

# EXCAVATION FOR FLAGPOLE, CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, EAST WITTON

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

**Site name:** Church of St John the Evangelist, East Witton      **County:** North Yorkshire

**Local Planning Authority:** Richmondshire DC      **Development:** Flagpole Excavation.

**Client:** East Witton Parochial Church Council (PCC)

**Monitoring Archaeologist:** Kevin Collins      **Project Manager:** Oliver Cooper

**Date of fieldwork:** 11th March 2019      **NAA Project no:** 1478

**Report date:** 12/03/19      **NAA Report number:** 19/23

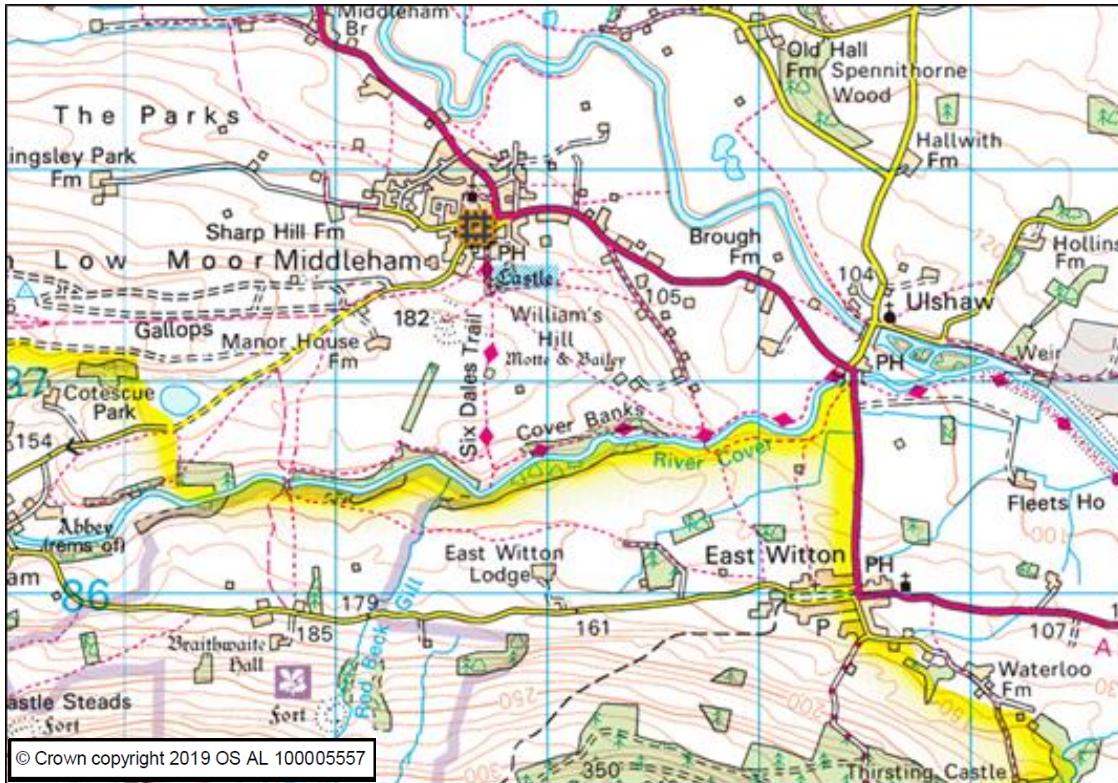
### **Reason for archaeological monitoring**

The development comprised the excavation of a hole for a new flagpole within the churchyard of the Church of St John the Evangelist, East Witton. Archaeological monitoring was requested to record, excavate, and rebury any human remains present within the development area, and to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which pre-date the present church and graveyard. The church was built in 1809 for the Earl of Ailesbury, by architect H.H. Seward, and remodelled in 1872 by G. Fowler Jones (Pevsner 1989, 152–3). The local archaeological record shows evidence of activity and features from the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post medieval periods in the area, so there was the potential for such remains to be encountered. Monitoring was undertaken in accordance with an agreed written scheme of investigation (NAA 2018).

### **Location and geology**

The village of East Witton lies at the eastern end of Wensleydale on the south bank of the River Ure, within the Richmondshire District of North Yorkshire (Figure 1). The Church of St John the Evangelist lies on a platform at the east end of the village, at an elevation of approximately 130m OD. The site lies in the graveyard of the post-mediaeval church, the new flagpole is located at approximately 5.25m to the east of the gate, north of a pair of shaped yew trees (SE 14657 8602, Figure 2; Plate 1).

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*Figure 1. Location of East Witton showing the Church of St John the Evangelist*



*Figure 2. Flagpole location indicated on GoogleEarth image (© 2018 Google)*

The bedrock geology of the area is composed of Carboniferous limestone (British Geological survey 2018). The drift geology where present, is composed of boulder clay and morainic drift and river terrace. There are occasional drumlins formed from the boulder clay.

### **Monitoring results**

Excavations were undertaken by hand; the hole was dug to the dimensions of 0.55m x 0.55m to a depth of 1m. Initial excavation was through a topsoil of dark yellowish-brown silty sand to a depth of 0.30m, changing to a light yellow silty sand below this level. At c. 0.45m depth, a number of limestone blocks were encountered (Plate 2). These had to be broken up in situ in order to be removed from the excavation. All of the blocks were plain with no evidence of mouldings or decoration. No human remains were encountered, and there were no other archaeological finds or features.

### **Discussion**

The excavation for the new flagpole did not identify any features or finds of archaeological significance. The absence of human remains accords with the relative recent (19th century) creation of the cemetery; the locations of burials are accurately recorded, and the potential for encountering disarticulated remains is relatively low.

The only point of interest was a group of limestone blocks, which may have been associated with the construction of the church in 1809 or its remodelling in 1872. The church is constructed of sandstone ashlar blocks, so the limestone is likely to have been used for the foundations or rubble core of the walls, or possibly waste material from levelling the site prior to construction.

### **References**

- British Geological Survey (2018) *Geology of Britain Viewer*. [Online] available at: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> [accessed 10/10/18]
- Northern Archaeological Associates (2018) *St John the Evangelist Church, East Witton: Written Scheme of Investigation*. NAA report **18-91**
- Pevsner N (1989) *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire, The North Riding*. London: Penguin Books



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*Plate 1: location of excavation close to west gate of churchyard*



*Plate 2: part-excavated hole showing limestone blocks*