

YORK



ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST

**FLOOR SLAB REPAIRS,
RIPON CATHEDRAL,
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**



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ABSTRACT

On January 14th 2002 York Archaeological Trust maintained a watching brief at Ripon Cathedral, North Yorkshire. The works comprised the lifting of a number of small floor slabs within the cathedral. The purpose of the watching brief was to record any features of archaeological interest. Lifting of the slabs revealed only mortar above clean sands and gravels.

1. INTRODUCTION

On the 14th January 2002 York Archaeological Trust maintained a watching brief at Ripon Cathedral, North Yorkshire (NGR: SE 314 711). Six floor slabs ranging from 0.25 x 0.18m to 0.65 x 0.50m in size and up to 0.075m thick were lifted at various locations in the cathedral. In addition the uppermost 0.025m of a paving slab 0.67 x 1.74m in size was chiselled off for replacement by a new slab. The purpose of the work was to level uneven areas of flooring within the church.

2. METHODOLOGY

The watching brief consisted of observing the lifting of the floor slabs (Figure 1). The works were requested by the Dean and Chapter of the cathedral, through their archaeological consultant Dr Richard Hall, and were carried out in accordance with scheduled monument legislation. The work was undertaken by the cathedral masons.

All site notes and plans were transferred into electronic format and are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust under the project code 1004, prior to their deposition with Harrogate Museum under their accession code HARGM:11125.

The solid geology of the area is Lower Magnesian Limestone (British Geological Survey Ten-Mile Map, Sheet No. 2 1957) laid down in the Permian period. This is overlain by glacial sands, gravels and clays laid down by retreating glaciers or ice sheets. Rescue excavations in the crypt of the cathedral in 1974 revealed the natural deposits to be sands and sandy gravels (Hall 1977, 61).

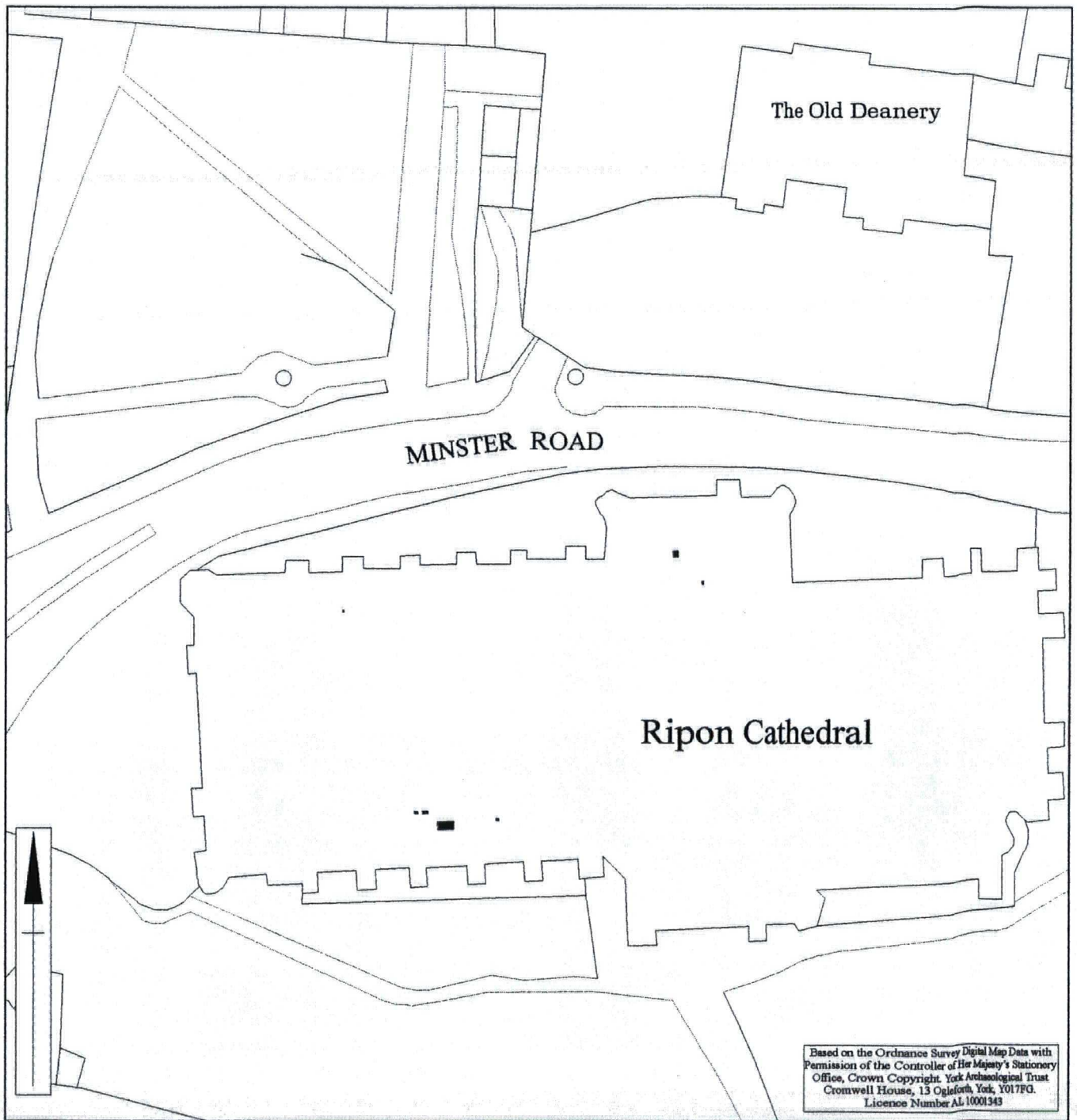


Figure 1 Site location

KEY:-



Observed works

0 25 metres

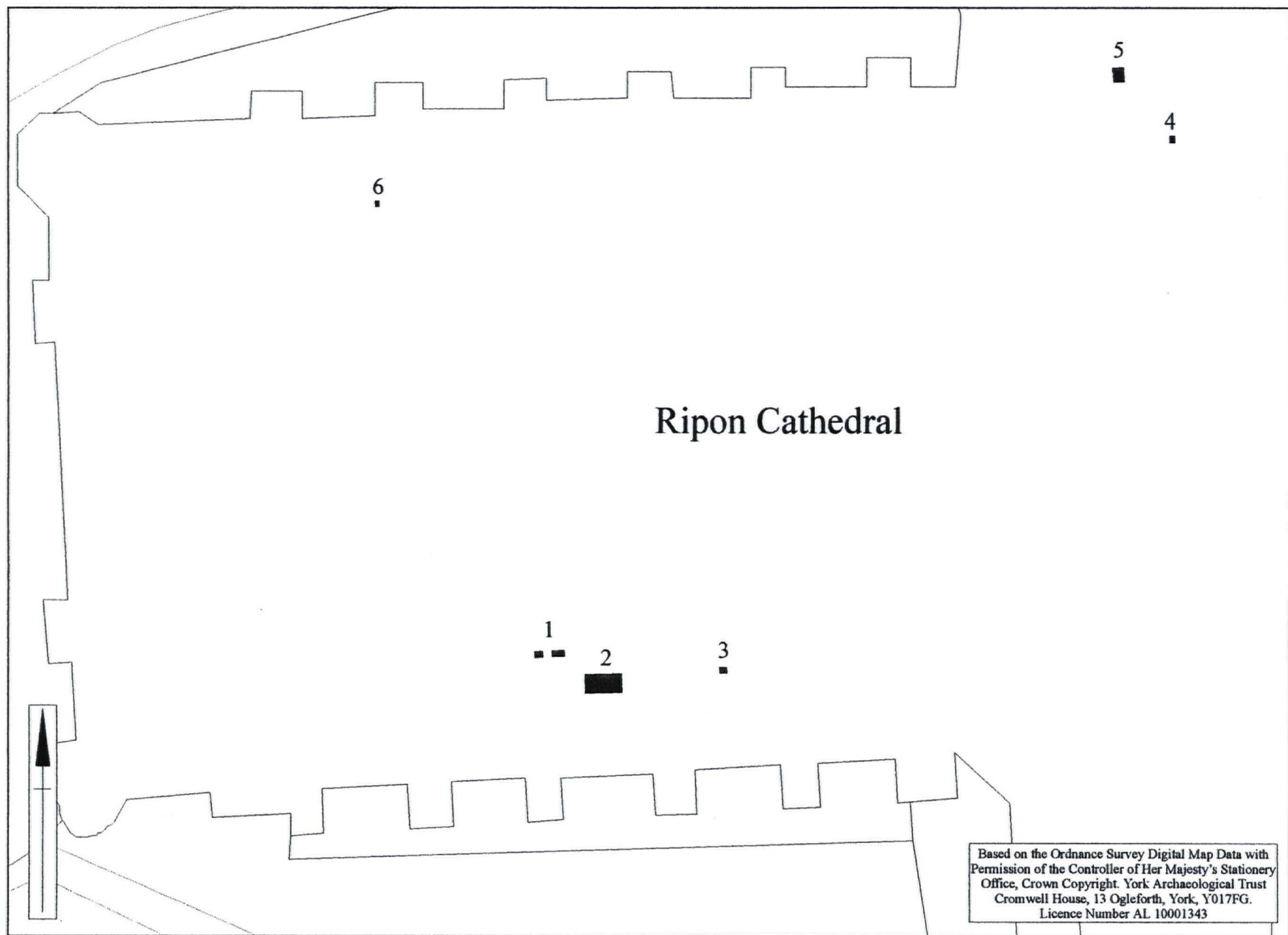


Figure 2 Location of areas 1-6

0 15 metres

3. RESULTS (Figure 2)

3.1 Area 1

Area 1 consisted of two small floor slabs in the south aisle. The southernmost slab (1000) was 0.45m to the south of the second slab (1003). The earliest deposit was clean orange brown sand (context 1002), the upper surface of which was at 0.07m below the present ground surface, was in excess of 0.13m thick. The sand was sealed by creamy-white fine-grained mortar 0.04m thick (context 1001) on which was bedded both sandstone slabs which measured 0.37m x 0.29m (1000) and 0.58m x 0.29m (1003) and were 0.03m thick.

3.2 Area 2

Area 2 consisted of a sandstone floor slab in the south aisle 0.67m x 1.74m in size (context 2000). The uppermost 0.025m of the slab was chiselled away for replacement by a new slab. No earlier deposits were visible during the course of this work.

3.3 Area 3

Area 3 consisted of a small floor slab in the south aisle. The earliest deposit was clean orange brown sand (context 3002) the upper surface of which was at 0.10m below the present ground surface. This was beneath a deposit of creamy-white fine-grained mortar 0.05m thick (context 3001) on which was bedded a sandstone slab 0.355m x 0.31m and 0.05m thick (context 3000).

3.4 Area 4

Area 4 consisted of a small floor slab in the north transept. The earliest deposit was clean orange brown sand (context 4002) the upper surface of which was at 0.10m below the present ground surface. Above the sand was a layer of creamy-white fine-grained mortar 0.05m thick (context 4001), which was sealed by a sandstone slab 0.32m x 0.24m and 0.05m thick (context 4000).

3.5 Area 5

Area 5 consisted of a floor slab in the north transept. The earliest deposit was clean orange brown sand (context 5002) the upper surface of which was at 0.08m below the present ground surface, and which was in excess of 0.16m thick. The sand was beneath a layer of creamy-white fine-grained mortar 0.02m thick (context 5001), which was below a sandstone slab 0.65m x 0.50m and 0.06m thick (context 5000).

3.6 Area 6

Area 6 consisted of a floor slab in the north aisle. The earliest deposit was creamy-white fine-grained mortar 0.026m thick (context 6001), which was beneath a sandstone slab 0.25m x 0.18m and 0.058m thick (context 6000).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The lifting of the floor slabs caused no disturbance to earlier archaeological remains on the site, and nothing of archaeological significance was seen. The floor slabs (contexts 1000, 1003, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000 and 6000) were all set on identical mortar bedding (contexts 1001, 3001, 4001, 5001 and 6001). Beneath the mortar bedding was clean sand (contexts 1002, 3002, 4002, and 6002). As the sand was observed in such small areas its interpretation is uncertain, but given its thickness (in excess of 0.16m thick) it probably represents a glacially lain natural sand deposit.

5. REFERENCE

Hall, R.A. 1977, Rescue Excavations in the Crypt of Ripon Cathedral, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, Volume 49, 59-63

6. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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