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ST JAMES CHURCH, ASLACKBY, SOUTH KESTEVEN, LINCOLNSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

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Report prepared for
Robert Shaw Architects

by
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Summary

- Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out during contractors excavations for service trenches and associated groundworks within the tower, north aisle and churchyard, prior to the construction of new kitchen and welfare facilities at St. James Church, Aslackby, Lincolnshire.
- Six burials were partially exposed and recorded within the service trenches to the west of the church. All human remains were re-interred within the churchyard prior to the completion of groundworks.
- Other findings included stone foundations that pre-dated the existing 14th-15th century tower at its southern extent, along with two undated possible postholes and an early medieval floor level/activity horizon. The remains of an undated, small retaining wall were also identified to the north of the church.
- Several sherds of Saxon pottery, dated to the 5th- 8th century recovered from the churchyard along with medieval and post-medieval pottery may indicate an early date for the establishment of the settlement at Aslackby and continuous occupation from that time.

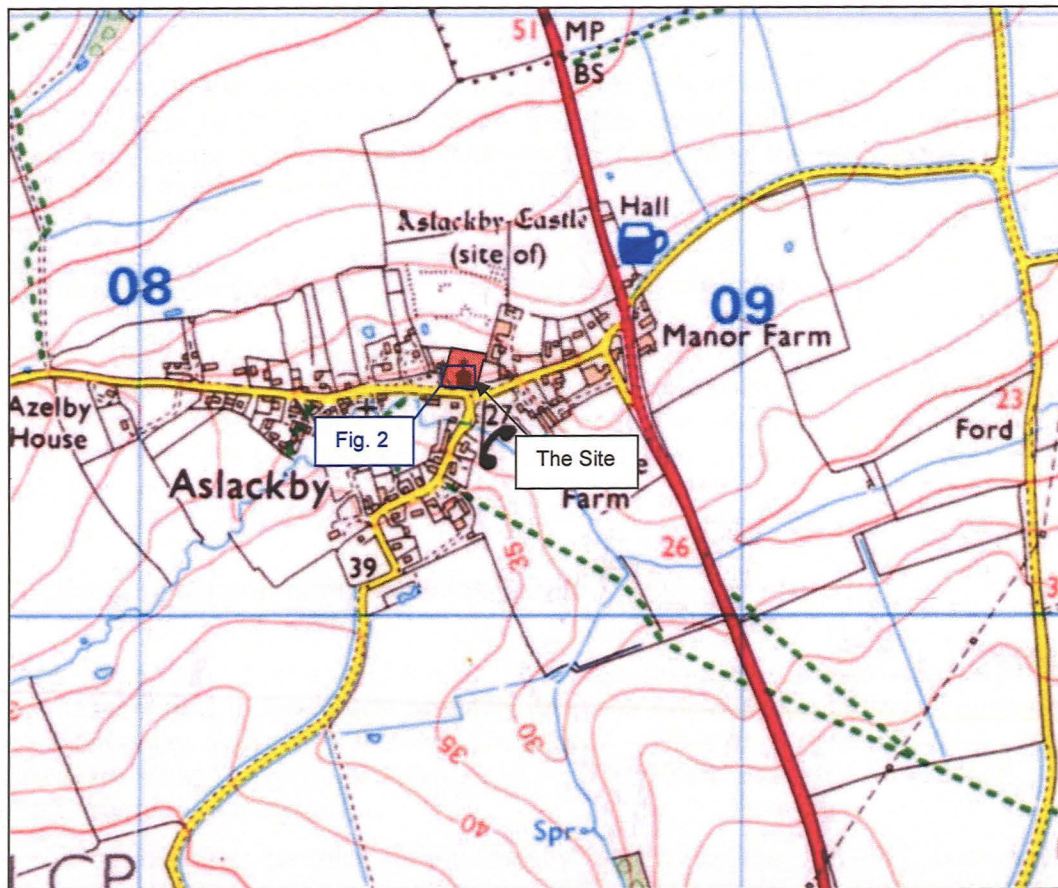


Fig. 1: Site location plan. The site is highlighted in red and the area shown on Fig. 2 is outlined in blue. Scale 1:12500. (based on the 2000 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey Explorer map, Sheet 248. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. PCA Licence No. 100049278).

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeological Services Ltd (PCAS) conducted archaeological monitoring and recording for Robert Shaw Architects during groundworks for the construction of new welfare facilities at Saint James Church, Aslackby, in the South Kesteven district of Lincolnshire. This was undertaken by Mike Rowe between 30/6/2010 and 9/7/2010.

The monitoring and recording was carried out to fulfil a condition of a faculty in accordance with archaeological best practice and national guidelines, as set out in *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IFA 2008).

2.0 Site location and description (Figs 1 & 2)

The site is located within the historic core of the village of Aslackby, and lay c. 300m to the west of the main trunk road, the A15, c. 10 km north of the town of Bourne and c. 19km south of the town of Sleaford. It is situated within the administrative district of South Kesteven in the county of Lincolnshire (centred on NGR: TF 0852 3040).

Saint James Church is Grade I listed and occupies the western part of an extended churchyard. It is situated within a conservation area that includes other historic buildings including the adjacent Old Rectory and nearby Manor. It overlooks the village green to the west and is bordered to the south by Aveland Way and Temple Road.

The works themselves took place on the north-west side of the church, between the west end of the north aisle and tower, and the western boundary wall of the churchyard. Internal works were confined to the tower and the store room at the western end of the north aisle.

3.0 Geology and topography

The site occupies raised ground within the valley of the River Ave, within the Kesteven Uplands and is situated at an elevation of c. 30m aOD. The churchyard is located on a south facing slope overlooking the road with the river beyond. The solid geology of the area is recorded as Oxford clay and Kellaways sand; overlying this is Boulder clay and Fen gravel (www.bgs.ac.uk).

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The site is located c. 1km east of the Roman Road, Mareham Lane (Margary 1973), although the origins of the village probably lie in the Anglo-Saxon period. It appears in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as 'Aslachebi' – an estate associated with the farmstead or village of a man called Aslacr' (Mills 1993) and later with Gilbert de Ghent (Williams & Martin 1992).

The church building contains fabric mostly dating to the 14th-15th centuries. Significant restoration was undertaken in 1856, most notably the Chancel, which however retains evidence of an earlier structure, in the form of its lancets windows that indicate a 13th century date. N. Pevsner notes the unusual filled-in arches of the tower which may suggest a grander scheme for a cruciform church which was never completed (Pevsner, 1951).

Other historic structures survive or have been recorded nearby. These include the Manor, west of the church which contains remnants of a medieval building. To the southeast of the church a Knights Templar preceptory, including a round church is known to have been constructed in the 12th century. The remains of the church were demolished in the 18th century although other parts of the preceptory survived until the late 19th century.

Immediately to the north of the church earthworks, still visible today, are believed to date from the 11th-12th century and where possibly associated with the adjacent Aslackby Castle, to the northeast (see Fig. 1). The castle itself, however, remains obscure, recorded as the site of a Norman castle by Leland, in the mid 16th century, recording 'great ditches and the dungeon hill', it has subsequently been reinterpreted as a possible moated site more commonly associated with a manor house rather than a castle as such.

5.0 Methodology

The development concentrated on the north-west corner of the church, within the western extent of the churchyard.

Groundworks, extending for c. 19m x 10m to the immediate west of the church were undertaken to connect the church to existing services just beyond the western limit of the boundary wall. Two main trenches, conjoined where they entered the north aisle, with a third emanating from the south-west corner of the tower, were excavated by mini digger equipped with a 300mm toothed bucket to a depth of 800mm. All of this work was monitored by the attending archaeologist, and any human remains disturbed by the groundworks were recorded and re-interred at a later date.

Further works within the tower were carried out by hand using mattocks and shovels to the required depth of 300mm. A reception pit for an oil tank measuring 3m by 2.5m was also excavated to the north of the north aisle to a depth of 800mm by mini digger, and was also monitored by the attending archaeologist.

6.0 Results

6.1 Service trenches (Figs 3, 7, 10 – 13 & 15)

The earliest layer encountered in the service trenches comprised natural orange clay containing frequent limestone fragments (106), recorded at a minimum depth of 0.4m below the existing ground level at the western boundary of the churchyard. Overlying the natural clay was a deep deposit of mixed silts and clays (105), which contained occasional small limestone fragments and animal bone as well as frequent disarticulated human bone.

This deposit represents a re-worked graveyard soil, consisting of both *in-situ* material and re-deposited material disturbed and accumulated during the excavation and backfilling of graves. Numerous sherds of pottery were recovered from this deposit, spanning the 12th-19th century and record the longevity of activity within the churchyard.

This context sealed/contained a total of six burials at a minimum depth of 0.62m below the existing ground level. These were recorded as SK1-7 (SK1 and SK4 being part of the same individual exposed in two different, converging trenches). Individual

grave cuts were rarely discernable within this deposit. All of the inhumations were aligned east-west, in the Christian tradition, and with the exception of SK 7 they were concentrated in a small area immediately northwest of the northwest corner of the tower. It may be speculated that this concentration may represent a single family plot.

SK 7, a young child, was interred to the west of the tower, and although apparently alone the presence of disarticulated human bone, derived from disturbed burials would appear to indicate that there are other burials within the immediate area. The disarticulated bone was observed in greatest concentration around the northwest corner of the church and diminished in quantity to the west, with very little of this material being observed to the west of the path. Sealing the former graveyard soil was a general topsoil/turf (104), which also contained occasional fragments of disarticulated human bone.

6.2 Tank Pit (Figs 3, 5, 6 & 9)

A deposit of yellow-brown silts (204) was revealed, approximately 0.42m thick at its highest point towards the northern extent of the pit, becoming less prominent to the south where the ground level dipped down towards the church. Containing small stone fragments, charcoal flecks and disarticulated human bone, this material also incorporated three residual sherds of 5th- 8th century Saxon pottery, along with three sherds of 11th-13th century material.

Overlying this deposit were thin spreads of sand and silt (205) and (206), containing small limestone fragments. This material was probably associated with the construction of an east-west orientated dry stone wall/foundation (202). This survived to a height of only 0.22m and had mostly collapsed along its exposed length. It extended beyond the limits of the tank pit both to the east and west. Three fragments of dressed stone had been re-used in the construction of this wall. This was within a shallow construction trench [203], and is interpreted as a former retaining wall.

6.3 North Aisle (Figs 3 & 14)

Narrow service trenches excavated within the west end of the north aisle revealed a 0.4m thick bedding deposit of limestone rubble (130) associated with the existing flagstone floor of the store room. Although no dating evidence was recovered from this deposit it was very similar to a rubble bedding layer (132) observed in the tower which was dated to the 19th century and a similar date may be speculated for this deposit.

6.4 Tower (Figs 3, 4 & 8)

Ground reduction within the southern extent of the tower encountered limestone rubble (134) set within orange clay; interpreted as a possible structure/foundation pre-dating the existing tower, but subsequently re-used as the foundation for the southern wall of the tower.

Overlying and butting this was a mixed deposit of dark grey silt, ash and charcoal (135), confined within the south-east corner of the tower. This appears to be product of the gradual accumulation of material, representing a succession of different events or activities and may indicate a preserved floor level/activity horizon, predating the existing tower.

Two undated, possible postholes [140] and [142] were observed to have been cut through layer (135) and may indicate the use of timber structural elements at some point during the construction or use of the church.

Deposit (135) was also cut by construction trench [136]. This contained limestone rubble foundations (137) which appeared to be the west wall of a structure demolished prior to the construction of the existing tower. This foundation appeared to be an alteration to an existing building, of which (134) was the original south wall, with (137) forming the altered/re-built west wall.

Immediately west of, and abutting, foundation (137) were the foundations (145) for the west wall of the existing tower (139). This comprised large limestone blocks set within construction cut [144].

All of the above was sealed by rubble deposits (132) and interface layer (133). The upper deposit (132) formed the main bedding material for the tower floor and comprised limestone rubble, interpreted as quarry/construction waste due to the presence of sawn sections of un-worked stone. This deposit also contained occasional 19th century glass, ceramic and iron material and confirms a 19th century date for the existing flagstone floor. Underlying (132), deposit (133) consisted of a mix of silt, lime mortar, charcoal flecks and limestone rubble and appeared to be the interface layer between the *in situ* deposits which pre-date the existing tower and the 19th century refurbishment material.

After the identification of *in situ* material during the excavation of the southern part of the tower floor it was agreed with the architect/developer that no further excavation of these deposits should take place. The removed material (133) was replaced over the *in situ* deposits and no further excavation took place within the tower. The identified *in situ* material exposed in the southern part of the tower has been preserved *in situ* under the new tower floor and similar material may be expected to survive under that part of deposit (133) which was not excavated immediately to the north, within the tower.

7.0 Conclusion

The reduction of levels within the interior of the tower exposed the south and west foundations of an earlier un-dated structure, which had been partially incorporated into the foundations of the existing tower. Together, with the possible floor level/activity horizon, indicate the preservation of an earlier part of the church surviving underneath the 14th-15th century tower. Wall foundation (137) shares the same alignment as the existing western wall of the north aisle (see Fig. 3) and it may be speculated that this wall originally extended further south and formed the western end of the church prior to the construction of the existing tower. The stone work of the north aisle is notably different from that of the tower and the south aisle and clearly indicates that they belong to two different phases of construction of the church.

Monitoring of the oil tank reception pit to the north of the north aisle identified an earlier, possibly medieval, horizon (204) preserved under the later (undated) retaining wall (202). This wall appeared to run the length of the north side of the church as the same surface contour which concealed the wall was apparent along the length of the church. Although this wall remains undated it may be speculated that it is of some antiquity because it had itself become buried underneath redeposited graveyard soils.

Some of the dating evidence recovered from the excavation of the oil tank pit, in the form of three sherds of 5th- 8th century Saxon pottery highlight the potential for deposits of this early date to survive within the immediate environs, although the presence of 11th-13th century material as well does indicate that this material is likely

to be residual and displaced from its original context. Nonetheless an early Saxon date may now be inferred for activity within the immediate area and may indicate an early foundation for the settlement of Aslackby, if not the origins of the church itself.

Monitoring and recording of the services trenches to the west of the church revealed extensive deposits of re-worked graveyard soil of mostly 17th-18th century date, with earlier disturbed medieval elements present in the form of pottery sherds spanning the 12th-16th centuries. The six identified inhumations remain undated. However, the apparent group of five (SK1 – SK6) may represent a single family plot, but the absence of any grave marker/headstones may suggest they pre-date the 18th-19th century and thus a medieval or early post-medieval date is most likely. The large amount of disarticulated material observed indicate that there are many more inhumation around the western end of the church but may have been interred at a greater depth than was reached during the current groundworks.

8.0 Bibliography

British Geological Survey website: www.bgs.ac.uk/education/geology-of-britain/home.html

Margary, I. D., 1973 *Roman Roads in Britain*. John Baker, London.

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Pevsner, N., 1951, *The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire*. Penguin, London.

Morgan P. and Thorne C., (eds.), 1986, *Domesday Book vol. 31: Lincolnshire*. Phillimore & Co. Ltd, Chichester.

9.0 Acknowledgements

PCAS would like to thank Robert Shaw Architects for this commission. PCAS would also like to express thanks to the vicar and churchwarden of St James Church for their cooperation and assistance during the fieldwork.

10.0 Site Archive

The archive is currently held at the offices of PCAS Ltd, Saxilby, Lincolnshire and will be returned to St James Church at the request of Mr C Gudgin on behalf of the P.C.C.

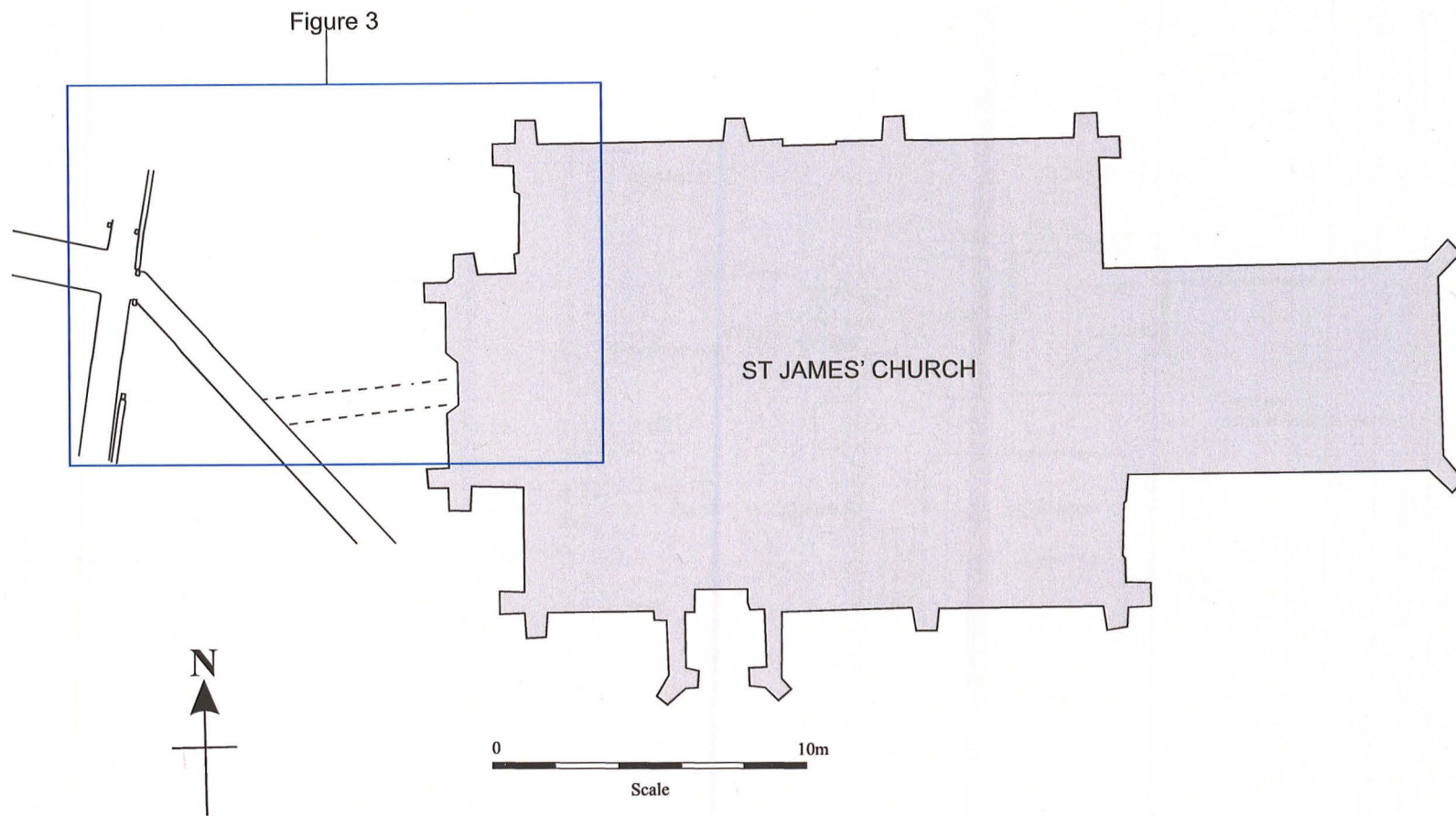


Figure 2
Location plan of Figure 3
Scale 1:200

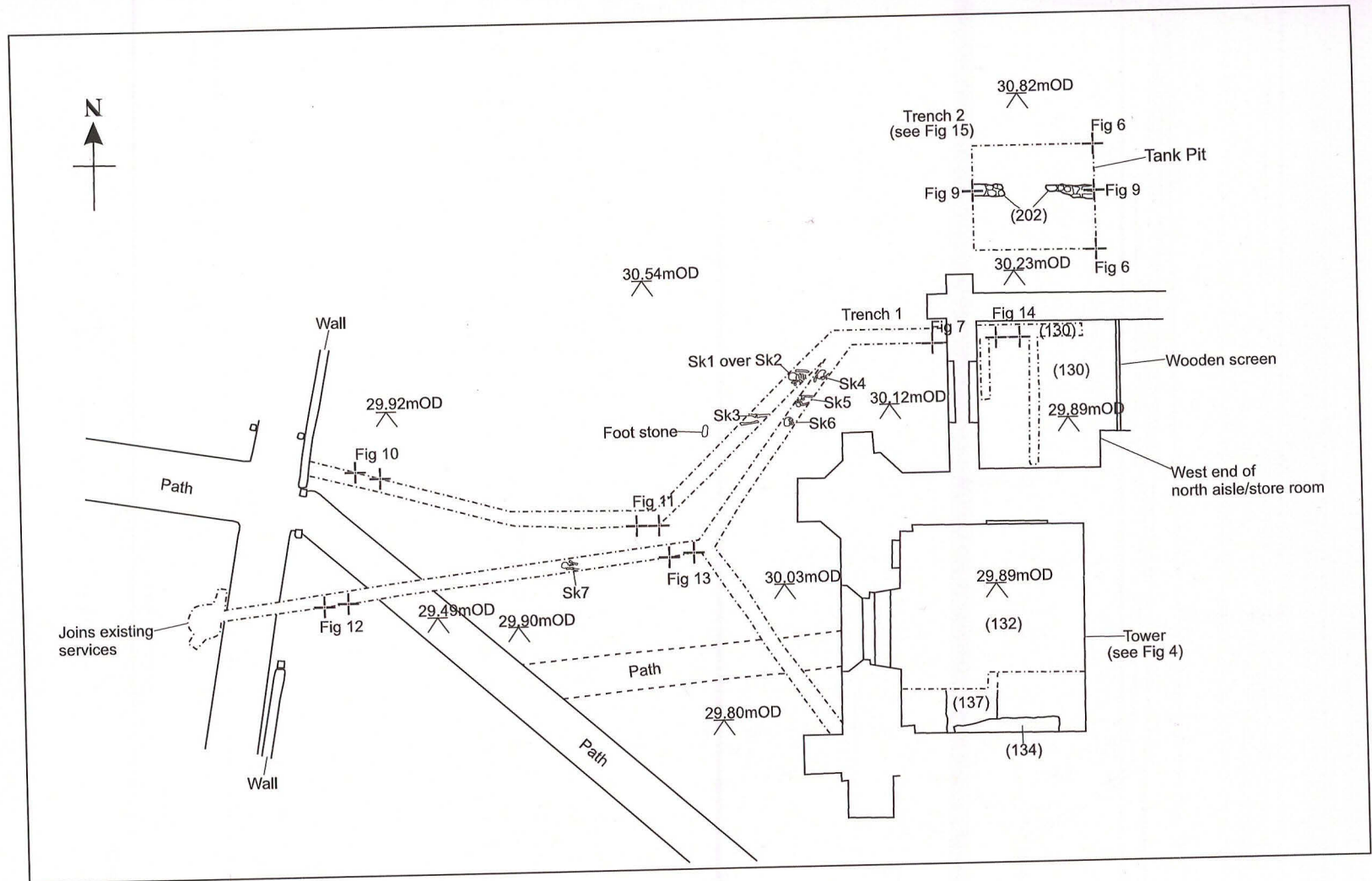


Fig 3
 West End of Church
 detailing service trenches and groundworks.
 Scale 1:100

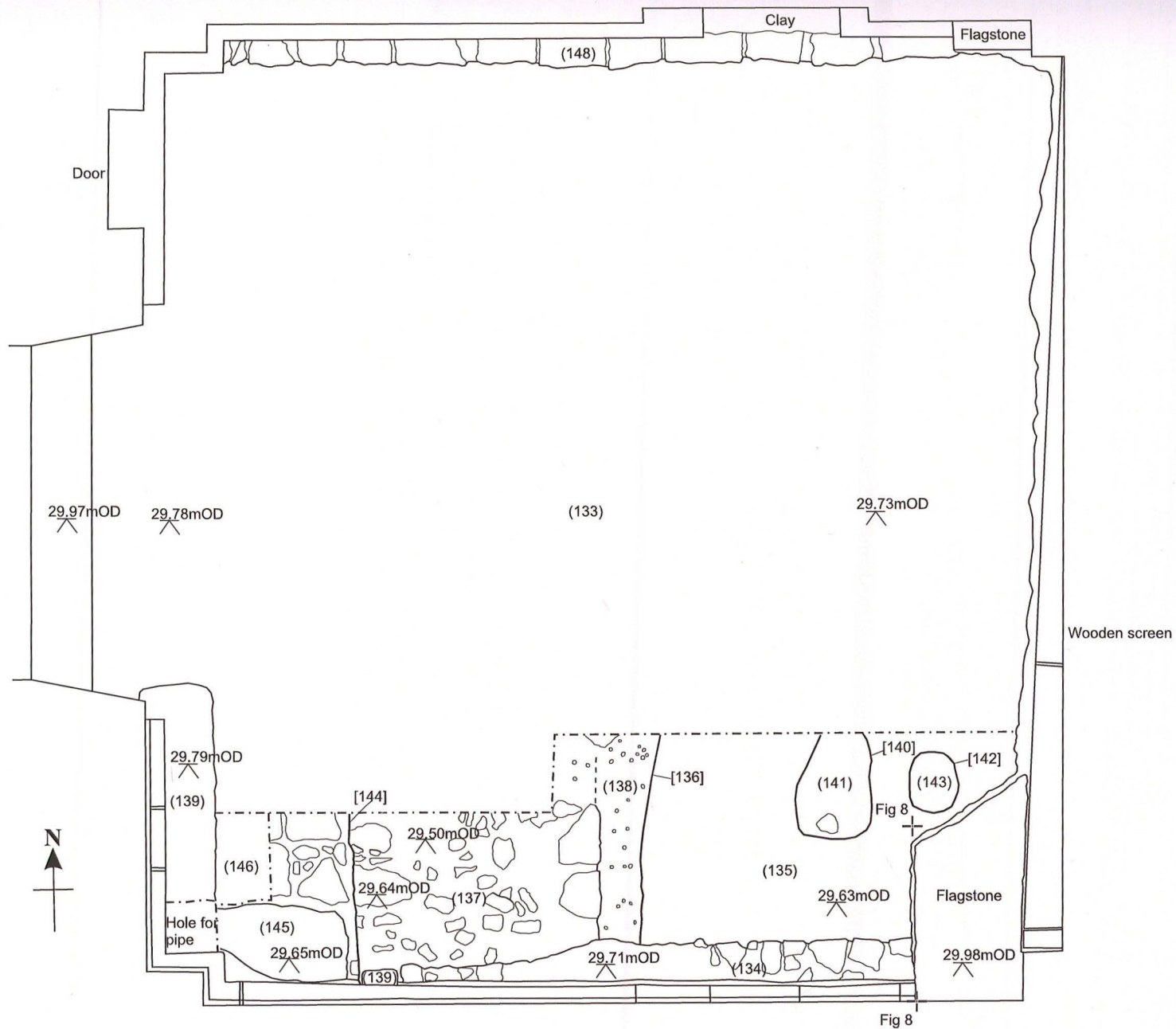


Fig 4
 Area exposed at south end of tower
 Scale 1:20



Fig 8

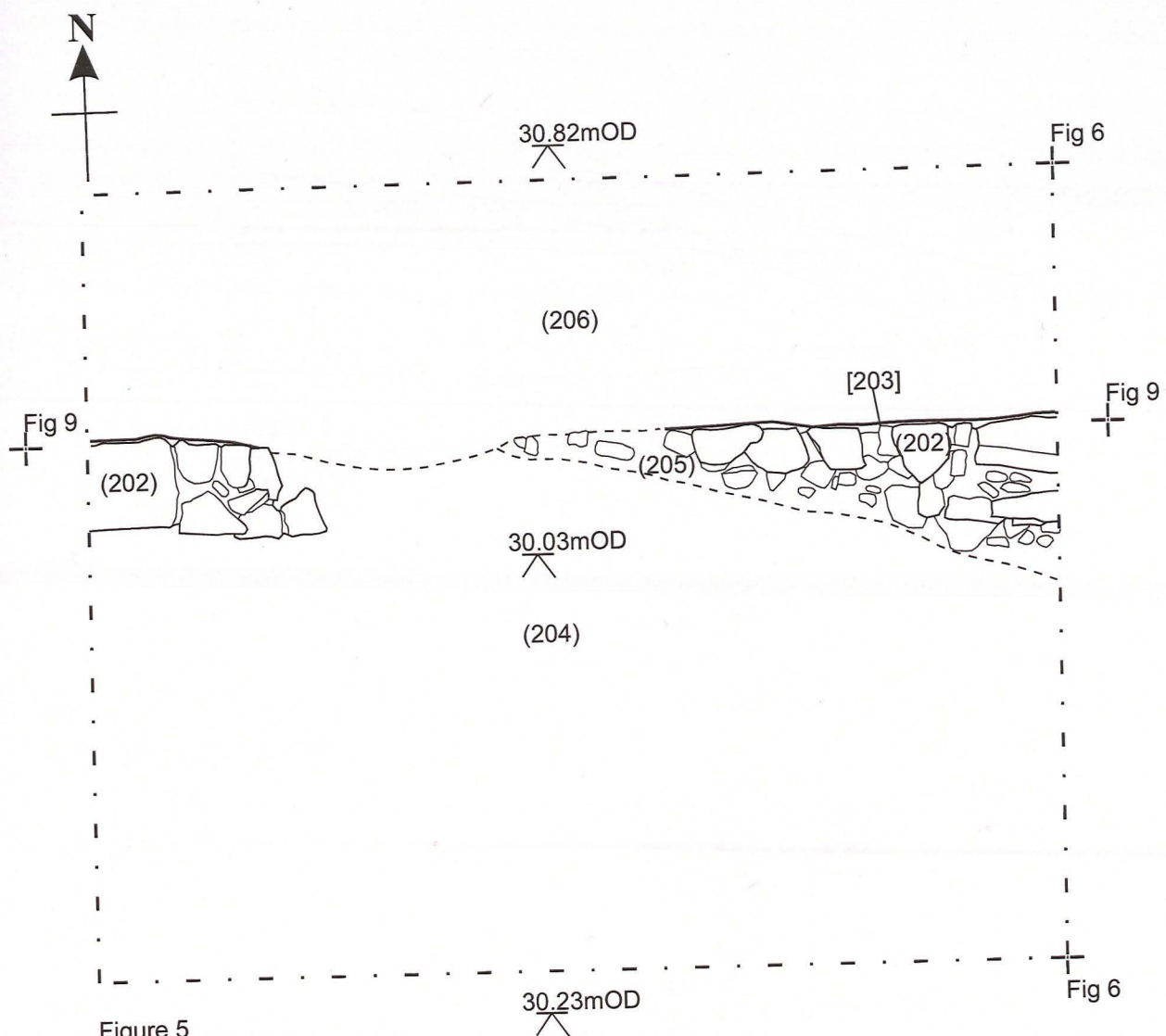


Figure 5
 Plan of wall (202)
 within Tank Pit.
 Scale 1:20

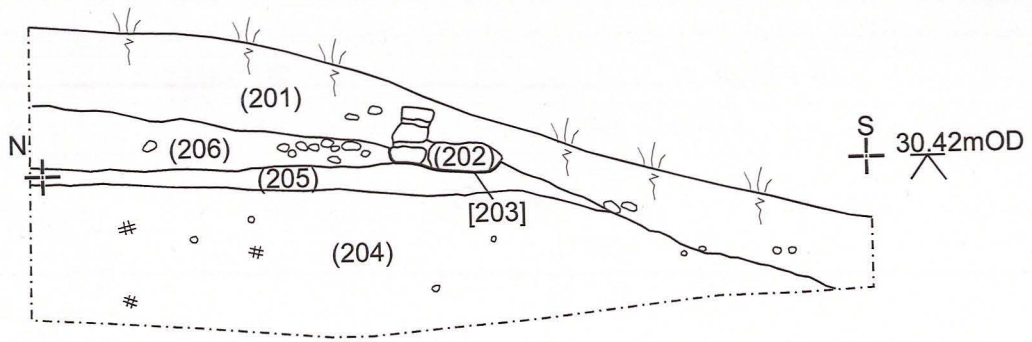


Figure 6
West facing section of Tank Pit
Scale 1:20

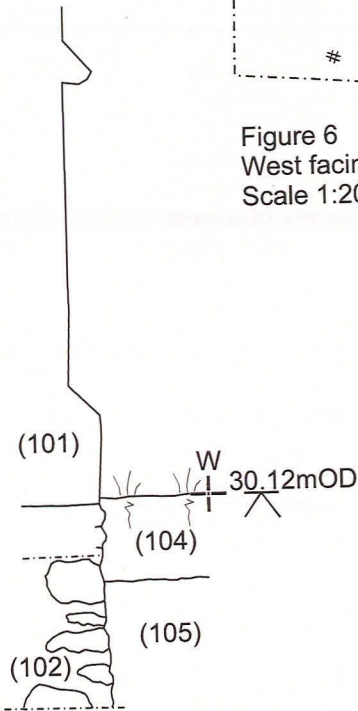


Figure 7
North facing section of foundations
adjacent to west face of north aisle
Scale 1:20

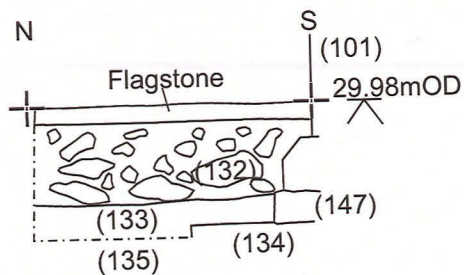


Figure 8
West facing section of Tower floor
Scale 1:20

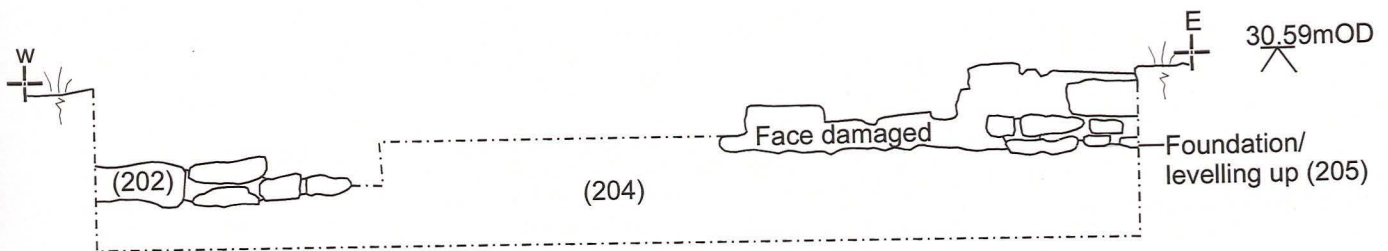
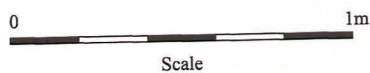


Figure 9
South facing elevation of wall (202)
Scale 1:20



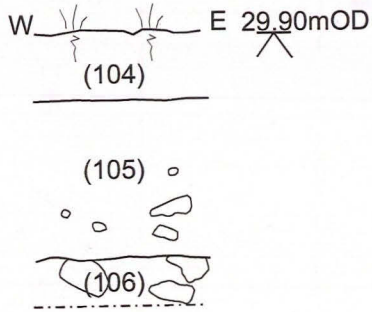


Figure 10
Sample section
West end Trench 1
Scale 1:20

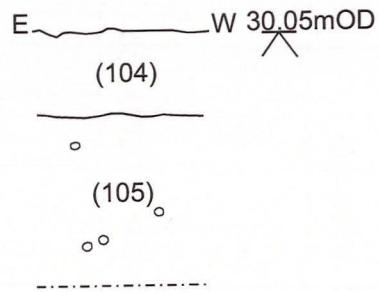


Figure 11
Sample section
Corner Trench 1
Scale 1:20

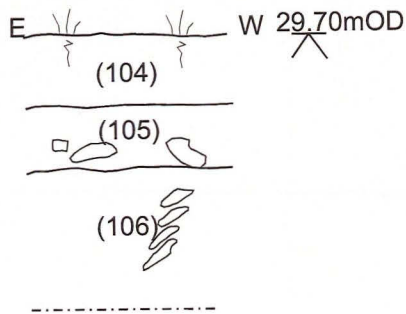


Figure 12
Sample section
Scale 1:20

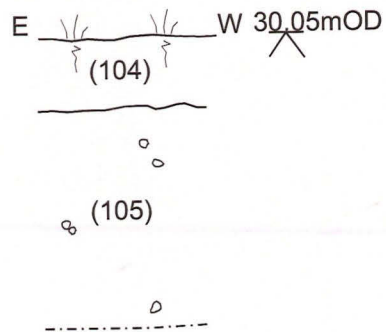


Figure 13
Sample section
Scale 1:20

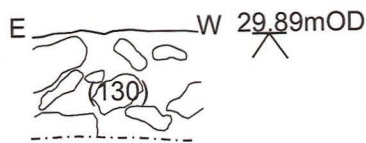


Figure 14
West end of north aisle
foundation
Scale 1:20



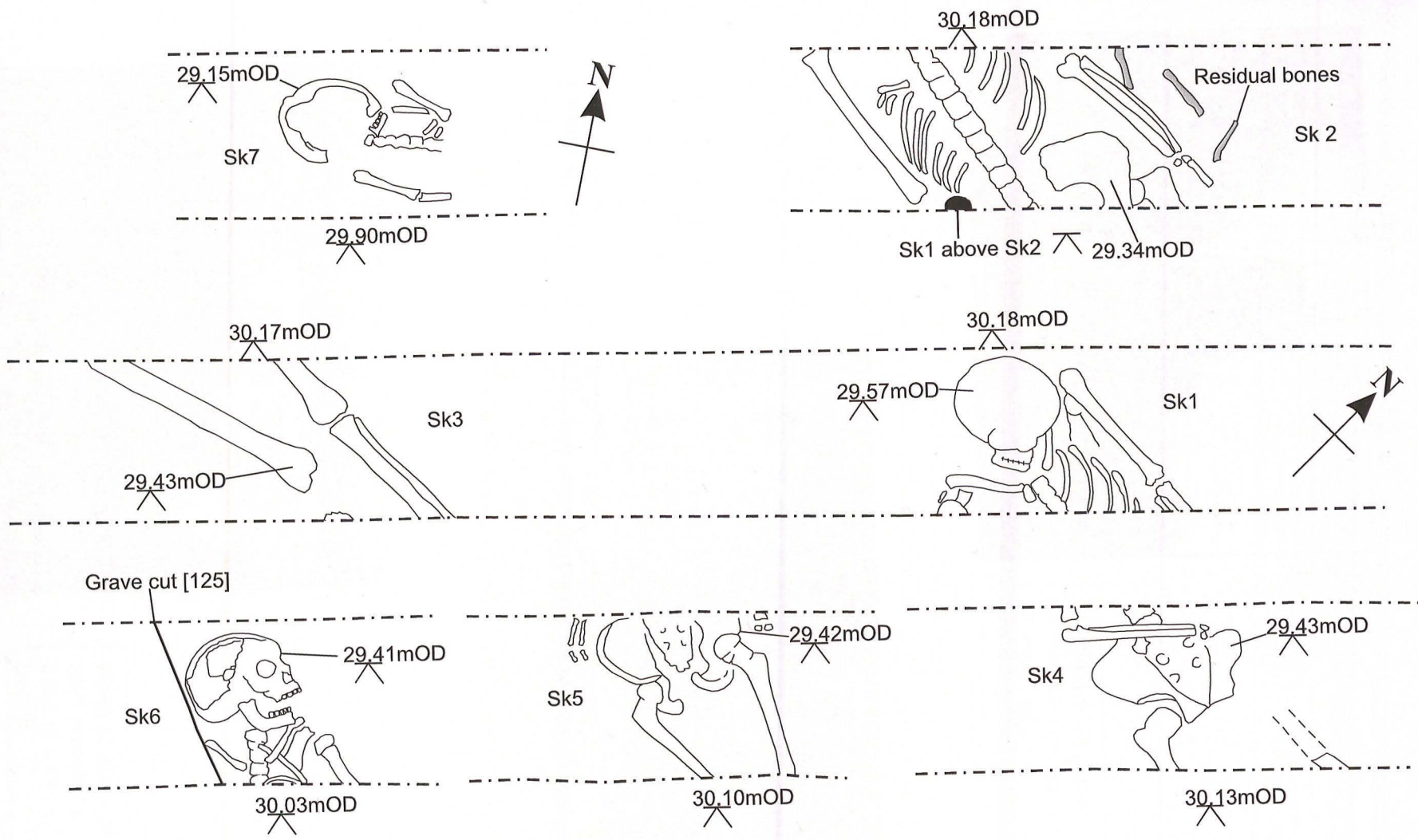
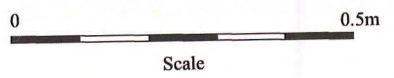


Figure 15
 Burials within service trenches
 Scale 1:10



Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: St James Church looking north-east.



Plate 2: General view of service trenches looking west.



Plate 3: Burial of SK6 revealed in base of service trench.



Plate 4: Wall (202) within Tank Pit looking north-west.



Plate 5: Section through Tank Pit looking east.



Plate 6: Bedding material under floor in North Aisle looking north.



Plate 7: Ground reduction in south end of Tower looking south-west.



Plate 8: West end of Tower showing earlier foundations to the east, adjacent to later foundations situated to the west.



Plate 9: East end of tower showing earlier foundations and former occupation/activity horizon.

Appendix 2

Context Summary (JCAL10)

Context No.	Type		Description	Finds/Dating
101	Structure	Above 102	Saint James church	14 th century
102	Layer	Below 101, within 103	Rubble foundations	14 th century
103	Cut	Contains 102, below 105	Construction cut for church	14 th century
104	Layer	Above 105	Topsoil and turf layer	19 th century
105	Layer	Below 105, above 106	Graveyard soil	18 th -19 th century
106	Layer	Below 105	Natural	Natural
107	Cut	Above 105, below 104	Grave cut for SK1/4	19 th century
108	SK	Within 107, below 109	No allocated to SK1/4	19 th century
109	Fill	Within 107, same as 105	Fill of grave 107	19 th century
110	Cut	Above 105, below 104	Grave cut for SK2	19 th century
111	SK	Within 110, below 112	No allocated for SK2	19 th century
112	Fill	Within 110, same as 105	Fill of grave 110	19 th century
113	Cut	Above 105, below 104	Grave cut for SK3	19 th century
114	SK	Within 113, below 115	No allocated to SK3	19 th century
115	Fill	Within 113, same as 105	Fill of grave 113	19 th century
116	Cut	Above 105, below 104	Grave cut for SK4 (Lower part SK1)	19 th century
117	SK	Within 116, below 104	No allocated for SK4 (Lower part SK1)	19 th century
118	Fill	Within 116, same as 105	Fill of grave 116	19 th century
119	Cut	Above 105, below 104	Grave cut for SK5	19 th century
120	SK	Within 119, below 104	No allocated to SK5	19 th century
121	Fill	Within 119, same as 105	Fill of grave 119	19 th century
122	Cut	Above 105, below 104	Grave cut for SK6	19 th century
123	SK	Within 122, below 104	No allocated to SK6	19 th century
124	Fill	Within 122, same as 105	Fill of grave 122	19 th century

125	Cut	Above 105, 124	Grave cut? No human remains	19 TH century
126	Fill	Within 125, same as 105	Fill of grave 125	19 TH century
127	Cut	Above 105, below 104	Grave cut for SK7	19 TH century
128	SK	Within 129, below 104	No allocated to SK7	19 TH century
129	Fill	Within 127, same as 105	Fill of grave 127	19 TH century
130	Layer	Below flagstones	Bedding layer for floor in North aisle	19 TH century
131	Layer	Below 104	Made ground outside church yard	19 TH century-modern
132	Layer	Above 133	Bedding material for tower floor	19 TH century
133	Layer	Above 134, below 133	Interface between 132 and 134	19 TH century
134	Structure	Below 135, 133	Earlier foundations of south wall within tower	15 TH century?
135	Layer	Above 134, below 133	Mixed occupation surface	19 TH century
136	Cut	Above 135, below 137, 138	Construction cut for 137	15 TH century?
137	Structure	Above 136, below 144	Earlier foundations of west wall within tower	15 TH century?
138	Fill	Above/butts 137, below 144	Fill of construction cut 136	19 TH century?
139	Structure	Above 137, 145	Foundations for church tower	15 TH century?
140	Cut	Above 135, below 132	Post hole	19 TH century
141	Fill	Within 140, below 132	Fill of post hole	19 TH century
142	Cut	Above 135, below 132	Post hole	19 TH century
143	Fill	Within 142, below 132	Fill of post hole	19 TH century
144	Cut	Above 137, below 145	Construction cut for lower foundations of church tower	15 TH century
145	Structure	Within 144, below 139, 146	Lower foundations of west wall of tower	15 TH century
146	Layer	Above 145, 139 below 132	Clay infill	19 TH century
147	Structure	Above 134, part of 134	Foundation of earlier south wall of tower	15 TH century?
148	Structure	Above 134, part of 134	Same as 147	15 th century?
201	Layer	Above 206, 202	Topsoil-turf layer in Tank pit	19 TH century

202	Structure	Within 203, below 206, 201	Dry stone wall	19 TH century
203	Cut	Above 205	Cut for 202	19 TH century
204	Layer	Below 205	Made ground/graveyard soil	5 th -8 th century
205	Layer	Above 204, below 206, 203	Levelling deposit for 202	19 TH century
206	Layer	Above 205, below 201	Levelling deposit for 202	19 TH century

Pottery Archive ~ St James Church, Aslackby, Lincolnshire (JCAL 10)

Jane Young

A small group of twenty-five sherds from twenty-four vessels was recovered from the site. The pottery ranges in date from the Anglo-Saxon to the late post-medieval period and includes a range of local and regional pottery types. Included in the assemblage are three Anglo-Saxon vessels found in layer 204. All three vessels are in sandstone-tempered fabrics commonly found in southern Lincolnshire. The sherds are in a fairly fresh condition and suggest nearby occupation of 5th to 7th century date.

context	cname	full name	sub fabric	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	decoration	part	description	date
105	BERTH	Brown glazed earthenware	fine red fabric	jar	1	1	7		BS	int & ext glaze	18th
105	BERTH	Brown glazed earthenware	coarse orange fabric	jar	1	1	11		BS	int & ext glaze	late 17th to 18th
105	BERTH	Brown glazed earthenware	light orange fine fabric + ca	cup	1	1	3		base	int & ext glaze	late 17th to 18th
105	BERTH	Brown glazed earthenware	fine red sandy fabric	jar/chamber pot	1	1	15		rim	int & ext glaze; flanged rim	late 17th to 18th
105	BL	Black-glazed wares	purple vitrified	large jar ?	1	1	16		base	Staffs/Bourne	mid 17th to 18th
105	BL	Black-glazed wares	coarse light orange fabric	jar ?	1	1	12		BS	Staffs ?	late 17th to 18th

context	cname	full name	sub fabric	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	decoration	part	description	date
105	BL	Black-glazed wares	fine dull orange fabric + ca	cylindrical jar/butter	1	1	45		BS	salt surfacing;int glaze;probably Bourne	mid 17th to 18th
105	BL	Black-glazed wares	fine orange fabric	large bowl	1	1	11		base	int glaze	18th
105	BL	Black-glazed wares	vitrified purple	large cylindrical jar/butter	1	1	36		rim	int glaze;Staffs type but possible Bourne product	mid 17th to 18th
105	BOU	Bourne D ware	slightly sandy + ca	jar ?	1	1	8		BS		mid 15th to 16th
105	BOU	Bourne D ware	slightly sandy + ca	jug	1	1	9		BS	gaze	mid 15th to 16th
105	BOUA	Bourne-type Fabrics A, B and C	Fabric A + G	large jar	1	1	26	pressed strip under rim	rim	everted rim	13th to 14th
105	BOUA	Bourne-type Fabrics A, B and C	Fabric A/B	jug	1	1	14	applied white clay strips	BS	fairly light firing	13th to mid 14th
105	ENGS	Unspecified English Stoneware	buff fabric	?	1	1	9		base		late 18th to 19th
105	ENGS	Unspecified English Stoneware	grey fabric	small ink bottle	1	1	17		BS		19th
105	LERTH	Late earthenwares	coarse marbled	?	1	1	19		base	Staffs/Derbs	mid 17th to 18th
105	REFR	Refined Red Earthenware		teapot ?	1	1	5	machine decoration	rim		late 18th to 19th
105	ST	Stamford Ware	Fabric B	pitcher/jar	1	1	1		BS	thick glaze	12th

context	cname	full name	sub fabric	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	decoration	part	description	date
105	STSL	Staffordshire/Bristol slipware	light orange	press moulded	1	1	11	brown trailed & combed on yellow	BS		late 17th to 18th
204	BOUA	Bourne-type Fabrics A, B and C	Fabric A/B	jar	2	1	21		BS		late 12th to 13th
204	SST	Early to mid Saxon sandstone-tempered	fine fabric	?	1	1	12		base	fine fabric with common aggregate mainly red tinged quartz & moderate fe	5th to 8th
204	SST	Early to mid Saxon sandstone-tempered	fine fabric + fe	small bowl	1	1	11		rim	drawable;fabric incl common fine quartz moderate larger sparse aggregate moderate fe incl slag	5th to 8th
204	SSTCL	Central Lincolnshire Early to mid Saxon sandstone-tempered	fine fabric	small jar	1	1	10		rim	drawable	5th to 7th
204	ST	Stamford Ware	Fabric B	jar/pitcher	1	1	23		base	knife-trimmed basal edge;unglaze	late 11th to 12th