

Ripon Cathedral: Installation of a Noticeboard in the Churchyard

Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief



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SUMMARY

Site Name: Ripon Cathedral Churchyard, Noticeboard

Address: Minster Road, Ripon, HG4 1QS

Grid Reference: SE 3171

Local Planning Authority: Harrogate Borough Council

County: North Yorkshire

Statutory Listing: Grade I

Conservation Area: Ripon Conservation Area

Scheduled Monument: SM 330/49

Fieldwork: Liz Humble

Report Production: Liz Humble

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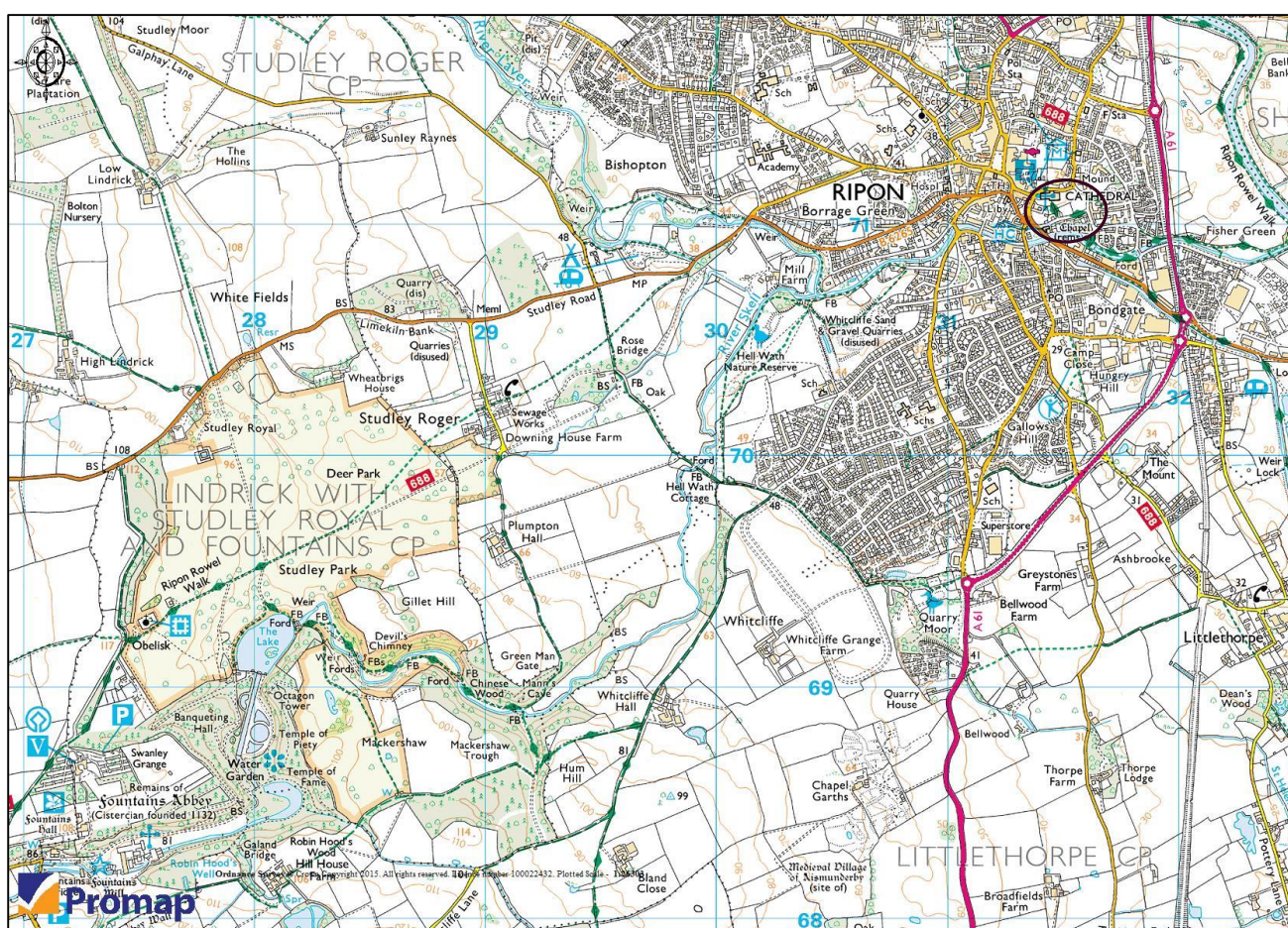
Humble Heritage is a professional built heritage and archaeological consultancy operating in the specialised area of the historic environment. The practice has extensive experience of historical and archaeological research, assessing significance and heritage impact and preparing heritage statements, archaeological assessments, statements of significance, conservation management plans and so forth. Humble Heritage provides heritage and archaeological advice on behalf of a wide variety of clients across much of England, Wales and Scotland and Liz Humble, Principal, is Cathedral Archaeologist to Ripon Cathedral.

There is a temptation to view cathedrals as timeless and tranquil places; venues of celebration and reflection. However, this view is a partial truth that masks the rich tapestry of change seen at Ripon and other cathedrals. A watching brief was carried out during the installation of a noticeboard within the churchyard at the southeast entrance. The noticeboard will provide important awareness regarding memorial safety works being undertaken within the churchyard, which is managed and maintained by Harrogate Borough Council. The installation of the noticeboard involved the excavation of two adjacent postholes, the larger measuring 460mm x 430mm and the smaller measuring 400mm x 360mm and reaching a depth of 780mm and 680mm respectively. The holes were excavated by hand with spades and shovels on 6 May 2015.

This section of the churchyard forms part of its late 19th century expansion to accommodate a rising population. The excavation, albeit limited in extent, demonstrates that no burials or other significant archaeology survives by the southeast entrance. An episode of dumping of building materials from demolition was observed in both trenches. The fieldwork and report were completed during May 2015 on behalf of Harrogate Borough Council.

INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 An archaeological watching brief was maintained during the installation of a wooden noticeboard by F. Lowley & Son Ltd on behalf of Harrogate Borough Council who are responsible for management and maintenance at the churchyard. The noticeboard was installed at the southeast entrance to the churchyard off High St Agnesgate (and its design followed the same design principles and used the same materials as the noticeboard at the west forecourt). Metal notices have also been fixed to the north and south entrances to the churchyard and they raise awareness of the memorial safety works being undertaken within the churchyard.
- 1.02 The excavation of two postholes for the noticeboard was monitored by Liz Humble, Cathedral Archaeologist on 6 May 2015 and this report has been written on behalf of Harrogate Borough Council during May 2015.



Location of Ripon Cathedral: the city lies ten miles north of Harrogate and four miles west of the A1



Location of Trenches 1 and 2 by the southeast entrance to Ripon Cathedral churchyard

PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 2.01 Ripon Cathedral is located in the heart of Ripon, off Minster Road. It is a Grade I listed building of exceptional architectural and historic interest. The land around which the cathedral church stands, including part of the surrounding churchyard, is a Scheduled Monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979. The scheduled area is identified as 'Ripon Minster Close'. The scheduled area wraps around a number of other buildings and structures that have been listed, namely the Old Deanery (Grade II*), the wall in front of the Old Deanery (Grade II), the Court House (Grade II*) and the wall to the old Court House (Grade II). Beyond the scheduled area, but within the precinct of Ripon Cathedral, are further listed buildings including Minster House (Grade II*) and its former Coach House (Grade II).
- 2.02 Ripon Cathedral FAC considered the proposal to erect the notices at a meeting during 2014 and, subject to approval under the Care of Cathedrals Measure, was willing to consent to the proposal. The Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE) decided to approve the application subject to three conditions:
1. *That the excavation of the post holes for the installation of the wooden noticeboard is carried out under the supervision of a suitable qualified archaeologist.*
 2. *That if anything of exceptional significance is uncovered during the excavation, works shall stop to allow for consultation with the Cathedral Archaeologist and the Commission.*

3. *That if human remains are uncovered, they shall be treated with due care and decency and in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Church of England and English Heritage's joint 'Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England', 2005.*

2.03 The archaeological watching brief proceeded on 6 May 2015 in accordance with the method statement prepared by the author of this report on 2 May 2015. Preservation by record was proposed to mitigate against any adverse impact on buried archaeology. Preservation by record would be followed by post-excavation analysis and dissemination of the results through the preparation and distribution of an illustrated report and archive. This sets out that the aims of the archaeological recording and associated interpretation are:

- Accurate data capture of any archaeological evidence pertaining to burials, artefacts or any ecclesiastical remains and phases of activity that may survive below ground.
- Record and interpret the archaeological evidence found during ground excavation – with outputs in hard copy and digital formats using archivally stable methods (for long-term preservation).
- Deposit one hard and one digital copy (with associated archive) with the Cathedral Chapter and one digital copy with the Historic Environment Record Office with an on-line entry on OASIS to make the results available to future researchers, the public, and specialists as part of understanding the heritage and its implications for managing change.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.01 The churchyard at Ripon Cathedral has medieval origins and it is thought that burials of monks and canons occurred within the medieval churchyard. According to local historian, Maurice Taylor, the churchyard was extended in the 1830s and then again during the 1860s in order to accommodate a rising population during the 19th century. In recent decades, burials in the churchyard became rare due to a lack of space and in 2013 the churchyard was formally and officially closed to new inhumation burials. Burial of ashes from cremations continue, with most inhumations expected to take place at nearby cemeteries managed by Harrogate Borough Council.

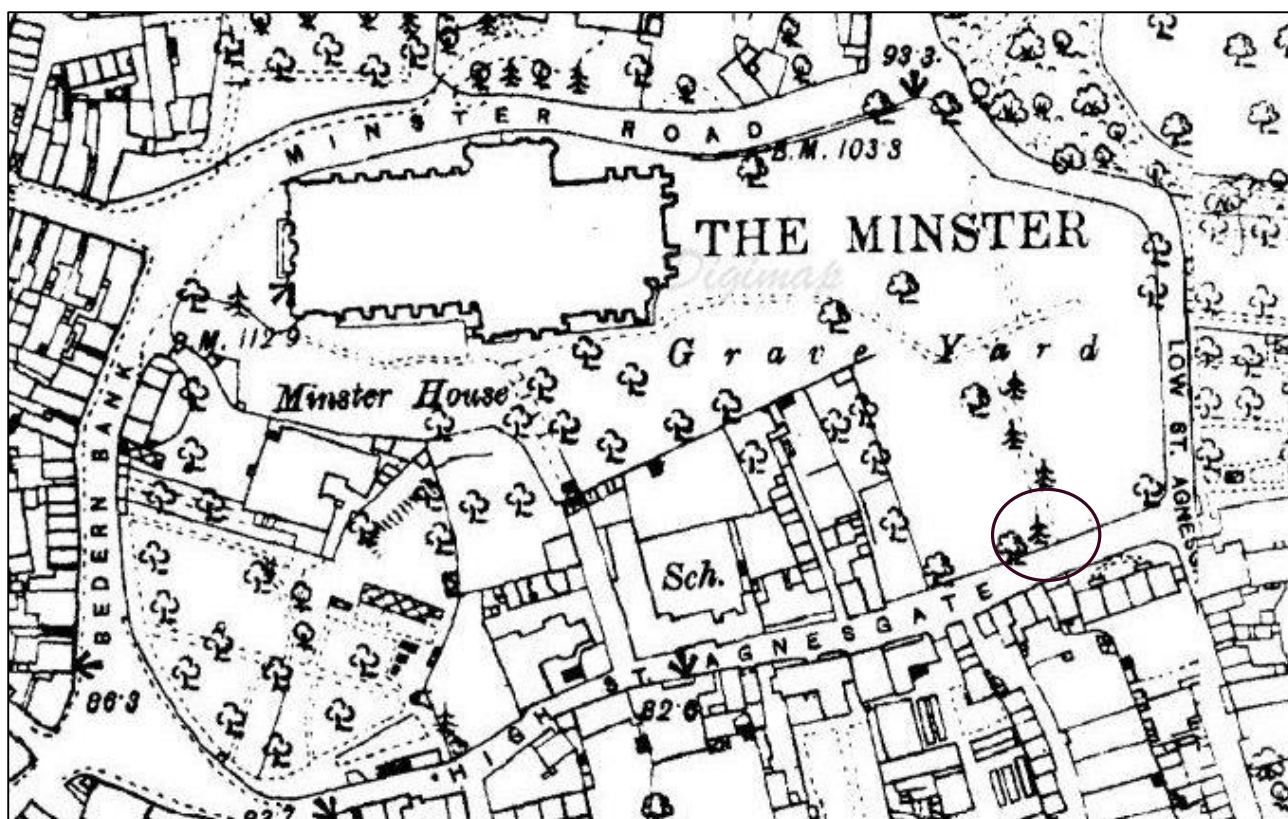
3.02 The following maps show the 19th century extensions to the churchyard. The area at the southeast corner and the associated gateway were created in the c.1860s and are first shown on the 1890s Ordnance Survey map.



Map of Ripon, John Humphries, 1800: note that the eastern part of the churchyard is a 19th century extension (see map below) with the southern entrance to the cathedral churchyard further west as the current southeast entrance had not yet been created



Ordnance survey map, 1856: note that the churchyard has been extended to the northeast, although the southeastern corner remains outside the scope of the burial ground at this date



Ordnance survey map, 1890s: during the c.1860s, the churchyard reached its current extent and now included the southeast corner. Note that the gates at the southeast entrance probably date to the late 19th century and the path is shown for the first time on this map

METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork

- 4.01 Standard techniques were followed throughout the excavation of the two trenches. As the trenches were excavated by hand by staff at F. Lowley & Son Ltd, close and continuous archaeological supervision was maintained in order to identify the presence or absence of any surviving archaeological deposits.
- 4.02 A digital photographic record was maintained using a Nikon D90 SLR camera with an 18mm-105mm lens. Trench record sheets were produced using *pro-forma* context sheets, with modern deposits recorded briefly. Due to the lack of significant archaeology, no plans or sections were drawn. All depths were taken from the existing ground surface. The locations of the trenches are shown on page 5.

Post-Excavation and Archiving

- 4.03 This report comprises a stratigraphic description of the archaeological deposits and features, and a discussion of the results and site phasing. A record of the photographs is included in the archive deposited with Ripon Cathedral and the individual plates are labelled.
- 4.04 The standard method of archaeological recording as used in this report is to assign every discrete unit of excavated ground or cut feature revealed (both known as a 'context') a unique identifier or 'context number'. This applies to both material that has been deposited on the ground surface or in a feature (identified by a number in round brackets) and to the interface or 'cut' left when material

has been excavated in the past (in which case the context numbers are shown in square brackets). Thus, a simple pit may have been dug into bedrock. This pit would be assigned a context number in square brackets, say, [100]. Perhaps it was slowly part-filled by the products of natural erosion – which would be given a context number in round brackets, for example, (99) – and then at a later date deliberately filled with more soil to level the ground, also assigned a separate number for instance, (98). In this way, we would describe the feature as a pit [100] with two fills (99) and (98). Among other advantages to this system, it allows for the unique identification of every feature on the site and the accurate location of every artefact recovered.

- 4.05 No skeletal remains or pre-19th century artefacts were unearthed during the excavation and therefore no finds require post-excavation processing.
- 4.06 This report has been lodged with Harrogate Borough Council, the Cathedral Chapter, Historic Environment Record and Archaeology Data Service and an entry made with OASIS.

RESULTS

Description of the Area

- 5.01 Ripon Cathedral has been an important ecclesiastical building since the mid-7th century. The crypt of St Wilfrid still survives from that period whilst the rest of the church has been rebuilt, first probably in the late 10th century and again in the later 12th century. The west front dates from the early 13th century and the east end was rebuilt in the later 13th century. A lady loft was added above the chapter house in the 14th century. The partial fall of the central tower in 1450 prompted rebuilding in this area, together with the construction of the pulpitum and choir stalls. The nave was rebuilt during the early 16th century and the church was thoroughly restored by Blore, Railton and George Gilbert Scott at various points during the 19th century. More conservative repair and restoration has continued through the 20th and early 21st centuries. The most significant and sensitive potential elements of the below ground archaeology at the site relate to the Saxon monastery that preceded the extant cathedral church and the high number of human burials.
- 5.02 The southeast entrance and southeastern part of the churchyard were created during the expansion of the churchyard into previously undeveloped land in the c.1860s. The entrance is formed from two stone gate piers with metal gates and the churchyard is defined by a stone wall along the edge of the pavement. The path from this entrance through the churchyard towards the cathedral church is surfaced with asphalt concrete.

Trench 1

- 5.03 Trench 1 was located nearest to the gate. Measuring 460mm x 430mm in plan the grass covered topsoil (1000) was a soft dark brownish grey sandy silt containing some rounded river cobbles, fragments of brick and lime mortar (ceramic building material - CBM) and fragments of tarmac. It reached a depth of 420mm-450mm. Below this was a thin layer of concentrated pieces of CBM and tarmac (1001) approximately 25-50mm thick beneath which was a subsoil layer (1002) comprising a mid-brown sandy silt with further inclusions of cobbles, CBM and tarmac. This extended to the base of the trench, which reached a total depth of 780mm from the ground surface.

Trench 2

- 5.04 Trench 2 measured 400mm x 360mm in plan with a depth of 680mm. The topsoil (2000) was the same as the topsoil layer (1000) in Trench 1. The layer of CBM (2001) and subsoil (2002) matched layers 1001 and 1002 respectively in Trench 1 and contained the same inclusions.



Trench 1 (with 200mm scale)



Trench 2 (with 200mm scale)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.01 The trenches that were excavated fall within an area of land that was brought into churchyard use for Ripon Cathedral in c.1860. However, their location very close to the entrance and path presumably precluded their use as a suitable location for burials and no skeletal material was uncovered.
- 6.02 No significant archaeology was found to be present. Layers 1001 in Trench 1 and 2001 in Trench 2 form part of the same deposit of material in this area. The concentration of brick, tarmac and lime mortar fragments with cobbles in this layer (and their sporadic presence in the topsoil and subsoil - layers 1000, 1003 and 2000, 2003 in Trenches 1 and 2 respectively) indicate that there was a period of construction or, more likely, demolition / dumping in this location. The bulk of the material would then have been moved elsewhere leaving these thin layers and CBM *in situ*. Given the concentration of this material above the subsoil, the activity associated with it probably occurred during the 19th or early 20th centuries.
- 6.03 No pre-19th century finds were present in these trenches and thus no further conservation or other research work is required. Copies of this report will be deposited with Ripon Cathedral Chapter, Harrogate Borough Council, the Historic Environment Record and the Archaeology Data Service. The site archive (digital photographs and trench record sheet) will be lodged with Ripon Cathedral Chapter as part of the body of material regarding the cathedral.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cartographic Material

Map of Ripon, John Humphries, 1800.

Ordnance survey map, 1856.

Ordnance survey map, 1890s.



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