



March 1999

**44 AND 52 CHURCH STREET,
LANCASTER
LANCASHIRE**

Watching Brief Report

44 and 52 Church Street, Lancaster
Lancashire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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The survey was undertaken by Chris Scurfield and the CAD drawings were generated by Chris Scurfield and Jamie Quartermaine. The report was written by Chris Scurfield and edited by Jamie Quartermaine and Rachel Newman. The project was managed by Jamie Quartermaine.

SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken in February 1999 by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU), on behalf of Lancaster City Council, in the course of a pedestrianisation development in Church Street, Lancaster (NGR SD 4765 6184). The watching brief examined the cellars of 44 and 52 Church Street, which had been exposed as a result of the development; the work was undertaken in accordance with a verbal brief by the Lancashire County Archaeological Service.

The survey involved the generation of structural plans for both cellars and was undertaken in conjunction with an oblique photographic survey of the affected elements of the cellar and associated basements.

The cellar of 44 Church Street projecting south-west beyond the facade of the main building, comprised a stone vaulted chamber, 3.18m x 3.10m in size. The doorway into the cellar, through the main building facade, has at least two phases of construction, and the base of the present door is 0.53m below that of an earlier phase of doorway. The top of the original doorway is set above the crown of the cellar vault, and pre-dates the construction of the cellar. The base of the earlier doorway is only 1m below the present street level and it is probable that this was the door to an original undercroft, which was subsequently deepened with the construction of the vaulted cellar. The doorway was part of what appears to be a late seventeenth or early eighteenth century building, and the vaulted cellar was clearly a later addition.

The cellar of 52 Church Street was rectangular in shape and projected 1.55m into the street out from the principal facade of the building. The cellar doorway incorporates long and short quoining, made up of large tabular stone blocks. The roof of the cellar comprised three large flagstones, which had been fitted closely together. Although the cellar walls are keyed into the principal facade of the building, the overall form of construction would indicate that the cellar post-dates the building of the basement wall.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Cellars at 44 and 52 Church Street were unexpectedly exposed in the course of a pedestrianisation scheme for the eastern end of Church Street, Lancaster (NGR SD 4765 6184) (Figs 1 and 2). The cellar of 44 Church Street had been divided by a partition wall constructed, for health and safety reasons, following the exposure, but prior to the watching brief. After which it was intended to fill the southernmost section with concrete to provide for a foundation for the pedestrian walkway that was being constructed over it. Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) were invited by Lancaster City Council to undertake a watching brief to record the cellar structures in advance of further development on the site. The watching brief was undertaken during February 1999, in accordance with a verbal brief, following an on-site discussion, by the Development Control Officer for the Lancashire County Archaeological Service. 44 and 42 Church Street are listed Grade II* buildings and the listed building description is incorporated as *Appendix 1*. Buildings 44 and 42 share the same facade, but are not parts of the same building, even though both are now under single ownership.
- 1.1.2 The survey involved the generation of structural plans for both cellars and was undertaken in conjunction with an oblique photographic survey of the affected elements of the cellar and associated basements.
- 1.1.3 This report presents an account of the survey, and the analysis of the affected structures.

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.2.1 ***The Roman Period:*** traditional opinion has it that the first substantial fort was built on Castle Hill during Agricola's northern advance in the late AD 70s, although it now seems probable that it was constructed up to ten years earlier (Shotton pers comm). The earliest fort appears to have followed the natural lie of the hill, with its north/south axis lying along the highest ridge. The fort was substantially reconstructed in the early second century. By the mid-third century it was occupied by a cavalry regiment (*Ala Gallorum Sebosiana*) who appear to have been forced to undertake a considerable programme of building restoration (Shotton and White 1990). The fort at Lancaster was important in the defence of the west coast and, to this end, about AD 330, the entire complex was reoriented and rebuilt on the northern and eastern sectors of Castle Hill. This fort was probably abandoned at the beginning of the fifth century.
- 1.2.2 Antiquarian commentators have frequently noted the numerous Roman finds from Lancaster (West 1779). It is apparent from their distribution that a substantial extramural settlement lay beyond the east gate of the fort, and there is little doubt that Church Street, running down along a low sandy ridge from Castle Hill to Stonewell, preserves the line of the Roman road, forming the principal road of the extramural settlement.
- 1.2.3 ***The Medieval Town:*** medieval Lancaster developed from two dependent villas of the Manor of Halton mentioned in the Domesday Survey (1086): *Chercaloncastre*

or Church Lancaster and *Loncastre*. The medieval town seems to have developed rapidly after the granting of a borough charter in 1193, and the prestige of the town grew significantly as it became a power base for the early Norman lords. The number of streets are documented and Church Street is amongst the earliest known.

- 1.2.4 The economic base of the medieval town was founded in its role as a market centre, serving a solid, but not particularly wealthy, rural hinterland, and it was not until the shipping trade with the Americas became established in the late seventeenth century that Lancaster accrued real wealth. This period of dramatic expansion and building gave the city many of its finest buildings, but obliterated much of the medieval townscape in the process.
- 1.2.5 ***Previous Archaeological Work:*** the majority of excavation work within the city has been undertaken in Church Street, concentrated on the relatively untouched islands of stratified archaeological deposits between cellars, confirming a concentration of Roman activity in that area. The majority of the excavations, with the notable exception of Mitchells Brewery (Howard Davis *et al* forthcoming), has been undertaken on a small scale. Much of the medieval stratigraphy has been truncated by post-medieval development. Excavations at 41 Church Street revealed Roman road material beneath the pavement (Penney 1981b), whilst excavations in the cellar of 65 Church Street identified a second century trench-built cobble wall foundation. During the construction of a cellar at 80 Church Street, in 1776 (West 1779), fragments of thick walls were identified associated with a five foot thick deposit of ashes and bones.
- 1.2.6 Excavations in 1975 at the corner of Penny Street and St Nicholas Shopping Centre located a frequently resurfaced, presumably Roman, north-west to south-east cobbled road. It has been suggested (Penney 1981a) that this may represent a southern deflection of the road from the modern line, leaving immediately to the east of 41 Church Street (opposite 44/52 Church Street). Alternatively, the road may be a precursor of Penny Street, leaving the line of Church Street at a right angle.
- 1.2.7 In 1988 and 1992 major excavations were undertaken by LUAU at the site of the former Mitchells Brewery (33-37 Church Street). These revealed a succession of buildings at both the street frontage and towards Market Street. The range of artefacts dated the occupation from the end of the first century to the mid fourth century.
- 1.2.8 Although little has yet been identified of the medieval period in the stratigraphic record, the evidence from excavations on Church Street demonstrates that the position of medieval structures within this part of the town seems to have been in part influenced by the Roman plan of the town.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The recording of the cellars was undertaken by an archaeological surveyor, following their exposure in the course of the pedestrianisation development. The watching brief involved a measured survey and the production of an oblique photographic record. Although only the south-western section of the cellar at 44 Church Street was to be filled with concrete, the rest of the cellar and the south-western sections of the associated basement were also recorded in order to provide an appropriate context.
- 2.1.2 **Drawn Survey:** the survey was undertaken using manual techniques and created plans of both affected cellars and parts of the respective basements. The survey drawings were digitised into a CAD system and superimposed with digital Ordnance Survey 1:2500 topographic data, which was provided under licence by Lancaster City Council (Figs 2 and 3).
- 2.1.3 **Photographic Survey:** an oblique photographic record was produced of the affected cellars and the adjacent basement in 35mm black and white, 35mm colour print and digital formats.
- 2.1.4 **Analysis:** a basic level of analysis was undertaken of the exposed fabric, which was set within the context of each building. The results are presented below.

2.2 ARCHIVE

- 2.2.1 A full archive of the watching brief has been produced to a professional standard, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The archive will be deposited with the County Record Office, further copies of the report being given to the Lancashire Sites and Monuments Record and Lancaster City Museum. A copy of the archive will also be available for deposition with the National Monuments Record in Swindon.

3. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 44 CHURCH STREET

- 3.1.1 **Development Impact:** the pedestrianisation of the south-east end of Church Street has resulted in the street level being increased by 0.11m, and the pavement was re-paved to a similar level. A mechanical excavator was used to remove c0.15m of tarmac to allow for the foundation of the new surfaces and this caused the roof of a vaulted cellar belonging to 44 Church Street to collapse (Plate 1) as the top of the vault was only 0.15m below the pavement (Plate 2). Remedial work was carried out the following day and a breeze block wall was constructed to 'shore up' the vaulted roof, and to limit the extent of the void that needed to be filled with concrete. The watching brief was undertaken following the construction of the breeze block wall and prior to the in-filling of the south-western void with concrete.
- 3.1.2 **Cellar Description:** the cellar extended south-west beyond the facade of the main building; it was 3.18m x 3.10m in size and had a maximum height of 1.88m. The walls/vault comprised approximately twelve courses of sub-rectangular stone blocks and flatter stones were incorporated towards the crown of the vault. The walls of the vaulted cellar abut the main walls of the building, except where a recess has been created and stones from the roof vault have been keyed in, so as to provide additional strength. The cellar was floored with small to medium-sized cobbles, and was accessed by a doorway from a corridor offset from a series of storerooms within the basement of 44 Church Street. The doorway (Plate 3 and 4) has at least two phases of construction, and the base of the present door is 0.53m below that of an earlier phase of doorway. The westernmost jamb combined moulded ashlar stones with two stepped chamfers (0.91m and 1.35m high), which relate to the original phase of the doorway. The top of this original doorway is set above the crown of the cellar vault, and clearly pre-dates the construction of the cellar. The lower section of the present doorway is roughly cut through the wall foundation, and it is evident that this phase of the doorway was more pragmatic than ornate in function. The later doorway has been narrowed by a 0.25m wide, rough masonry extension which has been butted to the original eastern ashlar jamb. The later door jamb is butted by the vault of the cellar, which clearly post-dates the narrowing of the doorway. A carved recess, c0.03m in depth, is set into the stone work, and provides evidence of a wooden door frame.
- 3.1.3 The base of the earlier doorway to the cellar is only 1m below the present street level and it is probable that this was the door to an undercroft, which was subsequently deepened with the construction of the vaulted cellar and basement. The front storeroom, in the west corner of the basement, also has an external doorway extending through the principal facade. This has been reduced in width and beyond it is a small vertical shaft which served as a coal shoot. Although there is still coal debris evident, the shaft is presently topped by pavement slabs and has not been used in the recent past. Originally the door possibly also provided access to the undercroft.
- 3.1.4 The owner of the shop reports that on an earlier occasion selective removal of wall furnishings had revealed a fragment of structural timber and associated wattle and daub. The location of this fragment is not known.

3.2 52 CHURCH STREET

- 3.2.1 **Development Impact:** in the course of the stripping of the tarmac surface, a mechanical excavator collapsed the cellar roof of 52 Church Street (Plate 5). With respect to the front elevation, the cellar door is offset below and to the right of the present shop entrance and is therefore located at the eastern corner of the basement room. As there was a gas meter installed at the south-eastern end of the cellar, it was decided that it would be easier to reroof the cellar, rather than move the meter and then fill the cellar with the concrete. As a consequence the development had only a relatively minor impact upon the cellar fabric.
- 3.2.3 **Cellar Description:** the cellar was rectangular in shape and projects 1.55m into the street out from the principal facade of the building; it is 1.68m wide. The walls consist of 13 courses of regular stone blocks, which are typically 0.1m x 0.2m with larger coursing towards the wall base (0.32m x 0.17m). The foundation wall of the building's front elevation comprises a significant number of large rounded river cobbles (0.17m x 0.17m). The cellar doorway incorporates long and short quoining, made up of some large tabular stone blocks which were placed vertically and horizontally; there was no evidence of a recess for a door casing (Plate 6). The roof of the cellar comprised three large flagstones, which had been fitted closely together and were each about 2m in length, 0.55m wide and 0.18m thick. The original cellar floor was found to be 0.07m below a cement floor and consisted of small to medium-sized cobbles. The original height of the cellar would have been 1.90m. The cellar walls are keyed into the principal facade of the building, but the overall construction of the cellar would suggest that the cellar post-dates the building of the basement wall.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 44 CHURCH STREET

- 4.1.1 The present basement was formerly divided into two independent elements, and it is evident that 44 Church Street was formerly two houses. The level of the original cellar doorway would suggest that there was a low level ground floor to the building, which was below the street level and would probably have had a stepped descent from the street level. Although this would suggest the existence of an undercroft, such buildings are typically of medieval origin and constructed in stone with a timber superstructure. This doorway is of a seventeenth century/ early eighteenth century character and, as there is no direct evidence for any medieval fabric, it is not possible to confirm that the basement was a true undercroft.
- 4.1.2 Although not examined in the course of the present watching brief, the discovery of structural timbers, with associated wattle and daub, may potentially elements of the original timber building on the site may have been incorporated within the fabric of the present stone building. However, it is not uncommon for eighteenth century stone buildings to incorporate internal timber framing, with associated wattle and daub (A White pers comm); this may therefore be an indication of a typical eighteenth century build.
- 4.1.3 Subsequently the floor of the ground floor was converted into a basement; a vaulted cellar was added onto the facade of the building and the former undercroft doorway was deepened and narrowed to provide access to the cellar. The cellar, although clearly later than the putative undercroft, incorporates a stone-vaulted fabric, which is unusual within Lancaster, and particularly so for one projecting by as much as 2.7m into the street (A White pers comm). The purpose of the vaulting was possibly intended to provide sufficient structural support to enable the movement of traffic overhead, but it is unlikely that the excavation of a below street cellar would have been permitted in the later nineteenth century as civic controls to prevent street encroachment were strictly enforced (A White pers comm). This would therefore suggest an early nineteenth century or earlier date for the cellar.

4.2 52 CHURCH STREET

- 4.2.1 The cellar of 52 Church Street represents an interesting contrast to the larger and more elaborate cellar at 44 Church Street. The 52 Church Street cellar is also a later addition to the structure, but does not incorporate a vaulted roof and the masonry character would appear to be of more modern construction than that of 44 Church Street.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX 1
LISTED BUILDING RECORD - 42 AND 44 CHURCH STREET

SD4761NE
1685-1/7/74
18/02/70
GV

CHURCH STREET
(North side)
Nos.42 AND 44
II*

EXTERIOR: House, now two shops. Early eighteenth century, refronted and altered in the early nineteenth century, and altered in the twentieth century. It has sandstone ashlar in narrow courses. Slate roof with gable chimney stack to the right. Double-depth plan.

Three storeys over a basement and now three widely-spaced bays, but originally probably five bays. The ground floor is now occupied by late nineteenth century shop fronts, of which the one to 42 Church Street was remodelled in 1985. The upper floors have windows with plain reveals, raised sills, and nine-pane sashes.

INTERIOR: ground-floor back room of 42 Church St. is fully panelled in hardwood with fluted pilasters, original doors, and raised and fielded panels above and below the dado rail. In 44 Church St. the back room on the left of the ground floor also has some full-height panelling with bolection moulding, all now painted. The room above it is fully panelled above and below the dado rail with panelled pilasters separating raised and fielded panels with bolection-moulded surrounds. The pilasters which flank the fireplace are fluted. 42 Church St. also has a fine dogleg staircase rising from the cellar to the second floor. This has square newel posts with raised and fielded panels, open strings with two turned balusters, alternately round and fluted, per tread and a broad handrail.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 1. Church Street location plan

Fig 2. Cellar Location Plan

Fig 3. Detail Survey Plan

PLATES

- Plate 1 Surface view of 44 Cellar exposure, orientated to the north-west
- Plate 2 Crown of 44 barrel vault in relation to the pavement surface (orientated to the north-east)
- Plate 3 44 Church Street cellar entrance through the principal façade viewed from within the cellar (orientated to the north-east)
- Plate 4 44 Church Street cellar entrance through the principal façade looking south-west
- Plate 5 52 Church Street cellar viewed from the street (orientated to the north-east)
- Plate 6 52 Church Street entrance into cellar through principal façade (orientated to the south-west)

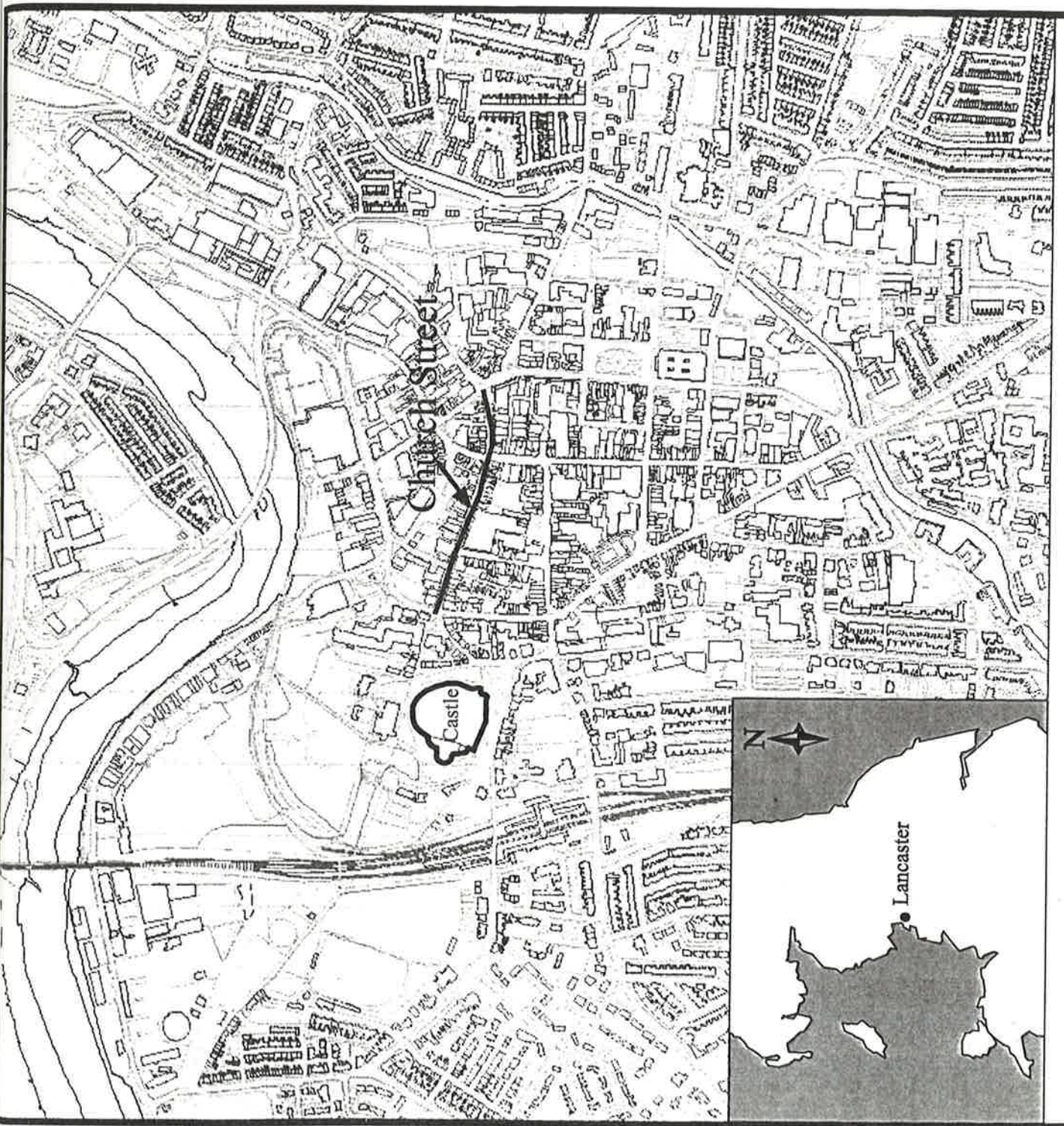


Fig 1 : Church Street, Lancaster: Location Map



Fig 2 Cellar Location Plan

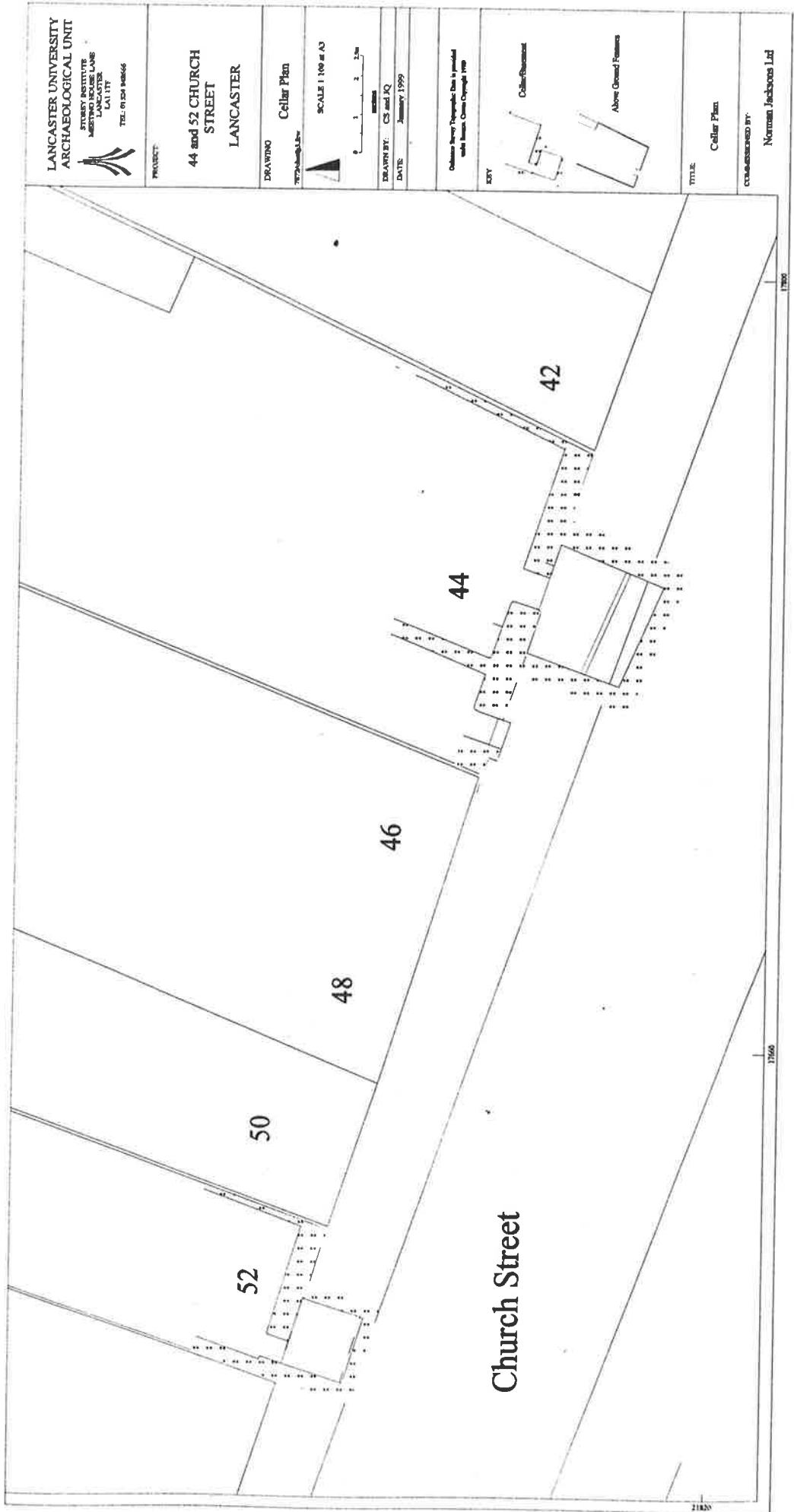


Fig 3 Cellar Plan



Plate 1 Surface view of No 44 Cellar exposure - > NW



Plate 2 Crown of No 44 barrel vault in relation to pavement surface > NE



Plate 3 No 44 cellar entrance through principal façade viewed
From within Cellar > north-east



Plate 4 No 44 cellar entrance through principal façade
looking south-west



Plate 5 No 52 Church Street cellar viewed from street > north-east



Plate 6 52 Church St. entrance into cellar through principal façade > south-west