

# CFA Archaeology Ltd

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## **Strathbrock Parish Church Uphall, West Lothian**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Report No. 3228**

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**Strathbrock Parish Church  
Uphall, West Lothian**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 General**

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in September and October 2014 at Strathbrock Parish Church, Uphall, West Lothian (Fig. 1) on behalf of Benjamin Tindall Architects for Strathbrock Kirk Session. Planning permission was granted for an accessible toilet at Strathbrock Church. The new toilet was to be built on the site of an existing redundant external lean-to boiler house. The services associated with the new toilet were to link into the existing service trenches.

A Method Statement for the watching brief dated 12 September 2014 was produced by CFA in consultation with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) and approved by them prior to the commencement of the work.

### **1.2 Background**

According to the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS No. NT07SE 4), the parish church of Uphall, anciently Strathbrock, was dedicated to St Nicholas. The church is a much altered 12<sup>th</sup> century building with a chancel that was extended in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The aisle was added in 1620 and other additions were made in 1664 and 1878. The building was completely renovated and restored in 1937-8, in order to expose the medieval features of the building. The church occupies a near cruciform plan.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The objectives of the watching brief were

- To conduct an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation (watching brief) during all groundbreaking works to ensure works are cleared down to formation depth to identify either undisturbed natural subsoil or archaeological features (whichever comes first)
- To record any architectural features that may be revealed during dountaking works on the site of the new toilet block.
- To mitigate the effects of construction on any archaeological deposits or features identified through the excavation and recording and producing a report on them.

## **2. WORKING METHODS**

CFA Archaeology Ltd followed the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs and the standard conditions of WoSAS for fieldwork in its area.

The service trench excavation was carried out using a tracked mini-excavator equipped with smooth-bladed bucket and kept under constant archaeological supervision. All further works required to fulfil the terms of the brief 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.

## **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **3.1 General**

The area monitored included the installation of a new service trench along the pathway leading to the church and the demolition of the existing redundant boiler house. An internal inspection hole dug to connect the external water main to the interior of the church was also monitored. The areas are shown on Fig. 1. Numbers in bold and parentheses refer to contexts, a list of which is contained in Appendix 1.

### **3.2 Boiler House demolition (Figs 2-3)**

The former stone-built boiler house was situated on the west-facing elevation of the church and built between the nave wall and vestry. The boiler house occupied a rectangular footprint and measured c. 2.4m by 1.7m and stood to a height of 2m. The walls (**001**) had been constructed using rectangular blocks of lime mortar-bonded sandstone with stugging and incorporated a small doorway surmounted with a sandstone lintel with fluted moulding. The lean-to roof comprised three large sandstone flagstones that rested at their highest just below a round-headed aisle window. The ground (**002**) surrounding the exterior of the boiler house had been made up to a depth of 1m requiring the need for a flight of access steps surrounded by a low concrete wall (Fig. 2).

Following the demolition of the roof the lower exterior walls of the church were exposed. These had been greatly altered forming a patchwork of repair work using red brick and an assortment of rubble. A roof raggle was also exposed marking the position where the stone flagstones had been embedded into the wall. A cast-iron soot box was situated on the north side of the exposed wall along with a pipe and a length of steel electrical conduit (Fig. 3).

The opening of a formerly blocked doorway between the boiler house and the church was monitored. The only notable features found were a pair of mason's marks carved on one of the door jambs (Thumbnails 44-45).

The concrete wall was removed to expose the sandstone steps. The top step was found to be a large re-used gravestone (**003**) with an inscription on each side (Fig. 4). On the face where the stone had been used as a step the inscription was very worn (Fig. 5).

The text included in Latin *MORS PATET HORA LATET* (*Death is Certain The Hour Uncertain*) below which was written:

Remember man have thee wrought  
Out of the earth and clay (unreadable text)  
And that from hell (unreadable text)  
when udst Last (unreadable text)  
Think on O man what I (unreadable text)  
And do not God (unreadable text)  
for he that raises (unreadable text)  
can as soon lay

The reverse side of the gravestone had a much clearer dedication (Fig. 6):

This stone is erected by Helen  
Grandison to The Memory of  
Thomas Rob Late Gardeber at Houston Hcl Husband who die(d)  
The 16<sup>th</sup> May 1760 Age<sup>d</sup> 60years  
Also near This stone Lies The body of Thomas Rob who deid  
In The 18<sup>th</sup> Sepr 1763 Aged 18years  
And 6 months . Also James Rob who Deid Agd 16 Moth  
Also William Rob died 2<sup>d</sup> day After His Birth

Below the depth of the base of the boiler house was a layer of degraded bedrock (**004**).

### **3.3 New Water Mains Trench**

A new water main trench was dug outside the church boundary within the contractors compound. The trench measured 0.5m wide and was 0.9m deep and followed the line of an earlier gas pipe. No archaeological finds were made.

Three test-pits dug into the existing tarmac footpath (**005**) leading to the church were monitored (Fig 1).

Test pit 1 (Fig. 7) and Test Pit 2 measured 1.4m by 0.3m and 0.8m deep. Tarmac was 0.1m thick and overlay 0.5m of mixed made ground (**006**) with underlying degraded sandstone. A gas pipe and electric cable lay at the base of both test pits and cut into natural subsoil (**007**).

Test pit 3 (not shown) measured 2.8m by 0.3m and was 0.73m deep. This contained mixed made ground (**006**). Natural subsoil was not reached.

The water main trench was later dug along the full length of the path and the deposits found within it were the same as recorded in all three test pits (Fig. 8). No features or deposits of archaeological significance were recorded.

### **3.4 Manhole**

The water main branched off the pathway to the west where a manhole chamber was excavated against the church wall. This measured 1m by 1m and reached a depth of 1.5m (Fig. 9). This exposed the fabric of the church down to its foundations which comprised approximately five courses of irregular mortar-bonded sandstone resting on large protruding blocks of sandstone.

During the excavation of the manhole was a pair of articulated leg bones (**009**) were found at a depth of 0.8m (Fig. 10). These included half of the femur and lower leg and a complete left lower leg. Both legs had their patella and angle bones. Between the thigh bones a few small finger bones survived showing that the person's hands were clasped at the front. The body had previously been cut by a gas main and electricity cable.

At a depth of 1.2m further human remains were revealed (**010**, Fig. 11). These comprised a badly crushed skull with both clavicle and the top of the humerus bones surviving. No vertebrae or ribs survived nor any bones lower than the elbow.

Running parallel to the skeletal remains (**010**) was the cut for a ceramic service pipe (**011**). Its fill (**012**) was a dark mixed loam with fragments of ceramic pipe and skull and jaw bone fragments, showing that this pipe trench had truncated human remains when it was excavated.

The human bones were photographed and re-interred within the base of the north-eastern end of TP3 adjacent to the manhole, as close as possible to their discovery location, covered with clean sand and backfilled.

### **3.5 Church interior service connection hole (Figs 13-14)**

A service trench measuring 0.9m by 0.7m was excavated through the floor of the church at the north-east corner of the aisle. This was designed to allow the new water pipe to connect with the interior pipe work of the new toilet block. Following the removal of the wooden floor boards and joists, the hole was dug to a depth of 0.9m through a loose mid-grey soil (**013**) containing moderately large fragments of sandstone. No structural or human remains were found.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological watching brief carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd during the demolition of a redundant boiler room built against the wall of the church revealed its architectural form and it was probably built during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century judging by the use of stone roof slabs. A gravestone with two inscriptions, one firmly dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the other possibly to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was used as the topmost step of a flight of stairs leading down to the boiler room.

The excavation of a manhole chamber against the church wall revealed the foundation courses of the aisle. These were seen to comprise five courses of irregular mortar-bonded sandstone resting on large protruding blocks of sandstone. During the excavation of the chamber human remains were encountered. These were recorded and re-interred within one of the test pits excavated to investigate the presence of an existing water pipe.

Examination of a small hole cut into the floor within the north-east corner of the aisle recorded no archaeological remains.

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) and copies of reports will be lodged with the West Lothian Council Sites and Monuments Record.

A summary statement of the results of this watching brief will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 3).



## APPENDIX 1: Context Register

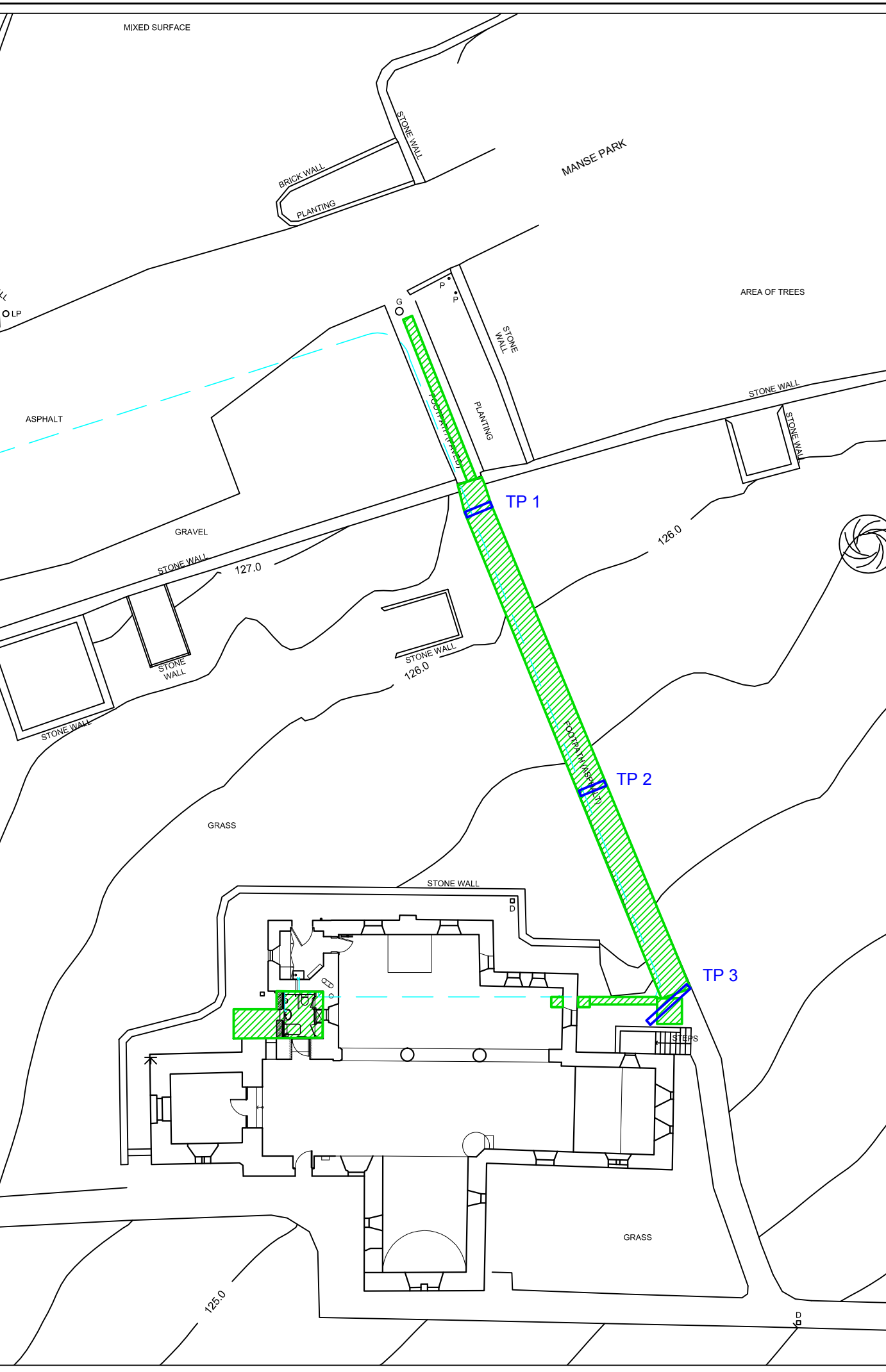
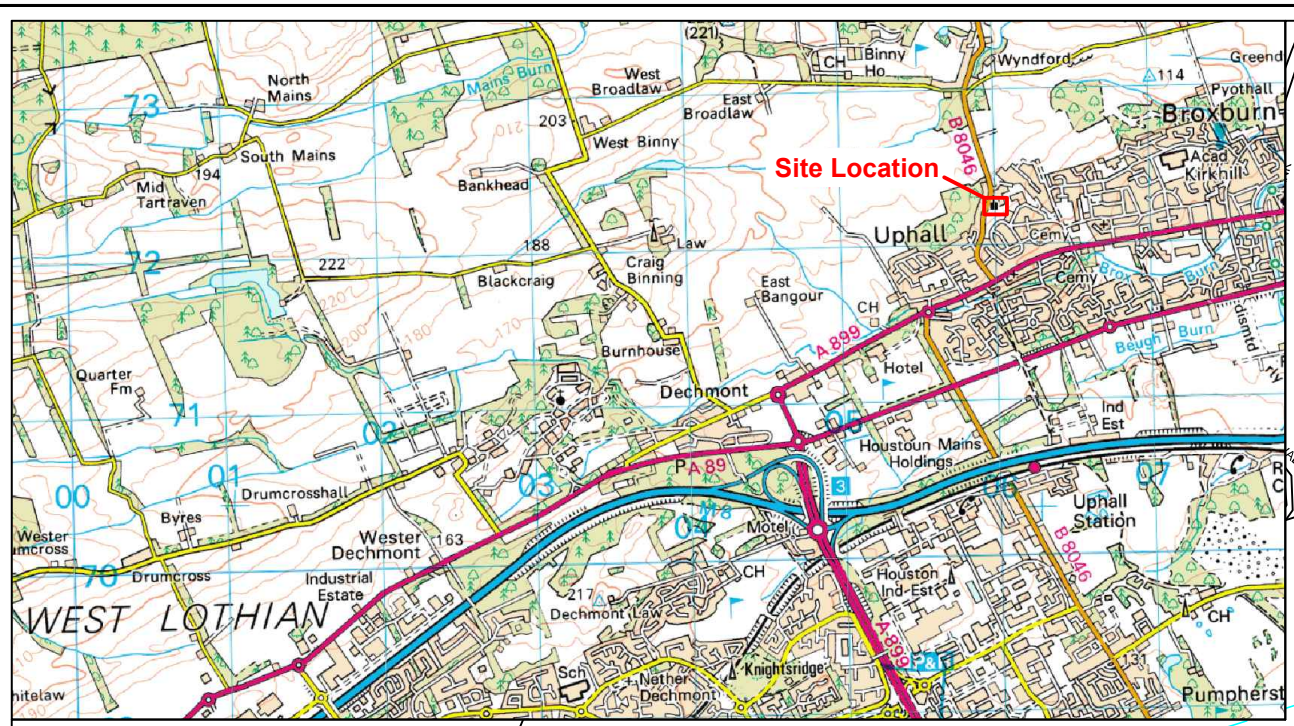
Context no.	Description
001	Stones forming the boiler house exterior
002	Made ground around the boiler house exterior
003	Gravestone used to form upper (top) step
004	Degraded bedrock identified below current foundations
005	Modern tarmac along the path
006	Made ground below the path
007	Natural subsoil below the path
008	Soil deposit underneath the church floor
009	Human remains in chamber hole at 0.9m depth
010	Human remains in chamber hole at 1.2m depth
011	Cut for ceramic service trench
012	Fill within cut 011
013	Loose mid-grey soil below the floor of the aisle.

## APPENDIX 2: Photographic Register

Shot	Description	From
1-5	Pre-demolition shots of the boiler house	Various
6-9	Working shots of the demolition of the boiler house	Various
10-11	Cast-iron door on soot box-marked James Boyd & Sons	E
12-15	Working shot of the demolition of the boiler house	E
16-32	Gravestone (003) in situ as a step	Various
33	Working shot of the gravestone being lifted	E
34-35	Upper fill the gravestone following lifting	Vertical
36-38	Working shots of the demolition of the boiler house	E
39-40	TP 1 general shot	S
41-42	TP 2 general shot	N
43	TP3 general shot	E
44-45	Masons marks on the inner side of the north door	W
46-53	Working shot of the removal of 19 <sup>th</sup> century masonry blocking the window of the Norman part of the church	Various
54-56	E-facing shot of the church foundation	E
57	In-situ human remains within manhole location	
58	Pipe trench leading toward the church	N
59	Pipe trench leading to the church yard entrance	W
60-62	Overhead shot of the pipe trench	
63	Pipe trench looking towards the church	N
64	Pipe trench looking toward the church yard	S
67	General shot of the pipe trench facing the church	N
68-69	Gate entrance, general shot	S
70-71	Hole in the interior of the church, pre-excavation	W
72-73	Hole exterior showing foundation stones	E
74-75	Hole church interior, post-excavation	W
76	General shot showing hole location within the church	SW
77	Area where chamber dig will take place	E
78-79	Lower leg remains at 0.9m depth in chamber dig	E
80	Human skull and upper arms at 1.2m depth	E
81	Detailed shot of human skeleton at 1.2m depth	E
82	Human remains at 1.2m depth, skull re-deposited in TP3	S
83	Human remains at 0.9m depth in truncated position in TP3	S
84	Human remains at 1.2m depth covered with sand	S
85	Human remains at 0.9m depth covered with sand	S

### APPENDIX 3: Discovery and Excavation in Scotland Entry

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	West Lothian Council
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Strathbrock Parish Church Alterations, Uphall, West Lothian
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	STPC
<b>PARISH:</b>	Strathbrock
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	M Cressey
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	CFA Archaeology Ltd
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NT07SE 4
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Parish Church
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)</b>	NT 0597 7220
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	September 2014
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	October 2014
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	N/A
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	<p>An archaeological watching brief carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd at Strathbrock Parish Church, Uphall, West Lothian. The area monitored included the installation of a new service trench along the pathway leading to the church and the demolition of the existing redundant boiler house. An internal inspection hole dug to connect the external water main to the interior of the church was also monitored.</p> <p>During the removal of a flight of steps leading down to the boiler house, the topmost step was found to be a gravestone with an inscription on each side. One was probably 17<sup>th</sup> century and was very worn. The second inscription was 18<sup>th</sup> century and was dedicated to the memory of Thomas Rob (d.1760).</p> <p>Disturbed human remains were also recorded in a manhole trench. The remains included a badly crushed skull and parts of upper arms and thigh bones. All of these remains were reinterred close to where they were found.</p> <p>The excavation of the new service and the excavation work carried out within the aisle revealed no archaeological remains.</p>
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	N/A
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Benjamin Tindall Architects on behalf of Strathbrock Kirk Session.
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	The Old Engine House, Eskmills Park, Musselburgh, East Lothian, EH21 7PQ
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)</b>	National Monuments Record for Scotland (NMRS) West Lothian Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)



**Key:**

- Monitored Area
- Test Pit



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Fig. No: **1** Report No: **3228**

Title:  
**Location map showing area monitored in and around the church**

Project:  
**Strathbrock Parish Church Alterations Archaeological Watching Brief**

Client:  
**Benjamin Tindall Architects on behalf of Strathbrock Kirk Session**

Scale at A3:  
**1:250**

Drawn by:	Checked:	Date:
SW	MC	22/07/2014

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Fig. 2 - External boiler house prior to demolition.



Fig. 3 - External boiler house demolished.



Fig. 4 - Gravestone used as the top step leading down to the boiler house.



Fig. 5 - Inscription on the step side of the grave stone.

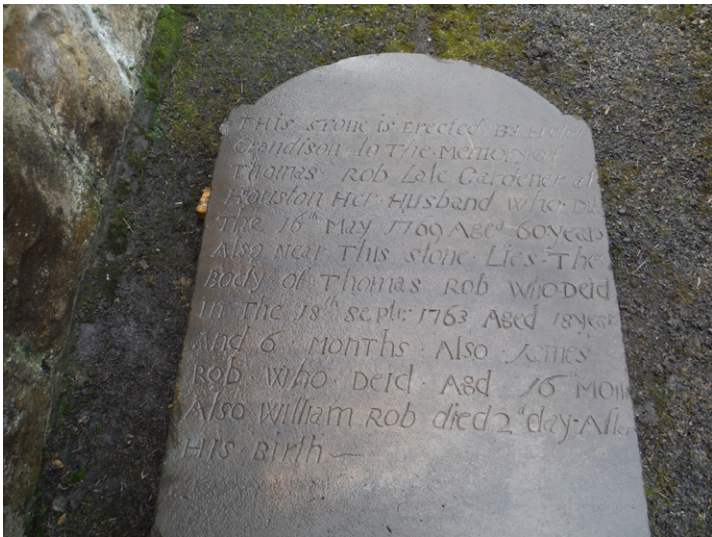


Fig. 6 - Memorial inscription dating to the 18th century on the underside of the text.



Fig. 7 - One of three test pits dug into the church yard path.



Fig. 8 - Church path excavated to follow the route of existing service trench.



Fig. 9 - Manhole trench outside the church wall.



Fig. 10 - Upper human remains found inside the service trench.



Fig. 11 - Lower human remains found inside the service trench.



Fig. 12 - Manhole dug to formation level showing foundation course of the church.



Fig. 13 - Service connection hole dug into the aisle floor.



Fig. 14 - Service connection hole excavated.



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Client:	Benjamin Tindall Architects on behalf of Strathbrock Kirk Session				
Project:	Strathbrock Parish Church Alterations, Archaeological Watching Brief				

