

ROPC16/001



RAIT PARISH CHURCH, PERTH & KINROSS

*Archaeological Watching Brief
for Tay Landscape Partnership*

March 2017

RAIT OLD PARISH CHURCH, PERTH & KINROSS

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HA Job no.:	ROPC16/001/
HAS no.:	n/a.
NGR:	NO 22747 26855
Parish:	Kilspindie
Council:	Perth & Kinross
OASIS ref.:	Headland1 - 274947
SNRHE no.:	NO22NW 3
Archive will be deposited with:	HES

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Graphics:	

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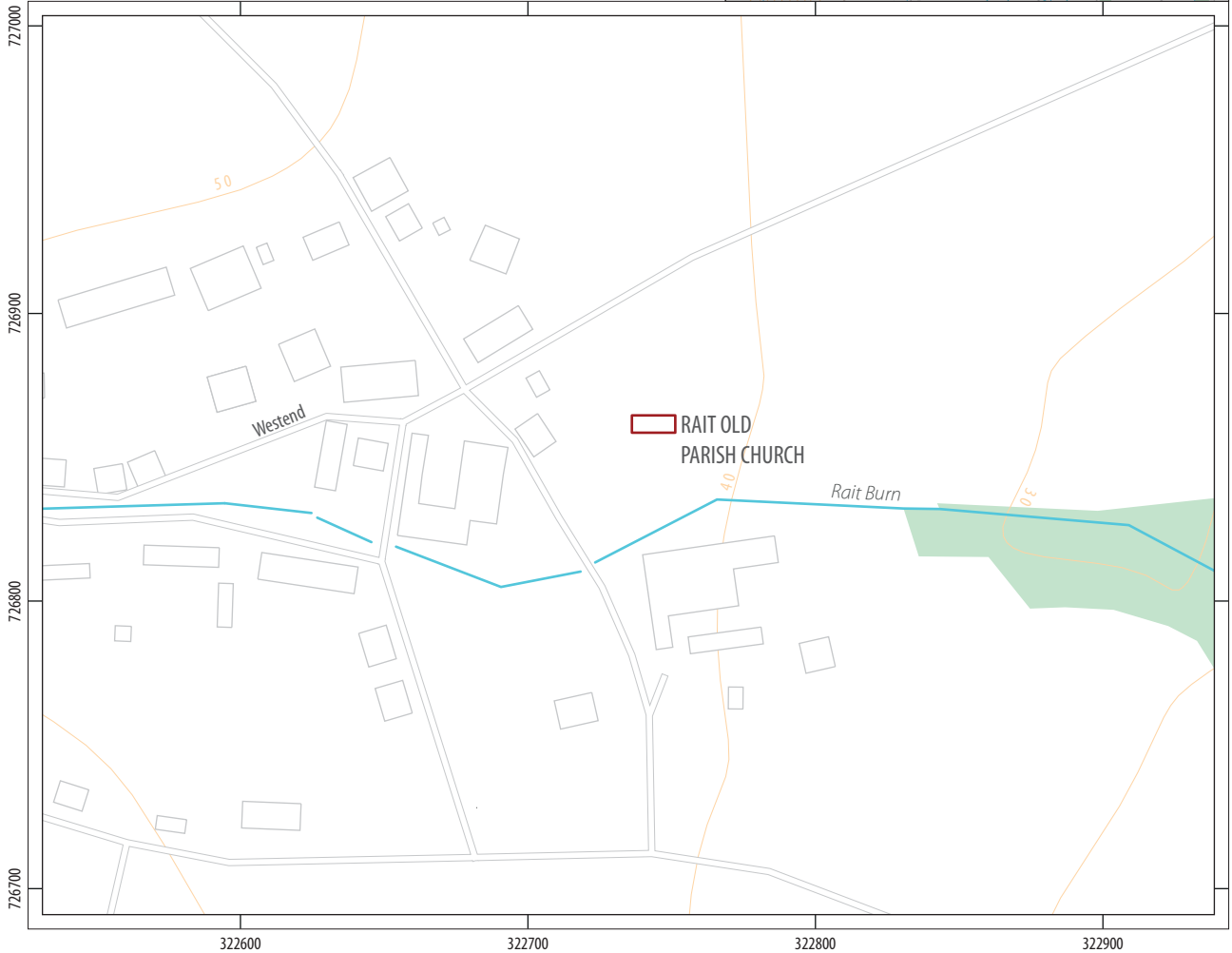
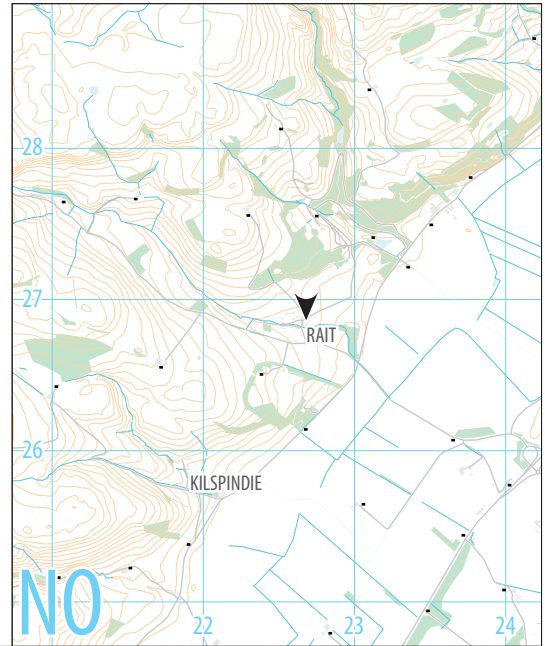
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1	Site location
2	Site plan
3	Pre-excavation shot facing east showing the larger mounds of earth
4	Post excavation shot of the internal area of the church

ROPC/01
Rait Old Parish Church
Rait
Perth

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Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2017



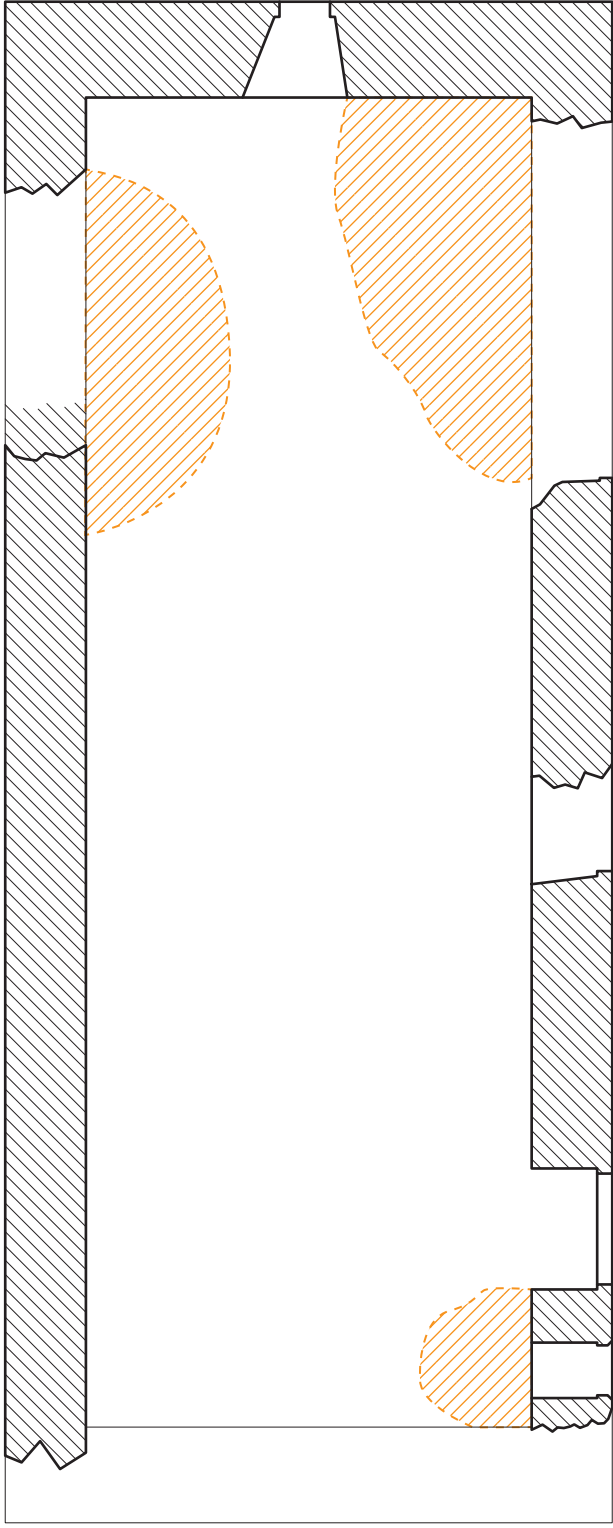
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HEADLAND
ARCHAEOLOGY

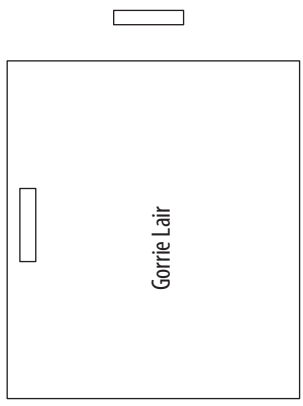
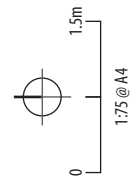
SCOTLAND

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ILLUS 1 Site location



area of earthen mounds to be reduced



Gorrie Lair

iron railings

Illus1
Site location plan

RAIT OLD PARISH CHURCH, PERTH & KINROSS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Summary

As part of the consolidation and repair work being undertaken at Rait Old Parish Church (SM 5613), Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned to carry out the archaeological monitoring of ground reduction/levelling works on the site. This was required to ensure that any subsurface features exposed during this work could be excavated and recorded. The actual levelling works were minimal in scope and mainly comprised the removal of mounds of earth and stone within the perimeter of the church walls. No features or floor surfaces associated with the church building were exposed during this work. The material that was moved contained a moderate assemblage of 19th/20th century pottery and glass fragments indicating the modern nature of these mounds. No deep excavations took place and no further work is required.

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned by Tay Landscape Partnership to undertake a programme of archaeological works in connection with ground reduction works at Rait old parish church.

Scheduled Monument Consent was applied for and granted (SMC 201602521) and Condition 1 stated:

No work associated with the levelling off of the ground surface or treatment/disposal of carved stone shall take place until Historic Environment Scotland has approved in writing a written scheme of investigation

(WSI) from an archaeological contractor to cover the works.

Reason: to ensure that archaeological information is adequately recorded during the course of works.

In order to fulfil this condition a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd (2016) on behalf of Tay Landscape Partnership; setting out the proposed strategy for archaeological mitigation.

This included a watching brief on all ground reduction works. The WSI was submitted to and agreed with Historic Environment Scotland who advise on archaeological matters associated with scheduled monuments. This report details the results of the work.

2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Old Parish Church lies at NGR: NO 22747 26855, in the village of Rait which is in the Tay valley to the north of the A90, approximately seven miles north east of Perth (Illus 1). The land is occupied by the ruined remains of the church and the surrounding graveyard. The site is bounded by a steep slope to the south leading to a mill lade with farmland to the east and the village of Rait to the north and west.

The building is a Scheduled Monument (Index Number: 5613) and is included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest as Category C (Reference: 11654). It is also included in the Scottish National Record of the Historic Environment (Site number: NO22NW 3).

The church is first recorded in 1120 when it was a chapel of the priory of Scone and was recorded as an independent parsonage in 1274. The building is likely to have been altered during the Reformation although it is possible that the fabric of the building incorporates earlier structures (RCAHMS, 1994). The church was abandoned in the early 17th century when the parish of Rait was amalgamated with Kilspindie. The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey published in 1867 depicts the church as a ruin by this time with trees growing inside the unroofed building.

The church is roofless and rectangular in plan, 20.1m long by 6.1m wide. The east gable is the only wall that stands to its full height with the maximum height of the remaining walls being 2.5m. The openings all have square-headed surrounds indicating a likely post-reformation date for their construction, although it is likely that some of the fabric of the walls incorporate earlier work.

The only previous work carried out across the site was a resistivity survey (Morris 2007) across the accessible areas of the graveyard. No previous work has been undertaken within the church building itself.

3 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In line with the WSI the main objectives of archaeological works were:

- To monitor the contractor's excavations and record any archaeological remains exposed and report on results of the work.
- More specific aims of the archaeological programme were to: establish the location, extent, nature and date of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the proposed development area.
- The resulting archive (finds and records) will be prepared for deposition in accordance with current professional standards and laws of Scotland.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Site works

The work was undertaken as specified in the WSI. Monitoring was undertaken on all ground reduction/levelling works within the church interior. The excavations were carried out by hand under direct archaeological supervision. This mainly comprised the removal of ivy stumps/roots and uneven mounds of earth to create a level surface for scaffolding to be erected. The monitored excavation ended when the maximum required excavation depth was reached.

During the removal of roots and earth, particular attention was paid to any stone encountered, to ensure any which might have been carved were recorded and kept.

4.2 Recording

All recording followed CfA Standards and Guidance for conducting archaeological watching briefs (2014). All recording was undertaken on *pro forma* record cards. Digital photographs were taken with a graduated metric scale visible where necessary.

A site plan including all identified features, areas of excavation and other pertinent information was recorded, using background plans provided by the client. The site plan has been accurately linked to the National Grid and heights to OD.

4.3 Reporting and Archives

The results of the works are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 2) and the OASIS database (headland1-274947).

The complete project archive will be deposited with the Scottish National Record of the Historic Environment (SNRHE) within six months of the completion of the project. The records (paper and digital) will be archived according to best practice guidelines set out by the Archaeological Archiving Forum (2007).

5 RESULTS (ILLUS 2)

The work was undertaken on 23th January 2017 in clear and dry conditions. The groundworks required in order to level the ground surface within the church were undertaken by hand. Prior to the work commencing all trees and ivy had been removed from the walls and floor surface. The present ground surface was uneven comprising a mix of dark brown stone-rich silty sand and larger sub-rounded stones. Three areas in particular formed large mounds of earth and stone abutting the inner sides of the church walls. The two largest of these were located against the south-east corner and the eastern side of the north wall. A third mound was found in the south-west corner of the church (Illus 3).



Illus 3 - Pre-excavation shot of the internal area of the church facing east

The mounds were reduced by hand with all the larger stones being removed and the smaller stones and earth spread over lower areas of the existing surface. Material within the two larger mounds included a moderate assemblage of 19th/20th century pottery and glass fragments (this was left on site). A small number of disarticulated bones were also recovered from this material (collected).

No features or structures of archaeological significance were exposed during this work and no artefacts relating to the early history of the chapel were identified. In general the existing ground level was left undisturbed (Illus 4).



Illus 4 – Post-excavation shot of the church floor facing east.

A digital photographic record of the area both before and after the ground reduction works had taken place was undertaken (see appendix 7.1).

5.1 Discussion

The limited scope of the works within the church footprint impacted on the chances of revealing any archaeological features relating to the early history of the church. No such archaeological features were encountered.

Photographs held with the SNRHE along with evidence shown on the 1st Edition OS indicate that at least two trees had been located within the church floor. These had been removed prior to the present work. Their presence may have damaged or removed any earlier floor surfaces associated with the pre-reformation church although this cannot be positively confirmed as the current ground works did not require the excavation of any deep pits or trenches.

No further work requiring archaeological monitoring is scheduled for the current programme of consolidation works.

6 REFERENCES

6.1 Bibliographic sources

Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF) 2011
Archaeological Archives A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation (2nd edn) [online document] Institute for Archaeologists: Reading, Accessed from www.archaeologyuk.org/archives/aaf_archaeological_archives_2011.pdf

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) 2014 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* [online document] Accessed from http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CIfAS&GWatchingbrief_2.pdf

Headland Archaeology 2016 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Rait Old Parish Church*. Unpublished client report for Tay Landscape Partnership

Morris, P 2007 *Rait Churchyard, Perth and Kinross (Kilspindie parish), geophysical survey*, *Discovery Excav Scot*, vol. 8, 2007. Cathedral Communications Limited, Wiltshire, England.

RCAHMS 1994 *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. South-east Perth: an archaeological landscape*. Edinburgh. Page(s): 130, 163

6.2 Cartographic sources

Perth and Clackmannan Sheet LXXXVII.14 (with inset XCIX.2) (Kilspindie) Survey date: 1861 Publication date: 1867

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

Photographic register

Frame no.	Direction	Description
ROPC-01	W	Pre –excavation shot of the internal area of the church
ROPC-02	NW	Pre –excavation shot of the internal area of the church
ROPC-03	NE	Pre –excavation shot of the internal area of the church
ROPC-04	E	Pre –excavation shot of the internal area of the church
ROPC-05	NW	External view of the South elevation
ROPC-06	N	View of the east gable end
ROPC-07	W	View of grave stone and east gable end
ROPC-08	W	View of grave stone and east gable end
ROPC-09	E	Post-ex view of the internal area of the church
ROPC-10	SE	Post-ex view of the internal area of the church
ROPC-11	W	Post-ex view of the internal area of the church
ROPC-12	SW	Post-ex view of the internal area of the church
ROPC-13	N	Detail of the internal elevation of the north wall after ground reduction works
ROPC-14	E	Detail of the internal elevation of the east wall after ground reduction works

7.2 Appendix 2 – Discovery and Excavation in Scotland entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Perth & Kinross
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Rait Old Parish Church, Perth & Kinross
PROJECT CODE:	ROPC16-001
PARISH:	Kilspindie
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Donald Wilson
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd

TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NO22NW 3
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Parish Church
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NO 22747 26855
START DATE (this season)	26/01/2017
END DATE (this season)	26/01/2017
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	As part of the consolidation and repair at Rait Old Parish Church archaeological monitoring of ground reduction/levelling works took place. The actual levelling works were minimal in scope and mainly comprised the removal of mounds of earth and stone within the perimeter of the church walls. No features or floor surfaces associated with the church building were exposed during this work. The material moved contained a moderate assemblage of 19 th /20 th century pottery and glass fragments indicating the modern nature of these mounds.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Tay Landscape Partnership
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	13 Jane Street, Edinburgh EH6 5HE
EMAIL ADDRESS:	Don.wilson@headlandarchaeology.com
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	HES