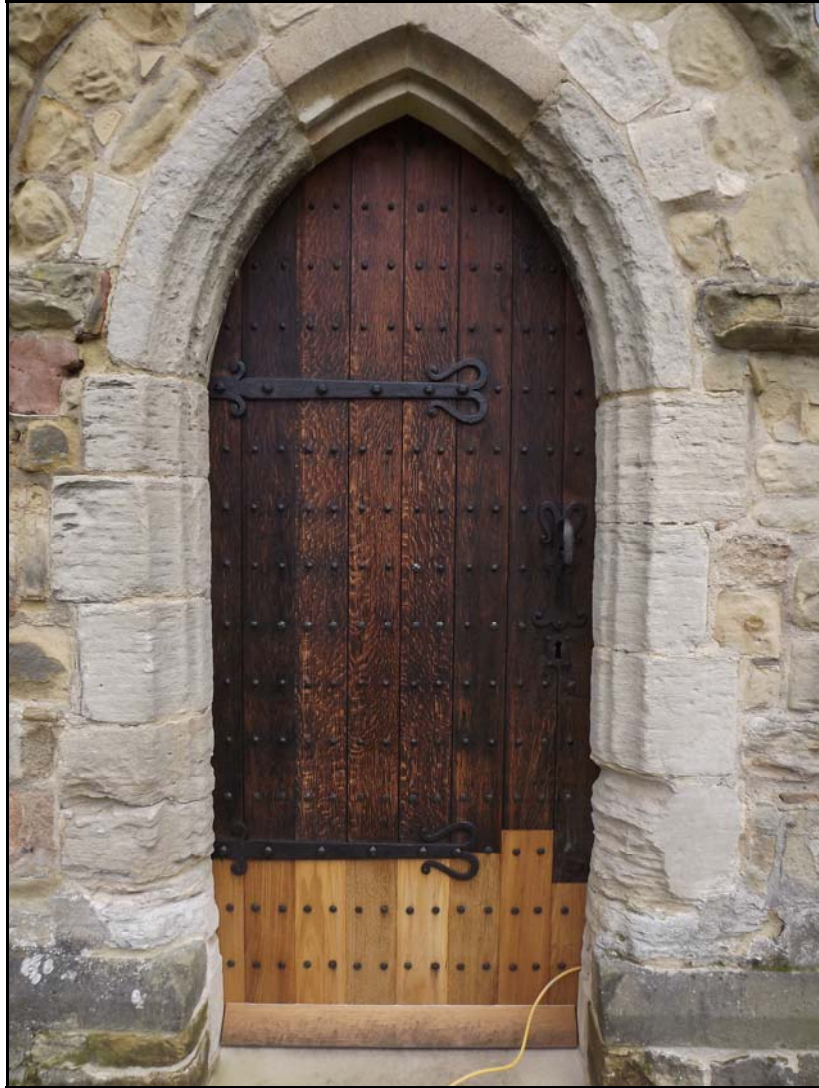


**St MARY MAGDALEN CHAPEL, RIPON**

**NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**



JB Archaeological Services

On behalf of

**The Trustees of St Mary and St John Hospital Charity**

February 2013

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Plate 3. General view west showing break of slope associated with cobble feature

**ST MARY MAGDALEN CHAPEL, RIPON  
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

*Summary*

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the excavation of the footings and service trench for a new air source heat pump at St Mary Magdalen Chapel, Ripon, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 31728 71778); the work was carried out for The Trustees of St Mary and St John Hospital Charity. The watching brief recorded the buried remains of a simple stone structure that appeared to be revetment of some form running parallel to the northern side of the chapel. A small amount of disarticulated human bone was recovered and reburied within the backfill of the service trench. The work was undertaken on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013.*

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NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report presents the results of archaeological watching brief on the ground works for a new air source heat pump and associated pipe work for St Mary Magdalen Chapel, Ripon, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 31728 71778) (Figures 1 & 2). The watching brief was undertaken by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013 on behalf of The Trustees of St Mary and St John Hospital Charity.

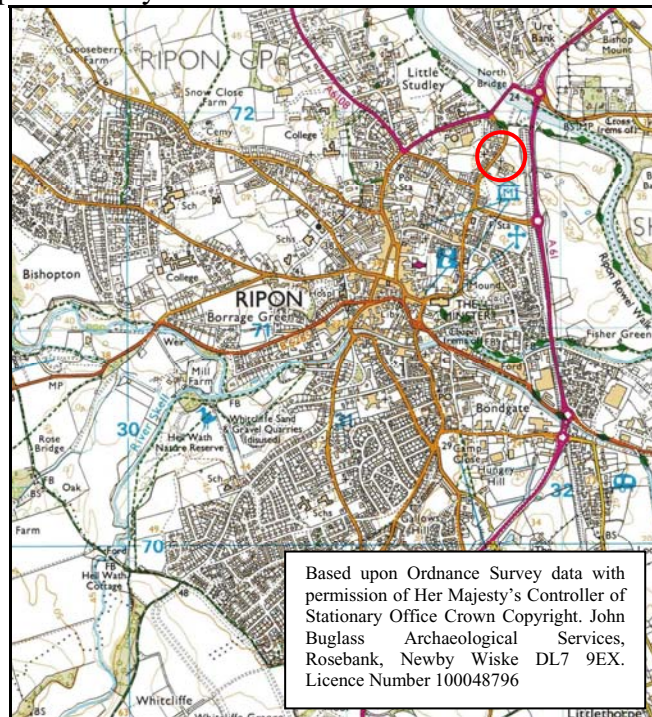


Figure 1. Site Location

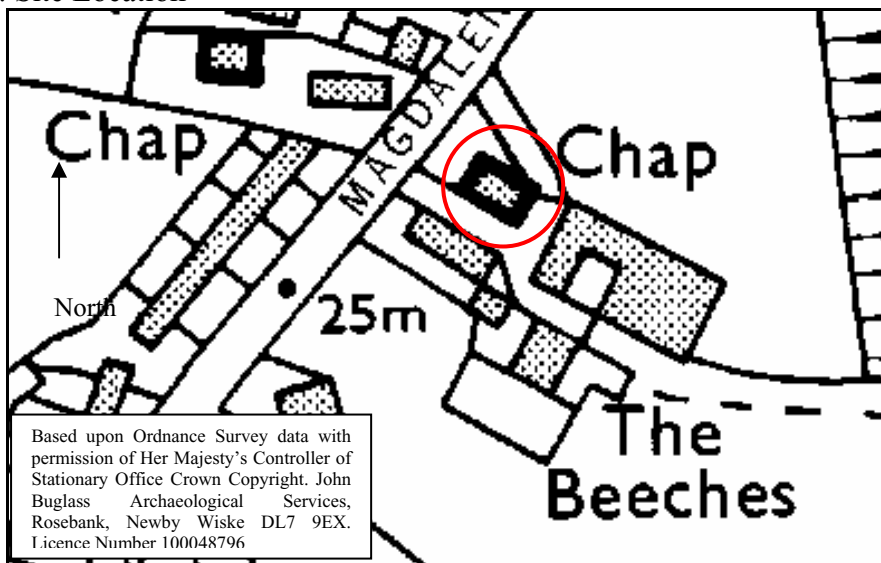


Figure 2. Specific Site Location

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **Historic and Archaeological Background**

- 2.1 The chapel is all that remains of the original hospital that was established by Archbishop Thurstan in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The hospital was established to help both the poor and, in particular, lepers. It also provided shelter in the form of almshouses built in the vicinity of the chapel. Over many years from the founding of the hospital its fortunes rose and fell, often in line with the endowments it received with the leper house being demolished in 1354 due to it having fallen into decay from disuse with the decline of the disease (<http://www.ripon-leper-chapel.org.uk/history/>).
- 2.2 The use of the hospital changed during the fourteenth century with the care of the sick and destitute taking over from the care of lepers and almshouses being built to house them.

### **Geology and Soils**

- 2.2 The underlying geology of the site is Triassic mudstones (British Geological Survey, 2001). Overlying this, the quaternary geology is alluvium (British Geological Survey, 1977). The soils, which have developed from these deposits, are classified as the Milford 2 association which is a fine well drained loamy soil (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

### **Topography and Land-use**

- 2.3 The site is located to the north-west of The Beeches on the eastern site of Ripon (Figures 1 & 2). The site lies at a height above sea level of *c.*25mOD and is surrounded by agricultural land to the east and residential dwellings to the west.

## **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 ground works associated with the new heating equipment. The specific aims are to:
- archaeologically record (written, graphic and photographic records) any archaeological features revealed by the ground works
  - recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the ground works
- 3.2 All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (now Institute *for* Archaeology) Code of Conduct for an Archaeological Watching Brief (1999).

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The ground works were undertaken on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013 by a combination of hand digging and machine excavation, both under direct archaeological supervision.

## 5.0 RESULTS

- 5.1 The watching brief recorded a very simple stratigraphic sequence along the line of the new service trench. A 0.2-0.3m thick topsoil directly overlay a very clayey light brown subsoil which continued to the depth of the service trench (0.8m). From within the topsoil a small number of fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered – mostly long bone fragments with a small piece of pelvis and a part of the top of a skull. The human bone was collected and reburied at the base of the service trench.
- 5.2 In addition to the human bone a single feature was identified along the line of the new service trench. This was a feature encountered 2.8m to the north of the north wall of the chapel (Plates 1 & 2). The feature was built without mortar from medium sized (*c.*0.1-0.3m<sup>3</sup>) water rolled cobbles in a narrow construction trench. The remains were 0.5m wide (north to south) and extended from just below the base of the topsoil (0.2m below ground level) to beyond the base of the service trench (0.8m below ground level, *c.*24mOD). The feature did not contain any mortar or other bonding material and did not appear to be of a ‘dry-stone wall’ type construction – the water rounded cobbles would have slipped off each other without mortar to hold them in position. The cobbles appear to have been tightly packed in a random pattern into a narrow trench in order to form the feature.
- 5.3 From what could be seen of the feature in the narrow service trench it was orientated east-west and to run parallel to the northern wall of the chapel. This alignment appears to coincide with a break in slope with an increase in the angle of slope to the north of this line. No artefactual material was associated with the feature and as such it is not possible to date it. During the excavation a single sherd of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery was noted in the topsoil. No other finds or features were encountered.
- 5.4 The route of the new pipe work inside the chapel was investigated and it was found that it was possible to run the new pipe work within the conduits for the existing system.

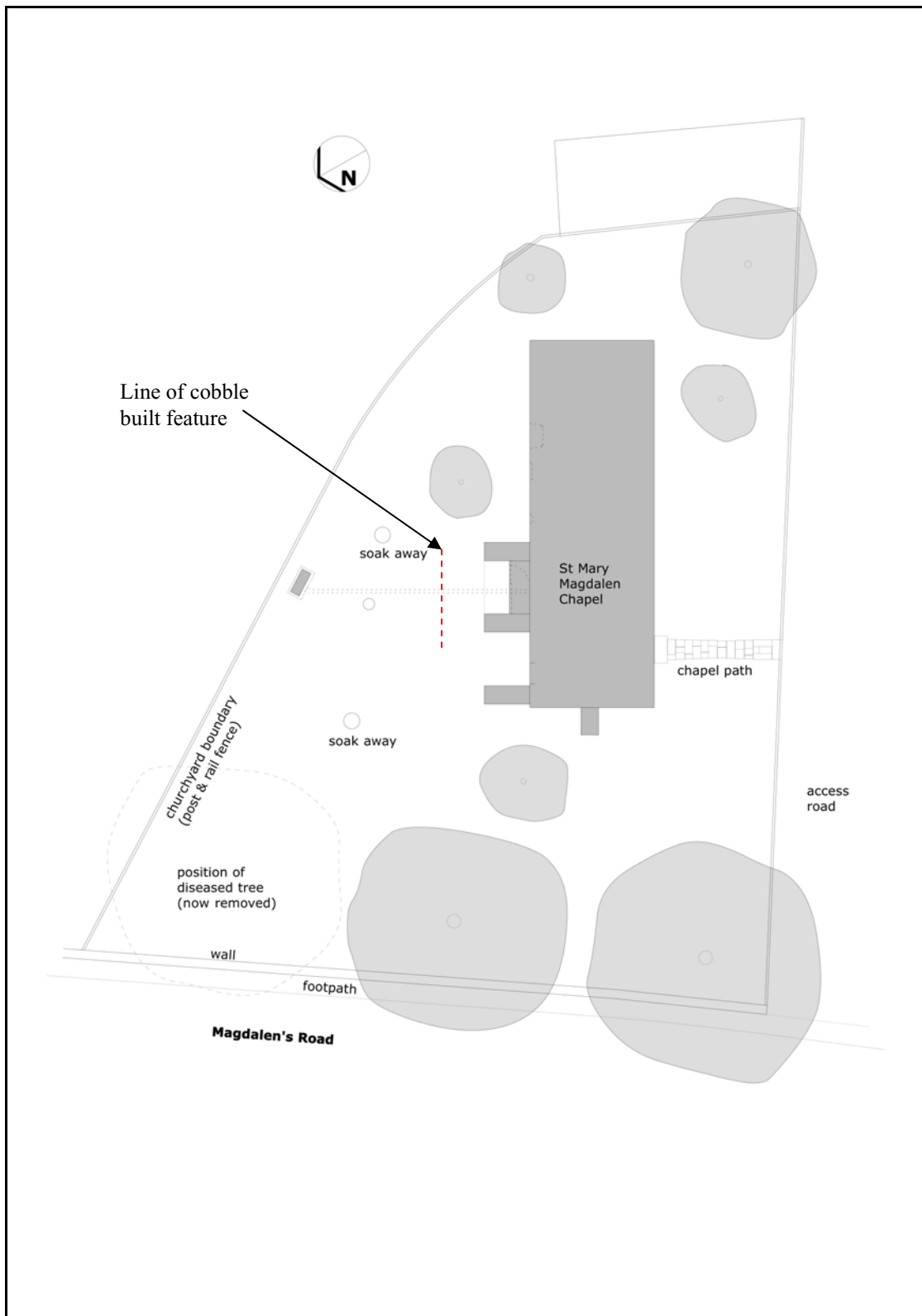


Figure 3. Line of cobble built feature north of chapel. Plan from by Simmon Sherriff LLP





Plate 1. Remains of cobble built feature, the upright scale marks its location within the trench, looking north, scales 0.5&1m



Plate 2. Remains of cobble built feature, the upright scale is at the southern end of the feature, looking east, scales 0.5&1m



Plate 3. General view west showing break of slope associated with cobble feature

## 6.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The feature described in the results above does not initially appear to have any obvious explanation and the narrow nature of the service trench does not allow for a very detailed examination to be made. Obvious interpretations such as a buried wall or path can be dismissed through the lack of mortar or dry stone type construction if it were a wall and its height if it were a path. There are, however, a couple of possible explanations; the first of these is that the feature appears to mark the northern edge of a platform that the chapel stands on. If this were the case then the feature probably dates to the earlier medieval period. The second possibility is that it may have been constructed in an attempt to try to stabilise the ground along this side of the chapel as there has been movement outwards of its northern wall. The resolution of this problem can be seen in the three substantial buttresses that are now located against the northern wall. The cobble feature may have been an earlier attempt to try to stop ground movement down slope and thus stop the movement of the wall. If this were the case then the feature could date from almost any period after the chapels' construction.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank David Sheriff for asking me to undertake this project and Colin Rickard and Paul the machine driver, for their help and co-operation in doing the site work.

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