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ALL'S WELL AT ST MARY'S PROJECT

ST MARY'S CHURCH

THORNTON IN CRAVEN, NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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Summary


As a result of Planning Application number 69/2005/5255 to undertake repair and enhancement work on the historic well in the graveyard of St Mary's Church, Thornton in Craven (SD 9701 4835), a condition of an Archaeological Watching Brief was placed on all the ground disturbance works. As a result of this condition and that as the project was part of a larger scheme funded, in part, by the Local Heritage Initiative the first phase of the turf and topsoil strip was completed as a community archaeology weekend (27/28th August 2005).

The result of this work was that the area around the well itself was stripped and the remains of the previous area of stone hard standing were recorded. The area of hard standing was primarily composed of un-worked rough stone fragments of varying sizes although within this there were a few fragments of stone roof tile and one fragment of a medieval cross marked grave cover.

Along with the remains of the hard standing a wide range of artefactual material was recovered. The remains of glass and ceramic vessels of late 19th and early 20th century origin dominated the assemblage. These vessels had most likely been used for flowers for graves. In addition to this a small number of metal finds were recovered, notably three coins (1799, 1862 and 1943) and the remains of lead window came and stained glass from earlier church windows. The lead came and window glass are of 17th/18th-century date.

The watching brief of the stripping of the footpath was carried out on the 14th November 2005 when the contractors started their phase of the work. Apart from a 20th century grave this aspect of the investigation did not encounter any archaeological features.

Although not part of the original watching brief a rapid inspection of the church itself was undertaken with members of the local community. This revealed a wide range of features relating to the medieval and later history of the church. Some of the features recorded included three 12/13th century cross and sword marked grave slabs, three inscribed stones, four carved heraldic devices and a series of carved heads both internally and externally. A more detailed investigation of these features and potentially others, as yet undiscovered, would help in any future interpretation of the site.



Northern Archaeological Associates

on behalf of Earth Tech - Morrison

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of archaeological watching briefs on the stripping of the turf and topsoil on both the line of footpath to and the area around the well in the grounds of St Mary's Church, Thornton in Craven, North Yorkshire (Figure 1) (SD 9701 4835).
- 1.2 The watching brief was conducted by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) for the All's Well at St Mary's Project, a Local Heritage Initiative (LHI) funded project. The topsoil stripping of the area around the well was carried out on 27/28th August 2005 and the stripping of the access footpath was carried out on the 14th November 2005.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Historic Background

- 2.1 The Grade I Listed church of St Mary's is located on the northern side of the B6252 between Thornton in Craven and Barnoldswick and is popularly believed to have originated at some time in the 13th century (Anon ND). A later re-build is attested to by an inscription over the east window which dates to the reign of Henry VI (1421-1461) (*Ibid*). However an inscription on the tower dated 1510 is used in the English Heritage (EH) Listed Buildings information as the date of construction for the whole church, though the inscription may only refer to the tower rather than the whole building.
- 2.2 The church is described in architectural detail in the EH listings, given in Appendix I (see also www.imagesofengland.co.uk) using Whitaker's *History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven*. In addition to the varied architectural styles of the building the surrounding graveyard also contains a wide range of funerary monuments, predominately from the 19th century. Those currently visible date from at least the 17th century and there is evidence for possible *in situ* medieval grave markers to still be present.
- 2.3 The most obvious feature of the graveyard is the Grade II Listed Wellhouse. This building was erected by Rector Henry Richardson in 1764 in order to protect the water supply that was used by the nearby village. The Wellhouse was a rubble built octagonal structure with a re-used mill stone as a cap over the inscribed stone coping with a stone ball to cover the central hole for the drive shaft of the mill stone. The inscribed reads:

*H RICHARDSON RECTOR Fontem huic salutiferum et perantiquum
tecto munivit Anno Aerae Christianae MDCCL XIV Quod Publicae
Sanitati bene vorcat*

The most recent translation for which is:

This Health Giving and Ancient Well, H. Richardson Rector Covered in
the year of the Christian Era 1764 May it Prove to be a Blessing to
Mankind

Geology and Soils

- 2.4 The site lies on the southern edge of the Yorkshire Dales in an area of Carboniferous limestones (Butlin, 2003, 10). Overlying this, the quaternary geology is one of glacial till and moranic drift. The soil weathered from this has been heavily modified over time by both the action of hill wash and the use of the area as a cemetery.

Topography and Land-use

- 2.5 As already mentioned above, the church was located to the north of the B6252 road on the southern side of the valley of Carr Beck. The church itself was built on a platform which had been partially cut out of the hillside at its eastern end whilst the western end has been raised, presumably using the material from the eastern end. The surrounding graveyard slopes, quite steeply in places, from east to west and at the western end there is also steep slope to the north.
- 2.6 The Wellhouse was located at the base of a short steep slope at the western end of the graveyard on the point where the spring naturally wells up from the underlying bedrock (Plate 1). The area is currently in use as a graveyard and the surrounding landscape is given over to lowland arable cultivation.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed or damaged during the groundworks for the construction of the footpath to and the viewing area around the Wellhouse. The specific aims were to:
- Archaeologically record (graphically and photographically) any archaeological features revealed by the turf and topsoil strip
 - Recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the turf and topsoil stripping and the subsequent groundworks

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The stripping of the turf and topsoil was carried out in two stages. The first stage was the removal of the turf and topsoil down to approximately the working level for the construction of the paved area around the Wellhouse. This was carried out by a group of up to 30 volunteers from the Earby and District Local History Society along with members of the local community. The de-turfing was carried out by hand under direct archaeological supervision and the subsequent lowering of the ground level was by hand excavation.
- 4.2 The contractors using a tracked mini-digger with a toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision carried out the second stage of stripping.
- 4.3 During all of the topsoil stripping the exposed ground surfaces were inspected for archaeological features and the resulting topsoil stockpiles were monitored for

archaeological artefacts. The areas were also metal detected by a member of the local history society under archaeological supervision.

- 4.4 Drawings were produced of the archaeological features encountered, and these were also recorded photographically, on 35mm colour slide and black and white print film and digitally at 5m pixel resolution. 1m and 2m bi-coloured poles were used as scales and a north pointer for orientation. For the detailed photography of such items as masons' marks 0.2m and 0.1m bi-coloured scales were used.

5.0 RESULTS

- 5.1 Archaeological features, where found, were allocated consecutive context numbers, starting at 001 for the topsoil and are given in brackets after the feature in the descriptive text below.
- 5.2 The stripping of the area around the Wellhouse encountered a single archaeological feature, which had undergone alteration over time. This feature was an area of angular cobble-sized limestone stones (002), which had been spread directly on the topsoil (001) in order to act as an area of hard-standing around the water source (Figure 2, Plate 1).
- 5.3 This area of stones could be seen to form a rough oval shape centred on the well with a greater spread of material to the north. This spread to the north was due to its being on the down slope side of the well where there was better access. The stones were of a wide range sizes but overall could be described as moderately well sorted, sub-angular limestone cobbles (Westman, 1994). The full extent of the area of hard standing could not be determined exactly as it exceeded the area stripped for the ground works. The areas exposed measured c.6m east to west and c.7.4m north to south. However by extrapolation the original total area could be estimated at being 7.5m east to west and 10m north to south. The thickness of the hard standing varied across the excavated area depending upon how much it had subsided into the topsoil and how much had been disturbed by maintenance activities over an unknown period of time. The layer averaged c.0.25m thick.
- 5.4 Set into this area structure and probably originally surrounded by an area of rough stone flags (003) was a small stone trough (004) measuring 0.48m square and 0.22m deep internally and 0.65m externally (Plate 2). The stone flagging (003) had at some stage been lifted and cast to one side along with some of the material from 002 in order to gain access to the area of the trough – presumably for maintenance. Examination of the rough flags showed that the majority of them appeared to be fragments of re-used stone roof tiles but at least one of them was a fragment of a cross marked grave marker (see finds description below) (Figure 3). An inspection of the Wellhouse was carried out and a single masons mark in the form of a cross was recorded on the eastern side of the millstone used as the roof to the well (Plate 3).
- 5.5 The stone trough appears to have been used as a means of watering the sheep that are kept in the graveyard to help keep the grass down. The practice of keeping livestock in graveyards for this purpose is a common one and is long lived. This therefore raises the

possibility of the trough being contemporary or near contemporary to the construction of the Wellhouse of 1764.

- 5.6 The stripping of the footpath was carried out in two stages. Initially the original line of the footpath was stripped to an average depth of 0.30m. However discussions with the church authorities on site lead to a change in alignment (Figure 1) and the second area of stripping was monitored later the same day.
- 5.7 The entire route of the footpath was cut into the well-developed topsoil and in terms of artefacts only yielded three fragments of clay pipe stem. The only feature to be encountered was the grave of John and Fannie Collinge (Plate 4 and see Appendix III for the inscription) at almost the extreme western point of the footpath. Due to the fact that the gravestone and curbs have been removed the contractors were unaware of this graves location and the covering slab was inadvertently removed. At the time of the uncovering the church's Canon was present and the decision was made to fill the void revealed with loose soil and re-seal the grave. The level of the footpath was then to be raised to prevent any further disturbance.
- 5.8 Prior to the commencement of the ground works for the footpath and viewing area those grave markers that would have been disturbed by the construction were relocated with in the graveyard. The original location of these monuments is shown on Figure 1.

6.0 Finds

- 6.1 The turf and topsoil stripping around the well produced a wide range of artefactual material. The majority of the assemblage was composed of the remains of glass (jam jars) and ceramic (marmalade jars) vessels of late 19th and early 20th century origin, which had probably been used for flowers on graves. In addition to this an amount of similarly dated agricultural ironwork was also recovered – this material was assessed for its archaeological significance and all of it was discarded. A small amount of material was recovered during the footpath stripping.
- 6.2 The remaining material, all from the topsoil, was retained and a full catalogue is given in Appendix IV along with a brief discussion of the material groups.

7.0 DECORATIVE STONE WORK

- 7.1 Although not part of the requirements for the watching brief, a brief inspection of the church itself was made and a number of features of interest were noted. These features ranged from inscriptions, heraldic devices and carved heads on the exterior of the church to medieval grave markers and a further carved head inside the church. Below is a brief description and discussion of these various features.

Heraldic Devices/Inscriptions

- 7.2 There were three carved inscriptions on the exterior of the church, two were located on the southern face of the tower and the third was over the window at the eastern end of

the nave. As noted above two of these relate to the foundation (over the east window) and rebuilding of the church (one on the tower) though this author is uncertain as to the meaning of the third inscription.

- 7.3 Also on the south side of the tower are the eroded remains of four heraldic devices. Three of them are located on the south-eastern buttress whilst the fourth is just above the two inscriptions.

Carved Heads

- 7.4 A number of carved heads appear in the outside of the church and are referred to in listed building description, and as such would appear to date to the work carried out in the 17th century, though an earlier date and subsequent re-use cannot be ruled out. The heads appear to be of two different styles, those on the stops of the mouldings for the eastern window are more elongated when compared to the two on the window stops on the south side of the tower which are more rounded.

- 7.5 There has been much discussion and debate over the dating of such carved heads (e.g. Jackson 1973 and Mann 1985) with the cruder the representation being generally judged to be older in date. However the existence of crude heads produced by quarry workers in the 19/20th centuries puts this idea into doubt.

- 7.6 Inside the church on the western most pillar on the north side of the aisle there is a single carved head facing to the west. This head is in very good condition, which could either be a reflection of its protected position inside the church or point to a more recent origin. The face is an integral part of the octagonal pillar, which exhibits tool marks typical of the 14th century (Simon Tomson pers comm). The face is elongated in form with almond shaped eyes and either stylised hair or some form of headgear.

Grave Makers

- 7.7 Within the tower of the church three medieval cross and sword inscribed grave markers were encountered. All of the motifs on the slabs had been made by pecking, presumably with a mason's pick, rather than by being carved using a chisel. The first of these (Plate 5) was located in the centre of the bell tower, a position it was moved to from what was presumably its original location in the adjacent grave yard 'some ten years ago' according to the church warden. As far as can be ascertained the slab was slightly to the north of a decayed late 19th century grave surrounded by iron railings adjacent to the path (Figure 1).

- 7.8 The slab was 0.7m wide and up to 1.7m long, the lower left-hand corner had been broken off (Figure 3). The cross was centrally located with the sword to its right hand side. The arms of the cross are all straight, though an error in carving has placed the top of the cross off to one side, with the central part of the cross containing a simple geometric pattern in the form of a leaf design. The shaft of the cross is plain whilst the base is simple single step. The four small shallow holes in a rough line down the right hand side probably relate to the construction of the later 19th century monument next to its original location. The various features described above would all appear to date this monument to the 12th century (Ryder, 1991, 49 *et seq*).

- 7.9 Although it is not certain as to the symbolism of the sword on grave markers the most likely interpretation is that it denotes a male burial (Ryder, 1991, 61 and Anon, 1871, 46) and the possibility that the deceased had the right to bear arms (Ryder, 1991, 61). The sword on the first slab had straight quillons with a clearly defined pommel of a distinctive shape for which no parallel could be found in the available references (Ryder, 1991 and 1996).
- 7.10 The other two grave markers were in the side room on the southern side of the bell tower that is currently used as a Sunday School. The two slabs are laid side by side starting immediately next to the exterior wall (Plate 6). The slab closest to the wall measured 0.64m wide and 1.44m long. The cross on this slab was originally much more elaborate than the one described above though it is now heavily worn in the area of the cross, this would suggest that it was in a different location as the degree of wear exhibited is not consistent with its current position. This cross has expanded arms that form a simple Maltese cross, which appear to have held further designs in a roundel now too eroded to distinguish. As before the shaft of the cross is plain but the base in this case is formed from three steps (Figure 3). These features would appear to indicate a 13th century origin (Ryder, 1991).
- 7.11 The sword on the second slab also has straight quillons though in this case they are more clearly defined. The pommel, however, was less well defined and is possibly due to the ability of the stone worker though this would seem unlikely considering the more elaborate nature of the cross head. The sword has a marked taper to it which is similar to the one seen in Ryder (1991, 43) described as Swillington 2 which is dated to 12/13th century.
- 7.12 The final slab was next to the one described above and measured 0.52m wide but only 1.02m long due to truncation and as the right hand arm of the cross ends abruptly at the edge of the slab it is possible that this side has also been truncated. As with the first slab the arms of the cross are straight but unlike the others the cross is completely plain (Figure 3). As with the first slab the sword is to the right of the cross and Ryder (1991, 61) argues that a sword in this position possibly indicates a left-handed person as the weapon would be on the right hand side of supine body.
- 7.13 The sword on this slab, though truncated, is noticeably different to the other two in that it has a well defined, rounded pommel and a much wider, parallel sided blade in relation to the others. However as before the quillions are straight. This sword is very similar to the one described as Bradford 2 by Ryder (1991, 15) which is dated to 12/13th century. Interestingly this slab is described as 'The Soldiers Grave' though it is unlikely that this has any significance to the slab described here.

8.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The de-turfing and topsoil stripping of the area around the well encountered a limited amount of archaeological evidence for activity. It revealed the remains of a poorly built working area around the well, presumably to try to maintain a dry environment underfoot for those coming to draw water. The artefactual evidence was primarily

restricted to the 19/20th centuries although there were one to two items indicating use back to around the time of the construction of the Wellhouse in 1764, a 1799 half penny and some fragments coarse blackware pottery. With the exception of the 20th century grave, the stripping for the footpath did not reveal any archaeological features.

- 8.2 Although not part of the original watching brief a rapid inspection of the church itself revealed a wide range of features relating to the medieval history of the church and possibly earlier buildings on the site. A more detailed investigation of these and potentially others, as yet undiscovered, would help in any future interpretation of the site.

References

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APPENDIX I

Listed Building Details

IoE number: 324520

Grade II

SD 9748 THORNTON-IN-CRAVEN CHURCH ROAD 9/142 Church Well II
Wellhouse, 1764. Rubble, stone slab roof. Octagonal with coping and monolithic cap and ball. The coping is inscribed: H RICHARDSON RECTOR Fontem huic salutiferum et perantiquum tecto munivit Anno Aerae Christianae MDCCL XIV Quod Publicae Sanitati bene vorcat (H Richardson Rector furnished this ancient and health-giving spring with a roof in the year of the Christian Era 1764, to turn it to the public good).

IoE number: 324519

Grade I

9/141

Church of St Mary

SD 9748 THORNTON-IN-CRAVEN CHURCH ROAD 9/141 Church of St Mary
10.9.54 GV I Church, probably early C16 (Whitaker records an inscription, of 1510 on tower). West tower, and nave, chancel and aisles under one roof. Rubble to nave, large dressed stones to tower, stone slate roof. The aisle walls are of four bays but not all windowed: short offset buttresses. Windows are straight-headed with round arched lights, 2 or 3 lights each. The east aisle windows (of 3 lights) have hoodmoulds with crude faces carved on the stops. The east chancel window has five cusped lights The tower has a 3-light window at ground level and 3-light louvred belfry windows. Diagonal buttresses. On the nave side a steep roof coping is visible to a previous nave roof. Interior has continuous double chamfered arcades on octagonal piers. Late C19 or early C20 woodwork, and crucifixion east window of 1898 by Kempe. Heavy balustered communion rail is late C17 or early C18. T D Whitaker, History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven, 1812

APPENDIX II

Context Catalogue

<i>Context Number</i>	<i>Description</i>
001	Topsoil
002	Hard standing
003	Stone flags
004	Trough
005	Subsoil

APPENDIX III

Monument Inscription

In loving memory of
FANNIE
THE BELOVED WIFE OF
JOHN COLLINGE,
WHO PASSED AWAY JUNE 2nd 1929.
AT REST.
AFTER A LIFE DEVOTED TO OTHERS,
AND SIX YEARS OF SUFFERING,
ENDURED WITH PATIENCE.

ALSO THE ABOVE
JOHN COLLINGE,
DIED JUNE 29th 1942,
AGED 76 YEARS.
AT REST.

APPENDIX IV

Finds Catalogue

Clay Pipes

A single complete two-piece mould made bowl was recovered along with a further fragment of a similar bowl and three fragments of stem. The complete bowl appears to be of mid 19th century style whilst the stem fragments are possible slightly earlier. Three fragments of pipe stem were recovered during the stripping for the footpath.

Animal Bone

A very small assemblage of animal bone was recovered but slightly surprisingly no human bone. The animal remains consisted of two fragments of cow sized animal bone, a broken cat ulna and a small fragment of bird bone. The cattle long bone was heavily eroded and had been dog gnawed indicating a longer period of time prior to burial.

Ceramics

The ceramic assemblage was dominated by 'Victorian' era pottery which was not retained. However within this material was a small collection (14 sherds) of coarse blackware pottery of 18th/19th century date. This material included two substantial rim fragments along with a diversity of body sherds. The size of the rim fragments is strongly suggestive of large storage jars – the sort of vessel that would be expected to be used for water collection.

Lead

Three categories of lead artefacts were recovered. The first was two fragments of lead alloy sheet (40.4x40.6mm, 2.4-2.6mm thick and 38.8x47.9mm and 2.4-2.9mm thick), function unknown but it was suggested that it may be a 'bell metal' alloy from the casting of the church bells. The casting of the bells is recorded in documents as having been on site.

Secondly was a small section of lead pipe (57.2x20.4mm with internal diameter 11.9mm and 2.3mm thick), presumably part of an earlier plumbing system for the well.

The final category was the remains of lead window came along with stained glass, some of which was still *in situ* in the came. The came could be regarded as two types, the first was 5.6mm deep and 5.6mm wide with milling visible along the groove. The second type of came was smaller 0.58mm deep and 11.5mm wide and also had milling along the groove. Both types are typical of 17th/18th-century manufacture.

Part of a lead strap was recovered during the stripping for the footpath. It measured 72mm long 23.4mm wide and 1.6mm thick, one end was pierced, probably for securing it.

Copper Alloy

The copper alloy finds consisted of three coins:

- 1799 half penny (30mm diameter and 2.3mm thick)
- 1862 penny (30mm diameter and 1.3mm thick)
- 1943 half penny (25mm diameter and 1.5mm thick)

Two buttons:

- The first button was a slightly convex copper alloy disc (22.8mm diameter and 0.8mm thick) with a loop soldered on – probably 18th century
- The second button was hemispherical (12.4mm diameter and 0.68mm tall) also with a loop for thread – possibly 16th/17th century.

A late 10th early 20th century ferrule 31.5mm long with a maximum width of 14.4mm tapering to 10.6mm was also recovered.

Iron

Two items of door furniture were retained as they may have been part of one of the earlier doors to the Wellhouse. The first was a retaining hook 157mm long and the second was a gudeon for a hinge 80x36x12mm.

Window Glass

18 fragments of stained window glass were recovered which included several corner fragments in each of the five different colours.

Dark Purple

1x corner piece – 62x41.9mm and 2.8-2.9mm thick.

Light Purple

1x corner piece – 32.8x81.7mm and 2.9-3.1mm thick.

1x corner piece – 39.8x69.7mm and 2.3-2.4mm thick.

1x edge piece – 46.3x28.6mm and 2.35-2.9mm thick.

Yellow

1x corner piece – 32.1x27mm and 2.9-3.2mm thick.

1x corner piece – 25.4x17.7mm and 2.9-3.2mm thick.

1x corner piece – 31.4x76mm and 3-3.2mm thick.

1x corner piece – 31.5x44.4mm and 3.1-3.4mm thick.

1x corner piece – 30.9x53.5mm and 2.9-3.3mm thick.

Dark Green

1x corner piece – 13.2x16.1mm and 2-2.1mm thick.

1x corner piece – 20x12.9mm and 1.9-2mm thick.

1x fragment – 34.2x72.7mm and 1.9-2mm thick.

Light Green

1x fragment – 28.4x11.2mm and 2.8-3mm thick.

1x edge piece – 33.2x33.8mm and 2.7-2.9mm thick.

1x corner piece – 37.1x52.6mm and 2.8-3mm thick.

1x corner piece – 50x38.7mm and 2.9-3mm thick.

In addition there were two pieces of came with the glass still intact.

1x dark green 12.6x42mm and 1.8-2.1mm thick.

1x dark green 44.6x12.2mm and 2-2.1mm thick.

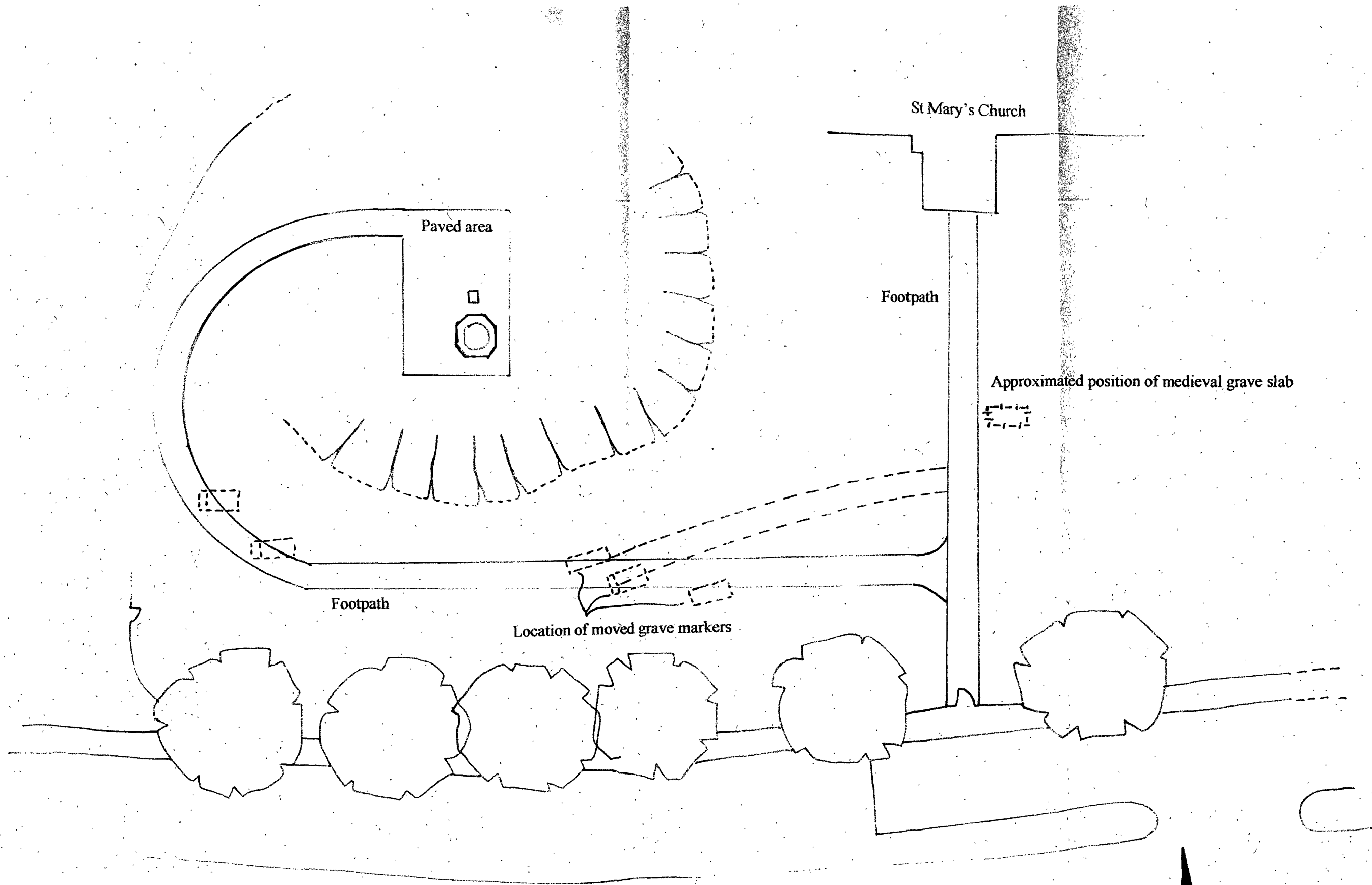


Figure 1: Overall site plan showing location of Wellhouse and associated features.

North

Scale 1:200

5metres

Based on architects drawing

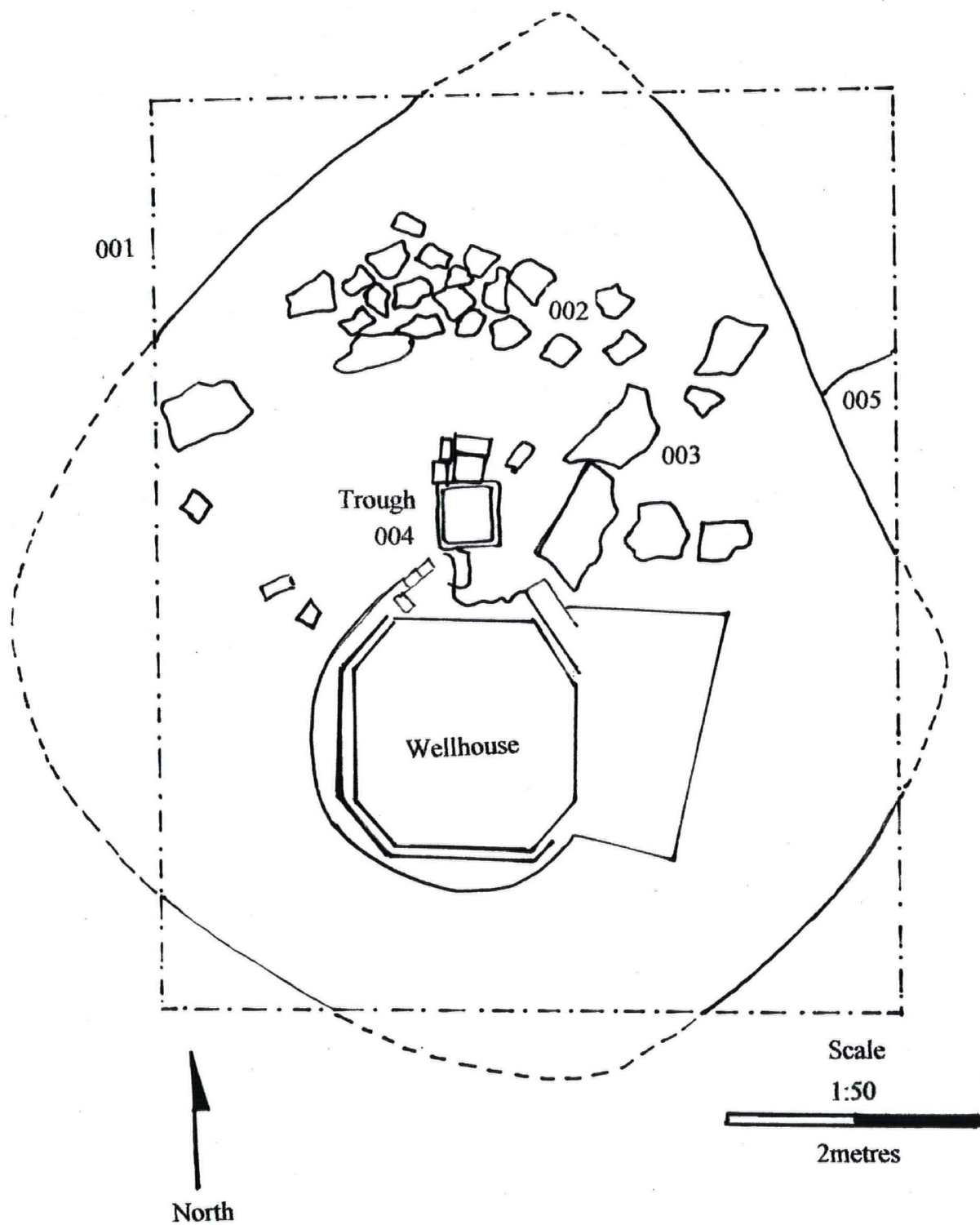


Figure 2: Detail of remains of hard-standing around Wellhouse

Key

- 006 Context Numbers
- . . . Limit of excavation
- - - - - Projected line of hardstanding

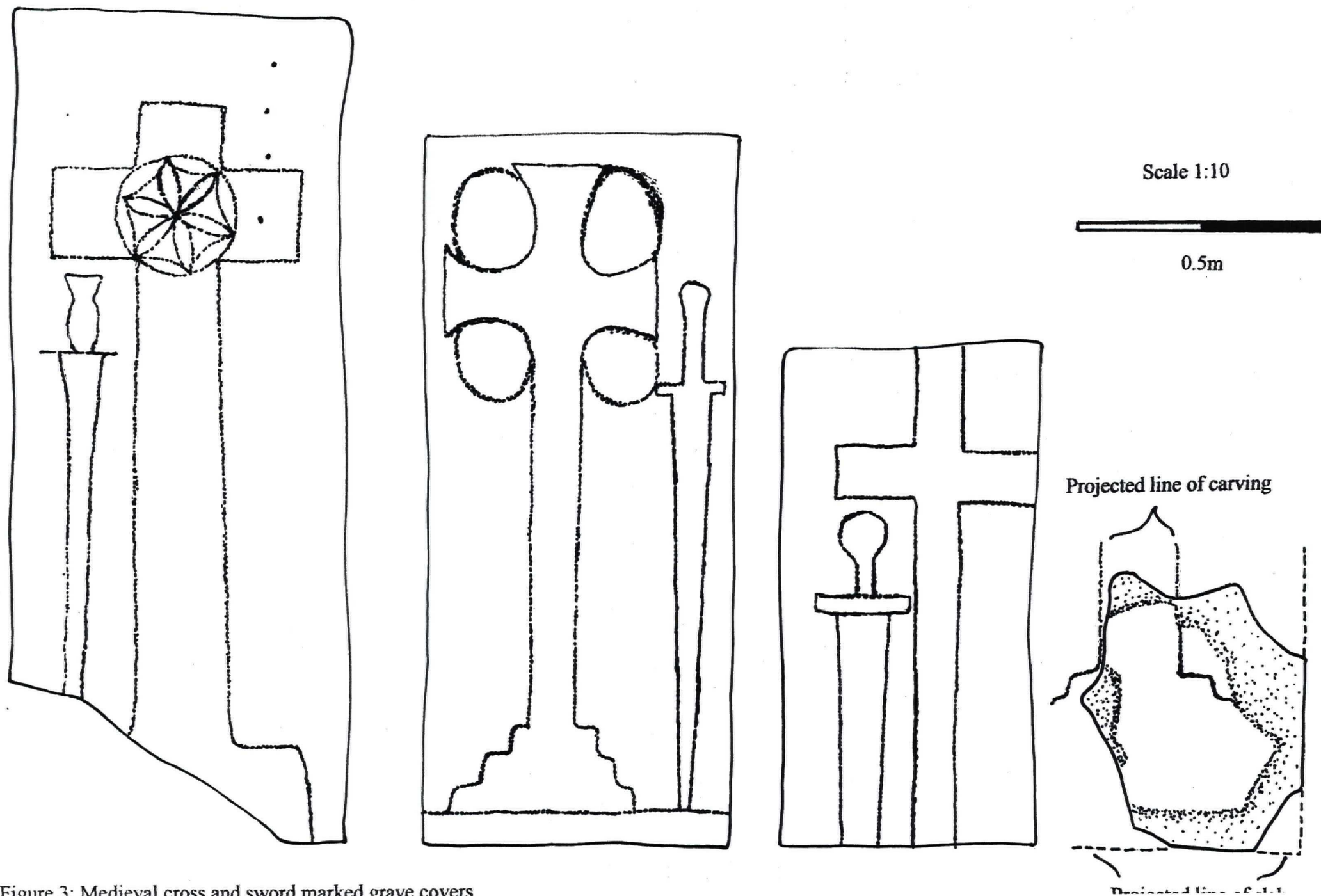


Figure 3: Medieval cross and sword marked grave covers