

Rec 10/7/8



FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY SPECIALISTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

ABBAY PLACE, SELBY
NORTH YORKSHIRE

NYCC HER	
SNY	12094
ENY	3844
CNY	6722
Parish	8019
Rec'd	10/07/2008

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document reports on the results of a watching brief undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists (FAS) Ltd on behalf of Balfour Beatty Utilities Ltd during the excavation of a gas service trench at Abbey Place, Selby, North Yorkshire. The watching brief was carried out on the 11th June 2007.

1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The new gas service was located along a paved area bordered to the north and west by residential properties lining Abbey Place (Figure 1; NGR SE 615 324; Plate 1). To the east, it was bounded by a burial ground used during the cholera epidemic of 1848-9, now a grassed area incorporating mature trees. The precinct of Selby Abbey lies to the south of the development area.



Plate 1 Location of watching brief

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

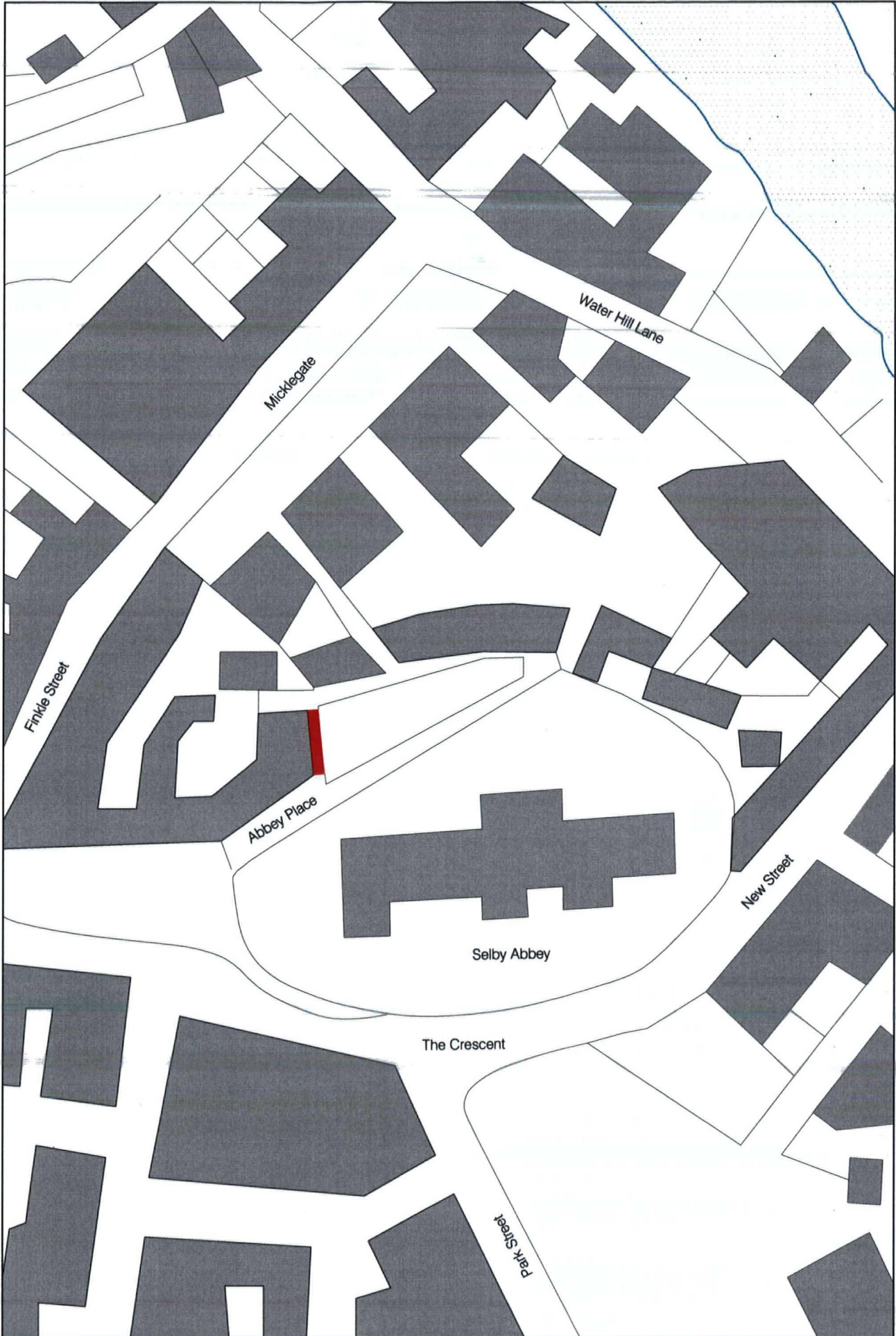
The aim of the watching brief was to identify, characterise and record any archaeological deposits encountered during the groundworks which would be destroyed or disturbed by the development. The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the North Yorkshire County Council Standard Written Scheme of Investigation for Limited Archaeological Recording for Service Works.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Abbey Place lies immediately to the southeast of Selby Abbey, situated centrally within the historic town of Selby. The history of the area is dominated by that of the abbey, founded in the late 11th century by the monk Benedict, who is recorded in legends to have travelled from Auxerre with a relic of St Germanus, after the saint appeared to him in a dream (Solloway 1925, 14-17; Page 1974, III 95). Benedict settled at the place which later became known as Selby, and was later granted land by William the Conqueror for the construction of the monastery. The original church structure was timber, and is thought to have been located closer to the river bank, on Church Hill; the current site of the abbey was occupied from the 12th century, when the abbey was reconstructed in stone.

The extant church has been attributed to several distinct phases of building. The first elements of the church to be erected, in the Norman period, were the central tower, the first two bays of the nave to the level of the triforium, and the accompanying bays of the aisles. Further buildings works, and major developments to the church, occurred in the 12th to 14th century (FAS 2001; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2007). A fire is believed to have





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Location plan

Scale 1:1500



Figure 1



ruined parts of the chapter house, dormitory, treasury and church in the 1340s (Solloway 1925, 27; Haslop 1958, 451). In 1346 the abbey church was described as ruinous, possibly a reference to the unfinished choir, while other buildings are described as destroyed by fire. As a result, the abbey obtained the right to appropriate the church at Brayton in order to use the income for repairs (Papal Registers - Petitions, vol.1,117).

Abbey Place lies to the north of the abbey, and would have been situated within the medieval abbey precinct. Reconstructed plans suggest that the precinct boundary, skirted by Kirk Dyke, would have lain relatively close to the north of the abbey church; little is known of potential structures in this area.

Selby Abbey was dissolved in December of 1539. Many of the monastic buildings were either stripped of resaleable material, dismantled or left to decay. Apart from the church, the only survivors were some agricultural buildings and the monastic gateway facing onto The Crescent, demolished in 1806.

The monastic church gained official status as a parish church in 1618, but without the income of the abbey to maintain its fabric, the building fell into decay. Combined with the effects of the unstable ground beneath, this neglect resulted in the collapse of the south transept in 1690. A replacement bell tower was erected in 1702, while the west front was repaired in 1734. In 1902, it was decided to reduce the height of the central tower, on account of the instability of its foundations. However, the most damage was done in 1906, when a fire started in the Latham chapel, destroying the church roofs, choir screen, and affected masonry throughout. Repairs began immediately on the nave, and work on the choir and upper tower followed soon after. This scheme also resurrected a south transept. In 1935, the west front was heightened, retaining and reinstating the pinnacles and parapet at the top of the new towers. The entire church was cleaned in the 1970s.

2.0 FIELDWORK PROCEDURE

The excavation of all service trenches was undertaken by hand. Three trenches were excavated and allocated A, B and C (Figure 2). Trench A measured 1.63m long x 0.93m wide; Trench B measured 1.50m long x 1.15m wide; Trench C measured 1.35m long x 1.10m wide. All three trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.60m.

3.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

A pathway consisting of a stone slab surface covered the proposed excavation area. This consisted of rectangular stone slabs of varying size and a thickness of 0.07m and was allocated C1000. After the removal of C1000, a concrete and sandstone hardcore layer (C1001) was seen directly beneath. This was identified as a preparation layer for surface C1000 and was seen in section to a depth of 0.25m.

A dark greyish-brown sandy clay layer was seen to be underlying C1001. This was allocated C1002 and contained frequent mortar flecks, occasional fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) and angular gravel.





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Location of trenches A to C

Scale 1:100



Figure 2



A yellow plastic gas service pipe was contained with C1002 and was allocated F1 (Plate 2). C1002 was seen in section to a depth of more than 0.30m and visible in the base of Trench A to C; the deposit is thought likely to represent the backfill of the trench containing F1. This sequence of deposits was consistent throughout Trench A to C.



Plate 2 F1 looking east

Table 1 Summary of contexts

Context	Feature	Identity	Description
1000	-	surface	stone slab surface consisting of rectangular slabs of various sizes with a depth of 0.07m
1001	-	layer	concrete and sandstone hardcore preparation layer
1002	1	backfill	dark greyish-brown sandy clay layer frequent mortar flecks, occasional fragments of CBM and angular gravel

Table 2 Summary of features

Feature	Contexts	Identity	Dimensions	Description
1	1002	modern service	Not seen	modern gas service pipe backfilled with C1002

4.0 DISCUSSION

No archaeological remains were encountered during the watching brief. The existence of a modern gas service pipe (F1) along the proposed route of the new pipe meant that any archaeological remains within this area had been removed, although archaeological remains may exist at a greater depth.

5.0 ARCHIVE

A copy of this report is held by FAS and the North Yorkshire County Sites and Monuments Record.

Acknowledgements

FAS would like to thank John Satchwell of Morgan Est for his assistance during fieldwork.



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