

St Lawrence's Church
Kirby Misperton
North Yorkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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March 1999

MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd

**St Lawrence's Church
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Archaeological Watching Brief

Introduction

During January 13th and 14th, 1999 an Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken at St Lawrence's church, Kirby Misperton, Ryedale district, North Yorkshire (SE 7792 7956 Fig 1) during the installation of a new gas supply for the Church's central heating system

The work involved the leading of a new gas pipe at a depth of 0.4m from the public road to the south, northwards through the church yard, and then through the west wall of the church, a distance of c. 21m (Fig 2) by Transco (Scarborough Depot)

The Church of St Lawrence is located on the corner of Habton Road and Barugh Lane, to the south-east of Kirby Misperton Hall and Flamingoland

The site stands on soils of the Dunkeswick Association which is a fine loam and clay soils over a solid geology of Till from Palaeozoic and Mesozoic sandstone and shale (Mackney et al 1983)

All work has been funded by the Parish

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Historical and Archaeological Background

In the Domesday Survey Kirby and Misperton are separate manors (Misperton is attached to Kirby Moorside), in all later records the two manors are referred to as Kirby Misperton. The manor of Kirby in 1086 is recorded as having a mill and a church and belonged to the Abbot of York. The township of Kirby Misperton was in the fee of St Mary's Abbey and the Abbey retained the overlordship until the Dissolution.

Churchbi (Domesday Book), *Ki-*, *Kyrkeby*, *bi* 1094-9, *Kirkabi* (1308), *Kirkby* 1414, *Kirby* (1665) means 'farm by the church' (Smith 1979). Misperton may derive from the Old English word *mispel* meaning medlar tree. The Old English word *mespeler-tun* translates as 'farm with the medlar tree'. In the 16th and 17th centuries the village was also called *Kirkbye Overkare* (1549) and *Kirby Overcarr* (1573). The development of the village name clearly shows that a settlement had existed on the site for a considerable period of time and the farm by the church translation is substantiated to some extent by architectural elements within the fabric of the church (see below).

A 'Celtic' (presumably from Age) burial urn is said to have been found during the 1875 alterations to the Chancel.

A number of re-used late-Anglian (9th century) carved stones, including a grave-stone with the inscription Tatburg are built into the north chancel and southern walls of the church. The structure of the present nave and the lower part of the tower date to the 15th century. A major refurbishment to the church was carried out in 1875, including the rebuilding of the chancel and vestry.

The churchyard was closed to burials in 1896.

The route of the gas pipe was at 90 degrees to the street through the church yard. Several standing gravestones attested to the presence of 19th century burials in the churchyard along the route of the gas pipe trench.

Excavation Methods

The pipe was laid by means of a mole device launched from three small trenches 1m x 0.30m wide x 0.40m deep. The first launch zone was excavated against the boundary wall of the churchyard, the next launch zone was located approximately in the centre of the graveyard up against a disused path. The final launch zone was up against the west wall of the church.

Excavation Results

Hand excavation of the launch zones within the graveyard showed that below the turf there was approximately 0.25m-0.30m of topsoil. This overlaid a rather mixed soil which had clearly been disturbed by tree roots and burial activity. No articulated skeletal material was observed in the launch trenches although a large number of fragments of human bone were recovered. These were parts of burials that had been disturbed by later grave digging. The bone was collected and placed in the trenches when they were backfilled and the turf replaced.

The launch trench against the wall of the church located a lower course of stone protruding slightly from the wall which had been sealed by the later build up of paths and garden beds in the churchyard. Below the limestone makeup of the path was a homogenous reddish soil which appeared to be a levelling deposit and contained only small fragments of bone. The gas pipe was fed through a hole drilled through the wall into a room at the back of the church.

Conclusions

The shallowness of the launch trenches meant that no in situ burials were effected by the installation of the new gas pipe.

Bibliography

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- Smith A (1979) Placenames of the North Riding Volume 5

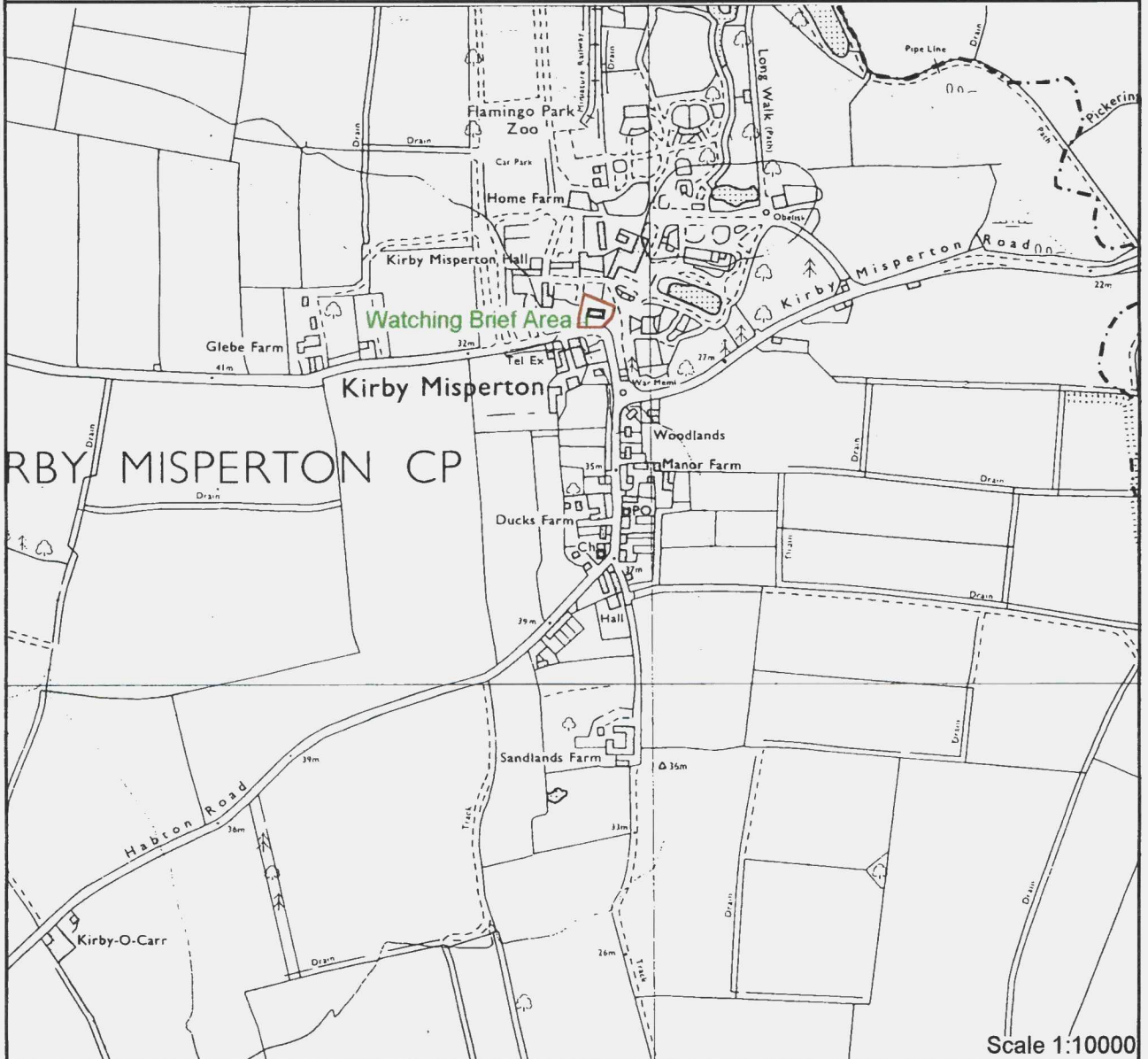
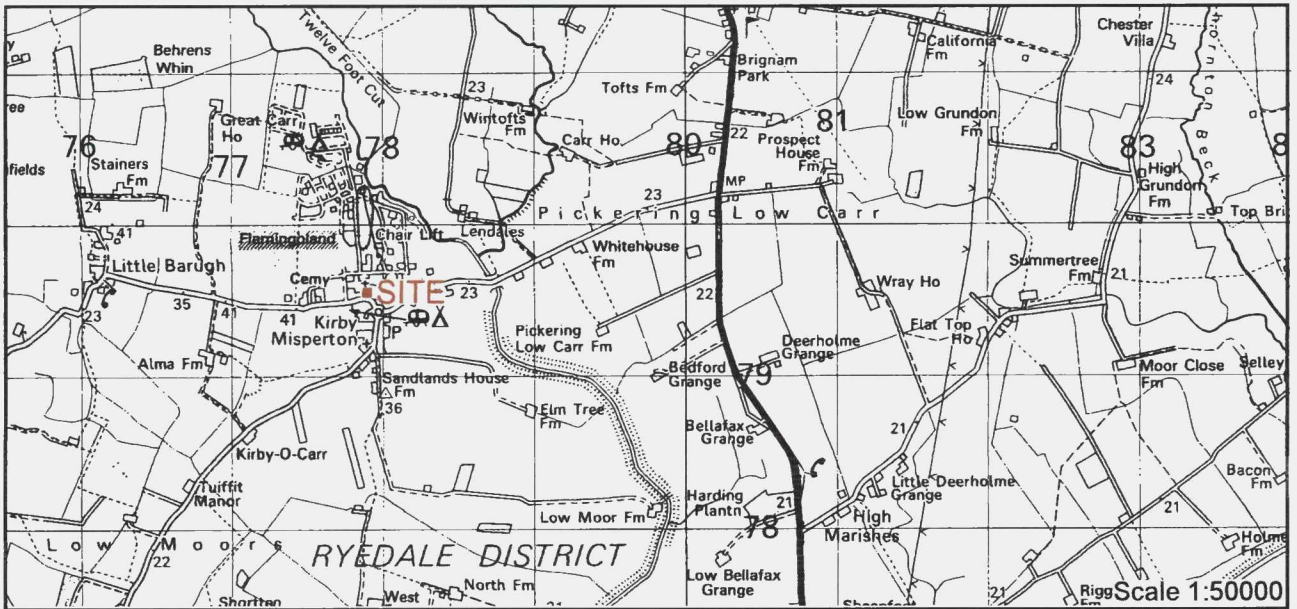


Figure 1. Site Location.

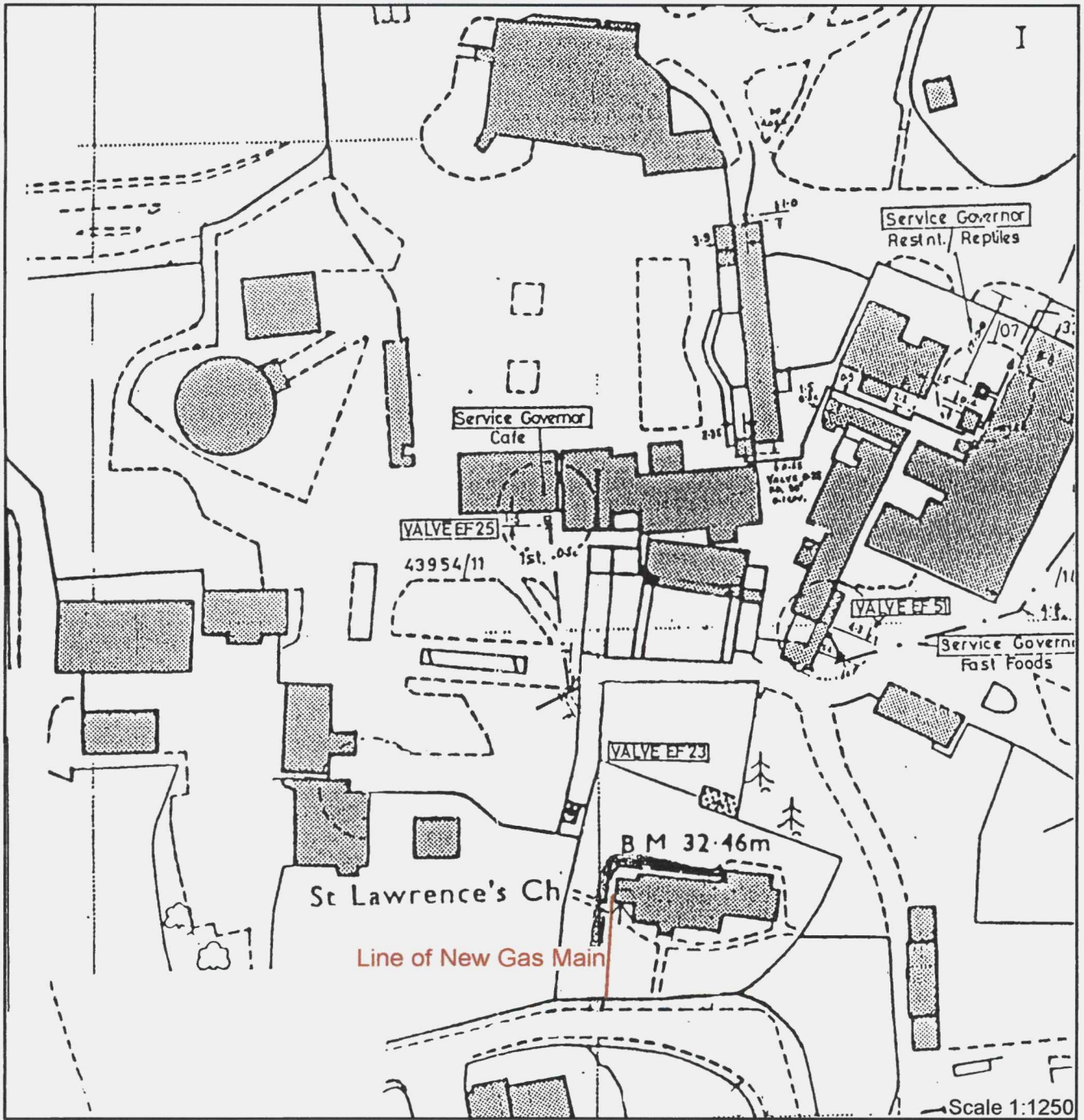


Figure 2. Area of Watching Brief.