



Figure 5 Recorded sections 6 to 9

0 1 metre

Contexts 1016-1018 were sealed by context 1010 (for description see 3.2.2 above), which was up to 1.40m thick. Context 1010 was clearly a cemetery soil that had been constantly re-cut and reworked. Although it was not possible to clearly distinguish any grave cuts in the sections of the trench, three coffins (contexts 1014, 1015 and 1012 with associated fill 1013) and the base of a grave cut lined with loosely compacted fine grey ashy-grit (context 1011) could be seen. The method of excavations (i.e. use of a mini digger) made it impossible to fully expose or record any burials. Small portions of individual burials were recovered from each bucket load of earth, but by carefully observing which types of bones were recovered it was possible to calculate that a minimum of 21 burials were disturbed by the excavations. Most of the burials were identified from the presence of a skull, substantial parts of the legs, or were visible in the trench sections. The burials were aligned east-west with their heads at the western end, they were therefore truncated diagonally by the drainage trench and soakaway. Most of the burials were only partially disturbed. The bones were placed in 15 plastic bags 0.25 x 0.25 x 0.20m in size. Bags 1-4 were recovered from the drainage trench and bags 5-15 from the soakaway pit. The burials are listed below and their locations are shown on Figure 5.

- Burial 1 Adult skull 0.55m below ground level
- Burial 2 Adult skull 0.45m below ground level
- Burial 3 Juvenile bones 0.45m below ground level
- Burial 4 Adult lower legs 0.60m below ground level
- Burial 5 Adult lower legs 0.45m below ground level
- Burial 6 Adult skull and ribs discoloured bright green and resting upon context 1011. 1.00m below ground level
- Burial 7 Adult skull and torso associated with elaborate coffin fittings 1.00m below ground level
- Burial 8 Coffin 1012 and fill 1013 1.07m below ground level
- Burial 9 Adult skull 1.20m below ground level
- Burial 10 Child skull and various bones 1.10m below ground level
- Burial 11 Infant skull and various bones between 0.50-0.70m below ground level
- Burial 12 Coffin 1014 between 1.07 and 1.35m below ground level
- Burial 13 Coffin 1015 between 1.07 and 1.35m below ground level
- Burial 14 Adult skull between 0.50 and 0.70m below ground level
- Burial 15 Child skull 1.00m below ground level
- Burial 16 Child skull 1.00m below ground level
- Burial 17 Adult skull 1.00m below ground level
- Burial 18 Child skull 1.00m below ground level
- Burial 19 Adult legs and pelvis 0.80m below ground level
- Burial 20 Adult pelvis and lower arm 0.90m below ground level
- Burial 21 Adult lower legs 1.00m below ground level

Within the soakaway pit the density of bones recovered is of interest. Only four bags of bones (Bags 5-8) were recovered from depths of between 0.10m and 0.80m below ground level. The remainder of the bones recovered (Bags 9-15) together with all four coffins, were from depths of between 0.80 and 1.50m below ground level. Put another way almost two thirds of the bones recovered were from deep graves, while only a third were from shallow graves.

Coffin fittings of three distinct types were found; stamped plates of late 17<sup>th</sup> century date, and two types of cast iron handles of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century or later date. These three sets of coffin fittings almost certainly relate to burials 7, 8 and 13, however, given the nature of the finds recovery it is not possible to be absolutely sure of this.

Sealing context 1010 was context 1009/1007 (for description see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 above), which was only present in an area extending roughly 1.5m from the south-eastern corner of the chancel. Context 1009/1007 was in turn beneath topsoil (context 1006).

### **3.4 The new drainage channel and soakaway to the north and west of the church**

The only area in which the new drainage trench was dug adjacent to the church in was close to the north-west corner of the north aisle. Here the earliest deposit was thought to be of natural origin consisting of orangey brown silty sand with occasional limestone fragments (1025). This may have been truncated, though this was not clear, by a construction cut for a wall or footing of limestone blocks (1023) that was aligned east-west, but slightly differently from the north aisle (plate 9). It was unclear what function or date this footing took, and its relationship to the north-aisle or its buttress was not ascertained.

Sealing wall footing (1023) was a thin layer of material very similar to (1025) which may have been laid as a bedding layer prior to the laying of a further limestone block (1022). Again it could not be ascertained how this new footing related to the church or to the earlier footing (1023) due to the presence of the eaves drip (1000).

A layer of orangey brown silty sand (1024/1007) which contained occasional brick and tile fragments sealed footing (1022). This was interpreted as a subsoil or graveyard soil. This was truncated by the insertion of a ceramic pipe for the original toilet inside the western end of the north aisle. This was sealed by topsoil (1006 and 1021). The latter was truncated by the insertion of the stone eaves drip (1000) which was sealed by two modern deposits. These consisted of mixed lime based mortar and red to orange brown silty sand (1020) and a dark brown sandy silt (1019) with occasional to moderate mortar and sandstone fragments. Both may relate to recent building work or repointing on the north aisle.



Plate 9 Stone work beneath stone eaves drip gully, north aisle

To the north and west of the church the drainage trench was dug through both the top-soil 1006 and graveyard soil (1024/1007). Only a small number of very degraded and unidentifiable bone fragments were recovered from these deposits to the west of the church. The trench was c. 0.4m deep close to the north aisle, to the west of the church within the old graveyard it was between 0.6m and 1m deep. The top of two possible deep grave cuts were observed between the church and the churchyard wall. In the new graveyard the natural fall of the ground meant that the drain remained fairly shallow at 0.6m and no evidence for burials was found here.

Within the soakaway in the new graveyard the earliest deposit was natural yellow sand (1038). This was truncated in the south-western corner of the trench area by a feature (1037). This contained steep sides, was rectilinear in shape and served an unknown function. It was filled with a mid orange brown silty sand (1036). Sealing this and perhaps levelling off the area was a layer of similar material (1035) that was mid yellow brown in hue.

On the eastern side of the trench a new feature (1034) then truncated levelling layer (1035). This had steep sides and was interpreted as a large liming pit for the slaking of lime for the manufacture of lime based mortar. Its primary fill was a layer of bright red sand (1033) clearly showing that there was substantial heat given off by the process. This was then sealed by a layer of ashy lime (1032) presumably from the last slaking process. The pit then appears to have become disused and was backfilled with a mid orange brown clay loam (1031) prior to the whole pit and the area being sealed by a similar deposit (1030) which contained frequent tip lenses of orangey yellow sand, gravel and limestone fragments. A former top-soil of mid orangey brown clay loam (1029) may then have formed. A layer of sand (1028) and hard-core (1027) perhaps as a path into the new graveyard area was then laid down prior to being turfed over with a layer of topsoil (1006).



Plate 10 Lime Slaking Pit in soakaway hole, New Cemetery

## **4. CONSERVATION REPORT ON COFFIN FITTINGS**

### **4.1 Objectives**

This report aims to meet the requirements of MAP2, Phase 3, "Assessment of Potential for Analysis," (English Heritage, 1991). The work carried out has involved an X-radiographic investigation of the finds, and an assessment of their condition, stability and packaging. This report includes an evaluation of the potential of each group of material for further investigative conservation and research. There are recommendations for long term stabilisation, packaging and analytical or specialist support required.

### **4.2 Procedures**

All small finds were X-rayed using standard Y.A.T. procedures and equipment. Two sheets of film were used, to provide a duplicate for archival purposes, and the plates were given a reference number in the YAT conservation laboratory series. The X-ray number was written on each small find bag. Each image on the radiograph was labelled with its small finds number. The plates were packaged in acid-free archival envelopes; one copy remains at the laboratory as an archive, the other is stored at the Finds Department and can be loaned out. The X-ray plate number was added to the Online Photo Archive (image to be scanned in at a later date) and linked to each find record on IADB.

All finds were examined under a binocular microscope at X20 magnification. The material identifications were checked and observations made about the condition and stability of the finds. These are recorded in the Conservation Work Record on IADB, the information can be printed out through SQL Query. Tables can be printed by material type (using the ASSESS Query) and are appended as section 8 in the copy of this report filed in the Conservation Laboratory.

### **4.3 Quantification**

A total of 32 small find numbers were assessed and 7 X-ray plates produced. The number of objects in each material category is listed below:

Iron 32 (10 originally listed with tin, 1 with wood as additional material)

### **4.4 Condition**

All finds have the same context number and come from mechanical digging during a watching brief. They consist of fragments of coffin plates, handles, and fittings. Jane McComish estimates that four or more coffins were disturbed, three in section in the trench and an adult skull and torso with fittings.

Most of the plate and handle fragments are covered on the outer face with thick deposits of soil/silt and inclusions (roots, pebbles, dark brown granular deposit) above thick orange powdery iron corrosion. Below this and elsewhere on the objects is a thinner orange-brown compact layer similar to 'weeping' iron, the active hygroscopic chloride corrosion product.

The cross-sections of the plates show a compact shiny black (?paint) layer on the outer surface (but not the inner face), and bright white metal (presumed to be tin) below this and on both faces immediately next to the iron core. The iron has largely corroded away and the fragments are only weakly magnetic. Some areas give directly to the shiny white metal surface, which has developed a powdery white corrosion layer(cassiterite?). The handles and fittings also display the shiny black layers, probably paint.

Wood has been mineralised on some fragments, the direction of grain is visible and can indicate perhaps whether the handles were attached to the long sides or to the ends, where the grain may be perpendicular to the handle. One find retained fibres, possibly the remains of upholstery or lining.

X-rays show heavy pitting and little metal core surviving on the plates, but better survival was present on the handles. The iron is potentially unstable and should be stored at less than 15%RH.

#### 4.5. Statement of Potential

##### 4.5.1 Preservation:

The corrosion did not indicate any unusual conditions of preservation, but reflected well-aerated soils, quite aggressive to iron finds.

##### 4.5.2 Dating evidence and quantification:

Stamped iron plates, tin-dipped first appeared at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Litten 1991, 107).

A 1783 catalogue notes a 'black' finish, as found on most of these fragments, "painted with two or more coats of matt black paint" (Litten 1991, 107). Figure 55 on that page shows plain handles similar to sf18, 19, and 29 illustrated in this catalogue. Figure 62 (p115) depicts an 1855 coffin with cast iron handles matching sf24, 25, and 26 from this site. Six handles (sf20-23, 27 and 28) were cast with matching floral decoration, possibly from one or two coffins, as one 1838 catalogue listed adult coffins with between 4 and 8 handles (Litten 1991, 113).

##### 4.5.3 Construction:

###### 4.5.3.1. Plates:

Tin plating, black paint and stamped decoration are discussed above.

sfs9 and 12 contain small rivet holes, some with small nails or tacks *in situ*.

Sf32 The width of this coffin plate is c.4.5 inches.

###### 4.5.3.2 Coffins:

Sf10: The largest fragment consists of a screw (see X-ray 5524), securing two planks of wood. The wood grain near the head of the screw runs across the shank and shows the plank was 5/8 inches thick. The tip of the screw is better preserved than the head end, and the wood grain here runs parallel to the shank. There are two small tacks, entirely corroded and with no metal core, that can be seen at the juncture of the planks, perhaps used to secure upholstery for a lining or cover? A few strands of fibre are visible beneath the head and may be identifiable by a specialist. The L-shaped nail retains 1/4 inch of wood running across the shank and the rest parallel to it.

#### **4.6. Recommendations**

Further work is recommended only if in line with particular research objectives. Although these are relatively modern, there may be sufficient interest in this material for interested researchers. The material should remain stable for the long term if stored correctly.

#### **6.2 Analysis and specialist Support**

6.2.1 Mineral Preserved Organic materials (MPO): wood remains could be identified if in line with research objectives. Textile sf 10 for lining or upholstery.

6.2.2 XRF: may be required for non-ferrous metal. FTIR or other analytical techniques for paint.

#### **6.3 Storage**

##### **6.3.1 Packaging**

The finds have been packaged appropriately for long-term storage. All materials used are archive stable and acid-free. Plastic bags have been pierced to allow airflow, reducing the risk of condensation and mould growth. 'Jiffy', (polythene) foam inserts have been added to the bags to provide additional support and protect against mechanical damage during transit. Any replacement of packaging materials should be carried out in consultation with a conservator. Avoid paper or card labels in association with metals, especially tin, lead and lead alloys. Acid vapours will cause active corrosion (Cronyn 1990).

##### **6.3.2 Storage environment**

These finds are packed in two polythene 'Stewart' boxes with sufficient airflow to allow the silica gel to provide a dry micro-environment of less than 15% Relative Humidity (which should prevent further corrosion of iron finds (Knight 1990)). An Indicator strip has been placed at the front of the box and can be viewed through the plastic. If any part of the strip turns pink the box is no longer desiccated sufficiently and the gel will need to be regenerated.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief was of limited value in adding to the understanding of the church fabric. Only four tiny portions of the lower church walls/footings were visible and these added little to the knowledge of the building's history. It seems that part of the chancel has been underpinned with brick at some stage, but the extent and date of this work were impossible to determine. It is also possible that under the north aisle there survives an earlier structure but this could not be defined adequately within the confines of the drainage trench.

The excavations within the old cemetery adjacent to the church showed that burials were very densely packed on the southern and eastern sides of the chancel, but were sparse on the northern side and to the west. At least thirty burials were disturbed; 2 adults and a child from the southern side of the chancel; 3 adults, an infant and a child from the eastern side of the chancel; 1 adult from the northern side of the chancel; 15 adults and 6 children from the drain and soakaway. It is possible that some of the bones recovered may be from other burials which could not be clearly identified. Given the shallow nature of the excavations adjacent to the chancel it was impossible to determine the maximum depth of the cemetery build-up in these areas, but in the soakaway pit to the south-east of the chancel the cemetery build-up was 1.50m thick.

Without proper archaeological excavation it was impossible to build up any idea of the stratigraphic relationship between these burials, and therefore their relative dates. The old cemetery was in use from the medieval period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (modern gravestones are present nearby), so the bones could be of medieval, post-medieval and modern date. Given the method of excavation it was also impossible to determine the position in which the bodies had been buried. The exception was Burial 20 which had one forearm folded across the pelvis.

It is of interest that the density of burials within the soakaway was far greater between depths of 0.80-1.50m below ground level than at depths of between 0.10-0.80m below ground level. A high proportion of the burials recovered (30%) were of infants or children. Excavations on the medieval cemeteries at Jewbury, St Helen-on-the-Walls and the Minster church in York, have produced similar results with between 25% and 30% of the burials recovered being children (Lilley et. al. 1994, 433). The proportion of child burials clearly reflects the high child mortality rates of the medieval and post-medieval periods.

To the west of the old cemetery in the soakaway pit within the new cemetery several features were uncovered. Of most interest was a feature interpreted as a lime slaking pit. This may have been used during the construction of the cemetery wall between the old and new cemeteries. The date of both the wall and the lime slaking pit is unknown.



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