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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**All Saints Parish Church, Laughton, Lincs  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

**NGR: SK 8490 9730**

**Site Code: LAS 99**

**LCNCC Accn No.: 75.99**

Report prepared for  
Laughton Parochial Church Council

by

**G. Tann and F. N. Field**

**LAS Report No. 490**

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# All Saints Parish Church, Laughton Archaeological Watching Brief

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during excavation of drainage trenches and soakaways serving rainwater pipes from the church. Wall foundations observed beneath the existing north and south aisles may belong to earlier phases of the church. Most trenches were positioned above existing drains keeping fresh ground disturbance to a minimum.*

## **Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Brown and Buttrick, on behalf of Laughton Parochial Church Council, in January 1999 to conduct an archaeological watching brief during excavations for a new drainage system around the outside of Laughton Church. The watching brief was required by the Diocese of Lincoln to fulfil a condition of the Faculty. Groundworks were monitored by N. Field and G. Tann on April 12th and 14th, and May 5th and 11th 1999.

## **Site Location and Description**

The village of Laughton is situated in the Trent valley on Cover Sands c. 8km north-east of Gainsborough (Fig. 1). The parish church lies close to the centre of the present village. It is bounded by the main road through the village on its west side which also forms the southern boundary of the churchyard. There is no churchyard on its north side and the church itself forms the southern boundary of a private garden.

## **Scope of Work**

A specification for the replacement of existing rainwater goods and new drains detailed new underground drains from rainwater pipes on the north aisle, vestry north and south aisle walls. All drains were to lead into small soakaways. An archaeological watching brief was required to monitor all groundworks connected with the new drains.

## **Archaeological Background**

Laughton is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when it was the centre of two estates, one held by Roger of Poitou, the other by Guy of Craon. This is probably reflected in the sprawling plan of the village with settlement running north and east of the church. The church is situated in the centre of the village but former extensive earthworks to its east may have been the original nucleus of the village, cleared in one of the county's great depopulations recorded in 1607 (Everson 1991). The church itself is built mainly of coursed limestone rubble with ashlar quoins, plinths and details.

The earliest surviving fabric is the late twelfth century north arcade; the south arcade is thirteenth century, the tower fourteenth century, and the north aisle fifteenth century in date. The chancel was rebuilt in 1894 as part of an extensive restoration (DOE 1985, 18-19).

There has been no tradition of archaeological discoveries in the churchyard or its immediate environs.

### **The Watching Brief (Fig. 2)**

Context numbers were assigned by LAS for recording observations seen during the excavations for the new drains. These numbers were used on finds, and on the plan and section drawings included in this report. A trench was dug round the full perimeter of the church.

### **Tower**

The main body of the tower is constructed in narrow courses of limestone with ashlar quoins and angle buttresses. There is a moulded ashlar plinth at the base of the tower with a chamfered course at ground level. On the south side of the tower (Pl. 1), foundations of large flat stone slabs beneath the buttress at the angle between the tower and the south aisle were recorded (1). They were off-set 0.5m to the south, and 0.65m to the west of the above-ground plinth (Pl. 2). The tower south wall foundations (2) (Pl.3) comprise three off-set courses projecting 0.35m south at the east end, but tapering to a 0.2m at the SW corner buttress (3). The well-prepared masonry of foundation (2) probably reflects a slightly mis-aligned foundation trench.

The buttress foundations at the south-west angle of the tower are off-set to the south and west by between 0.1m and 0.2m (3) (Pl. 4). One sherd of medieval pottery was found in the disturbed ground through which the new drain trench cut. Human skeletal remains were exposed at the base of the trench, but were covered and left in place. A small number of bones were collected from the spoil for reburial.

The trench crossed in front of the tower west door, revealing a series of ash, clinker, gravel and brick dust deposits (4) which were the remains of successive paths leading to the entrance. No surfaces of particular age were seen.

The NW angle of the tower is obstructed by a brick wall and shed. A separate 0.6m wide and 0.8m deep trench was dug along the northern side of the church. At the NE corner of the tower, is a stair turret (5) which is constructed in ashlar blocks (Pl. 5) but the plinth continues round. Below ground level, its foundation comprises a five-course off-set (Pl. 6).

### **The North Aisle**

The north aisle of the church forms the southern boundary of a private property (Pl. 7). The foundations beneath the aisle west wall are two courses of large flat slabs of stone forming an off-

set 0.45m wide (6) . The large stones of the aisle foundations appear to be earlier than those of the stair turret (5) while the aisle wall itself appears to butt the stair turret wall. This suggests that the north aisle has been rebuilt on earlier foundations which predate the stair turret.

The foundations along the aisle north wall (7) comprise much smaller stones and are quite different in character to those beneath the west wall (Pls 8 and 9). It is possible that the present aisle is slightly broader than an earlier version. This interpretation fits with the fact that the north arcade is Norman while the windows of the north aisle are 15<sup>th</sup> century confirming a rebuild of an earlier aisle.

The drainage trench along the aisle north wall trench was 0.6m deep and exposed an orange/brown sandy loam subsoil. No evidence of grave cuts was seen, but visible in the northern side of the trench was the backfill of the previous drainage trench.

#### **The Vestry/Organ Chamber**

At the eastern end of the north aisle is the nineteenth century vestry/organ chamber (8) which projects slightly beyond the aisle wall alignment. The windows imitate the fifteenth century style of those in the north aisle. Access is through entrances in the east wall of the north aisle and the chancel north wall. The buttress at the junction with the north aisle wall belongs to the Victorian work of the vestry (Pl. 10).

A new oil tank was sited in the angle between the vestry/organ chamber and the chancel (Pls. 11 and 12). Neither the foundations for the tank support, or for the new drain trench around the walls, revealed any features beyond the walls. The east wall of the vestry (9) has a moulded plinth and a chamfered course at ground level, similar to that around the tower which looks very worn in places and is probably reused. The wall butts the chancel south wall (which has neither plinth or chamfer on this elevation).

#### **The Chancel**

The chancel was rebuilt in 1894 and the trench for the new drain around this part of the church was not inspected.

#### **The South Aisle (Pl. 14)**

The trench was excavated slightly to the south of the wall, in order to avoid accidental damage to the masonry. At intervals, small areas of the foundations above the level of the trench base were cleaned (Pl. 14). These revealed that, although at the eastern end of the aisle the wall rests on the edge of its foundation, the foundation gradually projects as the porch is approached. On closer examination, two distinct types of construction were observed.

At the east end the foundation (10) is of regular rectangular blocks of limestone (Pl. 15). About 0.5m below the present ground level is a chamfered course, offset about 0.05m from the wall. Just



west of the east window, 5m from the corner, the character of the foundation changes and becomes broader and more the rubble coursing more irregular (11) (Pl. 16). It is on a slightly different alignment to the present wall, and protrudes 0.3m from the aisle wall near the porch (Pl. 17). Its stones are bonded with a light brown clay loam. The drainage trench was not sufficiently deep or wide to reveal any associated construction trench. Above ground level, mortar had been used to join the rubble foundation crudely with the overlying wall, offering a further hint that the existing wall incorporates *in situ* fabric of an earlier wall.

### **The Porch**

The porch was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pl. 19), probably replacing an earlier porch because lower courses of the foundations beneath its east wall (13) appear to be contemporary with foundation (11) (Pl. 18). Some cut and dressed masonry blocks in the porch wall face, near the corner, are probably re-used blocks from earlier demolition rubble.

On the western side of the porch, the foundations (14) are offset from the wall about 0.15, and appear very different from those to the east. A drain has disturbed the corner where the porch rejoins the aisle.

To the west of the porch, the aisle foundation (12) is similar to that seen at its eastern end, with no evidence of the rubble noted at (11) (Pl. 20).

### **Conclusion**

The watching brief identified two, possibly three, lengths of foundation which pre-date the existing church fabric. All these foundations appeared to be medieval rather than earlier. They suggest that the south aisle was about 5m shorter than the existing version, and that the north aisle may have been widened when rebuilt. There were also signs of an earlier structure, presumably a vestry or chapel, on the site of the organ chamber.

No evidence of any features pre-dating the church were found. Occasional exposures of existing drains at the base and sides of the new trenches was proof that the new drainage scheme has been successful in mitigating further damage to archaeological features.

### **Acknowledgements**

LAS is grateful for the co-operation received from Laughton PCC, their architect Mr Eirikur Walton and their on site contractors.

Specialist identification of pottery was by Jane Young (LAS), and the illustrations were prepared by

Geoff Tann  
December 2000

### **References**

DOE 1985 *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, West Lindsey*. Department of the Environment.

Everson P.L., Taylor C. C. and Dunn C. J. 1991 *Change and Continuity; Rural Settlement in North-West Lincolnshire* HMSO

### **Archive Summary**

Correspondence

Developer's plans

Field sketch plan and section drawings

Inked plan

Photographs: LAS colour print film nos. 99/15/16-18; 99/16/31-36; 99/18/22-27; 99/38/27-37; 99/39/0-4, 11-24 (including those used in this report)

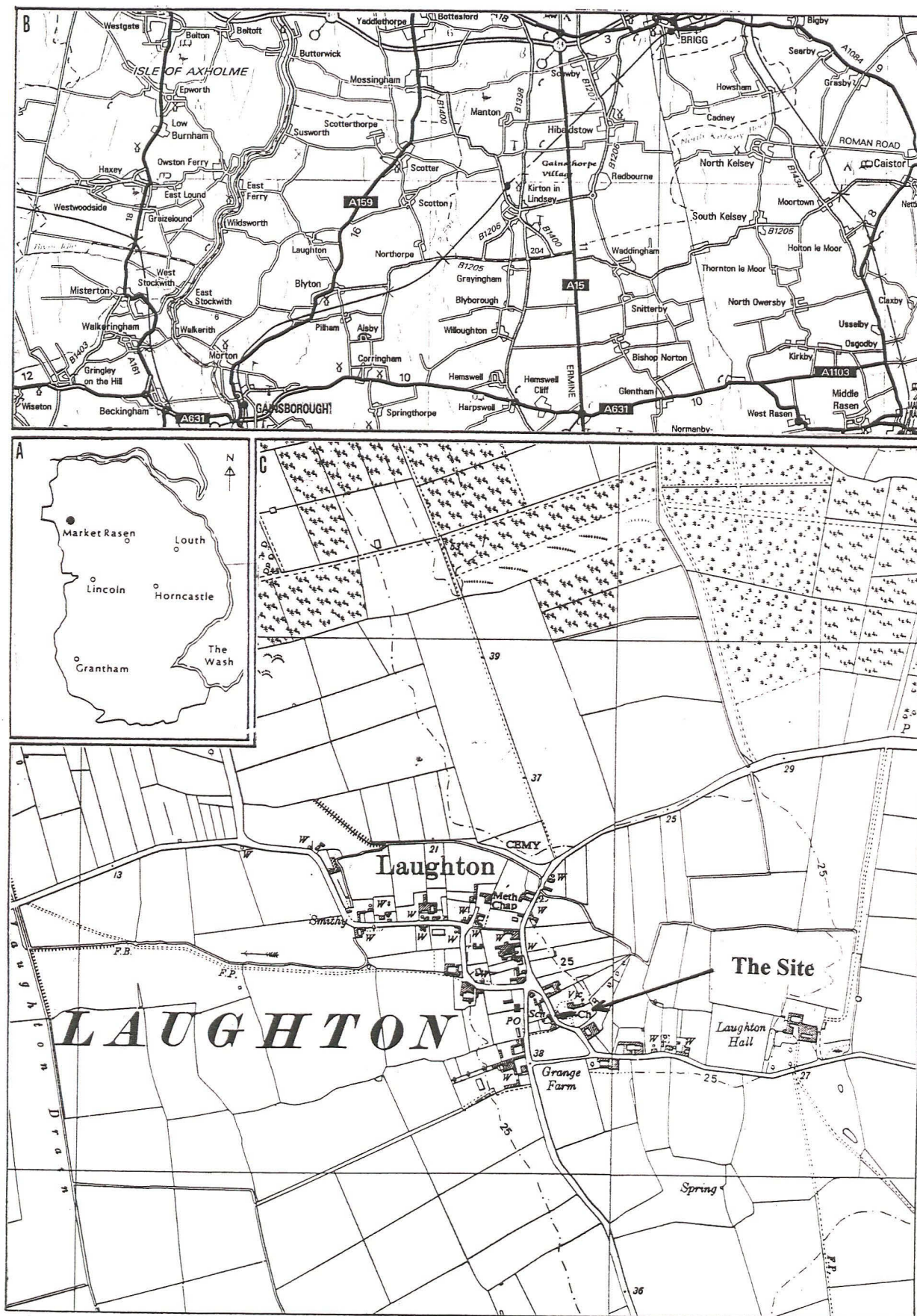


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**Fig. 2** Laughton village in 1849, showing areas of medieval occupation (hatched). From Everson et al. 1991

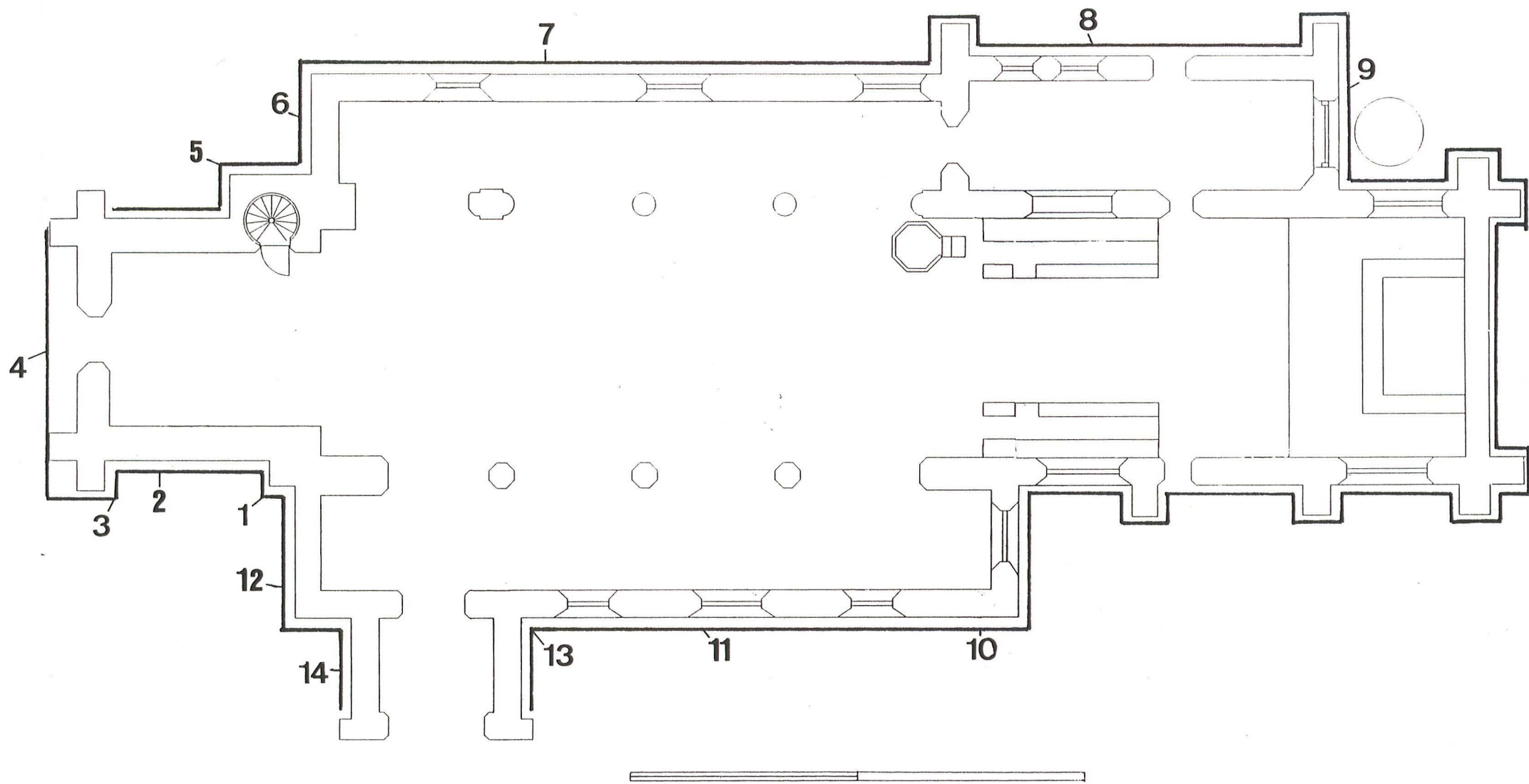


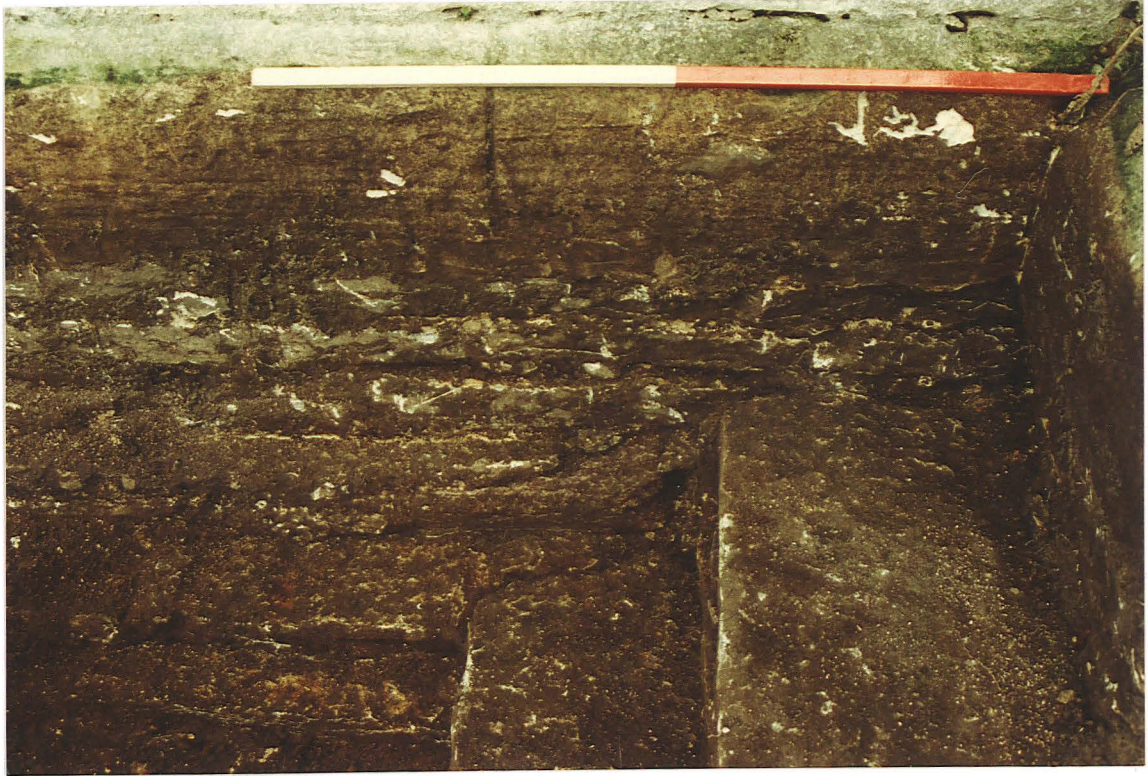
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Pl. 2 SE tower buttress foundations and south aisle wall top right





**Pl. 3 Junction of SE tower buttress and tower south wall foundations**

**Pl. 4 Angle buttresses at SW corner of tower with off-set foundations**





PI. 5 North side of Laughton church tower with stair turret in NE angle





**Pl. 6 Stair turret foundations sitting over the broad foundations beneath the north aisle west wall**



**Pl. 7** General view of the north aisle and vestry (left) with the nave clerestory above



**Pl. 8 NW angle of the north aisle showing different character of the foundations along the north and west walls**

**Pl. 9 View looking east along north aisle north wall showing neat, off-set foundations of small sized stone**

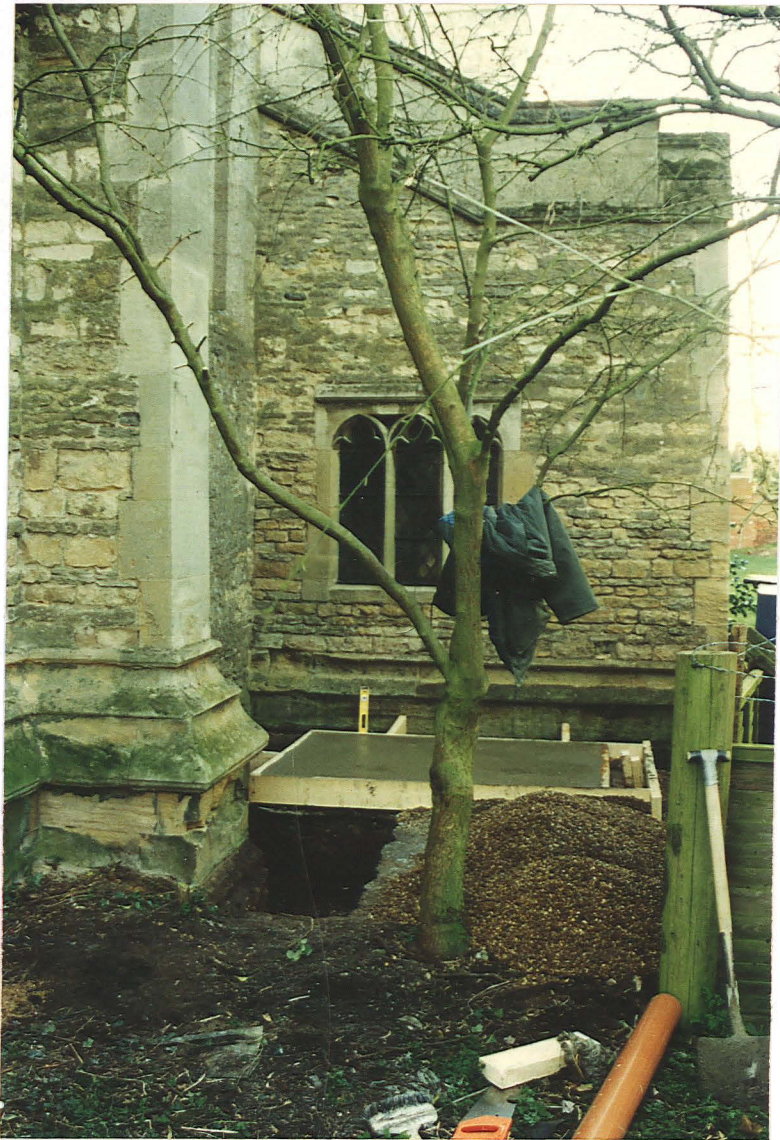




**Pl. 10** Added buttress at junction of north aisle and vestry

**Pl. 11** General view of east end of church showing chancel and vestry





Pl. 12 Concrete base for oil tank in north of chancel

Pl. 13 Detail showing vestry wall (right) butting chancel north wall (right)





Pl. 14 General view along south aisle south wall

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