

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF.
SAINT THOMAS'S CHURCH
MARKET RASEN, LINCOLNSHIRE**

NGR: ~~SK~~^{TF} 1065 8922.
SITE CODE: STMR03
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Report prepared for
West Lindsey District Council
by William Munford
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Summary

- A programme of archaeological observation and recording took place at Saint Thomas's church, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, when an ongoing scheme of environmental enhancements necessitated groundworks within the churchyard.
- The fieldwork included the recovery of disarticulated human remains for future re-internment, along with the detailed recording of four grave markers disturbed by the groundworks.
- The works also revealed a number of large stone blocks beneath a buttress of the church tower. These were interpreted as medieval foundations. An area of cobbles, preserved beneath modern tarmac, and a brick built inhumation vault were also recorded.

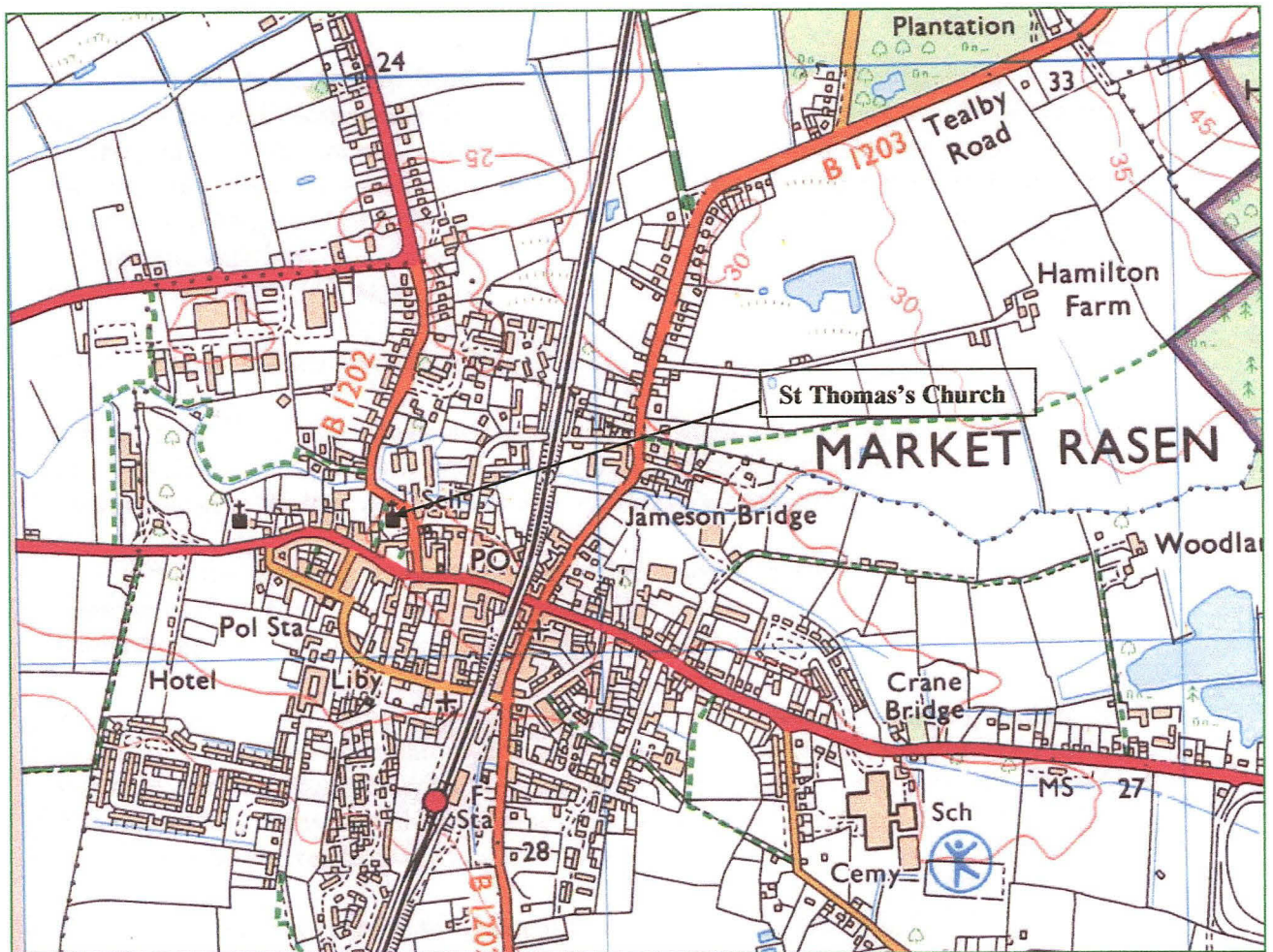


Fig.1: Location of St Thomas's Church, Market Rasen (scale 1:12,500)
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1.0 Introduction

West Lindsey District Council commissioned Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation and recording in the churchyard of St Thomas' Church, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire. These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by the Lincolnshire County Council Built Environment Team. This approach complies with the recommendations of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, Dept. of Environment (1990); *Management of Archaeological Projects*, EH (1991); *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, IFA (1999) and the LCC document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice*, 1998.

The full archaeological programme took place between the 15th December 2003 and 12th March 2004.

Copies of this report have been deposited with the commissioning body and the County Sites and Monuments Record for Lincolnshire. A summary will be submitted to the editor of the county journal, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*; and this will feature as a short note in due course. Reports will also be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln, along with an ordered project archive for long-term storage and curation.

2.0 Site location and description

Market Rasen is in the administrative district of West Lindsey, approximately 18km north-east of Lincoln. It is situated in the clay vale between the Lincolnshire Edge and the Lincolnshire Wolds.

The local topography is predominantly flat with a height above sea level of approximately 29.5m. The site geology comprises blown sand drift deposits over an Upper Jurassic solid geology of Kimmeridge Clay (B.G.S. 1999).

The area monitored during the watching brief was contained entirely within the boundaries of the present churchyard of St Thomas's church. This is bordered to the south by the Market Place and Parish Rooms building, to the west by the old Vicarage, (now a residential care home), and to the north and east by Caistor Road and George Street, respectively.

The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is ~~SK~~ 1065 8922.

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3.0 Planning background

A series of groundworks took place in the churchyard of St Thomas's Church, Market Rasen as part of the Town Centre Enhancement Scheme that is being implemented by West Lindsey District Council. As it was deemed likely that archaeological remains would be disturbed by the scheme, Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned to conduct an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks. The specification for this watching brief was designed in accordance with advice from the Senior Built Environment Officer of Lincolnshire County council.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Evidence deriving from a variety of sources indicates that the general area has been of archaeological significance from at least the Romano-British period.

Approximately 750m to the south-east of the site are a series of cropmarks identified from aerial photographs (SMR PRN 52748 and 52749). These have been identified as possible later prehistoric enclosures and associated field systems.

In the Romano-British period Market Rasen was the focus for a considerable pottery production industry. This was located to the south of the town, in the Linwood Road area. Evidence for this industry is extensive, particularly on the west side of Linwood Road. Whitwell refers to a field in this locality as the 'kiln field' (Whitwell 1992). Members of De Aston School investigated kilns in 1966, at NGR TF 107 885, and a summary of these investigations is held at the County SMR. Of the three excavated examples, all were of the typical single flue up-draught category. The majority of the pottery comprised grey domestic sherds, similar to those associated with the Trentside industries of Torksey, Lea, Knaith and Newton on Trent (Palmer-Brown 1998). This industry appears to have prospered between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD (Todd 1991).

An archaeological evaluation by PCA in 1997 on land that is now The Ridings Housing Development uncovered numerous features of Romano-British date, and large quantities of material associated with pottery production (Albone 1998).

The post-Roman settlement of Market Rasen itself probably emerged as a minor market centre in the late Saxon period, although the focus for this settlement is unknown (Palmer-Brown 1998).

St Thomas's Church has an Ironstone west tower, very similar to that at the church of Yarburgh 15 miles to the East, which dates from the early 15th century (Pevsner et al 1989). The arch to the nave appears to be c.1300 but there is documentary probability that the tower was built c. 1405. The west Doorway and west window are Perpendicular, the rest is externally all of 1862 (restoration by James Fowler), excluding the intercepting deep gable sheltering the priest's doorway and the late Norman south doorway.

In the 19th century, the market place adjacent to the St Thomas's was the focus of a busy town, which served the rural locality. Impressive buildings surviving in the town from this time include the Police Station and Magistrates court, built on Mill Street in 1849, and the Grange on King Street, a substantial house built in 1891 in the Queen

Anne revival style, of red brick, with pediment gables and white painted wooden dormers, (Pevsner et al 1989).

5.0 Methodology

Chris Clay, Alex Brett and Will Munford of PCA monitored the groundworks between the 15th December 2003 and 12th March 2004. A JCB excavator fitted with a variety of buckets was used to excavate most of the groundworks, whilst some were dug by hand.

The archaeological fieldwork included the recovery of disarticulated human bone and the recording (by scale drawing and colour photography) of disturbed grave markers and archaeological deposits. The disturbance and location of a modern burial vault and a cobbled area were also noted. The stone blocks and infill recorded as (002) were subjected to limited excavation, in order to assess their nature and dimensions and to attempt to recover datable materials.

6.0 Results

The uppermost material observed within the churchyard was (001), a dark brown sandy silt reworked topsoil with rare small angular stone inclusions.

Work to reinstate a pavement in the south west corner of the churchyard revealed four partially buried gravemarkers within layer (001). These were removed and recorded in the form of 1:10 scale drawings and colour photographs, (see figure 3). Their measurements, characteristics and the readable elements of their inscriptions are described.

Grave marker #1 consisted of a sub-rectangular slab of limestone measuring 1085mm long by 545mm wide and 70mm thick, with a shouldered top edge. Areas of it had been severely eroded, although its surfaces were smooth enough to suggest that it had been finely sawn. A maker's mark was inscribed at the horizon where the stone would have protruded from the ground. The inscription read:

In
Memory of
B.....Ann the daughter
of GeorgeBo.....
Who died March 18..18..
In Infancy

Smith Moorten.

Grave marker #2 also consisted of a sub-rectangular slab of limestone, in this case measuring 1730mm long by 704mm wide by 75mm thick. Like grave marker #1, it had a shouldered top edge and showed signs of having been finely sawn. It featured an inscription platform surmounted by a relief carving of a cloaked urn. Its inscription read:

In
Memory of
George Bower
Who changed life for eternity
On the 5th November 185..
Aged 77

Also in memory of
Edward son of the above
Who departed this life
On the 6th June 1816
Aged 21 years

Grave marker #3 was a simple rectangular limestone block featuring no decoration or inscription. It did not seem to display saw marks. Grave marker #3 may actually be a detached section of a more elaborate stone such as a cross. It measured 701mm long by 193mm wide by 60mm thick.

Grave marker #4 was another sub-rectangular piece of limestone with a shouldered top edge. Like grave marker #3 it bore no surviving inscription. It measured 720mm long by 450mm wide by 60mm thick.

A short distance to the east the same pavement improvement works revealed a concentration of human bones. These included large skull fragments and long bones. As they were not articulated, the bones were collected for future re-internment.

Groundworks in the south west corner of the churchyard exposed a brick built vault containing soil and articulated human remains. The works had not disturbed these deposits, and the ceiling of the vault was reinstated with large York stone paving slabs. The position of the vault was noted.

The works also included the excavation of 400mm deep by 400mm wide trenches either side of the existing pavement in the majority of the churchyard. As this work was carried out at the base of the north westernmost buttress of the church tower, it revealed a number of substantial stone blocks, (002), in the base of the trench. In plan these appeared to commence in line with the northernmost edge of the buttress and end approximately 300mm to the south of its southernmost edge. A single human long bone was discovered amongst the stone blocks and removed.

To the north, a shallow trench was excavated through the turf of the graveyard proper, in order to lay a length of spotlight ducting. This unearthed further disarticulated human remains, which were collected for re-internment.

During the final stages of the improvements, more groundworks were conducted to remove redundant tarmac from the edge of a cobbled area, close to the market place entrance to the churchyard. These revealed that the cobbled area extended beneath the tarmac. The tarmac appeared to have preserved the cobbled area very well (which presumably extended even further to the north). The location of these cobbled areas can be seen in figure 2.

7.0 Conclusions

The gravestones recovered from the south west corner of the churchyard may suggest that stones which became dislodged from their original position were not reset, perhaps, because of the demand for space for new graves: the scattered and fragmentary human bones recovered may attest to the same scenario. In graveyards, this dispersal occurs when forgotten graves are truncated as new graves are excavated. Over many years, this on-going process ensures that the entire soil matrix becomes inundated with fragmentary human bone.

It is worth noting that there may be some un-readable family relationship between the recipients of Grave marker #1 and grave marker #2. They display the names "George Bo..." and "George Bower" respectively. This could indicate that a family group was inhumed in this corner of the churchyard and that the stones were not simply disposed of here. The facts could probably be established by studying the local parish records.

The discovery of the large stone block foundations, (002), within the trench at the base of one of the buttresses of the church tower was anticipated. We know that the style of the buttresses themselves is typical of the 15th century. Throughout the Middle Ages the depth of buttresses increased in relation to their width as understanding of their structural properties developed, (Jones, 1969), and those at St Thomas's display appropriate dimensions for the probable 1405 construction date. Interestingly the single human bone found amongst the foundation stones indicates that the early 15th century works for the tower may have truncated previous graves or that the process of forgotten graves being disturbed within the churchyard, had already begun at this early date.

The fact that the area of cobbles in the churchyard extended beneath the modern tarmac and seemed to have been well preserved by it may be of some interest to the local community, if improvements works are again conducted within the churchyard.

8.0 Effectiveness methodology

The methodology employed during the watching brief allowed a full inspection to be made of all the groundworks, with minimal disruption to the primary scheme, and a full record to be made of the archaeological deposits that were encountered.

9.0 Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank West Lindsey District council for this commission, for assisting during the watching brief itself, and for providing some of the drawings used during the preparation of this account.

10.0 References

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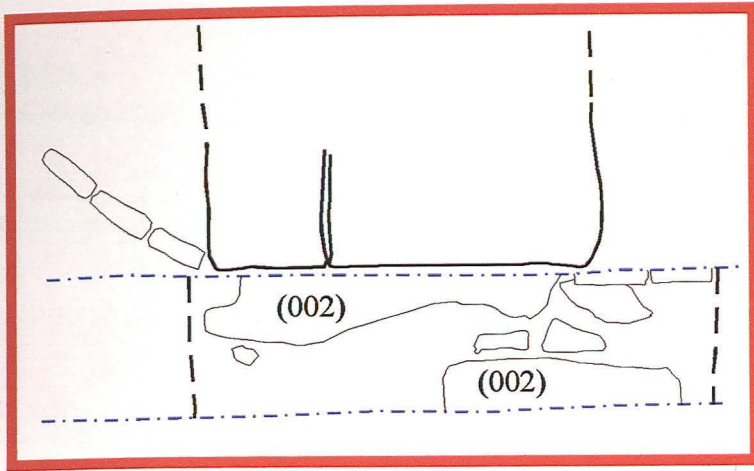
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11.0 Site Archive

The site archive for this project is in preparation and will be deposited at the Lincoln City and County Museum and the Lincolnshire Archives Office (documentary) within six months. Access may be granted by quoting the accession number 2004.98



0 1m
 Scale 1:20

Inset showing base of church buttress with possible foundation stone blocks, (002), revealed within improvement groundwork. (Scale 1:20)

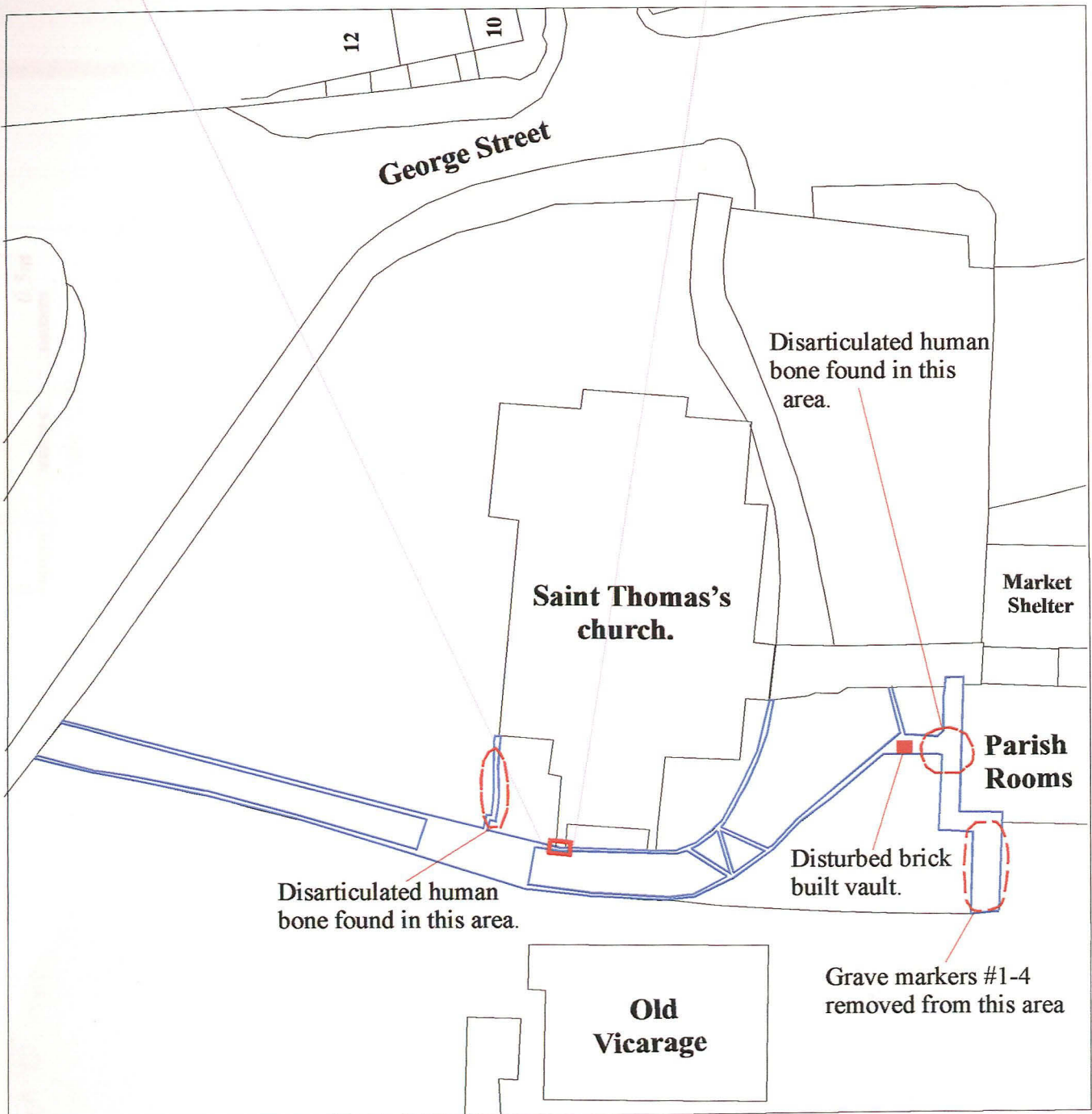


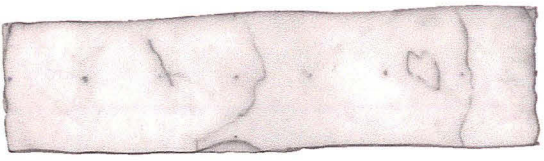
Fig. 2. Site plan showing the improvement groundworks highlighted in blue, and areas where archaeological finds were made highlighted in red. (Scale 1:200)



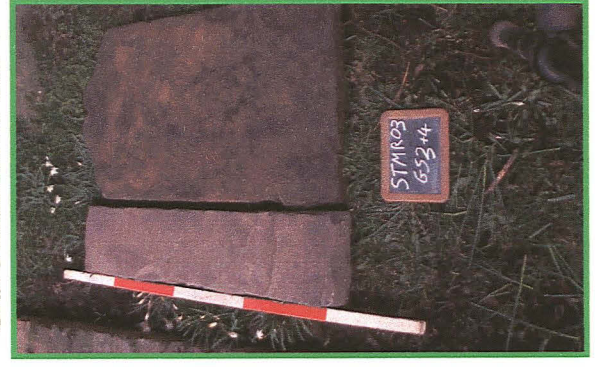
Grave marker #2



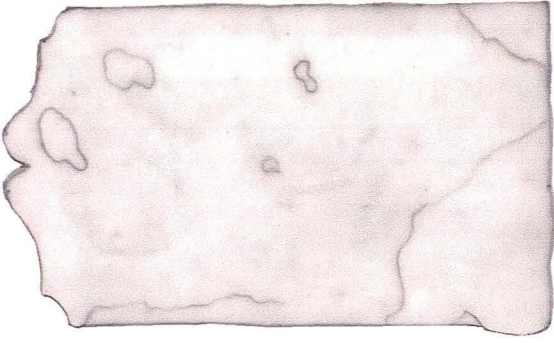
Grave marker #2



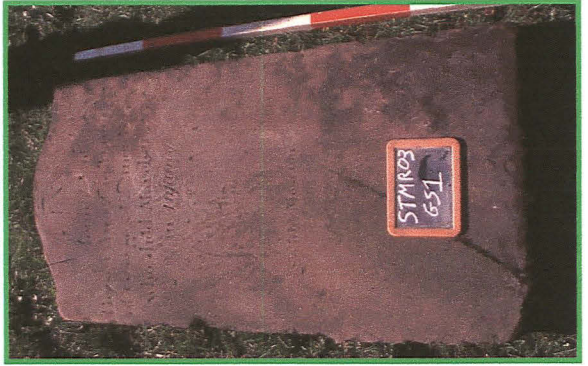
Grave marker #3



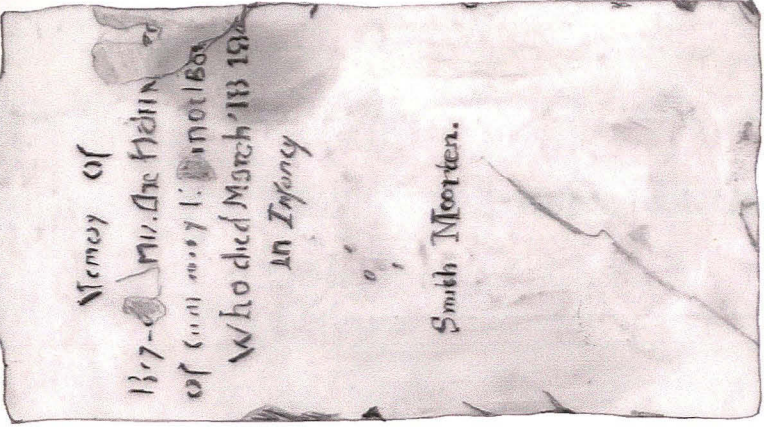
Grave markers #3 and 4



Grave marker #4



Grave marker #1



Scale 1:10

Fig. 3. Drawings and colour plates of the four grave markers disturbed during the works. (Drawings at scale 1:10).

Appendix 1. Colour slides.



Pl. 1. Part of the completed groundworks in the south west corner of the church yard, looking east.



Pl. 2. The churchyard during the enhancement works, looking east.



Pl.3. Stone foundation blocks, (002) at the base of the tower buttress, looking east.



Pl.4. Stone foundation blocks, (002) at the base of the tower buttress, looking north east.

Appendix 2. Context summary.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Interpretation.</i>
001	Layer	Graveyard soil
002	Masonry	Possible foundations.