

**CHURCH OF ST. LAURENCE, NORWELL,
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
WITHIN THE CHURCHYARD**

2018

M. Hurford

**Project Code: SLC
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**Matt Hurford Historic Buildings and Archaeology Services
5 South Park Avenue
Darley Dale
Derbyshire
DE4 2FY
Email: matt@hurfordarchaeology.co.uk
Tel: 07756021295**

SUMMARY

- During 2018 Matt Hurford Historic Buildings and Archaeological Services was commissioned by Dr Elizabeth Jones on behalf of Norwell Parochial Church Council to carry out an archaeological excavation prior to the extension of a drainage gully along the north wall of the chancel at the Church of St Laurence, Norwell, Nottinghamshire.
- The objective of the archaeological work was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains that would be impacted by the proposed drainage gully extension and to present the results within a report.
- The village of Norwell lies at SK 77563 61763, around six miles to the north of Newark-on-Trent. The underlying bedrock geology is Mercia Mudstone with superficial deposits of Holme Pierrepoint sand and gravel.
- There was probably a church or chapel attached to a manor house on, or standing close to where the later moated manor house was built immediately south of the present church. A priest and church is recorded in Domesday Book in 1086. The earliest fabric in the present church probably dates to the 12th century. At this time the church is likely to have comprised a nave and low chancel. The building was subsequently expanded in the following centuries to eventually include a larger nave and chancel, a tower, north and south aisles, a north and south transept and porch. Documentary evidence and architectural features suggest that the present chancel was either built or renovated during the late 13th century. By the middle of the 19th century the chancel was in a dilapidated state resulting in its restoration by the architect Ewan Christian between 1857 and 1859.
- The excavation comprised Area 01, located against the north wall of the chancel, which measured 3m in length and up to 0.54m in width. It was up to 0.64m in depth at the east end where a sondage was excavated to investigate the depth of deposits.
- The basic stratigraphic sequence comprised topsoil above a deposit containing disarticulated skeletal remains beneath which was natural substrata. Orientated west to east and extending along the full length of Area 01 was either a former wall or foundation built of well-dressed angular pieces of skerry of up to four courses bonded with sandy clay. It was overlaid by the late 13th century chancel wall and the modern brick foundations for the low cast iron railings of an adjacent private burial plot. The feature is on a slightly different alignment to the chancel wall suggesting that it relates to an earlier structure, the broadly Romanesque appearance of the stonework indicating that it could be part of the Norman chancel which was repaired or replaced by a legacy left to the church in the will of Mr John Clarell in 1295.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was managed, and the fieldwork undertaken, by M. Hurford. Much appreciated on site co-operation was provided by Prof Michael Jones and Dr Elizabeth Jones. Monitoring was by Dr Chris Brooke, joint Archaeological Advisor to the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham. Thanks are extended to Norwell Parochial Church Council for commissioning the work.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. During 2018 Matt Hurford Historic Buildings and Archaeological Services was commissioned by Dr Elizabeth Jones on behalf of Norwell Parochial Church Council to carry out archaeological excavation prior to the extension of a drainage gully along the north wall of the chancel at the Church of St Laurence, Norwell, Nottinghamshire.

1.2. The work was carried out in accordance with faculty requirements (2017-017255) and adhered to the recommendations made by Dr Chris Brooke, the joint DAC Archaeological Advisor.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1. The objective of the archaeological work was:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains that would be impacted by the proposed drainage gully extension and to present the results within a report.

2.2. The archaeological work was undertaken to both address and comply with the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham Schedule 2017-017255 requiring excavation by a professional archaeologist.

2.3. The proposed work comprised:

- The excavation of a single trench along the north wall of the chancel at the west end.

2.4. All archaeological work was to be undertaken by M. Hurford of Matt Hurford Historic Buildings and Archaeology Services.

2.5. The recording was to result in 'the preparation of a report and ordered archive', in line with the guidelines of the CIFA Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, (Standard and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief published December 2014).

3. SITE BACKGROUND (based principally on information in Jones, M., 2013 *Norwell Church & Chapel*, Historic England *List Entry 1369970 for the Church of St. Laurence, Norwell, Nottinghamshire* and Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project, Norwell St. Laurence <http://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk/main/xresults.php?search=norwell>)

3.1. History & Fabric

3.1.1. The village of Norwell lies at SK 77563 61763, around six miles to the north of Newark-on-Trent (Figure. 1). The British Geology Survey 1:50,000 map of the area shows the underlying bedrock geology is Mercia Mudstone with superficial deposits of Holme Pierrepoint sand and gravel (<http://mapsmapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home/html>).

3.1.2. Norwell is recorded in Domesday Book in 1086 as *Nortwelle* meaning *north stream* or *spring* (Ekwall 1936, 345), a settlement of 22 villeins, 3 small holders and a single priest with 73 acres of meadow, woodland, a mill, fishery and a church (<http://opendomesday.org/place/SK7761/norwell/>). This church probably began as an Anglo-Saxon chapel attached to a manor house on, or standing close to where the later moated manor house was built immediately south of the present church. Of the original church nothing now remains. The earliest fabric, located within the present nave, probably dates to the 12th century. At this time the church is likely to have comprised a nave and low chancel. The building was subsequently expanded in the following centuries to eventually include a larger nave and chancel, a tower, north and south aisles, a north and south transept and porch.

3.1.3. The presence of a chancel in the late 13th century is attested by the will of Mr John Clarell, prebendary of Overhall (1255-1295), who left a legacy of £5 specifically intended for the repair or rebuilding of this part of the church. This money had been spent by 1301. The geometrical tracery of the east window and the trumpet stops on the north and south faces of the chancel arch are likely to date to this period. The lancet windows may also belong to c.1300. The three-light window in the south wall is probably slightly later, dating to the early 14th century. During the latter half of the 15th century or beginning of the 16th century, the church underwent a significant programme of renovation including the addition of a crenelated parapet to the chancel and its re-roofing with moulded and curved tie beams and richly moulded ribs forming a panelled ceiling. By the middle of the 19th century the chancel was in a dilapidated state resulting in its restoration by the architect Ewan Christian between 1857 and 1859. The work was generally faithful to the existing architecture with the principal alterations comprising the lowering of the walls, the removal of the parapet, the unblocking of the priest's door, the renewal of the tracery of the east window and the insertion of the present ribbed and arched timber roof.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. The excavation was carried out by a professional archaeologist. All deposits were inspected in order to identify any archaeological remains of interest, in particular those of medieval or earlier in date. These were cleaned by hand, examined and recorded.

4.2. Recording of the excavation included the position and depths of the deposits exposed, by drawing (both in section and plan where applicable) and photograph.

4.3. Prior to backfilling spoil heaps were inspected for any datable or significant archaeological artefacts.

4.4. All identifiable deposits were given unique individual four digit context numbers e.g. 0001, 0002 etc. Context numbers started at 0001.

4.5. All saved artefacts were to be given individual three letter finds codes e.g. AAA, AAB.

4.6. Disarticulated human remains found in the confines of the work were to be recorded appropriately and left on site for reburial. Advice from Dr Chris Brooke, joint Archaeological Advisor to the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham would be sought if articulated remains were present.

5. RESULTS (Figure 2-4 and Plates 1-4)

Area 01

5.1. The excavation comprised Area 01, located against to the north wall of the chancel, which measured 3m in length and up to 0.54m in width. It was up to 0.64m in depth at the east end where a sondage was excavated to investigate the depth of deposits.

5.2. The excavation of Area 01 revealed a basic stratigraphy of three deposits comprising topsoil 0001, deposit 0002 and natural substrata 0004. The topsoil 0001, which extended to a depth of 0.16m, consisted of a weak very dark brown silty clay loam. Beneath 0001 was deposit 0002, which was up to 0.44m thick and comprised firm brown sandy clay with small quantities of skerry and disarticulated human remains. The layer was probably formed either when the present chancel was built or during later renovation work during the 19th century. Firm strong brown sandy clay natural substrata was encountered below 0002 and 0003.

5.3. Orientated west to east and extending along the full length of Area 01 was 0003, either a former wall or foundation. It was built of well-dressed angular pieces of skerry of up to four courses, with a single fragmentary piece of tile present, bonded with firm strong brown sandy clay. It was overlaid by the chancel wall and the modern brick foundations for the low cast iron railings of the private burial plot. Of particular note the feature is on a slightly different alignment to the chancel wall.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. The difference in alignment between the stonework 0003 and the chancel wall suggests that rather than being the foundation for the present chancel it is associated with an earlier structure. As the masonry has a broadly Romanesque appearance and underlies the late 13th century chancel wall it seems likely that 0003 relates the Norman chancel, the north wall of which, if not the entire chancel, was replaced, and not repaired, by the legacy of £5 left in the will of Mr John Clarell in 1295.

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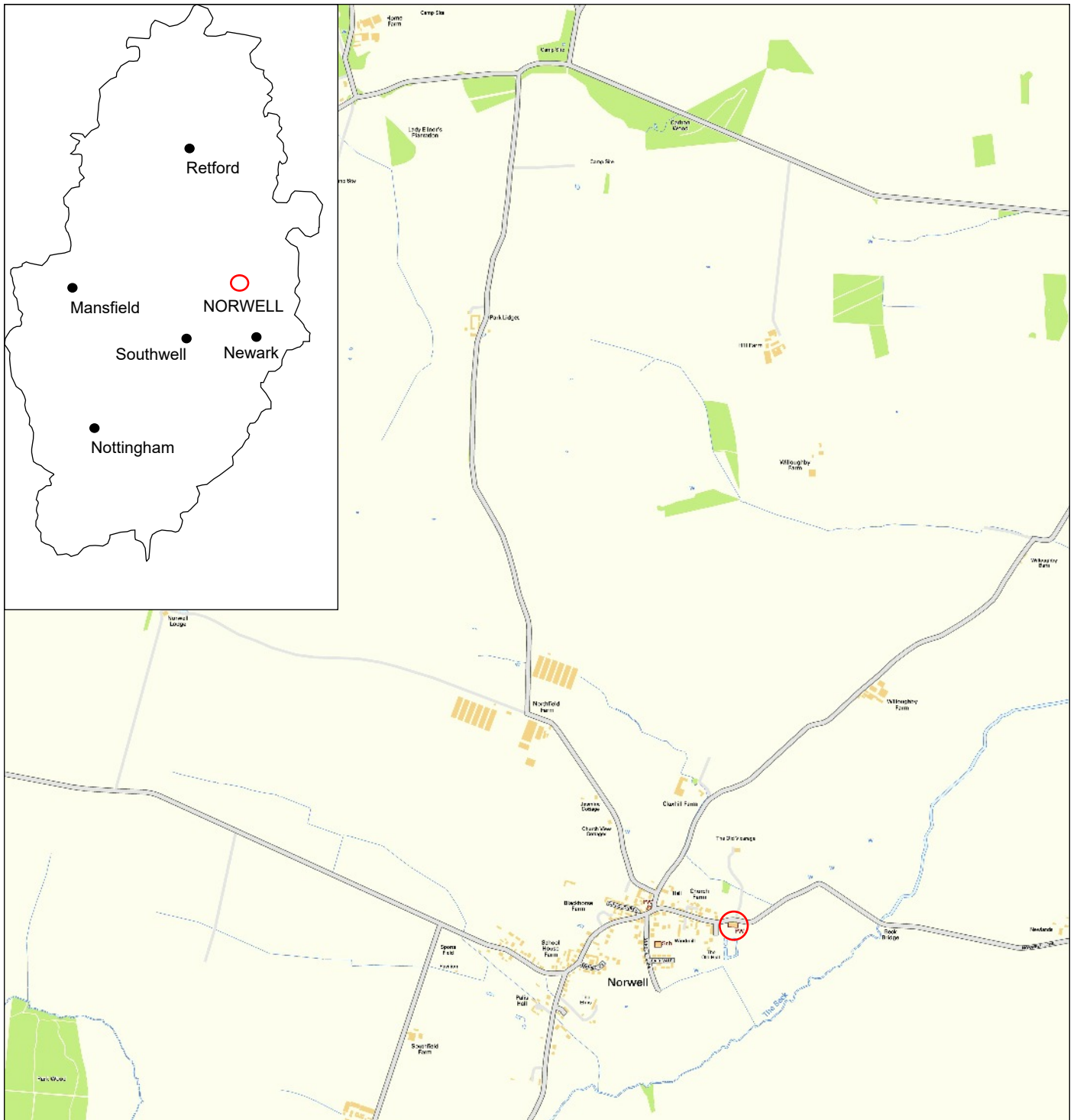
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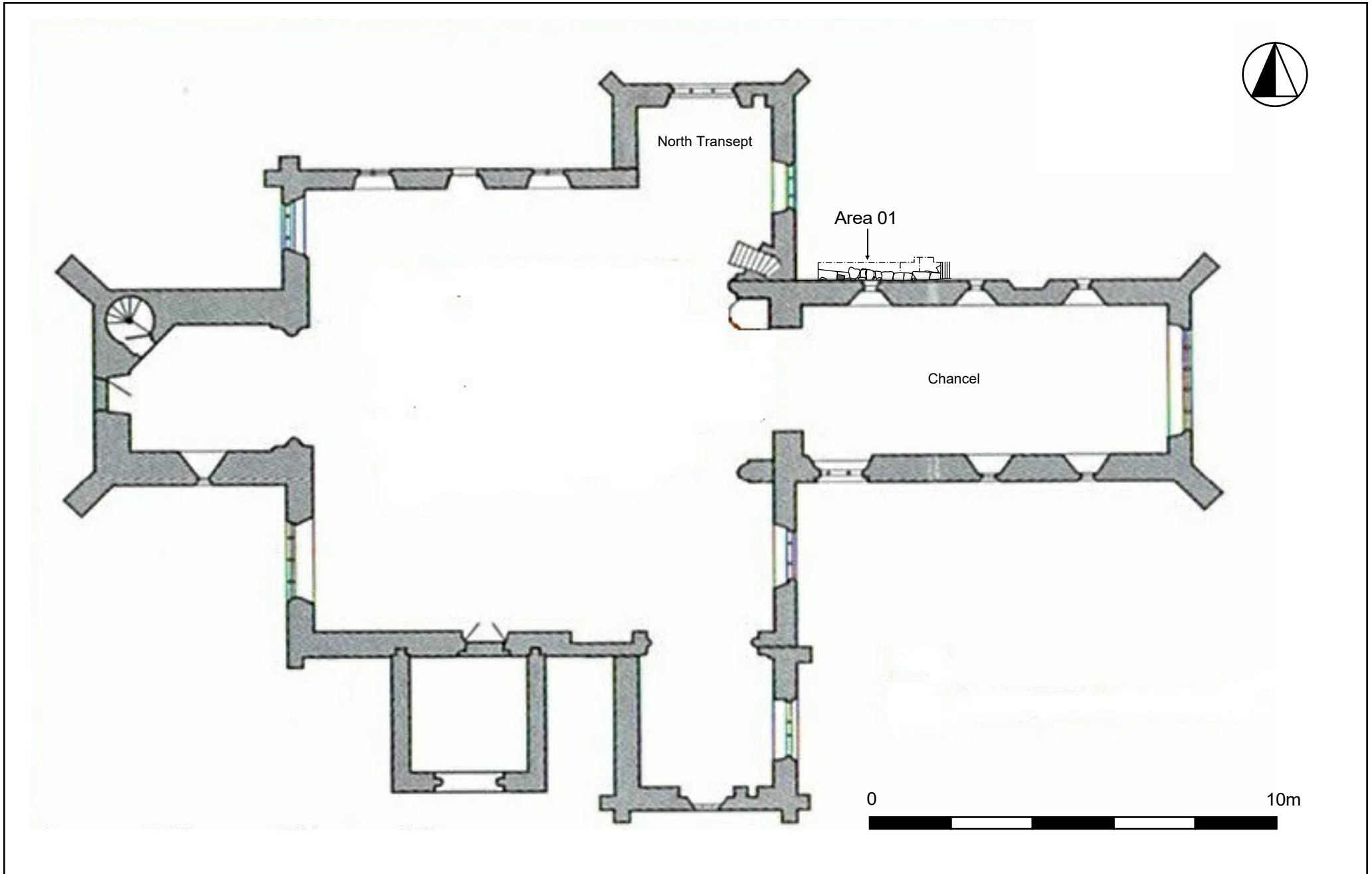
Historic England *List Entry 1369970 for the Church of St. Laurence, Norwell, Nottinghamshire*

Jones, M., 2013 *Norwell Church and Chapel*

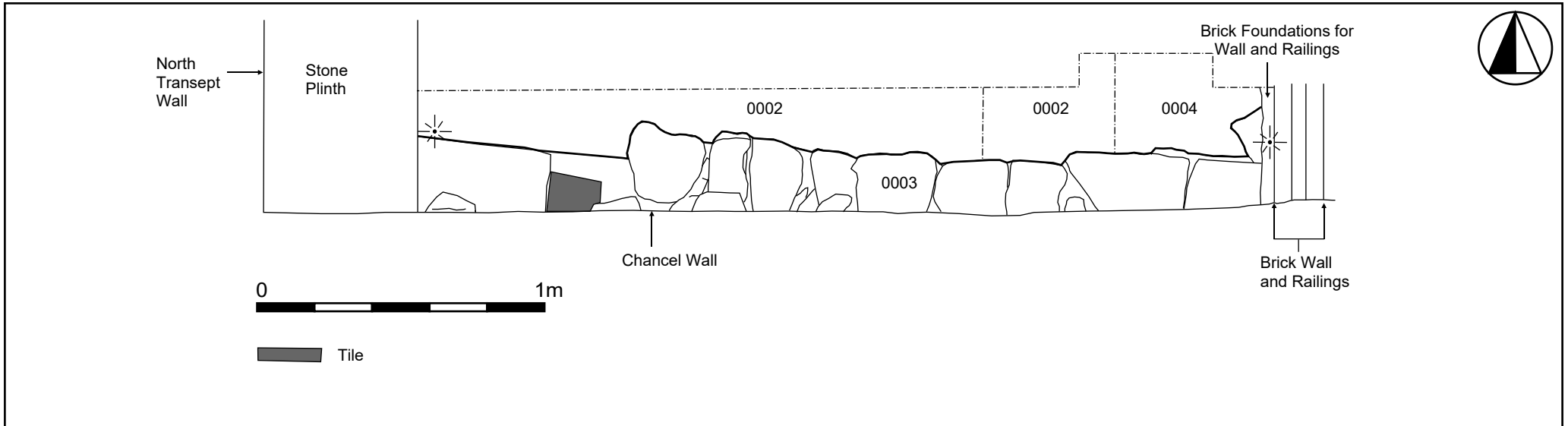
Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project, Norwell St. Laurence. Accessible at <http://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk/main/xresults.php?search=norwell>. [Accessed 8th April 2018]



SLC Church of St. Laurence, Norwell, Nottinghamshire.
Figure 1: Site location. Principal map scale 1:20,000. Insert not to scale.
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2018



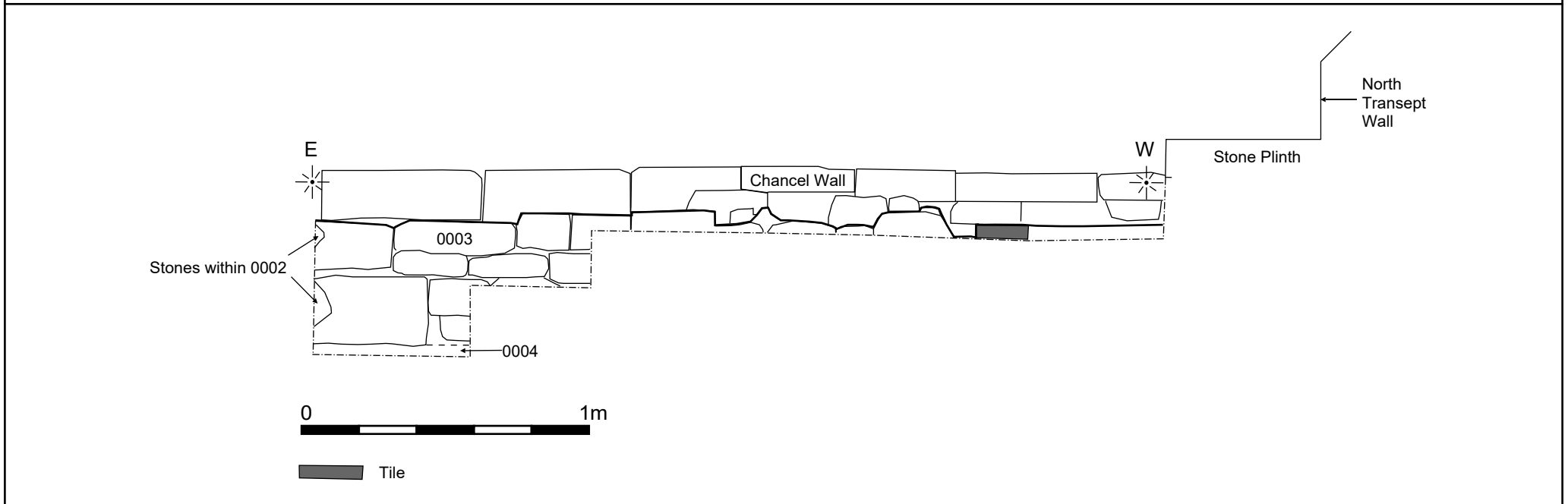
SLC Church of St. Laurence, Norwell, Nottinghamshire.
Figure 2: Area 01 Location plan (based on an illustration in Jones 2013, 7).
Scale 1:125 at A4.



SLC Church of St. Laurence, Norwell, Nottinghamshire.

Figure 3: Area 01 Post excavation plan.

Scale: 1:20 at A4



SLC Church of St. Laurence, Norwell, Nottinghamshire.

Figure 4: Area 01 North facing section.

Scale: 1:20 at A4



Plate 1: Area 01 with 0003 exposed, viewed from the east looking west.

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Plate 4: Detail of 0003 in the sondage at the east end of Area 01, viewed looking south.

Appendix 1 Context Summary

Context	Area	Description	Interpretation
0001	01	0.16m thick extends across whole trench, weak 7.5 YR 2.5/2 very dark brown silty clay, less than 1% angular pieces of limestone up to 50mm x 70mm x 20mm in size, <1% rounded pebbles generally towards the base of the deposit up to 80mm x 60mm x 30mm. Overlays 0002 and 0003.	Topsoil
0002	01	0.44m thick extends across whole site, firm 7.5YR 5/4 brown sandy clay, <1% disarticulated skeletal material, 5% rounded pebbles up to 100mm x 70mm x 50mm, 5% angular pieces of skerry up to 170mm x 130mm x 100mm. Overlays stone feature 0003 and natural substrata 0004	Redeposited material – grave earth combined with material from the building/rebuilding of the chancel
0003	01	Well-dressed angular pieces of skerry of up to four courses with a single fragmentary piece of tile 143mm in width and 380mm thick 5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, bonded with firm 7.5YR 5/6 strong brown sandy clay. Skerry pieces up to 0.43m in length and 0.22m thick. The feature extended across the entire 3m of Area 01 and was 0.42m in depth. It was overlaid by the medieval chancel wall and the modern brick foundations for the low cast iron railings. The feature is orientated west to east like the chancel wall though it is aligned slightly differently.	Foundation or wall pre-dating the present chancel wall
0004	01	Firm 7.5YR 5/6 strong brown sandy clay	Natural substrata