

YORK



ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
TRUST

**PIKEING WELL,  
NEW WALK,  
YORK**

**REPORT ON AN  
HISTORICAL STUDY AND  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION**



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# **PIKEING WELL, NEW WALK TERRACE, YORK**

## **REPORT ON AN HISTORICAL STUDY AND AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- ABSTRACT
1. INTRODUCTION
  2. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY
  3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
  4. RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
  5. LIST OF SOURCES
  6. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

### **List of Illustrations**

- |             |   |           |           |
|-------------|---|-----------|-----------|
| Figure 1    | Site Location Plan                              |           |           |
| Figure 2    | RCHME illustration of Pikeing Well              |           |           |
| Figure 3    | Francis Drakes illustration of New Walk 1735    |           |           |
| Figure 4    | Nathaniel Drakes illustration of New Walk 1756  |           |           |
| Figure 5    | Extract of 1852 Ordnance Survey Map             |           |           |
| Figure 6    | Fulford Grange Sale map 1858                    |           |           |
| Figure 7a-c | Elevations and plans by Thomas Pickersgill 1858 |           |           |
| Figure 8    | Location of the excavated trenches              |           |           |
| Figure 9    | Plan of context 1005                            | Figure 10 | Section 1 |
| Figure 11   | Section 2                                       | Figure 12 | Section 3 |
| Figure 13   | Photograph of context 1004 looking east         |           |           |
| Figure 14   | Photograph of context 1005 looking west         |           |           |
| Figure 15   | Photograph of context 1005 looking east         |           |           |
| Figure 16   | Photograph of context 2012 looking east         |           |           |
| Figure 17   | Photograph of context 2012 looking east         |           |           |

## **ABSTRACT**

*In July 1999 York Archaeological Trust undertook an historical desk-top study and an archaeological evaluation of Pikeing Well, New Walk, York on behalf of the York Millennium Bridge Trust. The desk-top study identified the existence of a number of wells in the area of New Walk in the Georgian period, of which Pikeing Well was one. It demonstrated that although the original well head structure was a commission of the York architect John Carr, this had been rebuilt in 1858 by one of his successors, Thomas Pickersgill. A second structure visible on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map was identified as an "open receiver" well of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.*

*The archaeological trenches identified the flagged floor of Pikeing Well to be in good condition and a centrally placed stone lined well pool which still filled with water. The "open receiver" well was also located and found to have been back-filled with its original stonework. An iron rail gate found sealing the well pool was probably not an original feature but simply a device to make the well safe after its closure by the Ministry of Health in 1929.*

### **1. Introduction**

In July 1999 an historical desk-top study was undertaken by York Archaeological Trust in conjunction with small scale archaeological excavations in advance of works on New Walk and at Pikeing Well associated with the construction of the York Millennium Bridge for the York Millennium Bridge Trust Limited.

Pikeing Well is situated on the east side of New Walk, south of the Blue Bridge across the River Foss and at the west end of Hartoft Street (NGR SE 6058 5066)(Figure 1). It lay just outside the city boundary in the parish of Fulford until local government reorganisation in 1996 and is on the east bank of the River Ouse, only a few metres from the river. The well house is known to have been an early commission of the York architect John Carr in which he designed a structure to house an existing local spring.

### **2. Aims and Methodology**

The aim of the desk-top survey was to better establish the archaeological and historical background to Pikeing Well and to identify the function of an apparently associated crescent shaped structure to the west which was visible on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of York surveyed in 1852.

The excavation of a trench within the Pikeing Well building aimed to locate the original floor level of the building and to assess its state of preservation. A second excavated trench aimed to locate the crescent shaped structure and again assess the state of preservation. The excavations followed standard archaeological practice.

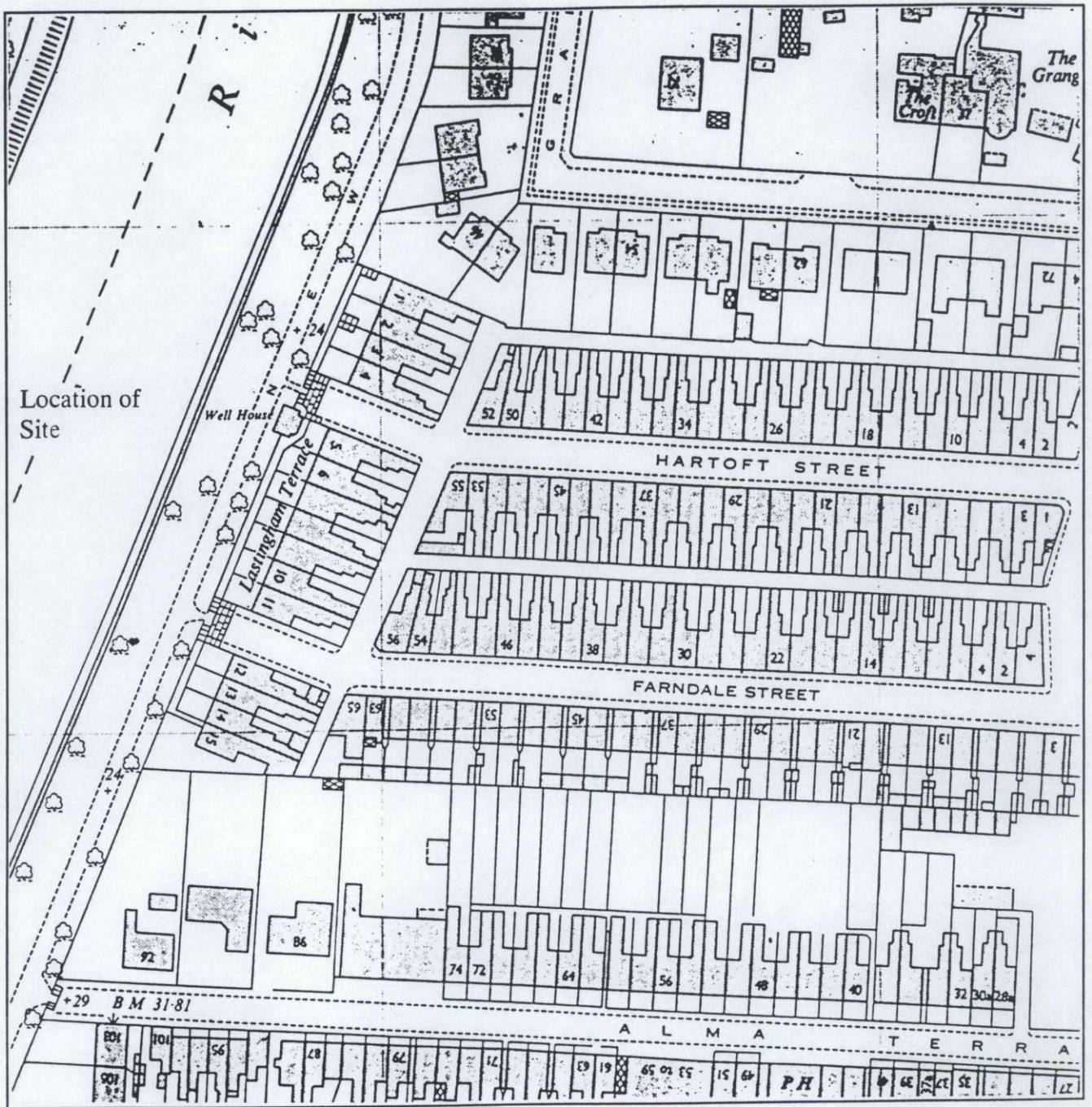


Figure 1. Site Location

Reproduced under licence number AL854123 from the 1963 Ordnance Survey 1:1250 scale map with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.  
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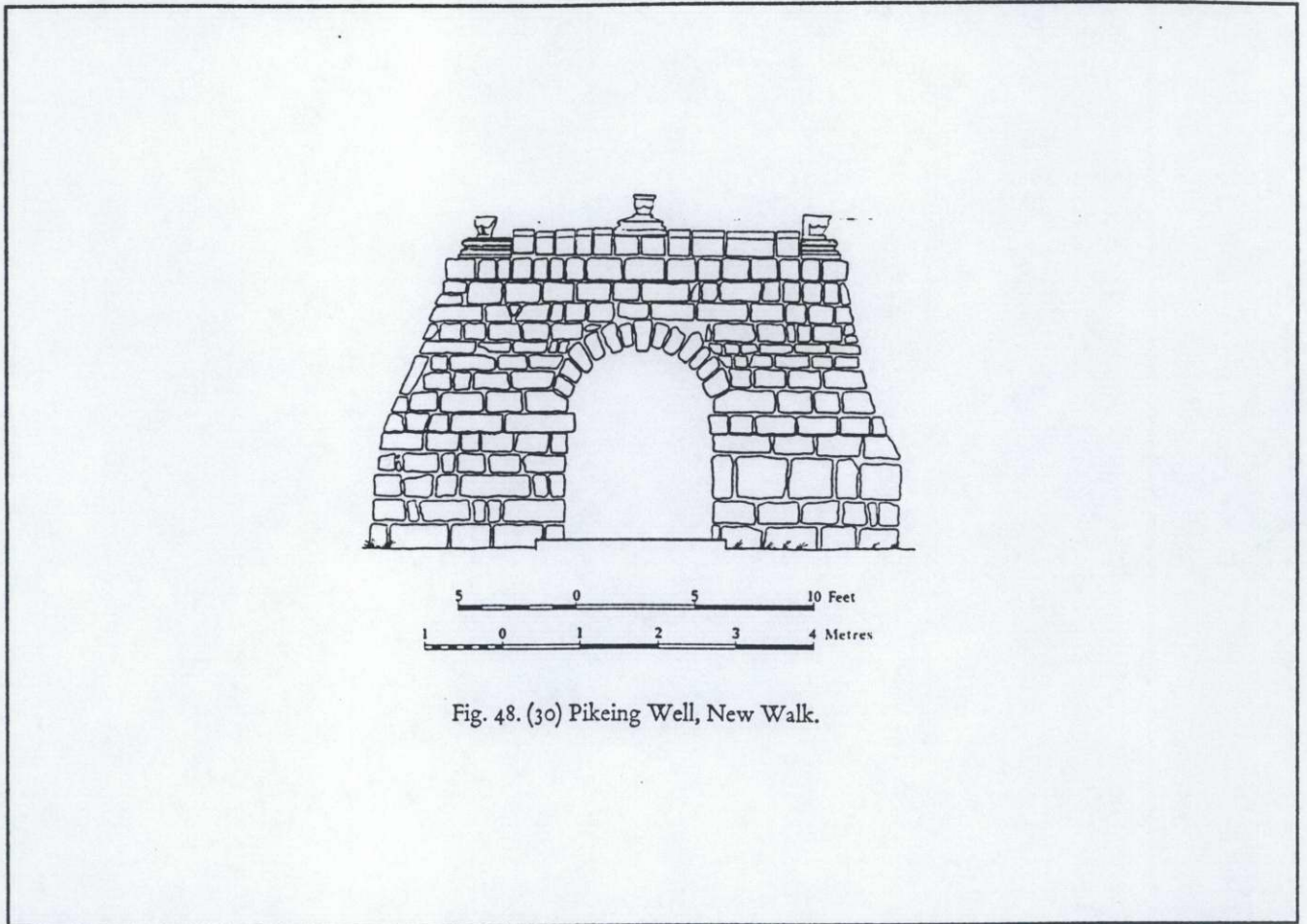


Fig. 48. (30) Pikeing Well, New Walk.

**Figure 2. Illustration of Pikeing Well**

Reproduced from R.C.H.M.E 'City of York' Volume IV 1975

### **3. Historical Background**

#### **3.1 New Walk**

Several historians of York mention Pikeing Well (also known as Lady Well and Spring Well) in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as one of the Georgian attractions of the city. It is associated with the promenade called New Walk which was laid out in 1732-4 for public use and entertainment. Initially the walk was named 'The Long Walk' but it became better known as 'New Walk' by which name it was popularly called.

The original Walk was laid out in the area of St. George's Close between Clifford's Tower and the River Ouse from the Friargate postern to the confluence of the rivers Ouse and Foss. Traditionally, in this close, all citizens of York have the right and privilege to walk, shoot with bows and arrows and dry linen according to ancient leases of corporation (Ward 1785, 187). Under the direction of Mr John Marsden, apothecary, the riverbank was straightened and piled, and a terrace 480 yards long and 8 feet wide was constructed on the riverside planted with one row of trees. A gateway was broken through the city wall and a handsome iron palisade gate was erected with an inscription stating that it was opened during the mayoralty of Jonas Thompson. It is this walk which is depicted in Drake's illustration of 1735 (Figure 3).

A suggestion was made by Knight that this walk had existed as early as 1547 when work to the New Werk was mentioned as in the River Ouse (Knight 1944, 538ff). However, this association seems dubious as 'werk' in place names is generally taken to mean 'works' or 'buildings' and could have been anywhere along the river's course through York as well as inferring that it actually referred to something in the river itself.

The walk proved so popular that in 1738 it was decided to extend it and a bridge was built across the River Foss at the cost of £110 7s. This was a wooden drawbridge painted blue – hence its name – the 'Blue Bridge', a name which it has retained despite successive rebuilding. In 1739 the width of the walk was increased from 8 to 28 feet and its length was extended by 2-300 yards south of the Blue Bridge. A double row of trees was planted in 1740 when 340 elms were ordered from John Telford (YCA, Chamberlains Accounts, Expenses necessary). In Cossin's amended plan of York in 1748 an avenue of trees was added to his original map and in Jefferey's map of 1775 a line of trees is clearly seen extending south of the River Foss and terminating halfway towards St. Oswalds Church in Fulford. It is this period which is portrayed in the painting by Nathan Drake of c.1756 which shows fashionable ladies and gentlemen promenading along New Walk (Figure 4).

More trees and plants were ordered throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and in 1818 Hargrove describes the walk as being interspersed with garden seats at convenient distances whilst the full regimental band from the neighbouring barracks provided entertainment. The walk itself was also being constantly repaired. It was much improved in 1782 when part of the church of All Saints, Pavement was demolished and material from this was incorporated in the base of the gravel walk. Consternation was caused in 1816 when the Council proposed to sell 41 of the largest elm trees, a petition was presented and the trees remained, these were augmented in 1824 when 820 new trees of various species were ordered and planted (Hargrove 1818, 524-5).

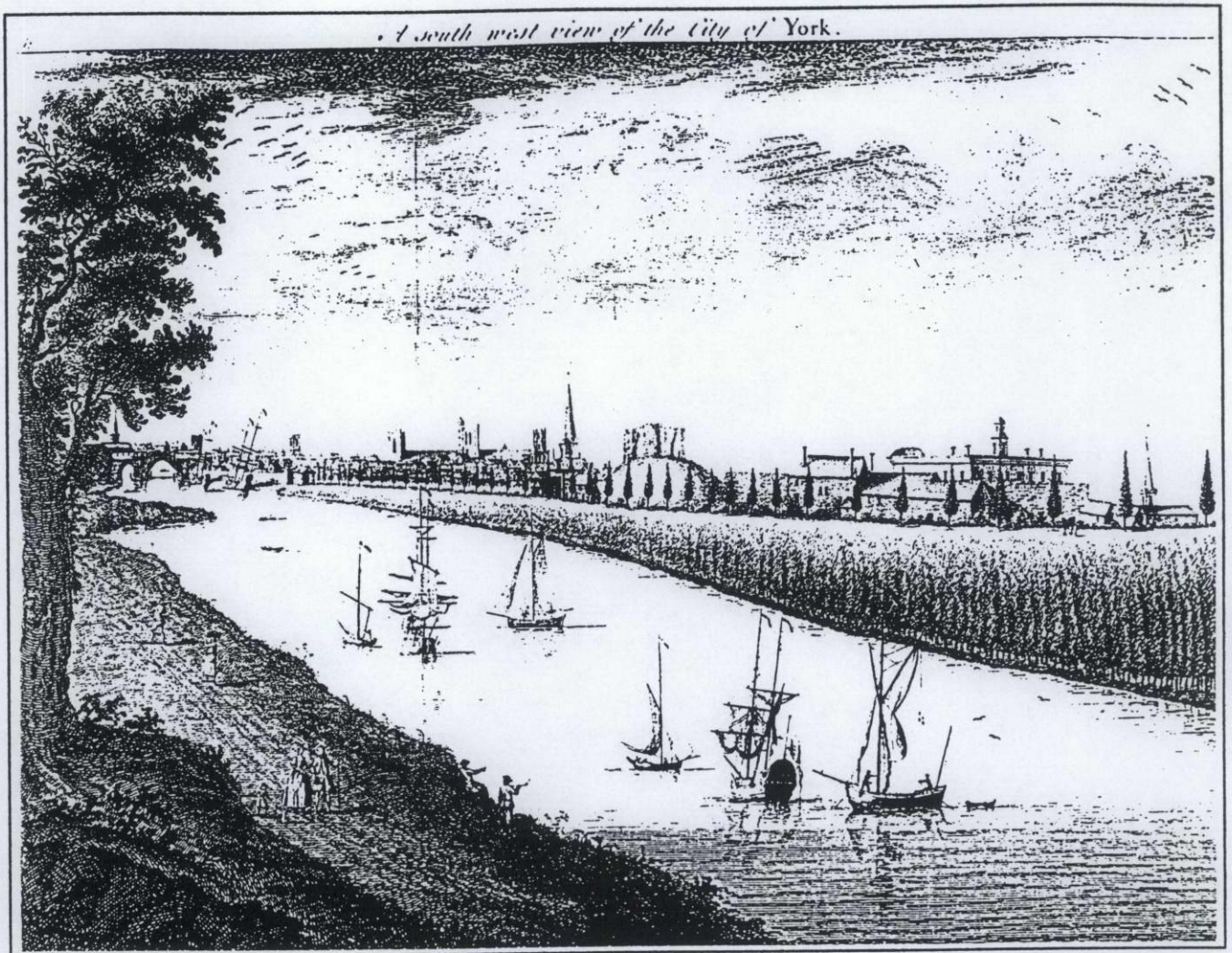


Figure 3. Francis Drake's illustration of New Walk 1736



Figure 4. Nathaniel Drake's painting of New Walk 1756

### 3.2 Pikeing Well

The name 'Pikeing' is difficult to derive. Unfortunately in the survey by the English Place Name Society it is not mentioned, but in normal placename analysis it would have been accepted that 'well' comes from OE *welle*, 'spring'; 'ing' coming from OSc *eng*, 'meadow' and 'Pike' from OE *pic*, normally meaning a pointed hill but also from the fish pike. This makes some sense as a spring containing pike, but the land is not a natural water meadow, nor does the water ever seem to have flowed freely.

The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that two further derivations are possible. As a noun OE *piic*, *pic* became later ME *pik*, *pyke*, *pike*; the earliest sense of this is a pointed digging tool, but it soon became applied to any tool or instrument with a pointed end (this is probably the derivation for the hill and fish names as having pointed features). The second use is as a verb to *pikk*, or *pykke*; this means to fix, dig, stick or plant in the ground as in making a palisade, it widened its use as a verb to include 'to pick' and 'to throw'. Either of these could have applied to Pikeing Well, at the same time as wells such as this were popular turnpikes were on the increase, these originally derived their name from the stakes which obstructed the way until a fee had been paid and were associated with a paying entrance. It is possible that this same connotation was applied either to the well as a fenced feature or as the paying well it became. However, as it was given this name before the well house was mooted in 1749 its verb use as a dug feature would also be appropriate. There is no recorded early use of the word and it seems to belong mainly to 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Towards the end of the southern extension of New Walk the land adjacent to the riverbank rises and several springs can be found in the forms of wells. Whilst general descriptions refer to a spring it is unclear whether the reference is to Pikeing Well or to Lady Well (see below), some sources give one name whilst others give the other. The well was thought at this time to have medicinal properties and drinking its waters was a fashionable pastime. However, it seems that some went further than drinking and in 1742 a regulation was passed forbidding persons to bathe naked in the river beside the walk (YC House Book 43, p75).

As early as 1749 the corporation appointed a committee to look into the building of '*an hansom fountain at Pikeing Well and a ha-ha along Foulforth Field*'. According to Bridden they purchased the land from John Taylor, Lord of the Manor of Fulford at that date expressly to house 'an ornamental pikeing well' (Bridden 1975). However, the corporation minutes state that it was 'by the leave of Mr Taylor' and the expense was estimated at about 20 guineas (YCA B43/318). The latter was probably the case as there is no indication that the corporation owned the well until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some kind of work seems to have been initiated shortly thereafter, although precisely what is not clear. In January 1751 15s was paid for 5 loads of clay carried to Pikeing Well (YCA CB 38 p.15b).

It is evident, however, that nothing much was done immediately for in April 1752 the corporation ordered 'that the wardens of Walmgate Ward, Aldermen, Mayor and Mr Mathers have leave to lay out any sum not exceeding £50 for the ornamenting of Pikeing Well' (YCA B43/389). By July the same year this was 'thought insufficient' and £88 13s was to be laid out. The commissionee was mentioned now for the first time as John Carr who had applied for his freedom of the city, it was agreed that £25 should be deducted from the sum for this purpose (YCA B43/394).

Carr was a journeyman mason who worked with his father, he had previously designed Harewood Stables and Skelton Hall with his father whom he also seems to have assisted in his role as Surveyor of Bridges for Northern England. The commission for Pikeing Well seems to have been his first lone project and this is the earliest date that he is known in York. After this he went on to design the new grandstand at Knavesmire in 1754 and 80 country houses in Yorkshire are attributed to him as well as several public buildings in York.

In the commission for Pikeing Well Carr undertook to enclose the well with an ornamental building. It seems however, that once again the work was not immediately executed, indeed perhaps other tenders were sought. In June 1753 the council ordered that a 'Mr Mitley have 3 guineas allowed him for taking the situation of the spring at Pikeing Well and drawing several plans for erecting a grotto over the same'. The vouchers for his payment in August exist but there seem to be no surviving plans in the Corporation archives (YCA B43/417, CB38 p.13 1753-4). However, it seems to have been Carr's design which was actually constructed. In December 1756 the corporation ordered that the money due to him for the building at Pikeing Well be paid (YCA B44/18) and in 1757 he was admitted to the freedom of the city when he is described as 'stonecutter'.

The corporation maintained the well and seem to have regulated its opening, it is possible that the Nathan Drake painting c.1756 mentioned above (Figure 4) portrays the gatekeeper. In a gap in the hedge in the foreground is a female attendant holding a large key and a box suggesting that she was a gatekeeper taking entrance fees. In 1760 William Wood was to be paid 2 guineas a year for keeping clear and opening and shutting up the well (YCA B44/97). It may have been him or his successor who was described by Hargrove in 1818 when he says the water was drunk by many persons and was much used as eye water. The building was known as the Well House and Hargrove described it as in imitation of a ruin and '*within it a remarkably fine spring of clear water*'.

By 1831 the area seems to have declined slightly in status, the Blue Bridge was dilapidated and dangerous and there are references to 'fallen women' frequenting the area and 'a set of blackguards congregating on New Walk on Sunday mornings for dog fighting'. Also the practice of naked bathing from the Walk seems to have continued as bathing was advised to be stopped as 'it renders walking there, for ladies, extremely unpleasant' (Yorkshire Gazette 1831). The eight original houses of New Walk Terrace c.1825 a little to the north of the well are said to have been designed as accommodation for mistresses of the cavalymen in the nearby barracks (1796), and seem to have fuelled references to unsocial behaviour in the area (Thallon 1998).

However, by 1837 Fishergate House was built and the area between was gradually infilled with exclusive suburban villa houses in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. This seems to have resurrected the area and repair of various parts of New Walk appear to have taken place at the same time. In 1863 a stretch of riverbank from New Walk Terrace to the Well House was piled with oak posts (YCA BC 7/2 p427), the old hedged boundary which had been replaced by brick walls was in bad repair with bulges and subsidence caused by old springs and in 1858 extensive renovations described as 're-erection' were made to the well house, supervised by Thomas Pickersgill. It seems that the well house originally built by Carr was renovated by his successor as Pickersgill belonged to the architectural practice founded by Carr.

These renovations are described in the minute books of the Ouse Navigation Company which was responsible for maintenance of the riverbank. In September 1857 surveyors were asked to inspect the Well House, the repairs reported were to be done as soon as possible. In October 1857 Mr Pickersgill produced plans for the re-erection of the Well House on the New Walk estimating about £32 cost (Figs. 7a, 7b and 7c). A plan for fencing in the outer well was submitted but held over until spring although permission to fell an Elm tree which was injuring the adjacent building was to go ahead. In May 1858 a piece of adjacent land was bought for additional foundations and the surveyor was to proceed with both the re-erection of the well house and the fencing in of the outer well which was to have steps were provided. This must have been the outer well described by Hargrove in 1818 and seen on the map of 1852 (see below). In July 1858 Mr Pickersgill produced plans of the well house and the well and gave estimates for four masons and six smiths for the work. By October the work seems to have been in its finishing stages as the Well House floor was to be newly flagged and the walk outside re-gravelled, vouchers exist for payment to two masons and one smith (YCA Ouse Navigation Minute Book 1857-8). The plans and elevations from these renovations exist in York City Archives as PH81/1430-2. The Borthwick Institute have checked their records of the architects company to which Carr/Pickersgill belonged but can find no trace of any architectural records.

Whether or not the land was being formally leased at this stage is not clear because it seems to have remained in the ownership of the lords of the manor of Fulford. The original plans were 'by leave of Mr Taylor' who was lord then, and a map relating to c.1758-68 as part of the enclosure of Fulford shows it must have been within the large northern area owned by Taylor whose northern boundary was that of the parish. The 1769 Enclosure Act seems not to have included this land and it is possible it had already been enclosed. This land was later divided but the greater area was part of the Fulford Grange estate until its sale in 1894. Fulford Grange had been built sometime in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and was the home of John Maude, a tea dealer in the 1790's. Part of its land included open land, 'formerly part of Ladywell Close' (RCHM, 1975; Wilson 1996). This suggests that it was built on enclosed land named after the nearby Well. In 1868 the Pikeing Well was known to have formed part of the Fulford Grange estate when it was sold as it also did in 1894. A map of the later sale particulars shows both the well house and the outer well and describes 'The Famous New Walk Well' as part of the estate. When the estate was dispersed in 1899 the well was released to the City of York. In 1929 the Ministry of Health cut off the water supply to the well as it was unfit for drinking, the spring apparently draining through the extended York cemetery (Wilson 1996). From this time onwards the well has been neglected.

The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments described the building in 1975 as a decorative well-head feature of simple rectangular structure with a round-headed doorway facing the river, the coping over this side incorporated re-used stones and three 12<sup>th</sup> century capitals as finials. These are shown in the accompanying Commission drawing as volute capitals. Only the central one remains at present although local legend relates the others to be in the river nearby.

### **3.3 Other water features nearby**

The spring line which feeds the well seems to bring forth water at several points along the riverbank between the River Ouse/Foss confluence and St Oswalds Church, Fulford.

In 1967 (7 October) the Yorkshire Evening Press describes Pikeing Well, Lady Well and Spring Well as alternative names for Pikeing Well. In fact it seems likely that they may all have been different wells or that terminology became confused after the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century when only Pikeing Well survived.

### **3.3.1. Lady Well**

Lady Well was in fact a separate well just to the north of Pikeing Well, between it and Blue Bridge. It seems to have been one and the same as Hawkswell which was described as on the boundary of York in 1413 and in subsequent boundary descriptions between York and Fulford. In c.1758 the boundary of Fulford's obligations for the surface of the road from Fulford to York ended at 'a building called Lady Well House' (YCA Accession 581). In 1715, when Lady Robinson was complaining about coal transport costs, she mentioned that there were threats to land the coal at Lady Well and cart it onwards into York, as if it was the York boundary (Kaner 1989, 12). This boundary was the same on the 1841 map of York and is shown passing directly through the building described on the 1852 map as a Bath House. It seems that some histories of York have confused the Lady Well with Pikeing Well. In 1818 Hargrove was quite clear that there were two separate buildings connected with water and he describes the bath-house as a cold bath for immersion bathing with a dressing-room each for ladies and gentlemen, charging 3d for one towel or 6d for two. There are no references to Pikeing Well as having been used for bathing, although it is not impossible. It seems probable that references earlier in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to medicinal bathing probably refer to Lady Well. The Bath House at Lady Well was certainly built by 1749 and possibly earlier. In 1742 a Lady Well house was advertised to let in the Yorkshire Courant, and by 1749 'the cold baths at Lady Well' were 'now open for the summer season' (Thallon 1997).

It seems that the fashionable habit of taking spa waters may have been seen as a potentially lucrative business. Lady Well was privately owned and managed and was successfully open by 1749. It was at much the same time that the well house over the Pikeing Well was mooted by the City Council, although they seem to have taken a little longer to get into operation. It is evident from other references that the cold baths already existed at the beginning of the century (see below). This well may be the little building seen in the distance near the bend in the river in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century view of showing Clifford's Tower from the north-east, and the small building seen on the rise beyond the trees in Drake's painting of 1756. When the Bath House disappeared is uncertain, it existed in 1852 but may have disappeared over the next decade when the houses between Fishergate House and New Walk were erected. Carr's well house thus seems to have been an addition to already existing facilities.

Because of the confusion between Lady Well and Pikeing Well some references formerly associated with Pikeing Well may actually apply to the bath house. In 1843 an analysis of a variety of well-waters was undertaken by J. Spence, who compared his work with a study by Dr White in 1790. Dr White had pronounced the Lady Well as entirely free from the selenites (sulphates of lime) which permeated the other wells in York. Spence found that Lady Well did in fact contain them, although to a lesser extent than the other wells. Both declared Lady Well as the softest water in York after the River Ouse and the cleanest to drink. However, it now seems apparent now that this was not a reference to Pikeing Well as has been previously thought.

### **3.3.2 Well in front of Pikeing Well**

In 1818 it was said that an 'open receiver' was situated in front of the well which was visited every morning for medicinal purposes when the well was not open. This is probably the crescent shaped feature shown on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map which lies between the well house and the river on the opposite side of New Walk (Figure 5). It was supplied with steps and ironwork fencing in 1858 (see above) and the 1894 map of Fulford Grange shows a much clearer and apparently wider opening than that of 1852 (Figure 6).

### **3.3.3 Other wells**

On the 1852 map another well is shown close by, to the north of a little wood which lies adjacent to the well house but nothing more is known of this well.

In addition to this there was yet another well to the south. This was somewhere closer to St Oswalds Church in Fulford and lay at the end of New Walk. It was a reservoir seemingly constructed to receive water from another spring. Its early history is obscure but it is probably the wellhouse belonging to John Taylor, Lord of the Manor of Fulford when the survey of 1759 was carried out for the 1769 Enclosure Act. If so it is probably the same 'Well House in Ings' owned by the Taylors in 1743 (YCA Accession 581). This was repaired in 1832 and was provided with a lions head to disgorge water. It was probably the bath at the end of the Walk described as being in a bad condition in 1853 because its water had been cut off, it is not shown on the 1852 map.

## **3.4 Earlier history**

In 1877 Davies described the well as 'a spring of beautiful water of the ancient name Pikeing Well' and it was also described as this when the well house was first discussed in 1749. It is clear from these accounts that the spring already existed by then. In 1714 a doctor recommended to Lady Mary Middlethorpe that her sickly son should go to a cold bath in Fulford (Kaner 1989, 12). The reference is ambiguous, it could mean that there were several to choose from or it could be that he was recommending one so well known that there was no need to name it. Lady Well (by that name) was known as early as 1715 (see above). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century references to Spring Well also occurred, it is not always clear, however, whether this referred to Lady Well or to Pikeing Well. Unfortunately most of the earlier references seem to be to Lady Well, perhaps because this was commercially established at an earlier date, although there are general references to wells in the area.

To establish its ownership and use as a well before the 18<sup>th</sup> century is more difficult. The well is situated in the northern part of the parish of Fulford, but this parish is a 19<sup>th</sup> century amalgamation of the parishes of Gate Fulford and Water Fulford. The northern area belonged to the manor and parish of Gate Fulford and probably lay in the same area called Fulford Field that Lady Well had when the sale of land for the well-house was made in 1749. If Taylor already had a well closer to his manor house (see reference in 'Other Wells') he may have been content for this one, at the northern extremity of his property, to go, just as he allowed the corporation to have Pikeing Well. The sale was made by the owner of the manor of Fulford, John Taylor, whose family had owned the manor since 1653. An entry in the Fulford Terrier in 1702 states the 'pikell' was rented by the Lord

Mayor of York, whether this was a reference to the spring is not clear as at this time the word may also have referred to a turnpike.

This same land had presumably been included in the manor since 1539 when it was seized by the Crown and later sold. It was seized at the Dissolution as a possession of St. Mary's Abbey who had owned it since c.1080 when it was given to them by Stephen, son of Alan of Brittany who had received it from William the Conqueror. It is probable that the name 'Lady Well' may derive from the long period of St. Mary's ownership.

In 1516 during a stay of Queen Margaret of Scotland at St. Mary's Abbey it is recorded that she went by water to 'Pike Garth' where she was entertained by the High Sheriff of Yorkshire. It is possible that this may be the area of the well which would have been easily accessible by water.

Several early charters and perambulations set Hawkswell on the southern bounds of the City near the river. As seen above this is probably one and the same as Ladywell and it is probable that any wells south of this go unmentioned because they were not within the city bounds and there are few documents for Fulford.

Ward describes a document of 1 Henry V (1413) in which the bounds of the city of York are described. These finish with the boundary by Fulford '*from the Greendykes and the gallows of St. Leonards, thence to the wooden cross in the way which leads to Fulford against Algarthsyke and so extending as far as a spring called Hawkeswell directly to the water of the Ouse where the citizens of York have common of pasture*'. (Ward 1794)

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century there was a dispute over land in the north of the parish which must have included the land containing the well. This dispute was over land rights, the City of York disputed with St. Mary's that they had rights of pasture. This was eventually settled in 1484 and the bounds were defined. In this definition after '*from Greendykes to the south end of Siwardhowfield by dyke to the Ox Pasture then west to the Fulford road*', the setting of a cross on the Fulford road is described before '*going north to stone bridge on the causeway from Fulford to Fishergate butting on Kingsdyk to the waters of the Ouse*'. This cross is subsequently mentioned in other bounds which also mention wells and which follow the approximate wording and bounds of the former charter. It is thought to be represented by the remains of the Fulford Cross which stands on Fulford Road opposite the Imphal Barracks (RCHM, 1975). However, if so, the cross must have been moved at some time as it is no longer on a boundary and neither is it in a direct line to the river.

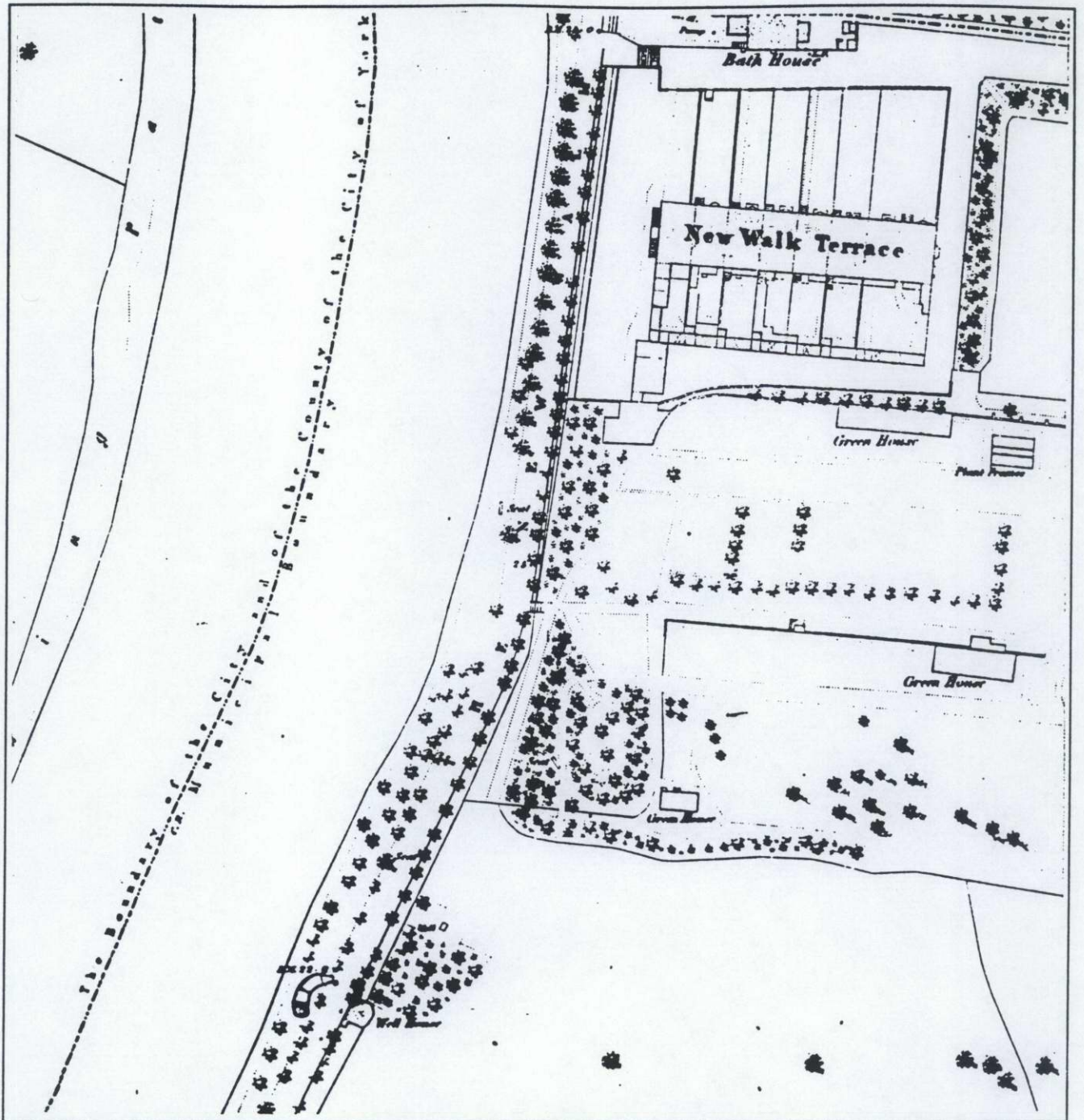


Figure 5. Pikeing Well and the open receiver well  
Extract from Ordnance Survey First Edition Survey Map 1852  
Scale 6" to 1 mile

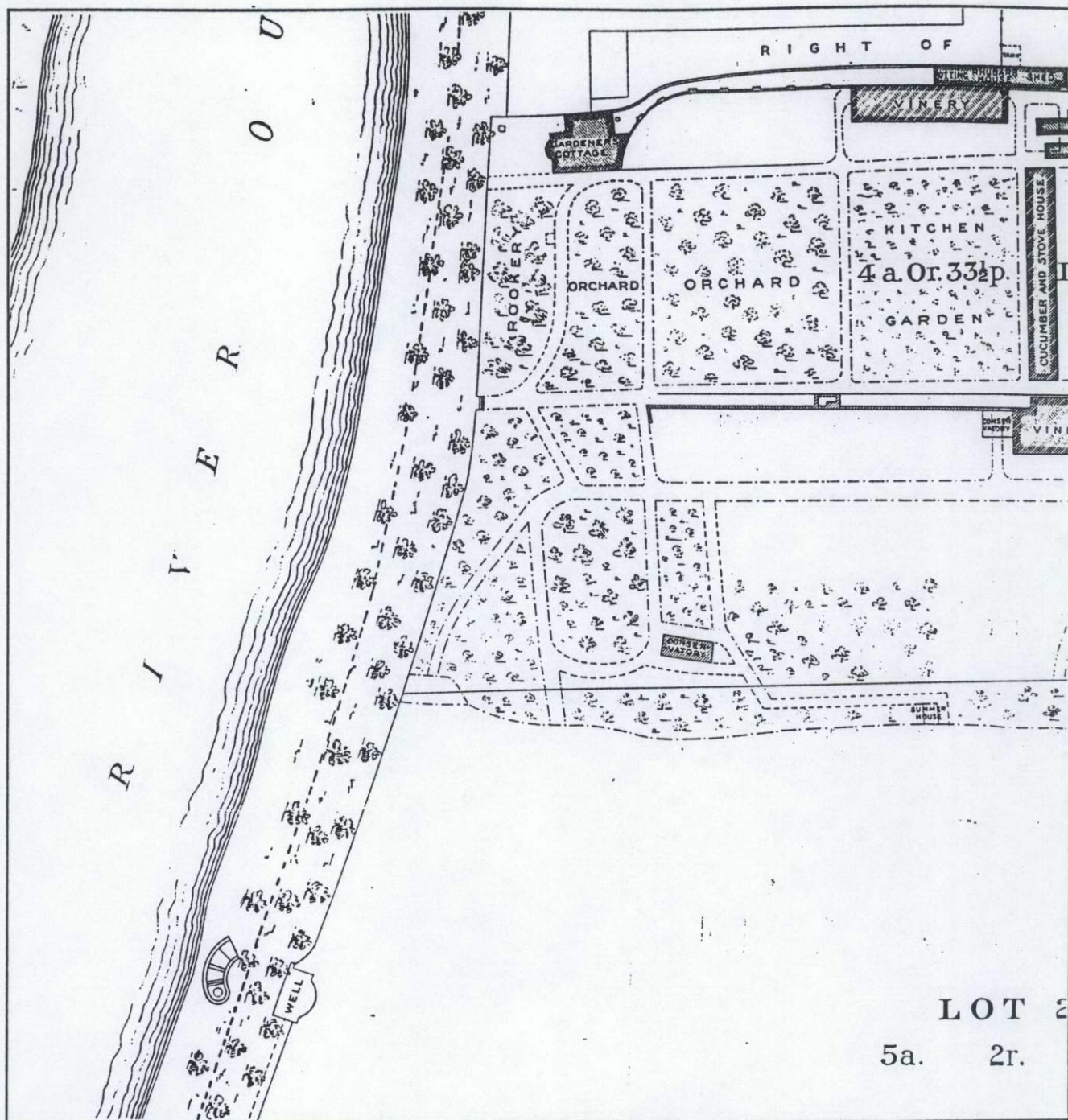


Figure 6. Pikeing Well and the open receiver well  
Extract from the Fulford Grange Sale map 1858

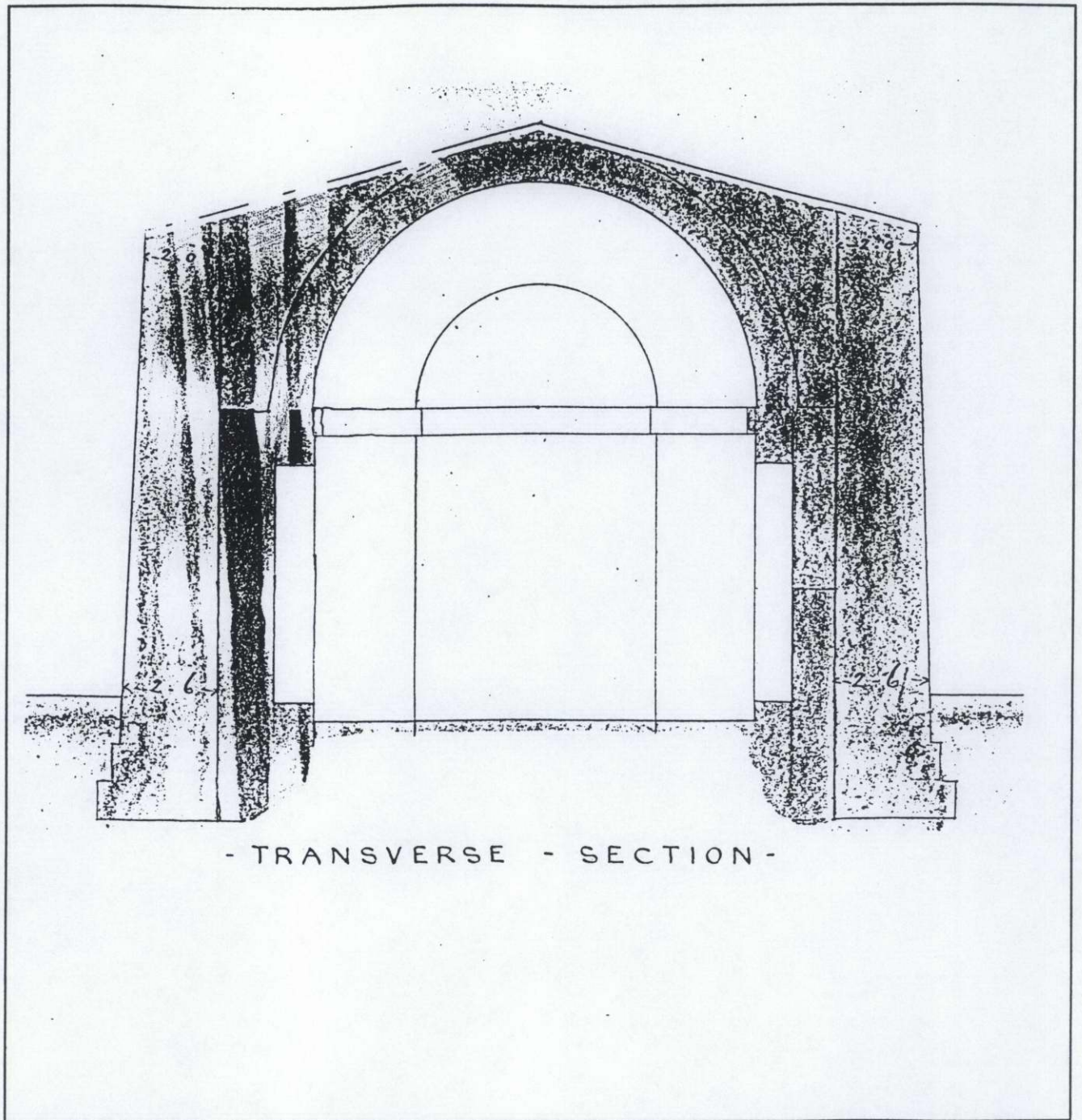


Figure 7a. Transverse section of Pikeing Well by Thomas Pickersgill 1858

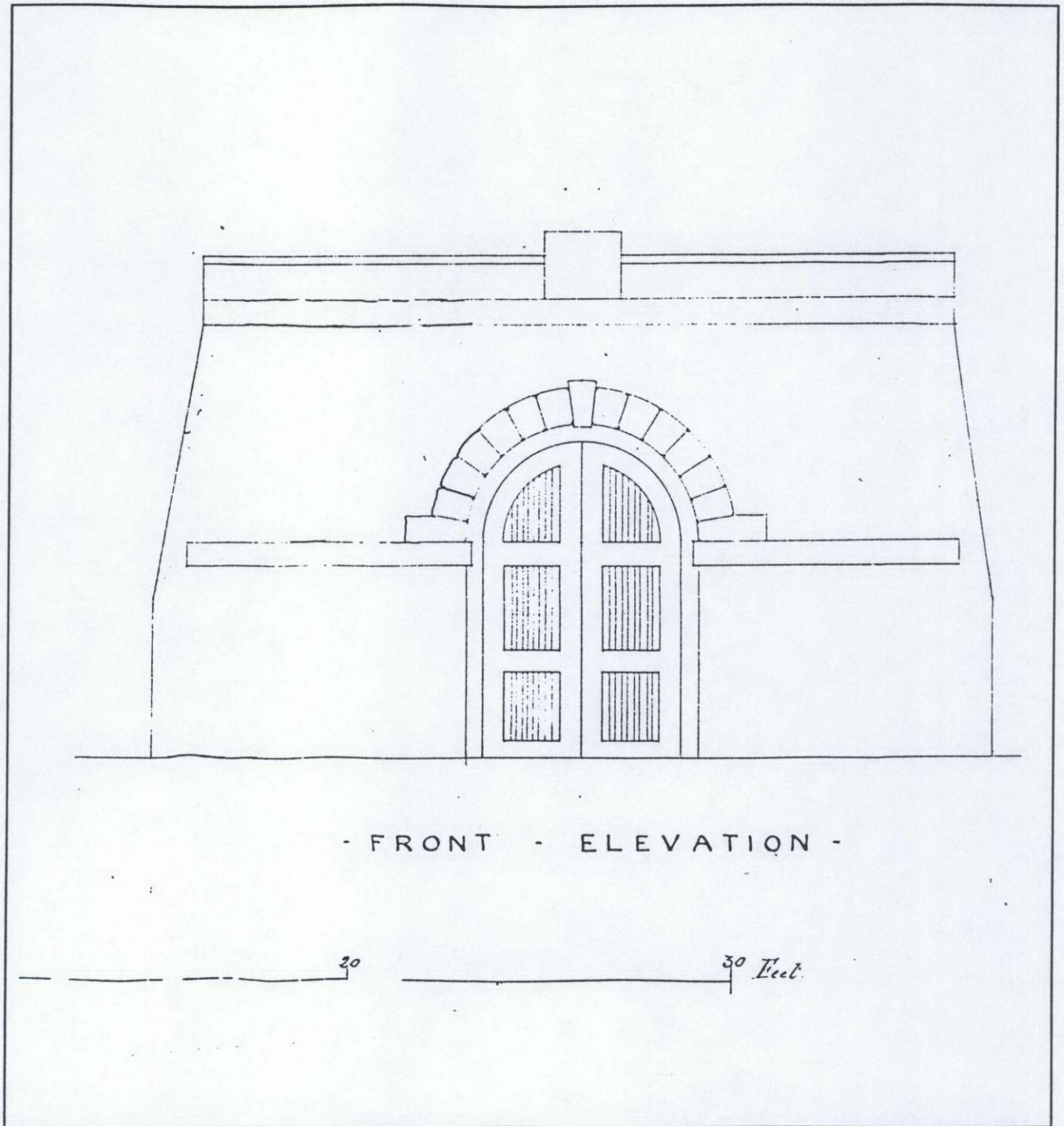


Figure 7b. Elevation of Pikeing Well by Thomas Pickersgill 1858

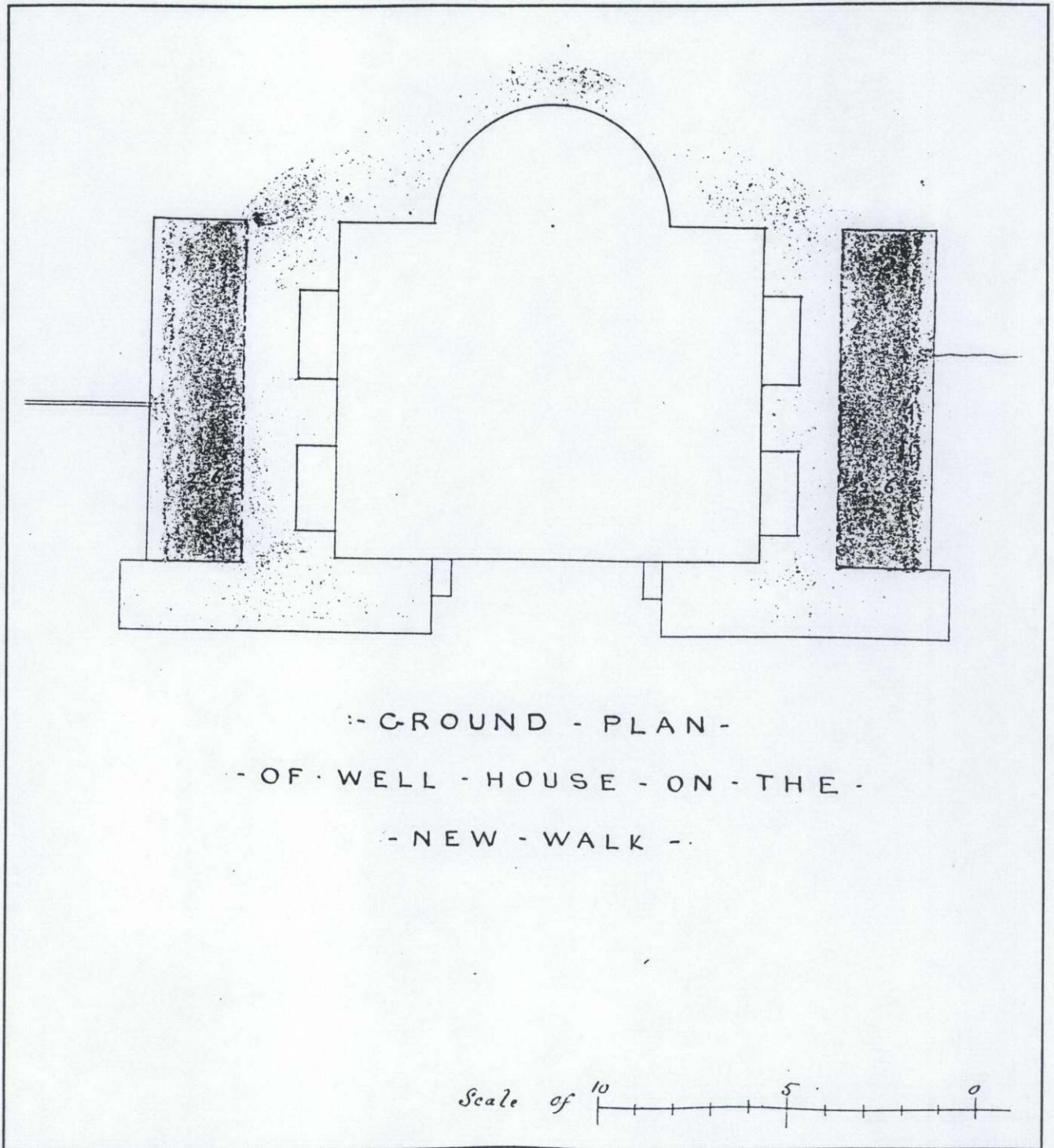


Figure 7c. Ground plan of Pikeing well by Thomas Pickersgill 1858

## **4.0 Results Of Archaeological Excavation**

### **4.1 Brief and methodology**

Two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site, one inside the Pikeing Well building and one located approximately 6.5m to the west of the building in the grassed area between New Walk and the River Ouse (Figure 8).

Trench 1 was located within the Pikeing Well superstructure, measured 3.80m x 1.0m and was 1.00m deep. The trench was extended from the front gates to the rear wall of the building. Its function was to locate and examine the original floor level of the well building.

Trench 2 was located to the west of the Pikeing Well. It was 'L' shaped and measured 4.70m x 1.0m on the north-south arm and 2.5m x 1.0m on the east-west arm. Trench 2 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.36m to locate and assess the state of preservation of the crescent shaped 'open receiver' building shown on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 5).

### **4.2 Trench 1**

The earliest deposit in Trench 1 was a paved floor with a centrally placed stone-lined pool and an associated flight of four steps (context 1005). The water table was at 6.65m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), only 0.05m below the level of the paved floor. The pool consequently filled with water to this level no matter how much infill material was removed. (Context 1005 is shown on Figures 9, 14 and 15).

The flight of four steps was located immediately inside the gate giving access to the interior of the well-house building. The steps led downwards from west to east. The lowest step had a tread 0.19m wide and a rise of only 0.03m. It consisted of two stone blocks, both of which continued beyond the limits of the excavation. The second step had a tread 0.23m wide and a rise of 0.18m. Again the step consisted of two paving slabs both of which continued beyond the limits of the excavation. The third step had a tread 0.28m wide and a rise of 0.30m. This step consisted of a single block of stone with a small socket and a lug on the upper surface, which presumably relate to earlier gates of the building. The block extended beyond the northern and southern limits of excavation, but was only 0.15m deep, i.e. not the full depth of the rise of the step. Beneath the third step was compacted earth 0.15m thick. The uppermost-step again consisted of a two blocks which measured 0.88m x 0.31m and 0.97m x 0.31m respectively and were 0.35m deep. This block extended from to the exterior of the well house. The eastern face of the blocks, i.e. the face inside the building, had a rectangular cross-sectioned groove 0.09m deep x 0.07m wide deep running the full width of the slabs 0.08m below the upper-edge.

To the east of the steps was a floor of four flat paving stones 0.61m wide which extended beyond the northern and southern limits of excavation. One of the slabs was trapezoidal in shape and measured 0.61m x 0.84m, the dimensions of the remaining slabs are unknown as they continued

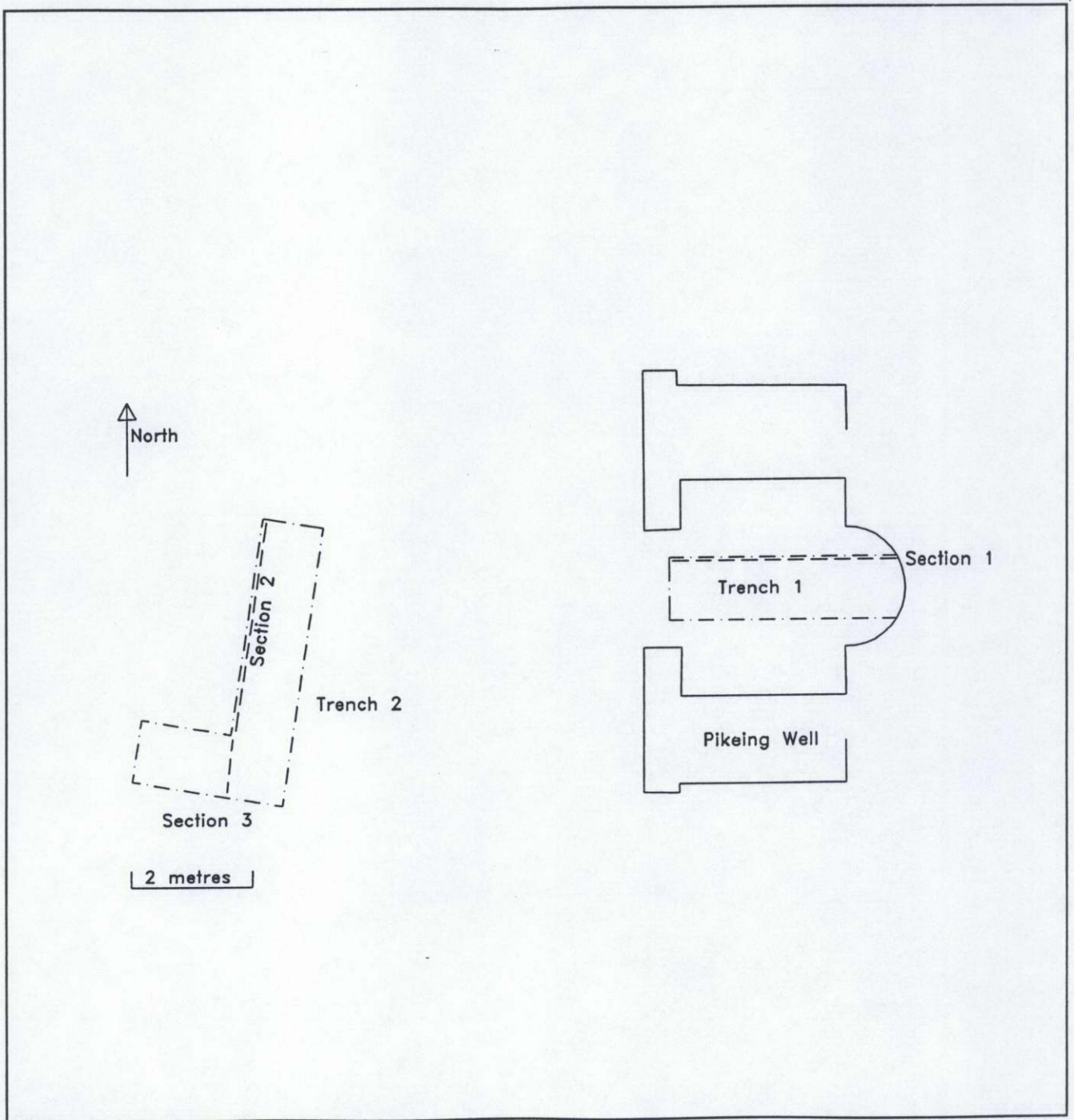


Figure 8. Location of the excavated trenches

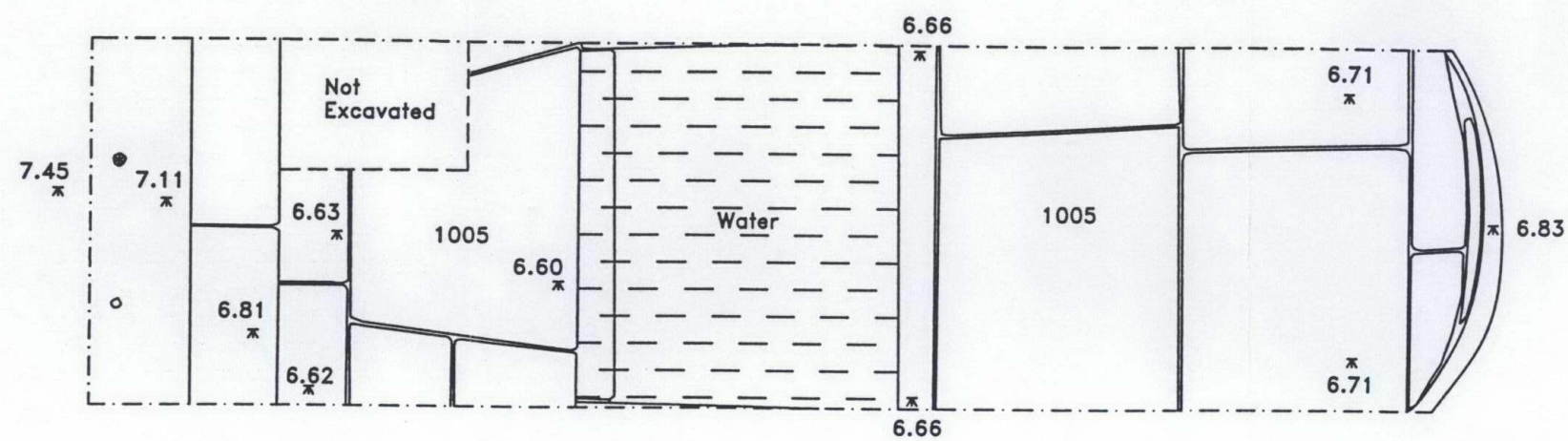


Figure 9. Plan of context 1005 at 1:20

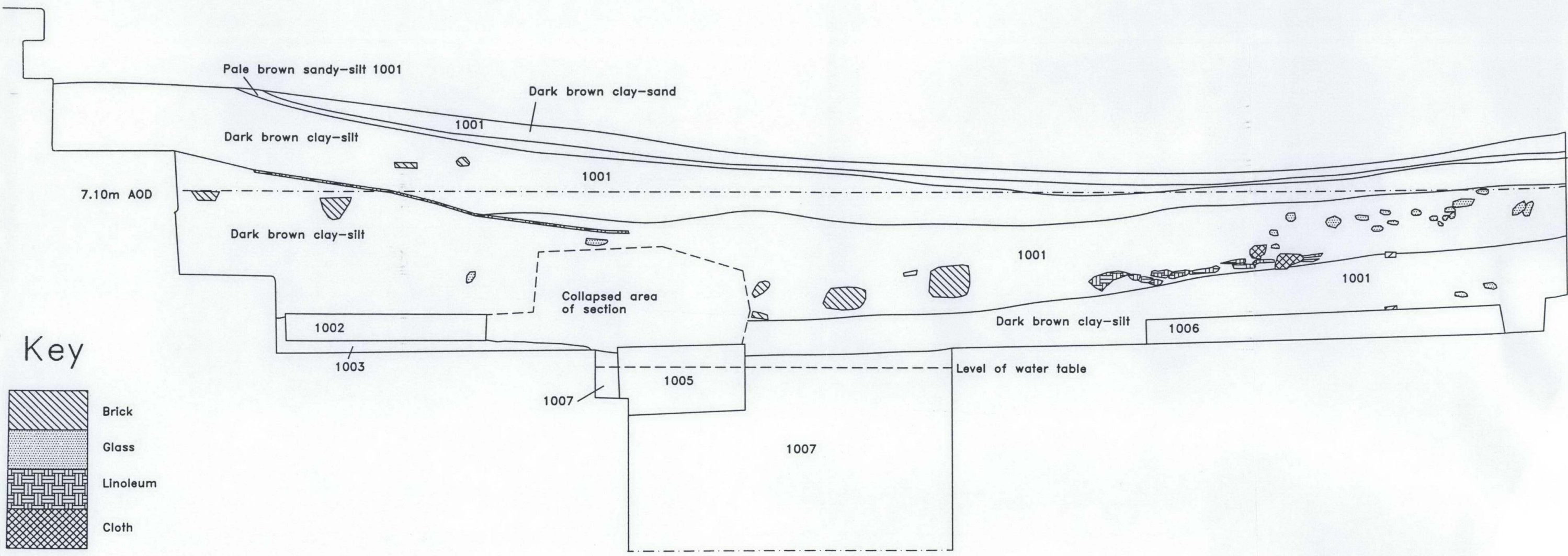


Figure 10. Section 1 - South facing section of Trench 1 scale 1:10

beyond the edges of the excavation. To the east of this paved area was a pool, which was located centrally within the well house.

The centrally placed pool measured 0.80m east-west and 0.99m north-south. It was lined on all four sides with stone slabs. On the north, east and south sides the pool was edged with kerb stones, all of which continued beyond the limits of the excavation. The side of the kerb nearest to the water had a rounded upper edge in each case. The dimensions of the north and southern kerbs are unknown, but the eastern kerb was 0.09m wide and in excess of 1.00m long. The western side of the pool differed from the other three sides in two ways, it did not have a kerb-stone edging, in addition there was a small step 0.14m deep and 0.16m wide running along the western side of the pool. It was only possible to excavate 0.50m of the interior of the pool (due to the presence of standing water) but probing suggests that the stonework continued downwards for at least 1.00m to c.5.70m AOD. At least two courses of stonework were present on each face of pool wall.

To the east of the centrally placed pool there was an area of paving 1.48m wide. This consisted of four rectangular paving slabs, all of which were 0.64m wide east-west, but the north-south measurements are unknown as the slabs continued beyond the limits of excavation. To the east of the rectangular paving slabs were three smaller paving stones shaped to infill an apse on the rear-wall of the building. Two of the stones were 0.14m x 0.42m and 0.04m x 0.60m in size respectively. The third paving stone was 0.14m east-west, and continued beyond the limits of the excavation to the north.

Infilling the central pool there was a deposit of dark grey-black organic sandy silt with brick and limestone fragments (context 1007). This was not fully excavated but was clearly modern as it contained numerous fragments of modern bottle-glass, none of which was retained.

Stratigraphically above the paving stones to the east of the central pool there was a wooden plank in excess of 0.18m x 0.80m with a rounded eastern end. An iron ring 0.23m in diameter was attached to the upper side close to the eastern end of the plank. This object was numbered context 1006 but could not be recovered as it continued beyond the northern limits of the excavation.

Sealing both contexts 1007 and 1006 was a wrought iron object, clearly a gate which had been placed horizontally over the pool in order to block it (context 1004 see Figure 13). Context 1004 consisted of three iron bars which were clearly originally horizontal bars. These bars were 0.80m long, 0.04m wide and 0.015m thick, and were spaced 0.52m and 0.53m apart respectively. Four longer iron bars, 1.68m in length, 0.04m wide and 0.015m thick were attached to the 'horizontal' bars. The four longer bars extended 0.06m beyond the eastern-most 'horizontal' bar, but were exactly aligned with the western-most 'horizontal' bar. In addition there were two separate bars 1.74m long, 0.04m wide and 0.015m thick, each with one pointed end, and a shorter bar 0.90m long, 0.06m wide and 0.015m thick with one pointed end and the other end curved to form a handle. The long bars may represent gate-posts and the shorter bar a latch.

Sealing the western paved area of context 1005 was a deposit of mid-brown organic silt. This contained modern bottle-glass fragments and modern pottery none of which was retained. This was in turn sealed by three modern concrete paving slabs (context 1002). Two of these slabs were lifted, but the third had to remain *in-situ*. The two lifted slabs measured 0.48m x 0.28m and 0.77m x

0.61m respectively. They were lain horizontally above context 1004 and capped the well-house pool. To the south-east of context 1002 there was a dump of irregular limestone fragments up to 0.30 x 0.20m in size.

Sealing all of the contexts described above was a varied build-up deposit (context 1001). This consisted of bands of sandy-silts, probably resulting from flooding, alternating with bands of rubbish and what were clearly tramps' beds made from various materials (linoleum, clothing, carpet and plastic fertiliser bags). Context 1001 contained human excrement and vast quantities of broken modern bottle glass. The volume of bottle glass increased from west to east, clearly the result of people throwing bottles against the rear-wall of the well-house. None of the glass from context 1001, which was up to 1.10m thick, was retained.

### **4.3 Trench 2**

The earliest deposit excavated was a curving wall (context 2012 see Figures 12, 16 and 17). The eastern face of the wall (originally the outer-face) consisted of two courses of brickwork laid directly on soil. The bricks were all 0.24m x 0.12m x 0.09m in size and were mortared together. The upper-course was laid with the long axis of the bricks parallel to the wall face, and the lower-course with the long-axis of the bricks at right angles to the wall-face. To the immediate west of the brickwork there was a limestone wall 0.20m wide and in excess of 0.78m high. It was impossible to fully excavate this wall due to the presence of standing water and for safety reasons (the sides of the trench would have become unstable). The upper surface of the limestone wall corresponded to the height AOD of the base of the brickwork. There was no evidence of the brickwork continuing in depth below the top of the limestone wall. Water was encountered within this structure at 6.21m AOD (0.45m lower than in Trench 1 and 0.85m higher than the level of the water in the River Ouse at the time of excavation).

Four courses of stonework were excavated, all of which consisted of carefully dressed limestone blocks. The lowest course consisted of single blocks of stone adjacent to both the southern and northern limits of the excavation with a deliberate gap of 0.65m between them. The blocks in this course were in excess of 0.14m high. The second course also consisted of single block 0.22m high adjacent to the northern limit of excavation and two blocks 0.17m high adjacent to the southern limits of excavation. Again there was a deliberate gap 0.77m in the central portion of the trench. The third course consisted of three blocks of stone which extended the full width of the trench. The central of the three blocks had clearly forced downwards by a large tree root into the gap in the courses of stonework beneath. The northern-most of the blocks was shaped to key in with the stonework of the course above. The uppermost course consisted of a single block 0.30m high adjacent to the northern limits of excavation. The limestone wall was not vertical, but sloped downwards from east to west. Above the eastern side of the wall was a compact gravel surface (context 2010) which clearly butted against and related to wall 2012. The gravel had slumped a depth of 0.35m in a linear east-west band 0.70m wide. This linear slumpage ran directly towards the gap in the lower courses of stonework of wall 2012.

Sealing the western side of the wall and infilling the gap in the lower courses of its stonework was a massive dump of carefully dressed limestone blocks, up to 0.30m x 0.20m x 0.15m in size, and brick fragments (context 2011). This dump was not fully excavated for reasons of safety.

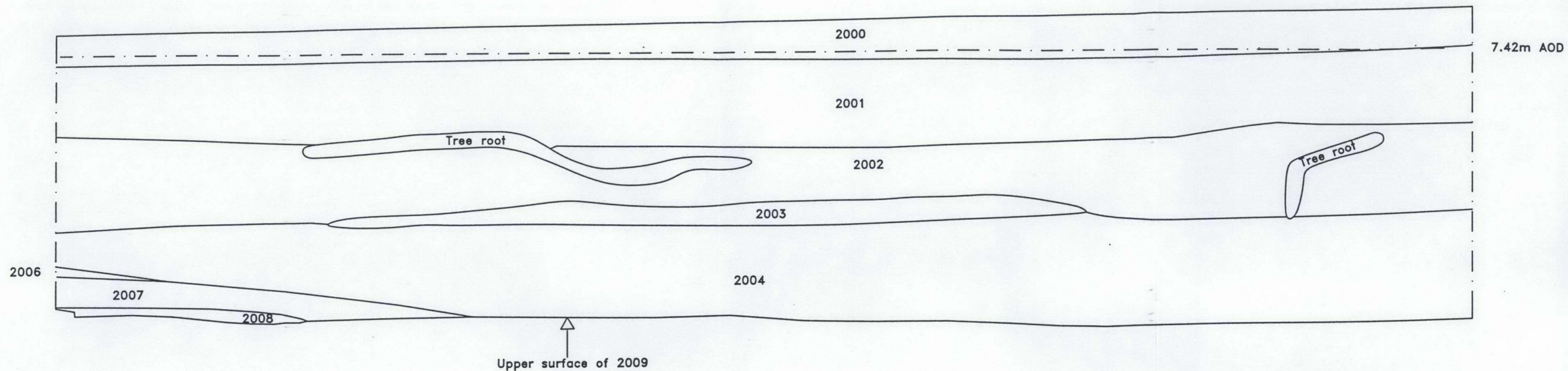


Figure 11. Section 2 - East facing section of Trench 2 scale 1:10

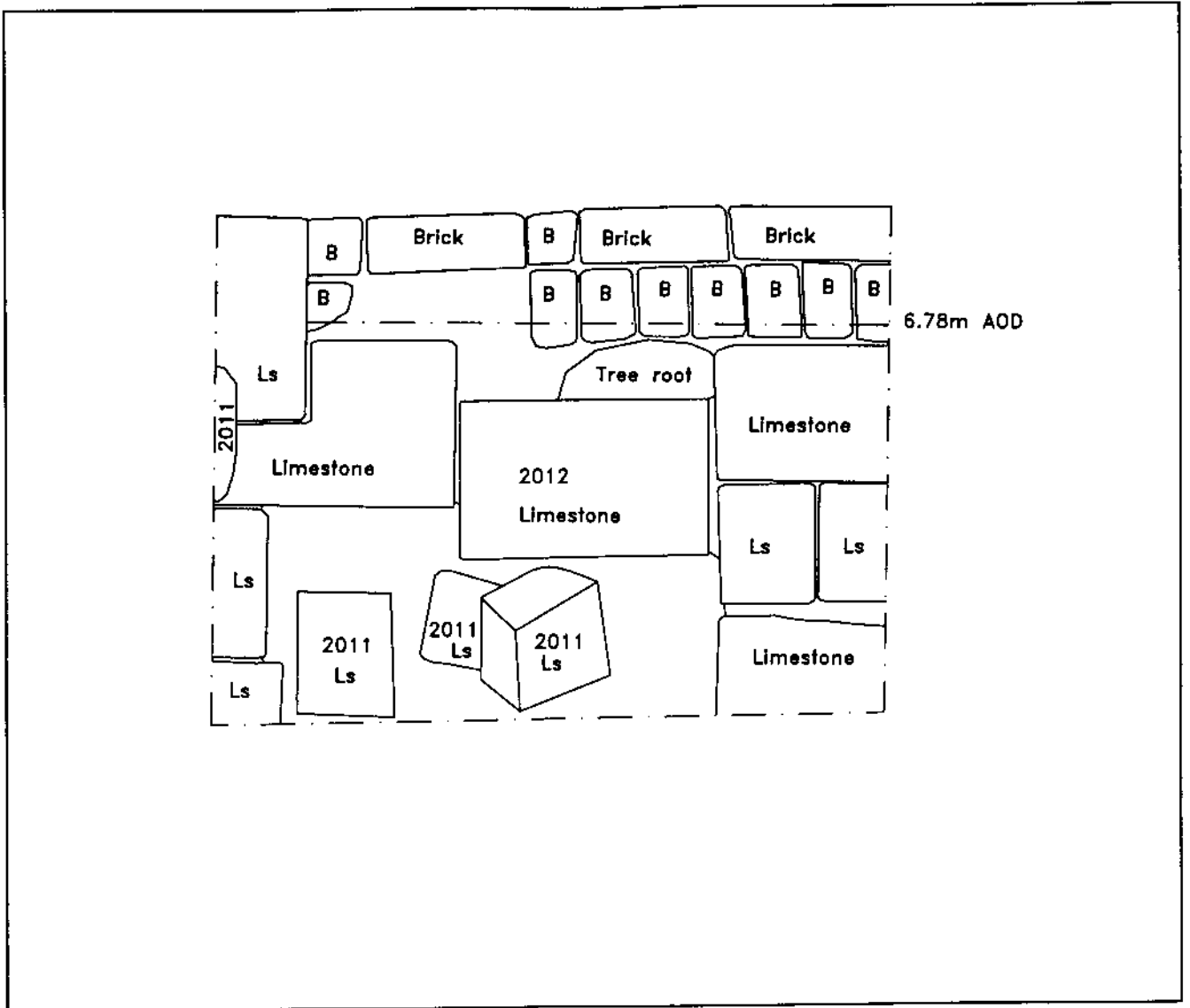


Figure 12. Section 3 - West facing section of context 2012 scale 1:10

Sealing the slumped area of context 2010 was a deposit of mid-brown sandy silt with limestone and brick fragments. A compact grey sandy silt with cobbles, brick fragments patches of pink clay and clinker (context 2008) sealed contexts 2009 and 2011. Context 2008 was beneath mid brown sandy silt with occasional pebbles and brick fragments (context 2007). Context 2007 was in turn sealed by compact dark brown sandy silt with pebbles clinker and brick fragments (context 2006). This contained a penny dating from 1971 which was not retained.

Above context 2006 was a kerb 1.90m long made of limestone slabs 0.59m x 0.15m x 0.02m set on edge (Context 2005). The kerb was aligned north-north-east/south-south-west and continued beyond the eastern limits of the excavation. Sealing the southern end of the kerb was a compact deposit of clinker and ash (context 2004) which was beneath a tarmac surface (context 2003) which butted against and clearly related to kerb 2005.

Sealing context 2003 was a layer of light grey-brown silty sand up to 0.15m thick (context 2002). Above context 2002 was a dark-grey silty loam (context 2001) with occasional fragments of glass, pottery and brick none of which was retained as it was clearly very modern. This was sealed by turf (context 2000).

#### **4.4 Interpretation of deposits**

The paved flooring (context 1005) within the well-house clearly represents the floor of the building, and is almost certainly the flagged floor which formed part of Thomas Pickersgill's restoration work of 1858 (see 3.2 above). It is strange that the stonework of the third step rests upon compacted earth rather directly on the step beneath and that the lowest step is so shallow. It is possible that when the well was re-erected by Pickersgill the original steps were carelessly re-laid giving a flight of steps with very uneven risers.

Contexts 1002-1004 and 1006-1007 all represent the deliberate infilling of the well. They were all clearly modern in date and probably relate to the closure of the well in 1929 by the Ministry of Health. It seems that the pool was first infilled with rubble and silt (context 1007). A wooden plank and an iron-gate (contexts 1006 and 1004) were then placed horizontally across the well-house floor. The iron-gate covered the pool in the centre of the well house and would have prevented anyone from falling into the pool. The original function of the wooden plank is unknown but it could represent part of a gatepost for the well-house. The iron-gate could not be dated as it lacked any distinctive decoration. It does not resemble the gate shown on Thomas Pickersgill's drawing of 1858, which implies that it is more recent. Some silting (context 1003) occurred at the base of the flight of steps partly sealing the iron-gate and the pool beneath. Concrete paving slabs (context 1002) were then laid above the silt and iron-gate thereby capping the pool and preventing the well from being used at all. In addition limestone rubble (context 1002) was dumped in the well-house.

Subsequently the well-house has clearly been used as a place for tramps to sleep in, for drunks to throw bottles in and as a toilet (according to the residents of the houses nearby the culprits in this case are fishermen). The building has also been subject to periodic flooding.

The wall (context 2012) located in Trench 2 clearly represents part of the 'open receiver' well shown on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 5). Context 2010 represents a gravel path to the east of the building. It is possible that this path dates to 1858 when New Walk was re-gravelled (see 3.2 above). The presence of a culvert leading from the Pikeing Well building to the open receiver is implied by two factors. Firstly there seems to be a deliberate gap in the lower courses of stonework in the open receiver which could represent the mouth of a culvert. Secondly, a linear slumpage in the upper surface of context 2010 could imply a collapsed linear feature beneath. This slumpage leads directly from the gap in the stonework of walling 2012 towards Pikeing Well.

Context 2011 clearly represents the deliberate infilling of the open receiver to prevent its use. It is unclear when this occurred but it may have been in 1929 when Pikeing Well was closed. Dumping then occurred above the open receiver and its related gravel path (contexts 2009, 2008, 2007 and 2006). These dumps levelled the ground surface in the area. Context 2006 was dated to 1971 or later by the penny found within it. The area was subsequently levelled and a tarmac path with a kerbstone edge was built (contexts 2004, 2005 and 2003). The area was then sealed by a build up of river lain deposits, topsoil and turf.

#### **4.5 Recommendations for the future use of the site**

Whatever use the well-house is put to by the York Millennium Bridge Trust, the deposits above the paved floor and within the pool should be cleared. As the deposits above the paved floor are clearly of modern date their excavation by an archaeologist would not be necessary. However, a watching brief would be appropriate to recover the wooden object (context 1006) and any further portions of the iron-gate (context 1004) which may be within the building. In contrast the contents of the pool should be excavated archaeologically as the earlier levels within the pool may be of archaeological interest.

If access to the interior of the building is thought desirable, careful consideration would need to be given to the design of gates for the well-house. Any gates would require heavy duty locks which could be locked at night to prevent people using the building at night for sleeping or as a toilet. If railed gates were to be used they would have to be designed to prevent people throwing material through them against the rear wall of the well-house. Flood deposits continue to accumulate within the building and some form of kerb to prevent their ingress would also be required.

The 'open receiver' well had been loosely backfilled with limestone rubble. It would therefore not form a stable base for any foundations.

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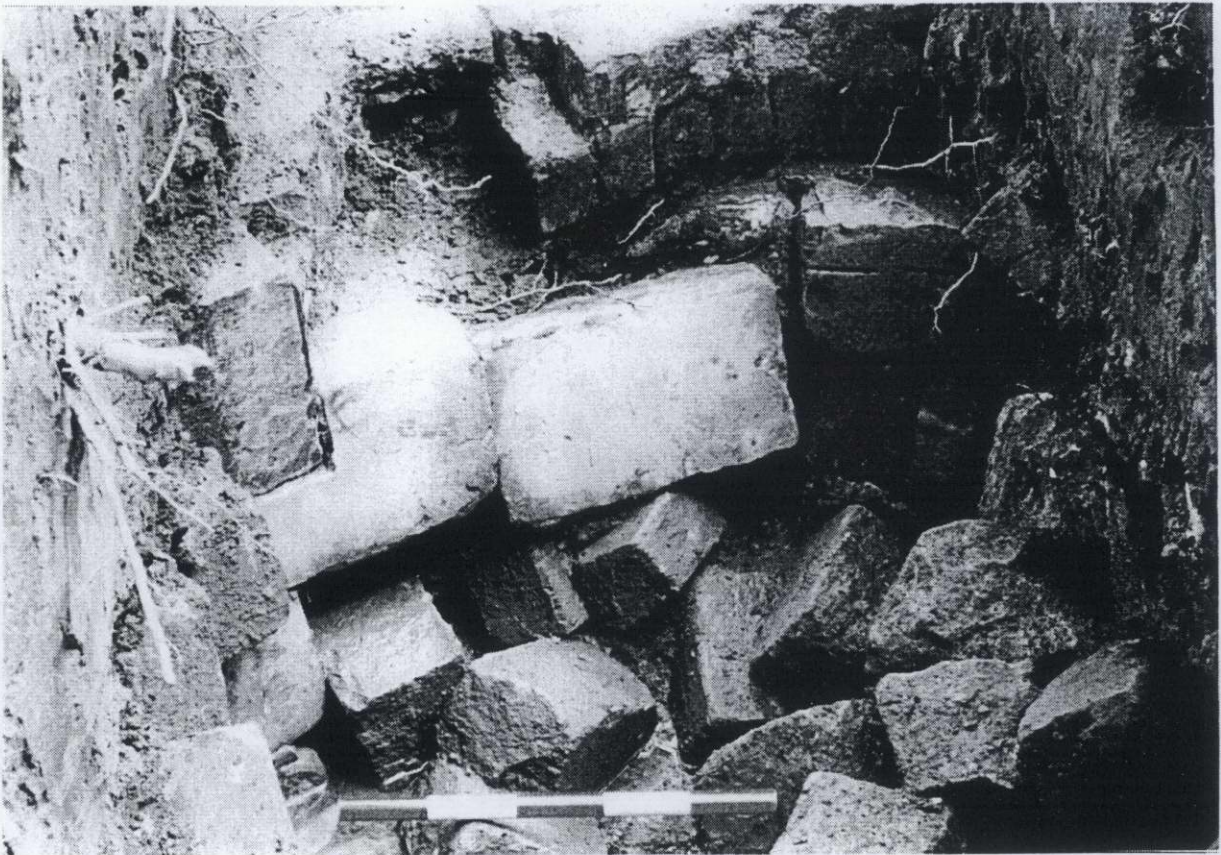
**Figure 13.** Photograph of context 1004 looking east



**Figure 14.** Photograph of context 1005 looking west



**Figure 15.** Photograph of context 1005 looking east



**Figure 16.** Photograph of context 2012 looking east



**Figure 17.** Photograph of context 2012 looking east



# YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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