



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

SITE	Ellen Wilson Cottages, Lawrence Street, York, YO1 9TX		
CLIENT NAME	Nick Beilby		
YAT PROJECT #	N/A	YAT REPORT #	2022/76
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	N/A	GRID REFERENCE	SE 61195 51326
PLANNING REFERENCE #		AAI OPS NOTICE #	21027

INTRODUCTION

An operations notice on demolition works for a late 19th century boundary wall was undertaken by York Archaeology on behalf of Nick Beilby from the 5th to the 8th of April 2022 at Ellen Wilson Cottages, Lawrence Street, York, NGR SE 61195 51326 (Figure 1).

An existing historic wall had been inspected on 25th August 2021 and was found to be in a dangerous state of repair. It was recommended the wall be dismantled due to the risk to public safety. The wall will be rebuilt to specifications provided by PRA Architects.

The objective of the watching brief was to record any archaeological deposits or structures exposed by the demolition. Due to the proximity of St. Lawrence Church the likelihood of remains relating to St. Lawrence Church and associated burial ground underlying the structure is significant.

METHODOLOGY

The wall was deconstructed by certified individuals under constant archaeological monitoring.

Removed bricks were cleaned of mortar and suitable bricks were retained for the reconstruction process. These bricks were removed for storage offsite to prevent theft.

A sample brick was taken to York Handmade Brick Company at Arne to source suitable materials for the reconstruction and a sample of mortar was analysed to determine its matrix for the reconstruction process.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The wall to be demolished formed the eastern boundary wall to land owned by EDWAC (Ellen and Dorothy Wilson Almshouse Charity). This yard was not visible in the 1852 OS map (Fig 2) and had been constructed before the 1889 OS was undertaken (Fig 3). This wall was likely constructed by John Biscomb (Builders) and formed a walled area which enclosed Stone Yard on four faces. This wall was not listed but falls within the curtilage of the parish church of St. Lawrence, a Grade I listed building. Ordinance Survey maps from 1852, indicate the burial ground for St. Lawrence originally extended to include the area of Stone Yard and all associated structures such as the wall under consideration. It is thus likely that medieval remains relating to the church and associated graveyard remain underlying the wall and Stone Yard.

A majority of the medieval church of St. Lawrence was dismantled and replaced in the early 19th century, leaving only the tower and former north doorway which date from the 12th century from the original structure, though numerous changes were undertaken during the history of the church (Wilson and Mee, 93).

The section of wall to be deconstructed formed the eastern boundary and in recent times had a section removed in order to facilitate vehicular access to the area. The remaining existent wall was 20m in length with an additional 4.3m section adjacent to the electricity substation.

Bricks used for the construction were handmade and measured at 0.24x0.15x 0.08m, which was typical of bricks from the time of construction

The wall was 2.07m in height and 0.23m width with four buttresses 0.48 by 1.12m chamfered into the internal elevation at intervals centered at 4.45m.

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The wall was capped by a stone steeple coping at 0.13m in height. Deterioration of the mortar had caused the wall to become dangerously unsteady which was evidenced by the visible mortar loss to joints as well as shelling of individual bricks. The wall had a lean of 9 degrees and could be moved by application of pressure, particularly in the short section associated with the electricity substation.

In order to provide accurate materials for the reconstruction of the wall a sample of mortar was analysed to determine its composition. Chemical and physical analysis concluded that the original mortar used for construction was comprised of fine silica sand, ash, and brick fragments along with lumps of lime originating from slaking or hot lime processes.

RESULTS

The wall was deconstructed to ground level with no unexpected building techniques or abnormalities in construction observed. The stated method of deconstruction was conducted by the demolition crew

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the demolition of the late Victorian wall ceasing at ground level, no underlying remains were exposed. In lieu of excavating a new trench for the footings of the wall reconstruction, a concrete pad was poured on top of the existing wall footings to support the new wall. This negated the necessity for further intrusive works and no archaeological remains were disturbed or recovered during these works. All affected historical remains were visible during demolition and no additional intrusive works were necessary for the reconstruction phase of this project.

It can be concluded that any archaeological remains present remain undisturbed in situ.

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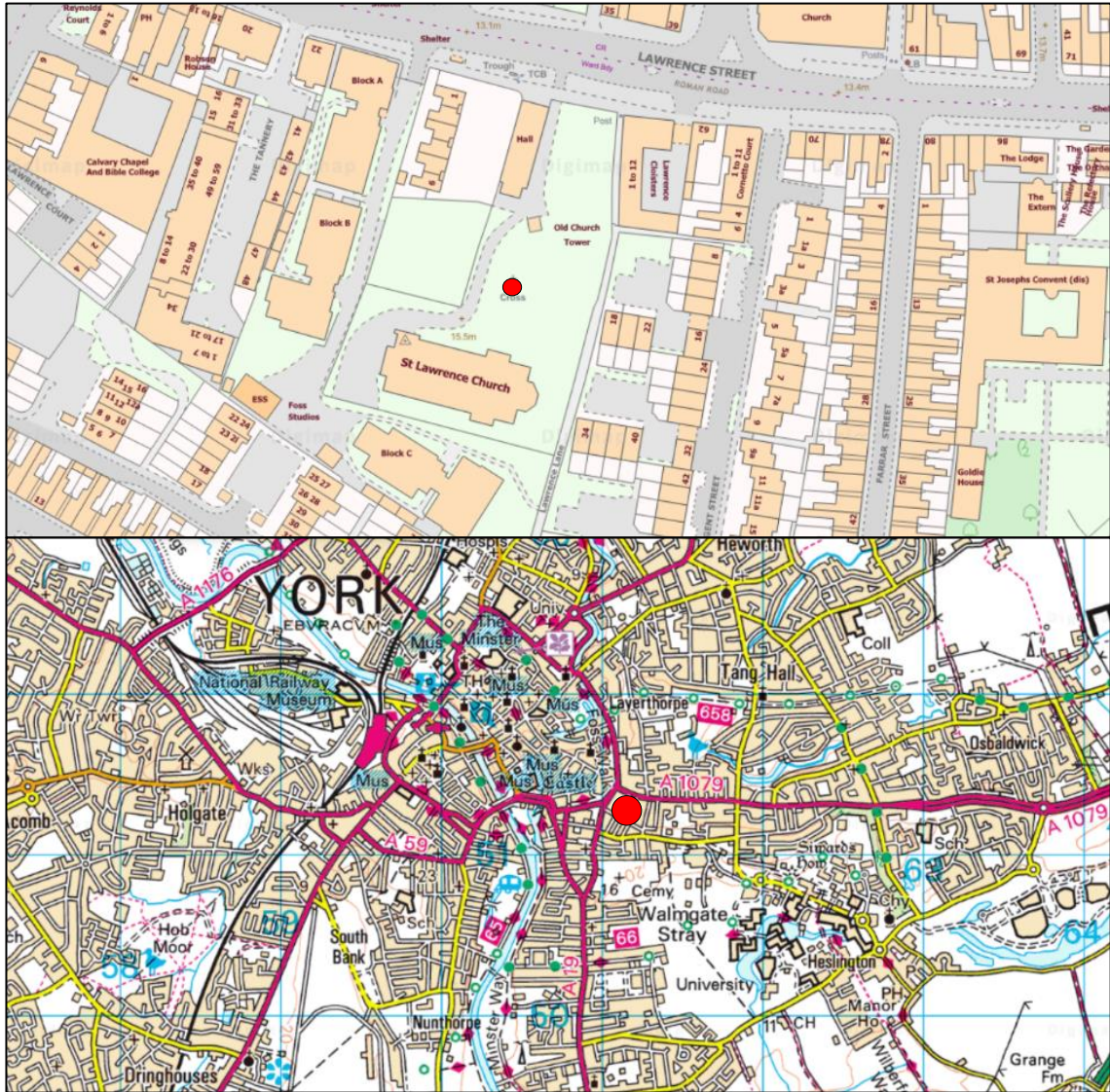
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Figure 1 Site location- ©Ordnance Survey



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FINDS	0	SAMPLES	0	PAGE	3 of 11

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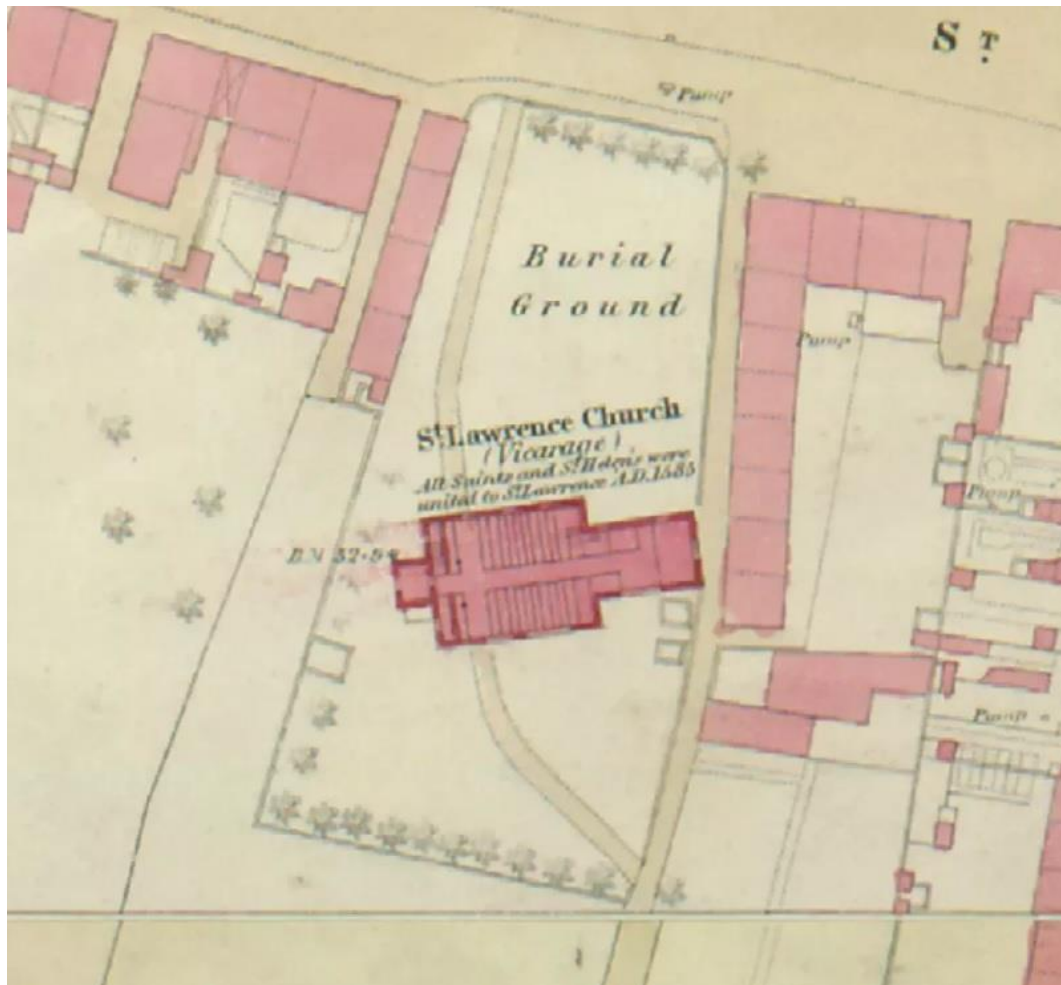
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Figure 2 St. Lawrence Church and grounds before construction of wall; OS map of 1852
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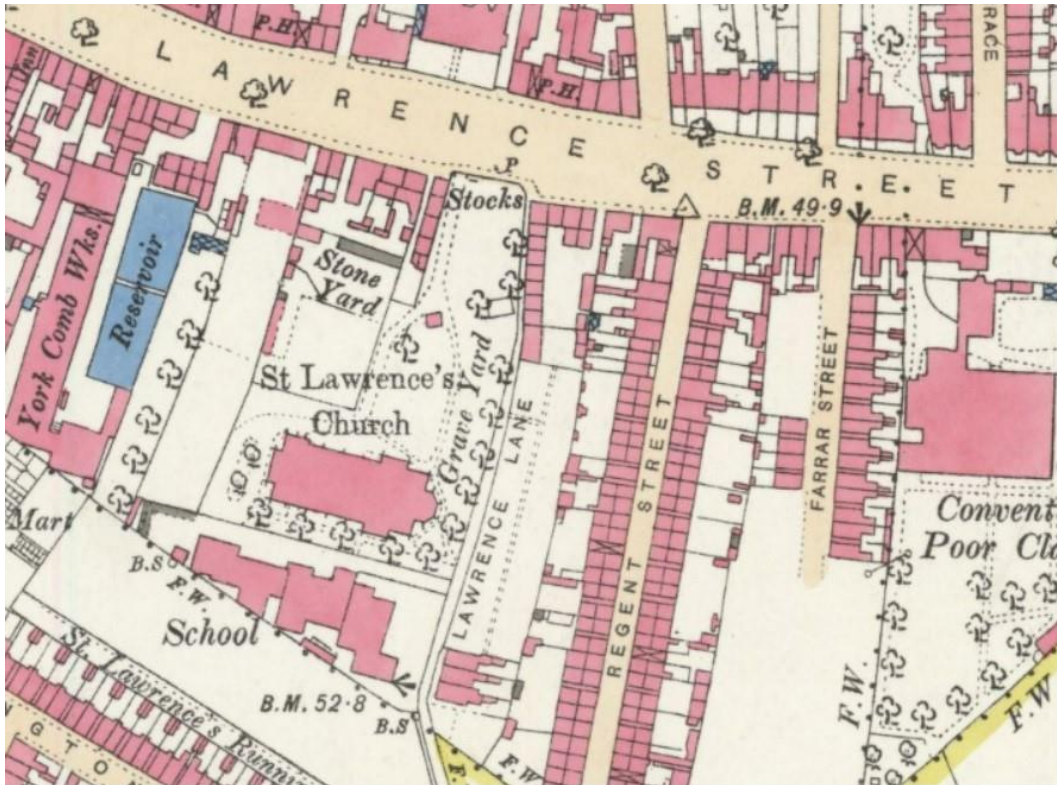


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Figure 3 Area of work after construction of Stone Yard and wall

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1892 OS map surveyed from 1889, courtesy National Libraries of Scotland

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Plate 1 Interior view of wall showing condition and lean; St. Lawrence Church in background

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Plate 2 interior face of wall showing buttress and condition

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Plate 3 Condition of interior wall

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Plate 4 Interior view of wall showing lean and condition

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Plate 5 Wall during demolition process

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Plate 6 Wall demolished to ground level

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