

1080 parish / Arch info

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ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	
27 OCT 2005	1/80/12N/FULL
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01 969 663250	

ArcheType

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Mr A Hewson
The Priory
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Middleham
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NYCC HER	
SNY	10334
ENY	2961
CNY	4464
Parish	1080
Rec'd	27/10/2005

24th October 2005

My ref: PM/05/rep

Dear Mr Hewson

re: Archaeological Watching Brief at The Priory, Back Lane, Middleham

Further to the completion of the archaeological watching brief requested by Richmondshire District Council during ground disturbance works for your development, I have pleasure in reporting on the results in this letter.

The watching brief was required because the Priory Guest House lies in the historic core of the medieval town, within a part of Middleham that is defined in the Richmondshire Local Plan as an Archaeologically Sensitive Area. This part of the town, close to the castle, is within the historic core of the settlement, an area with potential for the survival of medieval and later remains. Any ground-disturbing works in this area may, therefore, encounter evidence associated with medieval and later activity.

In addition, the building now known as The Priory is of mid-eighteenth century date and has been listed Grade II as being of architectural and historic importance. Ground works in its vicinity might recover evidence relating to the history of the house.

Ground works prior to development included the removal of existing floor levels within the small range of buildings lying to the north of the main property on the west side of the rear yard, plus drainage works relating to the new function of these buildings. The floor levels within the buildings were lowered by a depth of between 25cm and 50cm so that the new floors could be laid in accordance with building regulations. All works were undertaken by the contractor, using a mini-digger under archaeological supervision.

In the northern section of the buildings the removal of two concrete floors, plus hardcore, revealed a wet, black humic layer associated with a yellowish gravelly clay;

the clay was interpreted as a 'natural' layer, topped/mixed with an organic layer which probably derived from the use of this part of the building as a stable with hayloft above. No features of the stable survived, except for the 'hatch' giving access to the hayloft. The organic layer varied in depth, being thicker at the north and west of the room and less in evidence at the south of the room, where the gravel and clay was at a higher level. One piece of a Nottingham stoneware bowl, dating to the mid/late eighteenth century, was recovered from the top of the black organic layer. The black layer was not much disturbed by the excavation, as the level required for the new floor had been reached. Surviving archaeological remains (if any) lay below the excavated level, were not disturbed, and will remain sealed below the new floor.

In the central section of the buildings removal of the existing cobbles revealed a make-up layer which was not totally removed before the required new depth was reached; no archaeological finds or features were identified. This part of the building has a wide entrance arch, and appears to have been originally a coach house.

Similarly in the southern section of the buildings, removal of the stone flags forming the floor revealed a make-up layer which was not totally removed before the required new depth was reached; no archaeological finds or features were identified. Such features as survive, including a chimney, and a hearth at the first floor level, suggest that this building had a domestic function. It was probably a servant's or groom's cottage, at the rear of the building adjacent to the coach house and stable.

It is likely that the range of buildings where the development is taking place were originally a cottage, coach house and stable, contemporary with the first use of the house known as The Priory. The fragment of Nottinghamshire stoneware recovered from below the more modern floors in the stable area accords with the mid-eighteenth century date of the Priory.

The presence of a mason's mark on the stonework of the coach house arch suggests that at least some of the stone used in the construction of this building came from Middleham Castle, just across the road from The Priory, and, by the mid-eighteenth century, out of use.

In summary: the groundworks associated with the development at The Priory, Middleham, revealed no features of archaeological significance. The range of buildings under development appear to be a stable, coach house and groom's cottage contemporary with the original use of The Priory; no dating evidence earlier than the mid-eighteenth century was recovered. Some of the stonework used in the construction of this range of buildings appears to have been sourced from Middleham Castle.

I trust the above is to your satisfaction, and have pleasure in enclosing my invoice for the site work and report.

Yours sincerely,

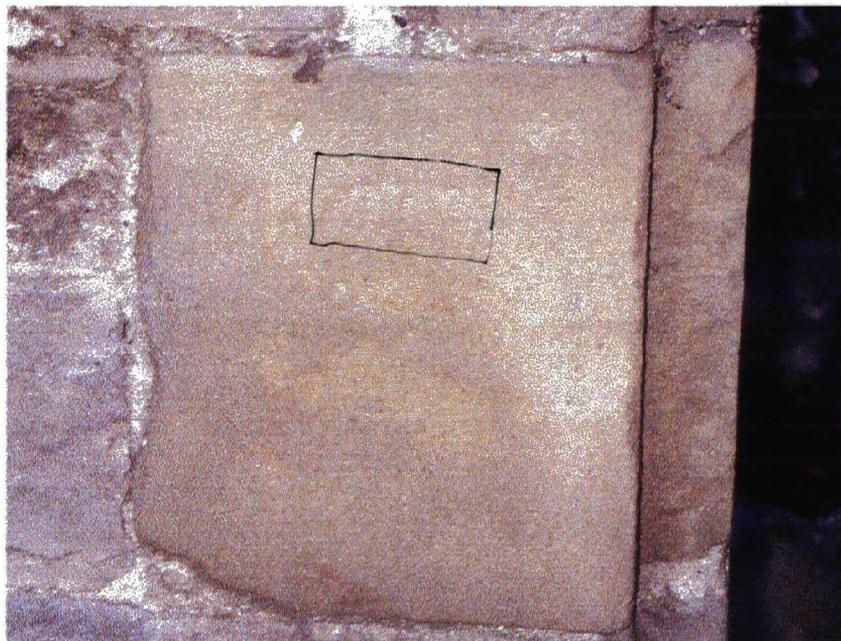
VM Metcalf

Vivienne Metcalf

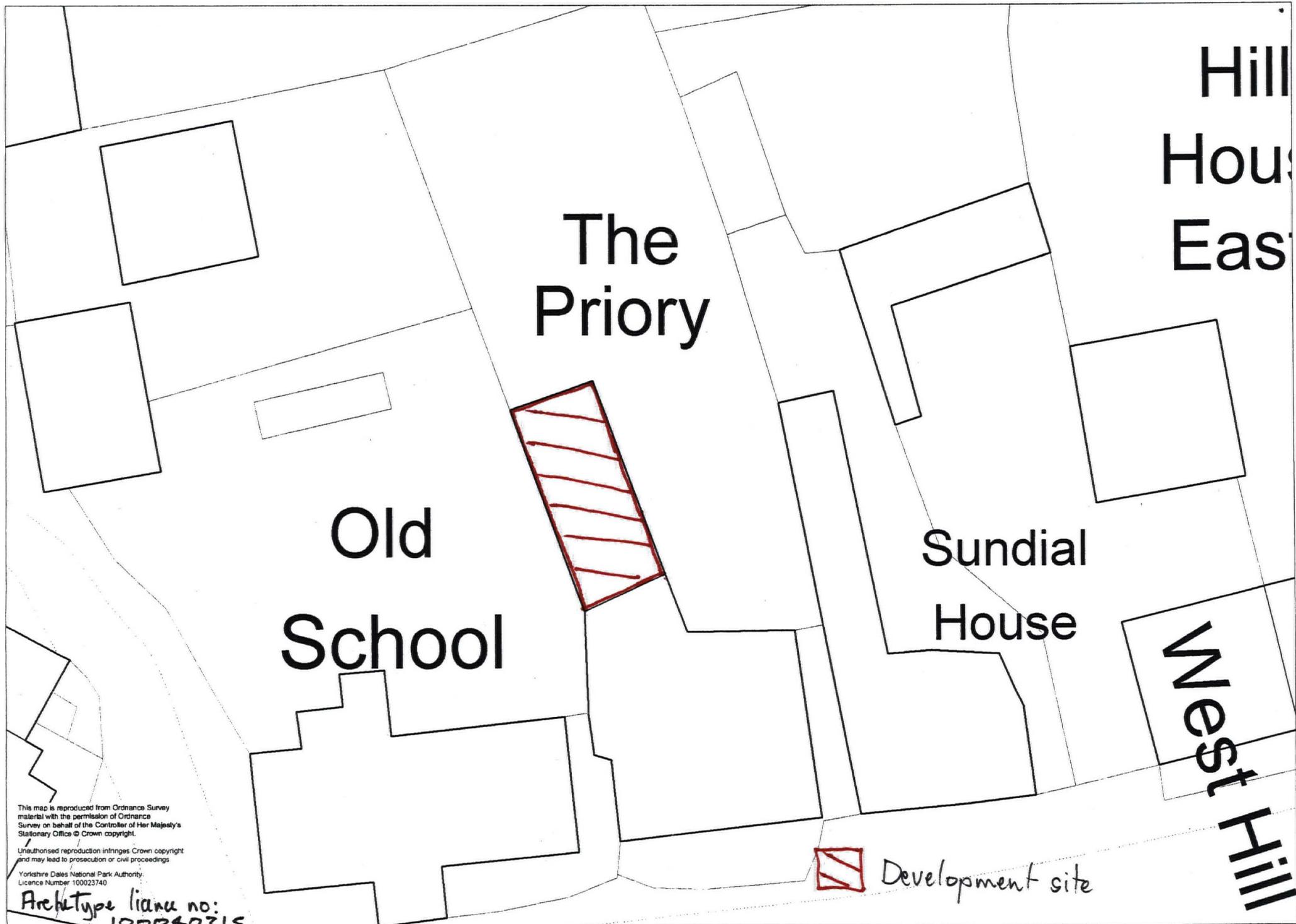
cc: Richmondshire District Council
North Yorkshire County Council



The Priory Guest House, Middleham. South side of coach house arch showing stone with mason's mark.



Mason's mark



The Priory

Hill House East

Old School

Sundial House

West Hill

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 Development site