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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**St Helen's Church, Little Cawthorpe, Lincolnshire  
Archaeological Recording**

**NGR: TF 3570 8372  
Site Code: LCCB 00  
LCNCC Accn No.: 2000.9**

**Report for  
Lee Holmes**

**by  
Mark Williams**

CROXLEY  
heritage

**LAS Report No. 535  
May 2001**



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Fig. 1 St Helen's Church, Little Cawthorpe. Inset C reproduced from the 1:25,000 OS Map. Crown copyright, reproduced with the permission of the controller of HMSO, OS Licence No. AL 100002165.

Fig. 2 St Helen's Church, Little Cawthorpe. Location of new drainage trenches.

## Plates

Pl. 1 General view of the north elevation of St Helen's Church, Little Cawthorpe.

Pl. 2 Trench 1, looking north, showing crushed chalk pathway. Scale 1m.

Pl. 3 Trench 2, looking north. Scale 1m.

Pl. 4 Trench 3, Looking north showing top of stepped foundations and backfilled test pit from 1998 evaluation. Scale 1m.

Pl. 5 Trench 5, Looking south. Scale 1m.

**St Helen's Church, Little Cawthorpe, Lincolnshire**  
**Archaeological Recording**

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**Summary**

*Archaeological recording was carried out during a continuing programme of maintenance of St Helen's church. No archaeological features or artifacts were found during excavation of five drainage trenches because the depth of excavation was generally not deep enough to extend below modern deposits.*

**Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned by Lee Holmes to carry out a programme of recording at the above site during the excavation of drainage trenches from the church to soakaway pits, located 5m from the church. The aim of the investigations was record any archaeological remains disturbed by the groundworks. The archaeological work was carried out on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2000 by Mark Williams and Jeremy Mordue.

**Site Location**

Little Cawthorpe is located 2.5 miles south-east of Louth in the Lincolnshire Wolds. The church (Pl. 1) is located on elevated ground in the centre of the village. The underlying geology is a cap of boulder clay overlying chalk.

**History**

The place-name Cawthorpe means Keli's settlement and consists of a Scandinavian personal name (*Keli*) + *thorp* - Old Danish for a secondary settlement. The 'Little' distinguishes it from another Cawthorpe, now lost, in the parish of Covenham. The first surviving reference to this small village is in c.1150, but although not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 its Scandinavian place-name suggests earlier origins. The site of a Cistercian nunnery (Legbourne Priory) lies between Cawthorpe and the nearby village of Legbourne.

The existing church was completed in 1860, apparently built on the site of a previous church and possibly on the same foundations. Little information exists about the plan of the previous building or its position with regard to the existing church. There is no record of any faculty having been issued for the construction of the new church.

An evaluation carried out by Lindsey Archaeological Services in 1998 found no evidence of an earlier church (Field and Williams 1998). Three explanations were suggested in that report:

1. The most likely explanation is that the earlier church was smaller than the later church and located inside the foundations of the present church.
2. The earlier church was exactly the same size as the present church and precisely located on the earlier foundations. This is less likely as the evaluation recorded evidence of the Victorian foundations cutting through earlier burials. However, medieval foundations have also been found to cut through burials elsewhere.
3. The earlier church was larger than this church with the foundations extending beyond the area of the previous evaluation. This again is unlikely as there was no evidence of floor surfaces in the test pits excavated during the evaluation.

#### **Method**

The new drains were positioned to take the flow from rainwater drainpipes from the roof. They originally emptied into a ceramic drain that ringed the church but which has since become blocked. The location of the new drainage trenches is shown on Fig. 2. The excavation of the drains was undertaken by hand, with the 3m closest to church of each of the trenches being hand dug by archaeologists. A full context record was maintained, together with a photographic record of the archaeological works.

#### **Results**

The drains increased with depth from the church to the soakaway pits. They were approximately 0.30m deep close to the church. The 1998 evaluation showed that the general sequence of building construction was a crushed chalk base, overlain by sandstone and in turn overlain by brick. This sequence was supported by the limited evidence provided by the drainage trenches.

#### *Trench 1*

Located at the western junction of the porch and the nave, running NE-SW. This trench did not extend below the overburden although a deposit of crushed chalk c.1m wide and 0.01m deep was found approximately 2m from the church. This is possibly part of a path previously running along the western side of the nave which can be seen as a slight depression in the ground (Pl.2).

*Trench 2*

Located at the western junction of the porch and the nave. This did not extend below the modern overburden until approximately 2m from the church (Pl. 3). There were no archaeological features in the trench although the 'natural' was disturbed in areas which may have represented backfilled graves.

*Trench 3*

Partly located within Test Pit 6 of the 1998 investigation. Beyond this, the excavation did not extend below the overburden until approximately 3m from the church limit (Pl. 4). The 'natural' was an orange brown silty clay and often appeared mixed, probably evidence of backfilled graves.

*Trench 4*

Located west of the entrance to the vestry. Again this trench did not extend below the overburden. At this point the foundations were relatively close to the surface and showed the same sequence as revealed in Test Pit 2 of the 1998 evaluation, with the same stepped profile and only the top of the sandstone foundation visible.

*Trench 5*

Located in the centre of the northern wall of the nave, this trench did not extend below the overburden until 3m from the church at the limit of the archaeologically excavated trench (Pl. 5).

**Conclusion**

The depth of the drainage trenches was, in most cases insufficient to penetrate the overburden within 3m of the church. The only archaeological remains found were the possible remains of a relatively recent path found in Trench 1. None of the trenches revealed significant amounts of the foundations and therefore there was little that could be added to the results of the 1998 investigation.

**Acknowledgments**

The fieldwork was carried out by Jeremy Mordue and the author. Naomi Field edited this report.

**References**

Field, N. and Williams, M. (1998). *St Helen's Church, Little Cawthorpe, Archaeological Evaluation* unpublished archive report for Hockley and Dawson Consulting Engineers

Mark Williams

15<sup>th</sup> May 2001



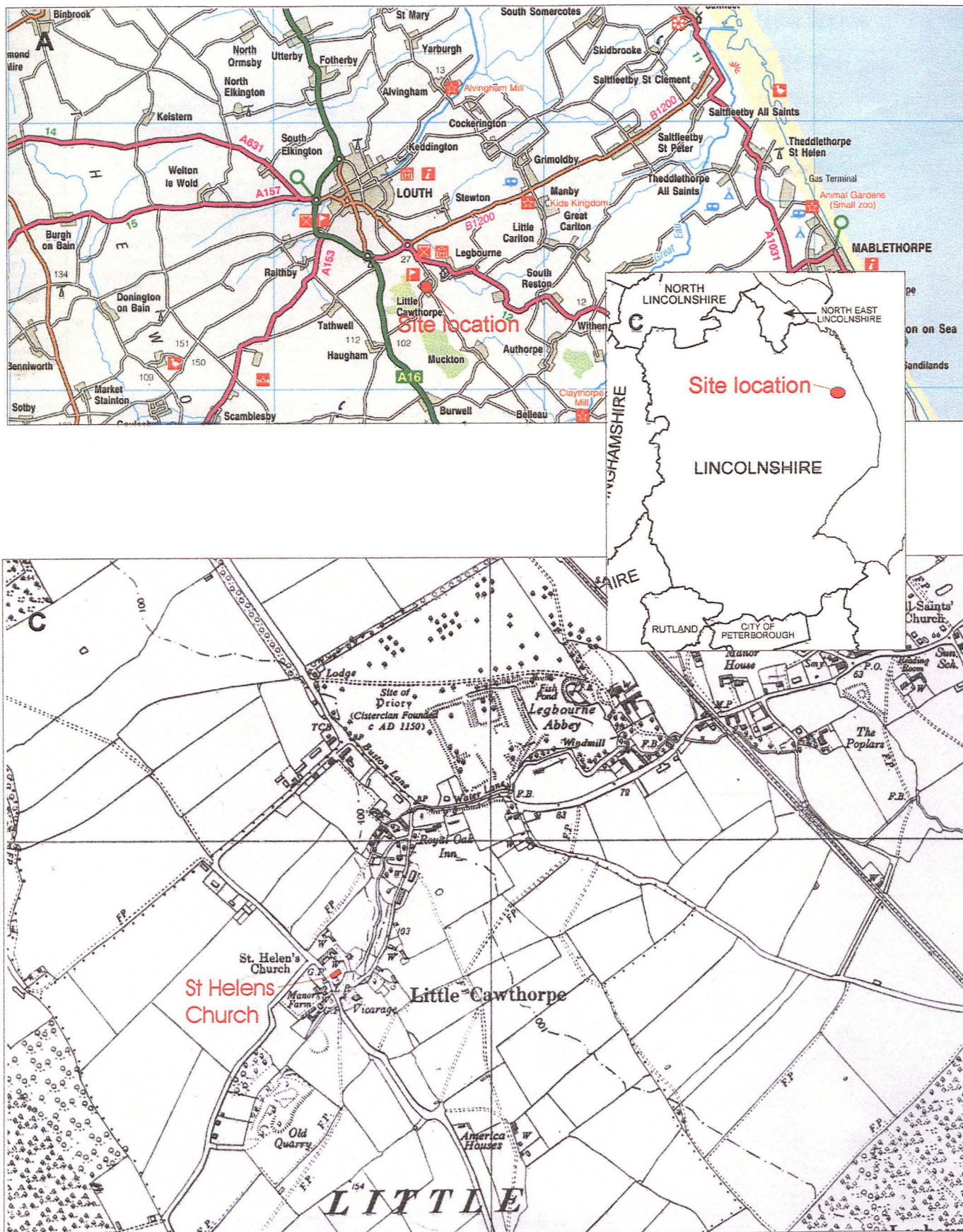


Fig. 1 St Helen's Church, Little Cawthorpe. Inset C reproduced from the 1:25,000 OS Map. Crown copyright, reproduced with the permission of the controller of HMSO, LAS Licence number AL 100002165

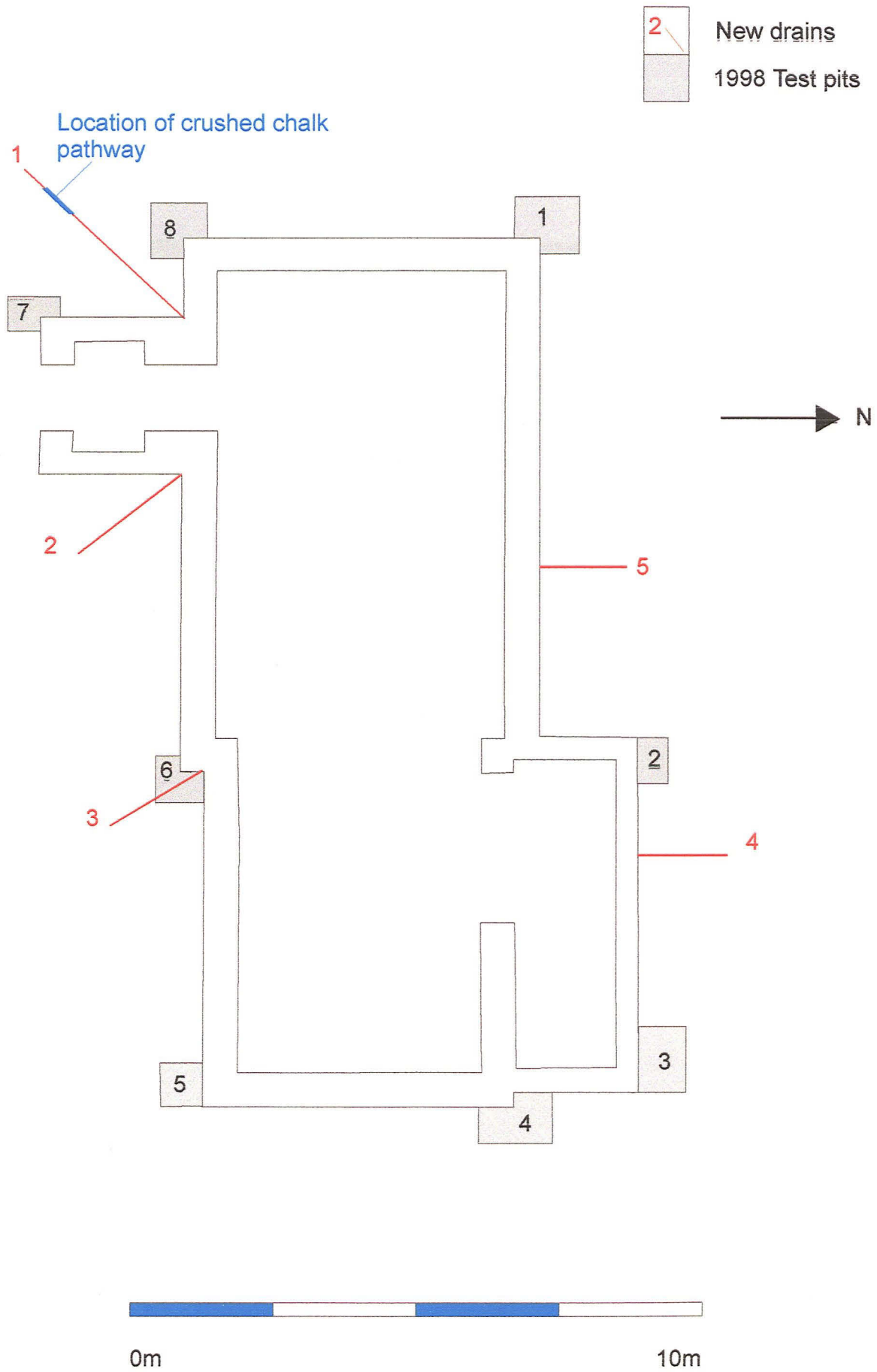
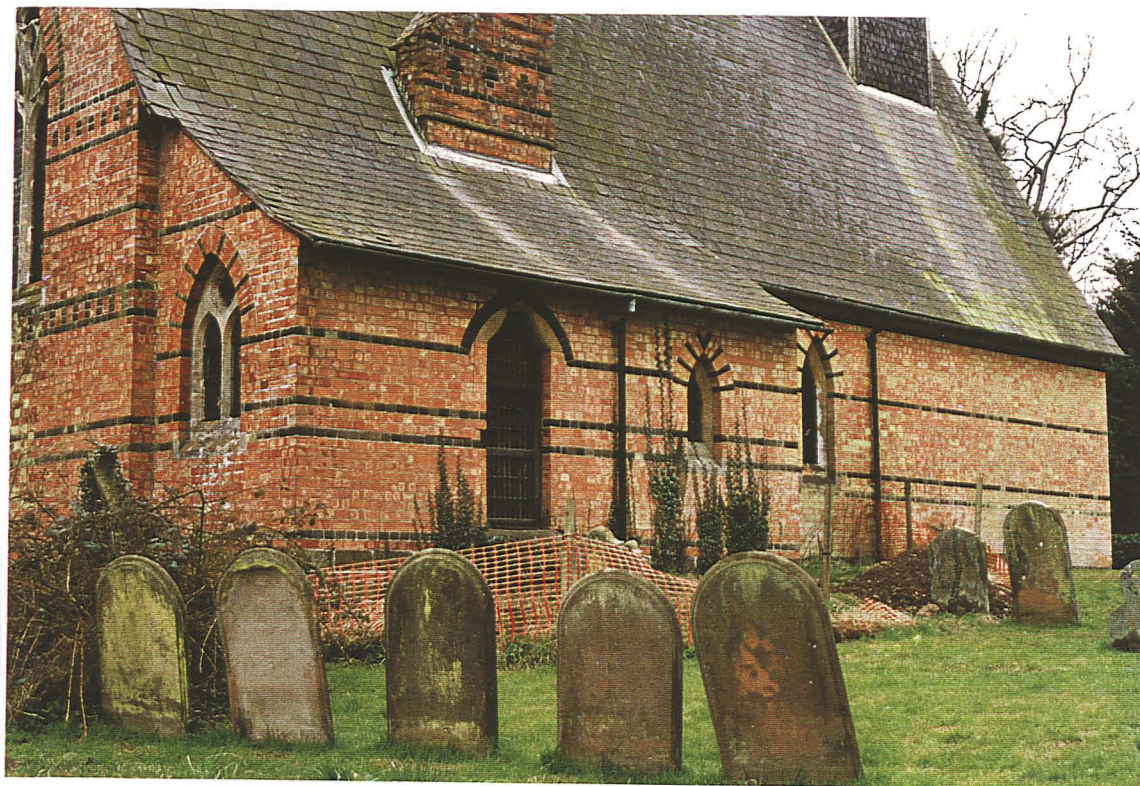


Fig. 2 St Helen's Church, Location of new drainage trenches



Pl. 1 General view of the north elevation of St Helen's Church, Little Cawthorpe.



Pl. 2 Trench 1, looking north, showing crushed chalk pathway. Scale 1m.



Pl. 3 Trench 2, looking north. Scale 1m.



Pl. 4 Trench 3, Looking north showing top of stepped foundations and backfilled test pit from 1998 evaluation. Scale 1m.



Pl. 5 Trench 5, Looking south. Scale 1m.