

# EXCAVATIONS ON THE SITE OF FLAWFORD CHURCH, RUDDINGTON, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Flawford Church was located at the east end of Ruddington parish, at NGR SK593332. The site was excavated by Ruddington Local History Society between 1967 and 1984 (James 1994), and this report presents a short summary of these investigations.

The place-name Flawford is thought to mean 'flagged floor' from the Old English *flor*, 'floor or pavement', and the Old Scandinavian *flaga* 'flag-stone' (Gover *et al* 1940). An alternative explanation is that the second element derives from *fag* or *fah*, meaning variegated or multi-coloured, and it has been suggested that the name 'may well refer to a Roman tessellated pavement' (Smith 1956). This infers that there was Anglo-Saxon activity on the site which was named after a pre-existing paved floor. The earliest reference to the name is from a lost document of c. 1150 quoted by Thoroton in 1677, but the first existing documentary reference to the church is from 1280 when the south aisle was added at the instigation of the Bishop of Dunblane.

The site also may have been associated with the chantry priests of the College of Ruddington established at Flawford in 1456 and dissolved about 1550 (VCH, Notts., 1910). The church was subsequently neglected, and by 1779 it had been totally demolished (James 1980). In 1967 Nottinghamshire County Council decided that the old churchyard should be made into an amenity area, and this prompted examination of the area likely to be affected.

## EXCAVATIONS

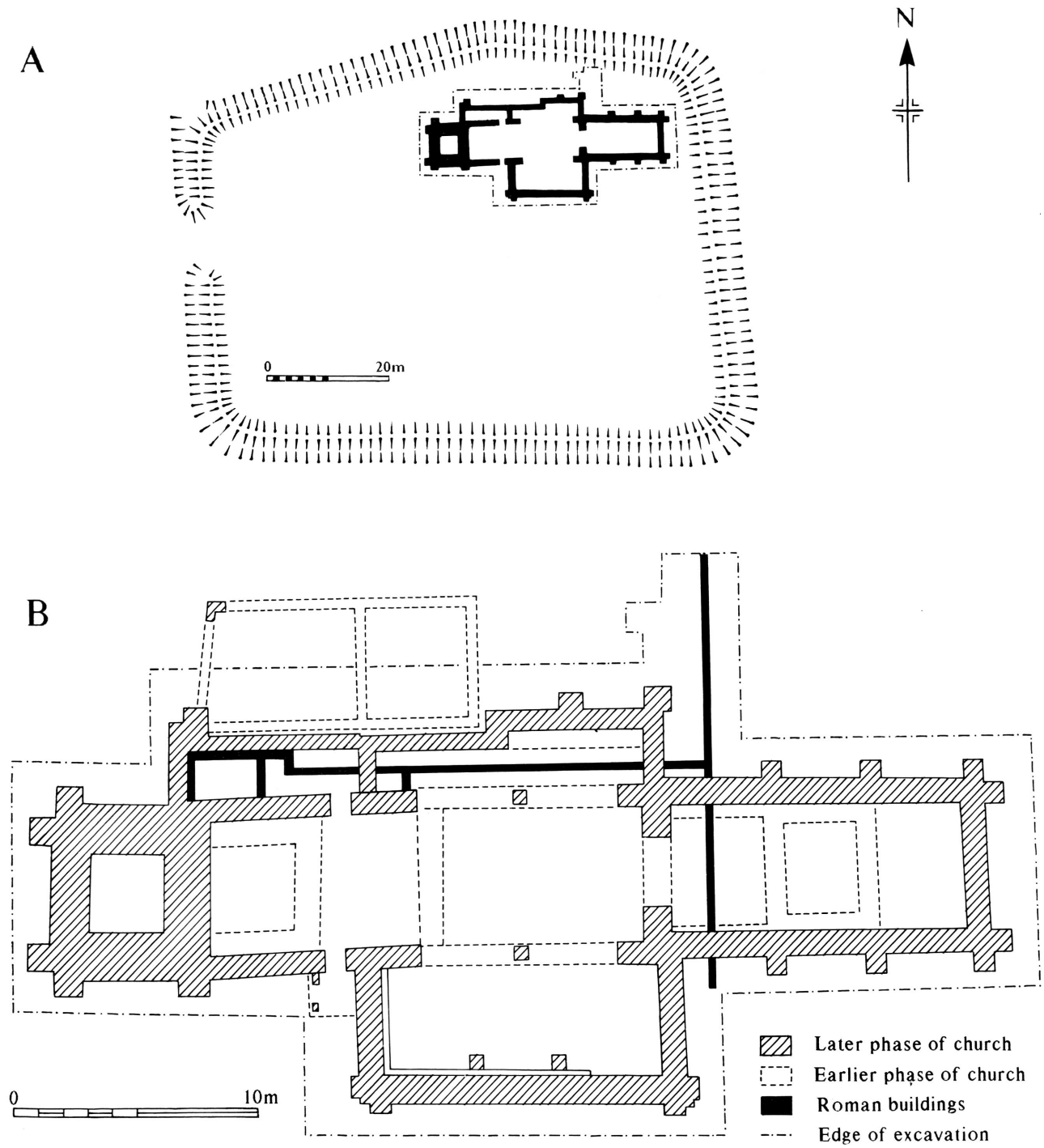
Excavations uncovered a number of periods of activity on the site. Flints, some possibly of Bronze

Age date (R. Jacobi pers. comm.), were found and a pit and gullies at the east end of the site indicated Iron Age activity. Pottery, which can be dated from the first century BC to the later first century AD, bones and a brooch of Colchester type also have been found.

Stone footings of a building, apparently unrelated to the later church, were located. Parts of the foundations of two lengths of wall were uncovered together with the remains of a disturbed tessellated floor, which had consisted of white limestone and red samian tesserae. These may have formed a mosaic which is unlikely to be earlier than AD160 (B. Hartley pers. comm.). Amongst the disarranged tesserae were two Saxon coins, one of Burgred (852-874) and one of Alfred (871-899).

Foundations of the first building recognisable as a church on this site consisted of cobbles and stone rubble in irregular round-bottomed trenches, which formed a nave 9.0 x 5.5m with a chancel 4.25 x 4.0m. Broken floor slabs indicated the possible level of the floor which lay 0.15m above the tessellated floor.

Subsequently several alterations were made to this building. At the west end, the cobbled foundations of a structure 3.65 x 3.3m were found, and this could have been a tower, added to an extension at the west end of the nave. Three trenches were located further west, 2m wide and 1.8m deep, which had been filled with crushed mortar and rubble, and this may be the location of a later and larger west tower. Alterations were also made to the east end of the chancel, where an extension 3.6 x 3.3m with a cobbled foundation was added. This was later replaced by foundations 13.7 x 5m, made of roughly shaped large limestone blocks with a cobbled core, and these later foundations were buttressed. The location of the excavated features is shown on figure 1.



**FIGURE 1: Flawford Church.**  
A. Location of excavation within medieval earthwork.  
B. Plan of structures located.

Remains of a narrow north aisle 11.5m long and 1.4m wide were discovered, and in the 13th century the south aisle mentioned earlier was added; this was also 11.5m long but as wide as the nave. The south aisle was built to accommodate the graves of the de Ruttington family and contained a number of stone effigies, of which only part of one has survived. Other foundations close by were of a two roomed building on the north side of the church and a small north west chamber to the church.

#### LOCATION OF FINDS AND ARCHIVE

Finds from the site include prehistoric flints, Iron Age and Romano-British pottery, a Colchester-type brooch and a coin of Tetricus AD270-273. Two Saxon coins and tesserae were also excavated, as well

as painted wall plaster and medieval pottery of the 11th to 14th centuries, and post-medieval pottery of the late 16th and 17th centuries. Part of an effigy from the south aisle is now located at Nottingham University Museum in the Department of Archaeology, together with all other finds and the archive containing detailed information and drawings on the excavations.

The three fine carved figures known as the Flawford Alabasters, now in Nottingham Castle Museum, were found buried beneath the chancel floor during the demolition of the church in the 1770s, having probably been placed there at the Reformation to save them from destruction. They were almost certainly carved in Nottingham and have been dated to pre-1370 (Stone 1953).

#### REFERENCES

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