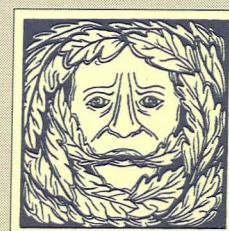
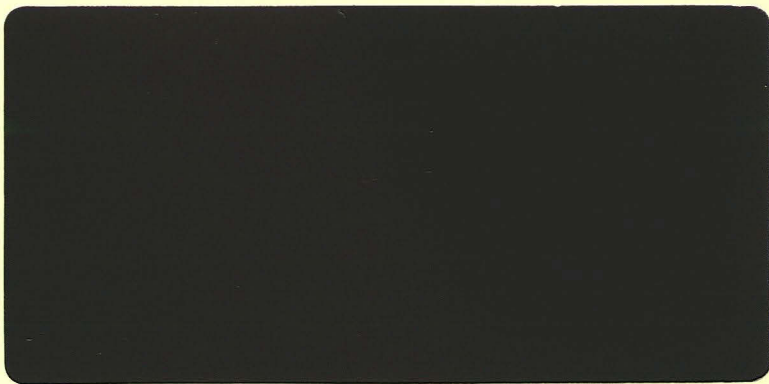


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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
OF DRAINAGE WORKS AT,  
ST. MARY'S CHURCH,  
NORTH SOMERCOTES,  
LINCOLNSHIRE  
(NCS 99)**



**A P S**  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
PROJECT  
SERVICES



Lincolnshire County Council  
Archives of Boston  
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
OF DRAINAGE WORKS AT,  
ST. MARY'S CHURCH,  
NORTH SOMERCOTES,  
LINCOLNSHIRE  
(NCS 99)**

Work Undertaken For  
Mack and Brown Chartered Architects  
on behalf of  
The Parochial Council

February 2000

Report Compiled by  
Paul Cope-Faulkner BA (Hons) AIFA

National Grid Reference: TF 423 957  
City and County Museum Accession No: 272.98

A.P.S. Report No. 18/00



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## 1. SUMMARY

*A watching brief was undertaken during drainage works at St. Mary's church, North Somercotes, Lincolnshire.*

*The church dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century with evidence for 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century additions. It has also been suggested that the church, located as it is on a slight prominence, was built on a saltern mound.*

*The investigations revealed a disturbed subsoil, which partly filled a possible grave cut and was overlain by modern topsoil. The only finds retrieved from the investigation were several pottery fragments of 18<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> century date and a coffin handle.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as 'a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons within a specified area, ..., where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed,' (IFA 1997).

### 2.2 Planning Background

On the 28<sup>th</sup> January 1999 a watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a drainage trench and soakaway at St. Mary's church, North Somercotes, Lincolnshire. The archaeological recording was commissioned by Mack and Brown Chartered Architects on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, and carried out by Archaeological Project Services.

### 2.3 Topography and Geology

North Somercotes is situated 12km northeast of Louth in East Lindsey District, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1).

St. Mary's church is located 750m to the south of the core of the modern village of North Somercotes at National Grid Reference TF 423 957 (Fig. 2). St. Mary's church is located on a slight prominence amongst the low lying land of the coastal plain at a height of c. 4m OD. The drainage trench and soakaway were located at the west of the church (Fig. 3).

Local soils are of the Agney Association, typically calcareous alluvial gley soils (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 87). The soils are developed on a drift geology of old storm beach deposits which in turn overlies a solid geology of Cretaceous Burnham Chalk (BGS 1990). Natural deposits encountered during the investigation comprised yellowish brown sand.

### 2.4 Archaeological Setting

St. Mary's church is located in an area of known archaeological remains dating from the medieval period. Somercotes is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of c. 1086. Referred to as *Summercotes* the name is derived from the Old English and simply means 'huts used in summer' (Ekwall 1974, 430). At the time of the Domesday Survey the land, grouped along with South Somercotes, was owned by the King, Roger of Poitou and Rainer de Brimou and contained 80 acres of meadow (Foster and Longley 1976). In the subsequent Lindsey Survey of c. 1115, the land owners are recorded as the Count of Brittany, Ansgot of Burwell, Hugh de Vallo, Ralf de Criol, Robert de Haia and Ralf Paganel (*ibid.*).

The church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century with

additions or alterations in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and repairs or restorations in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The church is located on a slight elevation which has been suggested as a possible saltern mound with similar characteristics to examples known from the Norfolk marsh (Owen 1984, 46). Known saltern mounds are present 1km to the east.

### 3. AIMS

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during the drainage works should be recorded and, if present, to determine their date, function and origin.

### 4. METHODS

The drainage trench and soakaway were both excavated by machine to the required depth. The exposed sections were cleaned and examined by hand. Each archaeological deposit or feature revealed within the trench was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10.

Finds recovered from the deposits identified in the watching brief were examined and a date was assigned where possible. Records of the deposits and features recognised during the investigation were also examined. A list of all contexts and interpretations appears as Appendix 1. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them, supplemented by artefact dating where relevant. A stratigraphic matrix of all identified deposits was produced.

## 5. RESULTS

Three phases were identified:

- Phase 1 Natural deposits
- Phase 2 Undated deposits
- Phase 3 Modern deposits

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

### Phase 1 Natural Deposits

The earliest deposit encountered during this investigation was a layer of light yellowish brown sand (004) exposed at the base of the trenches. Interpreted as a natural deposit, it may have formed as a result of marine alluvial processes.

### Phase 2 Undated deposits

Cut into the natural deposits was a shallow feature, at least 0.6m long and 0.1m deep (003). This feature, possibly a grave cut, was aligned east-west. Filling this possible grave and also overlying the natural deposits was a subsoil of mid brown sandy silt (002). This was up to 0.4m thick and a possible 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> century coffin handle was retrieved from this deposit.

Along the northern edge of the churchyard the subsoil changed to a yellowish brown silty clay (005), up to 0.32m thick.

### Phase 3 Modern Deposits

Sealing all deposits was a topsoil of blackish brown organic silt (001), measuring 0.45m thick.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Natural (Phase 1) deposits are represented

by a sand layer which probably derives from the old storm beach deposits noted on the geological map of the area.

Undated (Phase 2) deposits include a disturbed subsoil, some of which infills a possible grave, containing a number of fragments of disarticulated bone (these were not collected during the investigation). This deposit is unlikely to be a grave fill as it is quite extensive but may have formed as a result of continual grave digging since the church was founded. Support for this suggestion is provided by a detached lead coated iron coffin handle recovered from this layer, which also signifies the disturbance of a grave.

No evidence was retrieved to support the notion of a saltern in the immediate vicinity. However, it has previously been noted that soil associated with salterns are siltier than the underlying natural geology (Robson 1990, 27).

Apart from the coffin handle, finds comprise unstratified 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigations were undertaken at St. Mary's Church, North Somercotes, because the site lay within an area of known remains dating from the medieval period.

A disturbed subsoil was the earliest archaeological layer discovered and contained a coffin handle and a quantity of fragmented human bone.

Although human bone occurred there was no indications of other environmental evidence or waterlogging. Therefore, conditions are thought to be generally unsuitable for the survival of plant remains (eg, seeds, pollen,

plant macrofossils) other than through charring, although other environmental indicators (snail shells, insect remains, bone) may be preserved.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wish to acknowledge the assistance of Mr David Brown of Mack and Brown Chartered Architects who commissioned this investigation on behalf of Parochial Church Council. The work was coordinated by Gary Taylor and this report was edited by Tom Lane. Dave Start permitted access to parish files and library maintained by the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire.

## 9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Gary Taylor  
Supervisor: Fiona Walker  
Finds Processing: Denise Buckley  
Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner, Phil Mills  
Post-excavation Analyst: Paul Cope-Faulkner

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## 11. ABBREVIATIONS

BGS	British Geological Survey
DoE	Department of the Environment
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists

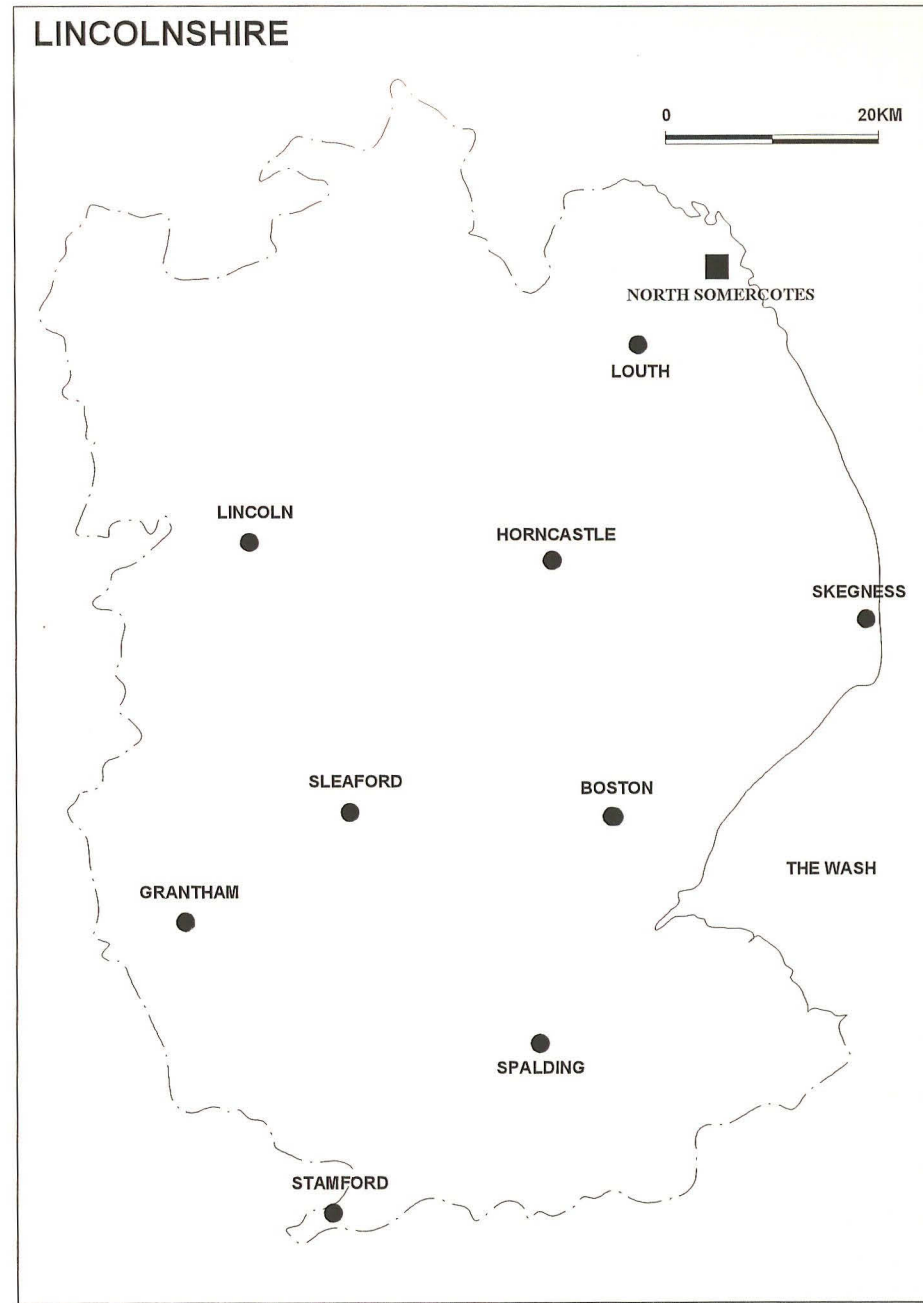
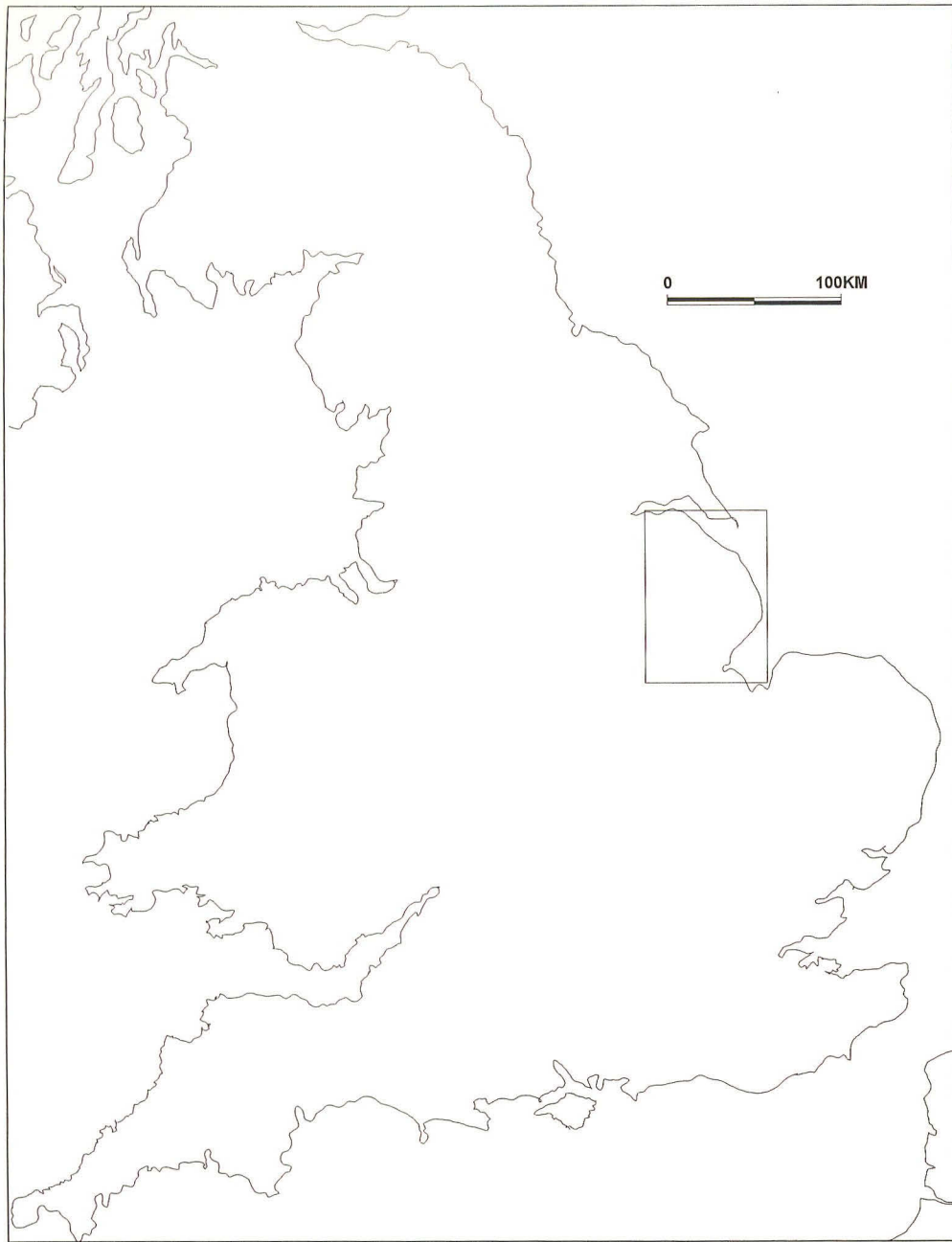


Figure 1 - General location map



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Figure 2 - Site location plan

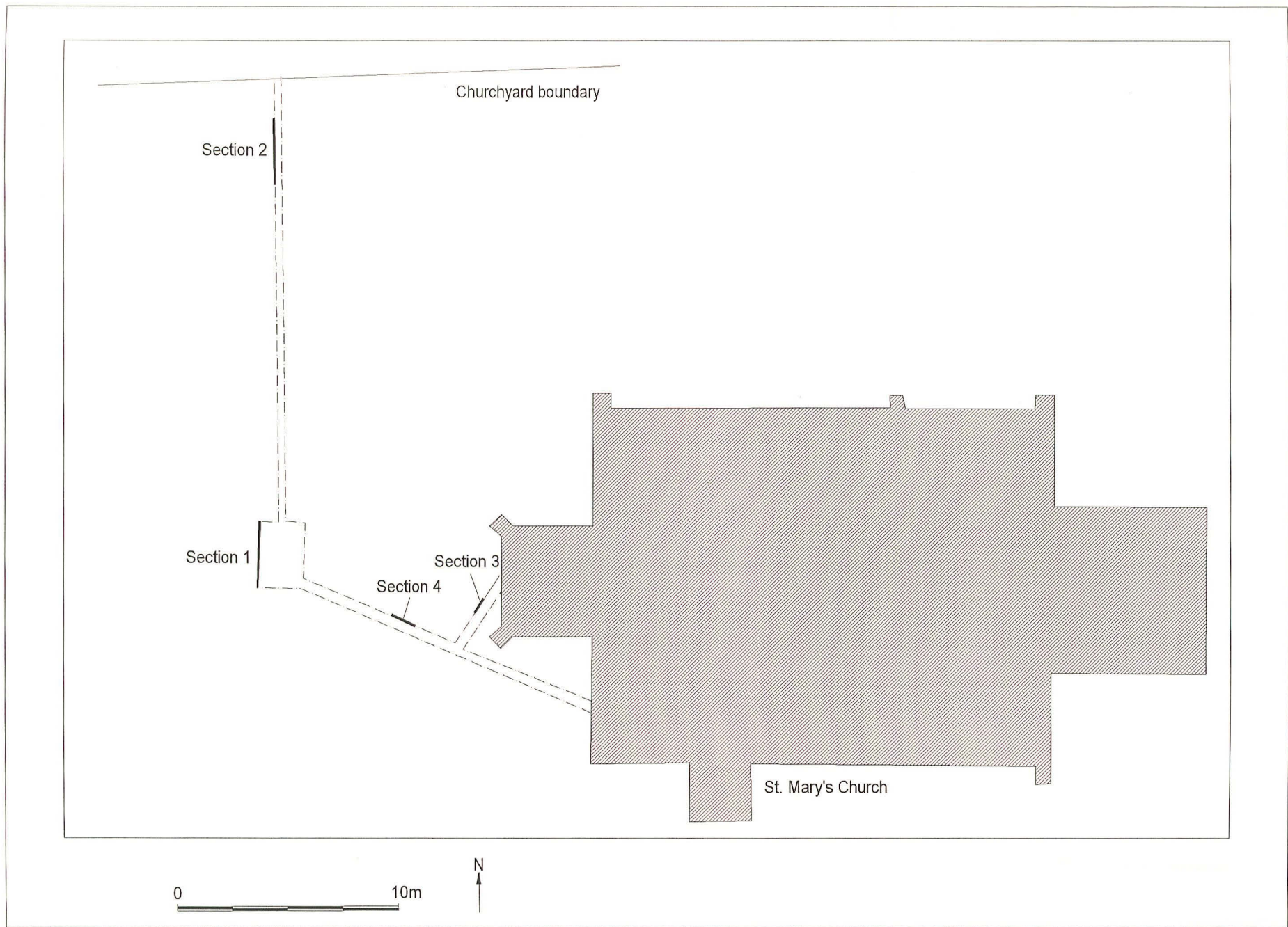


Figure 3 - St. Mary's church, showing drainage trenches and locations of drawn sections

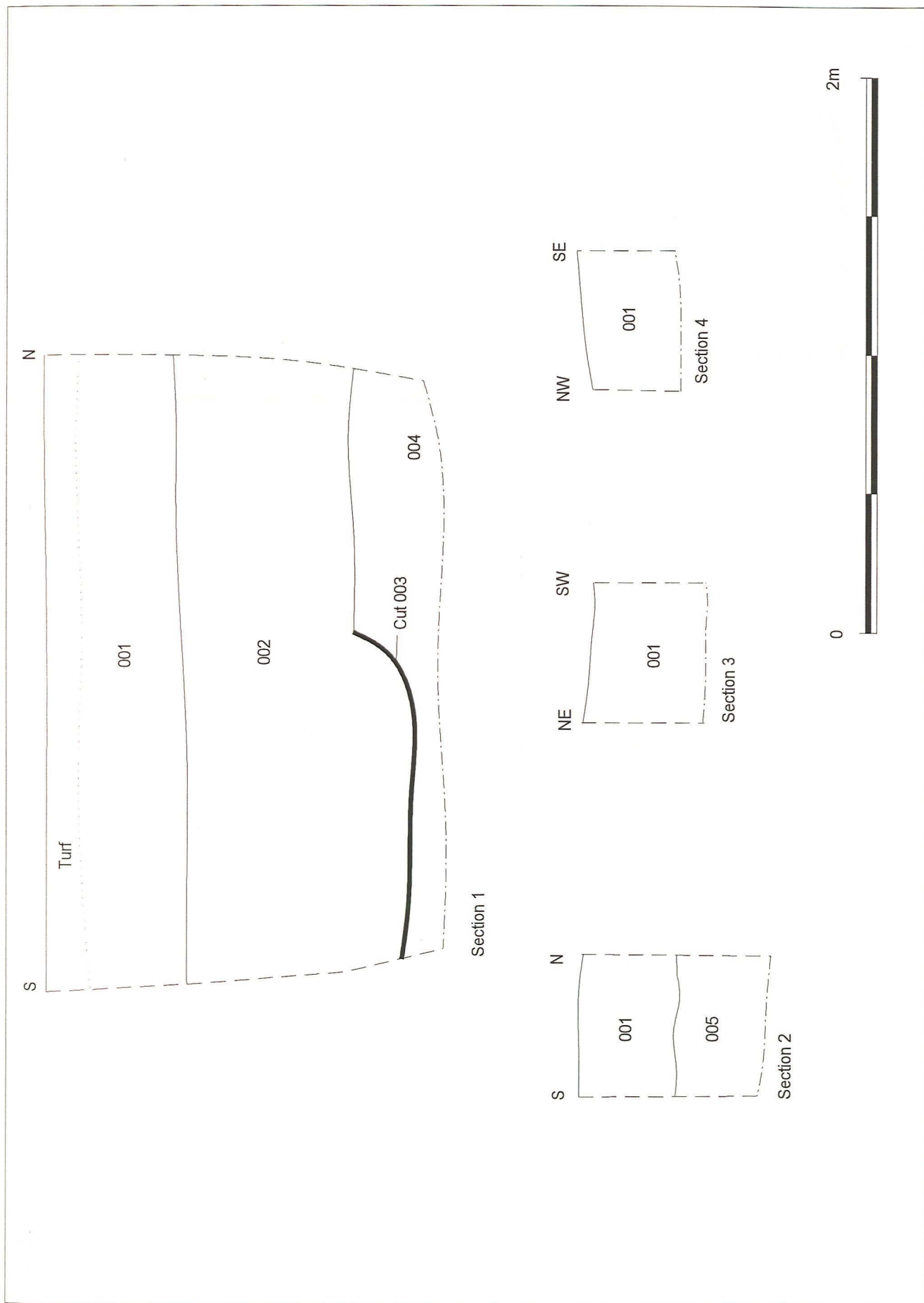


Figure 4 - Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4



Plate 1 - General view of St. Mary's church, looking west



Plate 2 - Section 1, looking west

## Appendix 1

### CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Description	Interpretation
001	Firm dark blackish brown organic silt, frequent root disturbance, 0.45m maximum thickness	Topsoil
002	Firm mid brown sandy silt, 0.4m thick	Disturbed subsoil
003	Cut, visible in section only, 0.1m deep, concave sides and a flat base, possibly orientated east-west	Possible grave cut
004	Firm light yellowish brown sand, >0.15m thick	Natural deposit
005	Firm mid yellowish brown silty clay, 0.32m thick	Subsoil

## Appendix 2

### THE FINDS *by Gary Taylor MA*

#### Provenance

The material was derived from unstratified deposits and the disturbed subsoil (002) within the churchyard. The material was random in distribution.

#### Range

The range of material is detailed in the table. Disturbed human bone was observed during the investigation but not retained.

Context	Description	Latest Date
+	3x creamware, late 18 <sup>th</sup> - 19 <sup>th</sup> century	20 <sup>th</sup> century
	1x salt glazed stoneware, ?flagon, late 18 <sup>th</sup> - early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	
	3x blue and white transfer printed pottery (1 pearlware), 19 <sup>th</sup> - early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	
	1x yellow and white glazed earthenware, late 19 <sup>th</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup> century	
002	1x iron coffin handle, coated with lead?. Iron screws with partially mineralised wood attached, ?18 <sup>th</sup> - 19 <sup>th</sup> century	?19 <sup>th</sup> century

+ = Unstratified finds

#### Condition

All the material is in good condition and presents no long term storage problems. The assemblage should be archived by material class.

#### Documentation

Records of archaeological sites and finds in North Somercotes are maintained in the Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Records. Basic records of the church architectural history are presented in published sources and the Department of the Environment listed buildings schedules.

#### Potential

The assemblage has little potential.



## Appendix 3

### GLOSSARY

<b>Context</b>	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretations of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, <i>e.g.</i> (004).
<b>Cut</b>	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, <i>etc.</i> Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
<b>Fill</b>	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) which become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
<b>Layer</b>	A layer is a term to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
<b>Medieval</b>	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
<b>Natural</b>	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity.
<b>Saltern</b>	Salt producing site typified by ash, derived from fuel needed to evaporate sea water, and briquetage.

## Appendix 4

### THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

5	Context records
1	Photographic record sheet
1	Drawing sheet
1	Bag of finds
1	Stratigraphic matrix

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services  
The Old School  
Cameron Street  
Heckington  
Sleaford  
Lincolnshire  
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Lincolnshire City and County Museum  
12 Friars Lane  
Lincoln  
LN2 1HQ

The archive will be deposited in accordance with the document titled *Conditions for the Acceptance of Project Archives*, produced by the Lincolnshire City and County Museum.

Lincolnshire City and County Council Museum Accession Number: 272.98

Archaeological Project Services Site Code: NCS99

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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