

**REPORT ON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF
AT THE CHURCH OF ST ANDREW
GREYSTOKE
CUMBRIA**

**For
REVEREND MICHAEL HOUSTON**

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In October 2003 North Pennines Heritage Trust was commissioned by the Reverend Michael Houston to carry out a watching brief during the excavation of a trench in the vestry of the Church of St Andrew, Greystoke, Cumbria. Human skeletal remains were encountered on excavation of the trench.

1 INTRODUCTION

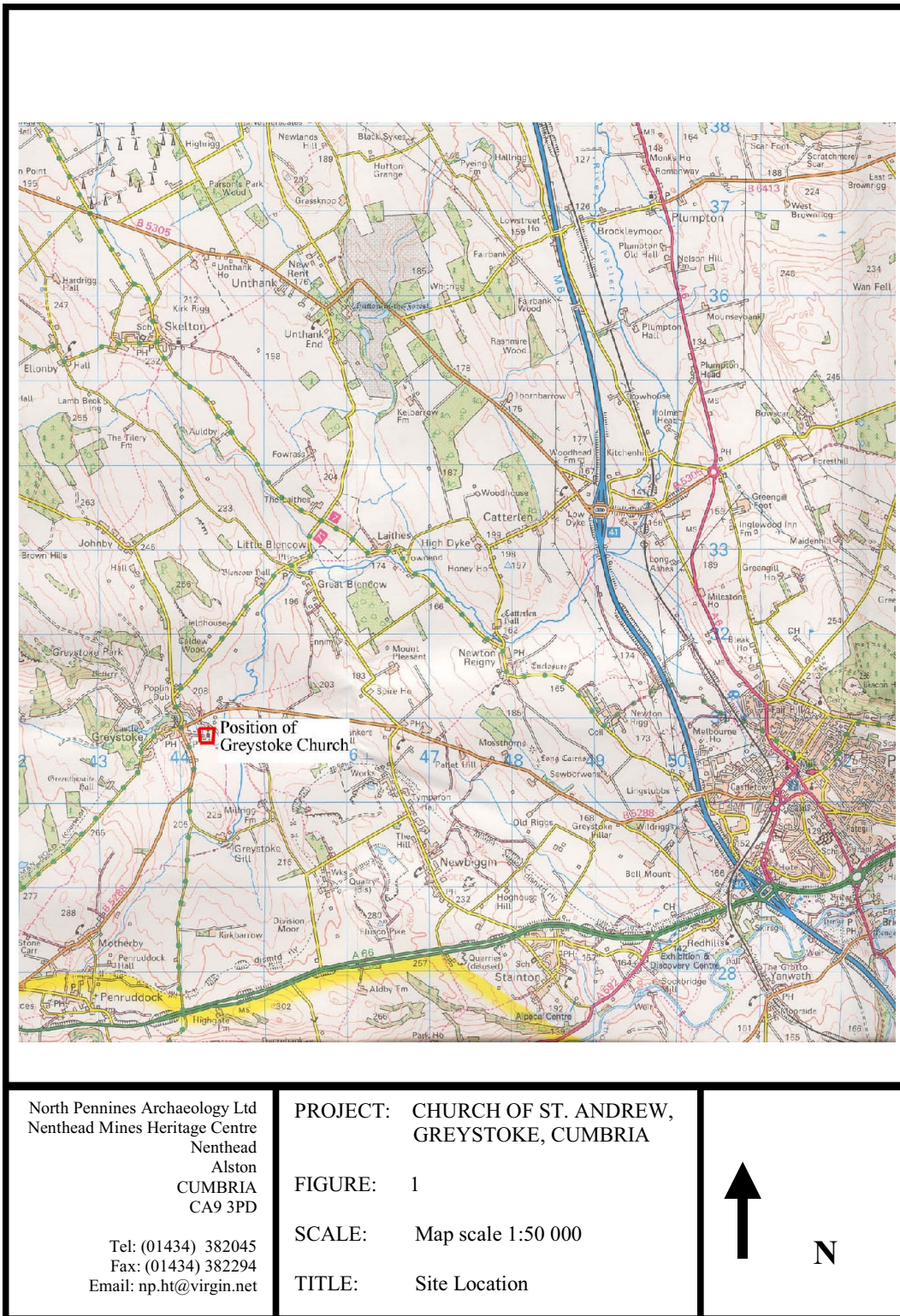
- 1.1 During works associated with the installation of an oil pipeline to fuel the new central heating system at St Andrew's, Greystoke, Cumbria. At this point NPHT were called in to assess and record the area and advise as work progressed. The project has been given the unique project identification site code of NPHT 03 GYS-A in the Trust archive.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located at NGR NY 4430 3070, 7km west of Penrith on the east side of the B5288 as it passes through Greystoke village (see figure 1). The church (Scheduled Monument number 4485) is situated down a small lane adjacent to this road called Church Road.

3 PREVIOUS WORK

- 3.1 No archaeological work is known to have taken place on the site. The Church of St Andrew is known to date from the mid 13th century, the earliest tomb of the tenth Baron being from this period. A much earlier wooden church is said to have been located on or close to the present site and associated with a sacred well from a pre Christian era. The church has always been closely associated with the castle, which was owned by the Barons of Greystoke.
- 3.2 In the fourteenth century the church was greatly enlarged to incorporate chantries associated with its new collegiate status (See Figure 2). This involved the opening up of the central arcade and the addition of chantries along the length of both sides of the church. The repositioning of the central tower to the western end was also carried out at this time. The vestry which contains a 15th century fireplace was originally the Sacristan's house, with a living area downstairs and a bedroom upstairs and was also added during this phase. The work began in 1382 and continued into the fifteenth century, resulting in the church now seen today.



4 AIMS

4.1 The aims of the watching brief were as follows:

- to assess and record the area already excavated
- to advise and supervise as further work progressed, both internally in the church and externally in the churchyard
- to record archaeological deposits;
- to establish, wherever possible, the depth of archaeological remains already uncovered;
- to establish, wherever possible, the condition of the remains;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives;
- to prepare a report for the Reverend M. Houston setting out the salient conclusions;

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The work was undertaken under the overall direction of Frank Giocco, BA, Dip Arch, AIFA, Principal Archaeologist. The watching brief was maintained by Patricia Crompton between the 26th September and the 13th October 2003. All staff involved were experienced archaeologists with significant experience of urban and rural sites.
- 5.2 A single trench running east to west was excavated in the vestry of the Church. The trench measured 2.6 m long by 0.6 m wide (see Figure 3).
- 5.3 An initial assessment of the trench led to the observation of a in situ human skull within the eastern end section of the trench. A collection of disarticulated bones was also recorded in the centre of the trench, appearing to have been disturbed during the excavation of the trench and returned to the trench by the workmen.
- 5.4 The trench was cleaned, photographed, and recorded before any further work was carried out (see Plate 3 and Figure 4). Contexts were recorded at the site to a depth of 0.6m. A sequence of contexts was recorded and drawn.
- 5.5 The collection of redeposited bone was identified as coming from a fully matured adult burial. It comprised a fibula in three parts displaying fresh breaks, which were all contemporary, suggesting they had occurred during the excavation of the trench. Other bones identified comprised a clavicle and skull fragments.

- 5.6 Several more finger bones were exposed (context 103) after cleaning, still in situ in the eastern end of the trench. These were not associated with the skull as they were too large.
- 5.7 The top of the human skull was visible projecting out of the east end section and was photographed before recovery (see Plate 1). In this position the skull was fairly intact. The vault of the skull was uppermost. Several fragments of cranial plates lay in the cavity of the skull, having fallen in through the hole made during the excavation. The skull was carefully excavated to try and maintain the dentition for age at time of death estimation and was then removed.
- 5.8 The skull was positioned with the vault towards the western end, the 'face' upwards, the back of the skull towards the bottom of the grave, and the base of the skull running east into the section. This indicates a normal interment position for an extended inhumation associated with a Christian burial.
- 5.9 After extraction it could be seen that the skull was almost intact and was identified as that of a juvenile from the tooth and cranial plate formation. The lower jaw (mandible) was still articulated (in position) with the skull and was drawn out with it. A juvenile atlas vertebra was also removed from the context. (See Plate 1).
- 5.10 The only flagstones (context 100) to be lifted in the vestry were those removed in association with the digging of the trench. The rest were to remain in situ as, at the time, it was deemed unnecessary to remove the whole surface. Unfortunately, any other skeletal remains associated with this burial would probably lie beneath the flagstones that continued to run east towards the vestry wall, as in a Christian burial, the head lies towards the west and the feet to the east.
- 5.11 It was agreed that no further work would be carried out and that the remains would be re-interred close to the point of excavation, remaining in association with any other unexcavated remains. Due to the stipulations pertaining to the remains as those of Christian burials, it was not possible to remove them for further investigation. A limited study and record was thus made within the confines of the church.
- 5.12 An age at time of death was estimated (after Ferembach *et al* 1980). The stage of tooth eruption of both deciduous and permanent teeth led to an estimate of 6 years of age (\pm 24 months) at time of death. The parameters of the estimate then span between the ages of 4 and 8. Without further evidence from other growing and fusing points of bone from the skeleton it is not possible to make a closer estimate than this for the age of the child at time of death. There was no evidence of pathology associated with disease that may have indicated cause of death on the remains found. Sexing of a skeleton is notably difficult in a child and, with so few bones present; it is not possible even to make an educated guess.
- 5.13 Further examination of the area by the Reverend Mike Houston led to the discovery of more human bones. These were removed by him, from deeper

within the section (context 103) beneath the flagstones. As they were also juvenile human bones they were added to the original assemblage. They consisted of rib and vertebral bones of an age roughly consistent age to the skull. As they were removed without being properly recorded and annotated though, they must remain unprovenanced.

- 5.14 A partial adult human jaw was also found and removed. NPHT were called in to give an age estimate of these remains. The section of lower jaw (mandible) bore the three molar teeth of a full grown adult. The jaw was broken at the mental foramen towards the midline of the jaw and behind the third molar at the back of the jaw. The processes and notches by which the mandible articulates with the maxilla (upper jaw) were not present.
- 5.15 The breaks in the jaw were not recent and the condition, colour and fragmentation of the jaw indicate that it has been buried for some considerable time and appearing to predate the other burial. It may be that this and the other adult bones are all redeposited from earlier burials disturbed during the burial of the juvenile. Unfortunately due to the confines of the trench no grave cut could be observed. It was a common practice in this period to exhume the bones of earlier burials to make room for others, usually after a period of about 100 years.
- 5.16 An age estimation of the jaw is given as 35-45 years (after Brothwell, 1981) although a more accurate estimate may have been gained if more teeth had been present, the wear on the molars appeared heavily affected by dental attrition (wear by chewing or grinding



█ =10cm

Plate 1: the juvenile skull



Plate 2: Redepleted adult bones

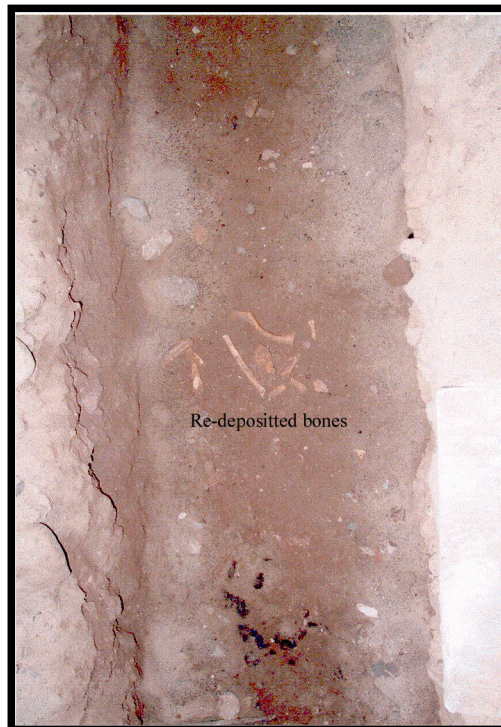
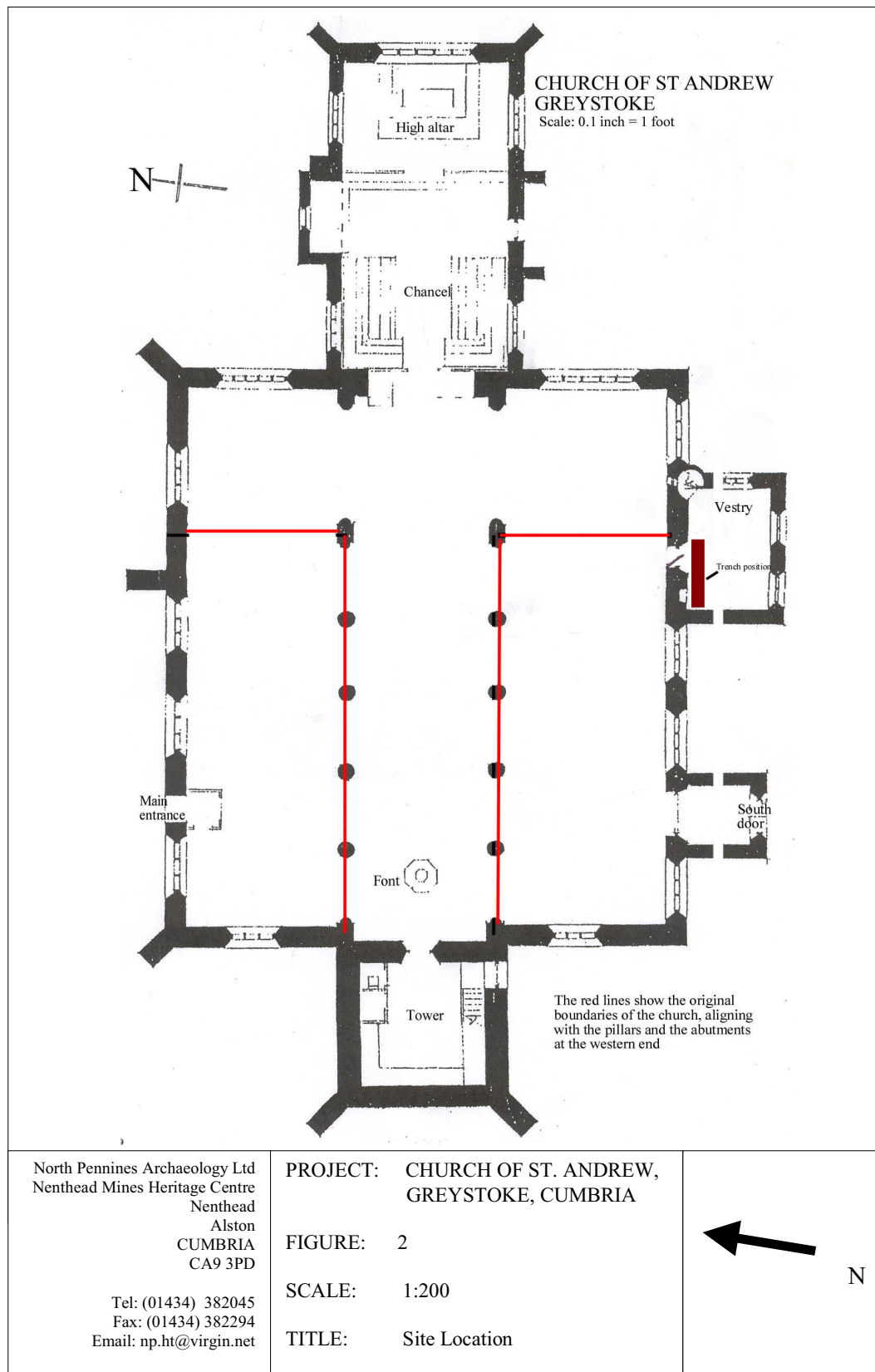
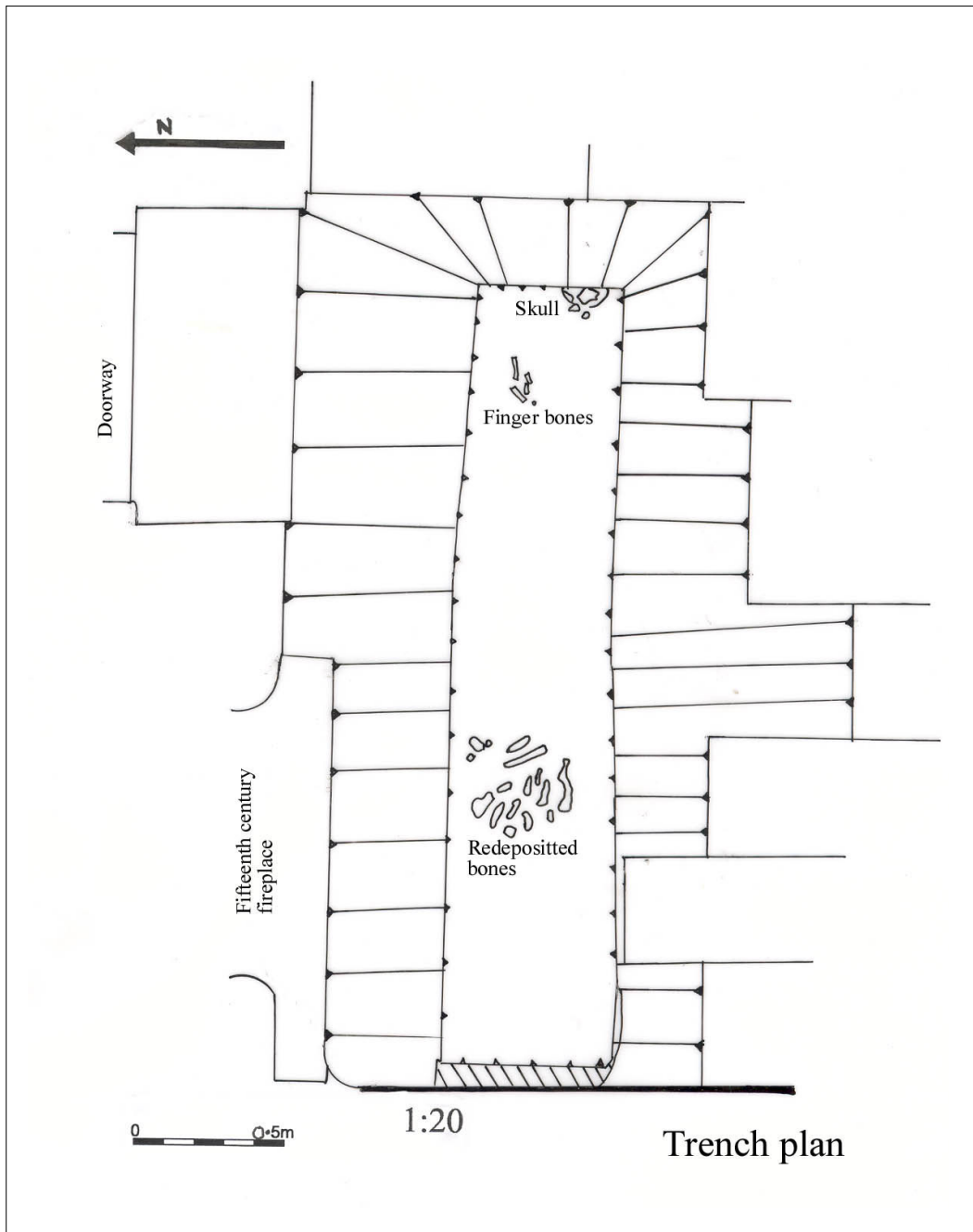


Plate 3: The redepleted bones in situ





<p>North Pennines Archaeology Ltd Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre Nenthead Alston CUMBRIA CA9 3PD</p> <p>Tel: (01434) 382045 Fax: (01434) 382294 Email: np.ht@virgin.net</p>	<p>PROJECT: CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, GREYSTOKE, CUMBRIA</p> <p>FIGURE: 3</p> <p>SCALE: 1:20</p> <p>TITLE: Trench Location</p>	
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Plate 4: The juvenile skull in situ

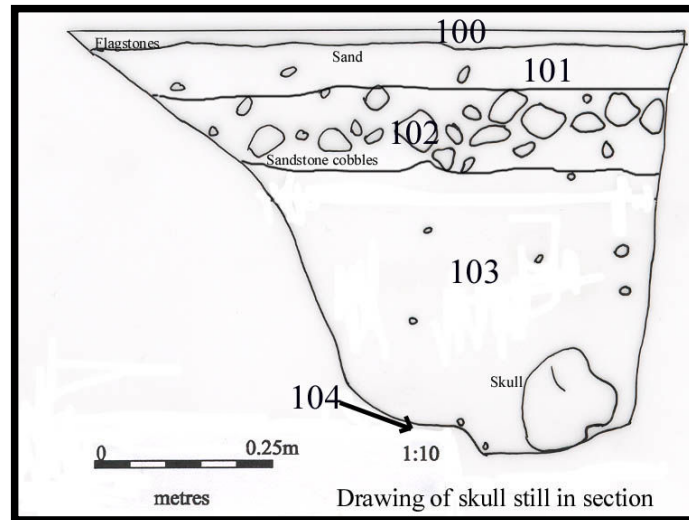


Figure 4: East facing section across pipe trench

TABLE 1: LIST OF CONTEXT ISSUED

Context number	Description	Date
100	Flagstones	Post 14 th century
101	Levelling deposit for flagstones	14 th century
102	Sandstone cobbles	Pre 14 th century
103	Topsoil	Pre 14 th century
104	Unexcavated	Pre 14 th century

6 THE FINDS

- 6.1 There were no artefactual remains from the site but a few animal bones were recovered when the trench was being cleaned for recording. A femur of a large mammal, either cattle or horse, was recovered. Only the cranial end was present. The condyles at the end were so deteriorated that it was difficult to determine the species. There were also several bones of small mammal, probably rabbit. These consisted of ribs and vertebrae. There were no other finds.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The remains appear to be associated with the original parameters of the church predating the construction of the Sacristan's house in the 14th century when this area would have been part of the graveyard. No coffin remains or any grave cuts were identified. The assemblage points to at least two burials within the trench, only further excavation would define the exact nature and dating of these burials.
- 7.2 No other features of archaeological note were recorded during the watching brief.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that no further archaeological work take place unless more work is undertaken within the boundaries of the site.
- 8.2 It is recommended that the archive be deposited in the Penrith Museum for long-term storage.

9 THE CONTRACTOR

- 9.1 North Pennines Heritage Trust is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It works in close association with and under the approval of the County Archaeologist. Based in Nenthead, Cumbria, the company has considerable experience extending over more than twelve years of archaeological investigation in Cumbria.

- 9.2 The company has a fully staffed professional field team capable of undertaking work ranging in scale from large-scale archaeological excavations to small desk based projects.

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