

**A REPORT TO
THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

November 2007

**St. HELEN'S CHURCH
STICKFORD
LINCOLNSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**

**PREPARED BY
MIKE JARVIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES**

MJAS REPORT No.: 548

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St. HELEN'S CHURCH, STICKFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

CONTENTS	PAGE
Non-Technical Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Site Location and Background	2
3.0 Aims and Methodology	2
4.0 Analysis and Results	2
5.0 Acknowledgements	4
6.0 Bibliography	4
PLATES	
Plate I: General view of Pit 1.	3
LIST OF FIGURES	
Fig. 1: Site location map.	5
Fig. 2: location of trial pits & sections 1 – 3.	6
APPENDIX	
Appendix 1: Context summary.	7
Appendix 2: Archive details.	7

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**St. HELEN'S CHURCH,
STICKFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- *On the 21 June 2007, Mike Jarvis Archaeological Services undertook a watching brief during the excavation of investigative trial pits at St. Helen's Church, Stickford, Lincolnshire. The watching brief was undertaken on behalf of The Parochial Church Council.*
- *The results of this watching brief proved largely negative and those archaeological deposits encountered were undated.*
- *No finds were recovered during the investigations although a small amount of displaced human bone was retrieved from the top/graveyard soil. It is probable that this material originated from elsewhere in the graveyard and therefore is of little interpretive value.*

St. HELEN'S CHURCH, STICKFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On the 21 June 2007, Mike Jarvis Archaeological Services (MJAS) undertook a watching brief during the excavation of investigative trial pits at St. Helen's Church, Stickford, Lincolnshire. The watching brief carried out on behalf of The Parochial Church Council.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

Stickford lies approximately 16km north of Boston, and 38km east of Lincoln in the administrative district of East Lindsey and lies at the southern edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds on an island of high ground projecting into the Fens. The village church (St Helen – hereafter *the site*) is located at National Grid reference: TF 3580 5990.

Stickford is an ancient village and dates from at least the Saxon period. Archaeological evidence in the vicinity suggests traces of prehistoric and Roman activity lie to the east of the village, while the most prominent visible evidence is associated with the medieval settlement (primarily ridge and furrow earthworks lying towards the northern end of the present-day village). The position of this activity (away from the church) may suggest a post-medieval shift in the settlement pattern. An archaeological watching brief carried out in 1994 to the north of the site failed to reveal archaeological deposits.

The Domesday survey of 1086 does refer to a church in the village, however the earliest parts of the present-day church date from the 13th century (the church tower dates to the 14th century). The church underwent extensive restoration during the second half of the 19th century.

3.0 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the watching brief were:

- To produce an archive record of deposits and remains generally within the constraints of the groundwork contractors' programme and working methods with due regard to current health and safety legislation.
- To produce a report on the archaeological importance of the discoveries.
- To produce a project archive from which the potential for further study and academic research could be assessed.
- To provide information for accession to the Historic Environment Record (HER formerly the SMR).

4.0 RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS (Fig. 2 and Pl. I)

The watching brief required observing the excavation of three small trial pits located against the outside walls of the church tower and dug in order to provide information prior to the implementation of a scheme designed to improve rainwater drainage.

The archaeological record was secured by means of trench-side notes, scale drawings and photographs. Human bone disturbed during the course of the groundwork was reburied on site.

RESULTS

Pit 1

Pit 1 (nominally 1.2m x 500mm x 500mm deep) was located against the south wall of the tower, mid-way between the south-east and south-west buttresses. Excavation revealed natural red/brown clay ([004]) approximately 500mm below ground level (7.75m OD). Above natural was [003], a 100mm thick deposit of very small angular limestone chippings, this was in turn sealed by a clay silt soil ([002]) that contained small limestone fragments and occasional charcoal fleck inclusions. [002] was sealed by an extensive top/graveyard soil ([001]) containing occasional fragments of brick, slate and modern glass (together with a few fragments of displaced human bone). Brickwork infilling the opening between the two tower buttresses ([009]) was revealed to have a minimal foundation comprising of an single offset course of mortar bonded brick the base of which lay c. 150mm below ground level (ground level - 8.26m OD).

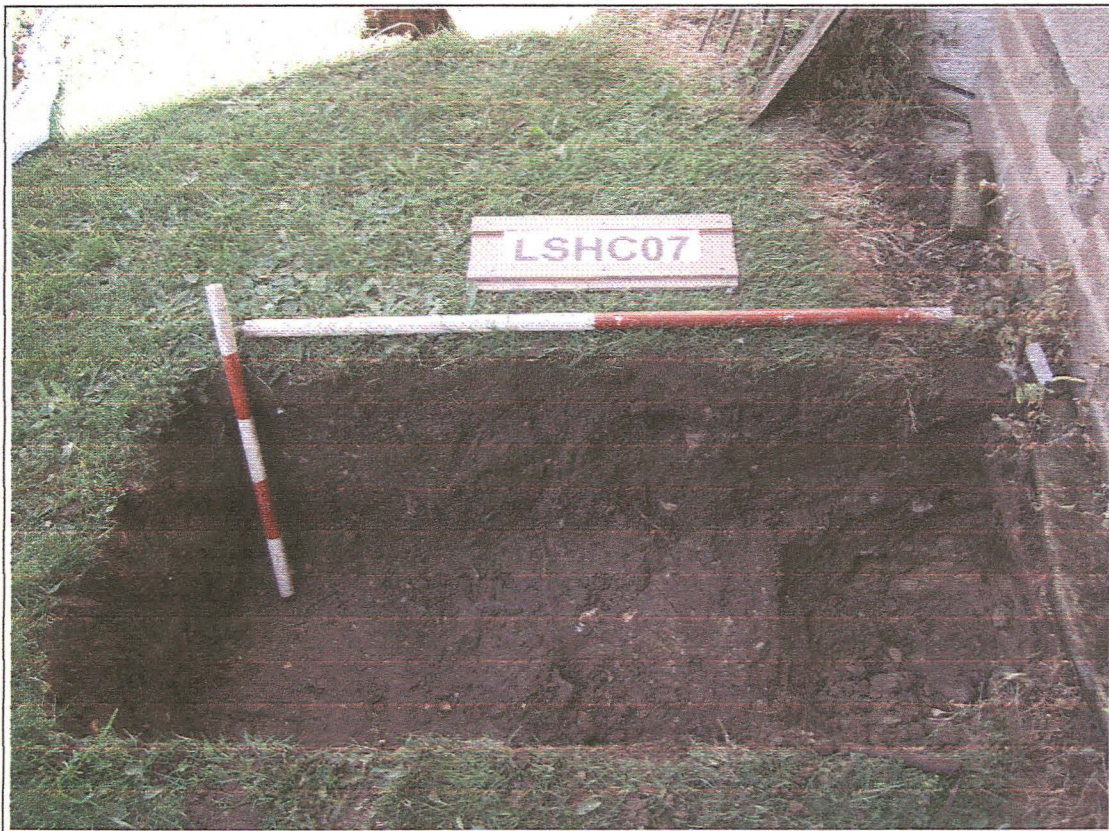


Plate 1: General view of Pit 1 looking west (scales are 1m and 500mm).

Pit 2

Pit 2 (700mm x 300mm x 400mm deep) lay 1.50m to the west of Pit 1 against one of the buttresses forming the south-west corner of the tower. Here, excavation was carried out to a depth of approximately 400mm and revealed layer [002] sealing a flat dressed limestone associated with the foundation of buttress [006]. Sealing [002] was topsoil [001] (ground level 8.26m OD).

Pit 3

Located midway along the north wall of the tower, Pit 3 (nominally 150mm x 150mm x 200mm deep) lay against the greenstone wall lying between its corner buttresses. A stony clay ([005] - natural?) was revealed 200mm below ground level (8m OD), above [005] was a fine silt topsoil [001] (ground level). The greenstone blocks present in the north wall ([007]) were revealed to extend approximately 170mm below ground level and were sat on a 50mm bed of limestone ([008]). Probing indicated that no foundation material lay below this level.

No further features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the results of this watching brief have provided little information regarding the nature of archaeological deposits on the site. Natural was revealed close to existing ground level. The deposit of stone chippings revealed in the base of Pit 1, although undated, may be associated with the construction of the tower during 14th century. Remaining deposits were also undated and similarly were of little interpretive value given the limited scale of the investigations. No finds were recovered although a small amount of displaced human bone was retrieved from the topsoil. It is probable that this material originated from elsewhere in the graveyard.

The brick and stonework filling the openings between the buttresses on the north and south sides of the tower were shallow and lacking substantial foundations. The foundations associated with the tower buttresses appeared substantial and extended below the level of investigation.

5.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mike Jarvis Archaeological Services would like to thank The Parochial Church Council for funding the watching brief. Thanks are also extended to Mary Anderson (Anderson and Glenn, Architects) and Millstone Restoration (groundwork contractor) for their full cooperation throughout the duration of the watching brief. Access to the Lincolnshire HER was permitted by Mr Mark Bennet.

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6.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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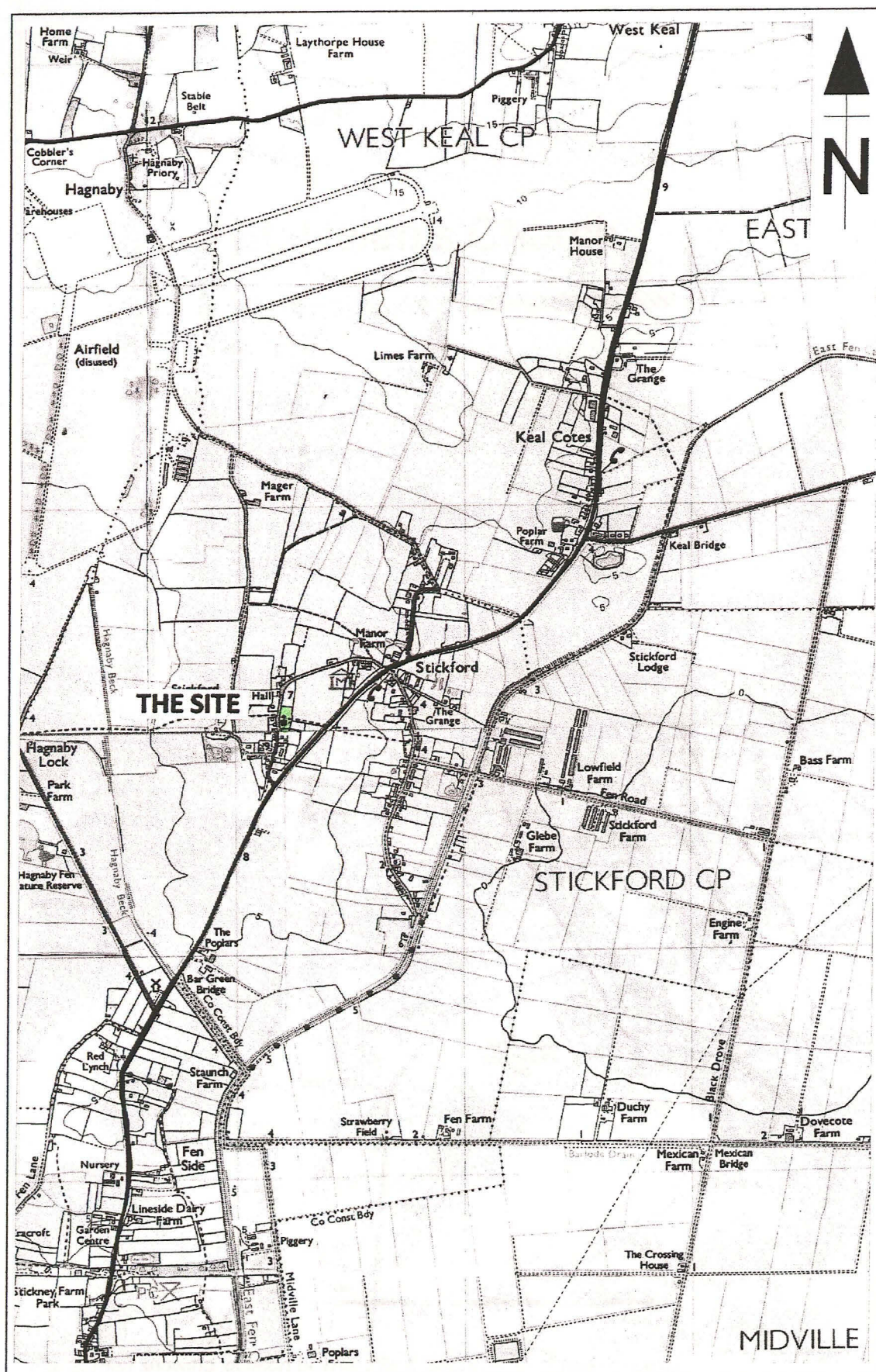
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NOTE

This report is presented on the understanding that further information may yet emerge, MJAS cannot therefore be held responsible for loss, delay, or damage arising out of this report.



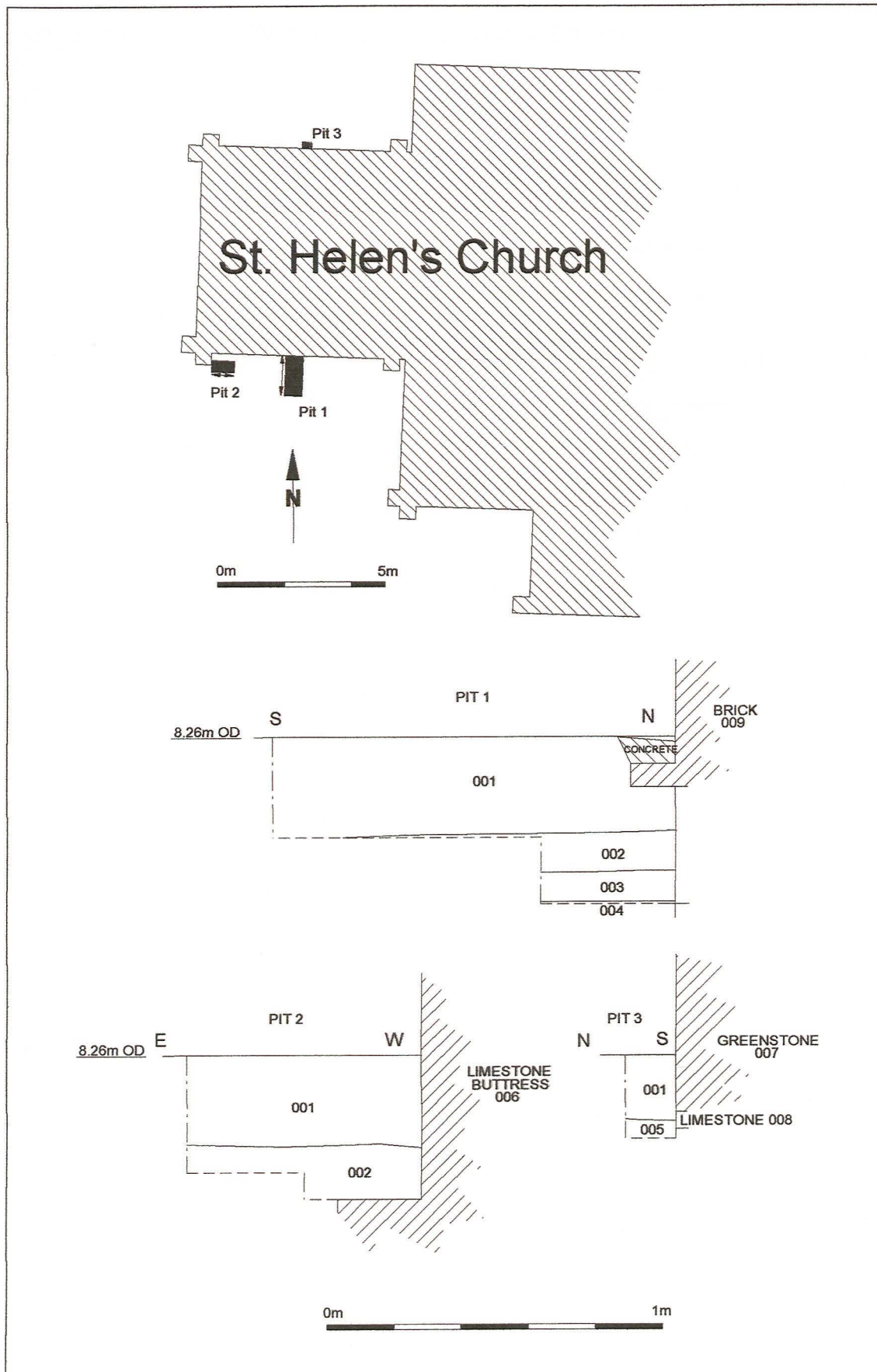


Fig. 2: Plan showing location of Trial Pits & Sections 1 – 3 (not to scale).

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APPENDIX 1 – CONTEXT SUMMARY

Context	Description
001	Topsoil – dark grey/brown clay silt – frequent small angular limestone fragments and occasional brick, roof slate and glass.
002	Firm mottled pale-mid brown clay silt with occasional small angular limestone and charcoal inclusions.
003	Friable, pale yellow/brown limestone chippings.
004	Compact, reddish/brown clay with occasional veins of grey clay – natural.
005	Stony clay – natural?
006	Limestone buttress/foundation in south-west corner of tower.
007	Greenstone infill wall between north-east and north-west tower buttressed corners.
008	Limestone layer.
009	Brick infill wall between south-east and south-west tower buttresses.

APPENDIX 2 – ARCHIVE SUMMARY

SITE NAME: St. Helen's Church, Stickford, Lincolnshire

SITE CODE: LSHC07

MJAS REPORT No: 548

NGR: TF 3520 6001

PROJECT TYPE: Watching Brief

PROJECT DATE: 21 June 2007

PLANNING APPLICATION No.: N/A

SMR No.: N/A

CIVIL PARISH: Stickford

MUSEUM ACCESSION No.: 2007.125

ARCHIVE PRESENT LOCATION: MJAS, 1 Torrington Road, Lincoln, LN2 2DP

ARCHIVE FINAL LOCATION: The City and County Museum, Friars Lane, Lincoln