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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

St Bartholomew's Church, Welby, Lincs.

NGR: SK 9755 3820

Site Code: WC 99

LCNCC Museum Accn. No.: 135.99

Archaeological Watching Brief

**Report prepared for
Welby Parochial Church Council**

by N. Field and W. Booth

LAS Report No. 518

March 2001

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St. Bartholomew's Church, Welby, Lincs. Archaeological Watching Brief

NGR: SK 9755 3820

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief in advance of installation of an under-floor heating conduit and replacement of pew platforms with a quarry tile floor at the west end of the church revealed the remains of a lime mortar floor surface, pre-dating the flagstone floor, and cut through in several places by graves. Finds include several pieces of painted window glass of probable medieval date.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Bond and Read (Chartered Architects), on behalf of Welby Parochial Church Council, to undertake an archaeological investigation at the west end of the church, following the removal of pews, and in advance of the installation of an under-floor heating conduit (Fig. 3).

Scope of Work

The purpose of the archaeological work was to establish the presence, extent and quality of any archaeological remains and record any archaeological features which were exposed by the groundworks. The watching brief was conducted by Naomi Field on June 14th 1999.

Archaeological Background

The Church of St. Bartholomew is located on the south side of the village of Welby, approximately 7km NE of Grantham, and 1km east of the course of the Roman road Ermine Street (Fig. 1).

Although a church is mentioned at Welby in the Domesday Survey of 1086, there is no Saxon fabric visible in the present building. There are Norman architectural fragments re-used in the south wall of the church, probably indicative of a Norman phase of construction on this site.

The north aisle of the church was built between about 1200-1225, and the tower is of Early English style (1275-1300) (Pls. 1 and 2). The date of the original chancel is unclear although there is a lancet window in the north wall which may possibly be from the original structure. In its present form it represents the rebuilding by J.H. Hakewill in 1873. The west respond of the north arcade is also Early English in style, while the remainder of the piers are Perpendicular, together with the south porch and clerestory. The screen was inserted across the chancel arch in the

fifteenth century, and the south door is late fourteenth/early fifteenth century in date (Pevsner, N. and Harris, J., 1964, *The Buildings of England – Lincolnshire*).

A Parish Diary was started in the 1860s by the rector's wife and was kept until 1968, which is currently being transcribed by Mr. Storey (churchwarden). Alterations to the church recorded in this diary include the re-orientation of the seats for men in the north aisle (to face east), the placing of a new stove in the middle of the church in 1872, and a concrete floor laid in the southern part of the nave and chancel in 1927.

The Watching Brief (Fig. 2)

Pews and pew platforms were removed from three areas at the west end of the church in advance of archaeological recording (Pl. 3). Area 1 was located in the north aisle; Area 2 covered 1.5 bays of the north side of the nave, and Area 3 covered 1.5 bays on the south side of the nave. Within these areas, context numbers were used for detailed recording. The context numbers used in the report text are in bold; both area and context numbers are indicated on the plan and photograph captions in this report.

Area 1 (west bay of the north aisle)

The pew platform in the north aisle had been constructed on a wooden frame resting on top of the flagstone floor (**10**). Beneath the platform the flagstones had been removed over an area 1.45m wide and 3.14m long to create a cavity 0.12 - 0.15m deep (Pl. 4). The pew platform rested on wooden sleeper beams, one placed parallel to the north wall, resting on a ledge of remaining flagstones 0.25m wide, and one along the south side of the cavity, again resting on the flagstones. These supported cross joists which were covered with 145mm wide pine boards.

A vertical post, circular in cross-section, was exposed towards the eastern side of the southern edge of this area. The post had been inserted into a rectangular posthole cut through the underlying soil. The post protruded above the floor level and was probably associated with the construction of the pew platform (Pl. 4).

Below the remains of the flagged floor surface was a very soft mixed brown sandy soil, containing small limestone and plaster fragments, probably a bedding for the flagstone floor. This soft soil was removed, revealing a firm yellow brown soil on the south side of the area. Closer to the north wall was a very soft deposit which contained larger limestone fragments and window glass debris, including several painted pieces which may be medieval in date (**11**). This material may have been placed in depressions caused by settling of graves beneath. It also contained two pieces of

15th-16th century pottery, but associated with 5 shroud pins, probably 18th century date and a clay tobacco pipe stem of 19th century date (see appendices).

Area 2 (western end of the north side of the nave)

The extent cleared of pew platforms was 2.55m x 5.75m. As in Area 1, the stone flags had been removed before the platform was installed. The 0.2m thick pier bases were square, constructed with more than one rectangular stone block and stood very slightly proud of the flagged floor surface; they had escaped damage from the pew structure (Pl. 5).

As in Area 1, the layer of very soft brown soil (**23** in this area), some 0.10m thick, below the flagstones was removed. The layer contained green window glass fragments, including painted fragments and two pieces of pottery of 17th –18th century date. Beneath the loose soil were the remnants of a lime mortar floor **1**. It lay only 0.10m beneath the existing floor level at its highest point in the south-east corner of Area 2. The mortar floor was cut away across the full width of the east end of area 2 and a light brown soil (**18**) filled this part of the site (Pl. 6). This was only partially removed and it is unclear whether the deposit was a levelling layer above several graves, but this seems to be the most likely explanation.

At the west end of Area 2 was an area of disturbance (**22**) approximately 1.50m x 1.50m (maximum) (Pl. 7). It contained a very loose fill (**6**) of soil mixed with mortar derived from floor surface 1. At its eastern edge were two stones (**14**) protruding from beneath the mortar floor. This material was only removed to a depth of 0.23m below the flagstone floor and there appeared to be a considerable depth of fill remaining. This is an odd shape and may represent more than one grave intercutting one another and whose fills were so similar that they were indistinguishable.

There was an area of intact mortar floor west of **22** on the south side of the respond, confirming it to be later than the construction of the aisle (Pl. 7). However, a rectangular area (**19**) at least 1.05m x 0.74m in size had been dug away on the east side of the respond, and cutting the backfilled disturbance **22**. The fill of **19** was a loose brown soil containing pieces of limestone (**4**), partially overlain by a levelling deposit of crushed mortar (**5**), which also extended over the fill **6**. This was probably a grave dug through the floor surface (Pl. 8).

Both the west and east sides of the aisle pier had been disturbed more recently, possibly to investigate conditions beneath the pews. Hole **20**, 0.82m x 0.56m in size, on the west side of the pier cut through the mortar deposit **5** and removal of its fill (**3**) revealed the pier foundations (**7**) at a depth of 0.17m below the existing flagstone floor surface (Pl. 9). There were also two limestone

blocks (12) on the northern edge of the hole, possibly positioned to support the pew platform in an area of soft ground.

Hole 21, 0.88m x 0.5m, was dug against the east side of the pier and contained a fill of crushed chalk and plaster (2), again derived from floor surface 1. When removed the pier foundations (8) were revealed 0.20m below the flagstone floor level (Pl. 10).

Area 3 (alongside the south wall of the nave)

Removal of the platform across the 1.9m x 6.07m area revealed a deposit of soil, limestone fragments and rotten timber, up to 0.2m deep (Pl. 11). This material (24) was the bedding layer for the flagstone floor and contained several fragments of 17-19th century pottery and a single rim fragment from a medieval jug, probably 13th century in date. As in Area 2, it covered an uneven lime mortar floor surface 1 (Pl. 12). The highest point of the surface was in the SW corner, dropping away to the north and east with the lowest point being in the NE corner, close to the church entrance. The floor surface had been slightly disturbed in the SW corner by the insertion of electric cables. Disturbance of the surface along the northern edge may represent the edge of a grave (15) below the flagstones alongside the pews, or have been related to installation of the pew platform.

Conclusion

Removal of the pew platforms established that they were constructed some time after the flagstone floor had been laid. Flags beneath the pews had been removed to create a cavity to allow circulation of air. The loose soil bedding beneath the pew platforms contained large quantities of window glass and a few fragments of pottery and tile. The latest of these artefacts date to the 19th century and probably relate to the construction date of the pews rather than the laying of the stone floor. The presence of medieval window glass and a single piece of medieval pottery is of interest but these were residual finds in layers deposited at a much later date.

The mortar floor surface was left intact, even where it survived above the bedding level for the new floor. The extensive disturbance 22 was lowered to enable more suitable bedding for the new quarry tile floor to be laid, but there was only limited excavation of other features which cut through the mortar floor. Disturbance to archaeological horizons was thus kept to a minimum.

Parish records refer to a concrete floor, which was apparently laid in the south part of the nave and chancel in 1927, but the watching brief found no trace of it. It may only have been laid to the east of the south door, outside the area of the monitored works.

Acknowledgements

LAS is grateful for the assistance received from Peter MacFarlane (Bond and Read Chartered Architects), the contractors for assistance with the labouring, and to Mr and Mrs Storey for their hospitality .

The recording was carried out by Naomi Field. Illustrations were prepared by Wendy Booth, and the report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Contents of the Site Archive

Correspondence

Dyeline copy of architect's plan

Field sketch plan and notes

Inked plan

Photographs: colour prints, LAS film no. 99/57/6-25

1 box of finds. Pottery, tile, window glass, lead, tobacco pipes

Naomi Field and Wendy Booth
Lindsey Archaeological Services
March 16th 2001

The Appendices

Context Summary: Welby Church

Context No.	Type	Description	Relationships	Finds
1	Layer	Mortar floor in areas 2 and 3.	Below cut by 17, 19, 20, 21, 22	
2	Fill	Chalk and plaster fill of ?inspection pit beside pier.	Fill of 21	
3	Fill	Contains 12	Fill of 20	
4	Fill	Loose brown soil and limestone pieces	Fill of 19	
5	Layer	?Redeposited mortar; ?grave fill	Above 4, cut by 20	
6	Fill	Loose brown soil and mortar	Fill of 22	
7	Foundation	Offset limestone rubble foundation for pier	same as 8	
8	Foundation	Offset limestone rubble foundation for pier	same as 7	
9	Layer	firm brown soil on S. side of Area 1	below 11	
10	Layer	Flagstone floor, still extant except in areas of pew platforms. Relict flags survive alongside north wall		
11	Layer	0.1m - 0.2m thick loose bedding layer of brown soil with limestone fragments, window glass fragments etc.in Area 1	above 9	2 pieces window lead, 1 clay pipe stem, 1 nail, 37 pieces plain window glass, 6 pieces painted window glass, 3 pieces bottle glass , 5 shroud pins
12		Two limestone blocks placed on fill of 3, presumably to act as support for 10 or 13	fill of 20	
13	Structure	Timber pew platform	Above 12	
14	Layer	Stone blocks below mortar surface	Below 1	
15	Cut	?Grave		
16	Fill	Brown soil	Fill of 15, below 24	
17	Cut	?Graves	Filled by 18, cuts 1	
18	Fill	Light brown soil	Fill of 17, below 23	
19	Cut		Filled by 4, cuts 22	
20	Cut	?Inspection pit beside pier	Filled by 3, 12, below 3, cuts 5,1	
21	Cut		Filled by 2, cuts 1	
22	Cut	?Graves	Filled by 6, cuts 1	
23	Layer	thin layer of loose dry soil, Area 2	above 1	pottery, 2 clay pipe stems, 9 pieces plain window glass, 4 pieces painted window glass
24	Layer	thin layer of loose dry soil, Area 3	above 1	pottery, 3 clay pipe stems,

Pottery Archive WC99

Jane Young Lindsey Archaeological Services

trench	cname	sub fabric	full name	part	description	date
Area 1	MP		Midlands Purple ware	BS	mortar	15th to 16th
Area 1	TB		Toynton/Bolingbroke wares	BS	mortar	15th to 16th
Area 2	BERTH		Brown glazed earthenware	BS		17th to 18th
Area 2	BL		Black-glazed wares	BS	abraded	18th
Area 2	RGRE		Reduced glazed red earthenware	BS		17th to 18th
Area 2	STSL		Staffordshire/Bristol slipware	base	trailed and feathered	18th
Area 3	BERTH		Brown glazed earthenware	BS		18th to 19th
Area 3	BL		Black-glazed wares	BS		17th
Area 3	LPM		Early Modern wares (general term)	rim		late 18th to 19th
Area 3	LSTON		Late stoneware	base		late 18th to 19th
Area 3	MEDLOC	OX/R/OX;medium sandy	Medieval local fabrics	rim	everted rim;thick pocked glaze with cu specks	13th ?

The Figures

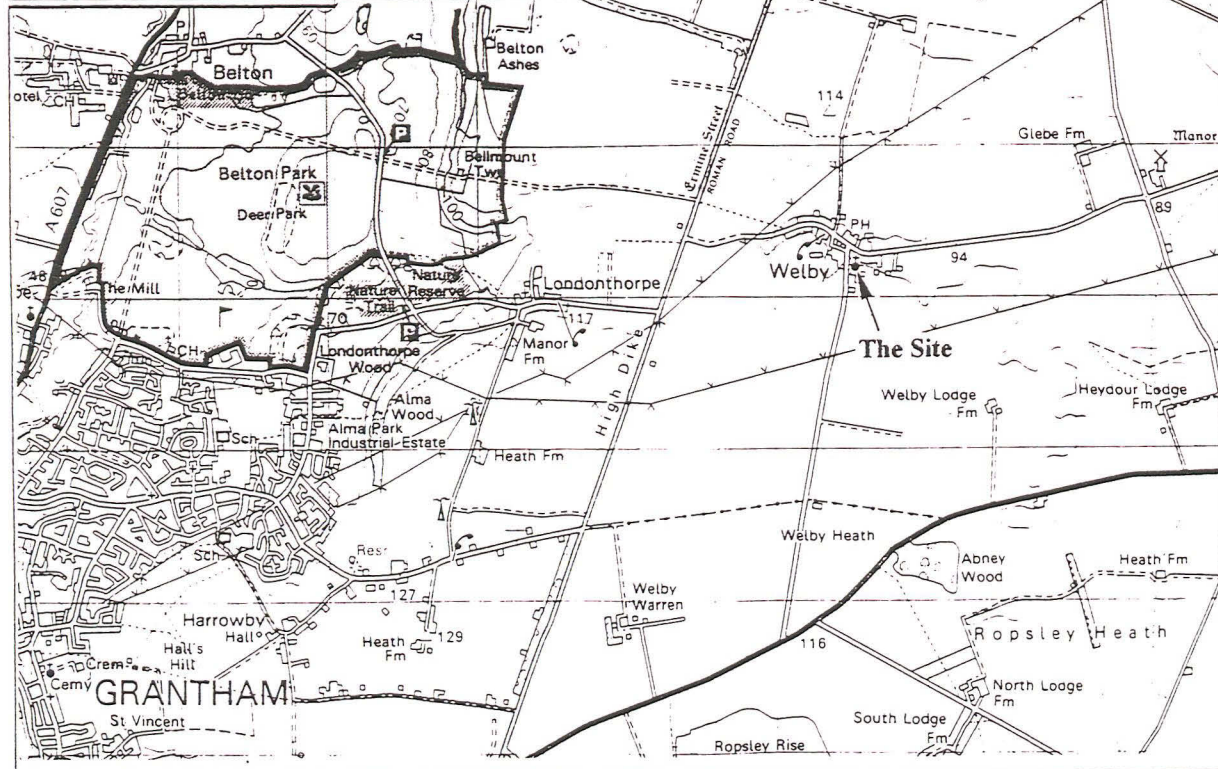
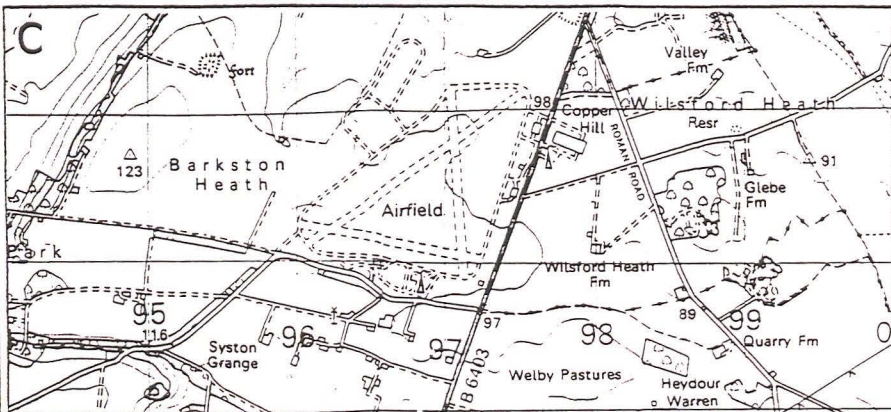
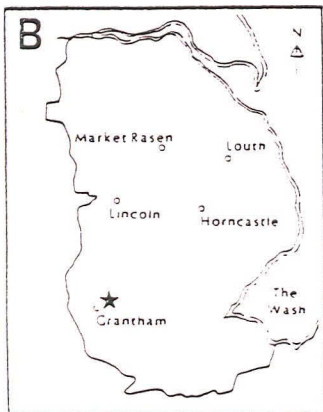
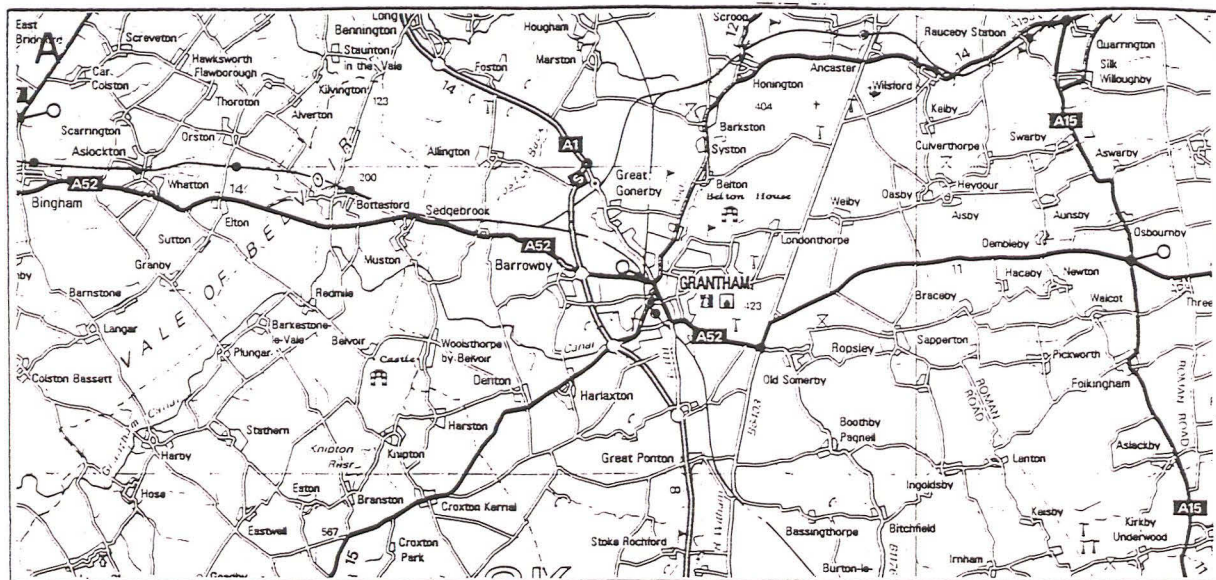


Fig. 1 Location of Welby. Inset C based on the 1998 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger map Sheet 130. Crown copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A.

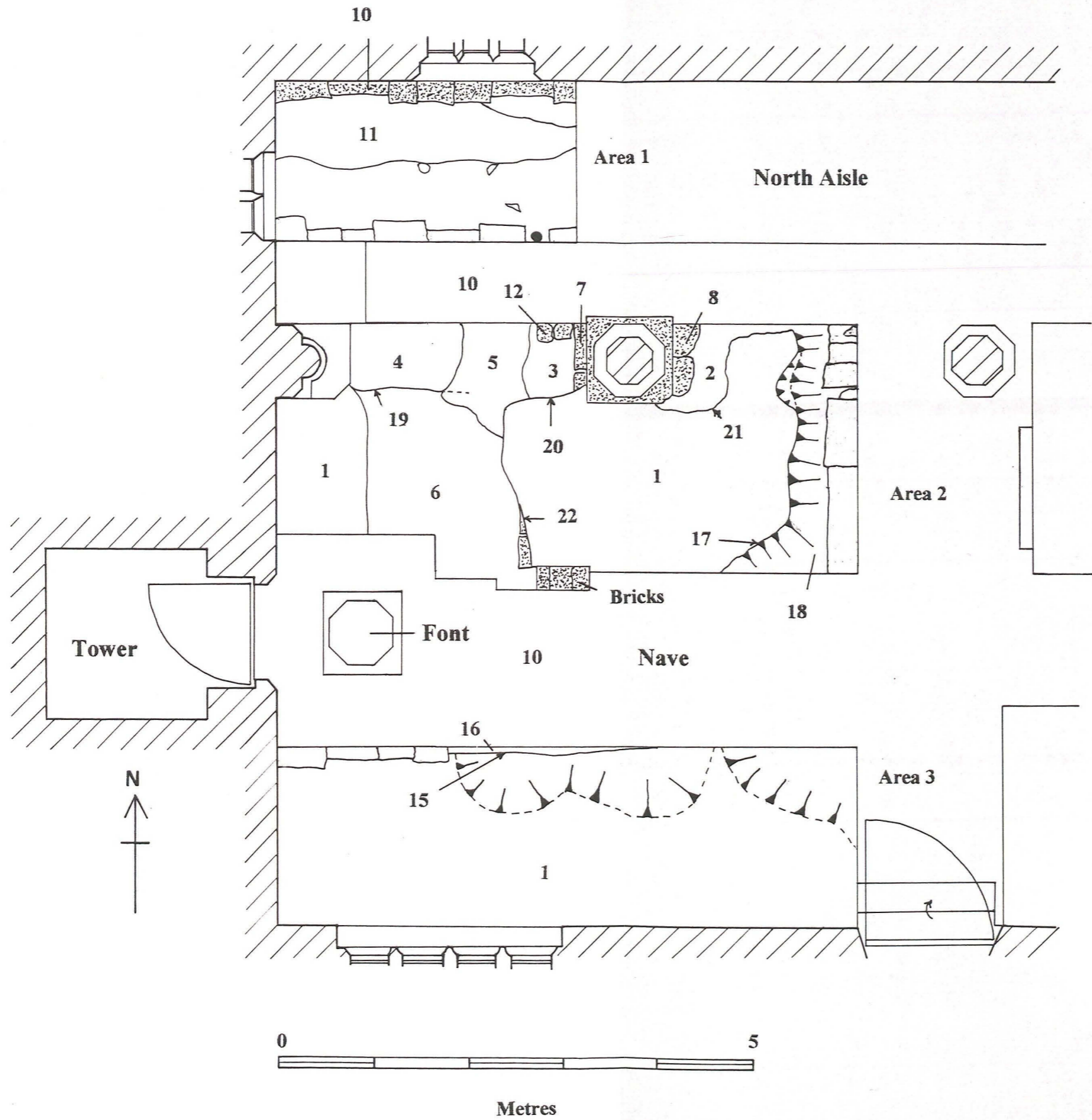


Fig. 2 St Bartholomew's church, Welby. General plan showing location of areas recorded (W. Booth, after plan supplied by Bond and Read Chartered Architects).

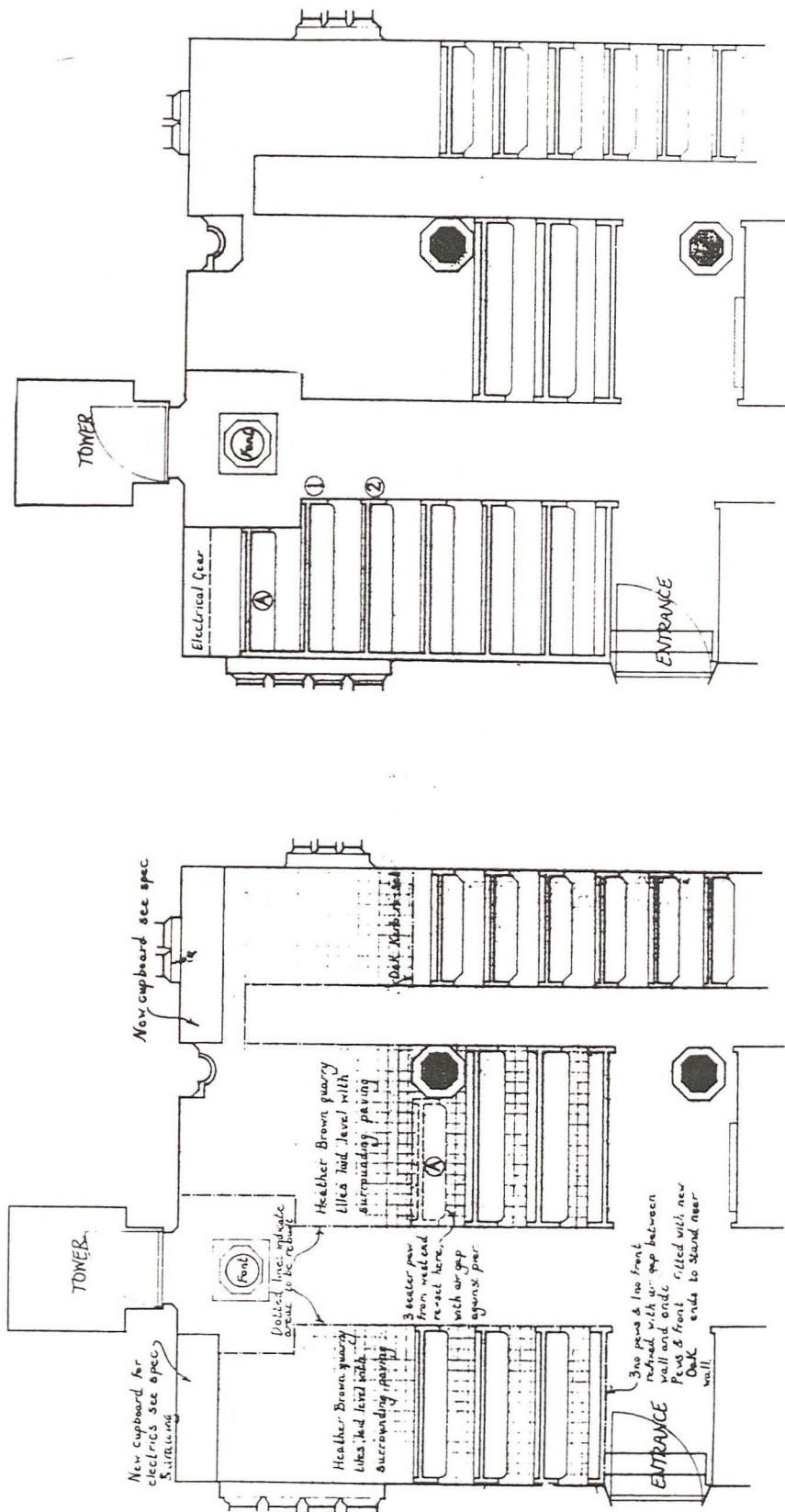


Fig. 3 St Bartholomew's church, Welby. General plan showing former and new layouts at west end of the church (Plan by Bond and Read Chartered Architects). Scale reduced to 1:100.

The Plates



Pl. 1 St Bartholomew's church Welby, south elevation, showing tower, porch and nave

Pl. 2 St Bartholomew's church Welby, view looking east showing tower, and north aisle





Pl. 3 Interior of church looking west, showing Area 2 (I) and Area 1 (behind the piers) after removal of the pew platforms and before clearance of the loose soil fill

Pl. 4 Area 1 after removal of upper fill with, looking west. (Scales 1m and 0.5m)





Pl. 5 Area 2 Area 2, general view looking west after cleaning to reveal mortar floor 1. (Scale 1m)



Pl. 6 Area 2 east end showing depression 17 after removal of fill. (Looking north, scales 1m and 0.5m)



Pl. 7 Area 2 west end showing disturbance 22 in foreground with mortar floor 1 to left and right. Grave 19 is to rear defined by the scales, (1m and 0.5m) Looking north.

Pl. 8 Area 2. Grave cut 19, looking south. (Scales 1m and 0.5m)





Pl. 9 Area 2. Disturbed area 20, west of aisle pier, looking north showing pier foundation to right of scale and two limestone blocks, possibly supports for the pew platform. (Scale 0.5m)

Pl. 10 Area 2 Disturbed area 21, east of aisle pier, looking west showing pier foundation above scale (Scale 0.5m)





Pl. 11 Area 3 general view after removal of pew platform and before cleaning looking west

Pl. 12 Area 3 general view after cleaning looking west showing extent of mortar floor 1 (Scale 1m)

