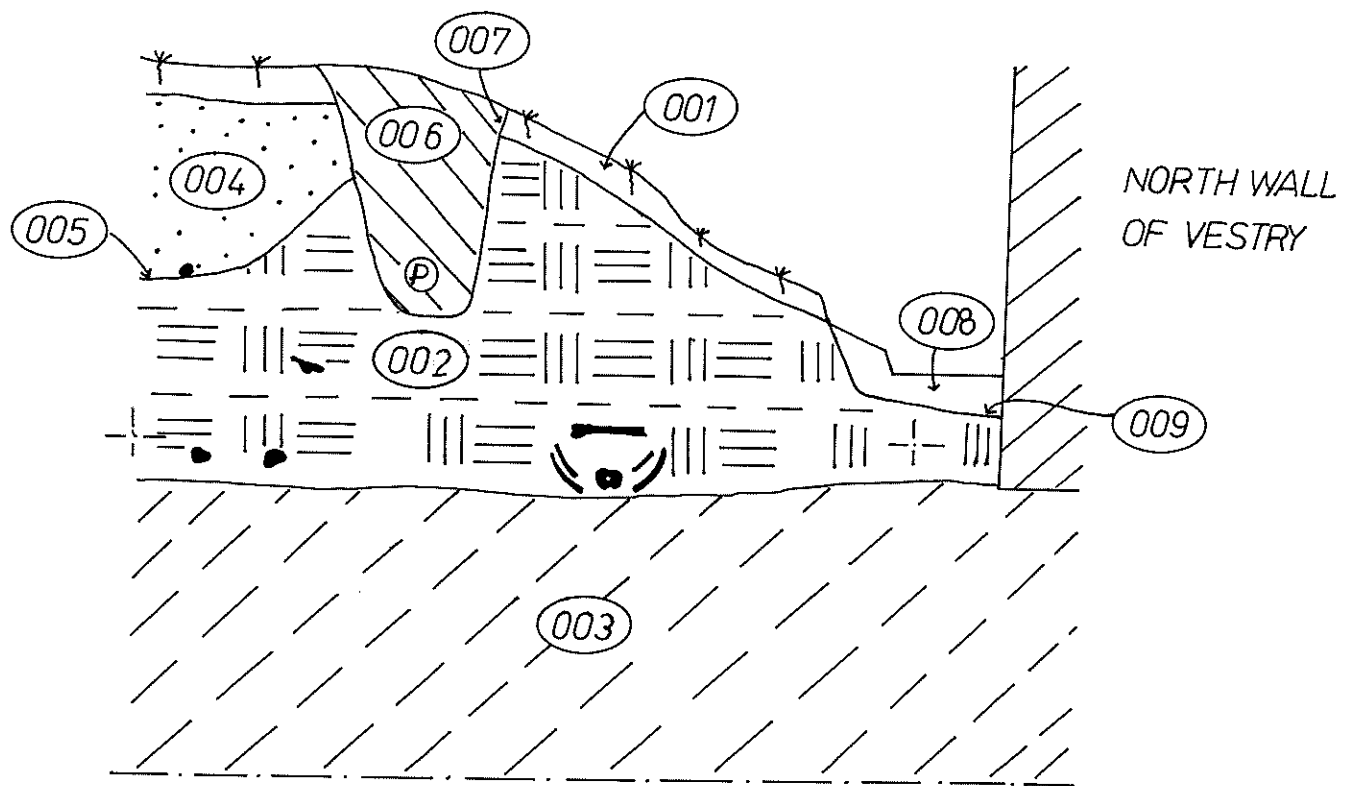
As with buttress construction trench one, the main features of archaeological significance within buttress construction trench two are cut 005 and its fill 004, and the human skeletal remains contained within context 002. The same possible explanation of cut 005 and fill 004 as mentioned above, applies in trench two. Although it is still not possible to define the limits of cut 005, it is apparent that it continues at least into construction trench two. This does not alter the possibility that cut 005 and its fill 004, are associated with the construction in the early 15th century of the vestry during phase 4 of the structural history of the church.

The presence of human skeletal remains within context 002 raises the same issues as in construction trench one. However in construction trench two, the hypothesis that any grave cuts have been eradicated by the thoroughly mixed nature of the soil seems to be significantly more plausible than the possibility that context 002 is a redeposited soil. This hypothesis appears to be more plausible because of the presence of what appeared to have once been an articulated human skeleton. As mentioned above, it seems unlikely that if the articulated skeleton was contained within the redeposited soil, that it would have remained intact after redeposition. Similarly it is unlikely that the skeleton would have been placed directly on-top of the bedrock before context 002 was redeposited in this area.

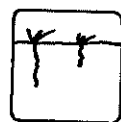
However, as mentioned above, further full excavation of a wider area of the graveyard would be required to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of deposition of these human skeletal remains.

FIGURE 5 WEST FACING SECTION OF BUTTRESS TRENCH TWO

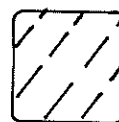
SCALE 1:20



KEY



001  
TOPSOIL



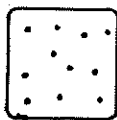
003  
LIMESTONE SHALE  
BEDROCK



006  
SILTY CLAY, MORTAR  
& TOPSOIL



BONE



004  
BUILDING  
DEBRIS



TILE



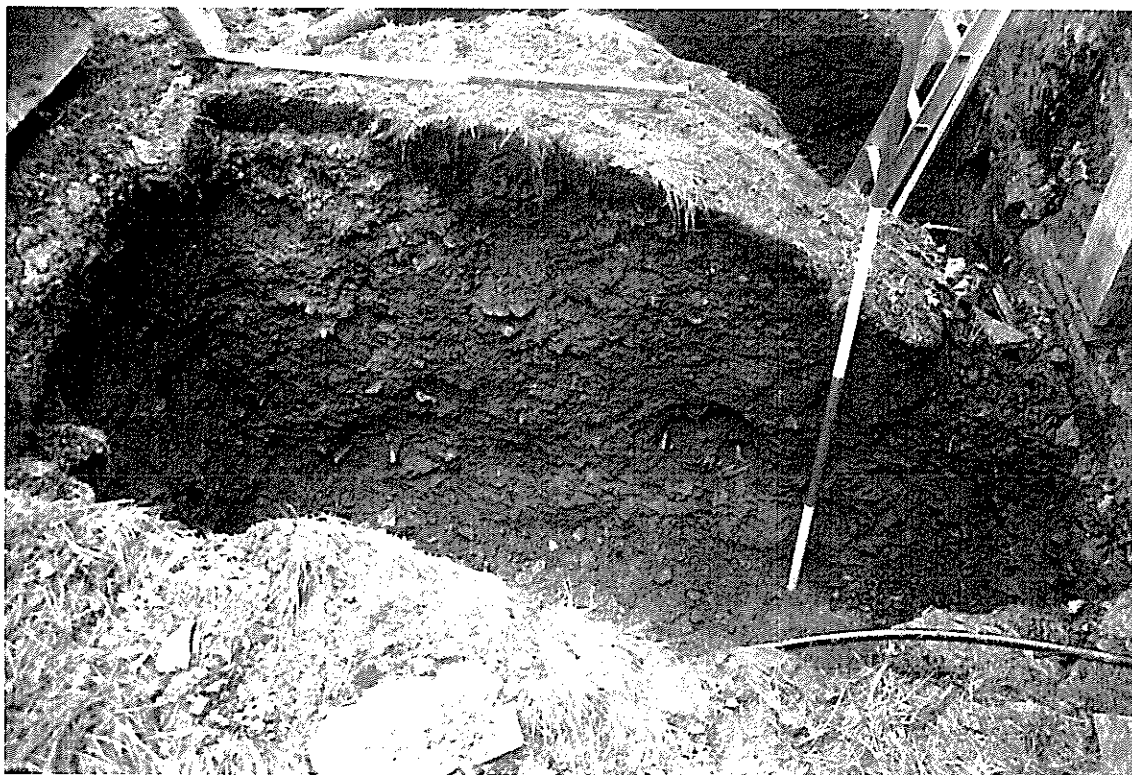
002  
SILTY CLAY  
LOAM



WATER PIPE



**FIGURE 6**  
**WEST FACING SECTION OF BUTTRESS TRENCH TWO**



#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The watching brief in buttress construction trenches one and two revealed two main features of archaeological significance. The cut 005 appears to be a pit filled with building debris (004) which may be associated with the construction of the vestry in the early 15th century, or later. It was not possible however to determine the size of the cut within the parameters of the watching brief.

It seems likely that the human skeletal remains located within context 002 (including what appeared to be an articulated burial) are burials where the grave cut is no longer visible due to the extensive mixing of the soil which has occurred within the graveyard.

Human skeletal remains which were retrieved during the excavation of the buttress construction trenches have been stored inside the vestry until reburial has been arranged.

## **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 number 3539.

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