

## Peakirk: Village plan and medieval underpinnings

Graham Jones, Leicester University 24.4.10

Peakirk, ‘Pega’s church’ (*æt Pegecyrcan* in 1016, and *Paycherch* as late as 1249),<sup>1</sup> is an example of a relatively rare class of settlement in eastern England (much more common in western areas and Wales) in which the place takes its name from the eponymous saint of a religious centre. When other eastern examples are considered at random – Bury St Edmunds, Hibaldstow, Felixstow, Ippollitts – the significance of Peakirk’s saintly association becomes clear. It is very unlikely that the name represents a late, anachronistic attempt to link the place with the saint in question. It is also highly probable that the religious centre gave rise to the settlement, not, as usually, the other way round. (Places where the titular saint’s name is used to distinguish one vill from another, e.g. Sutton St Edmunds and Sutton St James, represent a different phenomenon.) Bury St Edmunds is included in the list as somewhere, like Peterborough, where the converse was the case, settlement first with a church later: ‘*Beaduric*’s worth’ and ‘Medeshamstede’. However, the earlier names show that these had been central places before their churches grew in fame. Peakirk’s status was quite different. It is recorded only as a dependent settlement within the manor of Glinton and had no independent administrative existence at that level. (The presence of sokemen of Crowland, dealt with later, is another matter.) This is not to say that the place later identified from its church was wholly without population until its religious locale came into being. The wharf here in 1146, for example, may have been very ancient indeed. Tolls went to the lord, by that time the Abbot of Peterborough,<sup>2</sup> and a thirteenth-century obligation on tenants of Glinton manor (not *at* Glinton, the village being landlocked) was to ferry the lord where he wished.<sup>3</sup> Also Peakirk was the mainland embarkation point closest to Crowland, where the eponymous Pega’s brother St Guthlac established his religious foundation, a place of pilgrimage.<sup>4</sup> Romano-British finds near the church reveal the likely presence of a villa. Manorial dependency gives Peakirk additional interest as a settlement, since in a reverse relationship Peakirk’s was the mother church and Glinton a chapelry.<sup>5</sup> Such pairs, a civil centre and religious centre within a single territory, are a further interesting phenomenon, not properly explored and often lost to view from the processes of manorialisation and acquisition of parochial rights. Here are a number of intrinsic, general reasons for protecting Peakirk’s essential plan and form, its basic medieval morphology.

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<sup>1</sup> J. E. B. Gover, A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Northamptonshire*, English Place-Names Society 5 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1933), hereafter ‘EPNS Northants’, p. 240. The form Peakirk was a Scandinavianisation of the Old English name (*ibid*). The 1016 occurrence is in P. H. Sawyer (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks 8 (London, 1968), hereafter ‘Sawyer’, S 947.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Mellows and William Thomas Mellows (trs), W. T. Mellows (ed.), *The Peterborough Chronicle of Hugh Candidus* (2nd edn rev., Peterborough, Peterborough Museum Society, 1966).

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Biddick, *The Other Economy: Pastoral Husbandry on a Medieval Estate* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989), hereafter Biddick, ‘Other Economy’, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Guthlac’s biography, in the original version composed shortly after his death circa 715, is in Bertram Colgrave, *Felix’s Life of Saint Guthlac: Introduction, text, translation and notes* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> R. M. Serjeantson and W. R. D. Adkins (eds), *The Victoria History of the County of Northampton*, 2 (London, James Street, 1906), hereafter ‘VCH Northants, 2’, ‘Nassaburgh Hundred’, s.v. ‘Glinton’ and ‘Peakirk’.

Before focusing more closely on the village origins, it is worth reflecting on the extent of Peakirk parish. South-westwards the twin vills stretched down into the belt of woodland between Barnack and Peterborough, and Etton and Helpston as well as Glinton may have been in Peakirk's *parochia* at some point, judging from the parish boundaries and a late, retrospective reference to lordship.<sup>6</sup> The manor may have been connected with administration of the Forest of the Soke of Peterborough. A (?fourteenth-century) forester's effigy stands in the porch of Glinton parish church,<sup>7</sup> and the perquisites of the hereditary constables of Peterborough included timber from Peakirk for building and fuel (housebote and firebote) for their residence at Maxey. Their fee also included Woodcroft in Etton. Every plough-land of Glinton manor owed 1d for wax in 1125 – a probable cash commutation of a forest-related rent in kind.<sup>8</sup> Northwards the *parochia* once extended to the Welland at Deeping Gate in the west and to the outskirts of Crowland in the east. This is apparent because North Fen was known as Peakirk Marsh or Moor – it was common of the soke, enjoyed by Peterborough, Glinton, Maxey and Northborough,<sup>9</sup> and as such may also have been administered by the Glinton-based Forester. (Manorial waste included marsh as well as woodland, and protein resources included fish and wildfowl as well as beasts of the chase. Tenants of Glinton manor in 1125 included a fowler, who held seven-and-a-half acres in return for ten wild geese yearly.<sup>10</sup> See the Peakirk house name Goshams below.) Walderham Hall in Northborough was known as *Peykirkchaere* alias Walderham in a document of 1538, *chaere* referring to a parcel of fief.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the people of Borough Fen, stretching east towards Crowland and again part of the Soke's waste, had reserved seats in Peakirk church.<sup>12</sup> The parish of Peakirk was therefore a good seven miles across, and five north to south if 'the hermitage place of St Guthlac in Marholm' was included,<sup>13</sup> together with Edmund's gift of Walton in Paston parish.

The plan units of Peakirk are intriguing. There will be varying ways of interpreting them but at least three layers or phases are evident.

One appears to be represented by curvilinear features. Those appearing on the Ordnance Survey six-inch mapping of the late nineteenth century are shown in green on Fig. 4, while Fig. 5 adds (with thicker lines) features observed on the 1824 Inclosure Map. This layer or phase's principal component is the area bounded by Chestnut Close, Deeping Road and Rectory Lane, and whose northern part is occupied by the 'village green'. To the north-east, a series of property boundaries on

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<sup>6</sup> The unreliable fourteenth-century writer known as Pseudo-Ingulph. *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland: with the continuations by Peter of Blois and anonymous writers, translated from the Latin with notes by Henry T. Riley* (London, H. G. Bohn, 1854).

<sup>7</sup> John Langton and Graham Jones (eds), *Forests and Chases of Medieval England and Wales, c. 1000 to c. 1500* (Oxford, St John's College Research Centre [distributed Oxbow Books], forthcoming), hereafter 'Langton and Jones', Plates 12-14.

<sup>8</sup> VCH Northants, 2, pp. 503, 487, 493. On wax from the forest, Graham Jones, 'A common of hunting? Forests, lordship and community before and after the Conquest', in Langton and Jones, forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup> VCH Northants, 2, p. 520.

<sup>10</sup> VCH Northants, 2, p. 493.

<sup>11</sup> EPNS Northants, p. 240.

<sup>12</sup> VCH Northants, 2, p. 520, citing *Northants Notes and Queries* 2, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> The 'hermitage place' was bequeathed to St Guthlac's chantry in St Mary's, Marholm, in 1397. VCH Northants, 2, p. 500.

both sides of Deeping Road hint at a smaller enclosure in which the Hermitage sits centrally in the south-east, most clearly defined quadrant, and an even smaller feature immediately north of the Hermitage near the course of the South Drain which is here close to its confluence with the Welland. Further curvilinear lines include the Inclosure Map's eastern edge of the churchyard, the north side of Rectory Lane, and the property boundary running along the western side of the Old Rectory grounds. It should be pointed out – see Figs. 2 and 3 – that the curvilinear nature of these property lines is much clearer on the six-inch Ordnance Survey maps based on surveying begun in the 1880s than on recent Ordnance Survey products, for example those available via 'Digimap' at the Edinburgh University on-line mapping site, 'Edina'.

A second layer is linear (rectilinear in parts) (Fig. 5) and aligned on Thorney Road and its westward extrapolation, represented by the southern edges of the 'village green' and the churchyard. This line, if extended further, runs parallel with the direct lane/footpath to Glington. Perhaps the course of the lane shifted a little to the south. The rectilinear features include a sequence of property plots south of Rectory Lane.

The third layer is represented by the transverse eastern edge of the churchyard running from north-west to south-east and running south to Rectory Lane along the frontages of houses facing Chestnut Close (Fig. 6). The resulting trapezoidal shape of the churchyard suggests the division of a larger earlier area which also included the Old Rectory as well as land to the north and ran as far as the hypothesised enclosure around the Hermitage as well as including the 'village green'. Today the block's northern boundary is close to lying parallel with the axis aligned on Thorney Road (Fig. 2), but the Inclosure Map of 1824 suggests less regular land divisions, and even allowing for the inexact survey techniques, there seems to have been some careful tidying up of these divisions later in the nineteenth century (shown as black lines).

Looking at both the curvilinear and (recti)linear layers, it is reasonable to consider whether the latter might preserve the shape of a remodelling of the settlement, perhaps the work of Abbot Wulfgeat, who, according to Orderic Vitalis, writing in the early years of the twelfth century, obtained Edward the Confessor's consent to join Crowland abbey to his monastery at Peakirk or 'Pega's land' (*Pegelandae coenobium*).<sup>14</sup> The implication is that Wulfgeat was ruling over a prospering religious house at Peakirk, one moreover which on the evidence of Glington chapelry's dedication in honour of Benedict, founder of the monastic rule, had gone through the Benedictine reforms of English religious communities in the tenth century.<sup>15</sup> His rule, linked to Edward's reign, 1042x66, might give a date for the 'Peakirk cross'. 'The character of the design is late, and is more nearly allied to Norman than Saxon work,' according to Christopher Markham.<sup>16</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner merely called it 'Saxon'.<sup>17</sup> An earlier alternative period for remodelling is the second decade of the century, the time of a charter of King Edmund (see below). There is a good chance that the

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<sup>14</sup> VCH Northants, 2, p. 519; Marjorie Chibnall (trs. and ed.), *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* (6 vols, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969-80), hereafter 'Orderic', 2, p. 345.

<sup>15</sup> Glington' dedication is known from a will of 1526: VCH Northants, 2, p. 494.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Markham, *The Stone Crosses of the County of Northampton* (London &c., 1901), p. 95, hereafter Markham, 'Stone Crosses'.

<sup>17</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England. Bedfordshire, and the County of Huntingdon and Peterborough* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968), hereafter 'Pevsner', p. 304.

northern block represents the monastic land and the southern the tenant holdings from which was farmed the demesne arable of Crowland in the manor of Glington, variously described as 1, 2 and 3 virgates, and ascribed in a charter of debatable authenticity and dated 833 as a gift to Crowland by king Wiglaf of Mercia's former butler. In 1116 the abbots of Peterborough and Crowland came to an agreement concerning sokemen of Crowland in their demesne at Peakirk.<sup>18</sup> The dispute might well have blown up because these had been lands of Peakirk abbey, incorporated into Crowland's possessions only after Wulfgeat's assumption of both abbasies and their original ownership lost to sight with the subsequent disappearance of Peakirk's monastery.

It is notable that the Thorney Road axis is very similar to that of the church. In fact, was it the church, not Thorney Road, which determined that axis? If so, its architect may have been giving the remodelled or expanded village a deliberately sacralised layout. The axis of the church lies east-northeast, like the majority of churches, probably from sunrise alignments during the summer building period.<sup>19</sup> It dates from at least the eleventh century, since the eastern angles of an aisleless nave of that period survive and the west end of the nave is also from an aisleless Norman church.<sup>20</sup>

Looking again at the curvilinear features, the large area enclosed by Chestnut Close and Deeping Road is less regular south of the 'village green'. It broadens out south of No. 2 Chestnut Close, as does the adjacent curvilinear area south of the churchyard. Possibly these curvilinear elements south of the Thorney Road axis represent not a phase predating the hypothesised remodelling, but rather the effect of later infilling intruding onto a possible open space in front of the churchyard. The Inclosure Plan seems to indicate that the bend in the Deeping Road as it passes through the village lay rather further north in 1824 than in the 1880s – but this may be a result of surveying techniques and a closer reading of the Plan is needed. As for the function of the 'village green' feature, it may have been pastoral (the house name Goshams, if ancient rather than a more recent family name, might refer to geese, specifically perhaps the render in kind owed by the fowler mentioned in 1125), but the footprint of an earthwork need not be ruled out (Figs. 7 and 8). Ownership, the present writer believes, rested in the church.

A later period for a remodelling could be the late twelfth century, a time of growing population and prosperity. The north aisle of the church was added *circa* 1170 and the north chapel some years later. The chancel was rebuilt around 1190, and during the period 1133x1245 occurs the first report of the Hermitage, named 'St Bartholomew in the Marsh'.<sup>21</sup> Bartholomew was the recipient of Guthlac's special devotion and the patron saint of Crowland Abbey.<sup>22</sup> It may have been in the earlier part of this period

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<sup>18</sup> VCH Northants, 2, p. 520, citing Robert Swapham's continuation of the Peterborough Chronicle, Joseph Sparke, *Historiæ Anglicanæ (Historiæ cænobii burgensis) scriptores varii, e codicibus manuscriptis nunc primum ed.* (London, 1723), the MS history of Robert Swapham, hereafter 'Swapham', fol. 118.

<sup>19</sup> Ian Hinton, 'Church alignment and patronal saints' days, *The Antiquaries' Journal* 86 (2006), pp. 206-26.

<sup>20</sup> VCH Northants, 2, p. 520; Pevsner, p. 303.

<sup>21</sup> Swapham, fol. 218b., recording the gift to Peterborough of an adjacent meadow by Roger Paganus of Helpston.

<sup>22</sup> Graham Jones, 'Ghostly mentor, teacher of mysteries: Bartholomew, Guthlac and the Apostle's cult in early medieval England', in George Ferzoco and Carolyn Meussig (eds), *Medieval Monastic Education* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 136-52, hereafter Jones, 'Bartholomew'.

that the church was (re)dedicated, or became known, solely in honour of All Saints.

All Saints was included in the title of the church which preceded the existing building. The feast developed after *circa* 800 and All Saints dedications probably began to proliferate after the resumption of full episcopal and pastoral functions after the reconquest of the Danelaw, which ended in 920.<sup>23</sup> Peakirk had adopted the feast by 1016, when King Edmund Atheling granted land *æt Pegecyrcan* and Walton near Peterborough to ‘the place which is called the new minster of the Holy Trinity and our Lord’s mother and all saints’.<sup>24</sup> John Blair, who calls the charter copy ‘acceptable’, has commented that ‘in the absence of other obvious candidates [this] seems likely to have been at Peakirk itself’.<sup>25</sup>

The term ‘new’ shows that there had been an earlier mother church at Peakirk. If not on the site of the Hermitage, it is easiest to seek it first near or indeed under the existing building. For example, it seems possible that an earlier building underlay the east end of the north chapel and that it was somehow connected with the Hermitage. A vestry was built east of the north chapel in the fourteenth century, about the same time perhaps as the earliest fabric of the Hermitage chapel as it now stands, with a west door into the north chapel as well as a doorway into the chancel. In 1617 it was recorded that the upkeep of the vestry ‘and the two seats at the west end of it’ (i.e. in the north chapel) was the responsibility of the owner of the Hermitage.<sup>26</sup> If this did indeed preserve the footprint of an earlier building, it may have been the predecessor of the existing Norman church, the ‘new minster’ of 1016. Alternatively it may have been a free-standing churchyard chapel – or perhaps a shrine chapel, for anything immediately north of the high altar occupied the place of honour on the right hand of Christ at his expected Second Coming, and local saints’ shrines are frequently found in this position. (That said, shrine chapels can be located elsewhere in relation to the church – as for example with St Beuno’s sepulchre chapel at Clynnog near Caernarfon, which is south-west of the church.) The presence of relics at Peakirk is suggested by an internally splayed opening in the north-east angle of the chancel, about six feet above present ground level (rather high, but perhaps re-set?) with pinholes externally to hold a grill.<sup>27</sup>

The most venerated relic(s) at Peakirk would be associated with Pega. Though she took charge of her brother’s body and burial and died herself not long afterwards on a visit to Rome in 716 or 719, a tradition persisted relics of Pega were returned to England.<sup>28</sup> A twelfth-century verse treatment of the Guthlac legend by Peter de Blois contains the story of how Pega’s shape was adopted by the devil in order to tempt her brother to eat during the hours of fasting, and for which Guthlac sent his sister from

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<sup>23</sup> Graham Jones, *Saints in the Landscape* (Stroud, Tempus, 2007), p. 212.

<sup>24</sup> Sawyer, p. 285, charter S 947.

<sup>25</sup> John Blair, ‘A handlist of Anglo-Saxon saints’, in Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 495-566, at p. 552.

<sup>26</sup> VCH Northants, 2, p. 519.

<sup>27</sup> VCH Northants, 2, p. 519, and personal observation.

<sup>28</sup> Pega’s story appears in the Bollandist Brothers’ compilation, *Acta Sanctorum* (Antwerp, 1643-), *Jan. I* (1643), 532-33. See David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (5th edn, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 419. The various versions of the story and the Peakirk connection are fully explored by Avril M Lumley Prior, Avril M. Lumley Prior, ‘Fact and/or folklore? The case for St Pega of Peakirk’, *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 61 (2008), hereafter Lumley Prior, ‘Pega’, pp. 7-16.

Crowland and never saw her again.<sup>29</sup> A tradition that she lived thereafter at Peakirk on the site of the Hermitage has been current since at least the eleventh century. 'In that place Pega served God for many years... [On Guthlac's death, his servant Beccel] leaped into a boat and went to... Pega to tell her all her brother's behests... The next day she journeyed to Crowland and on the third day buried the body.'<sup>30</sup> According to Ingulph's late version of the Guthlac legend, Pega retired after her brother's death to a hermitage four leagues west of Crowland. It has been argued that four standard three-mile leagues would place Pega's hermitage far to the west of Peakirk. However, there is no certainty that three-mile leagues are meant. Various leagues were used in medieval England. Four Roman leagues of one-and-a-quarter miles would be most appropriate. The centre of Peakirk is exactly five miles from Crowland Abbey.

Christopher Markham's description of Peakirk's Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft referred to it being 'found during the repair of the church'.<sup>31</sup> Possibly this refers to re-flooring, or to the only clear sign of modern (?late Victorian) restructuring, the installation of heating in the vestry. The potential significance of the latter possibility, given the unusual arrangements concerning this part of the church, is difficult to over-estimate. The former possibility might indicate 'ritual burial' at a time of rebuilding, perhaps following damage during a period of unrest; the latter a deliberate re-use of material with devotional associations, as happened for example in the case of the 'Mercian' sculptured stones at Breedon in Leicestershire. Re-set sculptured stones acted as a signpost to the faithful, and in churches with relics reminded pilgrims of the presence of the holy, particularly in the corporeal remains of a saint. Although the dragons in the Peakirk stone (Fig. 9) are a characteristic of Anglo-Saxon art, the widespread representation of the devil as a dragon would have reminded pilgrims of the role of demons in the Guthlac legend and Bartholomew's help in defeating them.

It may be significant that a property line on the north-west side of Chestnut Close, if extrapolated, is aligned with the north-east angle of the church and with the start of the closely aligned property boundary and path just north of the Hermitage which bisects the smallest of the three curvilinear features. The path leads north-east towards the South Drain, the combination of streams rising south-west of Glington (itself probably named from it<sup>32</sup>), which is here close to its confluence with the Welland. Was this the way to and from a wharf? The significance of early medieval wharfs on or leading to the navigable Welland is noted in a recent study of the Abbey of Peterborough's estates: 'At Maxey [two-and-a-half miles north-west of Peakirk]... excavation uncovered timber-framed buildings, pits, postholes, and ditches. A series of large pits and slag deposits offer ambiguous evidence for industrial activities, possibly the tanning of hides and smelting of ore for exchange at *emporia*, such as

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<sup>29</sup> For this and other versions of the legend, see Colgrave, 'Guthlac', esp. on Pega, pp. 23-24.

<sup>30</sup> Orderic, 2, pp. 343, 337.

<sup>31</sup> Markham, 'Stone Crosses', p. 95. According to the recollection in 1926 of Bertha, daughter of Edward James, Rector of Peakirk 1865-1912, the cross-shaft was given to the Hermitage by a Dr Moore – perhaps the Canon Moore who gave a paper on 'St Guthlac and Croyland' to the British Archaeological Society, published in their *Journal*, vol. 35 (1879). The chapel copyhold was purchased from the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough in 1878 by Miss James' brother Francis. Markham's report contradicts her statement that the stone was found 'at Deeping'. My thanks are due to Dr Avril Lumley Prior for her location of Miss James' unpublished memoir: B. James, 'St. Pega and St. Guthlac with special reference to St. Pega's cell at Peakirk, Northamptonshire, and the adjacent Monastery of the Holy Trinity, the Mother of God and All Saints'.

<sup>32</sup> EPNS Northants.

London, or Dorestad across the Channel. These *emporium* had begun to develop vigorously during the opening phase of the monastery's growth [from *circa* 660]. Mercian interest in trade and monasteries coincided. They used their monasteries as reception centers for messengers and ambassadors who facilitated diplomatic and commercial exchange.'<sup>33</sup> The possibility arises that the Hermitage, or a predecessor on a slightly more northern site within the smallest curvilinear feature, was located for its proximity to a wharf, both for easy access to boats for Crowland and beyond to the North Sea, and for visits by pilgrims seeking St Pega. The path between the landing stage and the presumed resting place of Pega's relic(s) would have functioned as a sort of *via sacra*. It would have been particularly well used around the time of Pega's feast, January 8<sup>34</sup> or 9<sup>35</sup>.

Why does the church stand where it does? It may be significant that in 1919, when the pond was being dug in the Old Rectory gardens, pieces of Roman amphorae came to light, together with Romano-British pottery and also oyster shells.<sup>36</sup> Roman sherds have also been found in the churchyard.<sup>37</sup> Early in the seventeenth century a Roman urn was dug up at Peakirk during drain-cutting 'close to the Car Dyke'.<sup>38</sup> The church lies close, therefore, to the site of a high status villa. Finds of imported amphorae have been said to be rare in the Fens, alongside a 'striking lack' of decorated Samian ware. 'Wine and oil were not in demand.'<sup>39</sup> The find of an urn indicates burial with rites, but just possibly a place of devotion also. The indication is that Pega was given a villa site, perhaps by a royal or noble relative, and that in her time or later a church building developed on part of the villa's footprint, as for example at Frocester, Gloucestershire. Much closer to hand, of course, is the Roman palace complex at Castor, whose site was used for the monastery founded by Penda's daughter Cyneburgh, who may have been Pega's aunt.<sup>40</sup>

Literary descriptions of ascetic hermit life on the frontiers of civilisation are *topoi*; they should not be taken literally. Though signs of prosperity in the region decline after the Roman period and a break in domestic occupation is apparent in the early sixth century at Walton,<sup>41</sup> it can hardly be a coincidence that on the Fen-edge sprang up a cluster of religious houses almost as dense as those of the Severn Valley. The wealth of Medeshamstede abbey is evident from its very foundation by Penda's sons

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<sup>33</sup> Biddick, 'Other Economy', p. 10, citing Richard Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: The Origins of Towns and Trade, A.D. 600-1000* (London, Duckworth, 1982), pp. 39-46, and Cyril Hart, 'The Kingdom of Mercia', in Anne Dornier (ed.), *Mercian Studies* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1977), p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> Recorded from the eleventh century and later: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 296, fos. 1r-6v., from Crowland, and *English Benedictine Kalendars after AD 1100*, ed. F. Wormald, 1, Henry Bradshaw Society 81 (1946), p. 114.

<sup>35</sup> G. Kotzor, *Das altenglische Martyrologium* (2 vols, Munich, 1981), 2, pp. 13, 282.

<sup>36</sup> C. W. Phillips (ed.), *The Fenland in Roman Times: Studies of a major area of peasant colonization with a gazetteer covering all known sites and finds*, by P. Salway et al., Royal Geographical Society Research Series 5 (London, Royal Geographical Society, 1970), hereafter Phillips, 'Fenland', p. 251.

<sup>37</sup> Lumley Prior, 'Pega', p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> Kennet Gibson, *A Comment upon Part of the Fifth Journey of Antoninusthrough Britain...* (London, John Nichols, 1800), p. 111, citing William Stukeley's report of an observation by William Dugdale, probably in his *History of Imbanking and Drayning of Divers Fen and Marshes* (London, 1662).

<sup>39</sup> Phillips, 'Fenland', p. 167.

<sup>40</sup> Graham Jones, 'Penda's progeny', unpub. research seminar paper, University of Leicester, Department of English Local History, 1998.

<sup>41</sup> For the archaeological references see Biddick, 'Other Economy', Chapter 1, notes 3 and 4.

Peada and Wulfhere (Pega's cousins?); Guthlac's tomb was adorned by a king; Wilfrid's monastery at Oundle was where he spoke of giving treasure to kings for their friendship; Castor has been described as 'a prestigious ecclesiastical occupation associated with a substantial domestic settlement'<sup>42</sup> – this is without speaking of Ely, Ramsey, Thorney, *et al.*

These 'plantations' may have had both an economic and an ecclesiastical purpose, part of the process of reviving the Fenland economy, but with a cultural aspect also. Guthlac and Pega's father Penwalh came from a Romance-speaking background; Guthlac 'knew the British tongue' and heard it spoken in the Fens; Peakirk's *parochia* probably included Walton and Bretton, *tūns* of Romance-speakers and Britons. Their mother Tetta is more likely to have been Anglian or West Saxon, perhaps more representative of 'anglicisation'. Not to be forgotten is Guthlac's devotion to the apostle Bartholomew, whose legend from the earliest times was about the appropriation of other people's places of worship for Christian use; in short, reformation.<sup>43</sup> There was work to be done, spurred by ideas of *Romanitas*, both to complete the conversion of communities clinging to pre-Christian religions, the interrupted mission work of the British church, and to reform that church also. The Bartholomew strategy, encapsulated in the apostle's story which would have been read every year to pilgrims at the Peakirk Hermitage, and conceivably displayed on now lost panels of the Peakirk Cross, applied to sacralised landscapes, not just to individual temples and shrines. Only archaeology can reveal what elements of the sacred landscape may have been present at Peakirk before Pega.

To summarise (Fig. 8), a rectilinear remodelling of the settlement, perhaps connected with population expansion and revival of the religious community alongside that of Crowland, may have happened in the eleventh century or a little later. The area seems to have expanded south, and subsequently, perhaps after the Black Death, it appears to have been divided up.

Underlying the remodelling there appear to be a number of curvilinear features, the largest straddling the course of the Car Dyke, and another containing the Hermitage and located close to the angle of the South Drain as it turns north-eastwards to join the river Welland between Deeping and Crowland. Traditionally and on strong grounds, the Hermitage has been held to be the site of the Hermitage of St Pega, sister of St Guthlac of Crowland, who took charge of her brother's body and burial and died herself not long afterwards on a visit to Rome in 716 or 719. It is entirely conceivable that relics of Pega were brought back to her hermitage and interred in a new church built to receive them, perhaps a shrine chapel immediately north of the chancel of the later Church of All Saints.

While the 'island' character of the hermitage site has been rightly noted as typical for medieval religious foundations – an island's isolation makes it a 'desert place' – it is important not to lose sight of Pega's high-born origins and contacts and probable benefactors. Her brother's biography reveals her royal ancestry, and she herself was a friend of kings. Abbesses and other holy women of the age received royal or noble land for their establishments. The Romano-British material found near the church

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<sup>42</sup> Biddick, 'Other Economy', p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, 'Bartholomew'.

encourages the conclusion that for all its local isolation, Pega was given part or all of a royal estate, perhaps even a residence which developed out of a late antique villa. With the growth of manorialisation, secular administration shifted to Glinton because it was probably the reeve's vill, while Maxey developed as an *emporium* on the main waterway. Absorption into the territory of Medehamstede may have taken place in the same way that lesser religious houses were absorbed by superior houses in the same district (e.g. Worcester's absorption of nunneries or double houses such as Inkberrow and Fladbury). There is much to be learned from Peakirk and conservation of its built heritage and archaeologically sensitive landscape is essential.



*Fig. 1: Peakirk's compact village core from the air.*

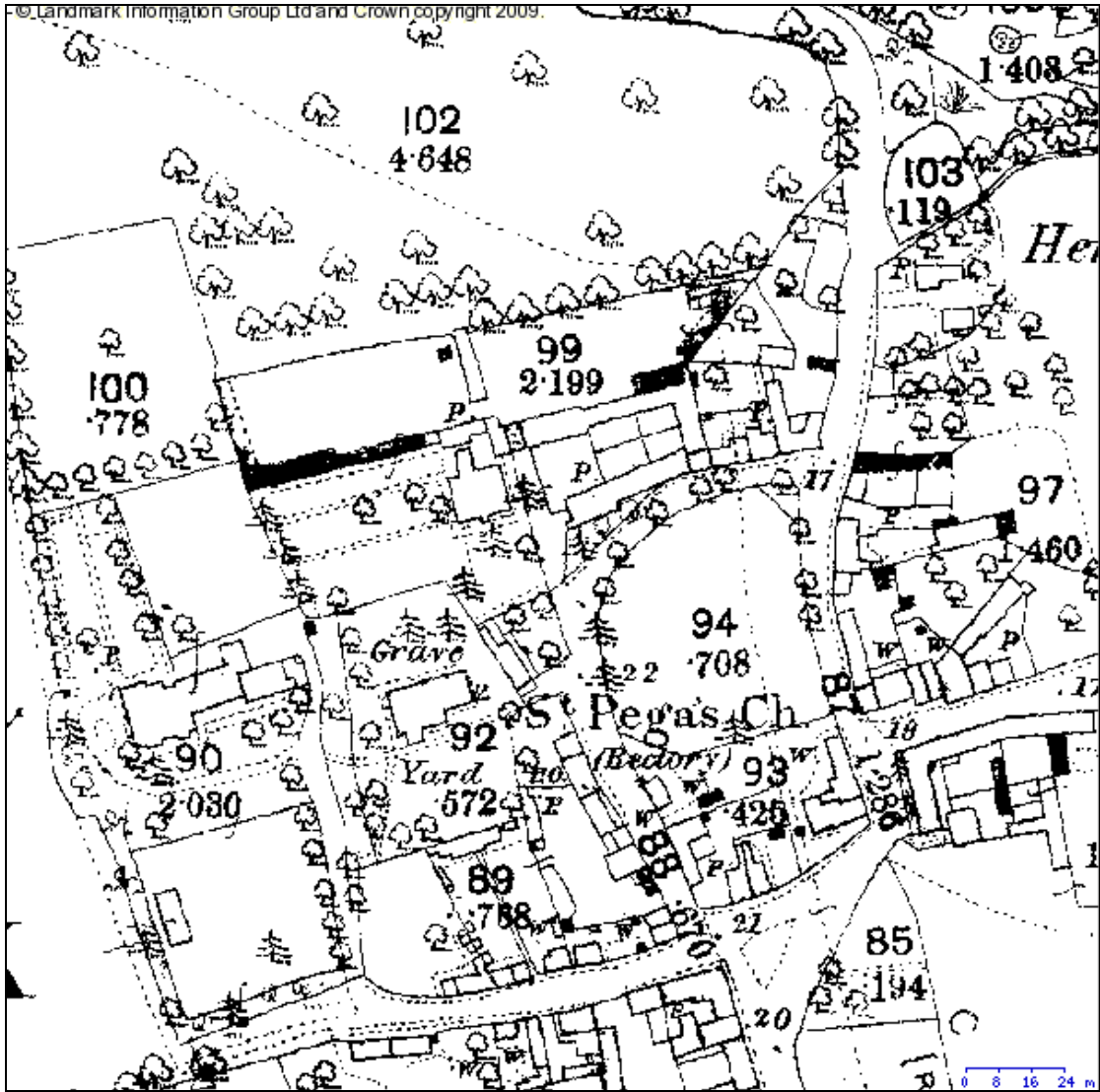


Fig. 2: Peakirk: Ordnance Survey, six inches to the mile, ?circa 1885.

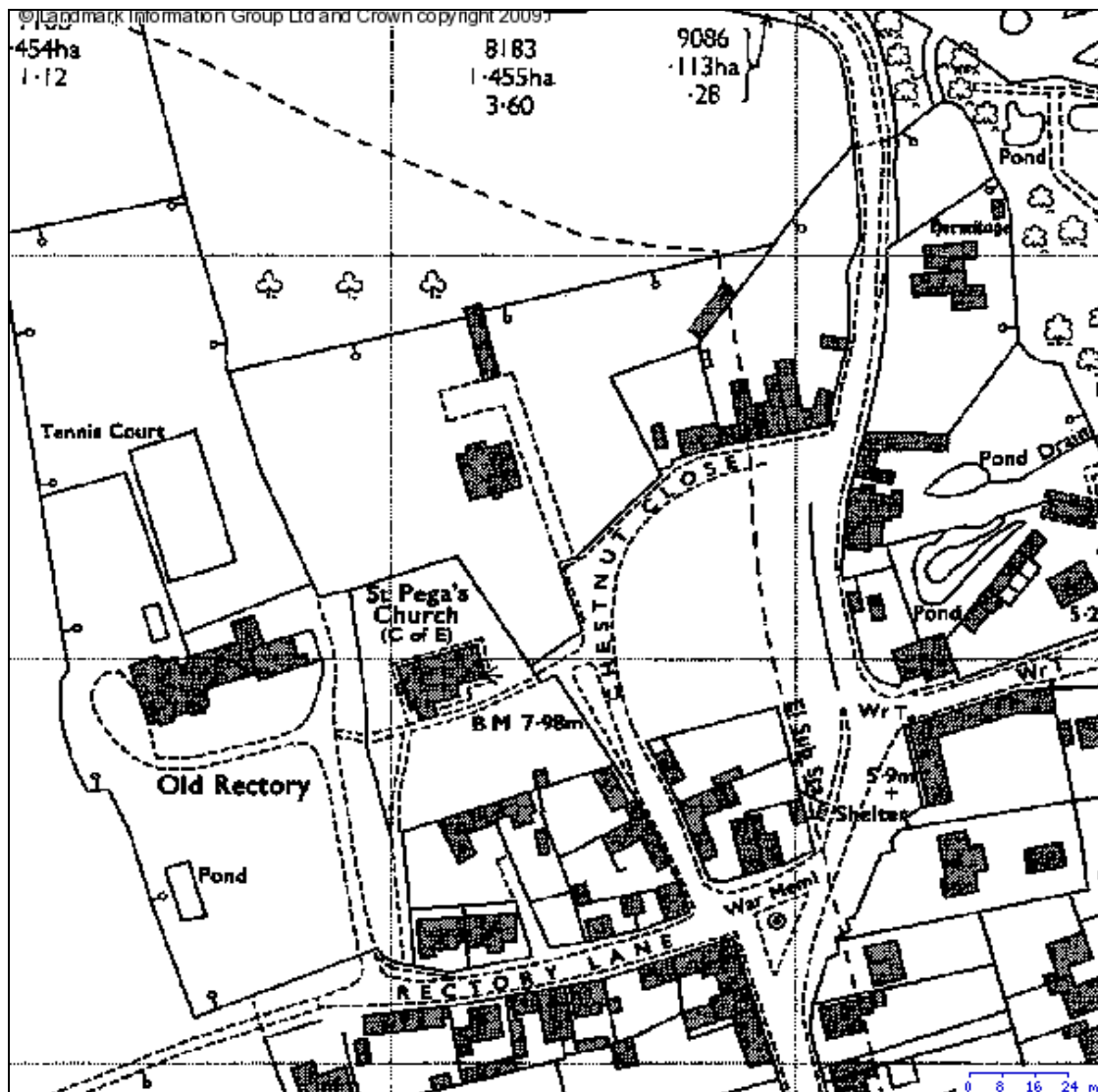


Fig. 3: Peakirk, Ordnance Survey 1:2,500, circa 1950.

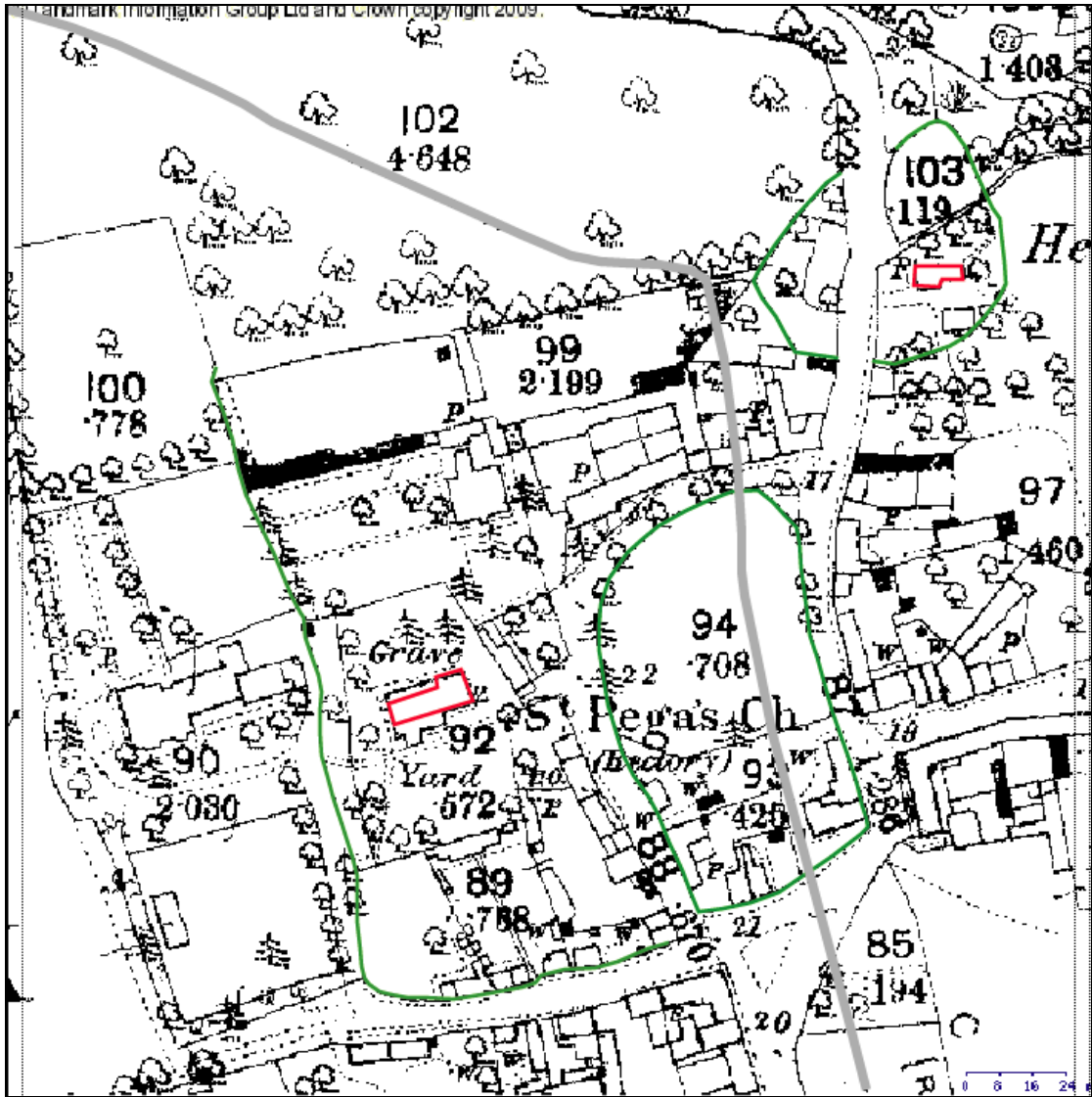


Fig. 4: Peakirk: Curvilinear features (shown in green), the Car Dyke (grey), and religious buildings, the parish church and the Hermitage (red).

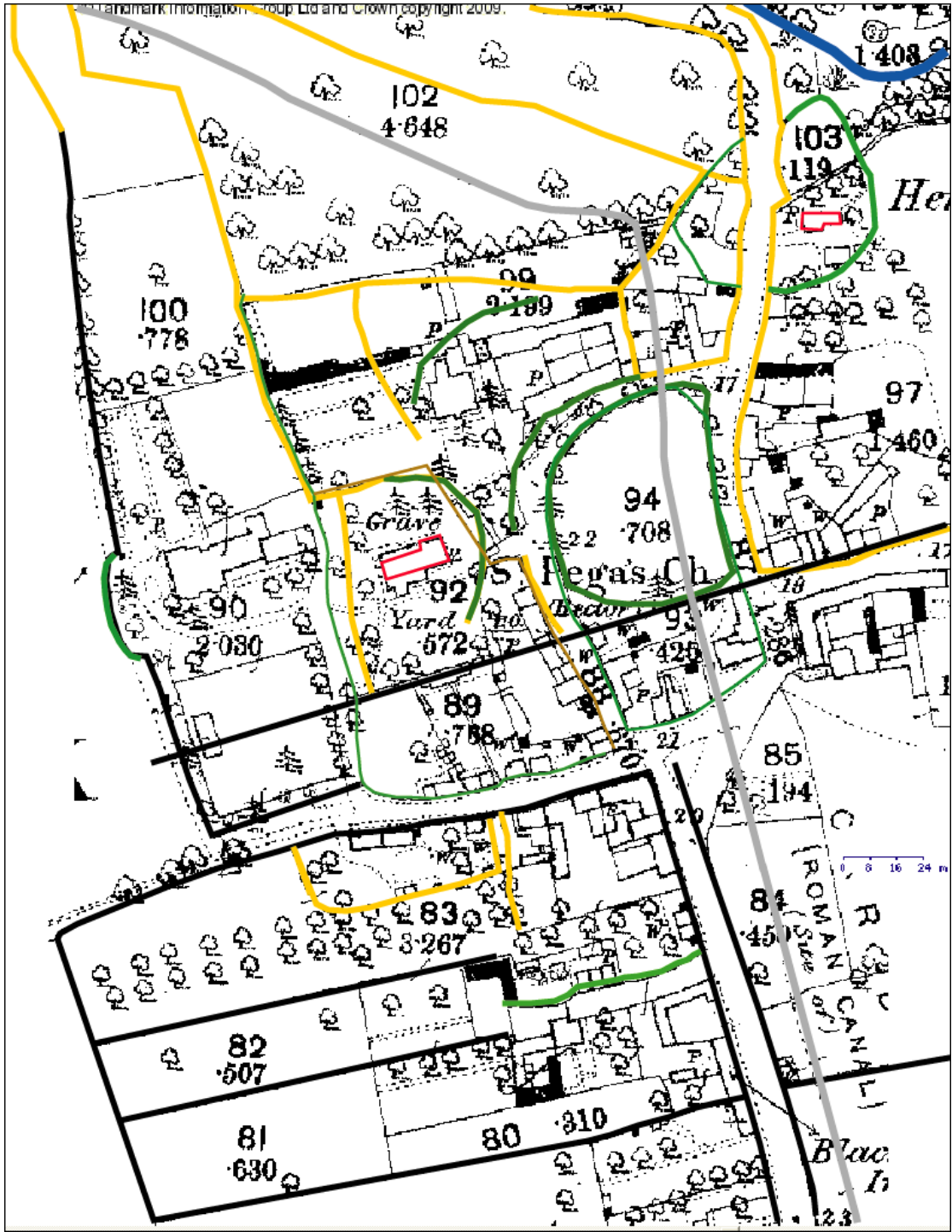


Fig. 5: Peakirk: As Fig. 4, plus additional curvilinear features from the Inclosure Map of 1824 (thick green lines); rectilinear features, shown in black, including the axis aligned with Thorney Road and parallel to that of the church; and other features from the Inclosure Map, in yellow.

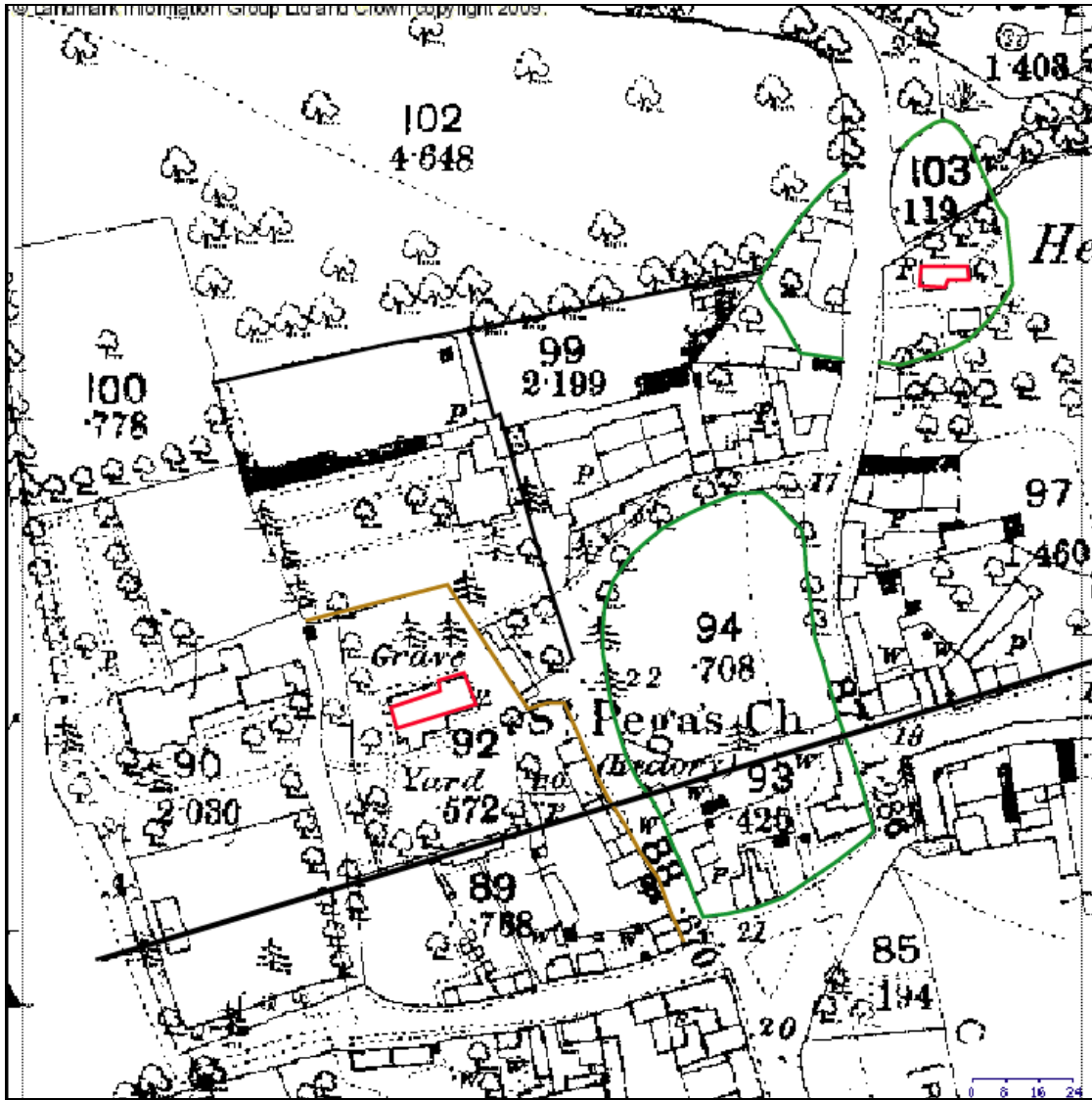


Fig. 6: Peakirk: Shown in brown, the eastern boundary of church and related property line on the west side of Chestnut Close, and in black (?nineteenth-century) replanning lines.

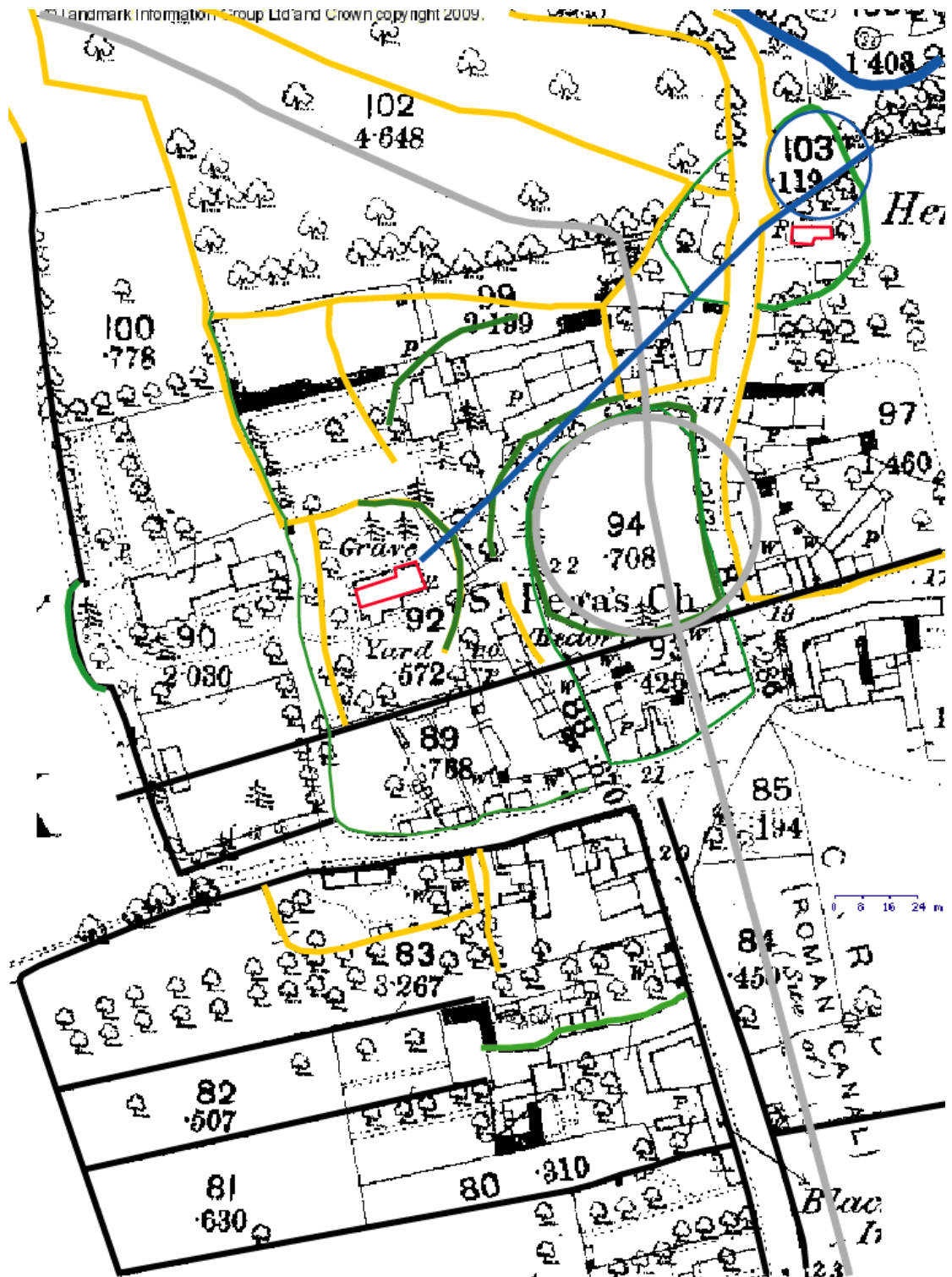
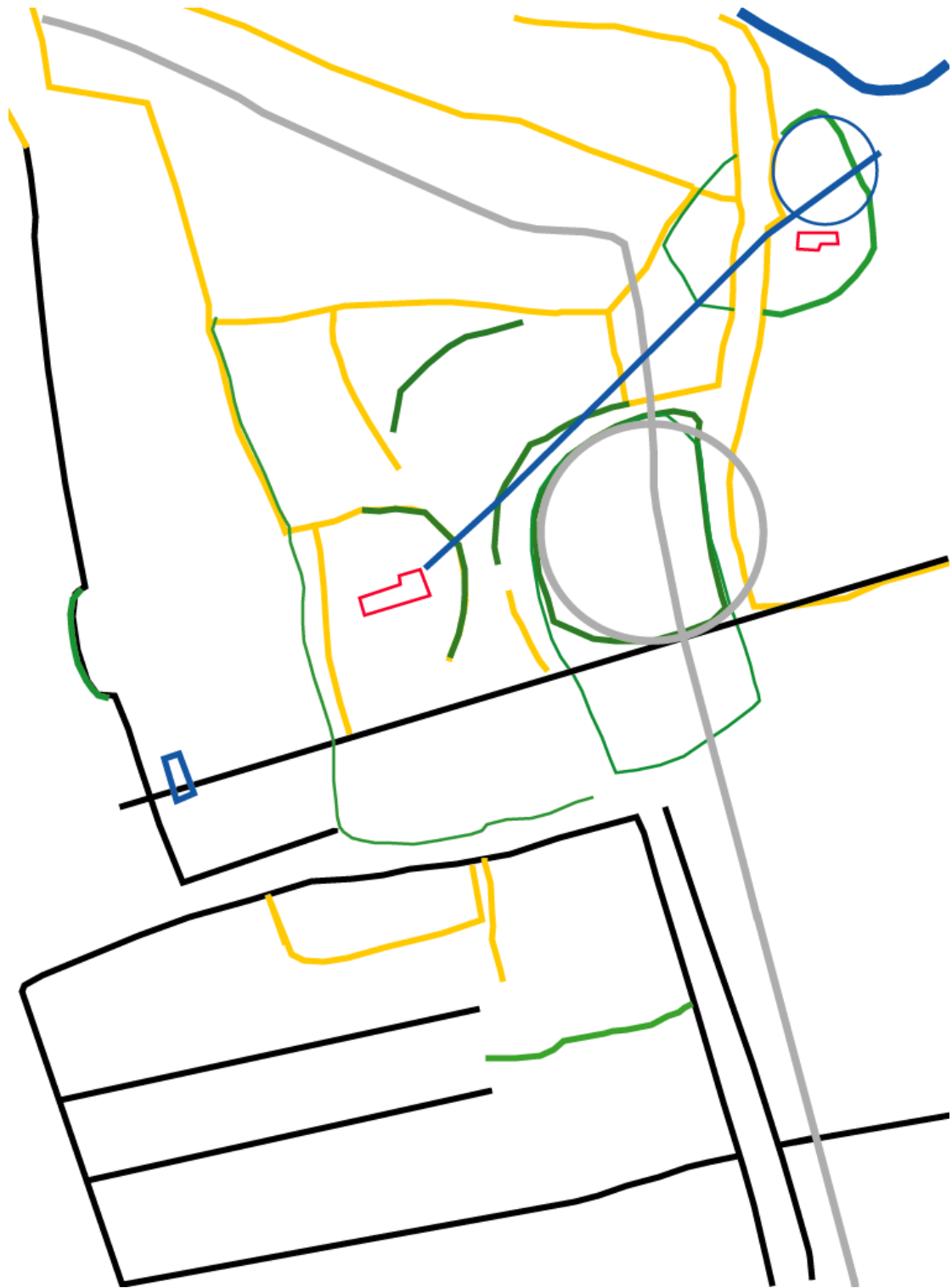


Fig. 7: Peakirk: Selected earlier features plus idealised extent of hypothesised curvilinear feature underlying the 'village green', and the extrapolated property line north-west of the 'green' which links the parish church with the Hermitage



*Fig. 8: Peakirk: Essentials of the village morphology together with the line of the Car Dyke (grey), the course of the South Drain (top right, blue), the conjectured curvilinear features, and (as a blue rectangle) the rectory pond where Romano-British material was found in 1919.*



*Fig. 9: The Peakirk cross-shaft, from Markham, 'Stone Crosses', p. 95.*