

Cambridge Archaeology Field Group



An archaeological evaluation at
St. Mary's Church, Hardwick
South Cambridgeshire
NGR 372 586
CHER Reference ECB4775

July 2016

Summary

An archaeological evaluation of a site behind St. Mary's Church, Hardwick was carried out by the Cambridge Archaeology Field Group (CAFG) over the weekend of the 25th/26th June, 2016. Two 3m x 1m trenches were excavated within the footprint of a proposed new building, together with a number of auger surveys. No significant finds were made and there was no clear evidence of any archaeological features within the area, despite the nearby church which is known to be of at least 14th/15th C date.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to TJN Landscapes for using their mini-digger to remove the gravel/hardcore surface, this made our work so much easier. Also to Alison Marcus, the Hardwick PCC and helpers for organising matters, including the supply of cakes and drinks to keep us going. Finally to the CAFG members who came and whose efforts meant we achieved our objectives.

Front cover: Fossil Gryphaea shell recovered from Trench A (photograph courtesy of Stephen Reed).

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1. Introduction

1.1 During June 2016 the Cambridge Archaeology Field Group undertook an archaeological evaluation on the site (NGR TL372 586) behind St. Mary's Church in Hardwick, as shown in Figure 1C. The project was instigated by the Hardwick Parochial Church Council prior to the land being developed with the construction of a new Church Hall.

1.2 Reason for the project

The archaeological evaluation was requested in order to comply with planning conditions imposed by the South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Authority (Reference S/0529/94F). This condition was applied owing to the archaeological potential of the site, being located close to the probable core of the Anglo-Saxon/Medieval settlement.

2. Topography and Geology

2.1 The village of Hardwick lies approximately 8km west of Cambridge (see Figure 1A). The core of the original village, in which St. Mary's lies, is approximately 1.6km south of the ridgeway on which the old Cambridge-St. Neots road runs. This old part of the village was located around a central green that existed up until enclosure in 1836, with the church located in the south-west corner. A newer settlement was started in the 1930s alongside the Cambridge-St. Neots road and this now dwarfs the original in size.

2.2 The site under investigation is a roughly triangular shaped plot located approximately 20m west of St. Mary's Church (see Figure 1C). It lies at an elevation of c. 63m OD (the OS Benchmark on St. Mary's Church is registered as 63.36m or 209.4 feet) as calculated in Appendix B. It is currently in use as a car park and with Portacabins as temporary accommodation.

2.3 The underlying geology is of gault and boulder clay on which lies a glacial till, a clay rich deposit that includes lumps of chalk, sandstone, limestone and flint left by the Anglian Glaciation event some 400,000 years ago. This relatively resistant layer forms much of the high ground of the Western Plateau in Cambridgeshire. The soil that developed is known as the Hanslope Association soil, described as having a "slowly permeable calcareous clayey nature" (Farewell et al, 2011).

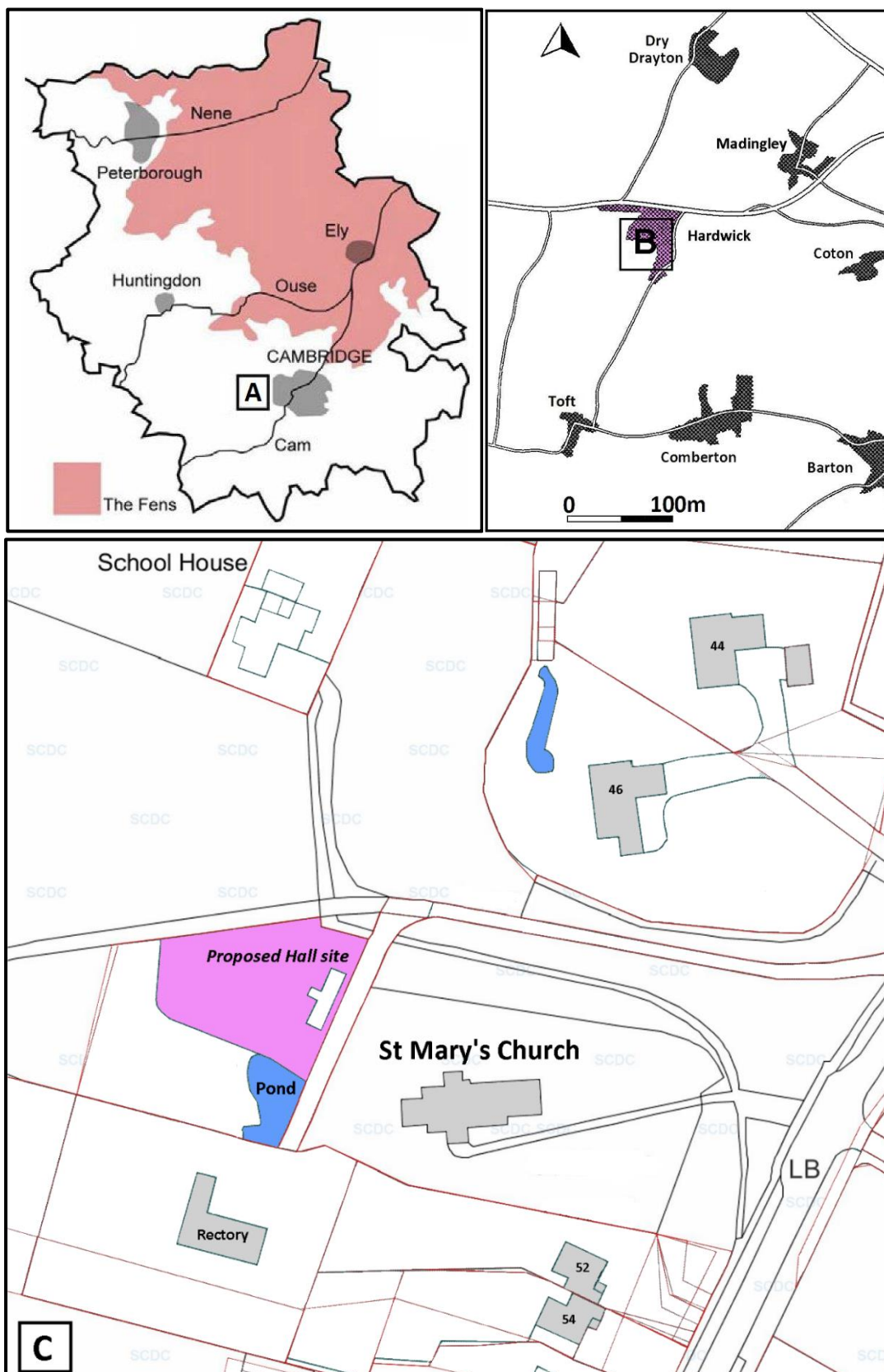


Figure 1. (A) Location within the county; (B) Location of the parish; (C) Location of the site

3. Archaeological and Historical background

The Cambridge Historic Environment Records (CHER) have some 26 entries for Hardwick (see Appendix A), of which 7 relate to buildings and 10 to landscape features. There is only one entry referring to archaeological finds being made within the parish (CHER 01100, a moated house site). Two recent excavations near the site, one some 200m to the north at Old Rectory Farm in 1999 (CHER MCB 20873) and the other some 200m to the east at Redbrick Farm (CHER CB 15644/CB 15645 and 11238) in 2003, produced no finds from the Pre-historic to the late medieval periods.

3.1 Prehistoric (before 600BC) to Iron Age (600BC – 43AD)

The CHER records earthworks (CHER 03226) some 50m east of the church that may date to the Iron Age or Roman period. However, no artefacts have been found which back up this date so they may be of a much later period.

In fact, no sites have been identified within the village core that are of Iron Age or Roman date, although excavations in nearby Caldecote have revealed settlement that does.

3.2 Roman (43AD – c. 450AD)

No Roman activity has been recorded in the village core, although Taylor (1997) proposes that a Roman road ran south-east to north-west from the Portway (an ancient trackway) to pass just north of St. Mary's Church. Although not a proven route, the possibility of features relating to it must be considered during the excavation.

3.3 Anglo-Saxon (450AD – 1066AD)

Hardwick is mentioned in 1050AD as "Hardwic", a name which derives from the Old English for sheep farm (Reaney 1943). The name is unusual in that the wet clay soils here are not really suited to sheep farming on a large scale (Duncombe 1973). The earliest documentary evidence records that the manor at Hardwick was given to Ely Priory in 991AD as a bequest from Ealdorman Beorthnoth prior to his death in battle against the Danes at Malden (Taylor 1997). Ely's rights to the manor were confirmed by Edward the Confessor in the 11th C but in 1600AD the manor was appropriated by Elizabeth 1 (Duncombe 1973). Elements of St. Mary's Church itself (CHER 04217), first mentioned in 1217AD but largely rebuilt in the 14th/15th C (Pevsner 1970), are said to date from this Saxon period (CHER 03252).

As many settlements of this period are placed around the parish church, there is a strong possibility that significant finds may be present on this site owing to its proximity to the church.

3.4 Medieval (1066AD – 1539AD)

The Domesday Book mentions Hardwick and records a population of eleven. It was assessed as 3 hides, 1 virgate and 22a. The demesne consisted of 1½ hide and 12a. worked by 2 ploughs. The seven villeins had 4 teams and there were 4 servi and meadow sufficient for 4 plough teams. A free tenant held 10a. valued at 1 shilling. There were 20 pigs in the demesne but no sheep – strange, bearing in mind the supposed derivation of its Saxon name.

By 1279AD the population comprised 43 tenants, while in 1377AD there were 81 poll-tax payers. However, by the end of the 16th C only 14 families are recorded (Duncombe 1973).

The CHER lists a number of sites from this period, including five examples of Ridge and Furrow landscape. Two, CHER 03437 and CHER 09572, lie within approximately 200m of the church, with the former to the south and the latter to the west. The most interesting site is CHER 01100, a moated site, some 300m south of the church. This was excavated in 1974 (Haselgrove 1974, 48 – 54) and produced finds including shell-tempered 13th/14th C pottery, a loom weight and metal work (knives, nails, horseshoe and a buckle). These are the only medieval finds listed on the CHER for Hardwick to date. St. Mary's Church itself is listed (CHER 04217) and includes medieval features such as a font, wall paintings and a sundial.

Also of importance is the east – west Portway track, approximately 500m south of the church. This was the only access from the south to the village until the north – south road between Toft and Hardwick was created at enclosure in 1836.

3.5 Post-medieval to Modern (1530AD – present day)

After the compulsory possession of the manor by Elizabeth 1 in 1600AD, it was sold off to a succession of private landowners. The estate similarly passed through many hands (including Capability Brown in 1770) through to the present day.

The population showed rises and falls – in the early 17th C it had c. 30 families although only 19 houses were assessed for tax. By 1793 there were 33 families and a population of 158 by 1801. It reached a maximum of 248 in 1871 but fell to 112 in 1901. However with the large

building program along the Cambridge - St. Neots road the population soared to approximately 2,500 in the late 1990s. Hardwick village was never of large size – there are few surviving buildings pre-dating the 19th C and only 11 buildings were recorded in 1831. This explains the paucity of entries in the CHER records and presumably the absence of many recorded find spots. The CHER 03265 record is for a public clay pit situated north of the church, whilst a pond is recorded (CHER 11239) to the south of the church. Most CHER entries, however, are for buildings and farms

4. Methods and constraints

The site of the proposed hall is currently in use as a carpark with a hardened surface comprising a small/medium gravel top surface overlying a limestone hard core base. There is a strong likelihood that the previous top soil had been completely removed during the car park construction (conversations with council members).

Two 3m x 1m trenches were excavated as part of the investigation, as shown in Figure 2.

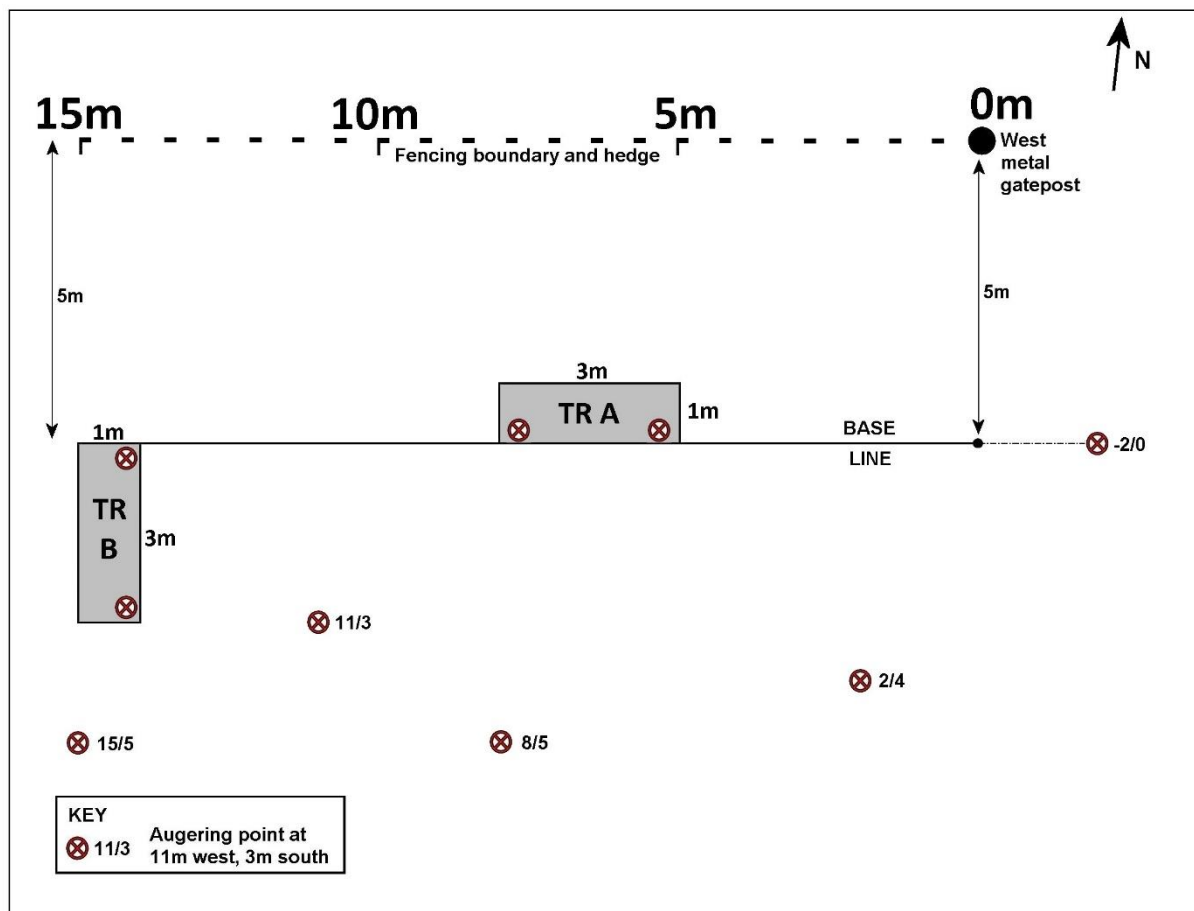


Figure 2. Location of trenches and subsequent auger points, together with the baseline position.

A temporary baseline was established with reference to the northern plot boundary which consists of a chain link fence and hedgerow. The entrance to the car park consists of a gate between two substantial metal posts. The westernmost post was selected as our reference point. The excavation baseline was set out 5m south from the metal post, and parallel to the boundary fence in the westerly direction. Trench A started at the 5m mark parallel to the baseline while trench B ended at the 15m mark and was positioned at right angles to the baseline.

After the trenches had been partly-excavated, a decision was made to take auger cores from two points in each trench, placed at the two corners on one side of each trench. A further auger survey was carried out over the site, with a number of cores situated to cover as much of the footprint of the proposed building as possible in the time available.

5. Results

The gravel and hard core base of both trenches was removed by a mini-digger, taking care not to remove any of the layer below the hard core. Underneath the surface there was no sign of topsoil, local people said that they remembered it had been removed before the hard core was laid. The exposed surface in both trenches was an olive/brown stiff clayey silt containing flecks of chalk, iron-rich inclusions and occasional stones. Black organic material may have been charcoal but was most likely to be decayed root material. The clay surface in Trench B was essentially flat with no signs of any archaeological features cut into it, (see Figure



Figure 3. View of Trench B after stripping off the hard core and gravel surface, showing an essentially flat surface of olive/brown clay (photo courtesy of Mike Coles).

3). Trench A was less flat with a dip in the middle of the trench (see Figure 4) but again no discernible archaeological features were obvious.



Figure 4. View of Trench A after stripping off the hard core and gravel surface, showing the dip in the centre of the trench and a surface of olive/brown clay (photo courtesy of Mike Coles).

At this point, auger cores were taken in two corners of each of the trenches (see Figure 2 for the locations) to see whether the clay was the natural sub-surface geology. The cores in Trench A showed that the olive/brown clay gradually changed into a yellow/brown clay with increased numbers of small rounded chalk pebbles, as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. View of Trench A auger core, showing the top olive/brown upper layer (to the right) changing to the yellow/brown clay lower down (photograph courtesy of Mike Coles).

The north side of trench A was further excavated with a 0.25m wide strip (see Figure 6). This confirmed that the yellow/brown clay continues down, as indicated by the auger core. No archaeological features were visible even at the lowest level (40cm below the hard core layer). This part of the trench gradually became flooded with water seeping in from the local water table.



Figure 6. View of Trench A, showing the stratigraphy and the 0.5m sondage down the north side of the trench (photo courtesy of Mike Coles).

The cores from Trench B are shown in Figure 7 (the lower two). They were broadly similar to those from Trench A. The most noticeable difference was that the lower, yellow clay contained inclusions of a blue/grey clay and more of the rounded chalk pebbles which were larger in size. The top core in the photograph was from the grassed area some 2m west of the edge of the car park surface. This showed only a small, approximately 3cm, layer of top soil and then went through the sequence of olive/brown to yellow clay with more of the blue/grey lumps.

Auger cores 15/5, 11/3 and 8/5 had basically the same makeup as the cores from the two trenches. Auger cores -2/0 and 2/4 were different in that the olive/brown clay went down much further at some 70cm, with only a small amount of the yellow clay being visible at the bottom.



Figure 7. View of Trench B cores (the lower two) and one from the grassed area west of the car park surface (photo courtesy of Mike Coles).

The conditions during the excavation were dry and any cut features would have been clearly visible in the natural geology. Finds were very limited and mostly confined to the area just under the limestone hard core layer, although a number of fossils were retrieved from the clay layers themselves. The finds were all modern, comprising a probable flowerpot sherd, a small transfer-printed sherd and some coloured glass (with no patina, suggesting they had not been buried for any length of time).

6. Conclusions

The two trenches that were excavated and the several auger samples that were taken did not suggest that there was any meaningful archaeology on this site. This corresponds with the findings from the previous excavations carried out in the vicinity at Redbrick Farm (Abrams 2003) and Rectory Farm (Roberts 1999) where there were no signs of any archaeology pre-dating modern times.

7. Bibliography

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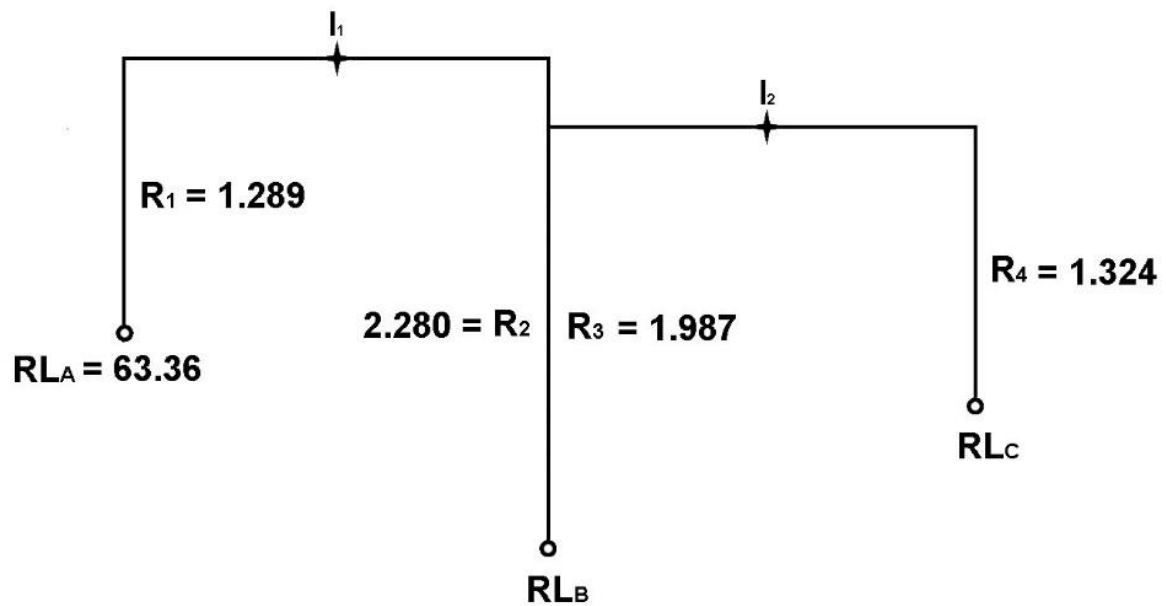
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Appendix A. Entries in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Records.

CHER Ref	Name	OS Reference	Type
01100	Moated site	TL 372 583	Building/feature
03225	Windmill mound	TL 373 580	Feature
03226	Earthworks	TL 373 586	
03252	Saxon cross	TL 372 586	
03265	Public clay pit	TL 373 587	
03336	Victoria Farm	TL 375 588	Building
03363	Chequers Inn	TL 372 584	Building
03437	Ridge & furrow	TL 373 584	
04217	Saint Mary's Church	TL 372 586	Building
04217a	Tomb, St Mary's Church	TL 372 586	
08924	Iron Age/Roman settlement	TL 383 579	Settlement
08924a	Ridge & furrow	TL 383 579	
09385	Pound Stone	TL 372 586	Marker
09571	Ridge & furrow	TL 355 578	
09572	Ridge & furrow	TL 370 585	
09580	Ridge & furrow	TL 395 588	
11237	Earthworks	TL 374 586	Pond?
11238	Earthworks	TL 375 587	
11239	Pond	TL 373 584	Pond
CB 15644	Undated ditch	TL 374 585	Feature
CB 15645	Earthworks	TL 373 586	
MCB 17282	Undated features, St Neots Road	TL 366 596	Feature
MCB 20872	Wallis's Farm site	TL 371 584	Building
MCB 20873	Old Rectory Farm site	TL 373 587	Building
MCB 20874	Redhouse Farm site	TL 381 594	Building
MCB 20896	Smithy, Main Street	TL 372 585	Bulding

Appendix B. Calculation of the height OD of the area where the trenches were placed.



RL_A = Level of the OS Benchmark height

RL_B = Intermediate reference level

RL_C = Level of the surface by the trenches

R_1 to R_4 = Level measurements made

I_1 = First instrument position

I_2 = Second instrument position

$$RL_B = RL_A + (R_1 - R_2) = 63.36 + 1.289 - 2.280$$

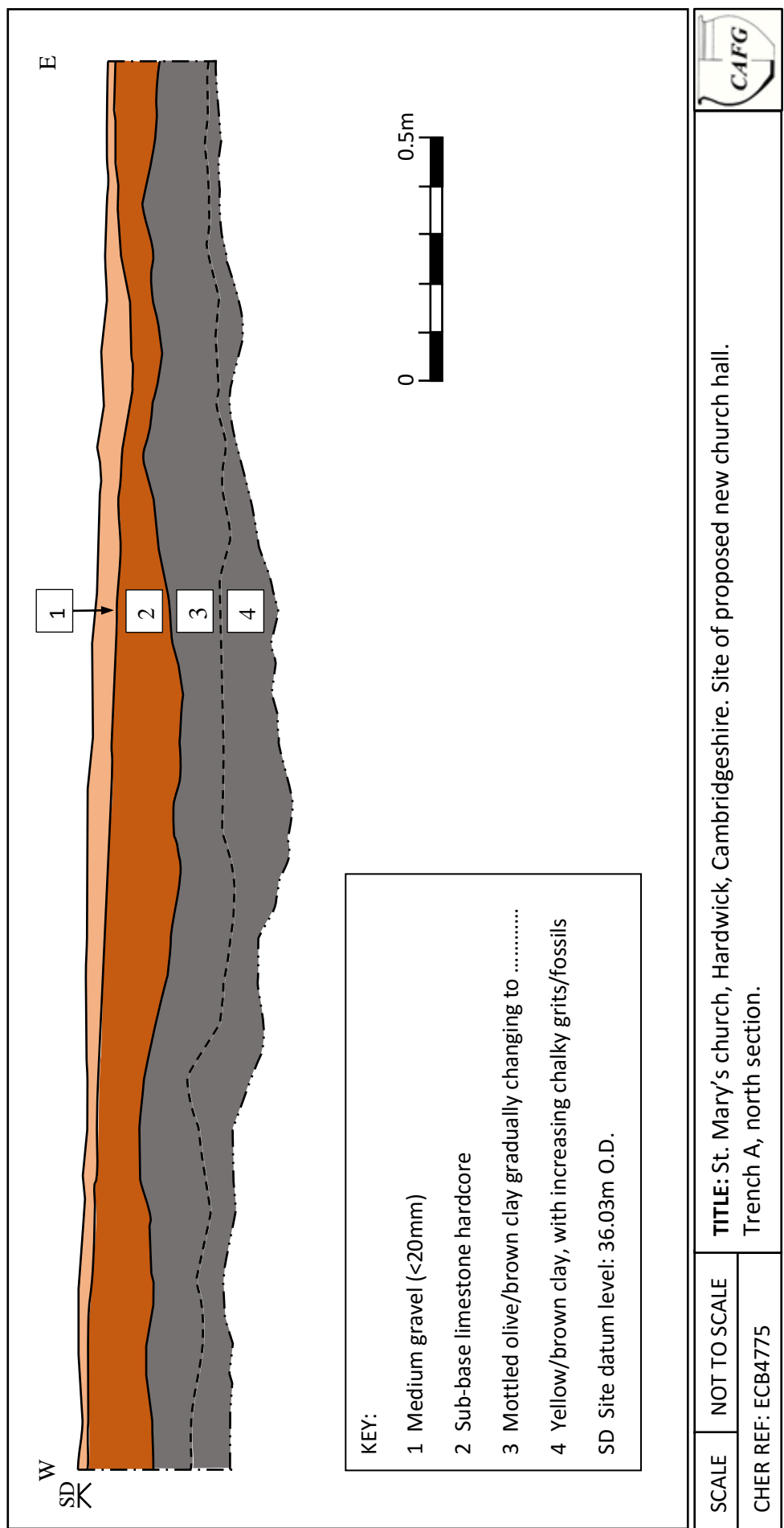
$$= 64.649 - 2.280 = 62.369\text{m}$$

$$RL_C = RL_B + (R_3 - R_4) = 62.369 + 1.987 - 1.324$$

$$= 64.356 - 1.324 = 63.032\text{m}$$

Appendix C. Finds recovered from the two trenches.

Trench	Context Number	Find type	Number of items	Weight (g)
A	1	Terracotta flower pot	1	29.93
	2	Bottle glass	3	8.49
		Brick/tile	5	15.21
		Fossil Gryphaea	1	0.82
		Stones	2	35.52
	3	Transfer-printed pottery	1	0.62
		Bottle glass	2	5.81
		Brick/tile	2	37.06
		Iron nail	1	4.53
		Slag	1	16.72
		Fossils Gryphaea, Belemnite, possible Ammonite	4	367.99
B	2	Brick/tile	1	6.05



Appendix D. Section across the south-facing wall of Trench A