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**St. Peter's Church
Helperthorpe
North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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**January 2000
MAP 01-01-00**

**St. Peter's Church
Helperthorpe
North Yorkshire
SE 9537 7043
Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

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**St. Peter's Church
Helperthorpe
North Yorkshire
SE 9537 7043
Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

1. Introduction

An Archaeological Watching Brief was conducted by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. at St. Peter's Church, Helperthorpe, North Yorkshire, during January 2000. The work was undertaken on behalf of the Yorkshire Electricity Board Ltd and involved the monitoring of groundworks associated with the laying of electricity supply cables within the churchyard and Vicarage grounds.

The site lies within the village of Helperthorpe at grid reference SE 9537 7043, on land to the north of the West Lutton to Hunmanby road.

All work has been funded by Yorkshire Electricity Board Ltd.

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2. Geology

The site lies on Andover 1 Association soils at a mean height of 250m AOD. Soils of this type consist of thin loamy topsoils occurring over chalky fine rendzina subsoils. The underlying solid geology is chalk (Mackney 1984, 91).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

Although there has been a church at Helperthorpe since at least 1282 (Bayly c.1880, 8) the present building dates to 1874-5 and is one of several churches in the region renovated or rebuilt by Sir Tattoh Sykes. The church replaced an earlier Sixteenth Century building of which no evidence now survives.

St. Peter's was originally a chapel annexed to St. Andrew's Church, Weaverthorpe. It received a burial license in 1877 and before that date the dead were interred at Weaverthorpe (Bayly c.1880, 8). The present Vicarage was built in 1876, again through the patronage of Sir Tatton Sykes.

To the northwest of the present churchyard are earthworks associated with the shrunken Medieval village of Helperthorpe (Fig. 1). Other earthworks are visible in the field to the immediate northeast of the Vicarage grounds and these may also be associated with the shrunken village.

4. Methodology

The monitored groundworks consisted of two trenches (Fig. 2). Trench 1 ran from an existing electricity cable beneath the western road verge, along the Vicarage driveway to the northwest corner of the Vicarage. Trench 2 joined Trench 1 at a point close to the vicarage and ran in a southwesterly direction through the churchyard, terminating at the eastern wall of the vestry extension. With the exception of the stretch of Trench 2 lying within the churchyard, all excavations were carried out using a back-acting mechanical digger with a toothless bucket. Hand-excavation was undertaken within the churchyard due to the lack of suitable access for the machine. All works were carried out under full archaeological supervision and the results noted.

5. Results

5.1. Trench 1

Trench 1 was 0.30m wide, 170m long and was dug to a mean depth of 0.45m. Two deposits were noted in section in the length of trench running from the road along the southern edge of the driveway. These were a loose, humic topsoil extending to a mean depth of 0.30m and below this a silty subsoil containing 70% angular chalk fragments. With the exception of a single sherd of Nineteenth Century glazed earthenware, no

finds were recovered from this section of trench and no archaeological deposits were uncovered.

Several earthwork features are visible in the field to the north of the Vicarage drive (Fig. 2). These run approximately north-south but do not appear to continue into the field to the south of the drive. No evidence was found during the present excavations to suggest the continuation of truncated earthwork features beneath the Vicarage driveway.

Excavations continued along the southern side of the driveway until a point 10m southwest of the eastern boundary of the Vicarage grounds. Here, excavation became impossible due to the large number of tree roots encountered and the decision was taken to cross over to the northern side of the drive. This necessitated cutting the remainder of Trench 1 through the driveway surface itself, rather than digging to one side as before. The driveway was found to consist of a 50mm layer of tarmac over a bed of chalk hardcore 0.12m thick. Immediately below this was the chalky subsoil deposit noted before, with a mean thickness of 0.30m. In the deeper sections of the trench a natural deposit of solid chalk was seen to underlie the chalky subsoil. No finds were recovered from the remainder of Trench 1 and no archaeological deposits were uncovered.

5.2. Trench 2

The section of Trench 2 excavated within the vicarage grounds was 0.30m wide, 10m long with a mean depth of 0.45m. The deposits revealed were identical to those seen in the driveway section of trench 1. No finds were recovered and no archaeological deposits were present.

The section of Trench 2 within the churchyard was 0.20m wide, 25m long and was excavated to a mean depth of 0.40m. In order to minimise the disturbance to human remains the trench was routed to run along the southern side of the existing church path. This path runs to a gateway at the northeast corner of the churchyard wall and is therefore contemporary with the construction of the church and the laying-out of the

graveyard in the Nineteenth Century. The excavation strategy proved successful in that no human remains or graves were encountered during the excavation. Two deposits were revealed within the trench. These were a loose silty topsoil extending to a mean depth of 0.20m, above 0.20m of silty subsoil containing 30% chalk rubble and quantities of fragmented brick. A single decorated clay pipe-stem of Nineteenth Century date was uncovered from this deposit. No evidence of earlier phases of building was uncovered.

In the area immediately adjacent to the church wall, Trench 2 revealed a deposit of building debris and rubble extending to the edge of the tarmac area around the church. A fragment of clay pipe-stem was recovered from this deposit which appears to date to the Victorian rebuilding of the church. No evidence of a foundation cut for the standing church walls was seen and the likelihood is that the rubble was deliberately deposited at the time of construction to form a well-drained area of hard standing around the church.

6. Conclusion

In the Vicarage grounds the driveway surface was found to seal previously undisturbed subsoil deposits, with no evidence of earlier activity on the site. No skeletal or archaeological remains were uncovered within the churchyard, presumably due to both the limited extent and depth of the groundworks and to the demolition and clearance of earlier structures on the site. In conclusion, no significant archaeological features were located during any stage of the present excavations.

7. Bibliography

- Bayly, J. c.1880- Four Churches in the Deanery of Buckrose Restored or Built by the Late George Edmund Street, R.A. for Sir Tatton Sykes, Bart. London.
- Mackney, D. 1984- Soils and Their Use in Northern England. Harpenden.