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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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Report No: 2.

ALL SAINTS CHURCH COLLINGHAM Excavations 1989

Introduction

All Saints Church and its surrounding cemetery stand on sandy ground which slopes steeply to the north and more gradually to the west. There has been a considerable build up of soil against the walls especially on the south side contributing to the damp problems of the church. In 1989 a drain was inserted around the whole of the church except for the tower and the vestry. The 1m wide trenches were excavated archaeologically prior to insertion of the pipes. These were linked to two soakaways, one to the north of the church and one to the south-west (see Fig.1).

In addition to the drainage programme a major repair scheme was also undertaken involving the re-rendering of the lower half of the tower and repair of a south aisle clerestory window. Stripping of the rendering provided an opportunity to record newly revealed architectural features.

The church is quite large with a Saxo-Norman west tower and nave possibly of the same period. There is an aisle and porch on both north and south sides of the nave. It was originally thought that the extent of the building would make discoveries of earlier phases of the church unlikely. However, this was not the case.

The numbers in the text refer to the (arbitrary) context numbers assigned to each of the features during recording. A full list of numbered contexts is appended. The numbers prefixed with a P refer to the photos in the separate album.

The Tower

Stripping of the rendering to first floor height revealed large quoins at the north west corner, these were abutted by the vestry west wall (P1, P2). The west window of the tower had replaced a blocked doorway (which is visible internally). The threshold of the door was found at modern ground level. The sill of the window was sagging because of poor support in the area above the blocked door but these stones have now been reset (P3). The buttress in the south west corner is clearly an addition suggesting that movement of the tower was a problem in the past. A plan of the church supplied by the architects and dated 1987 (? could be copied from an earlier plan) shows an internal spiral stair in this corner of the tower. The presence of a stair in this area might have contributed to movement of the walls.

Removal of rendering on the south wall (P4) revealed a horizontal row of three square putlog (scaffold) holes c.0.50m below the lower window. These had been filled in with stones and mortar but show where the original timber scaffolding had

been during the construction of the tower. A vertical joint in the masonry between the tower and the south aisle was also visible showing how the aisle had been inserted into the tower wall (P5).

South Porch

The drain on the south side of the church begins at the junction between the south aisle and the south porch west wall (P6). It runs along porch wall joining the main trench from the east and emptying into a soakaway to the west under the main path (P7). Seven burials were disturbed by the soakaway (P8-10) including one in a stone-lined cyst (P8). The soakaway cut through the graveyard levels and 0.50m into the underlying 'natural' yellow sand, the only time this was located during the excavations.

Substantial footings were found at both corners of the porch. Those on the south-east corner were neat and D-shaped (P11) but those on the south-west were roughly constructed. The present floor level inside the porch is 0.34m above that of the aisle but is still 0.38m below outside ground level.

The junction of the porch east wall and the south aisle wall clearly shows that the porch was an addition and its wall laps over the aisle footings (P12) and one of the middle buttresses. Adjacent to the east wall, and perhaps lying in the foundation trench, were several large stones including one incised with graffiti (Fig.3). This could be as early as 17th or 18th century in date and appears to represent a game. Apparently these have often been found in the vicinity of porches, and are reputedly the work of choirboys waiting to enter church.

Nine Men's Morris

South Aisle

It is of interest to note that the west wall of the south aisle wraps itself around the south-west corner of the nave and as noted above its insertion disturbed the tower masonry. However, on the east side the aisle wall was built flush to the nave wall rather than lapping around it.

Just above the south aisle parapet, at the junction with the nave west wall, is a small area of disturbed stone delineating the original nave roofline which is the only surviving evidence that the clerestory was added at a later date (P5). The original nave eaves height was c.1.50m lower than at present.

The build up of soil against the south aisle wall was more than 1m in depth. The south aisle was surrounded by a strip of bitumen which sealed a run-off of local stone set on edge in clean sand with a kerb (14). The same arrangement was found running along the north aisle wall. The surface was slightly convex, originally allowing rainwater from the aisle roof to run clear of the walls and to drain into the sand below (P13). Unfortunately, the bitumen had prevented this action from

taking place. The date of this work is unknown but two graves, with grave stones dating to the early 19th century, disturbed the stonework on the east side of the aisle (P14) and fragments of a grave stone which were incorporated into the kerb date to 1783 or 5 (P13) so the work must fall within this date range. This gutter was well above the chamfered plinths of the buttresses (P15).

Two adjoining pieces of keel-moulding were found below the stone sets which are 12-13th century in date and come from a window or door hood-mould. Several other architectural pieces were found, probably from windows but they were too fragmentary to identify with confidence. Quantities of stone roof slates were also recovered and these must have been an earlier covering for the aisle roof.

The south aisle wall (26) had a simple, neatly stepped foundation along the south wall which was found 70cm below modern ground level (P16). However, it is puzzling that the internal floor level which should have been at approximately this level was in fact 0.70m below assumed ground level. Perhaps the ground was dug out so that the aisle floor could be the same level as that of the nave. The lower deposits around the aisle were dug out by the building contractors so graves were not fully recorded but two were noted along the south wall. The south-east buttress appears to have been rebuilt (P17, P19).

The east side of the south aisle was of particular interest because it was clear that it had been constructed on top of an earlier wall (28) and its foundations (29). In contrast to the aisle wall (26) which was constructed with small, regularly coursed stones the earlier wall, of which three courses survived, was built with roughly finished, squared blocks of limestone and extended part of the way along the aisle wall (P18). The footings were of rougher, narrower courses and extended nearly to the south east corner of the aisle. The junction with the nave was not visible because of a concrete underpinning (13) which runs beneath the chancel and overlies the aisle foundations. At this end of the nave the aisle wall butts the nave wall and the irregular stone coursing, where the nave quoins have been removed and the aisle keyed in, can be seen at this point in the wall (P19).

The Chancel

The chancel was surrounded by a mortar underpinning (13), 0.65m deep and extending 0.50m beyond the edge of the walls. The date of its insertion is unknown but it post-dates the early 19th century stone guttering (14) and is earlier than the organ chamber, constructed in 1906, see below. On the south side of the chancel it was overlain by later Victorian rainwater pipes and cut through by the associated soakaway (15), (P20).

A burial (31 or Burial 1) found in the south trench near to the aisle, was disturbed by the underpinning (P21). Two more burials were found beneath Burial 1 by the contractors when the trench was deepened. The south trench was dug by hand but the other two sides of the aisle were excavated by machine. The east trench produced only one sherd of shelly ware pottery and the soil in the trench along the north wall had been disturbed by the insertion of a rainwater pipe dating to the construction of the organ chamber, or later.

Organ Chamber

An organ chamber was constructed along the north side of the chancel over the top of the mortar underpinning in 1906-7. At the junction of the chancel and the north aisle is the organ blower so there was no access to the junction between the chancel and the main body of the church. The excavations along this stretch of wall revealed an 18th century gravestone belonging to Samuel Wright and his wife. It was clearly not in situ, having been placed over the foundation trench of the chamber. The slab was removed and placed near to other gravestones belonging to the same family, east of the chancel. Large pieces of crimson painted wall plaster were found in the backfill of this trench which must have come from the chancel north wall, disturbed during construction of the organ chamber.

Two burials were found towards the west end of this trench. Burial 3 had been disturbed by the construction trench with much of the head and the legs gone (P23). West of Burial 3, and below it, was Burial 4. Its lower legs were beneath the head of Burial 3 (P24). At first it was thought that the grave was stone-lined but after its removal the ground was cleaned to reveal the pitched footings of a limestone wall (38) running north of and parallel to the chancel wall (P25). Unfortunately, little of this wall could be investigated as it was quite deep and also it ran beneath the organ chamber walls. It was cut through by a later wall, 36, described below.

The North Aisle

The north aisle was surrounded by a drainage surface of vertically set stones as discovered around the south aisle. Again these had been sealed with a layer of bitumen and were partly grown over with turf. Although the north aisle is a similar date to the south aisle it is not of the same construction. The north aisle wall has a single chamfered plinth of Ancaster limestone (6) 28cm above the off-set foundation. The foundations step out a second time, 23cm below the first step (P27). The south aisle has no plinth and only one off-set. The modern ground level was 25cm above the top of the plinth and 50cm above the original ground level. The foundation trench fill of the north aisle was full of limestone pieces especially along the east wall and the east bay of the north wall (P28). The reason for this became apparent only at

the lowest levels because of later intrusions along the east wall (see below) and graves along the north wall.

The aisle east wall was built on top of an earlier limestone wall (36), constructed on the same alignment and extending north beyond the the present aisle limits. The present east buttress has been rebuilt diagonally across the north east corner of the aisle but the original footings (37) were found to be perpendicular to the north wall of the aisle, the same as those of the other buttresses. Wall 36 was adjacent to 37 and the rebuilt buttress sits on top of both (P29-32,P39).

The full width of wall 36 was 0.61m. Its recorded width beneath the aisle wall was 0.58m so the aisle only just sits on its internal edge but aisle foundation trench has destroyed it to a depth of 0.33m. The wall foundations were bonded in reddish brown sand and cut through the pitched foundations, 38, described above (P25,P33). This wall must have been demolished prior to the construction of the north aisle and its existence may have been forgotten by the 14th century.

The trench along the east wall of the aisle was very stony because it contained the back-filled stone of the wall 36 in the foundation trench of the aisle wall but the ground was also disturbed at a later date. Just south of the buttress was a stone and brick lined external flue (24) which had disturbed the stone sets (2). The flue sloped at an angle beneath the aisle wall and the external vent had been covered with an iron grille. A video camera probe showed that the flue had been bricked up (P34,P35). It was originally the outlet for the underfloor central heating in the church.

To the south of the flue and also cutting through the stone surround (2) was a chimney-like feature of mortared brick in truncated cone section (P36). It had an open top with an internal dimension of 20cm. It was 48cm high and the internal base diameter was 30cm and mounted on a firebrick slab 46cm x 46cm x 6cm. Numerous fragments of coal were found in the vicinity of this feature and the base inside was covered in coaldust. No apparent air-feed or bellows aperture was found but the north side of the feature was damaged (P37). It was probably used for an ininerating or smelting process that involved the use of a second container which did not survive.

On the north side of the aisle were the remains of three walls (50, 42 and 49) which were all perpendicular to the aisle (41) and cut through by it. Wall 50 lies in the east bay of the aisle. Wall 42 also lies in the east bay and is adjacent to the middle buttress. It was disturbed by a burial immediately north of the buttress, Burial 9 (P40,P41).

Beneath the aisle wall 41 in the middle bay was what appeared to be the footings of an earlier wall (48) which was much

disturbed by two burials (P42). So its relationship to another wall (49), again perpendicular to the aisle is not clear. The remains of a possible fourth wall, 51, comprising a large slab (47) with small stones above and below it bedded in sand, parallel to the aisle, was found in the trench along the east side of the north porch (P43).

Dowsing produced the line of a conjectural east west wall of the porticus which was marked on the ground surface with pegs. A grave for the reburial of the human remains found during the excavations was dug by the contractors along this line. No large stones were observed in the spoil or the sides of the hole. However, probing with a metal rod in the bottom revealed soft ground along the north edge but the remainder was solid, indicating the presence of another wall parallel to the north aisle. No part of the grave was further excavated because it had already been prepared for the reburial ceremony. A conjectural reconstruction of the walls, in plan, is shown on Fig.1.

It is difficult to interpret these remains with certainty given the restricted area and depth of excavations, but they possibly represent a series of porticus along the north side of the church which predated the north aisle. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine whether they also predated the existing nave.

The North Porch

Trenches were dug along the west and east walls of the north porch which converged before emptying into the second soakaway (P46). The porch (46) is built over one of the middle buttresses (45) and the west buttress of the north aisle (P44,P45). The remains of the middle buttress have been incorporated into the fabric of the porch east wall and can be seen below the notice board inside (P47). The trench on the west side of the porch was dug by the contractors and although the footings of the buttress were noted a full record was not made.

Discussion

In summary, the limited excavations around the church have revealed evidence for an earlier church. It is not clear whether the whole church was rebuilt or if the porticus were still in use when the tower and nave were constructed at some time in the later 11th century and investigation inside the church is the only way to answer this problem. The presence of Roman pottery on the site does not necessarily imply continuity of use. (Wells Cathedral, St Peter's, Barton on Humber (S.Humberside) and St Paul in the Bail, Lincoln are, so far, the only known sites in Britain with definite evidence of Roman Christian activity.) Unless substantial (stone) buildings of that period are present the numerous graves will probably have destroyed any evidence which might indicate the nature of the

Roman use of the site. Perhaps some of these problems will be solved if further excavations both inside and outside the church take place in advance of future repairs or alterations.

The Burials

Twenty-four unmarked burials were discovered in the drainage trenches. Most were found at a depth of 0.75m below ground level or deeper. These shallow graves were clearly not of recent date and were probably all medieval. In some cases (e.g. Burials 5 and 6) only the skulls were disturbed. In other cases the burials had been disturbed by previous work (e.g. Burials 1 and 3). Given the small number of remains only basic records were made of the skeletal remains before they were all re-interred in the churchyard by the Rector.

Burial 1 (31) Adult male, 5' 9" in coffin
 Burial 2 (32) Adult female 5' 0" in coffin
 Burial 3 (33) Adult fragmentary. Above Burial 4
 Burial 4 (34) Adult female 5'0" ?stone lined grave.
 Burial 5 (39) Young adult, skull only
 Burial 6 (40) Adult, skull only
 Burial 7 (43) Adult, skull only cut 36
 Burial 8 (44) not excavated cut 36
 Burial 9 not excavated cut 42

The Finds

Quantities of building materials, pottery, window glass, clay pipes, nails and coffin fittings were found. Some of these items are of intrinsic interest but few were found in contexts which could assist with the dating or interpretation of the history of the church.

Context No.	Pottery		window glass		metal		clay pipes
	R-B	med. p-med.	med.	p-med.	nail	other	
4		3	1		1	1	1
5	1		5		1	2	
11	2		3	1	18	2	1
12			5	3	6	1	9
18			2				
20			1				
21		1					
22		1	2	2	1	14	9
23		2			2	1	1
27		3					
28					2		
30	2			1			
31	1			12		4	
32		4					
43		1					
x	1	2		12	21		6

x= unstratified, i.e. found in topsoil or on spoil heap etc
 R-B= Romano-British
 med = medieval
 p-med = post medieval

The majority of the finds were made on the south side of the church around the south aisle. At least nine sherds of Roman pottery were found (some small dark grey sherds identified as medieval could be Roman) but they were residual pieces in later deposits. The other discoveries were typical of finds in any church yard. The majority of metal finds were iron nails, from coffins and the roof together with some window lead. Five coffin handles were found, all 18-19th century in date. One iron knife blade of indeterminate date was found in context 22 (the subsoil around the south aisle). The clay pipe finds were also unremarkable and apart from two bowls were all stem fragments. Medieval and more modern window glass was found, although very recent material was not kept. None was painted.

Eighteen architectural fragments were found in the south aisle trench and six in the north aisle trench. All were in Ancaster limestone, which was also used in the plinth and other details around the present church.

A fuller analysis of the finds will be made in the final report to be published in the Proceedings of the Thoroton Society.

List of Context Numbers

- 1 bitumen sealing 2
- 2 edged stone gutter (north aisle) same as 14
- 3 sand and gravel bedding for 2
- 4 sandy soil over north aisle plinth below 3
- 5 stony fill of north aisle foundation trench
- 6 north aisle chamfered plinth
- 7 topsoil ,north side of chancel
- 8 mortar and stone fragments north side of chancel
- 9 foundation trench for organ chamber
- 10 chancel north wall footings
- 11 topsoil, south side of chancel
- 12 subsoil below 11
- 13 mortar underpinning around chancel
- 14 edged stone gutter (south aisle) same as 2
- 15 soakaway near chancel door. Cuts 13.
- 16 Threshold to the chancel door, sealed by 13
- 17 black tarmac path, chancel south side below 12
- 18 loose mortar layer over 13
- 19 sand bedding below path 17
- 20 brick fragments below 19, disturbed vault?
- 21 subsoil below 11
- 22 subsoil below 14 south aisle same as 21
- 23 brick and limestone rubble along east wall of N. aisle
- 24 flue exit for old heating system
- 25 ? furnace, along east wall of north aisle
- 26 south aisle east wall
- 27 grave fill, south aisle east
- 28 wall beneath 26
- 29 footings of wall 28
- 30 fill of foundation trench for 28 and 29, below 22
- 31 Burial 1 chancel cut by 13
- 32 Burial 2 North aisle
- 33 Burial 3 organ chamber above Burial 4
- 34 Burial 4 organ chamber below Burial 3
- 35 foundation trench for south porch
- 36 wall beneath north aisle east wall
- 37 NE buttress footing, north aisle
- 38 early pitched stone wall parallel to chancel, cut by 36
- 39 Burial 5 North aisle
- 40 Burial 6 North aisle
- 41 north aisle wall
- 42 early wall, perpendicular to north aisle and cut by it
- 43 Burial 7 North aisle Cuts 36
- 44 Burial 8 North aisle Cuts 36
- 45 west central buttress footing, north aisle, below porch wall
- 46 North porch east wall, overlies 45
- 47 stone slab, part of wall 51?
- 48 early wall footings below north aisle wall 41, middle bay
- 49 early wall perpendicular to north aisle, contemporary 48
- 50 early wall perpendicular to north aisle and cut by it
- 51 early wall parallel to north aisle and cut by N. porch wall

All Saints Church Collingham

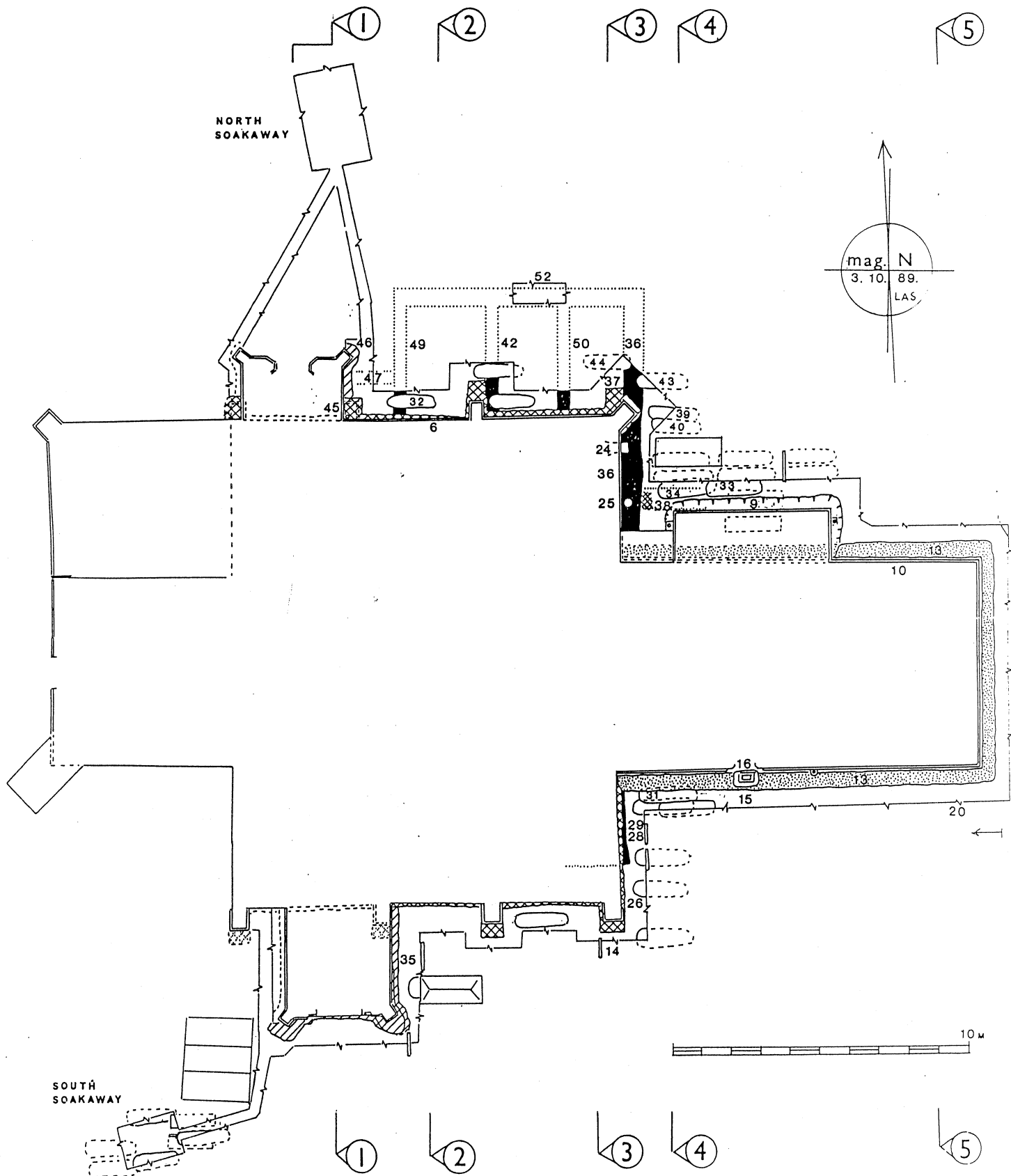


Fig.1 Plan of church showing excavated features.
The five cross sections are marked.

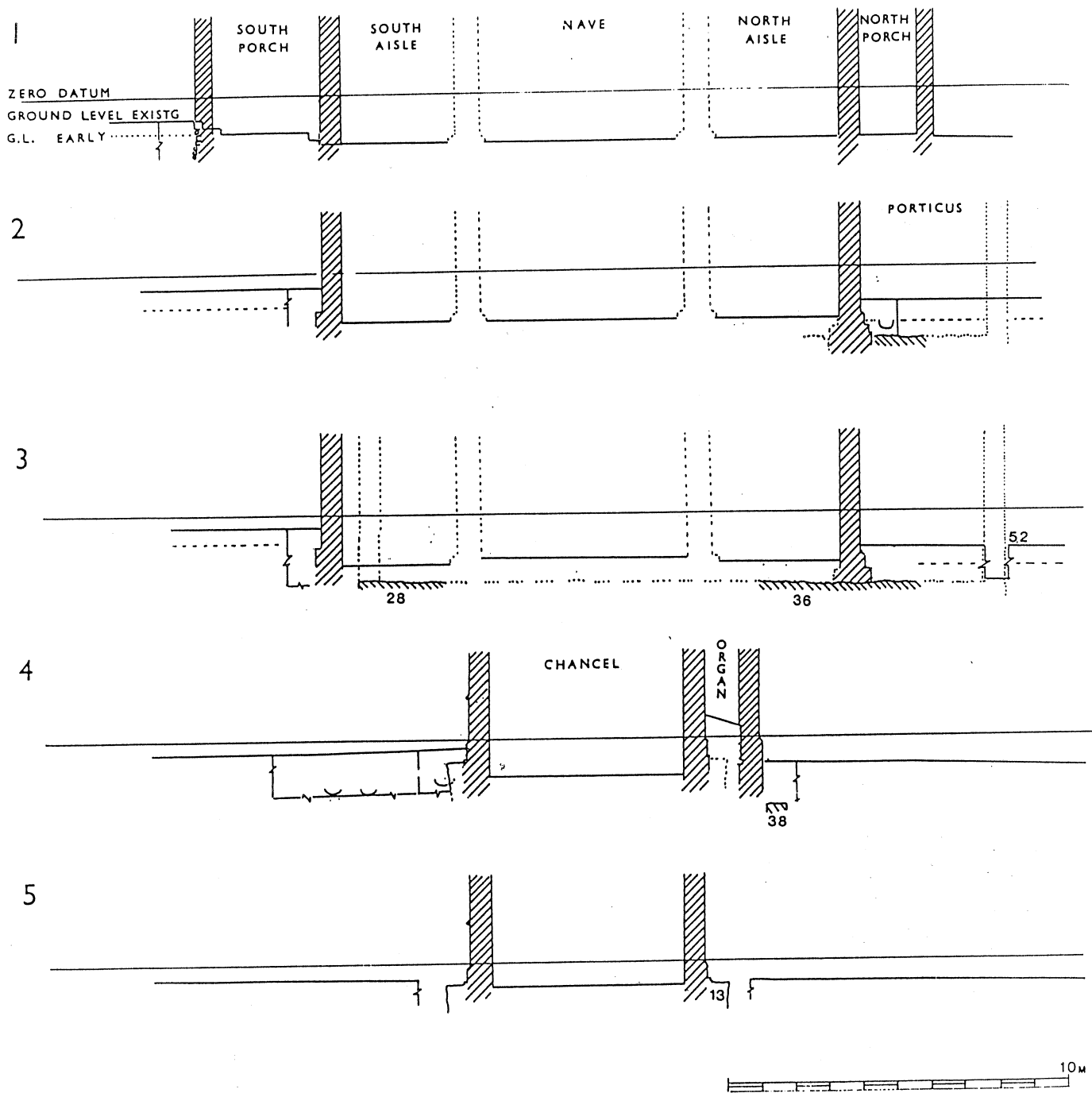


Fig.2 Cross sections through the church as marked on Fig.1

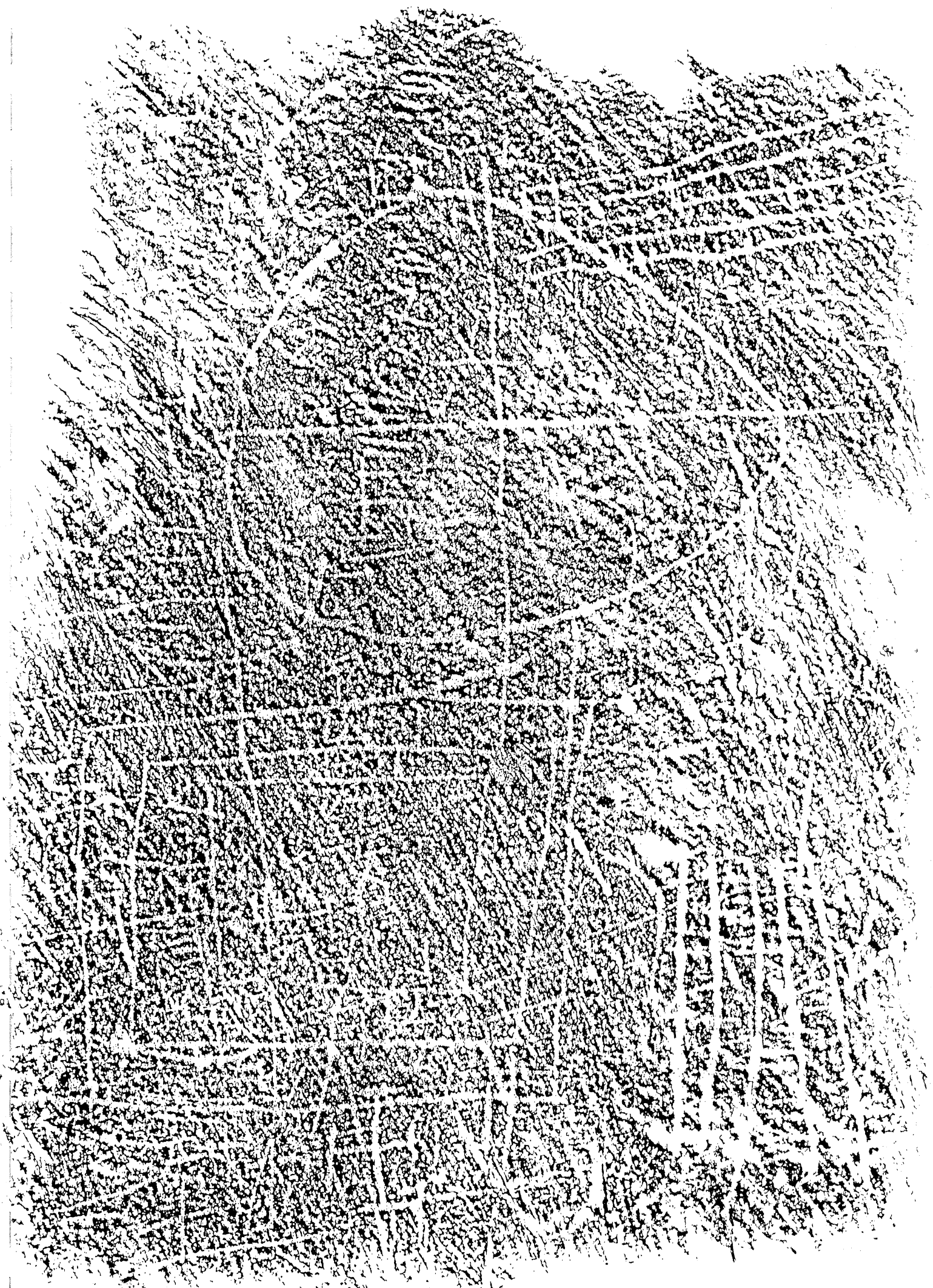


Fig.3 Rubbing of graffiti found on stone near south porch