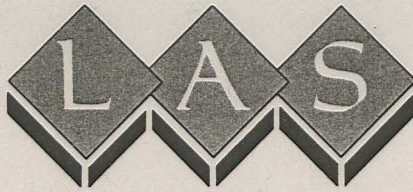


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# LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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**AUBOURN OLD CHURCH:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF A NEW  
ACCESS PATH AND ELECTRICITY CABLE TRENCH**

<sup>SK</sup>  
(NGR 9276 6278)  
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EVENT 43500  
SOURCE 415104  
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**Aubourn Old Church: Archaeological Monitoring of a new Access  
Path and Electricity Cable Trench**  
(NGR 9276 6278)

The parish of Aubourn contains two churches, both of which have experienced a chequered history. The medieval church, sited close to the present Hall of predominantly 17th century date, occupies the traditional location within the manorial complex: traces of fishponds survive between the church and the River Witham. That church building now consists of a 13th century chancel with a slightly later south window and a mid 19th century tower on the north side (Pl. 1; Pevsner and Harris 1964, 442). Lines of concrete flush with the turf are supposed to mark the positions of the dismantled walls of the medieval building (Pl. 2). The building was partly dismantled c. 1861 and the fabric of the porch, 2-bay north aisle and NE tower seems to have been used to build a replacement church (dedicated to St. Peter) at the Haddington end of the village to serve the enlarged parish of Aubourn, Haddington and South Hykeham. The newer church was built 1861-3 with a steeple and spire, but became unnecessarily large for late 20th century congregations and services are now held in the chancel of the smaller Old Church.

The churchyard of the medieval church has upstanding tombstones and is grazed by sheep. The approach to the building becomes muddy and poorly drained in wet weather and plans were prepared for the construction of a path between the north door and the Aubourn Hall Estate carpark (Pl. 3). The Diocesan Advisory Committee placed a proviso on the application, requiring an archaeological presence during part of the work, which was endorsed by the Chancellor in the approved Faculty. Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council to observe the limited excavation for the path across the interior of the dismantled church and archaeological monitoring by the author took place on 23rd July 1994.

The groundwork consisted of removal of turf and soil to a depth of about 0.25m from the church threshold across the dismantled building, using a small machine with a 1m toothless bucket (Pl. 4). Spoil was removed and tipped into a depression around the south-western edge of the churchyard which is probably the remains of a boundary ditch. A 0.25m wide bucket was then used to cut a deeper trench (varying from about 0.25m to about 0.9m deep) along the south side of the path excavation to bury a replacement electricity supply cable (Pls. 5 and 6). The cable trench left the path and deflected around the SW corner of the upstanding building before entering beside the SW doorway. Where the trench needed to cross a wall foundation a hole was drilled below the capping cement and brickwork but above the surviving stone foundations. The path excavation showed that the west door threshold of the remaining building had been repositioned on a base of clay roof tile fragments and concrete (1), presumably when the building was reduced in size in the mid 19th century. A broad area, almost 2.5m east-west immediately in front of the entrance, appeared to have been dug out and backfilled (2); the stone pieces were less dense than further west. The

remainder of the nave area below the turf was a uniform demolition spread of limestone pieces, mortar, brick fragments and small amounts of slate fragments (3).

The pipe trench cut through an apparently mixed deposit with mortar and limestone pieces, interpreted as a demolition layer. A restricted area of dense loose mortar (including a single fragment of wall plaster with a white slip) was noted 0.7m below the present ground surface in the centre of the building (4) (Pl. 7). This may represent plaster stripped from a wall during demolition. The mortar dump was below a thin mortar lens which was evident in the trench section; in different circumstances the lens would have been interpreted as a church floor surface but that interpretation seemed unlikely here. No floor surfaces were identified but the reasons for this were unclear (Pl. 8). It may be that the central position within the nave had been entirely disturbed by successive internal graves which could not be recognised within these conditions. Three fragments of charnel were found and reburied.

The western part of the nave had been disturbed by several late 19th - early 20th century small refuse pits containing metal containers such as oil cans and paint tins. Deposits of ash and broken roof tiles (5) seen in the deeper trench may have been equally recent (Pl. 7). A single archaeological feature was revealed at the edge of the pipe trench (6). Two courses of mortared red handmade bricks with no frog lay 0.3m below the present surface, aligned east-west (Pl. 9). The dimensions were 235mm x 70mm x 95-110mm and may have been late 18th century in date. Four end to end bricks were exposed but the original length of the structure could not be determined, neither could its function be guessed.

No unmarked foundations were discovered during the groundworks and the actual width of the dismantled walls was not revealed. A dense deposit of mortar and limestone rubble at the western end of the medieval building immediately inside the nave area seemed to be waste material from robbing the wall; it was not a broad *in-situ* foundation (Pl. 10). The construction of the path and the excavation of the cable trench did not appear to cause any damage to medieval archaeological deposits on the site.

#### **Acknowledgements**

Jane Logan (DAC Secretary) provided useful information on the Faculty application; Mr. Gough helped place the building in its historical context. The co-operation and interest of the parishioners who voluntarily undertook the groundworks was much appreciated. The site plan was produced by Mick Clark from a field drawing prepared by the author.

Geoff Tann  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
15th August 1994

#### **Reference**

Pevsner, N. and Harris, J. 1964 *The Buildings of England : Lincolnshire.*

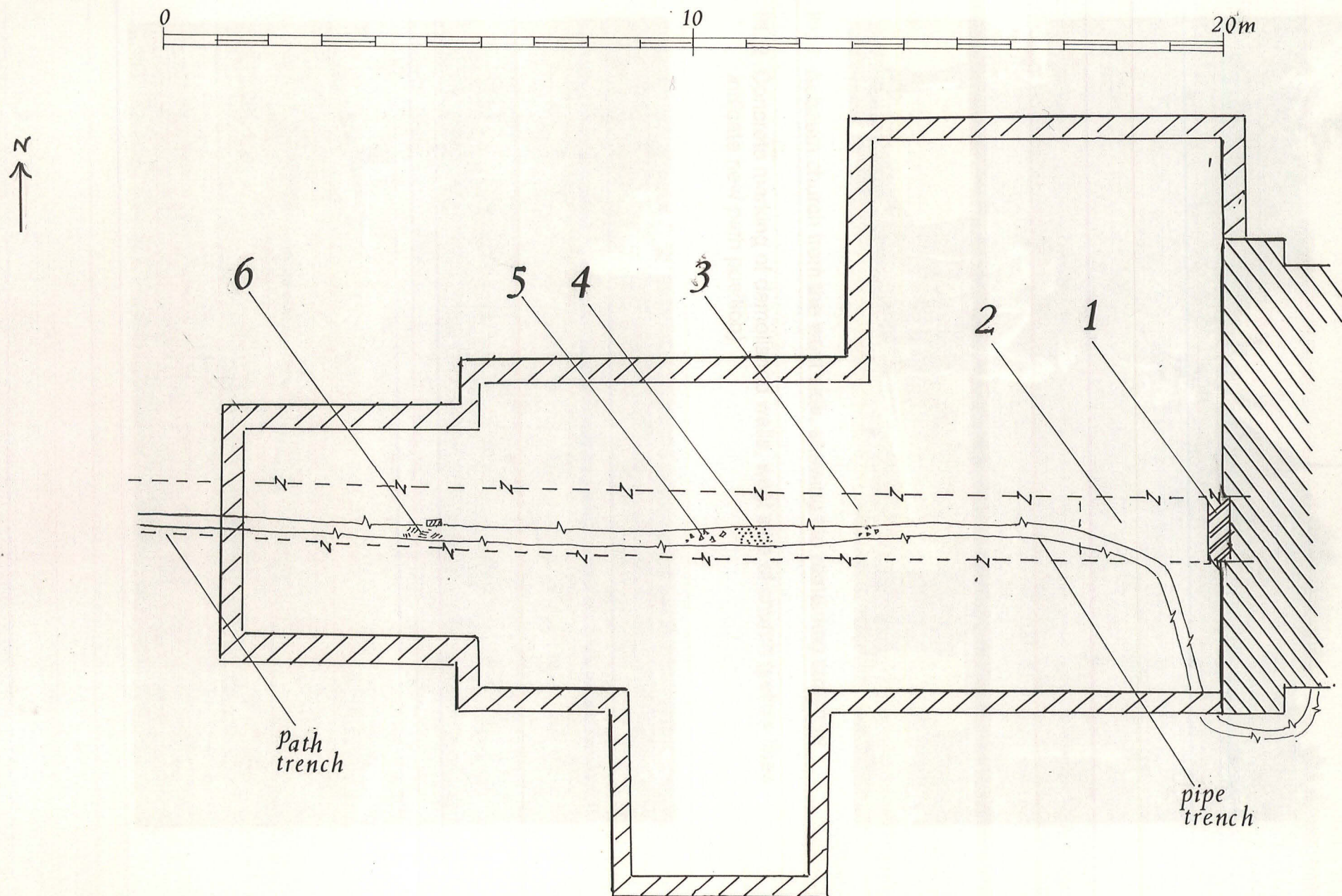


Fig. 1 Location of the new path and cable trench



Pl. 1 Aubourn church from the west side, showing the remaining structure

Pl. 2 Concrete marking of demolished walls, west side of church (yellow lines indicate new path position)





Pl. 3 The Graveyard (yellow lines marking route of new path to church gate)

Pl. 4 Excavation of the path, viewed from inside the west door





Pl. 5 Excavation of the cable trench across the former nave area



Pl. 6 The cable trench at the SW corner of the church



Pl. 7 Mortar dump 4 (left) and 20th century rubbish pit (left) in cable trench south section

Pl. 8 Cable trench section within nave area, looking north







Pl. 9 Brick foundation 6 in top of north path section

Pl. 10 Stone rubble and mortar beside west wall of demolished nave (looking south)

