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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**St. Martin's Church, Welton le Wold, Lincs.**

**NGR: TF 2735 8730**

**LAS Site Code: WWSM 01**

**LCNCC Museum Accn No.: 2001.115**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Report**

**for John Stainton (Architect)**

**on behalf of**

**Welton le Wold Parochial Church Council**

**by**

**N. Field**

**LAS Report No. 579**

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**St. Martin's Church, Welton le Wold, Lincs.**  
**Archaeological Watching Brief**  
NGR: TF 2735 8730  
LAS Site Code: WWSM 01  
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**Summary**

*Archaeological monitoring during the groundworks for a new toilet identified a single surviving clay floor surface in the west tower, and the internal foundation trench for the tower walls. Features associated with Victorian and more recent heating arrangements were also recorded. A single sherd of thirteenth century pottery was found. Excavation of a hole for a septic tank to the west of the tower revealed ~~ten~~ burials and six pieces of pre-Conquest pottery, confirming that Saxon settlement of the area lies close by.*

**Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned in March 2001 by Welton le Wold Parochial Church Council to conduct a watching brief during groundworks for a toilet and septic tank at St. Martin's Church, Welton le Wold. The watching brief was required in order to comply with a condition of the Faculty, and was undertaken by Naomi Field on 8th May and 22nd May 2001. Monitoring of the soakaway took place on October 8<sup>th</sup> 2001.

**Site Location and Archaeological Background**

Welton le Wold is situated 6km west of Louth, on the east side of the Lincolnshire wolds. Cropmarks of possible Romano-British enclosures have been identified south-east of the modern village to the NW of Bunkers Farm and there are several Bronze Age round barrows in the parish.

At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 the settlement at Welton belonged to a number of manors (estates). Only one manor was based in Welton itself, that belonging to Count Alan. It is recorded that there was a mill and a church belonging to this manor. (Lands belonging to manors in Gayton le Wold, south Cadeby and Muckton are also recorded in Welton le Wold.) The earthwork remains of the medieval settlement of Welton le Wold lies immediately east of the parish church and to the east of the modern settlement.

Although the St. Martin's church is record in Domesday Book there is no visible Saxon fabric in the building. The west tower is late-thirteenth/mid-fourteenth century date (Pl. 1). The west window is of Perpendicular style. The nave and chancel were rebuilt in 1850, with a fireplace, and the heating system and boiler in the tower were installed after that date.

**The Watching Brief**

The monitored groundworks were for new toilets and a kitchen area within the west tower, and a septic tank in the graveyard adjacent to the west door (Figs 2 and 3).

### **Interior of West Tower (Fig. 4)**

LAS had been advised that only the nineteenth century floorboards would have been lifted before the first monitoring visit was made. In practice, the area inside the tower had been lowered by about 0.7m, which was described as having been loose material below the removed floor (Pl. 2). The builders reported that the floor had been supported on joists, laid irregularly on the loose fill which incorporated mortar and brick fragments. Pieces of window glass of post-medieval date were also present.

Deposits below floor level on the southern side of the tower had been removed for the insertion of the Victorian boiler house. There were three steps down from the stair turret (to the west) to the boiler house. A brick retaining wall had been constructed along the edge of the soil deposits, and this formed one side of a coal storage pit in the centre of the tower, which had served the boiler which was a predecessor to the oil fired boiler. The 1.25m x 0.85m pit had been emptied, leaving only trampled coal dust on the soil surface below; its west and east sides were brick-lined (Pl. 2). Fragments of human bone from the fill of the pit, were presumably disturbed during excavation of the coal storage pit in the nineteenth century. The unlined northern face of the coal storage pit exposed earlier deposits, through which the pit had been dug. The uppermost layer was a 0.05m thick layer of pink clay incorporating chalk flecks, which could represent an early floor surface, possibly the original floor. Beneath the surface was a 0.05m band of sand, suspected to have derived from the sandstone of the tower walls, and to be a construction debris layer. Red/brown clay below the sand was interpreted as the original ground surface, predating construction of the tower.

Removal of the loose deposit below the tower floorboards revealed the offset foundation for the north wall of the tower which rose in height towards the east end of the wall (Pls 3 and 5). At the SW angle of the tower, the wall foundation respects the stair turret (Pl. 4). The edge of the foundation trench for the north and west walls of the tower was 0.30m wide. The foundations at the tower arch are of one build with the tower (Pl. 6).

Areas of burning were seen adjacent to and along the north wall, and these may have been the sites of early stoves (Pls 7 and 8).

### **The Tower West Door**

The tower west door was blocked internally with brick above its original threshold and the door retained outside (Pls 9 and 10). The external door jambs had been replaced at a lower level, probably during the mid-nineteenth century, but the associated threshold looked to be of greater age. The door has two large and elaborate hinges, the upper of which looked oldest and the lower one may have been a copy. The timber door is probably of nineteenth century date. Against the threshold was what appeared to be an overturned and cracked tapered grave slab, but upon lifting was found to be the top of a 'table' tomb (Pls 10-12). The tomb lid was lifted to enable a hole to be



dug through the wall for the service pipes leading from the facilities inside the tower to the septic tank in the footpath to the west of the tower (PIs 9 and 12).

Two pieces of stonework were retrieved from the excavation of the tower. One piece was as column fragment with a crude rope decoration of probable Norman date (PI. 13). A piece of window tracery was also recovered (PI. 14).

### The Septic Tank

A trench was dug linking the toilet in the tower to a septic tank with a sump under the footpath, immediately west of the tower. The area excavated was 4m x 1.5m wide (PI. 15). The southern section was dug to a depth of 0.70m, the remaining two thirds being 1.50m deep. Rapid excavation of the trench allowed only the most basic of cleaning and recording to be carried out. The trench was dug out by the builders and when human remains were encountered they were cleaned and recorded by the author, prior to lifting for reburial by the incumbent.

Beneath the turf and topsoil was a clayey soil containing a high proportion of chalk rubble. A few pieces of human bone were present in this layer. The remains of at least 11 bodies were recorded in this small trench (Fig. 5). The bones were retrieved for reburial by the incumbent.

No.	Age	Description	Depth below surface
1	Adolescent	Feet and lower part of legs beyond trench edge	0.70m
2	Adult	Disturbed by 1, legs and pelvis beyond trench edge	0.75m
3	Adult	Feet only	0.70m
4	Child	Secondary teeth still erupting	0.80m
5	Adult	Skull only, teeth lost ante mortem	0.80m
6	Adult	Pelvis, folded arms, upper legs	0.93m, cuts chalk
7	Adult	Below drain, smashed skull, cuts through 10	0.98m, cuts chalk
8	?	Jumble of bones, pelvis and vertebrae on top of leg bones	0.90m cuts chalk
9		L. arm folded, v.few ribs, head beyond trench edge	1.10m, cuts chalk
10	Adult	Legs only	1.10m, cuts chalk
11	Adult	Feet only	1.10m, on top of 9

*Table 1: The human remains*

All the burials were orientated west-east with their heads to the west. They were neatly laid out but not aligned in precise rows. Burial 8 was in the south-west corner of the trench and only partially exposed. It appeared to contain only a jumble of bones comprising pelvis and vertebrae on top of leg bones (PI. 16). Evidence for more than one layer of burials, eg. Burial 1, just north of Burial 8 cut though the right side of Burial 2 (PIs 17 and 18). Next to Burial 2, with heads almost aligned,

were Burials 4 and 5 which ran beneath the eastern edge of the trench (Pl. 18 and 19). Burial 7 cut through the feet of Burial 10. The feet of Burial 11 were found near the right shoulder of Burial 9. Burial 6 at the north end of the trench (Pl. 20).

### **Finds**

Two pieces of pottery were found in the fill of the grave of burial 7. The larger sherd was from a jar made at Torksey in the early 10<sup>th</sup>-early 11<sup>th</sup> century. It has applied pressed-strip decoration. The second sherd was also of 10<sup>th</sup>-early 11<sup>th</sup> century date, of a type similar in type to pottery found in kilns at Lincoln but of a fabric first identified in Horncastle. Three more pieces were found during the excavation but not associated with a burial and were all of 10<sup>th</sup>-12th century date. Of particular interest was a small sherd containing greensand inclusions which has a known distribution limited to a small area on the eastern side of the Lincolnshire Wolds. This was a coherent group of pottery some type of which run into the 12th century but could all happily belong to the period before the Norman Conquest. The burials containing this material are therefore probably a little later in date. An iron knife was also retrieved from the spoil in one of the wheelbarrows.

### **Conclusion**

The small scale works at Welton le Wold church enabled details of the tower to be recorded. Excavation of the septic tank demonstrated that burials are ubiquitous in churchyards, even under footpaths. The associated pottery suggests that they were early medieval in date and confirms that there was pre-Conquest activity in the immediate vicinity of the church.

### **Acknowledgements**

LAS is grateful to John Stainton, architect for supplying plans of the church and to Churchwarden, and the contractors for their co-operation. Jane young identified the pottery. Illustrations were prepared by Mick McDaid and the report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Naomi Field  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
March 29<sup>th</sup> 2002

### **Archive Summary**

Architect's plans of the scheme

Field notes and sketches

Photographs: colour prints, LAS film nos. 01/32/14-25; 01/37/1-14; 01/103/18-24

1 box of finds comprising 5 sherds pottery, 1 iron knife and 9 pieces of window glass.

2 pieces of stonework.

Correspondence

**THE FIGURES**

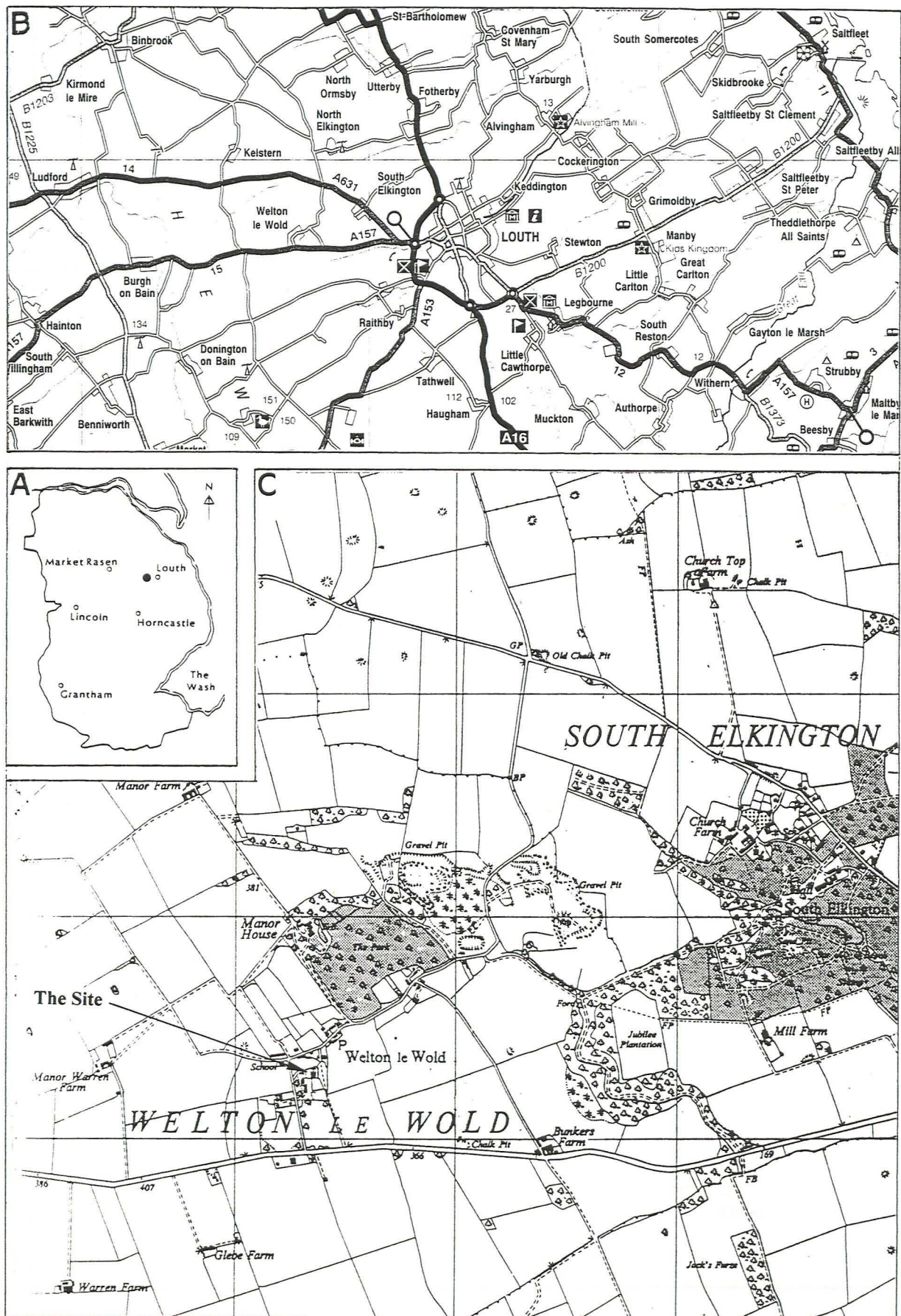


Fig. 1 Location of Welton le Wold (C based on the 1994 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey Pathfinder map, Sheet 706 with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. © Crown Copyright. LAS Licence No. AL 10002165).

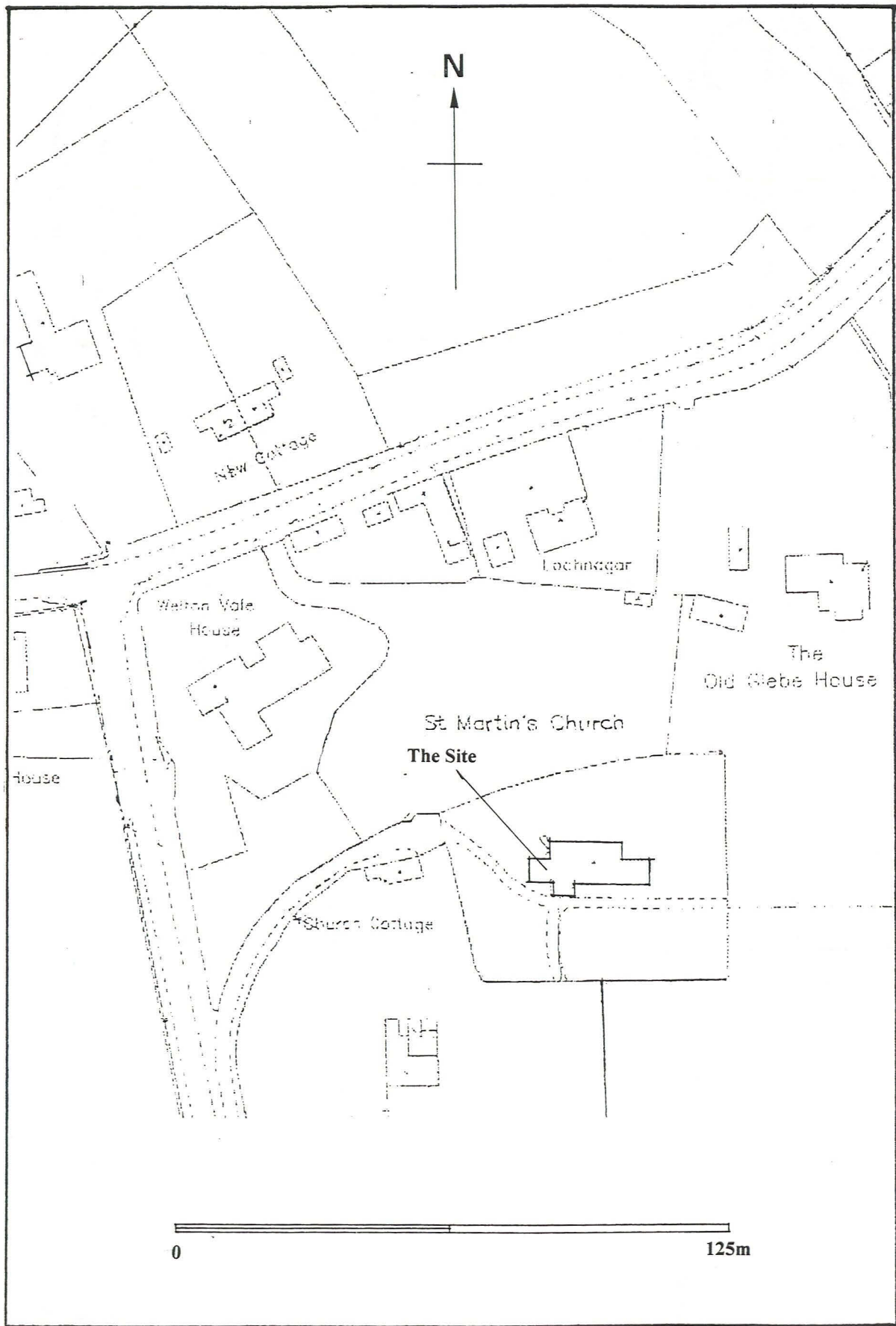


Fig. 2 St Martin's church, Welton le Wold, site location.

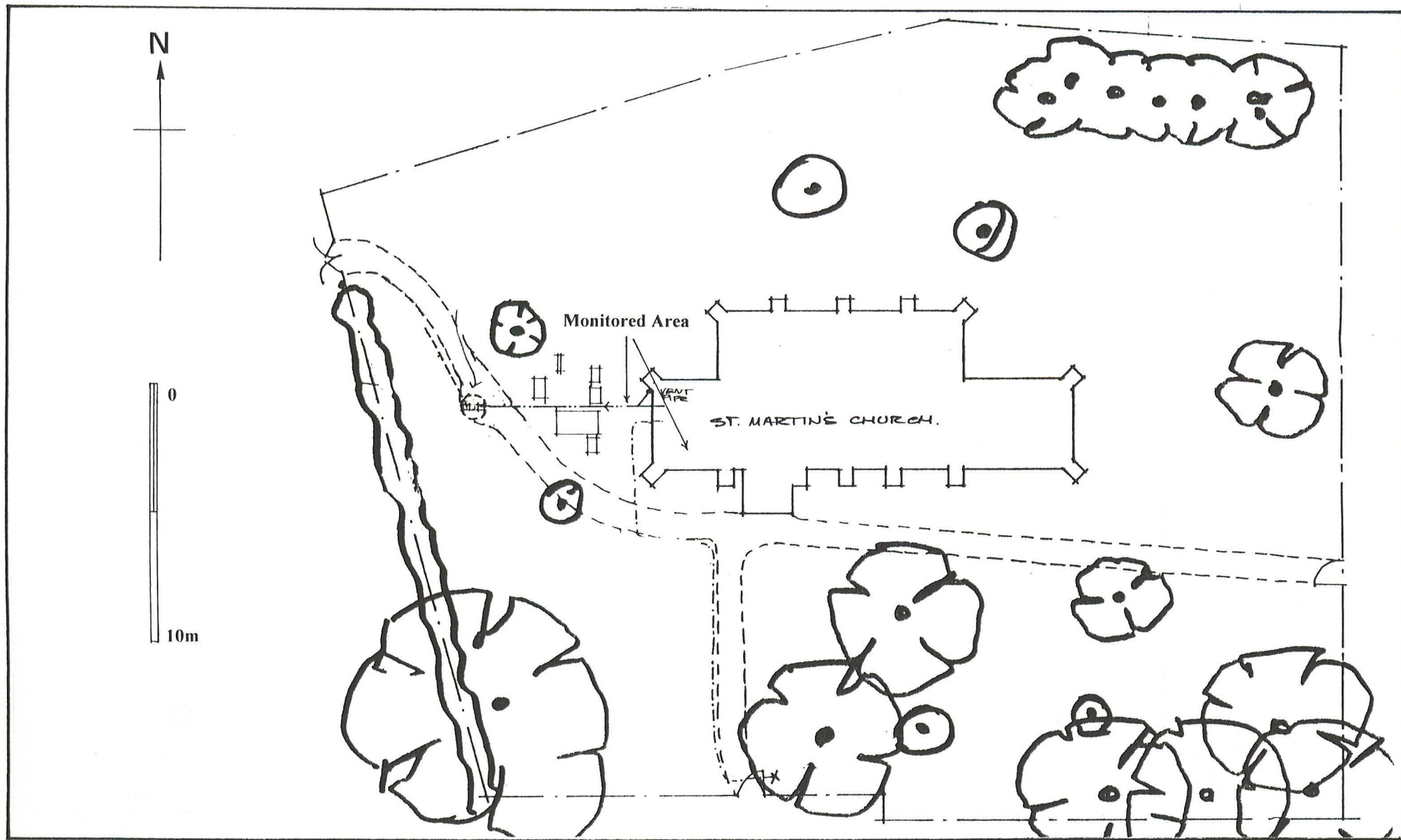


Fig. 3 St Martin's church, Welton le Wold, monitored areas (McDaid, based on a plan by the architect).

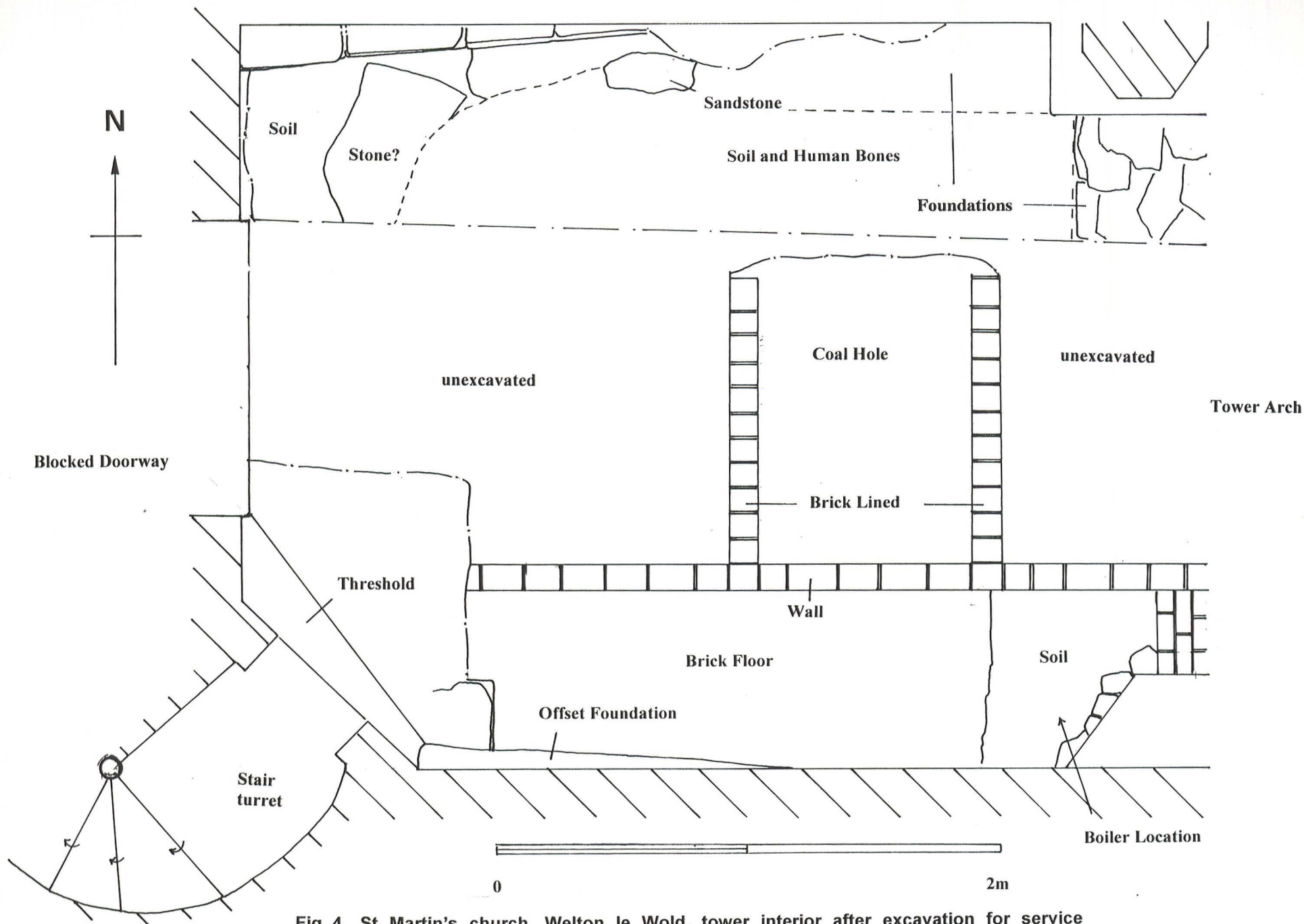


Fig. 4 St Martin's church, Welton le Wold, tower interior after excavation for service trenches.

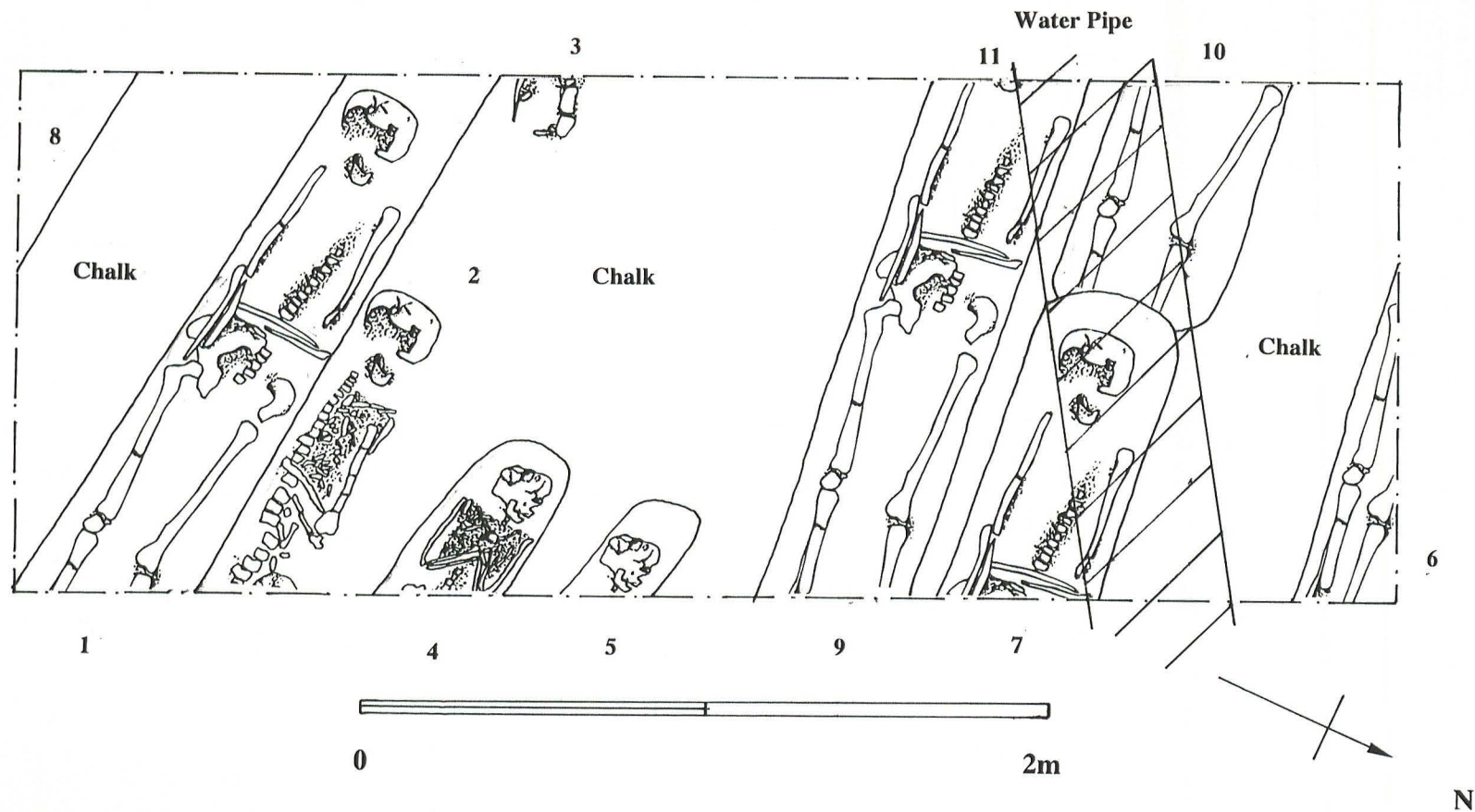


Fig. 5 St Martin's church, Welton le Wold, sketch plan of burials revealed during excavation of septic tank pit.



THE PLATES



Pl. 1 St Martin's church Welton le Wold (looking SE).

Pl. 2 Tower interior after removal of rubble beneath floorboards, looking west. Note brick steps leading to boiler, left and coal bunker in centre of floor. Area of burning in top corner may indicate position of stove.





Pl. 3 Tower interior after removal of brick steps, revealing original threshold to tower stairs, looking west. Trench for services has been dug out along north wall (right).

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Pl. 5 Service trench dug along tower north wall, looking west.

Pl. 6 Polygonal base of tower arch (north side) resting on foundations for tower north wall.





PI. 7 Offset footings along tower north wall. Note burnt stonework, looking west.



Pl. 8 Tower north wall, showing burning below plasterwork, looking north.



Pl. 9 Blocked tower west door, with hole for services. Base of hole is original threshold level for the door.

Pl. 10 Tower west door with table-top tomb lid in front. Scale 0.50m.





Pl. 11 Underside of table-top tomb lid.

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Pl. 15 Location of cess pit west of tower on line of footpath, looking east.

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Pl. 18 Burials 1 and 2 (left) and Burials 4 and 5 (right).



PI. 19 Burials 4 and 5



PI. 20 Burial 6