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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Cranwell, St. Andrew's Church
Archaeological Watching Brief**

NGR: TF 0328 4996

Site Code: CSA 96

LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 155.96

Faculty No. 518

**report prepared for
Cranwell PCC**

**LAS Report 304
July 1998**

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Contents

List of Figures

List of Plates

Summary 1

Introduction 1

Archaeological Background 1

Scope of Work 2

The Watching Brief 2

RESULTS

The Nave South Wall 2

The Porch, Nave and North Aisle West Walls 2

North Aisle: North West Angle 3

North Aisle: North Wall 3

Organ Chamber and Vestry 4

The Chancel 4

Conclusion 4

Acknowledgements 4

Reference 4

Conclusion 4

Acknowledgements 4

References 4

The Figures

The Plates

List of Figures

Fig. 1 Cranwell church. Site location plan based on the 1954 1:25,000 OS map with the permission of the Controller of HMSO © Crown copyright. LAS licence no. AL50424A

Fig. 2 Cranwell church plan based on plan supplied by the architect.

List of Plates

Pl. 1 St Andrew's Church Cranwell, general view from south showing bellcote, south porch, nave and chancel.

Pl. 2 Excavation of drains and soakaway south of nave

Pl. 3 Nave south wall showing concrete apron and triangular stone at base of wall below, and left of, window.

Pl. 4 Detail of triangular stone in nave south wall, after removal of concrete apron

Pl. 5 General view of west end of nave showing plinth continuous around the porch, nave west and south walls and north aisle. Note rebuild of nave west wall above the plinth and upper corner of south wall associated with construction of the late 17th century bellcote.

Pl. 6 North west corner of aisle looking south along the west wall of aisle and nave after removal of concrete apron. Note continuous off-set foundations below plinth beneath aisle (foreground) and nave (beyond the buttress).

Pl. 7 Detail of foundation between north and central nave buttresses.

Pl. 8 Detail of foundation between central and south nave buttresses.

Pl. 9 General view of north aisle showing north wall rebuild over removed medieval plinth at north west angle.

Pl. 10 North west angle of aisle looking south, during removal of concrete apron, showing damaged plinth stone of corner buttress.

Pl. 11 Detail of damaged plinth stone of the aisle corner buttress.

Pl. 12 Detail of trench along aisle north wall showing poor foundations

Pl. 13 General view, looking west, along aisle north wall with buttress foundation and plinth in foreground

Pl. 14 Detail of aisle north east corner buttress and its rubble foundation

Pl. 15 Incised lines on stonework in aisle north wall

Pl. 16 General view of north side of church showing vestry with entrance to boiler house.

Pl. 17 South east angle of chancel, looking west showing off-set foundation with concrete underpinning below.

St. Andrew's Church, Cranwell

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Summary

Archaeological monitoring during the installation of new drains around the walls of the church located the buttress foundations of the 13th century aisle and established that the 17th century bellcote, at the west end of the nave, probably replaced an earlier bellcote in the same position.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned in April 1996 by Bond and Read (Chartered Architects) to conduct an intermittent watching brief during excavation of shallow drainage trenches around the external walls of St. Andrew's Church, Cranwell. The watching brief was required in order to comply with a condition of the Faculty.

Background

Cranwell is located on the Jurassic limestone some 5km north-west of Sleaford and west of the A15 (Fig. 1). At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, the manor at Cranwell was held by Gilbert de Gant (Ghent) although there is no reference to a church. Before the Conquest the estate belonged to Ulf Fenisc, one of the greatest landowners in the pre-Conquest Danelaw (with estates in Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire). His estates formed a considerable part of the Gant fee of later times (Foster & Longley 1924, xxxi and xxxvii). At the time of the Conquest in 1066 the Cranwell manor had been valued, for taxation purposes, at £5. By 1086 it was valued at £7 and was evidently a prosperous but moderately sized estate (Foster & Longley 1924, 108 (24/36)).

St Andrew's church comprises a chancel and nave with a north aisle, south porch and bellcote at the west end of the nave (Pl. 1). The three-bay arcade is an opening out of the Saxon nave dating to the early 12th century that was extended westward in the 13th century, together with an extension to the nave. The aisle north wall was rebuilt in 1812 and the chancel was rebuilt in 1902-3 when an organ chamber/vestry was also constructed on its north side. The chancel arch is Early English in style. The bellcote at the west end of the nave is in an unusual Dutch-influenced style and of probable 17th century date (Fig. 2). Plans, elevations and section drawings of the church, prepared in 1899 by the architect C. H. Fowler, are held at the Lincolnshire Archives Office, showing existing layout and proposed alterations (ref. Fowler plans 24).

In 1902-3 repair work, under the direction of Mr C. H. Fowler, revealed the north-east corner of the Saxon nave with quoins of long and short construction, dating to c.950-1100. This is still visible but is now contained within the organ chamber. It was during the rebuilding of the chancel that four

carved stones were found in the north wall and were removed for display in the north aisle. These comprise three fragments of a large grave cover known as a hogback which is a well-known type in the north of England. The fourth piece is part of a standing shaft with a four-strand plait of Viking influenced decoration an c. AD925-950 century in date. The style, layout and quality of the interlace are so similar to the other three fragments that they are probably from the same workshop and possibly from the same monument. (David Stocker and Paul Everson kindly provided information about these fragments in advance of their publication in a corpus of Anglo-Saxon carved stonework in Lincolnshire by the British Academy).

Scope of Work

The purpose of the groundworks was to improve drainage around the church. This consisted of removing the surrounding concrete apron and the hardcore beneath, where necessary and replacing it with gravel. In addition a three new gulleys were laid, leading to drains and two soakaways (Fig. 2) Very little disturbance was made to deposits below the hardcore, but the work provided an opportunity to record the uppermost levels beneath the hardcore and to compare the foundations with the fabric above.

The Watching Brief

Three monitoring visits were made. During the first visit (by Naomi Field on 16th July 1996) some concrete had been removed but there was little to examine; the second visit (by Geoff Tann) examined a greater area and checked a deeper trench cut across the churchyard to a soakaway, and the third visit (by GT, on 26th July) recorded all archaeological features exposed in the trench around the church.

RESULTS

The Nave South Wall

Two drainage trenches were dug south of the nave wall leading to a soakaway (Pl. 2). The trenches were shallow and nothing except for a few pieces of human bone were found in them and the soakaway.

Removal of the concrete apron and underlying hardcore along the nave wall exposed dark brown soil with limestone fragments in the shallow trench (Pls 3 and 4). There was no evidence of an offset foundation course at this level but the lowest visible courses were of thinner stones than those used above.

A triangular piece of limestone was seen in the fabric at the base of the wall east of the porch and below the window (Pl. 4). The exposed face is not dressed but its unusual shape suggests that this may be part of an architectural fragment or other piece of worked stone.

The Porch, Nave and North Aisle West Walls

There is a chamfered double plinth, with taurus moulding above, at the base of the porch walls which continues along the nave south wall west of the porch and along the nave and aisle west walls. The plinth is not present east of the porch. This suggests that the porch was built at the same time as the extension to the nave and aisle in the 13th century. (Pls.1-3, 5). No features

were seen in the trenches to either side of the porch.

The drainage trench along the west side of the church revealed the neatly laid foundation on which the 13th century nave and aisle west walls were constructed, on a slightly askew alignment (Pl. 6). The foundation continues uninterrupted beneath the recesses between the nave wall buttresses (Pls. 7 and 8).

The nave west wall was entirely rebuilt above plinth level in the 17th century when the present bellcote was constructed. The distinctive ashlar blocks extend around the upper part of the nave south wall and are quite different from the poorly dressed narrowly coursed stonework below (Pl. 5). In contrast, there is no clear distinction between the 13th century extension and the presumed earlier fabric of the nave on the south wall. This wall has been heavily during construction of the porch and insertion of two windows, with extensive rebuilding above them.

The unusual buttressing arrangement of the nave west wall at first appears to relate to the strengthening required for the 17th century bellcote but the plinth courses follow uninterrupted around the buttresses and appear to be part of the 13th/₁₄th century fabric of the wall. The inference is that the original nave west wall also needed to support a considerable load and/or absorb the vibration generated by the ringing of bells and that the existing bellcote may be a rebuild of an earlier bellcote or tower.

North Aisle: North West Angle

The north wall of the aisle was rebuilt in 1812 and the junction between the medieval and the 19th century fabric can clearly be seen at the north west angle, where the upper plinth and moulding have been removed (Pls 6 and 9). Removal of the concrete apron revealed the limestone foundation extending 0.30m to the north of the existing north wall (Pls. 10 and 11). A large damaged stone on the uppermost surviving course of this projection is chamfered on its north face. Beneath the chamfered block was a thinner stone course. This projection was probably the remains of a corner buttress.

A 0.3m wide hand-dug trench ran from close to the north west angle of the aisle across the graveyard to a soakaway. It had been excavated and backfilled before archaeological inspection, but re-excavation of a limited area showed that no earlier foundation extended north or west of this part of the church.

North Aisle: North Wall

The aisle north wall was rebuilt in 1812 with a probable later rebuild/repair below eaves height (Pl. 9). At ground level the foundation is ragged and broken (Pl. 12). Insertion of graves alongside the wall could have caused this damage but no graves were identified within the shallow trench. At its junction with the vestry were the foundations, with chamfered plinth above, belonging to the medieval buttress at the north-east angle of the aisle (Pl. 13). The chamfered corner plinth rested on a foundation of small limestone lumps, which extended at least 0.25m beyond the limit of the trench. The rubble

foundations were 0.7m wide and at least 0.2m thick. As the north face of the chamfered is plain presumably at least one similar stone has been removed. The chamfered block has been crudely cut away on its west face to try to blend it in with the line of the rebuilt wall (Pl. 14).

Parallel incised lines were observed on two adjacent stones at the west end of the aisle north wall at sill height (Pls. 9 and 15). It is not clear whether the stones were originally a single piece of unknown function which had been broken and re-used in the wall or if the lines are of recent date.

Organ Chamber and Vestry

This part of the church was built in 1902-3, between the chancel and the north aisle, and constructed in narrow courses of roughly dressed limestone (Pl. 16). A brick foundation course was seen beneath this part of the building. There is a boiler house below which has probably destroyed all archaeological remains on this part of the site.

The Chancel

The chancel was rebuilt at the same time as the construction of the organ chamber and vestry although five larger blocks forming a straight joint behind the drainpipe on the south wall may be the west side of a blocked window, denoting earlier fabric *in situ* (Pl. 1). Removal of the concrete and rubble revealed a slight offset stone foundation with a concrete underpinning (Pl. 17).

Conclusion

The programme of groundworks at Cranwell church was modest in scale but the sensitivity of the site, because of its importance in the Anglo-Saxon period, merited close archaeological monitoring. In the event there was minimal disturbance to significant archaeological remains. However, removal of the concrete apron exposed the foundations and allowed provisional interpretation of the alterations at the west end of the church. No human remains were encountered in the trench around the church and only a few stray bones were uncovered during excavation of the soakaways. There were no other artefacts or pottery sherds found.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the Peter McFarlane (Bond & Read Chartered Architects), Rev. Gerald Smith, former vicar of Cranwell church, and the contractors.

Naomi Field and Geoff Tann
July 1998

Reference

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soakaway

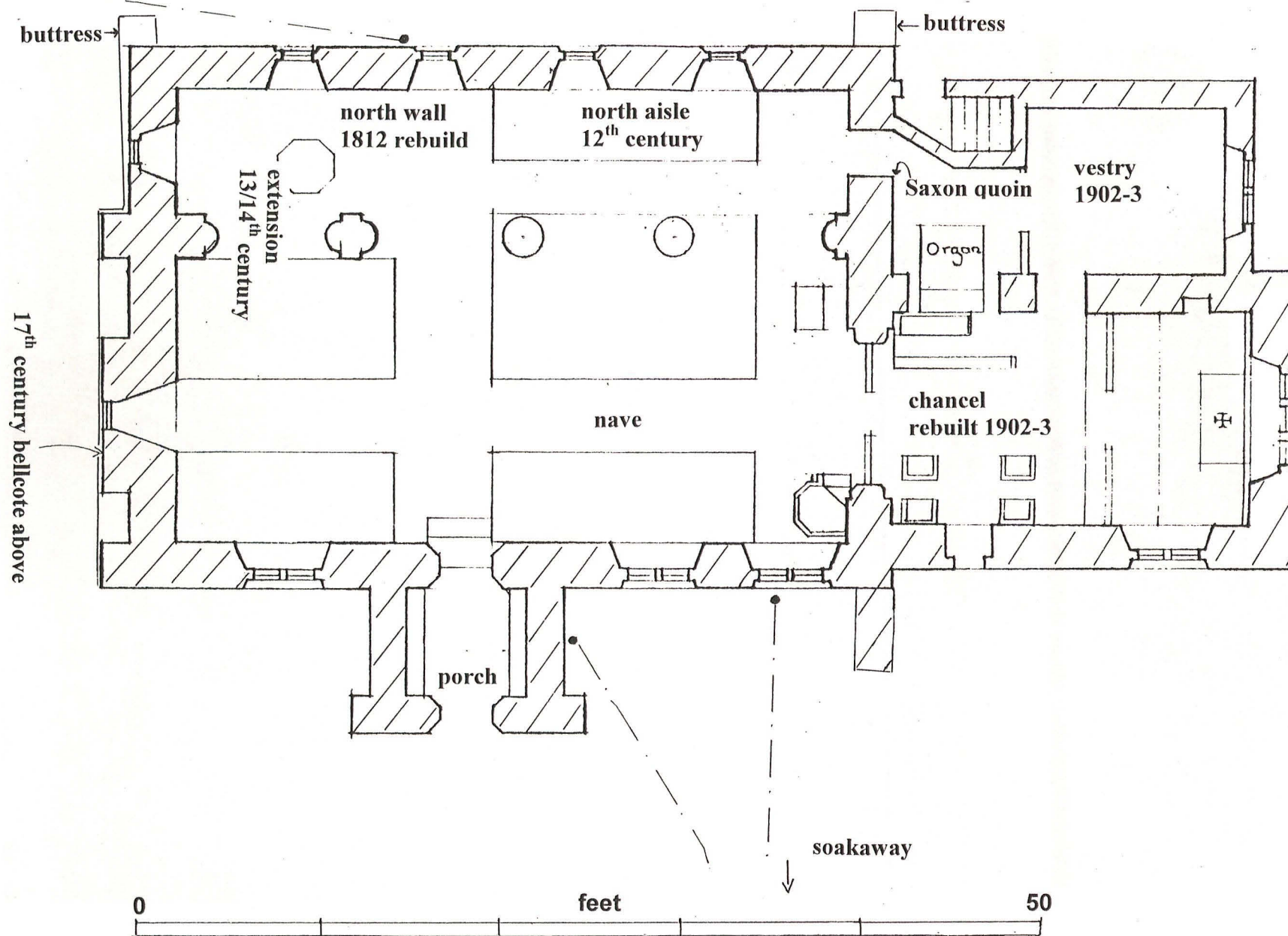


Fig. 2 Cranwell church plan based on plan supplied by the architect.



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