
Archaeology & Built Heritage

**An Archaeological Trial Pit Evaluation:
Church of St Mary the Virgin, Station Road,
Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire, LE9 7SG**

NGR: SP 4602 9649

Undertaken on behalf of

The Parochial Church Council

by

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Archaeology & Built Heritage

Report Number: R-0078

Project Reference: ABH-2018-03

June 2018

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by Deborah Sawday

Summary

An Archaeological Trial Pit Evaluation was undertaken in April 2018 at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire, LE9 7SG (NGR: SP 4602 9649).

The archaeological investigation was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council, through their architect Mark Stewart, and undertaken by Archaeology & Built Heritage.

The archaeological evaluation was requested by Tim Allen, Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England, in respect of an application for Scheduled Monument Consent relating to the provision of new vestry and toilet facilities within the church, in order to assess the potential impact of the development proposals on buried archaeological remains.

Four 1m² trial pits were excavated at specific locations within and around the church.

Trial Pit 1 was located against the external face of the north wall of the unroofed part of the nave. It exposed the foundation of the north wall of the nave, which was cut through an earlier, medieval deposit, of 12th or 13th century date. A residual sherd of Roman pottery was also recovered from this trial pit.

Trial Pit 2 was located against the internal face of the north wall of the unroofed part of the nave. It exposed a possible wall foundation located c. 0.8m south of the north wall of the nave, at a depth of 0.55m below present ground level. Above this level were modern deposits, possibly related to the documented restoration of the church in 1868.

Trial Pit 3 was located towards the centre of the unroofed part of the nave. This identified modern disturbance, possibly related to the 1868 restoration, to a depth of 0.65m. Below this level part of a large pit was exposed, the lower fill of which contained charcoal and fired clay fragments. The edges of the pit were scorched, indicating that burning had occurred in situ. Finds from the lower fill of the pit included medieval pottery and tile, with the latest material dating from the 14th century. It is possible that this was a bell casting pit, though further excavation would be required to confirm this tentative interpretation.

Trial Pit 4 was located 4m east of the external face of the east wall of the chancel, in the south-west corner of the church car park, and was intended to evaluate the archaeological potential of an area proposed as the location of a new cesspit. A grave containing an east-west aligned inhumation burial was partly exposed within this trial pit. Sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from a soil layer overlying

the grave. The burial was cut through an earlier pit, of unknown date. Human remains were discovered in the same area during the excavation of a saw pit in the 18th century and these discoveries suggest that the medieval graveyard lay to the east of the church, in the area of the present car park.

The results of the Trial Pit Evaluation will be used to inform the development plans for the church.

The project archive and finds will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under the accession code: X. A40.2018.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an Archaeological Trial Pit Evaluation conducted at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire, LE9 7SG.
- 1.2 The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council through their architect, Mark Stewart, and undertaken by Archaeology & Built Heritage on the 16th and 17th of April 2018.
- 1.3 The archaeological evaluation was requested by Tim Allen, Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England, in respect of an application for Scheduled Monument Consent relating to the provision of new vestry and toilet facilities within the church, in order to assess the potential impact of the development proposals on buried archaeological remains.
- 1.4 The archaeological evaluation involved the excavation of four 1m² trial pits at specific locations within and around the church and was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) submitted to and approved by Historic England and the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (Finn 2017).

2. Location, Topography and Geology

- 2.1 Elmesthorpe is a village and civil parish in the Blaby district of Leicestershire, within the East Midlands region of England. The village is located c. 1.25 km (0.75 miles) south of Earl Shilton and 4km (2.5 miles) north-east of Hinckley (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The church of St Mary the Virgin is situated to the north of the B581, between its junctions with the A47 Leicester Road and the B5364 Wilkinson Lane, at National Grid Reference SP 4602 9649 (Figure 2). Ordnance Survey mapping names this section of the B581 as Elmesthorpe Lane, which becomes Station Road to the east of

the junction with Wilkinson Lane. The address of the church is variously given as Station Road or Elmesthorpe Lane. The Station Road address, which is given in the Application for Scheduled Monument Consent, is used here.

- 2.3 The church occupies an area of high ground, at around 111m above Ordnance Datum (bench mark on south-west corner of tower has a value of 111.28m above OD).
- 2.4 The solid geology of the area is mudstone of the Mercia Mudstone Group, a sedimentary bedrock formed in the Triassic Period. Overlying this is sand and gravel of the Wolston Sand and Gravel formation, a superficial deposit formed during ice age conditions up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (British Geological Survey Geology of Britain online viewer accessed 14.08.2017).

3. Statutory Designations

- 3.1 The site is within the area of a Scheduled Monument designated under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, list entry number 1005076: Elmesthorpe church, ruined nave and west tower.
- 3.2 The Church of St Mary is included on the statutory national list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest maintained by the secretary of state for digital, culture, media and sport. It was listed at grade II on 27.04.1988 with the following description:

Parish church. C14, C16, chancel rebuilt 1868. Random granite rubble and dressed stone with stone dressings and slate roof. West tower, ruined roofless nave, and chancel, now used as nave. West tower, 2 stages, has plinth, 2 chamfered string courses, coved eaves band and crenellated parapet. To west, 2 diagonal buttresses, 4 setoffs, and between them a chamfered and moulded doorway with hood mould, C18 plank door and strap hinges. Above, on each side, a C16 chamfered pointed bell opening. Nave, 2 bays, has on each side the remains of 2 buttresses and 2 early C14 double lancets with coved and chamfered reveals and hood moulds. At the west end, on each side, a 2 light mullioned window, that to north with a flat head and hood mould, that to south with a 4 centred arched head. 3 bay chancel has on each side 3 buttresses and at east end, 2 pairs of angle buttresses all with setoffs. Coped east gable with cross. North side has a central restored Decorated double lancet with moulded reveal and to west, a roll moulded C19 doorway with shafts and hood mould. East end has a C19 5 light ogee lancet with flowing tracery and hood mould. South side has 2 restored Decorated double lancets. Tower chamber, now the west porch, has

no architectural features. Tower arch, double chamfered and moulded, has no responds. Rendered chancel interior has rusticated openings and arch braced queen post roof. East end has a C19 alabaster and stone gradine. South side has to east a restored C14 ogee headed combined piscina and aumbry and a restored C14 ogee headed triple sedilia. Fittings include early C13 lobed round font bowl on C19 stem with clustered ringed shafts. C19 pine benches and brass lectern. Mid C20 reading desk and altar rails. Small slate war memorial tablet.

4. Historical Background

- 4.1 A settlement named *Torp* in the Domesday Book of 1086 is identified as Elmesthorpe by Cox on the basis that it had been held before the Norman Conquest by a man called Ailmar. It is named in later documents of 1199 and 1207 as *Ailmerestorp* and in 1225 as *Ailmarestorp* (Cox 2014, 82). Morris had equated this *Torp* with Primethorpe in his *Domesday Book Leicestershire*, which is now part of Broughton Astley (Morris 1979, 19:3).
- 4.2 The place-name is a combination of the Old English masculine personal name *Ailmar* and *Torp*, meaning: the dependent outlying farmstead or hamlet belonging to a man called Ailmar (Cox 2014, 82).
- 4.3 Recent research has suggested that, for the most part, settlements with thorp place-names originated as outlying hamlets, of linear plan with a small number of crofts and tofts along each side of a single village street. The majority appear to have been sited on good soils for arable farming and were possibly originally inhabited by unfree ploughmen and eventually by tenant farmers. These developed principally in the 10th and first half of the 11th centuries and may have been part of the process of transition from small dispersed habitation sites to nucleated villages (Cullen, Jones and Parsons 2011, cited in Cox 2014, 83). Bourne notes that nearly half of the settlements in Leicestershire with thorp place-names are shrunken or deserted, confirming their status as secondary settlements (Bourne 2003, 9, 44). Elmesthorpe had been depopulated by the 16th century according to Burton (see below).
- 4.4 Nichols provides an account of the descent of the manor, which is summarised by Curtis (Nichols 1811, 603-8; Curtis 1831, 56-7).
- 4.5 William Burton visited Elmesthorpe in the early 17th century and noted 'This town had been much greater many years since; but depopulated about the reign of king Henry VIII.; no houses now remaining but the chief house, and antient church. The

Lordship is very large, exceeding good ground and fertile, and contains many good sheep pastures in it' (Burton 1622, 91).

- 4.6 Elmesthorpe Hall, the 'chief house' noted by Burton, occupied the same site as the present Church Farm, north of the church (Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record ref: MLE16977). 'The antient hall stood on an eminence, and was a very large and extensive building' according to Nichols. 'From the traces which now remain of the extensive pleasure-grounds, &c. it appears to have been a large and commodious residence' (Nichols 1811, 605).
- 4.7 Elmesthorpe Hall was the principal seat of three generations of the Cockaigne family from 1619. Sir William Cockaigne was Lord Mayor of London in that year and was also the first director and governor of the plantation of Ulster, being responsible for the establishment of the City of Londonderry. Hartley suggests that the large fishponds which are a feature of Elmesthorpe parish were constructed about this time as part of the extensive pleasure grounds that surrounded the hall (Hartley 1989, 56, 62, Fig. 52; reproduced here as Figure 6).
- 4.8 A group of four ornamental ponds and a larger wildfowl pond, located to the north of Church Farm, were subject to archaeological investigation in 2007-8, in advance of construction of the A47 Earl Shilton Bypass (Jarvis 2009; HER ref. MLE69). Other ponds are located to the south of the church (Hartley 1989, 56, 62, Fig. 52).
- 4.9 Church Farm House, which was built in 1710 and subsequently enlarged, contains reused timbers thought to come from the old hall. The cellars are also said to include remains of the earlier hall. The first tenant of this farmhouse, a Mr Thompson, discovered the foundations of several buildings, presumed to have been remains of old village houses, when he ploughed the land in the 18th century (Nichols 1811, 605).
- 4.10 The site of the deserted village apparently lay to the south of the church where fields bearing the name 'Township' are shown on the Tithe map for Elmesthorpe. A lane is also marked on the map running south through these fields, which may be equated with Nichols' observation that 'There are now some small traces of the village, by a kind of hollow way, which was one irregular street' (Hartley 1989, 56).
- 4.11 The deserted village site is recorded on the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER ref: MLE70).
- 4.12 The population of Elmesthorpe was 35 in 1801 (Census). There were 4 households and 46 inhabitants in 1831 (Curtis 1831, 56-7). The population was 36 in 1841 and 45 in 1851 (Census).

- 4.13 When the Nuneaton and Hinckley Railway line was extended to Wigton Junction near Leicester a station was opened at Elmesthorpe, in 1863, serving the villages of Barwell and Earl Shilton. The railway revitalised Elmesthorpe and Lord Lovelace of Kirkby Mallory, the landowner, commissioned the noted architect C.F.A. Voysey to design The Wentworth Arms Inn which was built on Station Road in 1895, near the entrance to the station. In the following year Voysey was also commissioned to design a row of six workers' cottages (Wortley Cottages) to the north of the railway line (Pevsner and Williamson 1992,150-1). Further housing was built and a boot and shoe factory was opened in the village by Harvey, Harvey & Company in the 1920s. The population in 1871 was 44, in 1881 it was 34 and in 1891 it was 38. By 1901 the population had increased to 70 and in 1921 was 77 (Census).
- 4.14 The population of Elmesthorpe expanded dramatically in the 1930s under a national government scheme to relocate families from depressed industrial areas of the country to make a living on the land. In 1935 the Land Settlement Association purchased Church Farm as accommodation and offices for a manager, and new packing sheds were erected there. 43 smallholdings with greenhouses were established within the parish, in addition to several houses for staff. Elmesthorpe became well known for its market garden produce (L&RFWI 1989).
- 4.15 The population almost tripled between 1931 when there were 134 residents and 1951 when there were 392 (Census).
- 4.16 The Land Settlement Association scheme at Elmesthorpe ended in the 1960s and many of the holdings were sold to their tenants. The railway station closed in 1963 and that decade also saw the closure of the boot and shoe factory (L&RFWI 1989).
- 4.17 The population of Elmesthorpe had fallen to 361 in 1961, but rose again to 513 by 1981; there were 509 residents in 2011 (Census).
- 4.18 In the 1980s Church Farm House became a private grammar school and since 1999 has been a private residence.

Church of St Mary the Virgin

- 4.19 The oldest parts of the extant fabric of the Church of St Mary the Virgin date to the early 14th century (Pevsner and Williamson 1992, 150; Listing Description). The font, which is 12th or early 13th century, was found in a garden at Red Hall, Barwell and reinstated when the church was restored in 1868 (see below).
- 4.20 A Saxon origin for the church is proposed in some sources, though on what grounds is not made clear.

- 4.21 The church played a minor role in a major historical event when officers and men of king Richard III's army were billeted there before the battle of Bosworth field in 1485 (Nichols 1811, 604).
- 4.22 The west tower was apparently restored in the 16th century (Listing Description). In 1650 the church was described as 'decayed'. Half of the lead was still on the roof in about 1754 but subsequently collapsed into the middle of the church. The rest of the roof covering had been stolen or sold (Nichols 1811, 606-7).
- 4.23 The church would have been demolished but for the intervention of the Dean of Salisbury in 1763, who determined that it should be restored and instituted himself as Rector, though took no active part in the functioning of the church.
- 4.24 Nichols' history includes two views of the unroofed church produced by John Pridden in 1792 (Plate XCIX; reproduced here as Figure 7).
- 4.25 In 1854 Earl Shilton became a separate parish instead of a chapelry of Kirkby Mallory and the Rev F. E. Tower, the curate at Earl Shilton, was also made Rector of Elmesthorpe.
- 4.26 In 1868 the church was rebuilt at a cost of £600. The chancel was re-roofed, though the nave was not restored and remains open to the sky (Pevsner and Williamson 1992, 150; Listing Description). The organ was installed in 1931.
- 4.27 Nichols records that 'About 1730 there was a monument, with recumbent figures, at the South-east corner of the chancel' and another stone-built tomb in the nave. He further notes that 'In the church-yard, at the end of the chancel, in making a saw-pit some years ago, were found several human bones, though now not the least trace of any grave remains' (Nichols 1811, 606). The present burial ground, on the south side of the church, was newly consecrated in 1941 on land conveyed by Deed of Gift by the Land Settlement Association (L&RFWI 1989).
- 4.28 Various archaeological interventions within the parish are recorded on the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER). No previous archaeological work at the Church of St Mary is recorded.

5. Research Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 Regional research aims are defined in *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012), which builds on an earlier resource assessment and research

agenda: *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper 2006).

- 5.2 The archaeological investigation has the potential to contribute towards themes defined in Section 6.7 of *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands*, which provides a research agenda for the High Medieval period (1066-1485), specifically aspects covered in paragraph 7.5: *Religion*; and also Section 6.8 which provides a research agenda for the post-medieval period (1485-1750), specifically para. 8.6: *Ecclesiastical structures, estates and burials* (Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012, 94, 108).
- 5.3 The specific objectives of the archaeological trial pit evaluation, as set out in the WSI, were:
- To identify the presence/absence of buried archaeological remains within the areas affected by groundwork associated with the proposed development plans
 - To establish the character, extent and date range of any buried archaeological remains that are encountered within the trial pits
 - To record any archaeological remains that are present within the trial pits
 - To interpret any such remains within the context of the known current and previous use of the site and the wider area
 - To produce a report and archive of any results

6. Scope of the Trial pit Evaluation

- 6.1 Tim Allen of Historic England indicated the requirement for four 1m² trial pits, in the locations shown on Figure 2. The trial pit locations as excavated are illustrated on Figure 3.
- 6.2 Trial Pit 1 was located against the external face of the north wall of the unroofed western part of the nave. Trial Pit 2 was located against the internal face of the north wall of the unroofed part of the nave. Trial Pit 3 was located at the centre of the unroofed part of the nave. Trial Pit 4 was located in the south-west corner of the car park to the east of the church, where it is proposed to install a new cesspit.

7. Methodology

- 7.1 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 16th and 17th of April 2018, in accordance with the methodology set out in Section 7 of the approved Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 7.2 The trial pits were excavated by hand and were backfilled and reinstated on completion of the investigation.
- 7.3 The fieldwork was monitored by Dr Michael Hawkes, the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, who carried out an inspection visit on the 17th of April 2018.
- 7.4 The drawn record included the plan and at least two sections of each trial pit, prepared at a scale of 1:20. Context descriptions were recorded on the drawings sheets. A digital photographic record of the investigation was made.
- 7.5 It was not possible to record accurate Ordnance Datum levels for current internal floor and external ground surfaces, or the archaeological remains, as the bench mark on the south-west corner of the church tower is obscured by climbing foliage. Consequently, all depths are recorded in relation to present ground level adjacent to each trial pit.

8. Results

- 8.1 Context numbers assigned during the evaluation are used to identify the archaeological remains. Cut numbers are presented in square brackets, e.g. pit [12]. Feature fills, layers and structures are presented in round brackets, e.g. fill (11) of pit [12], and wall foundation (13). The trial pit locations are shown in Figure 3 and the plans and sections are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5.

Trial Pit 1 (Figure 4; Photos 2-4)

- 8.2 Trial Pit 1 was located against the external (north) face of the north wall of the unroofed part of the nave; it measured 1.0m square and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.0m.
- 8.3 Beneath a modern surface of granite mill waste was an undated topsoil layer (28), to a depth of 0.40m below ground level. Removal of (28) exposed a wider foundation (13) to the north wall of the nave (14). The foundation (13) was constructed from mortared granite and projected beyond the outer face of the north wall by 0.35m. A possible construction cut [27] for the wall foundation (13) was recorded in section, which was backfilled with a yellow brown sand deposit containing mortar (17). The construction trench [27] was cut through a mid-brown coloured sand deposit containing frequent mortar fragments (29). This deposit contained sherds of 12th or 13th century pottery, in addition to a residual Roman sherd (see Appendix). Below (29) was a yellow-brown coloured sand (15) and a spread of granite fragments (16),

which overlay the geological natural sand, exposed at the base of the trial pit at a depth of 1.0m.

Trial Pit 2 (Figure 4; Photos 5-7)

- 8.4 Trial Pit 2 was located against the internal (south) face of the north wall of the unroofed part of the nave; it measured 1.0m square and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.0m.
- 8.5 Beneath the concrete paving slab surface was a grey-brown coloured sandy silt deposit containing mortar fragments (3), to a depth of 0.18m. Below this was a light brown coloured sandy silt (4), to a depth of 0.76m below ground level. Context (4) contained stone fragments, modern pottery sherds and glass fragments, a piece of medieval glass and a medieval tile fragment, plus a few disarticulated human bones. The north wall of the nave (1) was exposed in the north section of the trial pit.
- 8.6 A structure composed of angular granite fragments and large water-worn stones in a clay matrix (2) occurred beneath context (4) in the southern part of the trial pit, at a depth of 0.55m below ground level. This appeared to be an east-west aligned wall foundation, located 1.8m to the south of the north wall of the nave. Over the rest of the trial pit, the geological natural ground occurred beneath (4), at a depth of between 0.64m and 0.76m below ground level. The interface between (4) and the geological natural sand was very diffuse. An area of modern disturbance occurred along the western edge of the trial pit.

Trial Pit 3 (Figure 5; Photos 8-10)

- 8.7 Trial Pit 3 was located towards the centre of the unroofed part of the nave; it measured 1.20m E-W x 1.0m N-S and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.20m.
- 8.8 Beneath the concrete paving slab surface was a compact dark grey brown sandy clay deposit containing crushed sandstone (5), which may have been a levelling and/or bedding layer for the paving slabs. Below (5) was a mid-brown coloured clay sand deposit (6) to a depth of 0.65m from the surface. Context (6) contained common charcoal flecks, occasional pebbles and larger stones, slate fragments, post-medieval and modern pottery sherds, modern glass fragments, a piece of lead window came and a few human bone fragments. The geological natural ground, a soft orange-brown coloured sand occurred below (6), at a depth of 0.65m.
- 8.9 In the north-east corner of the trial pit, part of a large pit feature [12] was exposed, cut into the geological natural ground. This was excavated to a depth of 1.20m but the base of the pit was not reached. The cut contained three fills. The upper fill (9) was a mid-brown coloured clay sand. Beneath this was an orange brown coloured sand (10). The lower fill (11) consisted of burnt clay fragments and charcoal in a brown sand matrix. The geological natural sand around the edges of the pit cut was scorched, indicating *in situ* burning. Finds from the lower fill (11) included a sizeable assemblage of medieval pottery and tile with a 12th to 14th century date range (see Appendix).

- 8.10 In the extreme north-west corner of the trial pit, the edge of a modern feature [8], that had been cut into the fills of the earlier pit [12], was exposed. The fill (7) of the modern feature contained post-medieval and modern pottery and glass, in addition to residual medieval pottery and tile.
- 8.11 A live electricity supply cable ran along the southern edge of the trial pit, just below the paving slab surface.

Trial Pit 4 (Figure 5; Photos 11-12)

- 8.12 Trial Pit 4 was located 4m east of the external face of the east wall of the chancel, in the south-west corner of the church car park. It was intended to evaluate the archaeological potential of an area proposed as the location of a new cesspit. Trial Pit 4 measured 1.10m N-S x 1.0m E-W and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.0m.
- 8.13 The car park surface consisted of compacted granite mill waste (18), to a depth of 0.28m. Below this was a dark brown sandy clay layer (19), to a depth of 0.68m, which overlay the orange sand natural. The interface between (19) and the geological natural was very diffuse. A sherd of medieval pottery and a fragment of glazed medieval ridge tile were recovered from context (19).
- 8.14 Cut into the geological natural, below (19), was a grave cut [24]. The E-W aligned grave extended beyond the northern, eastern and western edges of the trial pit. Within the grave, the pelvis and legs of an adult skeleton (23) were exposed (but left *in situ*). The head lay to the west. The human remains occurred at a depth of c. 0.9m below ground level, though it is likely that the skull, if intact, will survive at a higher level. In section, the grave cut was identifiable at a depth of c. 0.6m below ground level, though it was not defined in plan at this level. The grave fill (22) consisted of an orange-brown coloured sand. No finds were recovered to date the burial.
- 8.15 The grave [24] was cut through an earlier pit-like feature [26], that was partially exposed in plan at the base of the trial pit. Only the western edge of [26] lay within the trial pit and its fill (25) was an orange-brown coloured sand with some clay patches and inclusions of charcoal and small pebbles. The geological natural sand around the edge of the pit cut [26] was scorched. No finds were recovered from this feature.
- 8.16 Along the western edge of Trial Pit 4 there was a 20th century electricity cable trench, apparently following the line of a former boundary marked on early Ordnance Survey maps. This was capped with interlocking bricks (20) stamped 'DANGER ELECTRICITY CABLE'. Below this was a dark brown sandy clay deposit (21). The cable itself was not exposed and its depth is unknown.

9. Discussion

- 9.1 Buried archaeological remains were identified in all four trial pits.
- 9.2 In Trial Pit 1, the foundations of the north wall of the nave were exposed. The wall foundation trench [27] was apparently cut through an earlier deposit (29), which produced sherds of 12th or 13th century pottery, in addition to a residual Roman sherd. This sequence would be consistent with the early 14th century construction date suggested for the nave (Pevsner 1992, 150; Listing Description). If this interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence is correct then the spread of granite fragments (16) exposed at the base of the trial pit must be earlier than the 14th century church.
- 9.3 Any groundwork in the vicinity of Trial Pit 1 exceeding c. 0.3m below present ground level could potentially impact on buried archaeological remains.
- 9.4 Trial Pit 2 indicates that no earlier floor levels survive below the present concrete paving slab surface within the unroofed part of the nave. A possible wall foundation (2) occurred at a depth of 0.55m below ground level, with deposits above this consisting of 19th century or later rubble, possibly associated with the alterations made to the church 1868. The nature and date of the wall foundation (2) are unknown.
- 9.5 As with Trial Pit 2, Trial Pit 3 demonstrates modern disturbance to a depth of between 0.55m and 0.65m below present ground level within the unroofed part of the nave, presumably associated with the 1868 restoration. Below this level, the SW corner of a large pit was recorded, cut into the geological natural ground. Based on the location of this feature, evidence for *in situ* burning, and fragments of fired clay and charcoal within its fill, it may have been a bell casting pit, though further excavation would be required to confirm this interpretation. The finds recovered from the lower fill (11) of the pit, indicate a medieval date for this feature. The latest material is attributable to the 14th century, which is consistent with the suggested construction date of the church.
- 9.6 Based on the evidence recorded in Trial Pits 2 and 3, any groundwork within the unroofed part of the nave that exceeds c. 0.5m in depth could potentially impact upon buried archaeological remains.
- 9.7 A few disarticulated human bone fragments were present within the modern deposits in Trial Pits 2 and 3. These presumably derive from disturbed medieval burial(s) within the nave, as indicated by Nichols' reference to the former existence of a tomb within the nave (Nichols 1811, 606). The human remains found within the

nave were reburied when the trial pits were infilled, with the approval of the minister, Revd. Martin Castle.

- 9.8 Trial Pit 4, outside the east end of the chancel, located an inhumation burial, the grave for which was defined at a depth of c. 0.6m below present ground level. The existence of burials to the east of the church is consistent with Nichols' account of the discovery of human bones during the excavation of a saw pit in the churchyard at the end of the chancel (Nichols 1811, 606). Further burials may be expected in this area.
- 9.9 A medieval date for the burial is suggested by the finds recovered from the overlying context (19), which may be interpreted as a graveyard soil. The human remains within Trial Pit 4 were left *in situ* and reburied after recording.
- 9.10 The burial was stratigraphically later than an undated pit-like feature [26] observed in the base of Trial Pit 4. Scorching of the geological natural ground around the outer edge of this feature was comparable with that recorded for pit [12] in Trial Pit 3, possibly suggesting a similar origin. Further investigation would be required, however, to permit an accurate interpretation of either of these features.
- 9.11 The results of the Trial Pit Evaluation will be used to inform the development plans for the church.

10. Archive and Finds

- 10.1 The project archive consists of: 3 x annotated permagraph drawing sheets (including context descriptions); context index sheet; 21 x high-resolution colour digital photographs (in jpeg format); photographic index.
- 10.2 The finds consist of: 1 sherd of Roman pottery weighing 9g; 26 sherds of medieval and later pottery weighing 658g; 5 fragments of medieval roof tile weighing 493g; 1 fragment of medieval window glass; 4 fragments of post-medieval or modern glass; 1 fragment of lead window came.
- 10.3 The project archive and finds will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under the accession code: X.A40.2018.

11. Publication

- 11.1 A report on the results of the investigation will be submitted for publication in a suitable regional or national archaeological journal within one year of completion of

fieldwork. The length and content of the report will reflect the significance of the archaeological discoveries.

12. Bibliography

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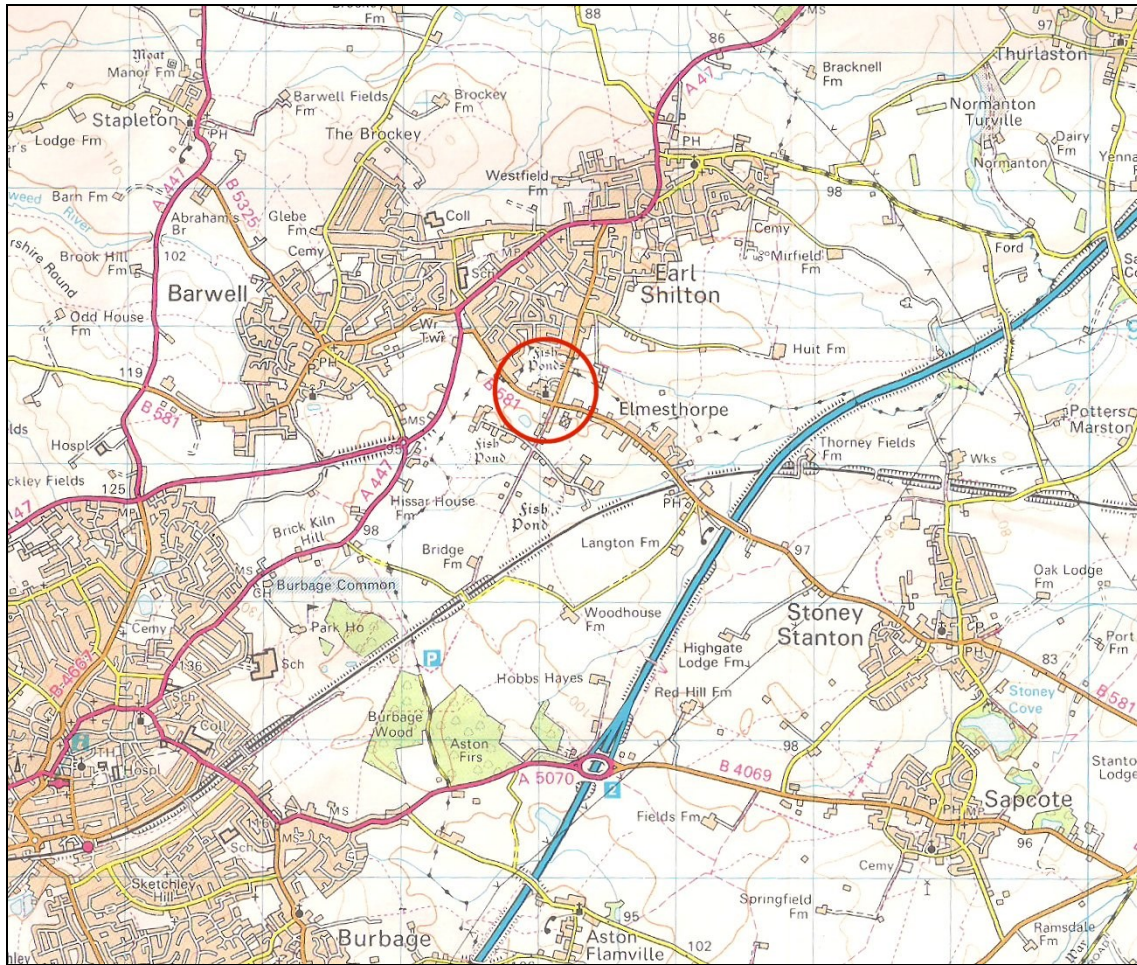


Figure 1. General Location Plan with Church of St Mary circled in red. Grid = 1km squares.
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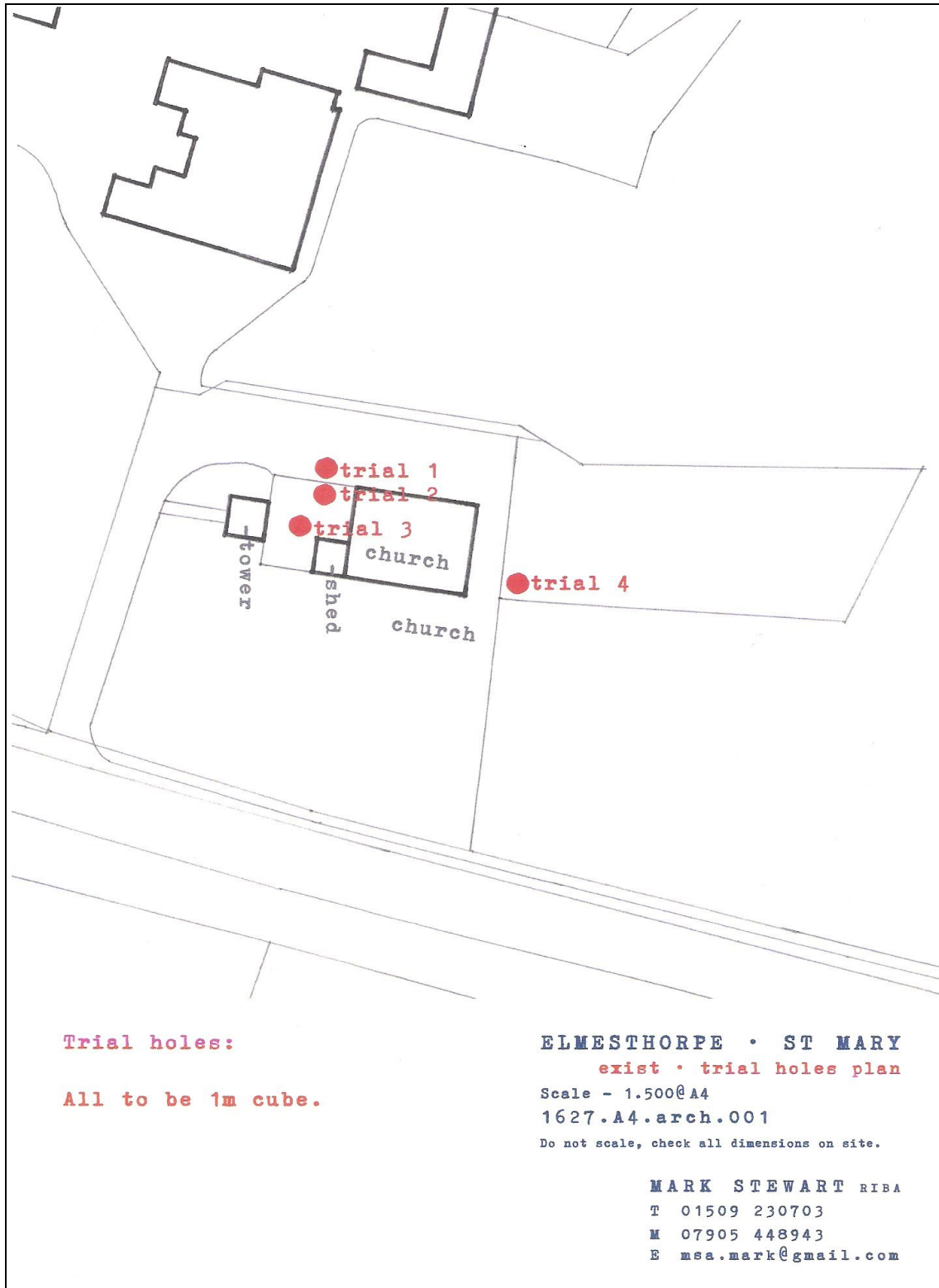


Figure 2. Site Plan showing proposed trial pit locations. Plan supplied by Mark Stewart.

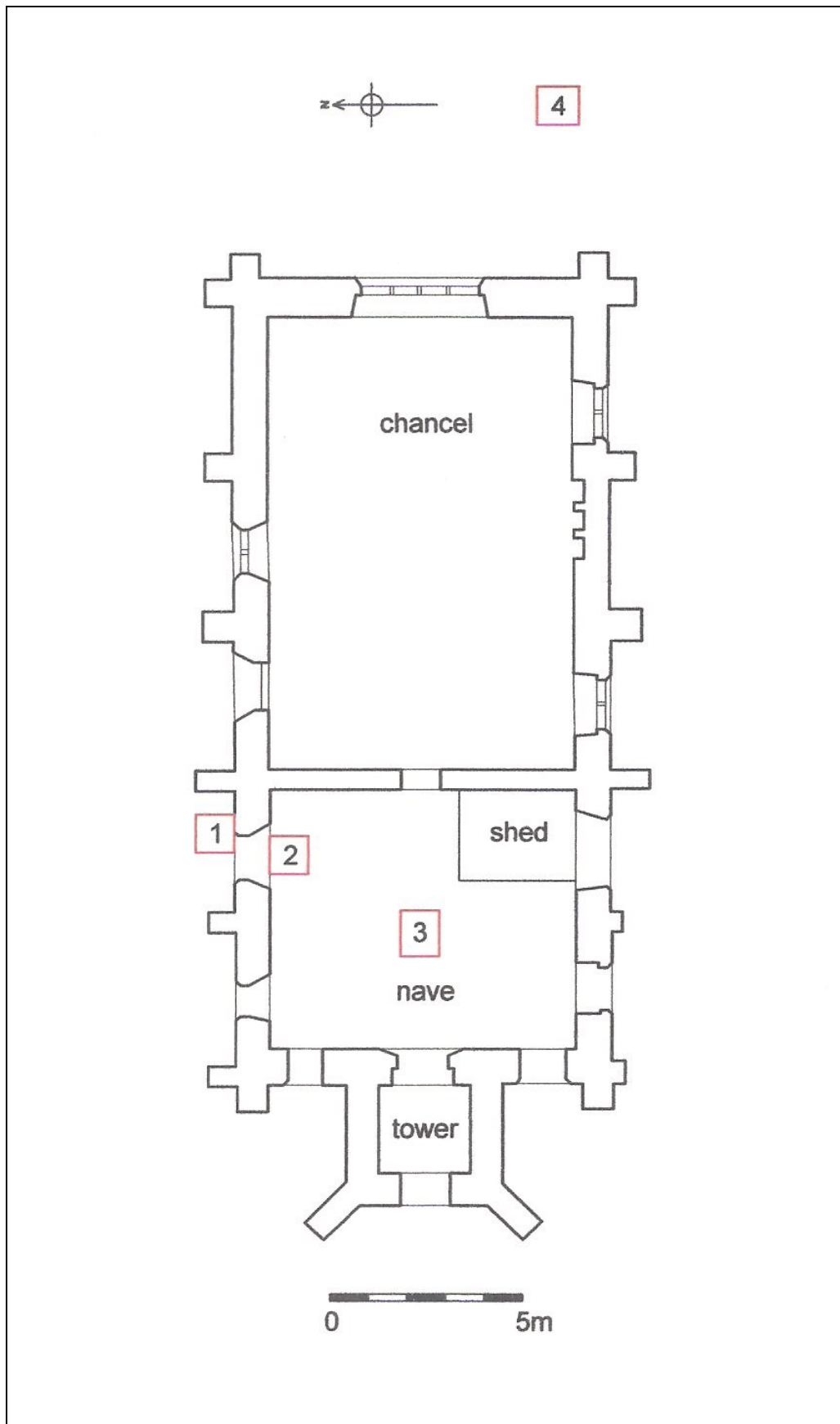


Figure 3. Trial Pit locations as excavated (numbered 1 – 4).

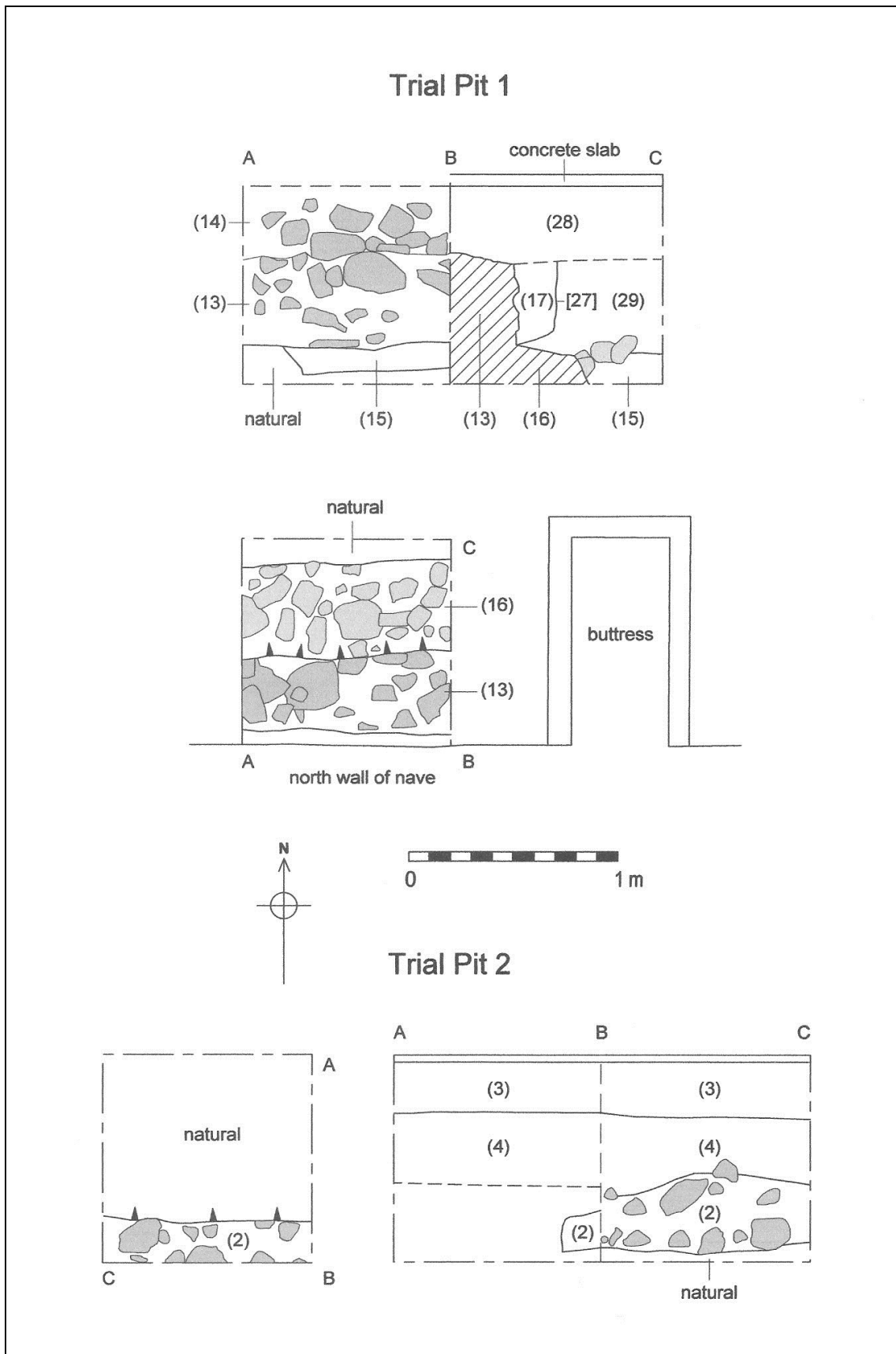


Figure 4. Trial Pits 1 (above) and 2 (below) Plans and Sections.

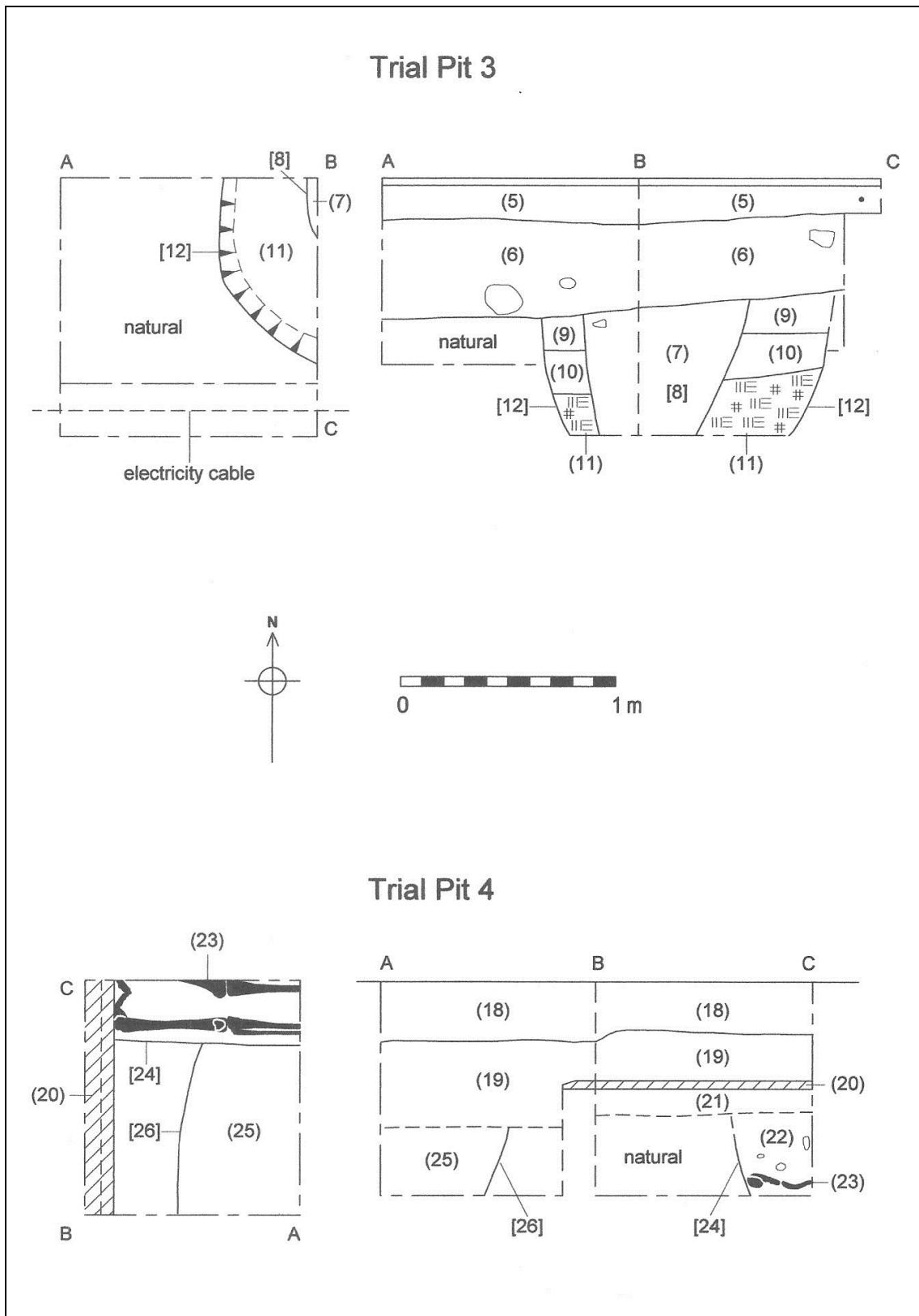


Figure 5. Trial Pits 3 (above) and 4 (below) Plans and Sections.

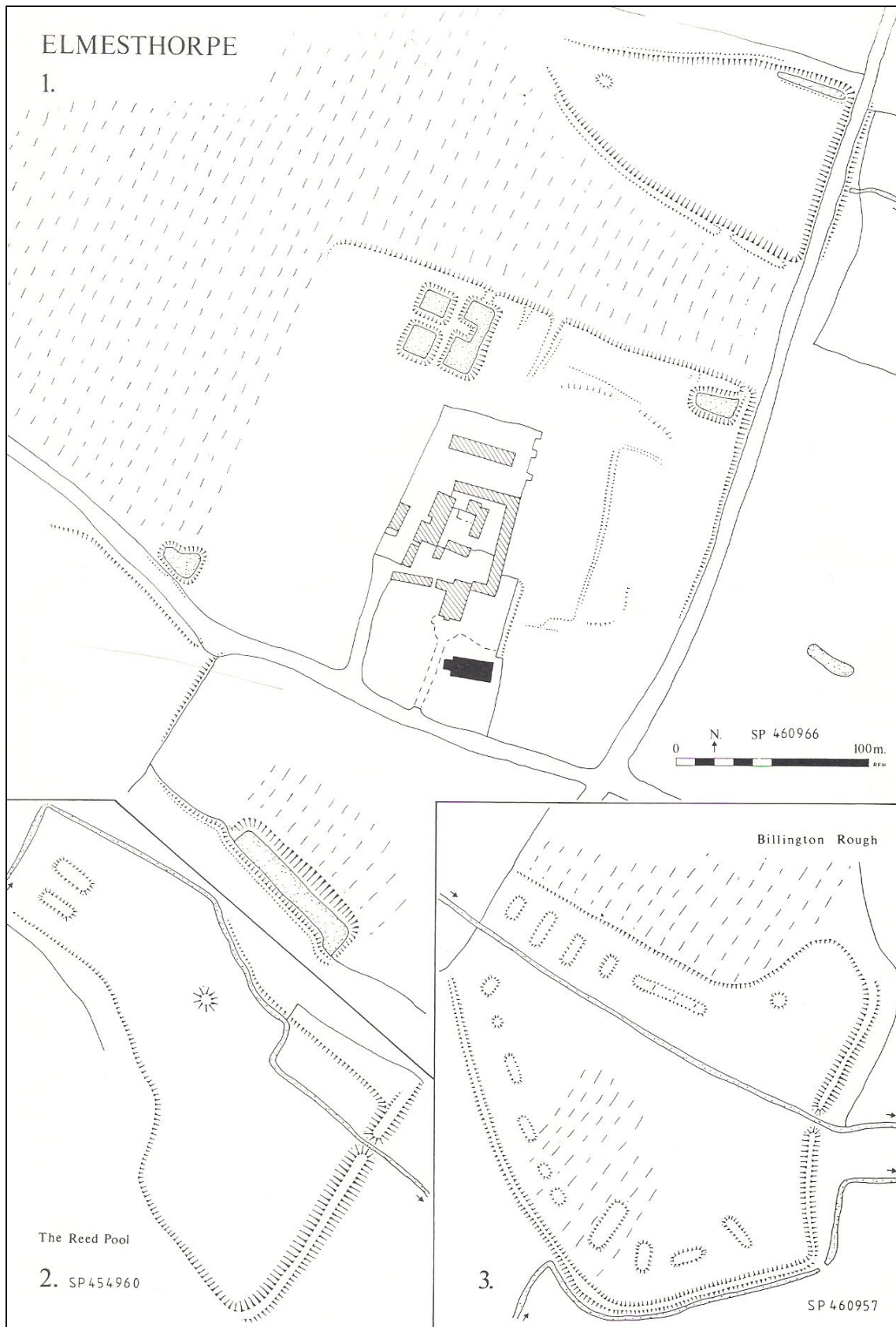
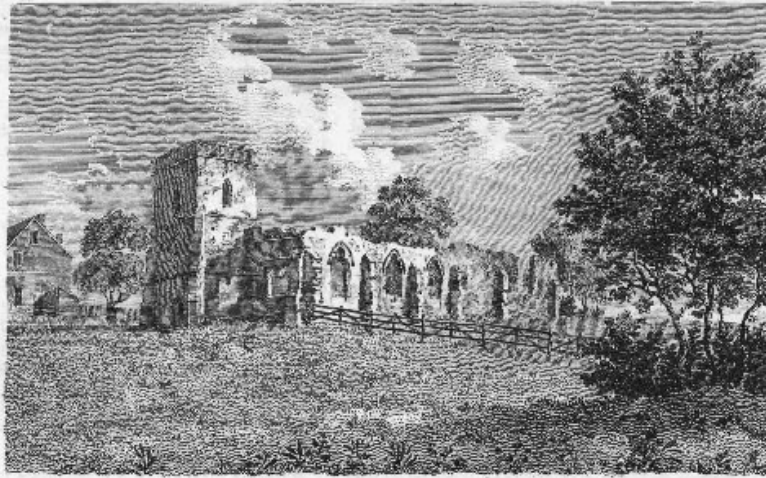
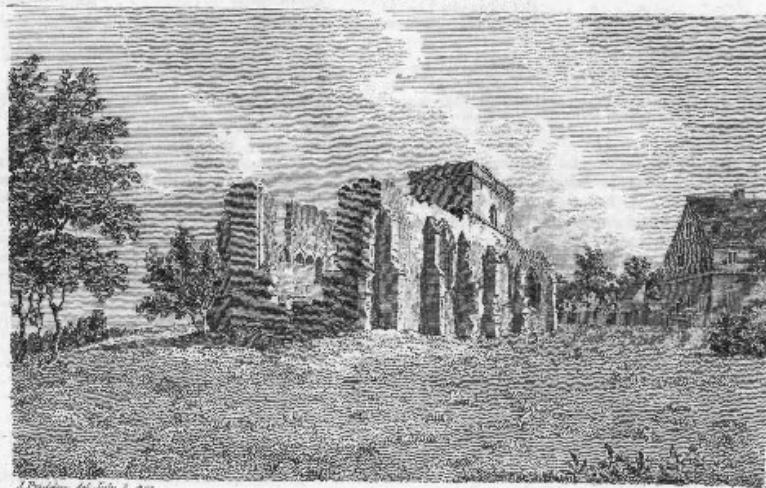


Figure 6. Earthwork survey of Elmesthorpe, church solid black (after Hartley 1989, Fig. 52).

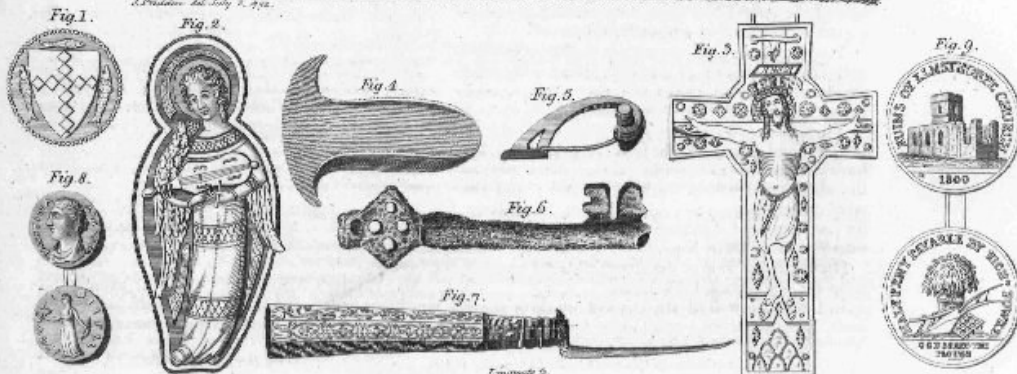
ELMSTHORPE, S. W.



ELMSTHORPE, N. E.



J. Pridden del. July 2. 1792.



To the Rev. Thomas Leman, M. A. this Plate is respectfully inscribed by his much obliged & faithful Serv.^t
J. Nichols.

Figure 7. Views of the ruined church of St Mary in 1792 by J. Pridden (Nichols 1811, Pl. XCIX).



Photo 1. Church of St Mary, Elvesthorpe, general view looking NNW.



Photo 2. Trial Pit 1 location, looking S.



Photo 3. Trial Pit 1 showing wall foundation (13) and stone spread (16) at base, looking N.



Photo 4. Trial Pit 1 showing west-facing section, looking E.



Photo 5. Interior of unroofed part of Nave, looking NNE towards Trial Pit 2.



Photo 6. Trial Pit 2 showing north wall of nave (1), looking N.



Photo 7. Structure (2) partially exposed at base of Trial Pit 2, looking S.



Photo 8. Interior of unroofed part of Nave, looking SSE towards Trial Pit 3.



Photo 9. Trial Pit 3, showing pit [12], looking E.



Photo 10. Trial Pit 3 detail of west-facing section, looking E.



Photo 11. Trial Pit 4, looking W.



Photo 12. Detail of Trial Pit 4 with grave [24] on right cutting earlier pit [26], looking W.

Appendix: The Finds

by Deborah Sawday

A1. The Finds

- A1.1 The pottery finds included a Roman Grey Ware sherd, weighing nine grams and dating from the 1st to the 2nd century A.D. from Trial Pit 1, context (29).
- A1.2 The medieval and later pottery assemblage was made up of 26 sherds, weighing 658 grams, representing 21 vessels with a vessel rim equivalent (EVEs) of 0.16, (calculated by adding together the circumference of the surviving rim sherds, where one vessel equals 1.00), and an average sherd weight of just over 29 grams for the medieval pottery.
- A1.3 Four fragments of flat roof tile, weighing 480 grams, and a fragment of ridge tile weighing 13 grams were also recorded.

A2. Methodology

- A2.1 The material was examined under a x20 binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to current guidelines (MPRG 1998, MPRG 2016) and the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999, Sawday 2009). The results are shown below (Tables 1-3).

Table 1: The medieval pottery and ceramic building material fabrics.

Fabric	Common Name/Kiln & Fabric Equivalent where known	Approx. Date Range
ST2	Stamford - fine, fabrics G B/(A) (1)	c.1050-12 th C.
PM	Potters Marston ware - Potters Marston, Leicestershire (2)	c.1100- c.1300/50+
CS	Coarse Shelly ware (includes sherds previously catalogued as LY4 – Lyveden Stanion A ware) - Northampton fabric T1/2, T2, (3) Northants CTS 330 (4)	c.1100-1400
CC1	Chilvers Coton A/Ai (6), Warwick CTS WW01 (5)	c.1250-1400
CC2	Chilvers Coton fabric C (6), Warwick CTS SQ30 (5)	c. late 13 th -1475
CC5	Chilvers Coton fabric B/Bi (6) – Warwicks CTS STR20 (5)	c.1250-1300
EA1	Earthenware 1 – Coarse Post Medieval Earthenware - Chilvers Coton/Ticknall, Derbyshire(6) (7)	c.1500-1750
EA2	Earthenware 2 – ‘Pancheon ware’, Chilvers Coton/Ticknall, Derbyshire (6) (8)	17 th C.-18 th C. +
EA7	Earthenware 7 - Slipware – Chilvers Coton etc	17 th C.+
EA10	Fine White/Earthenware/China	Modern
EA	Earthenware Unclassified	
(1) Kilmurry 1980	(5) Soden & Ratkai 1998, Ratkai 2005.	
(2) Haynes 1952, Sawday 1991	(6) Mayes & Scott 1984	
(3) McCarthy 1979	(7) Gooder 1984	
(4) Northants CTS	(8) Sawday 1989	

A3. Condition

A3.1 The pottery and the ceramic building material showed relatively little signs of abrasion, and the medieval pottery had a relatively high average sherd weight of 29.05 grams.

A4. The Ceramic Record

A4.1 The fabric codes and sources – where known – are shown in the fabric list, Table 1. Table 2 lists the medieval and later pottery totals by fabric, number, weight (grams), EVES and average sherd weight (ASW). Table 3 catalogues the pottery, ceramic building material and miscellaneous finds by context. Co-joining sherds are noted, whilst single sherds are generally counted as one vessel.

Table 2: The medieval and later pottery site totals by fabric, sherd number, weight (grams), vessel count, EVES and average sherd weight (ASW).

Fabric	No.	Gr	Vessel count	EVES	ASW
<i>Earlier Medieval/Medieval</i>					
ST2	1	6	1	0.10	
CS	6	213	4		
PM	7	176	4	0.06	
CC1	1	6	1		
CC5	3	122	3		
Sub Total	18	523	13	0.16	29.05
<i>Post Medieval</i>					
EA1	1	55	1		
EA2	1	30	1		
EA7	1	8	1		
Sub Total	3	93	3		31.0
<i>Modern</i>					
EA10	5	4	5		
Sub Total	5	4	5		
Site Totals	26	658	21	0.16	

A5. The Site Record

A5.1 The layer (29) in Trial Pit 1 produced a residual sherd of Roman Grey Ware, as well as four sherds, weighing 109 grams, of medieval pottery in 12th century Stamford ware, 13th century Potters Marston, and CC5, Chilvers Coton B ware, dating from the later 13th century.

A5.2 The backfill (11) of the pit [12] in Trial Pit 3, also produced exclusively medieval pottery; twelve sherds, weighing 387 grams, in Potters Marston, Chilvers Coton B ware and Coarse Shelly ware, the latter dating from c.1100 to c.1400, together with a fragment of 14th century flat roof tile in CC2, Chilvers Coton C ware.

- A5.3 Layer (19) in Trial Pit 4 contained a thin-walled fragment of Potters Marston, probably dating from the 12th century, and a green glazed medieval ridge tile fragment dating from the mid-13th or possibly early 14th century.
- A5.4 Two sherds of modern pottery and modern glass as well as presumably residual finds occurred in Trial Pit 2 layer (4), including a fragment of stained medieval window glass (Figure A1) and part of a medieval flat roof tile.
- A5.5 Medieval flat roof tile and post medieval and modern pottery were also recovered from Trial Pit 3, contexts (6) and (7) [8] as well as a piece of medieval window came from the former and a sherd of medieval pottery and post medieval and modern glass from the latter.



Figure A1: The stained medieval window glass.

A6. Discussion

- A6.1 Stamford, a major pottery production centre from c.850 to 1250, lies some 60 km. to the north-east, and was the most widely traded late Saxon/early medieval ware, so

its presence here is not unexpected. Similarly the sherds of Potters Marston ware are evidence of the proximity of Elmesthorpe to the village which gave its name to a major local pottery industry during the 12th and 13th centuries (Sawday 1991).

- A6.2 Another important regional centre of pottery and tile manufacture at Chilvers Coton was operating during both the medieval and post medieval periods. The generally, wheel thrown and glazed pottery in fabrics CC1, fabric CC2, Chilvers Coton A and C wares respectively (Mayes and Scott 1984), were also widely traded from the mid or later 13th century; however, the latter fabric occurring here as roof tile rather than pottery. The coarse, red bodied fabric, CC5, Chilvers Coton fabric B (*ibid.*) on the other hand, seems to have only been made during the mid or later 13th century and to have had a more local distribution pattern; and the kiln site lies only approximately 12 km to the south west, at Nuneaton. The Coarse Shelly wares are thought to be the products of kilns both known and unknown lying on the Jurassic limestone of south east Leicestershire and north east Northamptonshire, (Northamptonshire CTS).
- A6.3 Chilvers Coton and Ticknall in Derbyshire, the latter lying c.32 km to the north-west of the site, are the most likely sources of the post medieval and modern Earthenwares EA1, EA2 and EA7. Earthenware EA1 could date as early as the 16th century and EA7 from the 17th century, the remaining Earthenwares EA2 and EA10, date from the post medieval and the modern periods.

A7. Conclusions

- A7.1 The medieval and early post medieval pottery was in a range of wares typical of the region: Stamford, Potters Marston, Coarse Shelly and Chilvers Coton. The remainder of the assemblage is made up of post medieval and modern material. The relatively high average sherd weight for the medieval pottery may suggest the survival of relatively undisturbed archaeological levels in the vicinity.
- A7.2 The finds in context (29), which date from the 12th to the later 13th or possibly the early 14th century, provide possible evidence for the construction of the north wall of the nave. The pit [12] located within the nave, which was only partially excavated, and the layer (19) below the modern car park also produced finds of a similar date.
- A7.3 However it is worth noting that the ceramic building material - the flat roof tile in context [12] and the ridge tile in (19) - could both have been subject to stock-piling or re-use throughout several phases of building or refurbishment on the site, and hence do not necessarily provide a terminal date for their disuse, but rather a *terminus ante quem*.

A7.4 The documentary evidence suggests that the village was already deserted by the late 15th century, so that when Richard III stopped here on his way to the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, no accommodation could be found for him, and his officers slept in the church. Subsequently the church fell into ruins (Hoskins 1970).

Table 3: The pottery, ceramic building material and miscellaneous finds by context.

Context	Fabric	No	Gr	Vessel No	Comments
POTTERY					
TP1 (29)	GW	1	9	1	Jar rim, Roman. Everted rim, late 1 st – 2 nd C. A.D.
(29)	ST2	1	6	1	Abraded jar rim, form 4, (Kilmurry 1980), diameter 130mm, EVEs 0.10, 12 th C.
(29)	PM	2	45	1	Upright externally thickened jar rim. Patchy reduction, traces of external sooting. Similar at kiln site (Haynes 1952, fig.1.B) 13 th C. Rim diameter c.200mm, EVEs 0.06.
(29)	CC5	1	58	1	Strap jug handle triple thumbed at base. Similar thumbing found at Chilvers Coton where recorded in fabric A, (Mayes & Scott 1984).
TP2 (4)	EA10	2	20	2	One transfer printed blue under glaze, modern.
TP3 (6)	EA2	1	30	1	Abraded pancheon/wide mouthed bowl, slipped with traces of internal lead glaze.
(6)	EA7	1	8	1	Fragment of press-moulded dish, trailed slip decoration in yellow on brown. Paralleled at Chilvers Coton (<i>ibid.</i> 1984, fig.101, site 6, F36), where dated to the 17 th C.
TP3 (7)[8]	CC1	1	6	1	Body with incised/stabbed decoration under green lead glaze, paralleled at Chilvers Coton, (<i>ibid.</i> 1984, fig.105.214, Site 13, K.32a-b) where dated to the later 13 th C.
(7)	EA1	1	55	1	Oxidised version of a normally reduced (grey) ware, base with brown lead glaze on interior. Glaze runs suggest this may have been cracked during firing and was possibly a second.
(7)	EA10	2	8	2	Misc. body.
(7)	EA10	1	14	1	Bowl or dish rim, with a band of floral decoration on inner rim in grey, pink, yellow and white. Modern.
TP3 (11) [12]	PM	3	77	1	Flattish base and body, no joins but probably one pot.
(11)	PM	1	33	1	Flattish base, basal angle untrimmed, slight external sooting.

(11)	CS	3	144	1	Body – joining sherds.
(11)	CS	3	69	3	One body sooted/burnt, another flattish base sooted externally.
(11)	CC5	1	52	12	Concave basal angle, abraded, patchy reduction on exterior.
(11)	CC5	1	12	1	Concave base – sooted/burnt.
TP4 (19)	PM	1	21	1	Burnt thin walled flattish base, externally abraded (broken in two for identification purposes).
CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL					
TP2 (4)	CC2	1	140		Flat roof tile, maximum c.17mm thick – (<i>ibid.</i> 1984, fig.116, Site 10, kiln 20). 14 th C.
TP3 (6)	CC2	1	64		Fragment as above, maximum c.16mm thick.
TP3 (7) [8]	CC2	1	86		Flat roof tile, spot of green glaze on moulded edge, maximum c.17mm thick, (<i>ibid.</i> 1984, fig.116, Site 10, kiln 20). 14 th C.
TP3 (11)	CC2	1	190		Flat roof tile, maximum c.15mm thick, (<i>ibid.</i> 1984, fig.116, Site 10, kiln 20). 14 th C.
TP3 (11)	EA	1	3		fired/burnt clay.
TP4 (19)	CC1	1	13		Green glazed medieval ridge tile.
MISCELLANEOUS FINDS					
TP2 (4)	glass	1			Fragment of red stained window glass, with ?scratched figurative decoration.
(4)	glass	1			Modern bottle glass.
TP3 (6)	lead	1			Fragment of medieval lead window came.
TP3 (7)	glass	1			Thick green bottle glass, 17 th – early 18 th C.
(7)	glass	1			Bottle glass - post medieval/modern.
(7)	glass	1			Modern - window glass.

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Site/ Parish: Church of St. Mary Elmesthorpe, Leics. Accession No.: X.A40.2018 Document Ref: elmesthorpe2.docx Material: pottery, tile, window glass & misc. Site Type: church	Submitter: N. Finn Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Identification: 30.05.2018 Method of Recovery: trial pits Job Number: NF33
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