

SAINT GREGORY'S CHURCH, BEDALE

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



JB Archaeological Services

On behalf of

Bedale PCC

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at St. Gregory's Church, Bedale, North Yorkshire under a Faculty from the Dioceses. The watching brief was on the excavation of a service trench for the installation of a new gas supply. The church lies towards the eastern end of Bedale (NGR SE 26555 88447).

The watching brief recorded relatively small amounts of disarticulated human bone from previously disturbed burials along the whole length of the service trench. No articulated burials were encountered.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief at the Parish Church of Saint Gregory's in Bedale, North Yorkshire. The archaeological watching brief was on the excavation of new service trench along the line of an existing footpath to the east of the church for the installation of a new gas supply. The church lies towards the northern end of Bedale in Bedale civil parish, Harrogate District (NGR SE 26555 88447) (Figure 1).
- 1.2 The archaeological work was undertaken by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) for the PCC on 29th June 2011.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Historic Background

- 2.1 The place name for Bedale is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Bedale*. The name is derived from the Old English personal name Beda and *halh* meaning 'Nook of land of a man called Beda' (Mills, 1998, 31) or 'Beda's water meadow' (Morris, 1982, 56). The present church has its origins in at least the 13th century and contains fragments of Viking style grave markers. The church is Grade I listed.

Geology and Soils

- 2.2 The underlying solid geology of the site is Magnesian Limestone of the Permian and Triassic Period (British Geological Survey, 2001) which is overlain by a quaternary geology of glacial sand and gravels (British Geological Survey 1977). The soils that have developed from this geology are the Nercwys Association which are deep fine loamy soils with slight seasonal water logging (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

Topography and Land-use

- 2.4 The church lies at a height of *c.*45mOD in an area of ground which slopes down to the east with a road to the west and within the large graveyard.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed or damaged during the excavation of the service trench. The specific aims were to:
- archaeologically record (graphically and photographically) any archaeological features revealed by the ground works
 - recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the ground works

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The excavation to a depth of c.400mm was undertaken by a mini-digger using a 150mm wide (6 inch) toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision. The majority of the service trench was along the edge of an existing footpath (Figure 2 and Plates 1 & 2).
- 4.2 During the excavation the exposed ground surfaces were inspected for archaeological features and the resulting topsoil stockpiles were monitored for archaeological artefacts.

5.0 RESULTS

- 5.1 Not unexpectedly the watching brief recorded extensive evidence for human burials. This was in the form of a relatively small amount (given the age of the church) of disarticulated and unstratified human bone along the length of the trench. The commonest skeletal elements found were long bone, particularly femur, fragments. Smaller numbers of fragments of skull and rib were observed along with the occasional phalange.
- 5.2 In addition to the human bone the remains of a very badly degraded, iron coffin handle was noted (Plate 3). As with the human bone this too had been re-deposited and was not in its original burial location.
- 5.3 One minor feature of interest was noted on the outside of the church. This was a small collection of, presumably, 19th century graffiti (Plate 4).
- 5.4 No other archaeological features or artefacts were encountered during the ground works.

6.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Unsurprisingly the watching brief noted the presence of disarticulated human bone from numerous past burials which had been disturbed over time. The depth of the excavation was not sufficiently deep enough to encounter any articulated remains.
- 6.2 No evidence was recorded for any earlier buildings within the service trench.

References

Mills AD (1998) *Dictionary of English Place-names*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Robert Horrell for inviting me to undertake the project and Dave Crighton for his freely given co-operation and unstinting help in completing the watching brief.

ILLUSTRATIONS

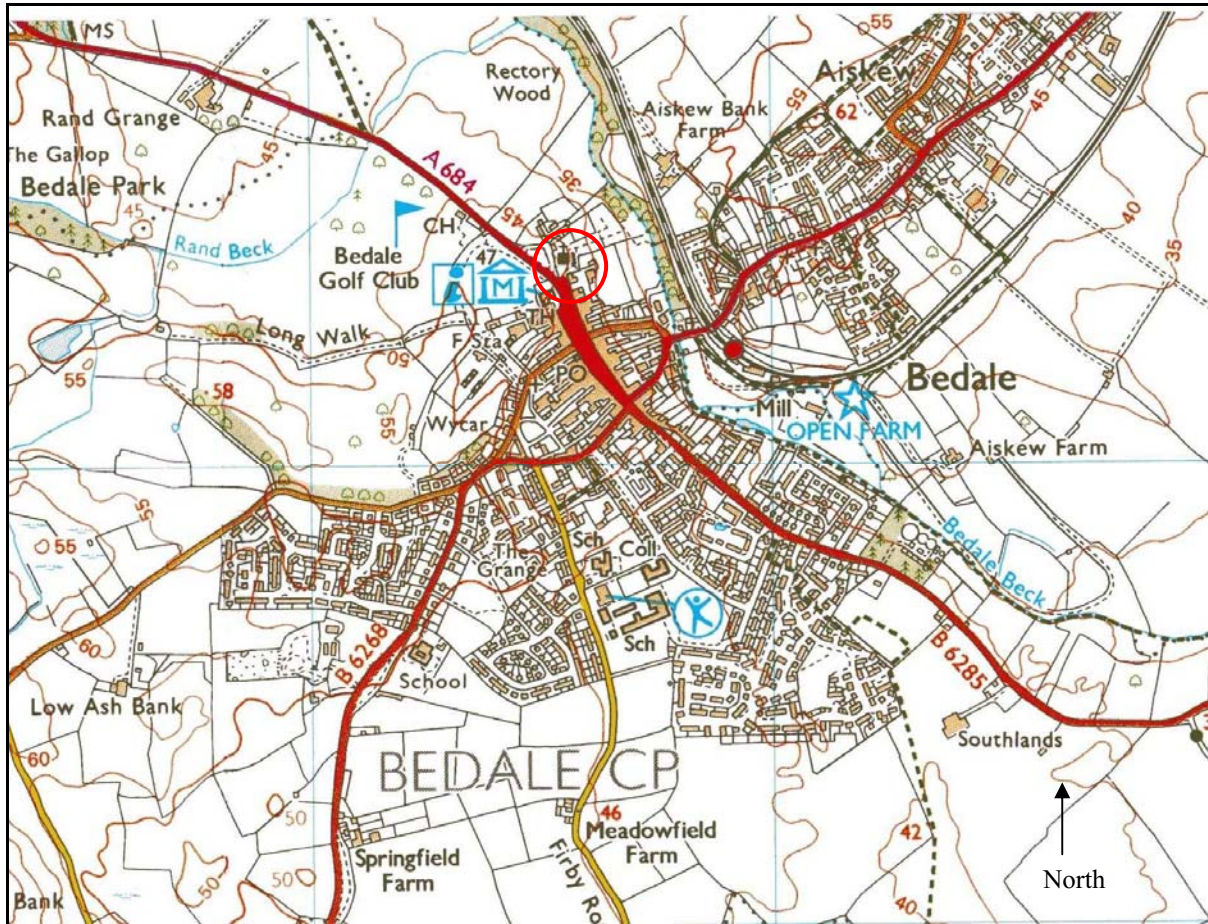


Figure 1. General Location of Bedale Church.

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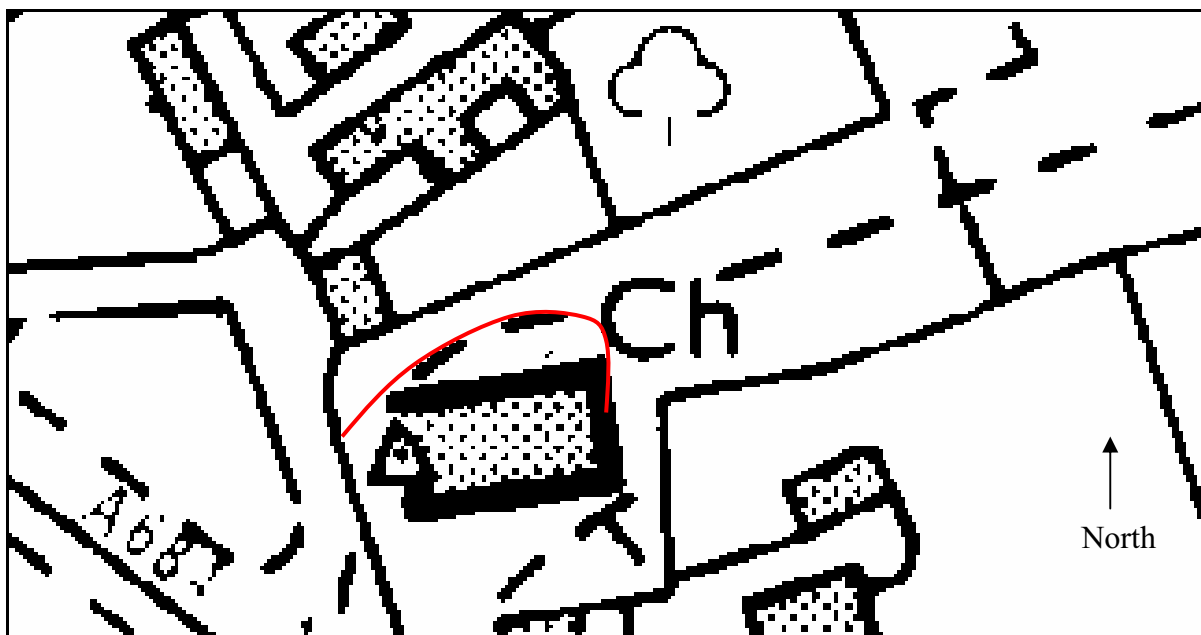


Figure 2. Location of the service trench at St Gregory's Church.

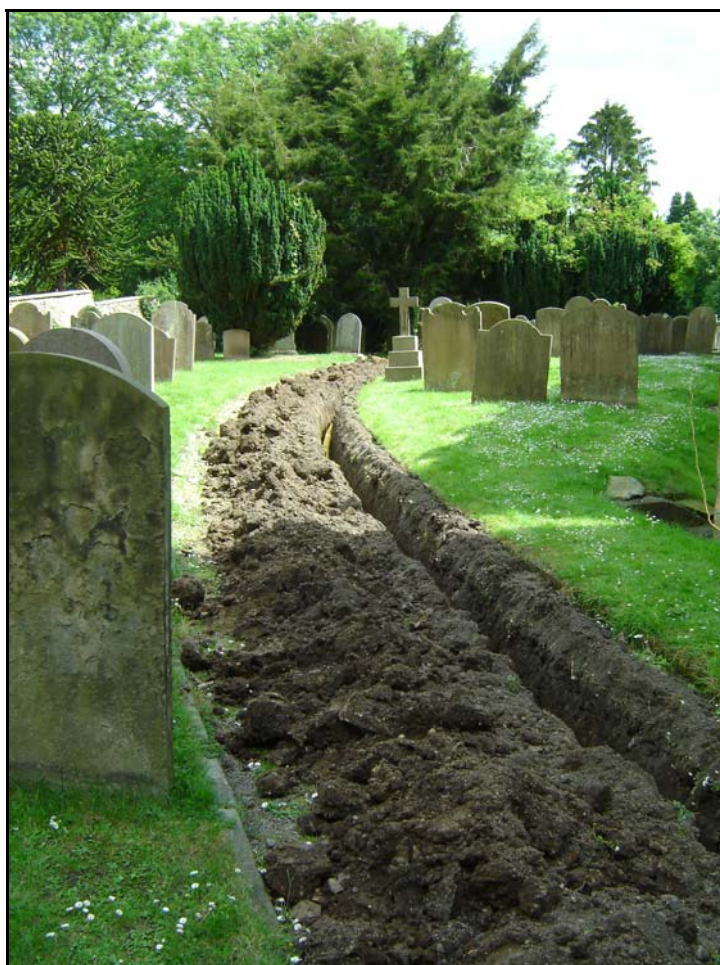


Plate 1. General view of the service trench looking east.



Plate 2. General view of the service trench looking west towards boiler house.



Plate 3. Badly degraded iron coffin handle.



Plate 4. Graffiti on south-east buttress.