



prospect archaeology

Client: Crowle PCC

St Oswald's Church, Crowle, North Lincs.

Archaeological Recording

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St Oswald's Church, Crowle, North Lincs.
Archaeological Recording
NGR:SE771 120
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Summary

A programme of archaeological recording was undertaken in 2010 at St Oswald's Church Crowle during reordering works. Pew platforms in the nave and north aisle were removed and replaced with flagstones flush with the existing floors. A kitchen area was installed at the west end of the north aisle. The font was moved from the west to the end of the nave and the Crowle Stone was moved from the north side of the nave to a position next to the south door. The floor level in the tower was reduced to that of the nave, and toilet facilities were installed. Excavation was not required except in the tower and a small area in the south-west corner of the nave. Elsewhere the exposed surfaces beneath the removed pew platforms were swept clean and recorded.

Excavation of a service trench across the churchyard was also monitored and four 19th century brick vaulted graves were recorded. Evidence for the nave north wall foundations was found beneath the north arcade. It was 1.6m wide, the same width as those of the nave west wall. The foundations were in line with a wall scar on the nave west wall showing that the west door had originally been centrally placed in that wall and that the nave was widened by 0.60m when the north aisle was built. The north wall of the north aisle was also discovered showing that before its demolition in 1792 the medieval north aisle had been only 2.40m wide internally. Three 19th century brick vaults cut through the foundations of this wall and are assumed to pre-date the rebuild of the north aisle in 1884.

Excavations in the tower revealed the original external chamfered plinth of the nave west wall and its return through the door, which is an original opening and pre-dates the construction of the tower. The original threshold had been removed by the installation of heating pipes in 1915 and the construction of concrete steps through the opening. Ground level at the time of construction of the nave is estimated to be around 0.50m below existing ground levels around the tower.

Floor tiles found in the area of the north aisle which had been reused to support the pew platforms. Nine different types, of three different sizes, were identified indicating that there had been several phases of tiled flooring in the church. The tiles were mainly of Flemish type and were of 14th -17th century date. Flat roof tiles of 13-16th century date were also found, and are assumed to have been from the church.

Introduction

A programme of archaeological recording was commissioned by Brown & Buttrick Architects on behalf of Crowle PCC to be carried out during the groundworks phase of work associated with the provision of new facilities in the church. This was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the faculty granted for the work.

Site Location

The village of Crowle is situated on the A161 in the Isle of Axholme, 16km west of Scunthorpe. The parish church is situated on the north side of the village centre on a slightly elevated knoll at a height at just below 8m OD (Fig.1; Pls 1 and 2).

Archaeological Background

The settlement at Crowle is mentioned in the *Domesday Survey* of 1086 and has Anglo-Saxon origins. The church is also mentioned and is clearly of Saxon origin, although no obvious Saxon fabric survives. The south and west walls of the Norman nave survive virtually intact. There is a complete frieze of eaves corbels along the external face of the south wall, below the clerestory which is a later addition. The south door has two orders of colonnettes, decorated capitals, and an arch of several orders, two of them with zigzag moulding (Pevsner et al. 1989, 242).

The chancel is Early English in date but was partly rebuilt in 1856. The north arcade of four bays is also Early English although the aisle was taken down in 1792 and rebuilt in 1884 by A.S. Ellis of London, when restoration in other parts of the church was also carried out.

There is a decorated cross shaft in the nave decorated in Scandinavian style with a damaged runic inscription on one of its faces. It is probably of mid-10th century date (Everson and Stocker 1999). The shaft was formerly used as a lintel over the west door but was moved to the north side of the nave in 1919 during restoration work. An engraving of the west door in Stonehouse's history of the Isle of Axholme depicts the cross shaft in position as the door lintel (1839). The preservation of the stone is almost certainly due to its reuse by the Norman masons when constructing their church.

The tower is accessed via the west door in the Norman nave, which has a tympanum above and also has a south door. There is a stair to the ringing chamber on the north side of the tower; the upper stage is Perpendicular in style and has been added to the lower stages.

Scope of Work

A faculty was granted for major internal reordering of the church. Archaeological monitoring and recording was a condition of the faculty covering work affecting many areas inside the church. These comprised

1. Laying of new flagstones in the nave and aisle flush with existing floor in areas formerly occupied by pews or concrete surfaces.
2. Relocation of the Saxon cross shaft from the north side of the nave to a position next to the nave south door.
3. Relocation of the font from the west end of the nave to a position next to the chancel arch
4. Installation of kitchen facilities in the north aisle
5. Installation of toilet facilities in the tower
6. Installation of new heating system
7. Installation of new gas main and other services through the churchyard

In order to achieve the improvements the works requiring archaeological recording comprised

1. Removal of all remaining pews and their wooden platforms in the nave and north aisle (laying of new stone floor)
2. Reduction of floor level in south-west corner of the nave (Re-siting of the Saxon cross shaft)
3. Removal of the concrete floor in the south east part of nave and replacement with flagstones (relocation of the font)
4. Removal of pew platforms (Installation of kitchenette at the west end of the north aisle) see item 1.
5. Lowering of the floor level in the tower (installation of toilet facilities)
6. Removal of old heating system pipework (new underfloor heating system)
7. New services comprising a gas main through north east side of churchyard and water and foul drainage across the southern part of the churchyard.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the Archaeological Monitoring and Recording was to allow appropriate recording of any archaeological deposits exposed during groundworks at the above site. This will include

- Recording of any archaeological stratigraphy present
- Recording and removal of archaeological artefacts as necessary

Method

Archaeological supervision of all groundworks was undertaken in order to map and record any archaeological remains encountered in the process.

A full photographic record was made of the works on site. A context numbering system for archaeological remains will be in operation. PA operates a standard context recording system, developed by its staff over the past 20 years.

Results

The following description refers to areas that were allocated during the recording on site. Areas 1-5 are inside the church, Area 6 was the churchyard. Each of the six areas recorded was assigned a block of numbers (Area 1 was assigned **100** onwards, Area 2 started at **200** onwards, and so on). These areas and context numbers are used for the convenience of identification only and do not have any significance regarding the date of a feature or area of the church. (The tower and east end of the nave are described here out of order.) The numbers are shown on the accompanying drawings (Figs. 2-12). Figure 3 shows all the recorded areas inside the church.

The timber pew platforms were removed in the south-west and north-west corners of the nave and from the north aisle. In addition the raised concrete floor in the south east-corner of the nave was removed. In all areas, except for the south-west corner of the aisle where the cross was to be located, the floor level beneath was at the required formation level for the new floor. In these areas the surfaces were swept, prior to recording and no further excavation was undertaken, beyond a little further cleaning of stonework using a trowel. A hardcore of crushed limestone was laid as a base for stone flagstones, flush with the existing floor level.

1. Nave South-West Corner (Fig. 4)

The pew platform in this part of the nave, covering an area 3.60m x 2.20m in extent was removed and replaced with flagstone flooring (Pls 3 and 4). The Crowle Stone was moved to the north-east corner of this area and secured in a hole 1050 x 750mm, and 450mm deep. Apart from the tower this was the only other area inside the church where the floor level had to be excavated to achieve the required depth. Elsewhere, areas beneath the pew platforms were cleaned and recorded prior to a flagstone floor being laid.

Removal of loose debris (**100**) beneath the removed wooden platform to a depth of 0.08m below the existing floor surface revealed the south and west wall foundations, **110**, offset from the wall by 0.16-0.23m. Crossing the floor area were three rotted sleepers for the pews aligned N-S, sitting in three shallow trenches c.0.20m wide and 0.10m deep (**120**, **121** and **122**) (Pls 5 and 6). These trenches had been dug through a red-brown soil with red-blue clay lumps and a few pieces of

limestone (**101**) which extended over most of the exposed area. East of the middle sleeper trench **121** was a spread of crushed limestone and mortar **102** overlying the soil layer **101**, which filled a bowl-shaped hollow in the ground.

Removal of the layers **101** and **102** revealed the remains of a mortar floor surface **103** filling a dip, larger than that covered by the layer **102**, in the north half of the pew platform area (Pls 6 and 7). The southern part of the mortar floor had been truncated by later levelling, exposing earlier layers of floor makeup (**116**, **118** and **119**). Mortar floor surface **103** may be the same floor as mortar surface **206** in Area 2 to the north.

Cutting through floor layer **103** was posthole **113**, which measured 0.30m x 0.35m and a minimum of 0.25m deep (Pl. 8). Its loose fill **114** contained pieces of wall plaster and flecks of wood from the removed pews were also present. The bottom of the posthole was not reached as it lay below the required level for the new floor. South of posthole **113** was a smaller circular posthole **111**, 0.24m in diameter and at least 0.20m deep; it was not fully excavated, for the same reason as above. Its fill was a mixed brown soil with clay lumps (Pl. 9).

A small ashy patch, **105**, was recorded on the southern edge of floor surface **103** and the base of a posthole **106** cut through this layer. A second patch of ash and mortar, **117**, was recorded west of the central sleeper trench **121**. A soft ashy layer **115** overlay a mortary layer **116**, a small area of which was recorded on the edge of mortar floor **103**. It continued beneath **103** but no further excavation took place and its extent was not recorded.

Both **116** and **117** overlay a thin layer of white lime **118** which lined the edge of the hollow. **118** overlay a small fragment of mortar floor **123**. This, in turn, overlay a mixed brown soil with mortar flecks **119** recorded in the southern part of the area extending to the southern wall foundation. This layer of soil was seen to be overlying the red-brown soil **109** exposed in the bottom of the sleeper trenches **120**, **121** and **122** (Pl. 10).

A small fragment of mortar floor **108** was recorded overlying the west wall foundations **110**, and may have been the same floor surface as **123** but the sleeper trench **122** had been dug along the edge of the wall separating the two deposits (Pl. 10). **108** may also be the same mortar floor as **220** and **221** recorded in the north-west corner of the nave.

2. Nave North-West Corner (Fig. 5)

The pew platform area in the north-west corner of the nave measured 4.20m x 3.30m in extent. It extended from the edge of the nave west wall as far east as the first arcade pier. On its north side the pews had extended between the Crowle Stone, which was next to the respond, and the westernmost pier of the north aisle arcade.

The area was crossed north-south by three timber joists to support the pew platforms. These lay within the thickness of the loose rubble and soil, **200**. Removal of the loose soil, **200**, beneath the pew platform revealed the stone foundations of a wall, **201** (Pl. 11). The foundations belonged to the original north wall of the nave and were 1.60m wide. It comprised narrow courses of limestone and local mudstone with a few water-worn pebbles in a matrix of pinky-beige mortar. There was evidence of *in situ* burning in two small areas. The respond and the west pier of the north aisle arcade within the excavated area sit on the north edge of this foundation, as did the Crowle Stone. (While the pier is Victorian in date the respond is mostly original with a Victorian base.)

Overlying the wall foundation, was a small patch of mortar floor, **227**, that was part of a floor surface which post-dated the construction of the north aisle (Pl.12).

At the east end of wall exposed in Area 2 was a disturbed area where the pew support had been inserted (Pl. 13). In the centre of the wall, east of the Crowle Stone was a second area of disturbance where a pew support had been located (Pl. 14). The area of wall in the gap between the respond and the cross shaft was disturbed by the insertion of a 1 ½ " diameter radiator pipe that ran north-south close to the nave west wall then turned east running the full length of the north aisle, parallel to the edge of the pew base.

Two postholes were cut into the masonry of the wall foundations and may mark the position of scaffold poles used in the construction of the clerestory. Oval posthole **228** lay east of the Crowle Stone within the N-S channel cut for the pew frames (Pl. 14). Circular posthole **222** was next to the south side of the respond and contained a large water worn pebble in the base, surrounded by blue clay (Pl. 15).

Once the foundation had been discovered it was easy to identify the wall scar on the nave west wall, above the plasterwork, which shows the original position of the nave north wall (Pl. 16). When the

north aisle was built the nave was widened by 0.60m (2 ft). The west door looks off-centre but was originally centrally positioned in the nave west wall. The return of the wall is also visible externally, although mostly hidden by the stair tower to the belfry (Pl. 17).

The foundations of the nave west wall were exposed and were contiguous with the north wall foundation. Over part of the west foundations were fragments of the mortar floor, **220** and **221**. This may be the same floor as **108** recorded overlying the west wall foundation in Area 1 to the south.

A patch of mortar floor, **206**, was recorded in the south-eastern part of Area 2 (Pl. 18). This may be the same floor surface as mortar surface **103** recorded in Area 1, immediately to the south. The mortar floor **206** overlay a firm brown sandy soil, **213**, which contained a few small pieces of stone and extended over much of the area south of the north wall foundation **201**.

Cutting through the mortar floor were two filled-in post holes, **207** and **209** (Pls 19 and 20). Also cutting through the mortar surface was feature **204** which extended beyond the eastern limit of the excavated area. Its soft fill **205** contained small quantities of disarticulated human bone. A second probable grave **202** lay north of **204** and cut through layer **213**. The top of its fill **203** also contained pieces of human bone as well as 5 pieces of roof tile of 13-16th century date. These features were not fully excavated as they lay below the required formation level. A possible third grave was recorded cutting into layer **213**, partially concealed by mortar layer **206** to the east and a mortary sand patch **215** to the west. **215** was overlain by another small patch of mortar, **226**, on its south side. Cutting into **215** on its west side was an oval posthole or pit **217**, measuring 0.0.50 x 0.40m and a minimum of 0.40m deep (its full depth was not excavated). Its loose fill **216** contained many pieces of stone packing.

Cut into layer **213** north of the mortar floor was a rectangular post-hole or pit **211**, which measured 0.38 x 0.30 x 0.23m deep (Pl. 21). Its fill **212** was a mixed mortary soil. A circular posthole **224** with a diameter of 0.30m, was cut through both **213** and **214**, just west of mortar floor patch **206**. A second posthole of the same size, **218**, lay west **224**, also cut into layer **213**. Its fill was packed with small pieces of stone (Pl. 22).

3. Nave East End (Figs 6 and 7)

South of the nave aisle in the south-east corner there was an area of concrete floor which was 2.6m x 2m in area and 0.15m thick. It was laid directly over loose soil **500**. A triangular floor tile was found in this loose material, the only one from the site. When the area was swept and cleaned the foundations of the nave south and east walls (**501**) were exposed. There were at least three courses of irregular stone, offset from the wall by at least 0.20m, sitting on a lower offset course **507**, which projected a further 0.50m in from the walls. Much of the stonework was masked by mortar (Pls 23 and 24).

The required formation level was 0.20m below the existing stone floor and only 5cm of soil was removed. Two postholes **502** and **504** were revealed beneath **501**, both of which had been dug through a firm brown soil **506**. It is assumed that they were scaffold holes probably dating to one of the phases of repair or alteration. No finds were made so no date for these deposits could be ascertained.

To the north of the nave aisle a narrow area of floor was exposed in advance of the relocation of the font. (Pl. 25) This was the former location of the pulpit which had been set on an area of concrete **512** which extended around all sides of the north aisle respond.

Beneath the concrete at the south end of this area was a layer of soft brown sandy soil **508**. There were probably several graves in this area but not cuts could be distinguished. At the southern limit of this area and cutting into **508** and **509** was the northern edge of a later brick vault **517**. This extended beneath the stone slabs of the nave aisle (Pl. 26). A stone slab **511** extended beneath the pew on the west side of the excavated area. This dipped into the soft ground, probably the cavity of a grave beneath (Pls 26 and 27).

The northern part of this area was covered in mortar and stone (**510** and **513**) which comprised the foundations of the nave north wall, as recorded at the west end of the nave as **201** (Pls 28-30). This area was not excavated to a sufficient depth to be able to define the southern edge of the wall. A depression in the wall **514**, which contained soft brown soil was probably an area of disturbance where a pew support had sat. Cutting into the northern edge of the wall was a large pit **515**, 0.48m in diameter, which was only partially recorded (Pl. 29).

4. North Aisle (Figs 8-11)

The north aisle was demolished in 1792 and rebuilt in 1884 and is 17.30m long and 3.50m wide. The pew platform extended the full length of the north aisle with a narrow area of stone flags on the south side running the length of the arcade.

The loose surface material from beneath the pew platform, **400**, was removed and the area rapidly cleaned and swept (Pls 31 and 32). This part of the church contained a large number of brick and tile fragments, including medieval floor tiles. Crossing the north aisle were six sleeper trenches for the timber frame of the pew platform (**403**, **410**, **414**, **415**, **443**, **444**). Bricks or tiles were placed at each end of the trenches as supports for the timber frame, which was removed by the contractors.

Immediately evident, after the initial cleaning, was a double brick-lined vault. The southernmost vault, **431**, which measured 2.15m x 0.70m internally, was capped with three large stone slabs, **432** (Pls 33 and 34). The centre slab was found to be broken and collapsed into a void below. On removal a cavity was revealed which containing a lead coffin, in a leather-covered wooden outer case, **433** (Pl. 35). The leather-lined wooden lid was decorated with pressed tinned metal strips and three plaques (Pl. 36). Plaque 1 at the west end of the case was 0.26m long and 0.16m wide, tapering to 0.09m, had a seated female figure facing left on a plinth, with swag below (Pls 37 and 38). The centre plaque 2 was the largest, measuring 0.46m x 0.33m. It depicted a seated female figure facing left with an angel to either side. Beneath the figure is an illegible inscription (Pls 37 and 39). Plaque 3 was very corroded and had been previously damaged. It measured 0.26m high, 0.20m wide at its widest point. The lower half contained a shield with cannon to either side (Pl. 40).

The coffin had three drop handles along the sides and one at each end. They were mounted on nearly-rectangular plates and measuring 0.24m wide and 0.18m deep (Pl. 41). Part of the wooden box had collapsed and exposed a lead coffin inside which measured 1.86m long, the head 0.38m wide, the foot 0.35m and the widest point was 0.55m. There was lattice incised decoration on the surface of the coffin (Pl. 42). Two courses of brickwork were removed from the vault lining and then the stone slabs were replaced. This was so that the grave would be sealed beneath the new floor. The coffin was left *in situ*.

The adjacent grave to the north, Vault 2 (**434**), was the later of the pair; the brick lining making use of the north wall of Vault 1 to form its south wall. It was filled with soil, **435**, and all that was visible

was the brick lining (Pls 33 and 34). A third brick-lined vault, **429** lay 0.50m west of the double vault. (Pls 33 and 43). It had no cover and was filled with soil, **439**. The cut for this vault, **427** was visible and it was filled with sand **428**. West of, and earlier than, Vault 3 was grave **422** whose fill **423** contained stone fragments. A posthole **425** cut through the fill of this grave and may be associated with the rebuilding of the north aisle in 1884.

The three brick vaults, and grave **422**, sat over the line of the original north wall of the aisle which was demolished in 1792 and thus are clearly later than this date. Whether they were constructed before the north aisle was built is not so clear, but it is likely that they were originally built outside the church, only to end up inside the church when the north aisle was rebuilt in 1884.

The area north of the original aisle wall mainly comprised a firm brown soil with mortar lumps and flecks, and a few small pieces of stone. It was overlain by patches of mortar floor **430** and **440**, which must be associated with the Victorian aisle, prior to the installation of the pews (Pls 44 and 45). While these patches appear to respect the edges of the vaults **431** and **439** they abutted the vaults.

The medieval north wall of the aisle, **419**, was most clear at the west end of the present aisle. At the west end of the north aisle is a wall whose external facing of stones has been robbed but the internal edge survives (Pl. 46). It was recorded for a length of c.4.80m extending from its junction with the west wall foundations as far as grave **422**, described above. It was approximately 0.80m wide, the internal facing stones being present but those on the external face had been removed. A spread of mortar, **442**, which extended over the wall and into the north-west corner of the present aisle may have concealed a corner buttress but was not removed. The foundation construction of the present aisle west wall was very different south and north of wall **419**. This is because the foundations **402**, belong to the medieval aisle while **418** north of wall **416** belong to the Victorian rebuild (Pl. 47). Two stones lying between Vaults 3 and 1 probably belong to wall **419** (Pl. 48). East of double vault 1 and 2 was a narrow spread of mortar which may represent the wall line **419**. This spread east of the pew sleeper trench and was associated with three chamfered stones (Pls 49 and 50). These were the only surviving edge of the external wall face. The outline of a buttress east of the double vault was defined by the mortar. To the south of **419** was a yellow mortar spread **437**, remnant of a floor base.

At the east end of the north aisle was the east wall foundation, **438**, running beneath the floor of the organ chamber (Pl. 51). The exposed width was 0.90m wide. The north wall could not be traced as far as the east wall and there was no indication of a break in construction as there had been on the west wall. It is possible that the east wall is part of the 1884 rebuild and that the medieval east wall was not found.

In the area south of the medieval aisle north wall the area most of the ground at the west end comprised a firm light brown soil with mortar flecks. Soft patches in the soil probably represented graves but time constraints meant that their edges were not all defined. Two were positively identified along the southern edge of the excavated area, **404** and **408**. Soft areas to the north and east of **408** were probably the locations of two further burials.

A small patch of mortar floor, **406**, sat on top of the west end of grave **408**. A second patch of mortar floor, **421**, survived adjacent to the wall **419** (Pl. 52). A patch of burning **407** was situated north of mortar patch **406**.

5. Tower (Fig. 12)

The north half of the tower had been excavated to a depth of 0.85m below a herringbone brick floor to accommodate the boiler in 1915, with access via two brick steps next to the tower door (Pls 53 and 54). The area to the south was reduced to approximately the same level in order to create a new floor, level with that in the nave.

Bricks from the retaining wall of the boiler cavity are frogged and stamped RICHARD THOMAS & Co. LTD CROWLE (Pl. 55). A door in the north wall of the tower leads to the stair to the belfry (Pl. 56). It has chamfered stops at the base of the door jambs with a modern, concreted threshold 0.04m below the chamfer stop.

South of the boiler chamber was a herringbone brick floor **301**, that extended across the south half of the tower. It had been constructed using a variety of bricks, some of which were frogged and stamped; others were older, smooth red bricks. This floor surface was removed by the contractors and was bedded on a layer of dark orange sand, **302**, which was 0.15m thick. Underneath the sand was part of an earlier brick floor, **303**, running diagonally from the west door towards the south west

corner of the tower (Pl. 57). This comprised hand-made bricks of 14-16th century date, measuring 220 x 108 x 50-55mm in size, bedded on a layer of sand **311**.

To the south of the brick floor **303** was a compact earth floor, **306**, which extended over the threshold of the tower south door. Three patches of charcoal and ash were recorded sitting on the earth floor (**310**, **308** and **313**) (Pl. 58). Cutting into ash patch **313** was a circular depression, **304**, which contained loose soil with brick fragments and 19th century clay pipe bowls and stems, bottle glass and pottery (Pl. 59). In the tower ceiling above was a circular hole, interpreted as an opening for a stove flue.

Beneath soil layer **306** within the thickness of the south wall was pink-grey mortar surface **307** beneath the threshold of the south door (Pl. 60). This area had been disturbed by the insertion of a water pipe and bricks supporting the modern threshold stones. It overlay the core of the wall, **319**.

Beneath the brick floor **303**, and the soil layer **306**, was a layer of very hard mixed boulder clay, **312**, 0.10m thick, which extended across the southern part of the tower. It overlay a thin loose mortary layer, **313**, which may have been the construction horizon for the tower.

The tower has been built on to the west end of the nave and is constructed in courses of varying depth using small roughly dressed stone. Insertion of the tower wall into the earlier nave west wall is particularly clear on the north side (Pl. 61). The foundations for the north wall of the tower, **317**, were visible c.0.10m below the level of the nave west wall foundation, protruding by only 0.05m, in the cavity excavated for the boiler, and were painted over. A much broader offset foundation, 0.20m wide, was recorded along the south wall of the tower (Pl. 62).

The east side of the tower is actually the west wall of the nave, **315**, and is constructed in fine magnesian limestone blocks, typically measuring 0.26m x 0.23m x 0.37m (Pl. 63). A chamfered plinth, at the base of the wall follows around the opening at the south-west corner of the doorway, showing that the door was a contemporary opening and not a later insertion (Pls 64 and 65). It is unfortunate that this block had to be removed as part of the reduction of the threshold to the level of the nave floor, but it was reset in the wall to the south of its original position so that it is now flush with the line of the wall (Pls 71 and 72).

The north side of the opening was damaged when the heating pipe from the boiler was installed and the plinth does not survive (Pl. 64, 66 and 67). The original threshold had been removed by the later insertion of three steps from the nave into the tower, whose most recent form post-dated the insertion of the heating pipes.

An earlier intrusion had been a grave **319** that cut into eastern edge of the doorway, extending beneath the unexcavated area of the nave aisle floor (Pl. 68). Its fill **320** was a soft sandy soil which contained fragments of 14-16th century brick and tile.

The door jambs are straight and the door opens inward. The recorded wall thickness, including the offset foundation **316** is 1.64m, virtually the same as the north wall foundation **201/510**. The wall itself, including plaster, is 1.50m thick. It is this entrance where the Crowle Stone had been situated, used as a lintel for the door until its removal in 1919. The door head and tympanum are not visible on the nave side because they are painted and plastered over (Pl. 16). On the west face some of the voussoirs of the door head are faintly visible as is part of the tympanum. Above the door is a clock whose wooden casing masks the tympanum. However, on opening the hatch, the unpainted section of the tympanum was visible displaying with what appears on first inspection to be incised cross-hatching (Pl. 69). Whether this is truly the case (as described in the listing description of the church) or blocks of stone as described by Stonehouse in his description of the church (1839) was not clear when viewed from a distance (Pl. 70).

6. Service trench across the churchyard

A service trench for water and foul water was dug by mini-excavator from the southern boundary of the churchyard to enter the church through the base of the west wall of the tower (Pl. 73).

Although part of the boundary wall to the west is constructed in older brick the point at which the service trench was dug was rebuilt c. 1960. The modern brick boundary wall sits on a stone foundation at least 4 courses deep and set in a foundation trench filled with rubble. A hole was drilled through the south wall of the churchyard wall, east of the lamp post and ran north-west towards the porch, parallel to the footpath. At the point where the trench entered the churchyard it was 0.50m wide and 1.m deep (Pl. 74). The dark brown sandy topsoil **600** was 0.20m deep overlying a red-brown sandy soil **601**. A few fragments of human bone were encountered at a depth of only 0.30m, but the majority were encountered at 0.90m to the base of the trench. Parts of at least 20

individuals were disturbed along the route of the trench. All bone retrieved was handed over to the incumbent for reburial.

A large brick-lined vault with a stone cover 2.40m long and 1m wide was encountered (603). It commemorated five members of the same family and representing three generations, the earliest of whom died in 1786 and the last in 1899. A second stone slab had been secured to the base of the first with two iron clamps, to fit the last inscription for the last member of the family (Pl. 75 and 76). The full inscription read

Here
Lieth the Body of
William Dawson of Eastoft
Who departed this Life
The 1st of March 1786
Aged 32 Years
HERE Also Lieth the Body of Mary
The Wife of William Dawson and
Daughter of John and Alice Mar
grave who departed this Life
January the 7th 1799
Aged 41 Years
ALSO IN MEMORY OF SARAH
WIFE OF WILLIAM DAWSON MARGRAVE
OF EALAND, WHO DIED JANUARY 25th 1866
AGED 83 YEARS
BE MINDFUL OF DEATH
ALSO
WILLIAM DAWSON MARGRAVE
OF EALAND WHO DIED JANUARY 26TH 1872
AGED 86 YEARS
ALSO
WILLIAM DAWSON MARGRAVE
OF CROWLE WHO DIED JAN^y 9TH 1899
AGED 82 YEARS

The route of the trench was diverted south, and around the west side, of the vault and its contents remained undisturbed.

At manhole 3 a second brick vault (**604**) was clipped by the trench 1.50m south of the first vault. A third vault (**605**) lay 2.10m north of Manhole 3 (Pls 77-78). These were avoided and no further recording was carried out.

Next to the flagpole, north of the vaults **604** and **605**, a fourth vault **606**, was encountered at a depth of 1.60m below ground level. It was constructed in large, handmade, bricks 234 x 110 x 74mm in size, suggesting a date in the early 19th century (Pl. 79). The trench was diverted southwards to avoid the vault. The stone cover had collapsed into the vault which was 1.50m deep and was buttressed on the external south face (Pl. 80). At this point the trench was 1.90m deep and below the topsoil **600** was the graveyard soil **606** between 0.25m and 1.65m depth. Below 1.65m was the natural orange sand **602**.

Fragments of a grave slab were found near to the Inspection chamber at the south-west corner of the tower. Only the lower part was found and no name was present on the surviving art of the inscription (Pl. 81).

The inscription read

.....*The 19th*

January 1806 in the

.....*Year of the Age*

The prayer is The....

And sees her Saviour the [?Lord]

But still she speaks to us tho: [?gone]

She calls us to that [?house] only place

Where all theof life are o'er

And pain and partings are no more

The trench continued around the south end of the tower- there were no graves although one or two pieces of bone were observed. At this point the trench was 0.50m east of the churchyard wall and was 1.30m deep and 0.70m wide. A spur was dug eastwards to join with the tower west wall and the profile of the tower plinth and foundations was exposed (Pl. 83). A hole, 0.20m in diameter, was drilled through the wall at 0.28-0.48m below the existing ground surface (Fig. 14 and Pl. 84).

Discussion

Although there was minimal excavation in the nave and north aisle cleaning of the areas beneath the wooden pew platforms revealed important evidence for the former layout of the church. In the south-west corner of the nave where the Crowle Stone was to be relocated it was necessary to remove some of the deposits below the pews. It was in this area that the ground had sunk, creating a bowl like depression which had been levelled up with crushed limestone. It is possible that there was a grave below but the area revealed in the excavation was too small to be sure and would have required more extensive excavation than was required to establish the reason for its presence.

The mortar fragments **108** overlying the west wall foundation were all that survived of the first floor surface in this part of the nave. It is not clear whether other mortar layers, such as **118** which had sunk into the bowl shaped depression and were not fully excavated, were part of this floor surface. The brown soil **109**, recorded at the bottom of the pew sleeper trenches looked very similar to the graveyard soil outside, confirming that there are very shallow remains surviving.

Further evidence for the original mortar floor overlying the foundations was found in the north-west corner of the nave (**220**). The nave north wall beneath the arcade was 1.60m thick and the wall scar on the internal face of the west wall confirms that the nave was widened by 0.60m when the north aisle was built in the 12th century. Graves were present in this part of the site as in the north aisle but fortunately no human remains were disturbed as they lay beneath the required floor level. Further evidence for graves was also found at the east end of the nave and in the north aisle.

Soft patches of soil abounded in the north aisle and the rapid recording in this area of the church did not allow for the identification of individual graves. Burial in wood coffins, which subsequently rot, results in the collapse of soil above them into the coffin void, leaving uneven and soft areas of flooring. This is why mortar and tile floor surfaces needed to be frequently repaired. It was in this area of the church that a variety of late medieval glazed floor tiles were recovered, testament to the many repairs to, or replacement of, earlier floor surfaces. Some were used as props at each end of the sleeper trenches to support the timber frames for the pews. All were much worn and it is not known from what part of the church they originally came. Their Flemish origins are of note but not by any means unique in Lincolnshire. The presence of the medieval roof tiles in all areas of the church offers a further glimpse into how the church would have looked in the past.

It is recorded that the north aisle was demolished in 1792. Some sources say that the aisle was immediately rebuilt, others that it was not rebuilt until 1884. The presence of three brick vaults cutting through the foundations of the demolished aisle suggests that there was a period when there was no north aisle and the vaults would have been constructed in what was then the churchyard. A date in the first half of the 19th century fits well with the style of coffin recorded in Vault 1 and the brick used in the construction of the vault walls.

It was already known before the excavation began that the tower had been added to the west end of the nave but its elevated floor level had hidden the chamfered plinth at the base of the nave west wall. It is likely that the plinth may also run around the south wall too but the ground levels outside have risen by up to 0.50m, masking the evidence on this side of the church. The discovery of the plinth and its continuation through the west door opening confirms that the door was an original feature and had not been inserted to provide access to the tower. It is unfortunate that the installation of the heating system in 1903 resulted in damage to the north side of the opening and any original threshold had also long been removed.

Approximately half the tower floor area had been removed when the boiler was installed in 1915. The upper brick floor was clearly contemporary and sealed part of an earlier brick floor which did not extend to the edges of the room. The reason for this is not clear although in the south-east corner was the pit containing the rake out from a small stove. The other patches of charcoal and ash suggest that there was a period when there was no floor surface in this part of the tower. The clay tobacco pipe bowls, are mid 19th century in date and it is likely that this stove was in use until the new boiler was installed. There was no evidence for any burials in the tower nor was there any evidence for a bell pit.

The service trench which ran through the graveyard encountered human remains, mostly disarticulated, especially where the trench was at its deepest. The route was diverted in order to avoid the brick vaults that were encountered so that they, and their contents, were left undisturbed. There was minimal disturbance at the point where the service trench entered the churchyard with some evidence for a former boundary wall with stone foundations. Clearly earlier than the 20th century brick wall above, the stonework may belong to the earlier brick wall that survives to the west, or even a predecessor. There was no evidence for any other form of boundary marker such as an associated bank or ditch.

Conclusion

The 2010 programme of refurbishment was undertaken with great care to minimise disturbance to the potentially important archaeological remains in the church. It provided an opportunity to record important new evidence about the development of the church including evidence for the original position of the nave north wall and the dimensions of the medieval north aisle. The reuse of late medieval floor and roof tiles in the construction of the Victorian pews have also thrown light on the materials that were used in the flooring and roofing of the medieval church.

Naomi Field
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