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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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St. Edith's Church, Little Carlton near Louth
(NGR: TF 4037 8536)

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CITY AND COUNTY
MIDDLESBROUGH

St. Edith's Church, Little Carlton near Louth
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Introduction

The long battle to save the church of St Edith at Little Carlton came to an end on May 25th 1993 when demolition contractors Edwin Sharpe Ltd. moved in to dismantle the building to ground level. Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the demolition.

The simple church building comprised a chancel, nave and west tower with a spire (Pls 1 and 2). There was a south entrance with porch and a vestry on the north side of the nave (Pl.3). Externally the church structure was rendered. This comprised a smooth mortar render on the tower and the north wall of the nave perhaps part of the extensive reconstruction work of 1837 (Pl. 3). The chancel, the south side of the nave, and the porch, were covered in a very hard concrete render containing a rounded pebble aggregate, possibly of twentieth century date. The nave was the earliest surviving part of the church and was constructed in coursed chalk rubble. The chancel had also been built in chalk but when it was rebuilt in 1837 the new construction incorporated one course of brick to every three chalk courses to provide greater strength. The tower was completely rebuilt in brick 1837.

Historical Background

There were only four churches in the Lindsey division of Lincolnshire dedicated to Saint Edith, all of which were situated east of Louth on the edge of the Wolds. The settlement of Little Carlton is mentioned in Domesday Book, when it was recorded as part of the Manor of North Reston (Foster and Longley 1924, 103). The entry records a church but it is unclear in which village it was situated. The church at North Reston is also dedicated to St Edith which may reflect a pre-Conquest interdependence of the two churches or even their foundation by the same person or family.

Very little can be gleaned of the history of St Edith from documentary sources. In 1616, during Bishop Neale's period of office, the Little Carlton living was valued at £13. 6s. 8d and 36 communicants were recorded. The rector was William Tathwell A.M. (Ross Mss. Vol. 6). It is only by turning to the nineteenth-century directories that any reference may be found. White's Directory of Lincolnshire records that the church had been built 'about 20 years ago, on the site of the old one' (White 1856, 226). Kelly's Directory of the county described the church as 'a small structure consisting of a chancel, nave and western tower surmounted by a spire containing 1 bell, and a south porch; rebuilt in 1837. The font is old, and the register dates from 1726' (Kelly 1885,

354). A search of Faculties at Lincolnshire Archive Office (LAO) did not locate any record of these major building works. Inspection of the parish registers did not show any significant gaps in the registration of births, marriages and deaths to suggest a break in activity at that time. The only Faculty located was dated May 1900, and records the decision to demolish Castle Carlton parish church and to unite the benefices, sharing the church at Little Carlton (LAO FB11/210).

The archaeological watching brief established the extent of the work which, from the style of the architecture, clearly took place in around 1837 and confirmed that the nave walls were of medieval construction.

The Watching Brief

LAS staff attended the site on four occasions during the demolition process to record the fabric as it became revealed and to retrieve architectural fragments as the structure was demolished; a detailed archaeological watching brief was not possible within the available budget. Jane Logan, Secretary to the Lincoln Diocesan Advisory Committee, visited the site on 25.6.93 with LAS.

Although LAS were not informed by the contractors when demolition began, they proved co-operative throughout the demolition and supplied useful information based on their observations during dismantling of the walls. Some architectural fragments were stored separately until the archaeologist could visit to record them.

A measured ground plan of the building was made at the outset and interior wall plaster was stripped by archaeologists from selected parts of the nave and chancel walls. All the information obtained during the watching brief has been added to the plan shown in Fig.1.

The Nave

The earliest surviving part of the church was the nave which measured 10.02 x 5.12m. There were pairs of windows in the north and south walls symmetrically positioned along the wall and opposite one another. The entrance on the south side of the church, to the west of the windows was constructed in 1837 together with the south porch. On the north side of the nave, opposite the entrance was the vestry, also dating to 1837. Removal of the internal plasterwork revealed that the windows and doors had all been replaced as part of the 1837 restoration programme although the window openings were re-used. The scissor-braced roof also dated to 1837 (Pl.4). The complete rebuild of the tower at the same time meant that there was no evidence for the earlier roof pitch or former height of the nave.

There was a central aisle with eight rows of pews to either side, attached to the nave walls, set on wooden floor bases (Pl. 4). The rest of the floor surface was covered in black, yellow and red quarry tiles. These were removed from the nave floor by the demolition contractors, leaving the bedding material intact so that earlier floor surfaces were not disturbed.

The font was positioned in front of the blocked tower arch (Pl. 4) and was recorded as follows 'perpendicular, octagonal, each panel with three cusped arches and a little panel tracery' (Pevsner and Harris 1964, 298). It had been removed from the church some years before demolition.

Nave: south wall

The entrance to the church was at the west end of the nave on its south side. This was not the original entrance as was clear from its surround of neat brickwork which had been inserted through the chalk fabric of the nave wall. Its four-centred arch was in the same style as the vestry doorway on the north side of the nave (see below). The wall above the opening had collapsed during this operation and had been blocked with five courses of brick above the opening (Pl. 5). A porch had been constructed in the same brickwork and belonged to the 1837 rebuild of the church.

A blocked doorway was revealed 0.8m east of the porch, within the 1.5m width of the existing window opening. An iron pintle, which was the lower hanging for the door (Pl. 6), was found on the west side, slightly above the height of the plinth at c.0.95m above internal floor level, set into the wall. The doorway had been blocked with rubble smaller than that used in the nave wall construction and it is assumed that the blocking was contemporary with the construction of the porch and the new door to the west in 1837.

The walls of coursed chalk survived to 4.11m (13'6") above the internal floor surface. The regular blocks acted as cladding for a wall core consisting of soil, mortar and small chalk rubble. The chalk had been levelled and then capped with 0.61m of red bricks when a new roof was fitted giving a total height of 4.72m (15'6"); the height of the medieval nave is not known.

A row of four scaffold holes was found in the south wall of the nave just above plinth height. Another row was present about 1m above. These were reported to the archaeologist by the demolition contractors and it is assumed that they were the same as those observed on the north side of the nave which were 0.14m (6") square. (see below and Pls 17 and 18).

A blocked window was revealed at the east end of this wall, 0.6m from the chancel wall and 0.23m east of an existing

window (Pls 7 and 8). The apex of the window had been neatly cut through the chalk blocks. There was damage to the chalk blocks on either side of the window, all of which indicates that it was inserted into the wall (Pl. 9). The plasterwork which lined the window splays was intact when the window was unblocked (Pl. 9). It was clear that this plaster was contemporary with the window and of a different type to the plasterwork on the nave walls. The window-ledge had been formed above a mixture of clay which contained vegetable matter and small irregular lumps of chalk (Pls 9 and 11); the same material had also been used to line the apex of the window beneath the plaster (Pl. 11).

The window had been blocked with bricks flush to the external face of the nave wall, at some time prior to the application of the cement rendering, and the blocking was invisible on the outside of the church. This brickwork was not plastered internally so the opening never functioned as a niche (Pl. 9). The void had been filled with loose rubble and bricked up. A fragment of clear hand-blown window glass was found amongst the loose rubble infill, possibly seventeenth-eighteenth century in date (Pl. 10).

Part of a tenth-century limestone grave cover (Pl. 41) was found in the rubble fill of the wall between the two main windows (see description below). This had been placed in the rubble core of the wall during construction and was not part of the later rebuild or blocking of windows. There was mortar adhering to all surfaces of the stone showing that it had been damaged prior to use in the wall, suggesting that it may have been broken some time prior to its re-use. No other pieces of this decorated stone were found. The stone was saved by the contractors; it was removed by LAS staff to their Lincoln office and will be stored at the City and County Museum, Lincoln.

A raised hexagonal dais, positioned in the SE corner of the nave but not adjoining the walls, supported the existing pulpit.

Nave: north wall

The vestry doorway had been inserted into the chalk rubble wall (Pl. 12). It lay 1m east of the west nave wall and was 0.9m wide. It had a four-centred arch, lined in brick in the same style as the south entrance to the church. The vestry itself was constructed in brick and all this work dates to the 1837 restoration.

A window lay just one metre east of the vestry doorway, which had been inserted into an earlier door opening, 1.28m wide, immediately opposite the blocked south door. The area below the window sill had been filled with bricks 210 x 105 x 60mm in size (Pl. 13). The exterior had also been patched with brick prior to rendering (Pls 14 and 15).

Another existing window, 2.39m east of the blocked doorway, retained original moulding fragments around its edges inside the nave (Pl. 13). The area below this window on the outside wall was blocked with brick prior to rendering (Pls 16 and 18). It is unlikely to have been another entrance and may just have been a repair to the wall.

Only the central part of the north wall was observed during demolition. Its fabric was identical to that of the south wall and a putlog (scaffold) hole was recorded on both the internal and external faces of the wall (Pls 17 and 18). These photographs also show the chalk rubble core construction of the wall.

Nave: west wall

The west wall of the nave was built in large green sandstone and chalk blocks which did not respect the narrow coursing of the longer nave walls. The larger blocks formed both the north-west and south-west angles of the nave. On the north wall a small section of coursed chalk blocks survived sandwiched between the later work at the angle (l) and the inserted vestry door (r) (Pl. 19). The same situation was apparent on the opposite side of the nave where west of the doorway (Pl. 20) no attempt had been made to bond the two fabrics together (Pl. 21). It is possible that this end of the church had structural problems which led to a reconstruction in stronger materials.

Pl. 20 also shows the remains of a brick heating flue in the corner of the nave, and scorching of the stonework above was clearly visible (Pl. 21).

All evidence for a medieval tower arch had been removed when the brick tower was constructed in 1837. A large hole was punched through the wall and straightened up with brickwork (Pls. 20 and 22). The new tower was inserted into the nave wall, its east wall flush with the end of the nave. It was a completely free-standing structure, not bonded in to the nave (Pl. 25). The lack of bonding reinforces the view that there may have been structural problems at this end of the church. Perhaps the medieval tower had pulled away from the nave, causing the damage to the nave described above.

The vertical joints between the tower and nave are clearly visible on Pl. 24 which also shows that the roof gable had been completely rebuilt, removing all evidence for the medieval roof pitch of the nave. The position of the scissor braced nave roof of 1837 is also visible.

The tower arch had been blocked and plastered over. It was surrounded by a moulded plaster crocketed ogee gable (Pl. 23).

Tower

Access to the tower after blocking of the tower arch was only possible from the church yard, via the west door. It was not recorded in any detail because the internal floors had rotted and were unsafe. It was square in plan with corner buttresses. There was a bellcote and the spire was surrounded by turret pinnacles.

Chancel Arch and Chancel

The plasterwork at the east end of the nave was stripped to reveal the original chalk walls. The chancel arch had been completely removed and replaced with a brick arch in 'Tudor' style. It was supported on brick piers c.0.5m square which flanked the chalk wall, leaving an opening of 2.90m (Pls 26-28). The original opening would have been of a similar size. It is possible that moulded chalkwork found in the chancel wall were the remains of the medieval chancel arch (see below). Pl. 27 shows the junction between brickwork and chalk indicating that the whole of the gable had been rebuilt, removing all evidence for the medieval chancel arch. A rectangular cavity is visible in one of the chalk blocks, possibly for keying into another block, in a former use.

Nothing of the medieval work was visible from the chancel side (Pl.29). Pl. 30 shows the brick construction of the arch was similar to that used in the nave and vestry doorways. The whole elevation had been clad in brick to provide a bond for the chancel walls. Fig. 1 shows how the brick end buttresses were constructed to enclose the chalk nave wall and tie in the chancel to the nave (see also Pls 29 and 30).

A small screw-capped glass bottle was found amongst the bricks of the gable and contained a note from the steeplejack who had carried out repairs (Pls 31 and 32).

Church Restoration	Steeplejack
Lightening Conductor Engineer	Gilding
C. BONIFACE	

47 Cavendish Avenue, Eastbourne; Tel. 21778
and 81 Bourne St, Eastbourne

A handwritten note was added:
NEW ARCH DECEMBER 21st 1970: FINDER REWARD £1

Mr Boniface has since moved to an unknown address in Bristol and could not be contacted, although his cousin still lives in Eastbourne.

There is no record of the works carried out in 1970. As with much of the 1837 brickwork it looked as if old bricks were re-used and it is not known how extensive the repairs were.

The chancel was a simple structure 4.80 x 5.25m in area. Opposing windows positioned approximately centrally along the north and south walls had been blocked prior to internal replastering and cement rendering of the exterior. The east window had been vandalised but the intersecting Y-tracery and most of the coloured glass panes still survived.

There was a step up into the chancel from the nave and an altar step. The fancy scissor-braced roof sat on moulded corbels (Pl. 33). The floor was tiled in red, yellow and black quarries which were left in situ (Pl. 40).

The walls had been strengthened during reconstruction by alternating a single course of brickwork with three courses of chalk. The dimensions of bricks in the chancel walls were 230 x 113 x 70mm, larger than those of the tower or nave repair. Demolition of the chancel walls produced large quantities of dressed chalk window heads and other architectural fragments which had been incorporated into the walling (Pls 34-36). At least 5 pieces of double moulded chalk blocks, thought to be from one of the nave windows, were found (Fig. 2 and Pl. 37). Pls 35 and 36 show two different arch fragments, one of which may have come from the chancel arch.

After removal of the bricks and other building materials for re-use the site the church interior was marked with gravel and the walls were capped (Figs 38-40).

Conclusion

Enough of the medieval fabric survived to be able to reconstruct part of the earlier layout of the church. The nave originally had opposing entrances at its west end, with two opposing pairs of windows. The size and form of the earlier chancel is unknown. It is assumed that there was a predecessor to the brick tower but nothing survived in the fabric of the building. The discovery of the late Saxon grave slab reinforces the Domesday Book evidence that there is likely to be an earlier church beneath the foundations of the medieval church.

Acknowledgements

The survey work was undertaken by Michael Clark, Naomi Field and Geoff Tann. LAS is grateful to the Rev. Stanley Jackson and Miss Jane Logan for their assistance with the project. The demolition contractors provided much useful information and assistance on site. Paul Everson took the photographs of the church in 1981 and David Brewster provided copies of Plates 38-40. Paul Everson has also inspected photographs of the Saxon grave slab and prepared a more detailed

description as part of his research for the Corpus on Anglo-Saxon worked stone for the British Academy.

Naomi Field
Lindsey Archaeological Services
March 9th 1994

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Appendix 1

The Saxon grave cover (Pl. 41)

Dimensions: Length 0.30m (incomplete)
Width 0.28m (incomplete)
Depth 0.09m (average)

Piece from the centre of a flat rectangular grave-cover decorated in low relief on the top surface. A twin cable herringbone border surrounds a central panel comprising one complete figure-of-eight pattern and half a second pattern.

The slab belongs to a group specifically associated with the Lindsey region whose characteristic ornament comprises a cable-moulded border around a rectangular or slightly tapered slab. Within the border is an interlace ornament consisting of vertical rows of interconnecting 'Carrick bend' knots. The knots are arranged to stress each figure-of-eight row (Stocker 1986,61).

To date sixteen other examples have been found, eleven of which come from the Lincoln Edge, including two from Lincoln. Five have been found in the Wolds and Marshland area (N.Thoresby, Theddlethorpe St Helen, Tathwell and Miningsby).

These slabs are dated to the later tenth-eleventh centuries.

Appendix 2

The Churchyard (Pls 42-43)

The churchyard was not affected by the demolition of the church building but two early stone grave markers, apparently *in situ* on the south side of the church, were recorded in case accidental damage occurred.

1. A stone 0.39m wide and protruding 0.35m above ground level:

HEAR
LYETH THE BODY
CHRISTOPHER
INGAMELS WHO
DEPARTED THIS
LIFE APRIL Y17
1692

2. A stone with a more ornate top:

HERE
Lyes the Body of
Samuel Turner who
Departed this Life
April ye 4th 1758
Aged 46 Years
Remember Man as you Pass by

*As you are now so once was I
As I am Now so must you be
Therefore Prepare to follow me*

Pevsner and Harris recorded that the head of a 15th century churchyard cross existed at Little Carlton, bearing a crucifix on one face and a standing saint on the other (1964, 767). This was not recorded by LAS.

Appendix 3

The Planning Background

Initial plans to convert the church building into a private house were made by the Church Commissioners in 1982 but refused by East Lindsey District Council. In early 1984 an application to convert the premises to an artist's studio or craft workshop was also rejected. English Heritage criticised the Church Commissioners' subsequent plans to demolish the church, prompting another application to convert the building into a house. This application was also refused, as was an appeal. Support for the demolition of the building in preference to the proposed conversion was expressed by District Councillors and parishioners from Little and Great Carlton. In the absence of an alternative use for the structure considered acceptable by the parishioners or the planning authority, it was agreed to demolish the church.

The graveyard remains open for new burials and bench seating is to be installed inside the area of the demolished building.

The internal fittings were sold by auction by auctioneers Mawer, Mason and Bell. The pulpit was placed in the village hall but the font has not been located.

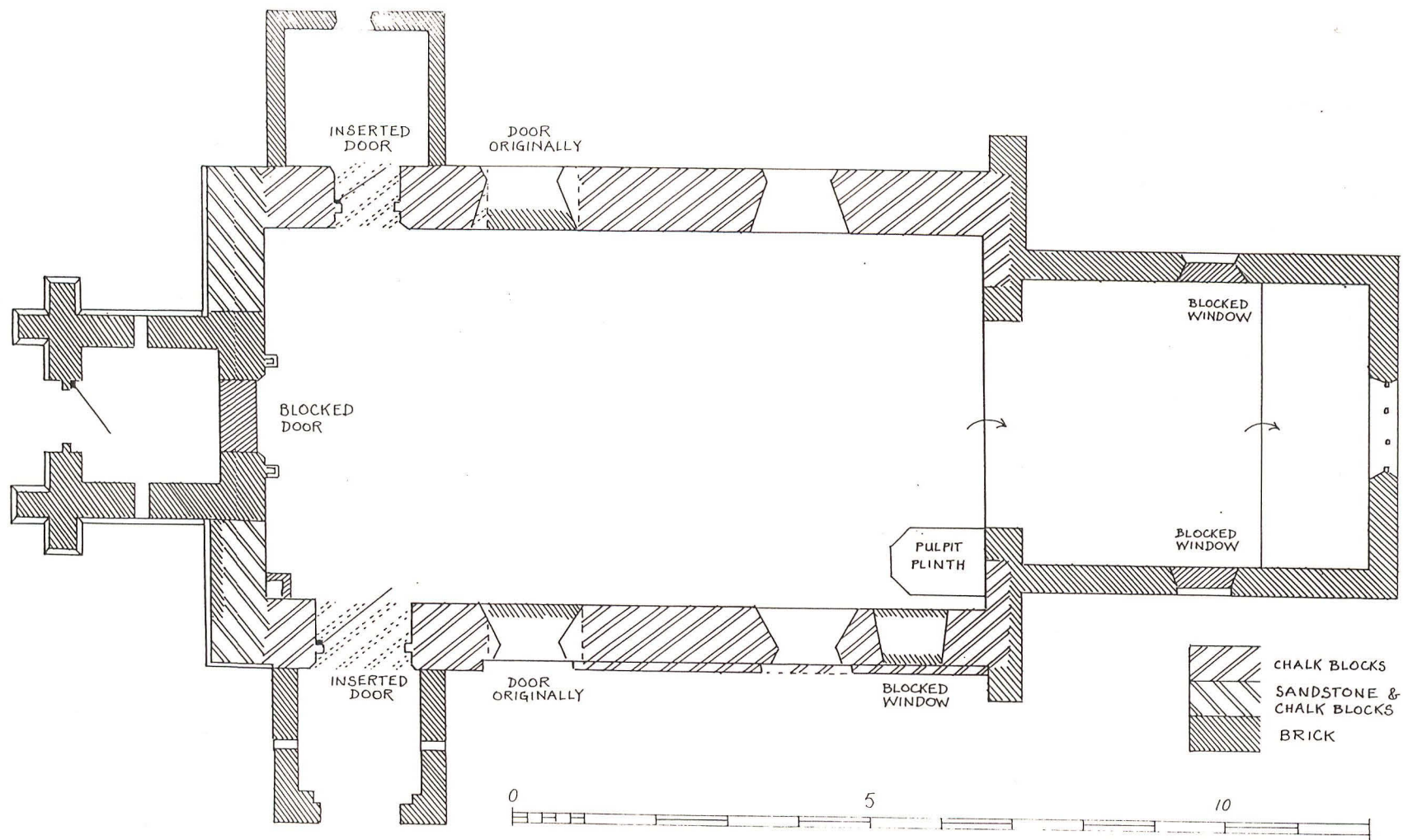


Fig. 1 Little Carlton St Edith. Ground plan, incorporating information obtained during watching brief. (Surveyed and drawn by M.Clark)

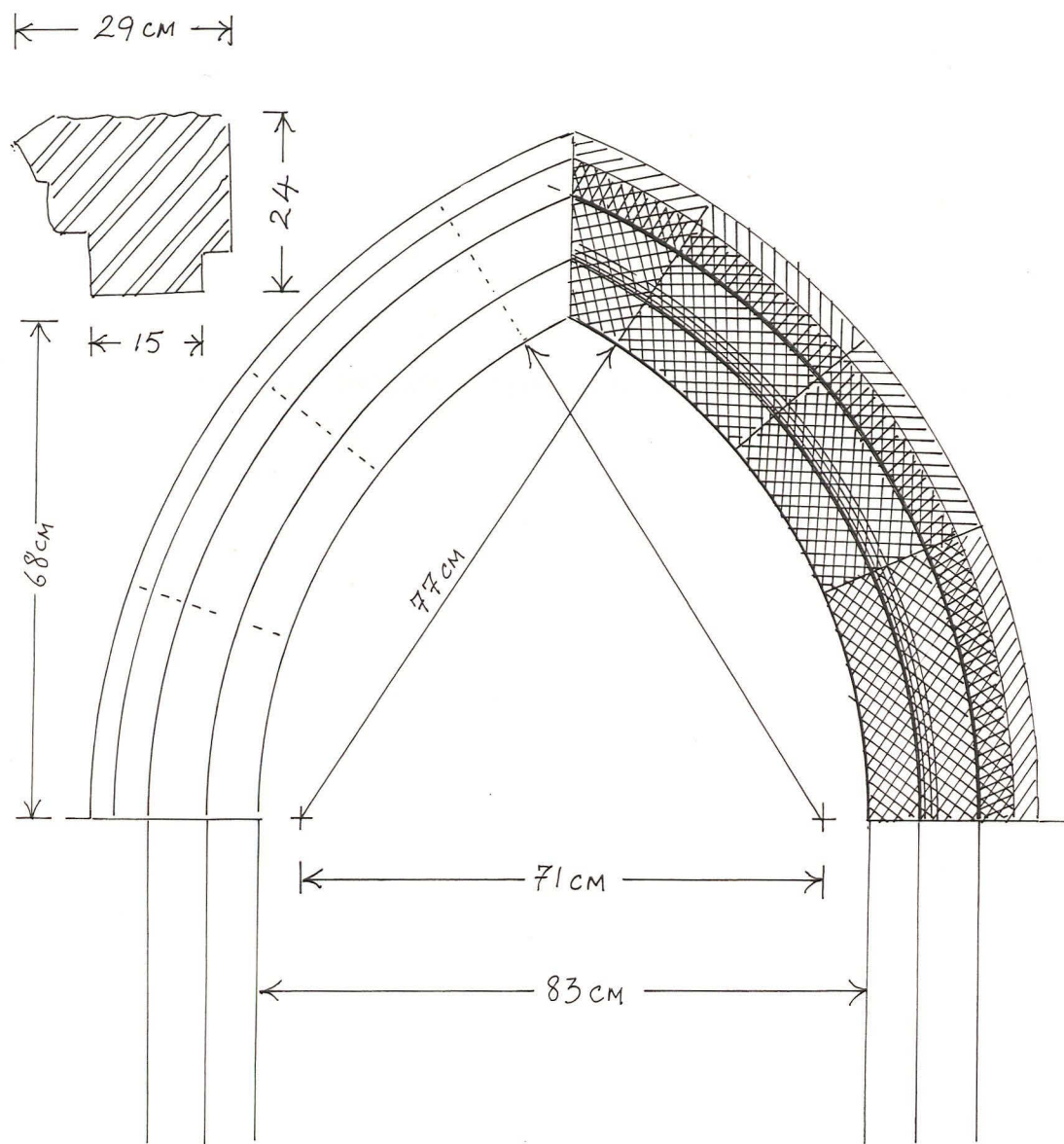


Fig. 2 Reconstruction of an arch based on five fragments found in the chancel walls. (M.Clark)

Demolition for church

LITTLE Carlton church is finally being demolished, 10 years after it was closed.

Its fate was sealed three years ago after East Lindsey councillors refused James and Kay Doak's plan to convert it to a house and the conservation-minded couple lost their appeal.

They produced their plans after leaders of English Heritage, on a visit to the area, criticised the Church Commissioners' intention to demolish it.

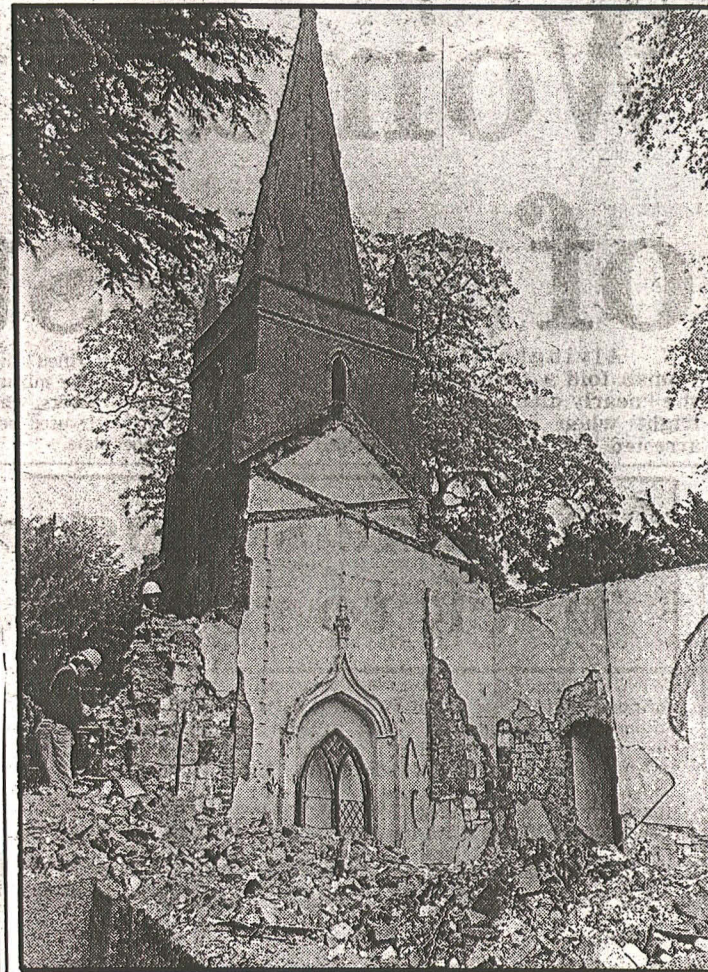
But a majority of councillors backed fierce opposition to the conversion from Great and Little Carlton villagers, who preferred to have no church than a private house in the churchyard.

Two other conversion bids had failed previously.

Coun Mike Kennedy, who led the opposition on the council, said the parish council had been chasing the Church Commissioners to go ahead with demolition and now they had finally acted. A low wall outlining the church will be left and the churchyard, with its beautiful trees, will be maintained as a place of peace. Burials would continue there.

"It is what the village wants", he said, adding that a report would be produced on details of the church's structure revealed by demolition.

But Mrs Doak, who was a district councillor at the time of the conversion plan, said, "A beautiful piece of Lincolnshire's history and architecture has been destroyed and is lost for ever. It need not have happened."



It is either official vandalism or realistic recognition of outlived usefulness but Little Carlton church is finally being demolished, after a decade of decay and controversy. Photo: Ian Holmes.



Pl.1. Little Carlton St Edith. South elevation (1981).

Pl.2. Little Carlton St Edith. View from south east (1989).





Pl.3. Little Carlton St Edith. North elevation (1984).

Pl.4. The nave, (February 1981).





Pl.5. Entrance in south wall of nave.

Pl.6. Nave south wall, (porch to left). Recess shows position of blocked doorway. Lower door pintle found on left side, just above demolition level.





Pl.7. Blocked east window in south wall of nave.



Pl.8. East window partially unblocked. Damaged pulpit dias in foreground.



Pl.9. East window - after removal of brick blocking.

Pl.10. East window sill, showing glass in situ and external brick blocking.





Pl.12. Nave north wall. Inserted vestry entrance.

Pl.13. North wall of nave showing chalk construction and blocked doorway below window on left. N.B. remnant of chalk window jamb on east window





Pl.11. Close up of mud infill.



Pl.14. Nave north wall (exterior), west window.



Pl.15. Nave north wall (exterior), west window, brick surround.



Pl.16. Nave north wall (exterior), east window, brick surround.

Pl.17. Nave north wall (interior), showing chalk coursing, putlog hole and rubble core.





Pl.18. Nave north wall (exterior), showing chalk coursing, putlog hole and rubble core.

Pl.19. North west angle of nave showing later sandstone and chalk repair, original chalk wall and inserted brickwork of vestry door (right).





Pl.20. Brick heating flue at south west corner of nave.



Pl.21. Burnt stonework above heating flue, south west corner of nave.



Pl.22. Brick patching of west wall of nave with inserted brick tower (left).



Pl.23. Tower arch, built 1837.

Pl.24. Inserted tower, vertical joint.





Pl.25. Free-standing brick tower after demolition of nave and chancel.

Pl. 26. Chancel arch looking towards chancel.





Pl. 27. South side of chancel arch showing brick facing of new arch. Note brickwork above the chalk and re-used chalk block.



Pl. 28. North side of chancel arch showing brick facing of new arch.

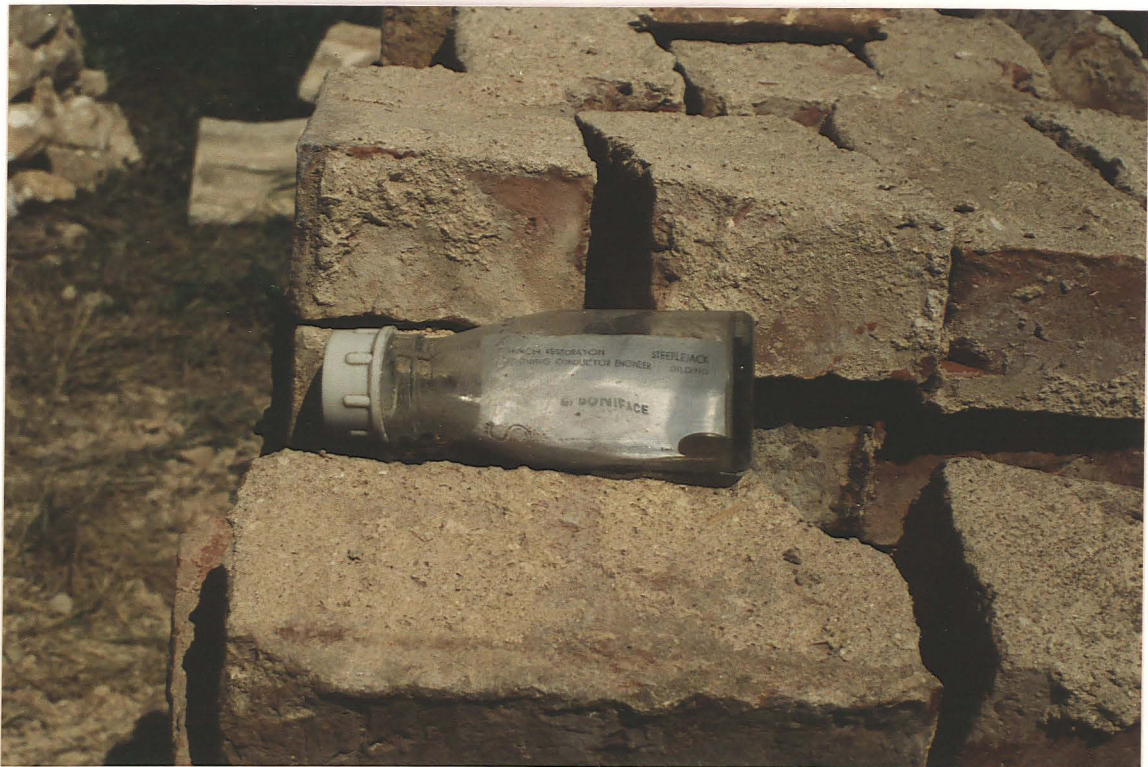
Pl. 29. Chancel arch looking towards nave after demolition of chancel. Note complete absence of any chalk and bonding for the chancel walls.





Pl. 30. Chancel arch. Detail of south side showing bonding with the chancel wall (demolished).

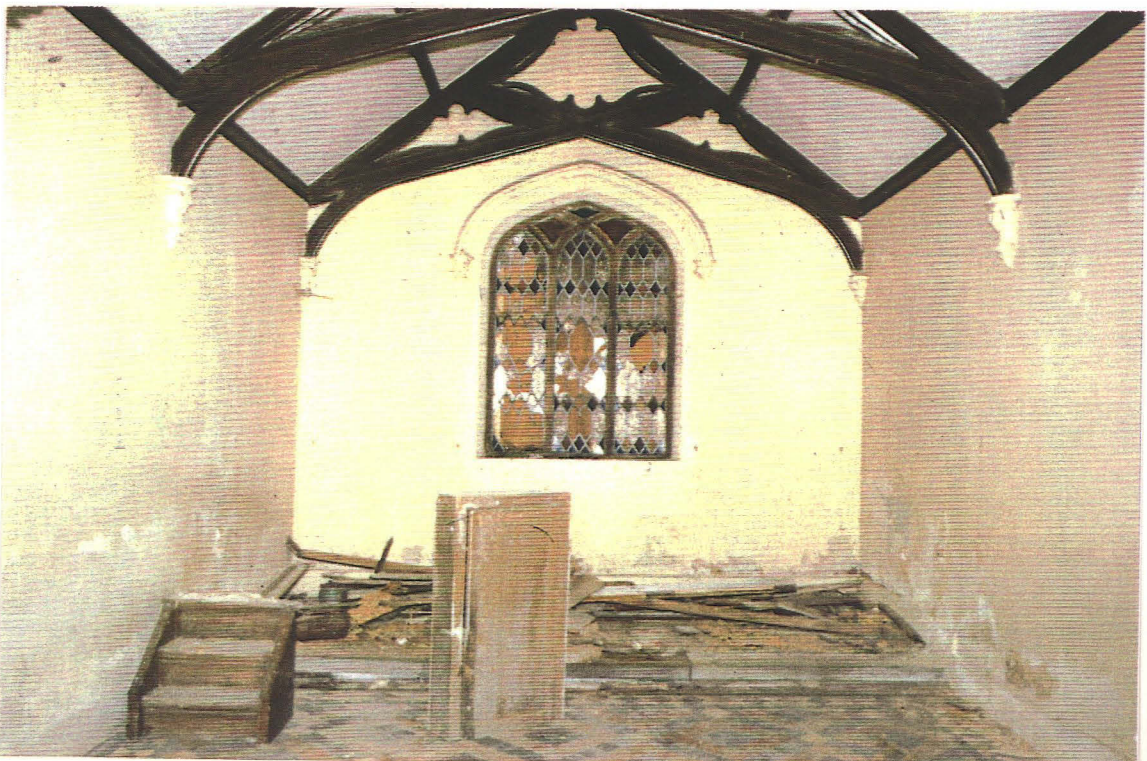
Pl. 31. Bottle found above chancel arch.





Pl. 32. Bottle found above chancel arch.

Pl. 33. The chancel prior to demolition.





Pl. 34. Window jamb fragment found in chancel wall.

Pl. 35. Arch fragment found in chancel wall.





Pl. 36. Arch fragment found in chancel wall.

Pl. 37. Five fragments possibly from part of window.





Pl. 38. Tower and nave after landscaping.

Pl. 39. Looking east. The church after landscaping.





Pl. 40. The chancel after landscaping.

Pl. 41. Fragment of 10th century grave slab found in nave south wall.





Pl. 42. Grave slab dated 1692 on south side of nave.

Pl. 43. Grave slab dated 1758 on south side of nave.

