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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

SAINT OSWALD'S CHURCH

LEATHLEY

NORTH YORKSHIRE

N.G.R. 423170 447020

COUNTY PARISH NO. 6145

FOR

YORKSHIRE ELECTRICITY GROUP PLC

JULY 1999

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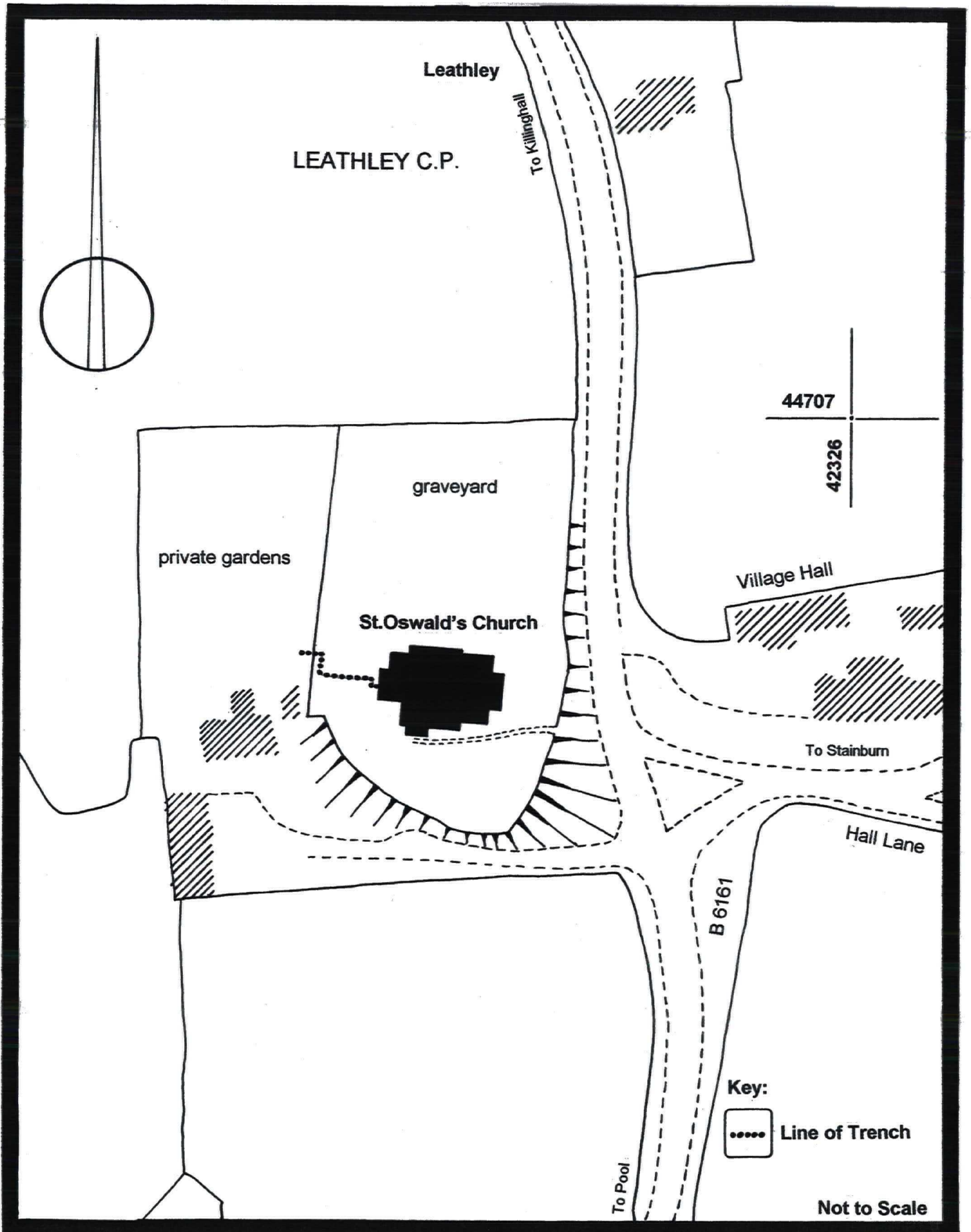
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FIGURE 1

GENERAL SITE LOCATION PLAN



**SAINT OSWALD'S CHURCH
LEATHLEY**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
JULY 1999**

INTRODUCTION

The archaeological watching brief was maintained during the installation of an underground electricity service to St.Oswald's Church at Leathley. This programme of works was undertaken by Yorkshire Electricity Group PLC.

The archaeological watching brief, concluded on Monday 12th July 1999. The following statement outlines the nature of my findings.

SITE LOCATION

St.Oswalds Church is situated in the southern extent of the small, dispersed, village of Leathley at 65 metres AOD and at N.G.R. 423170 447020. The village is located within western extent of the civil parish of Leathley, and is in the Harrogate District of North Yorkshire.

The position and dimensions of the service trench was predetermined by Yorkshire Electricity, following discussions with the Bradford Diocesan Registry and the Church Warden. The line of the trench avoided known burial sites.

The curvilinear trench was excavated between the western elevation of the church tower and the cemetery's western boundary wall.

~~The line of the service trench was positioned so as to avoid known burial sites.~~

SITE DESCRIPTION

St.Oswald's Church is situated within the southern extent of the small village of Leathley on a natural knoll like area of rising ground overlooking the flood plain of the River Wharfe to the south. The church is situated adjacent and to the immediate west of the B6161 Pool to Killinghall Road.

The church is located within the centre south of the walled graveyard, the curtilage of which has been recently extended into the fields to the north. Ground levels within the graveyard reflect the relief of the surrounding terrain, rising from the south, east and north towards the site of the church, the ground levels to the west of the church are gently undulating.

PLATES 1, 2 AND 3



St. Oswald's Church, facing north west.



Site location, facing south west.



Site location, facing south.

The site is situated within the western extent of the graveyard, in area with shallow undulations. The existing ground level falls away from the base of the tower very gently to the west, on an even gradient, before rising, unevenly toward the dry stone boundary wall. The ground level to the west of same is approximately 0.60m below that of the graveyard.

This area of the graveyard is presently occupied by a small number of marked graves, the headstones of which indicate they all date to the early 19th century.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Environs:

During the mid 20th century the flood plain to the south of Leathley, known as Washburn Foot was the site of lithic prospection. Here J.S.Cowling and his son E.T.Cowling collected a large number of Mesolithic flints. It is believed that the site situated as it is close to the confluence of the River's Wharfe and Washburn occupied an elevated spur overlooking a large lake that occupied much of the valley east of Otley. The large post-glacial lake measured approximately four miles in length and up to two miles in width. Leathley's slightly elevated aspect made it ideal as an occupation site from post-glacial times onwards. These elevated gravel terraces have produced artefactual evidence from the Mesolithic through to the Romano-British period. E.T.Cowlings investigation indicates that the prehistoric occupation levels, that yield the greatest number of lithic artefacts, occur at the interface between the lean topsoil's and the gravel subsoil's.

It has been intimated by Cowling that the circular planform of the, pre-extended, graveyard at Leathley was suggestive of a pre-Christian enclosures of the Iron Age, similar to those identified at other sites within the region (Kex Gill, Blubberhouses).

A total of three Beehive Querns have been recovered from Leathley, these have been dated to the Iron Age (Cowling E.T. 1946, Rombolds Way). It is noted that the artefacts were once kept in the Vicarage garden, however, their present where/about's is not known. we

The Church:

The earliest fabric of St.Oswald's Church is the, coursed gritstone, west tower which is tall and un-buttressed and is thought to date to the late 11th century. The tower may have been attached to a even earlier Norman nave which has since been replaced by the ashlar dressed Perpendicular nave and aisles. The west door within the nave is thought to date to the 12th century. The church was restored in 1869.

No previously recorded archaeological works have been undertaken within the Church or village Leathley.

METHODOLOGY

Prior to the commencement of works it was anticipated that there was a low probability that archaeology survived, in situ, on the line of the service trench. Should any archaeology survive in situ it was likely that this would survive at a depth below the existing ground level greater than the proposed depth of dig.

Furthermore the Client had made every attempt to select a site line that would have the least impact on known burial sites, however there remained the potential that the excavations may disturb human remains, however, given the shallow depth of dig it was anticipated that these would most likely consist of unstratified, previously disturbed remains.

It was therefore recommended that an archaeologist be appointed to maintain a Watching Brief on the hand excavations.

The Aims:

The aims of this archaeological investigation are as follows:

- a. To liaise with Yorkshire Electricity Group PLC, The Heritage Unit, North Yorkshire County Council and the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser regarding recommendations to the proposed works to ensure the minimum damage to archaeological remains which have been identified at or above the maximum depth of excavation; and
- b. To record any finds, features or structures of archaeological interest and obtain information on the presence, extent, character, date and depth of these remains.

The archaeology will be recorded using professionally approved techniques, standard forms and conventions. All areas of excavation and any archaeological features will be recorded by plans and photographs and sections where possible.

- c. to assess the importance of any remains found and interpret them in terms of their historical context and their relationship with the extant fabric of the building and churchyard.

The Excavations:

The service trench measured 20 m in length, 0.30 m in width and approximately 0.40 m in depth.

Prior to the commencement of site works it was agreed that the archaeologist together with the assistance of the work force of Yorkshire Electricity would hand excavate all aspects of the proposed groundwork's.

This approach to the works is designed to fall between the requirements of a Watching Brief and a controlled archaeological excavation.

SUMMARY OF WORKS

The Drilling Works:

Prior to the commencement of groundwork's it was necessary, to drill through the base of the west elevation of the tower. A diamond tip drill was engaged to bore a core through the fabric, the diameter of the bit measured 34mm. These works were positioned to the immediate south of the pedestrian entrance to the tower and were drilled at an angle of 120 degrees down from a position adjacent the internal door jamb at approximately 1.0m above internal floor level to approximately 0.15m below the external ground level.

These works were undertaken by a specialist in industrial drilling and were achieved with minimal impact to the fabric of the church.

The fabric of the tower consists of irregular shaped fragments of sandstone, these are not coursed in a regular blockwork. The sandstone fragments vary considerably in size ranging from 0.05m x 0.08m to 0.80m x 0.15m. The fabric has been recently repointed. The quoins are fashioned in grey gritstone dressed blocks, this same blockwork is noted as string course on the south facing elevation of the tower at 3.5m above the existing ground level.

One roughly dressed sandstone block was exposed within the eastern terminus of the service trench through which the drill had passed. This previously buried block of masonry was similar in every respect to the fabric above ground level i.e a yellow orange, soft, medium grit sandstone with a moderate degree of natural weathering. The surrounding grey white mortar differed from the recently repointed yellow brown fabric of the extant fabric of the tower.

The evidence would suggest that the masonry exposed below ground level had been previously exposed to the elements, resulting in natural weathering, prior to it being concealed and buried by a rise in ground levels adjacent to the tower. The differing mortar mixes would indicate that this fabric had been buried some time prior to the recent repointing works.

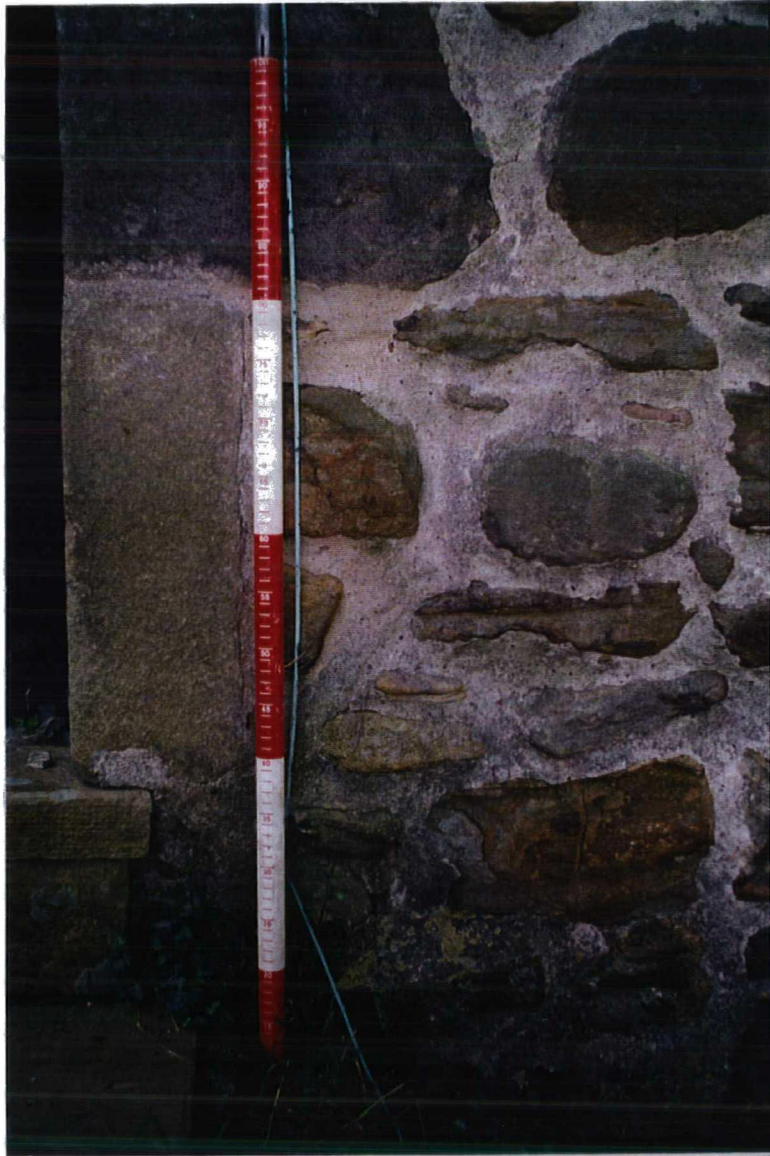
The Ground Works:

These works consisted of the hand excavation of a curvilinear service trench, towards its western extent the trench was broadened and deepened in order to pass beneath the dry stone boundary wall. The following stratigraphy was identified within the trench;

Natural sub-soil was not encountered during these excavations.

The earliest anthropogenic deposit was a layer of disturbed ground / former grave fill that was identified along the entire track. This layer of medium brown (10YR4/2) sandy loam was dry and well compacted. The layer contained a moderate quantity of

PLATE 4



Detail of tower fabric prior to drilling.

PLATES 5 AND 6



Trench as excavated, facing east south east.



Trench as excavated, facing north.

inclusions, dominated by water worn pebble, root and ash / cinder. The layer also contained the occasional large water worn cobble that measured up to 0.30m in size, these stones were recovered intermittently long the eastern and central area of the trench. The layer exceeded 0.35m in depth being identified within the base of the excavation. The layer contained a small assemblage of 19th century pottery and bottle glass together with de-articulated fragments of human bone. The human remains were representative of most of the more robust areas of the skeleton including fragments of cranium, mandible, dentition, clavicle, vertebrae, radius and femur. These small broken fragments were found to be in poor condition, the breakage's and fractures were not the result of trauma but were attributable to post mortum damage. It is likely that the excavation of the 19th century graves within the immediate area was responsible for disturbing earlier, unmarked, graves. These fragmentary human remains were encountered within the central and eastern extent of the trench and were almost certainly representative of a more than one burial.

Within the western extent of the trench this layer was sealed by a recently deposited layer of made up ground that measured up to 0.25m in depth. This deposit of medium brown (10YR4/3) loamy sand was dry and friable and contained a high quantity of inclusions. These were dominated by water worn cobbles, angular sandstone fragments measuring less than 0.18m in size, together with cinder, clinker and brick fragments. The layer also contained 19th /20th century pottery, glass and metalwork. The finds and inclusions within this layer were consistent with that of spoil resulting from building works/demolition and boiler waste. The layer was confined to that area of undulating ground within the western extent of the study area, suggesting this dumped material accounts for the make up of these shallow undulations.

Within the eastern extent of the trench in the immediate vicinity of the flight of two steps that ascend to the door in the western elevation of the tower, the fragmentary remains of a buried pathway was identified. The cinder and clinker surface was identified immediately below the turf and measured up to 0.12m in depth. The cinder and clinker was suspended within a matrix of blue black (7.5YR3/2) loamy sand that was dry and well compacted. The layer contained a number of other inclusions; namely root, pebble together with shallow lenses of coarse gritty sand. The layer contained a small quantity of 19th century pottery. This former surface butted to the steps and the western elevation of the tower, extending up to 1.50m to the west of same. The surface sealed the layer of disturbed ground and was sealed by the turf.

A dark brown (10YR4/3) loam topsoil was identified along the majority of the trench with the exception of the eastern extent where it was replaced by the former footway. The topsoil was dry and friable with low quantity of inclusions dominated by root.

The entire length of the trench was surfaced in grass turf.

CONCLUSION

The recent archaeological watching brief conducted by Mr.K.J.Cale on behalf of Yorkshire Electricity Group PLC, was largely negative.

The watching brief identified three main phases of activity on the site, namely:-

- i. The gradual accumulation and repeated disturbance of a sandy loam along the entire track. It would appear that this layer may have originally been the interface onto the natural sub soil, but as a result of successive burials on the site, dating back over a period of over 900 hundred years, the layer has both increased in depth and become heavily disturbed.
- ii. The construction during the 19th century of a cinder and clinker footway round the tower, affording pedestrian access from the south elevation to the doorway within the tower.

It was during the construction of this footway that the ground levels adjacent to the tower were slightly raised. The formation of this path buried one course of stonework on the west elevation of the tower.

- iii. The tipping of cinder, ash and clinker together with general builders waste adjacent to the western boundary wall of the graveyard during the early 20th century. It would appear that this spoil was barrowed to this location and then tipped in conical shaped mounds. These mounds have since been slightly displaced and truncated and survive as shallow undulations in the western extent of the graveyard.

The recent programme of excavation generated a small quantity of a human bone, these small broken fragments were carefully removed from the excavation trench and placed into a storage container. Further to on site discussions with a Yorkshire Electricity Group PLC representative the remains were handed over, immediately, to Reverend Michael Cleverley, The Rectory, Leathley, LS21 2LF for re-internment.

A very small quantity of finds were identified during the watching brief these included late 19th century pottery, glass and metalwork, none of which was recovered or removed from site.

Kevin John Cale

July 1999

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