



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING
REPORT**

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**HOLY TRINITY CHURCH
STARTFORTH
COUNTY DURHAM**

prepared for

Startforth PCC

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Client Startforth PCC
Location Holy Trinity Church, Startforth, County Durham
District Teesdale

Grid Ref NZ 047 159
HER no. D6892 (Startforth village)
OASIS Ref northern1-307281
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HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, STARTFORTH, COUNTY DURHAM
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

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HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, STARTFORTH, COUNTY DURHAM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Summary

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring during excavations for a new 'above ground' cesspool drainage system at Holy Trinity Church, Startforth, County Durham (centred on NZ 047 159; Fig. 1). Previous evaluation of the development site (NAA 2007) identified burials at a depth of 1.1m below ground level, sealed by subsoils which were themselves cut by the foundation trench for the existing church.

The current investigations showed the presence of a number of previously disturbed graves along the eastern buttress, which were pressed up against the foundations of the church. These were disturbed either during the construction of the Victorian church, or during the later installation of a drain and lightning conductor.

Possible evidence for the medieval church was encountered in the form of masonry that apparently pre-dated the Victorian foundations. The finds recovered from the archaeological monitoring represented a wide range of periods, from prehistoric to modern, and indicated background activity within the vicinity.

One enigmatic feature within the churchyard was a small stone pillar, without inscription, lying on its side, which had possibly been used as a grave marker. In size and shape, this was not dissimilar to a Roman altar and it would probably warrant further investigation. The identification of a Roman settlement close to the fording point of the River Tees would be significant.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring during excavations for a new 'above ground' cesspool drainage system at Holy Trinity Church, Startforth, County Durham (centred on NZ 047 159; Fig. 1). Previous evaluation of the development site (NAA 2007) identified burials at a depth of 1.1m below ground level, sealed by subsoils which were themselves cut by the foundation trench for the existing church. The development has been designed to avoid the known burials and minimise the potential for impact upon any previously unrecorded archaeological features.

1.2 The village had its origins in the medieval period and, although now located within County Durham, was formerly situated within the Gilling West Wapentake of the North Riding of Yorkshire.

1.3 The development was entirely contained within the graveyard of Holy Trinity Church, which was officially closed aside from the Garden of Remembrance and a small number of reserved burial plots. This report has been prepared by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd for the Startforth Parochial Church Council (PCC).

2.0 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Location

2.1 The village of Startforth lies on the south (right) bank of the River Tees, immediately opposite Barnard Castle, within the Teesdale District of County Durham (centred on NZ 047 159; Fig. 1). The church sits on a platform above a north-facing slope of the Tees Valley at an elevation of approximately 155m OD. The site lies in the graveyard of the present post-medieval church.

2.2 The new cesspool drainage system was located on the north side of the bell tower and initially required the excavation of a pit measuring 3.5m by 2.6m to a maximum depth of 0.6m. This was then increased to 1.1m deep to accommodate a smaller tank, so that the excavations did not encroach on the existing footpath and the possibility of further undisturbed graves (Fig. 2).

Geology and soils

- 2.3 The bedrock geology of the area is composed of Namurian Millstone Grits of the Carboniferous period (IGS 1977). The drift geology, where present, is composed of boulder clay and morainic drift and river terrace deposits (IGS 1979). The soils of the area are mapped as well-drained, loamy, typical brown earths of the Wick I association (Jarvis *et al.* 1984).

3.0 SUMMARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The village of Startforth is located on the south bank of the Tees, opposite Barnard Castle. The Domesday Survey of 1086 records a settlement at *Stradford*, the etymology of which is derived from two Old English elements, *straet* and *ford*, translating as ‘the ford on the street’ (Mills 1991, 308). This refers to the location of the village at the point where the Roman road from Binchester to Bowes crossed the River Tees. At the time of the Domesday Survey, Startforth was held by two individuals, Enisan and Bodin, from Count Alan of Brittany, also known as the Earl of Richmond, who was William the Conqueror’s son-in-law and had extensive land holdings in Yorkshire at that time (Hinde 1996, 333). The entry for Startforth in the Domesday Book, and its Old English place-name, would seem to indicate that the village already existed in the pre-Conquest period.
- 3.2 Three churches are recorded as having existed on the site at various times. The present church was constructed in 1863 by J. & W. Hay of Liverpool and replaced the medieval building. During the construction, a stone cross of Anglo-Saxon date was discovered beneath the earlier wooden floor and this may support a late Anglo-Saxon or early Norman origin for the earliest church on the site. However, Pevsner (1989, 357) makes no mention of the earlier sculpture and only records the presence of 14th and 15th-century examples in the church.
- 3.3 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 2007, located approximately over the intended centre of the new cesspool drainage system (NAA 2007). This comprised the excavation of a pit measuring 2m by 2m and was situated next to the base of the bell tower on the north side of the present church. Initial excavation demonstrated that the eastern half of the trench was disturbed in the upper levels by service pipes and a lightning conductor, and excavation was halted at a depth of 0.4m in order not to disturb these. The pipe locations were recorded at this level. The western half of the trench was further excavated to a depth of 1.2m.

3.4 The earliest features encountered at the site comprised two graves, which were recorded cutting into the natural geological deposits. One of these contained articulated human remains and extended beyond the southern extent of excavation at a depth of 1.1m below ground level. The second grave cut was at the eastern limit of excavation and extended into the unexcavated eastern area at a comparable level. A human skull was visible within this grave. Both graves were sealed by a deposit of buried subsoil overlain in turn by a further buried soil horizon. This latter deposit was cut by the foundation trench for the post-medieval church, the trench being visible for a depth of 0.75m and continuing beyond the southern limit of excavation. The buried soil horizons were sealed by a thick deposit of debris resulting from the construction of the present church, which was situated directly below modern topsoil. The fact that both graves lay below a deposit that was cut by the foundation trench for the present church indicates that the burials encountered during the evaluation pre-date 1863 and may conceivably be medieval in date.

3.5 Excavation was halted upon the discovery of articulated human remains and the evaluation report recommended that further excavation would be required in order to record and relocate any human remains, as well as record and sample excavate any other archaeological features that fall within the area of development.

4.0 **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

4.1 The development involved the excavation of a 1.1m deep trench for the installation of a cesspool drainage system necessitated by the installation of toilet facilities within the body of the church. The groundworks had the potential to damage and destroy archaeological features and deposits predating the present church and graveyard, in addition to previously unrecorded burials comprising articulated human remains. The previous archaeological works undertaken at the site have indicated that some graves pre-date the present building. The principle aim of the project was to excavate the footprint of the proposed sewage tank prior to any works commencing in order to mitigate the impact of the development upon hitherto unrecorded archaeological remains and preserve those remains by record.

4.2 The primary objectives of the project were:

- to record, excavate, recover and rebury any human remains present within the development area;

- to record and sample excavate any surviving archaeological features or deposits that pre-date the present church and graveyard, and which will be directly affected by the development (i.e. cannot be preserved in situ); and
- to prepare a report on the results of the excavation that would be submitted to the Diocese of Leeds, in the first instance, and to the Durham County Historic Environment Record, in order that the results of the excavation form part of a permanent record for the project.

5.0 **METHODOLOGY**

5.1 The location of the excavations was set out by the principal contractor.

5.2 The topsoil was removed by hand-excavation, under the supervision of the attending archaeologist at all times. Excavation continued to a depth of 1.1m below the existing ground level where undisturbed human remains were encountered during test pitting in 2007 (NAA 2007). No further ground works took place beneath this level to avoid disturbing any further human remains.

6.0 **RESULTS**

6.1 The archaeological monitoring identified two separate soil layers (**001** and **002**). Layer **001** represented a general topsoil layer, which comprised a dark grey sandy silt and contained fragments of modern glass and blue and white pottery and was approximately 0.4m deep.

6.2 Layer **002** comprised a pale brownish-grey sandy silt and produced two fragments of worked flint, sherds of medieval green-glazed pottery, a quantity of disarticulated human remains (probably more than one individual), a coin dated 1694 and a partial .410 calibre shot-gun cartridge dating to after 1918. This layer likely incorporated more than one grave that had been disturbed by the construction of the existing Victorian church, the installation of the drain leading into the kitchen or the installation of a lightning conductor.

6.3 The human remains recovered during the excavation were retained at the church to be reinterred at a later date.

6.4 The foundations for the existing church (**003**) were examined and consisted of well-dressed rectangular stones measuring up to 0.3m long. A distinct change was noted

between the Victorian foundations and the much larger, undressed stones (004) beneath (Plate 1). It was thought that these larger stones represented part of the earlier medieval foundations for the church.



Plate 1. Church foundations overlying irregular masonry, possibly of medieval date

- 6.5 A possible blocked-up vent or drain was visible within the lower, undressed foundations (Plate 2). This comprised a small rectangular hole, measuring 0.4m by 0.5m with a large stone lintel across the top, which was infilled with three blocks.



Plate 2. Blocked ventilation hole within possible medieval foundations 004

7.0 **DISCUSSION**

- 7.1 The archaeological monitoring was successful in achieving the primary objectives set out above. No undisturbed graves were affected by the ground works and disarticulated human remains were recovered and packaged appropriately for reburial within the church grounds.
- 7.2 Possible evidence for the medieval church was encountered in the form of masonry that apparently pre-dated the Victorian foundations. Early Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping suggests that the 19th-century church, albeit more extensive, overlay its medieval forebear. The finds recovered from the archaeological monitoring represented a wide range of periods, from prehistoric to modern, and indicated background activity within the vicinity.
- 7.3 One enigmatic feature within the churchyard was a small stone pillar, without inscription, lying on its side, which had possibly been used as a grave marker (Plate 3). In size and shape, this was not dissimilar to a Roman altar, and it would probably warrant further investigation. The identification of a Roman settlement close to the fording point of the River Tees would be significant.



Plate 3. Possible Roman altar within graveyard

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APPENDIX A
CONTEXT CATALOGUE

Context	Phase	Interpretative description	Relationships	Findings and sample information
001	Modern	Topsoil	Above 2	Modern glass, blue and white pottery.
002	?Pre-modern	Disturbed grave fills	Below 1	Contained two flints, green glaze pottery, 1694 William and Mary coin, post-1918 shotgun shell casing, coffin fittings, human remains.
003	Victorian	Church foundations	Cuts 1 and 2	
004	Medieval	Church foundations	Below 2	

APPENDIX B

POTTERY

Charlotte Britton

INTRODUCTION

A total of 18 sherds (214.1g) of pottery were recovered from the 2017 excavations at Holy Trinity Church, Startforth, County Durham. All of the recovered pottery has been organised by stratified deposit (context) and quantified by count and weight (Table B1). This report presents the results of the assessment of the material examined in accordance with national standards (Barclay *et al.* 2016).

Table B1: Pottery sherds by count and weight

Context	Count	Weight (g)
001	11	158.0
002	7	56.1
Total	18	214.1

METHOD

All material was assessed by eye, and wares and chronology were identified (Table B2). Vessel form was also identified where possible.

Table B2: Wares present in each context with date range, count and weight

Context		001		002		Total Count	Total Weight (g)
Ware	Date	Count	Weight (g)	Count	Weight (g)		
Fine reduced ware	12th - 13th Century			2	34.0	2	34.0
Stoneware	18th Century	3	53.0			3	53.0
Whiteware	19th Century	5	94.8			5	94.8
Horticultural Ware	20th Century	3	10.2	5	22.1	8	32.3
Total		11	158.0	7	56.1	18	214.1

RESULTS

The assemblage dates to the medieval and post-medieval periods, spanning the 12th to 20th centuries. It is classified as domestic and horticultural, which comments on the nature of the site. All of the pottery present was British in origin.

The medieval pottery

The medieval pottery recovered from Holy Trinity Church consists of two sherds of fine reduced ware, both with evidence of a splashed green glaze on the outside. It dates between the 12th and 13th centuries (Mainman and Jenner 2013, 1190-1191) and is characteristic of the region and period. The holloware form identified suggests domestic use.

The post-medieval pottery

The small post-medieval pottery assemblage recovered comprises domestic and horticultural wares. Table wares were exclusively represented within the domestic assemblage, which consisted of Stoneware and Whiteware. Both date between the 18th and 19th centuries and were most likely produced within the local region. Two sherds of Stoneware have a green marbled glaze on the outside, which was often used to imitate Chinese imports during this period and was extremely popular. The forms identified are exclusively jars and, with respect to the wares, are highly characteristic of the period and region.

The eight sherds of horticultural ware recovered all take the form of terracotta plant pots and date to the 20th century. Two sherds from context **002** depict a maker's stamp ('WARD DA'), indicating they were produced by the Ward Darlaston company, a producer of plant pots based in Wolverhampton, West Midlands. The company operated between 1921 and 1997 and was highly popular during the 20th century.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The medieval pottery recovered should be retained and deposited with the site archive. All the post-medieval pottery recovered dates between 18th and 19th centuries and is in very good condition; however, as it is highly typical of the period and region, it is recommended for discard.

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APPENDIX C
CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIALS ASSESSMENT

Chrystal M L Antink

INTRODUCTION

Two fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), totalling 189g, were recovered from excavations at Holy Trinity Church in Startforth, County Durham.

METHOD

Fragments were recorded by weight, form, and any complete dimensions.

THE ASSEMBLAGE

One fragment, weighing 14g, was identified as part of a modern roofing pantile. The other, 175g, is a decorative fragment of Victorian salt-glazed garden edging (Plate 4). It has one flat edge, a plain back, and is decorated on the front with a simple eight-petaled flower. Often these tiles had three lobes and this indeed appears to be the end section of a larger tile. This could have edged the path through the church grounds, or demarcated a grave.

STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL & RECOMMENDATIONS

The identifiable CBM was indicative of modern activity and is generally unremarkable. It is therefore recommended that the material need not necessarily be archived with the remainder of the site.



Plate 4. Salt-glazed garden edging tile fragment

APPENDIX D

FINDS REPORT

Dr Elizabeth Foulds

INTRODUCTION

This report discusses the finds recovered from archaeological monitoring during excavations of a cesspool drainage system at Holy Trinity Church, Startforth, County Durham (centred on NZ 047 159). The finds primarily represent post-medieval and modern activity, but there were worked flints indicative of prehistoric activity in the area.

METHOD

All finds were recorded in a Microsoft Access database on 20 September 2017. The specialist finds recording and reporting was completed in accordance with the national finds standard (English Heritage 2008, ClfA 2014).

RESULTS

A total of 23 finds were submitted for assessment. Of these, one was a natural stone and will not be discussed further. Most finds indicated post-medieval activity or were undiagnostic in regard to date. Prehistoric activity was represented by two worked flints and a possible worked chert fragment.

Table D1: summary of finds by material and period

Material	Prehistoric	Post-medieval	Undiagnostic	Total
Ceramic	-	1	-	1
Copper alloy	-	2	-	2
Glass	-	6	-	6
Iron	-	-	6	6
Lead	-	-	1	1
Stone	3	-	-	3
Total	3	9	7	19

DISCUSSION

Many of the finds from context **002** probably derived from the graves associated with the disturbed burials.

The lightning rod insulator was a type patented in 1860 by James Spratt, an American electrician who sold lightning conductors in England (Grace's Guide to British Industrial History 2017a). It was likely that the original lightning conductor installed during the construction of the Victorian church in 1863.

The shot gun shell is marked with 'ELEY KYNOCH 410' on the base. It probably dates to after 1918, when the ammunition companies G. Kynoch and Co. and Eley Brothers were merged with other companies into Explosives Trades Ltd. and later became Nobel Industries (Grace's Guide to British Industrial History 2017b).

RECOMMENDATIONS

No further analysis work is recommended. Finds that have been recommended for discard have been indicated in the finds database, as they lack significance for the site.

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English Heritage (2008) *MoRPHE Project Planning Note 3 Archaeological Excavations*. London: English Heritage.

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Grace's Guide to British Industrial History (2017b) *Nobel Industries* [Online] Available at: https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Nobel_Industries (accessed 20/09/2017)

CATALOGUE

Abbreviations: D=diameter, H=height

001: Topsoil

Five fragments of glass vessels. Two were olive green body sherds and one was a brown body sherd. There was also a large rim fragment of a machine made colourless jar and a second rim fragment of a smaller jar. Unweathered. Post-medieval. 164g.

Complete glass lightning conductor insulator. Mould made with 'JAMES SPRATTS PATENT LONDON' written around the circumference and '1860' on the side. Lightly weathered. D: 42.9mm, H: 35.2mm, 69.3g.

Fragment of slate, possibly used as roofing tile. 18g.

002: Disturbed grave fills

Four large fragments of iron. One may be a handle. Undiagnostic. 688g.

Two strips of iron. 612g.

Two flint flakes and a possibly worked chert flake. Prehistoric. 1g.

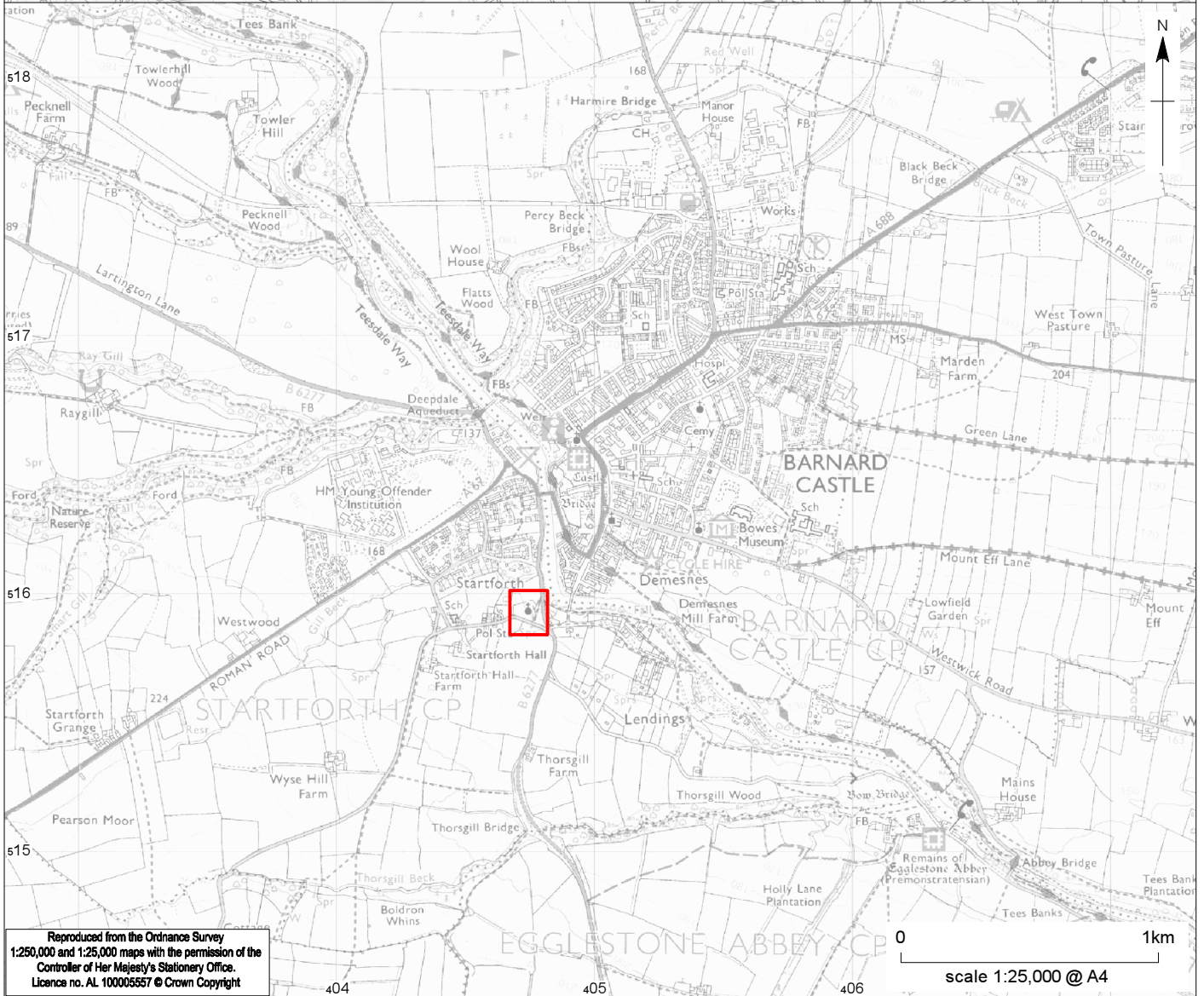
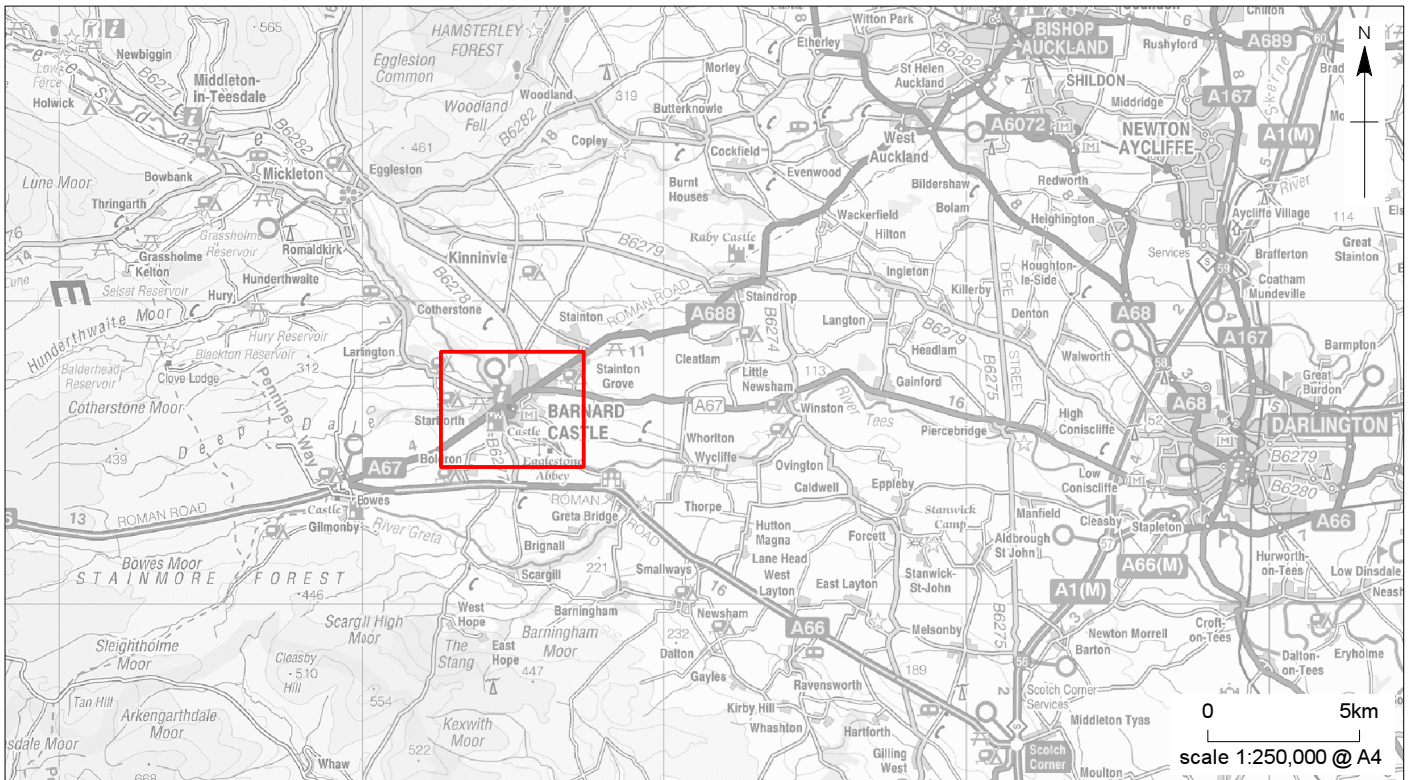
End of a shotgun shell. Post-medieval. D: 12.0mm, 5g.

One lead strip. Undiagnostic. 32g.

Copper alloy 'L' shaped brackets. 104g.

Worn William and Mary copper farthing dated 1694. Post-medieval. D: 22.4mm, H: 1.8mm, 5g.

Partial ceramic clay pipe bowl with heel. No decorative or maker's marks. Size and shape of bowl corresponds more closely with some of the later, rather than earlier, pipes. 7g.



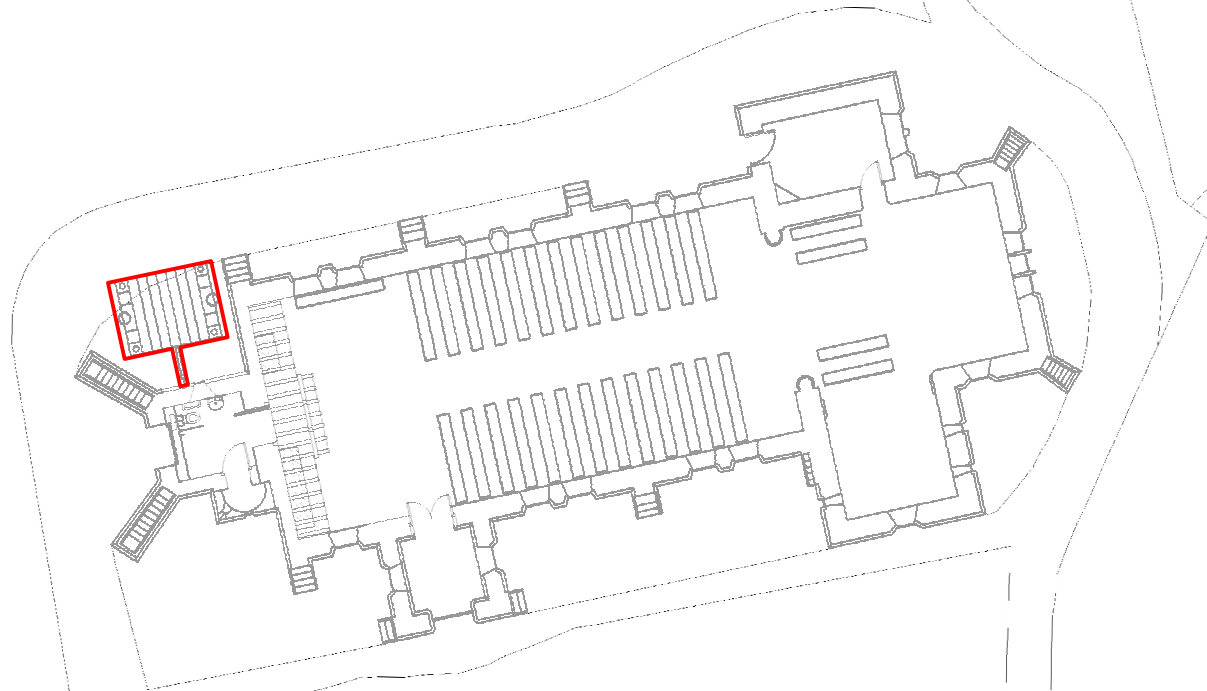
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Holy Trinity Church, Startforth: site location

Figure 1

Based on Ordnance Survey digital data supplied
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scale 1:250 @ A4