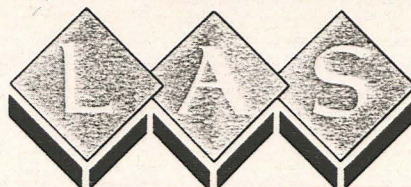


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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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St Wulfram's Church Grantham Archaeological Watching Brief

SKNGR: TF 9147 3613

Site Code: GSW 94

LCNCC Museum Accession No. 149.94

Report

for

GRANTHAM ST WULFRAM DCC

October 1995

Lincolnshire County Council
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PLATES

Pl. 1 General view of south aisle looking E after removal of floor and grave slabs

Pl. 2 W end of area after removal of floor makeup, showing traces of brick cross walls, in area of proposed toilets

Pl. 3 Same area as Pl. 2 after excavation of soil along line of cross wall between office and toilets, revealing row of brick-lined vaults.

Pl. 4 Large limestone block in NW corner of aisle

Pl. 5 Central area showing double brick vault cutting earlier barrel vaulted grave to N and butted by vaults, shown in Pl. 3, to W

Pl. 6 General view looking S

Pl. 7 Foundation trench for office E wall, looking S, showing edge of double vault and vault beyond

Pl. 8 Foundation trench along S wall of store showing edge of brick vault

Pl. 9 South aisle W wall showing concrete apron between buttresses.

Pl. 10 Sewer trench perpendicular to aisle W wall, showing off-set footings

Pl. 11 Sewer trench looking W towards Swinegate

Pl. 12 N-S ditch in sewer trench east of churchyard entrance

Pl. 13 Threshold stone beneath modern paving slabs marking entrance to churchyard

Pl. 14 Brick foundations in line with corner of almshouses W of churchyard entrance

Pl. 15 Sewer trench looking E towards church

Pl. 16 Pit or ditch at junction with footpath looking W

Pl. 17 Pit or ditch at junction with footpath looking E showing disturbance from earlier services and tree roots

Pl. 18 End of trench at junction with brick inspection chamber, looking E towards Swinegate

FIGURES

Fig. 1 St Wulfram's Church Grantham. Location of sewer trench and works in south aisle Reproduced from the 1968 OS 1:1250 scale map with the permission of the Controller of HMSO, Crown copyright. (Licence no. AL50424A)

Fig. 2 Sketch drawing of vaults revealed beneath south aisle floor. Position of foundations for toilets and office based on drawing kindly supplied by Bond and Read. (N. Field)

Fig. 3 Plan and section drawing of part of the pipe trench to either side of churchyard entrance (N. Field/ M. McDaid)

Fig. 4 Plan showing location of possible ditch or pit at west end of pipe trench (N Field/ M. McDaid)

Fig. 5 Grantham town plan c.1840. This shows the western limit of the churchyard as a straight boundary running N-S.

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Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned by Bond and Read Chartered Architects to undertake an archaeological watching brief at St Wulfram's Church, Grantham during building works. These comprised the construction of an office and store and toilets in the west end of the South Aisle. Also included in the watching brief was the associated sewer trench dug from the west end of the church to join the mains sewer in Swinegate (Fig. 1).

Archaeological Background

The earliest parts of the present church are three bays of the nave which lie west of a pair of unusually wide arches. The pillars of this arcade date to the end of the 12th century. A few fragments of Norman work survive in the clerestory above these 3 bays.

In about 1250 two bays were added to the nave westward as well as the south porch and the lower part of the south aisle wall. This part of the church was included in the restoration works of Sir George Gilbert Scott during the period 1866-75.

It is thought that the original market site at Grantham was in front of St Wulfram's church (Honeybone 1975). (Other markets which are known to have developed next to churches include Sleaford, Boston and possibly Gainsborough.) The town grew westwards and the present market place developed close to the Friary by about 1300.

1. Internal Works

The new facilities are all contained within the westernmost bay of the South Aisle. Central heating pipes were laid at this time and it was assumed that grave slabs which dated 1751, 1761, 1797, 1801 and 1834 had been relaid with the new floor on a bedding of crushed limestone c.200mm in depth. The grave slabs were removed by the contractors prior to the first visit by the writer so their former positions were not recorded. Two grave slabs were left undisturbed in the centre of the floor area (Pls. 1,2).

The required depth for the concrete floor in the area of the toilets was 200mm and it was anticipated that archaeological disturbance would be minimal. The foundation trenches required for the two N-S walls and one E-W wall were to be 300mm wide and 300-500mm in depth depending on ground conditions.

Removal of the crushed limestone bedding revealed at least 8 brick vaults (Fig. 2). A row of three was visible along the west wall of the aisle (Pl. 3).

There was a large limestone block in the NW corner of the cleared area, close to the present west wall of the aisle (Pl. 4). This had been exposed by the contractors but was not investigated further.

The vault walls on the west side of the aisle butted a double vault in the centre of the floor, beneath the two undisturbed grave slabs (Pls. 3,5). This in turn cut the edge of a grave to the north whose barrel vaulted capping was undisturbed (Pl. 5). It is not known if all the graves were originally sealed in a similar manner. The central graves also cut through a further brick lined vault to the SE (Pls. 6,7).

A foundation trench running east (for the store area) located a further brick vault on its south side (Pl. 8).

The date range of the grave slabs in this part of the aisle (1751-1834) is entirely in keeping with the expected date for brick vaults. It is suggested that they commemorate the people buried in the vaults but it is not known if they were placed in their correct positions by Scott.

The eight recorded vaults had completely removed any earlier deposits and no further monitoring of the building works was carried out inside the church.

2. External Works

The sewer and water pipes were inserted beneath the foundations of the west wall of the south aisle. Only 0.30m length of the aisle wall was exposed in the trench outside. It is 2m wide above ground level with offset foundations visible in the trench (Pls. 9,10). Material visible in the trench which turned northwards running along the edge of the concrete apron between the buttresses appeared to be backfill of the church foundations. The sewer trench then turned west at the west door running along the existing path, through the churchyard gates, past the almshouses to join an inspection chamber west of Swinegate (Fig. 1, Pl. 11).

The trench west of the church cut through layers of grey-brown sand and gravel, remarkable for a churchyard, where one usually finds dark humic soil riddled with graves. At a distance of 25.10m from the West Door were two ditches, crossing the trench apparently running NE-SW (Fig. 3, Pl. 12). (The trench width was too narrow to ascertain their precise orientation.) The larger of the two lay to the west and cut through the backfilled smaller ditch. Its fill was an orange-brown sand.

A stone threshold was observed immediately beneath the flagstones which cross the churchyard entrance (Fig. 3, Pl. 13).

At a point 2.30m west of the gates is a brick foundation 1.20m wide and 0.40m deep, comprising 5 courses of brick. It followed in line with the east wall of the Hurst's Almshouses (Fig. 3, Pl. 14).

The trench continued along the south side of the footpath until it reached the junction with the smaller footpath leading off in a south-westerly direction. At this point the trench made a slight dog leg before continuing a further 4.60m to end at the brick inspection chamber adjacent to the retaining wall of the lawned area Pl. 15).

It was at the junction of the two footpaths that the trench fill changed. West of the churchyard gates the trench cut through orange sands and gravels which gave way at a point 16.70m west of the gates to darker mixed soils, possibly marking the line of another ditch (Fig. 4, Pls. 16,17,18). Unfortunately, this part of the trench was badly disturbed by tree roots and other service trenches. It was from the spoil of this darker soil that three plain pieces of pottery in a hard shell tempered fabric (two body sherds and a base) were retrieved. They were identified as Lincoln Kiln Type fabric dating to the late 9th-late 10th century. These were the only finds from the sewer trench.

Discussion

The building works at St Wulfram caused minimal archaeological damage. The internal works were in a part of the church already disturbed by 18-19th century vaults. The sewer trench outside the church crossed at least two ditches but the narrowness of the trench meant that no associated finds were made. It is not clear whether they represent a former churchyard boundary east of the present gates or if they are of a much earlier date.

There was no direct evidence for former use of the land as a market or area of habitation. It is of note that an early town map of around 1840 (Fig. 5) shows the churchyard boundary before it was extended. If there was a market area it could have been in the block of land now occupied by the almshouses and other buildings, together with the open space, lying between the churchyard and Swinegate.

It was in this area that the two pottery sherds were found. Their early date is of note but the small quantity retrieved makes interpretation of the finds impossible.

Naomi Field
October 1995

Acknowledgements

Graham Cook kindly supplied architect's plans of the works and the men from Peter McCrone Builders were helpful at all times. Thanks are due to staff of Lincoln Reference Library for their assistance and to Jane Young of CLAU for identifying the pottery.

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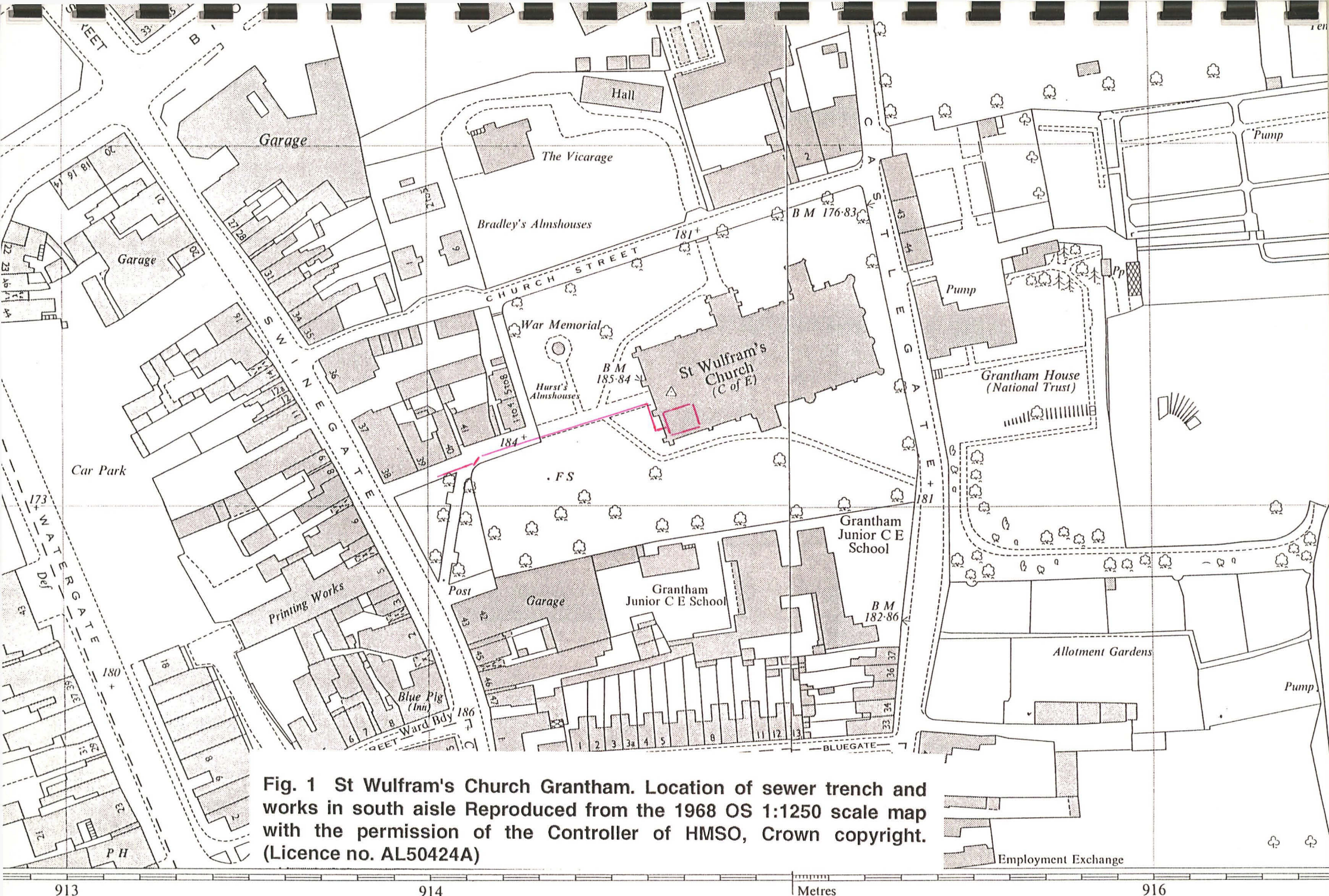


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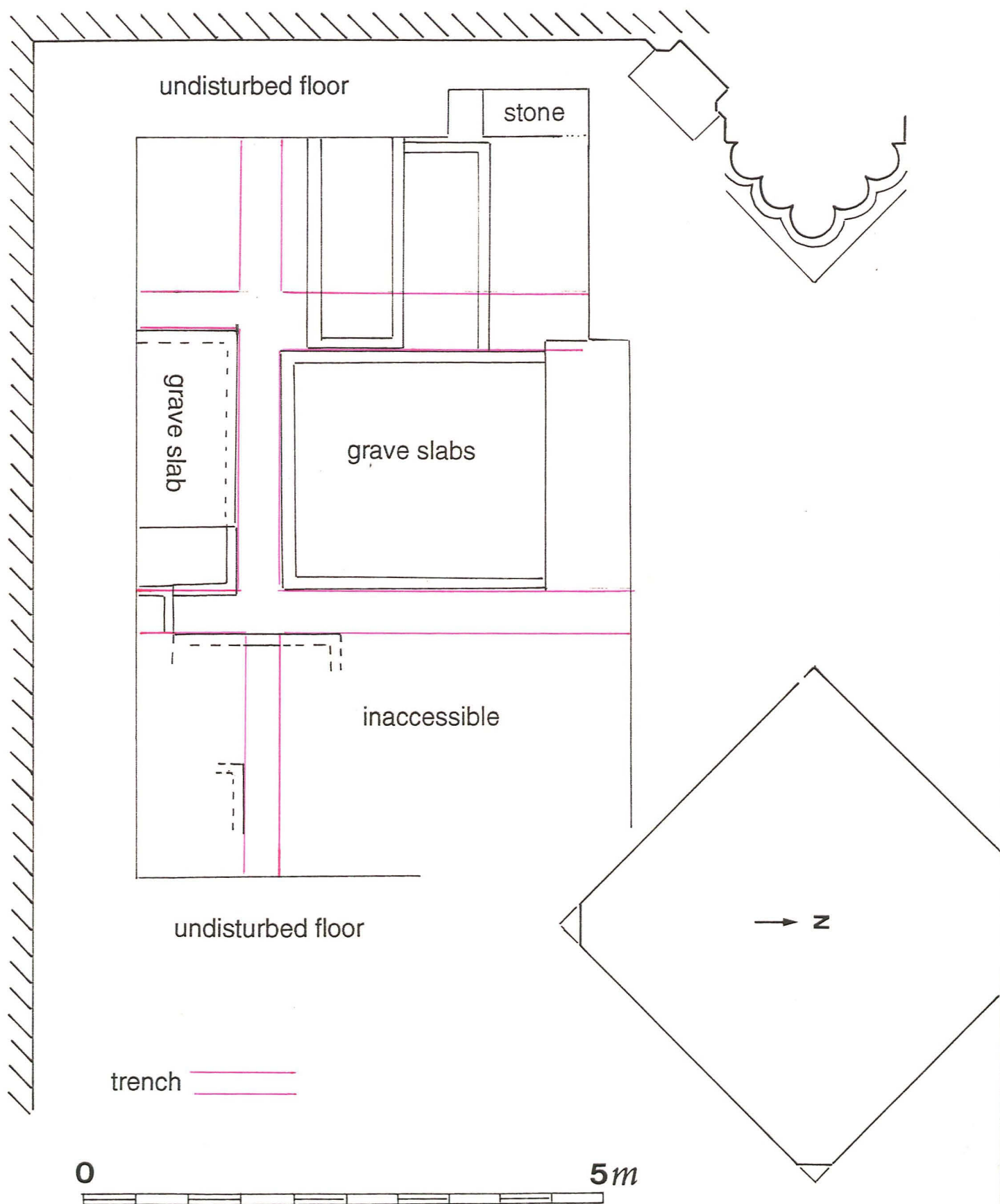


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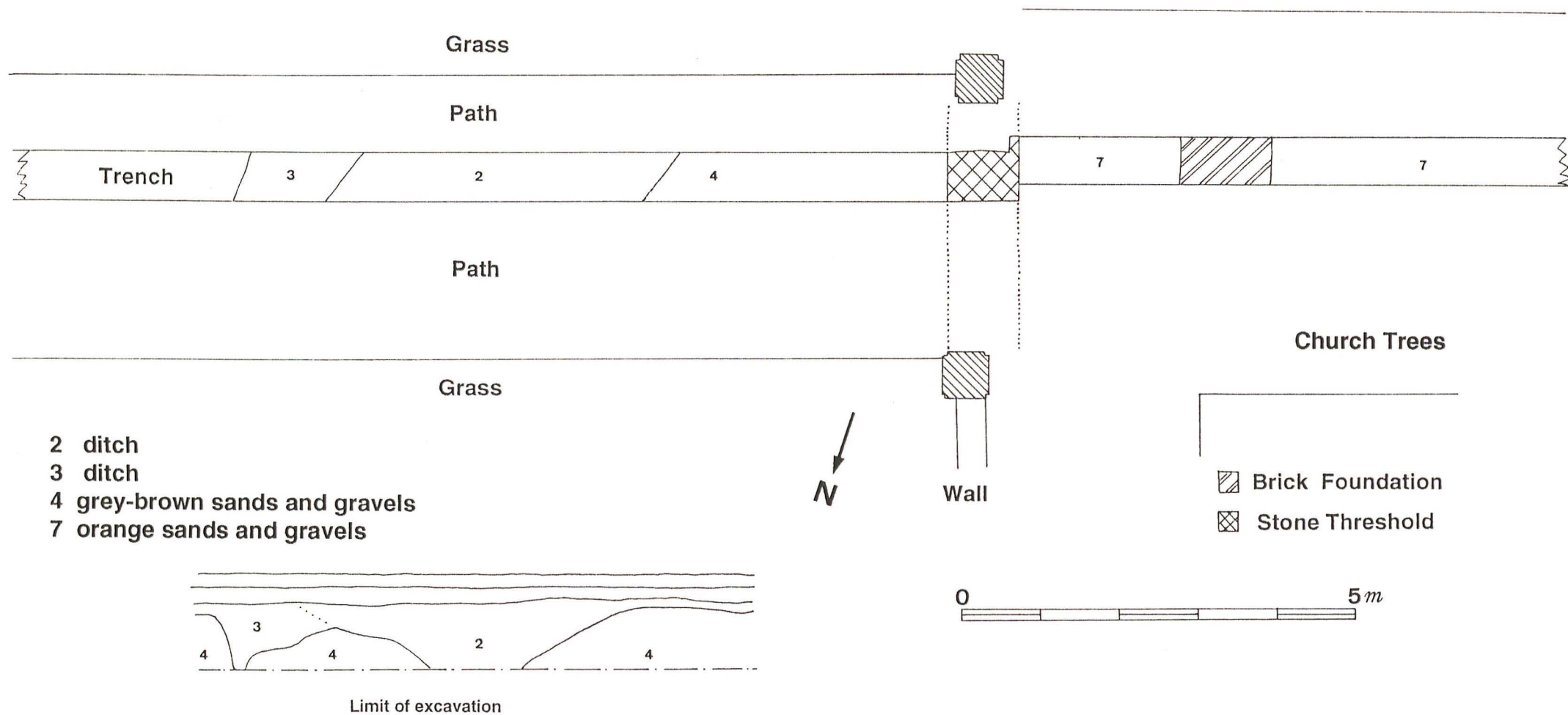


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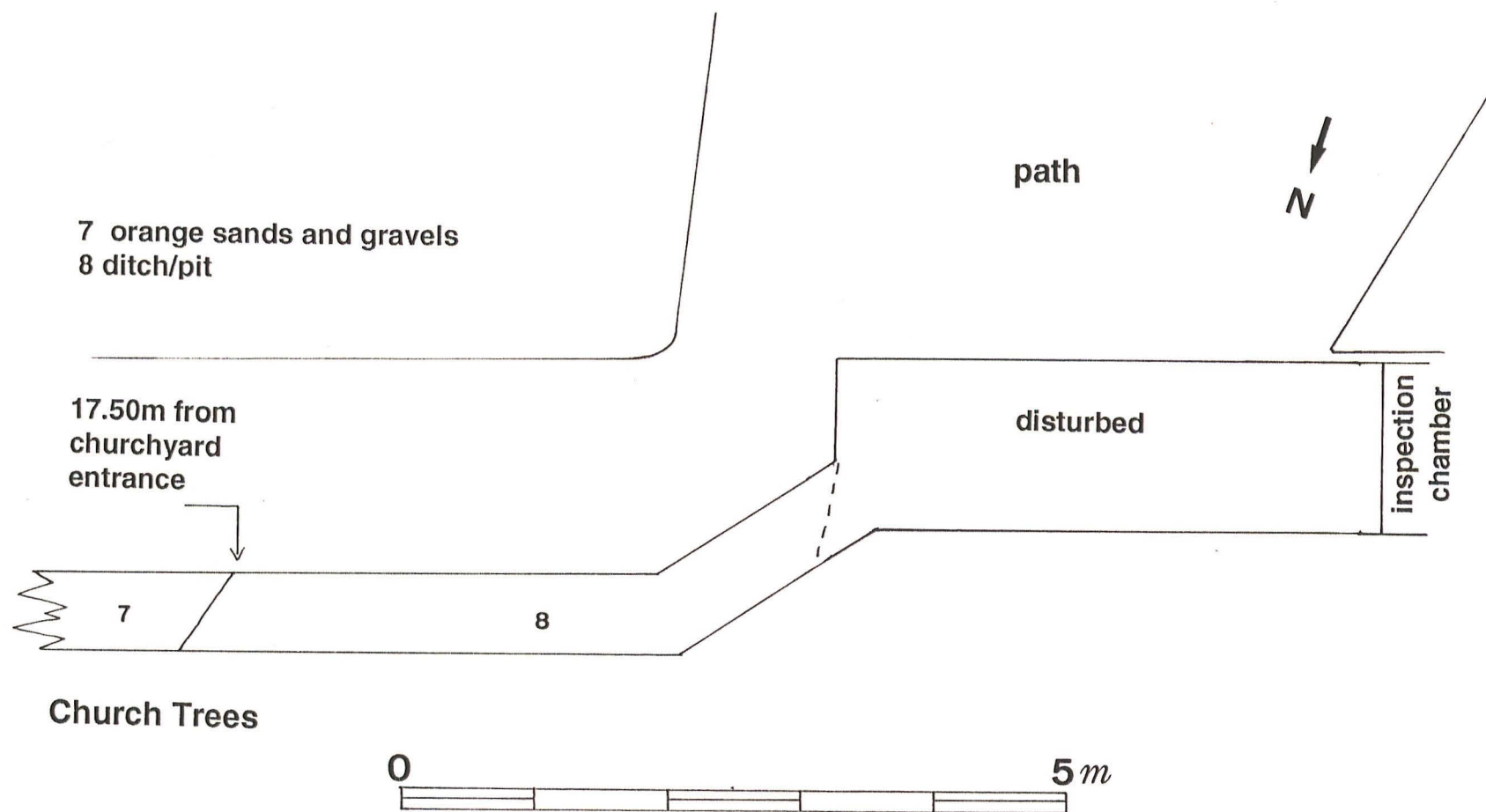


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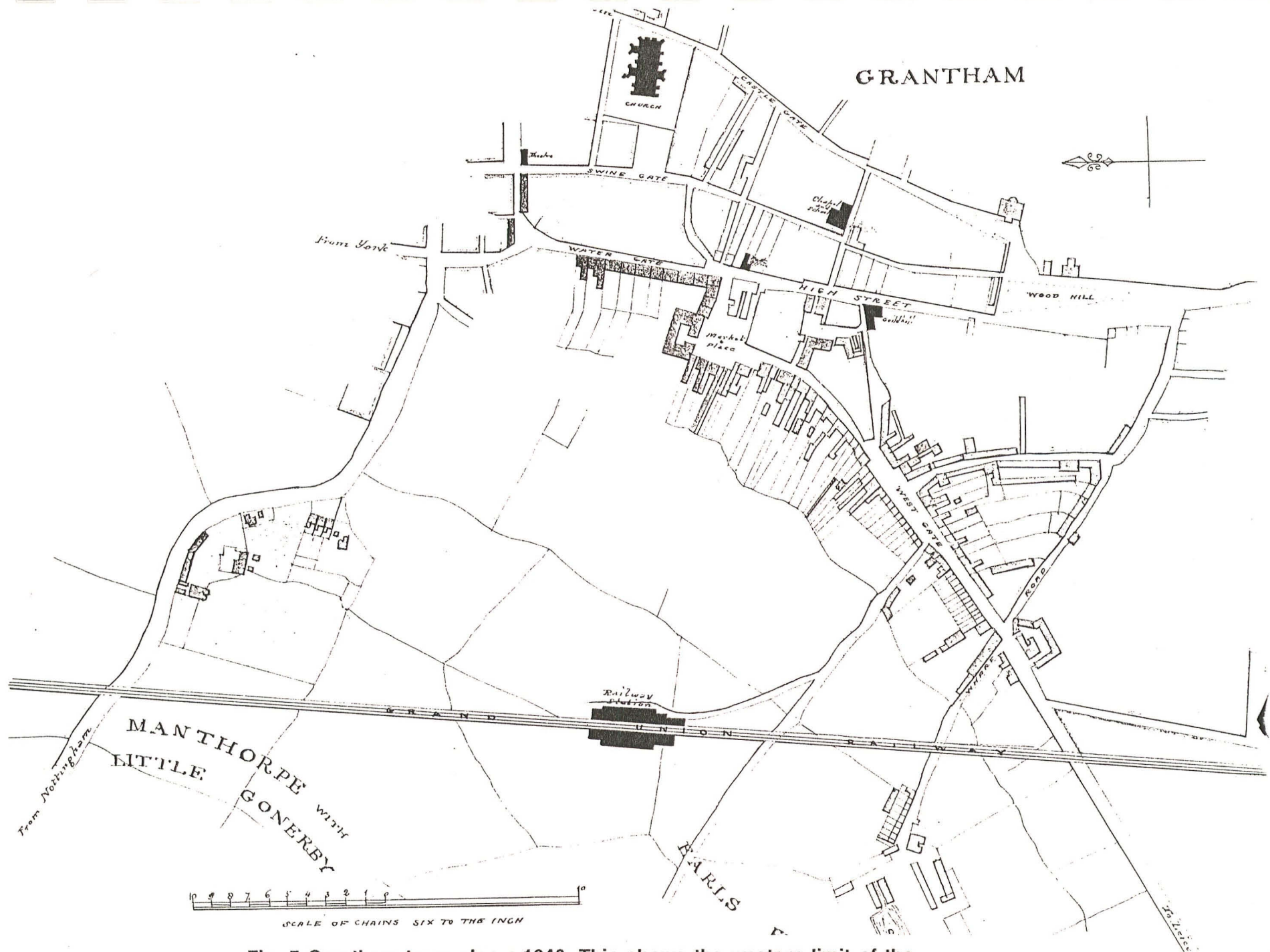


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