

# CFA Archaeology Ltd

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*Historic Building Recording*


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*Geophysical Survey*

**Coldingham Priory Church,  
Coldingham,  
Scottish Borders**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Report No. 2149**

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Grid Ref	NT 9039 6595

This document has been prepared in accordance with CFA Archaeology Ltd standard operating procedures.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 General**

This report presents the results of a watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in October 2012 at Coldingham Priory Church, Coldingham, Scottish Borders (NGR: NT 9039 6595, Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Roger G Dodd & Co. on behalf of the Congregational Board of Coldingham & St Abbs.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) dated 11 October 2012 was produced by CFA and agreed by Historic Scotland and Scottish Borders Council.

### **1.2 Background**

Coldingham Priory Church is an A-Listed building (HB no. 4059) and planning consent (Ref No.10/01448/LBC) has been granted for the construction of two new wheel chair access doors and a new disabled toilet. The graveyard and remains of the medieval priory is a Scheduled Monument (SM no. 383) and consent (AMH/383/1/1) was obtained from Historic Scotland for works within the Scheduled area (Fig. 1).

Due to its location within an archaeologically sensitive area and its historic importance a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the listed building planning application and Scheduled Monument Consent. The works consisted of: the installation of a new foul drain for a toilet; a new slapping through the south wall and construction of a small set of stairs to facilitate access to this new door; and alterations to the 19th century south porch which necessitated excavation for an upgraded footpath (Fig. 2).

### **1.3 Objectives**

The objectives of the programme of archaeological works are

- To conduct an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation (watching brief) to monitor all ground breaking works external to the Church.
- To conduct an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation (watching brief) to monitor the slapping through the south wall, in order to provide a photographic record of the slapping and to record any architectural features relating to the Priory that are not apparent in the externally visible elevations.
- To mitigate the effects of construction on any archaeological deposits or features identified through their excavation and recording and produce a report on them.

## **2. WORKING METHODS**

### **2.1 General**

CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs. The terms of the WSI were adhered to.

### **2.2 Archaeological Watching Brief**

All groundbreaking and slapping work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision. All excavation works and slapping were carried out by hand.

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, by photography and by completing standard CFA record forms.

The stratification of all excavated areas was recorded whether or not significant archaeological deposits were identified.

Charnel, i.e disarticulated human bone, was recovered and a suitable spot within the excavated trench was chosen to rebury the remains. The location of the reburial site was recorded.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

The watching brief observed the construction of the new door in the south wall and associated stair and the excavation of a foul drain and a hardstanding surface located at the southern porch (Fig. 2). Numbers in bold and parentheses refer to contexts (Appendix 2).

#### 3.1 Doorway slapping

The new door was cut through the south wall of the church. The new doorway was cut 0.7m above the exterior ground level, through the 1.1m thick southern wall of the Church, and measured 1.5m wide and 2.6m high (Fig. 9).

The wall was constructed with an exterior and interior skin, with a rubble-filled core (Fig. 6-7). The exterior wall face comprised ashlar red sandstone (**008**) (Fig. 3). On the outward facing side the blocks were dressed, and were unworked on the side within the wall core.

The core comprised irregular sandstone rubble and occasional white stone blocks (**009**) set within a limestone mortar matrix. Within the core, a quantity of worked architectural stone fragments were recovered (Fig. 5, 8). Two of the pieces of stone, including the sedilia fragment (Fig. 5), had been placed so that a flat edge formed part of the inner face of the wall.

The interior face of the wall was made using irregular-sized dressed sandstone blocks (**010**). Over this was rendered a 0.05m thick layer of plaster (Fig. 4).

#### 3.2 Foundations for new stairs/hardstanding

Ground reduction took place for a new hardstanding surface along the southern wall of the church and the east side of the porch, for accessing the new door. A trench was excavated which measured 8m long, 2m wide and 0.25m deep and cut through a previous existing path (**003**) (Fig. 15). Parallel to the wall were found re-used rectangular worked red sandstone blocks (**004**); these formed a rough kerb for the previous path and were removed (Fig. 14).

The trench cut through topsoil (**001**) within which was recovered ten fragments of disarticulated human bone. The bone was photographed and reburied in a small hand dug pit at the base of the trench. Below the topsoil was a layer of made ground (**002**) which consisted of sandy silt with mortar inclusions. Natural geology was not reached.

Deeper foundation were excavated within the above-mentioned trench for the construction of stairs (platt) for accessing the new door (Fig. 16). These extended to 0.5m below existing ground surface through made ground (**002**). Natural geology was not reached.

### **3.3 Foul drain**

The trench for the foul drain was aligned east-west along the south wall of the church and measured 6m long, 0.3m wide and between 0.3-.07m deep (Fig. 13). The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of topsoil (006) which overlay a layer of brown sandy silt with mortar inclusions (007); natural geology was not reached. No finds or artefacts or human remains were recovered during the construction of the pipe trench.

A small slapping was made through the south wall of the church, the hole measuring 0.3m high by 0.4m wide (Fig. 10-12). No worked stone was recovered from this slapping.

### **3.4 Hardstanding surface for the porch**

A rectangular area for the new hardstanding surface on the west side of the porch was excavated and this measured 2.8m long, 1.7m wide and 0.25m deep (Fig. 17). Excavations did not extend through the topsoil (005) and no artefacts, deposits or human remains were found.

### **3.5 Finds, by Sue Anderson**

A quantity of worked stone was recovered from the new door slapping on the south elevation. Photographs of these are included in Appendix 1. These include door and window mouldings, a large piece of sedilia, a carved human head (Appendix 1, no. 27), and possible column fragments and other items. These are likely to be 12th-13th century in date and belong to the medieval monastic buildings of Coldingham Priory.

Other finds are listed in Appendix 4 and comprised a single pottery rim sherd and nine fragments of animal bone from (001). The pottery is an unglazed oxidised sherd in a fine micaceous fabric similar to Scottish post-medieval oxidised ware. However this fabric typically has a green lead glaze and the sherd is unglazed. It may be from a later flowerpot or other utilitarian vessel. The outer edge of the beaded rim is spalled and there are traces of sooting or burning below and inside the rim. The animal bones include several fragments of sheep and a large cattle radius with sawing and cutmarks. The preservation and type of butchery suggest that these are also of post-medieval date.

### **3.6 Discussion**

The shire of Coldingham was given by King Edgar of Scotland to the Benedictine monks of St Cuthbert of Durham in 1098. The first church, probably serviced by monks from Durham Priory, was consecrated in 1100. Only the church of Coldingham is mentioned in 1127, but in 1139 and again in 1140-1, charters refer to the monks serving the church of St Mary and St Cuthbert of Coldingham. The first Prior of Coldingham is recorded in about 1174.

Shortly after its virtual destruction by the English King John in 1216, a new, much larger, cruciform-plan priory church was built and the existing monastic buildings renovated. All that remains of this 13th century priory are the north and east walls of the choir (now part of the parish church), the lower portions of the south and west



walls of the south transept, and the arch leading from the south transept into the south aisle of the nave.

During the Anglo-Scottish wars of the early 14th century, the monks were compelled to abandon Coldingham for a time. An abortive attempt was made to erect the priory into a collegiate church in the mid-15th century.

In 1504, the priory was annexed to the Crown and in 1509, severed from Durham and placed under the Abbey of Dunfermline (also Benedictine). In the 16th century, the priory suffered severely during invasions and was garrisoned both by Scottish and English forces. It was finally dissolved in 1606, and in 1648 most of the remaining buildings were destroyed by Cromwell; the choir's south and west walls were blown out. In 1662 the south and west walls of the choir were reconstructed and that part of the church adapted for use as a place of worship, and a bell tower erected to the west.

In 1745, the church was again partially destroyed by fire, and around 1770, its tower collapsed. Much of the stone from these disasters went towards the construction of local houses.

By 1851, the church was in poor condition and required substantial renovation. These renovations, complete by 1855, included the removal of rubble to expose the original floor level and the foundations of the 1100 church, the gutting of the interior, the partial rebuilding of the west and south walls, the repair and replacement of the original carved stonework, the removal of the bell tower and the subsequent rebuilding of the west wall, the raising of the corner towers, the addition of a parapet, the installation of a new roof and ceiling and the formation of a new porch entrance with a vestry and belfry above to the south.

It seems very likely that architectural fragments built into the south wall are derived from the destroyed, priory buildings and thus are likely to be 12th-13th century in date. They could have been incorporated into this wall in 1662, when the south wall is recorded as having been rebuilt following Cromwell's destruction, or in the 1850s when the south wall was again repaired following an earlier fire and the subsequent robbing of stone for local buildings in the village.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The watching brief observed the construction of the new door in the southern elevation and its associated stair and footpath, ground reduction for an upgraded footpath serving the entrance porch, and the excavation of a trench and associated slapping through the south elevation for a foul pipe for a new toilet.

A number of pieces of architectural stonework were recovered. These were incorporated in the construction of the present structure and are derived from the earlier monastic buildings on the site, from the 12th-13th century.

The ground breaking works did not penetrate deep enough to uncover any articulated human remains or structural remains of previous buildings. The watching brief found a small amount of disarticulated human remains within the topsoil, which are probably from burials disturbed by the various phases of building works at the site. A small amount of post-medieval pottery and animal bone was also recovered.

Any requirement for additional mitigation work (post-excavation analysis) will be decided by Historic Scotland and Scottish Borders Council.

A summary statement of the results of this evaluation will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 5).

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) and copies of reports will be lodged with the Scottish Borders Council Sites and Monuments Record and H.

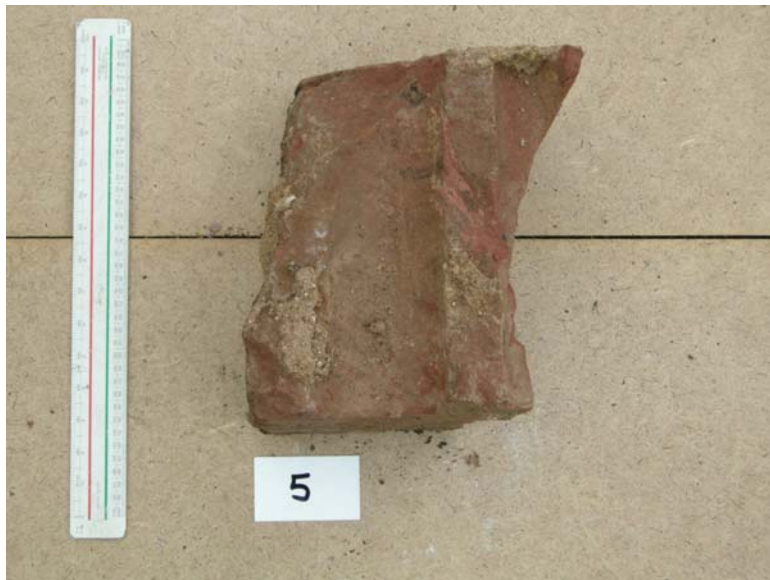
#### **5. REFERENCES**

Cowan, IB and Easson, DE (1976) *Medieval religious houses, Scotland: with an appendix on the houses in the Isle of Man*. London. p55-9.

MacGibbon, D and Ross, T (1896-7) *The ecclesiastical architecture of Scotland from the earliest Christian times to the seventeenth century*. Edinburgh. Vol.1, p437-48.

**APPENDIX 1: Architectural Fragments**























## APPENDIX 2: Context Register

Context No.	Description
001	Topsoil (Trench A)
002	Made ground (Trench A)
003	Existing path (Trench A)
004	Edging stones for existing path (Trench A)
005	Topsoil (Trench B)
006	Topsoil (Trench C)
007	Mortar deposit (Trench C)
008	Door way exterior (red sandstone ashlar blocks)
009	Rubble core of wall with lime mortar sandstone
010	Interior rough squared sandstone blocks covered with mortar

## APPENDIX 3: Photographic Register (Digital)

No.	Description	From	Conditions
1-2	Trench A pre-excavation	SW	OC
3-4	Trench A topsoil removed	E	OC
5-6	Trench A levelled off	SW	Sun
7-8	Trench C pre-excavation	W & E	Sun
9	Trench B pre-excavation	W	OC
10	Trench B fully excavated	W	OC
11	Trench C fully excavated	W	OC
12-13	South elevation of church prior to wall slapping	S	-
14	N-facing interior wall prior to work	N	
15	Interior wall with partial removal of plaster showing irregular stone construction.	NE	
16	Work in progress showing large blocks and rubble fill	N	
17	Moulded arch stone <i>in-situ</i> in the wall	N	
18-19	Detail of stone arch	N	
20	West end of N-facing exterior showing archway re-use	N	OC
21	Detail of wall matrix during wall slapping	NW	OC
22-23	East facing elevation post slapping work	NE	
24-25	North facing elevation post slapping work	NW	
26-27	Exterior of South facing elevation post slapping work	S	Sun
28	Interior of south wall post slapping work	N	
29	West end of dig for foundations at door slapping	SE	
30-31	General shot of foundations door slapping	E	Sun
32	East end of dig for the stair	SW	Sun
33-34	Detail of west end of stair foundation showing depth and extent of wall facing.	S	Sun
35	Disarticulated human remains recovered from stair excavation	-	
36	Hole excavated for bone reburial	W	Sun
37-42	Interior face of south wall at the location where the pipe enters	N	Sun
43	General shot of church wall	E	Sun
44-46	Detail of moulding on the west wall	E	Sun
47-49	Detail of under partially removed floor	-	
50-77	Photographs of each stone found within <b>009</b>	Various	OC

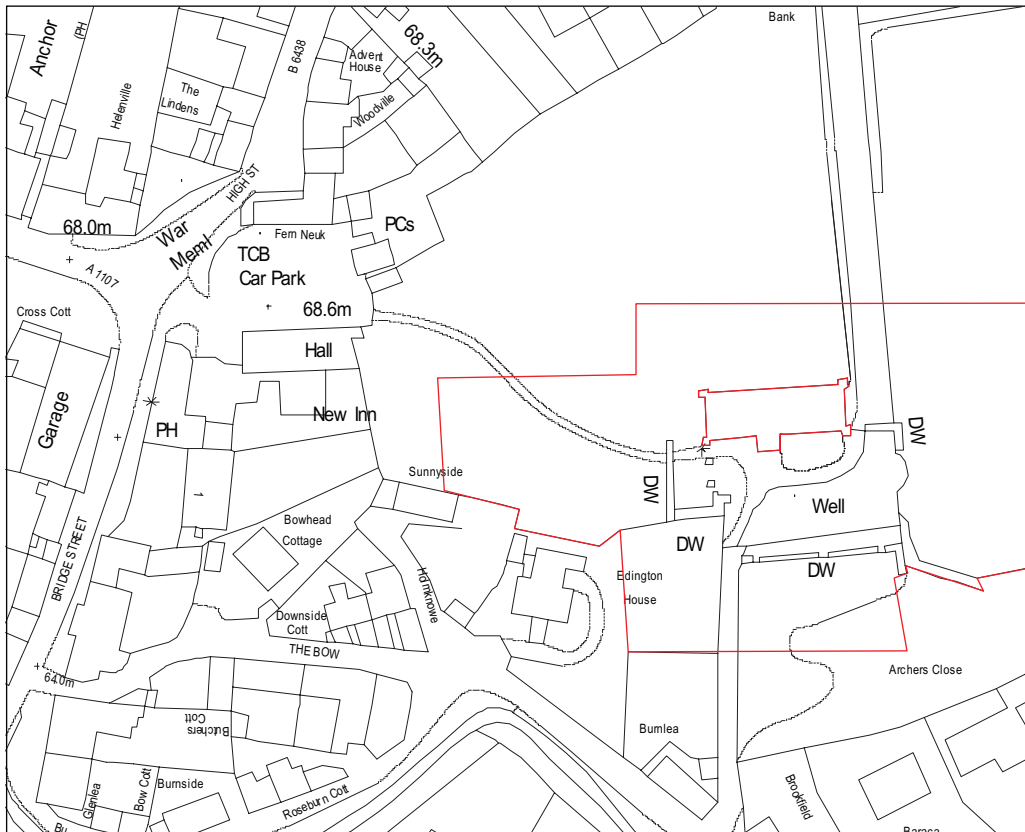
## APPENDIX 4: Finds

Context	Find type	No.	Wt (g)	Notes
001 Tr A	Pottery	1	20	beaded rim fragment of fine oxidised ware
001 Tr A	Animal bone	9	147	proximal R radius cattle (butchered with saw), 2 x sheep radius shafts, distal half sheep humerus, sheep tooth, rib, 2 large mammal long bone frags

## APPENDIX 5: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Scottish Borders Council
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Coldingham Priory Church, Coldingham
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	COLP
<b>PARISH:</b>	Coldingham
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	James Lewis
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	CFA Archaeology Ltd
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	N/A
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Church
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	N/A
<b>NGR (2 letters, 10 figures)</b>	NT 9039 6595
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	October 2012
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	October 2012
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	N/A
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief at Coldingham Priory Church observed the construction of a new door in the southern elevation and its associated stair and footpath, ground reduction for an upgraded footpath serving the entrance porch, and the excavation of a trench and associated slapping through the south elevation for a foul pipe for a new toilet. A number of pieces of architectural stonework were recovered. These were incorporated in the construction of the present structure and are derived from the earlier monastic buildings on the site, from the 12th-13th century. The ground breaking works did not penetrate deep enough to uncover any articulated human remains or structural remains of previous buildings. The watching brief found a small amount of disarticulated human remains within the topsoil, which are probably from burials disturbed by the various phases of building works at the site. A small amount of post-medieval pottery and animal bone was also recovered.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	N/A
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	N/A
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Congregational Board of Coldingham & St Abbs.
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	The Old Engine House, Eskmills Park, Musselburgh, EH21 7PQ

<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION</b> (intended/deposited)	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland Scottish Borders Council Sites and Monuments Record



Key:  
 Scheduled Area



Fig. No: 1      Revision: A      Client: Congregational Board of Coldingham & St Abbs  
 Title: Location map and map showing Scheduled Area

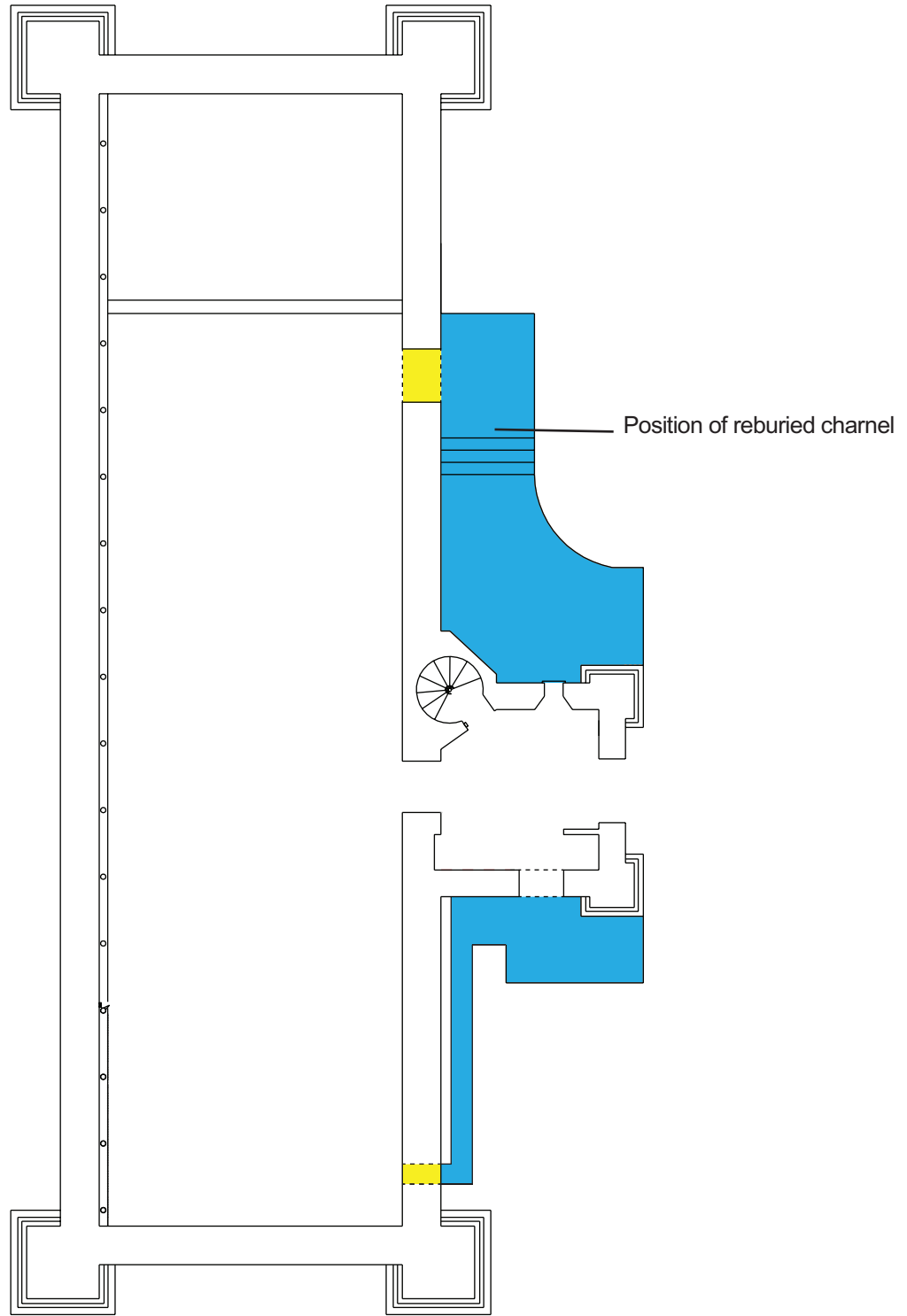
Project: Coldingham Priory Church

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Scale at A4: 1:500


Drawn by: GC      Checked: LW      Report No: 2149





Key:

- watching brief areas
- slapping for new doorway and drainage pipe



Scale at A4: 1:100

Fig. No:	2	Revision:	A	Client:	Congregational Board of Coldingham & St Abbs
Title:					
Plan showing watching brief areas and locations of slapping					
Project:					
Coldingham Priory Church					



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GC	LW	2149



Fig.3 : South-facing external elevation prior to new door slapping



Fig.4 : North-facing internal elevation prior to new door slapping

Fig. No: <b>3-4</b>		Revision: <b>A</b>	Project: <b>Coldingham Priory Church</b>		
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Fig.5 : Large masonry sedilia fragment in situ within wall



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Fig.7 : East-facing section of new door slapping



Fig.8 : Detail of west-facing elevation of new door showing architectural fragments in situ





Fig. No: <b>7-8</b>		Revision: <b>A</b>	Project: <b>Coldingham Priory Church</b>		
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Fig.9 : Completed door slapping from the exterior



Fig.10 : South-facing external elevation prior to slapping for drainage pipe

Fig. No: <b>9-10</b>		Revision: <b>A</b>	Project: <b>Coldingham Priory Church</b>		
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Fig.11 : Internal elevation showing slapping for drainage pipe



Fig.12 : External elevation showing slapping for drainage pipe





Fig. No: <b>11-12</b>		Revision: <b>A</b>	Project: <b>Coldingham Priory Church</b>			<b>CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD</b> The Old Engine House Eskmills Park, Musselburgh East Lothian, Eh21 7PQ  T: 0131 273 4380 F: 0131 273 4381 e: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk w: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk
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Fig.13 : Drainage trench



Fig.14 : Excavation in progress for platt and new path on east side of porch, showing kerb stones in situ

Fig. No: <b>13-14</b>		Revision: <b>A</b>	Project: <b>Coldingham Priory Church</b>			CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD The Old Engine House Eskmills Park, Musselburgh East Lothian, Eh21 7PQ
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Fig.15 : Completed ground reduction for platt and new path on the east side of porch



Fig.16 : Foundation excavations for platt


Fig. No: <b>15-16</b>		Revision: <b>A</b>	Project: <b>Coldingham Priory Church</b>			<b>CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD</b> The Old Engine House Eskmills Park, Musselburgh East Lothian, Eh21 7PQ
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Fig.17 : Completed ground reduction for new path and drainage connection on the west side of the porch

Fig. No: <b>17</b>		Revision: <b>A</b>	Project: <b>Coldingham Priory Church</b>
Drawn by: <b>GC</b>	Checked: <b>LW</b>	Report No: <b>2149</b>	Client: <b>Congregational Board of Coldingham &amp; St Abbs</b>
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