

EXTERNAL DRAINAGE WORKS,
ST LEONARD'S CHURCH,
THRYBERGH, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

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On behalf of

St Leonard's Parochial Church Council
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2012, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by Mr Brian Foxley, architect, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording (a watching brief) during groundworks associated with new external drainage works at St Leonard's Church, Thrybergh, South Yorkshire (NGR SK 46688 95484). The archaeological recording was undertaken between 30th October 2012 and 5th March 2013.

Although relatively limited in extent, the below-ground excavations identified one *in situ* human burial and the probable sites of two other graves. The *in situ* burial lay on the south side of the church, close to the junction of the nave and chancel, at a depth of 0.35m-0.44m BGL - within the drainage trench, the skeleton comprised the left side of an extended east-west aligned inhumation. Metal studs recovered from the fill of the grave might suggest an 18th-19th century date. The remains of another undated east-west aligned burial were identified just to the east in the same trench, although this had been disturbed by previous drainage work. A further grave cut was noted in a soakaway to the north-east of the church, and hints of another burial were implied in a soakaway to the south-east, but no human remains were identified in either case.

The two parallel 0.50m wide sandstone foundations exposed on the north side of the church at the west end of the chancel may be associated with an earlier and/or attached structure here, although one could well be a former buttress. The presence of a loose brownish-orange sandstone and sandy silt, up to 1.10m deep, in the area off the south-east corner of the church implies that this part of the churchyard is made-up ground.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2012, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by Mr Brian Foxley, architect, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording (a watching brief) during groundworks associated with new external drainage works at St Leonard's Church, Thrybergh, South Yorkshire (NGR SK 46688 95484). The archaeological recording was made a recommendation of the Diocesan Advisory Committee certificate, but no such condition was imposed on the Faculty, issued by the Diocese of Sheffield on 12th March 2012 (no. 5103).

2 SITE LOCATION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 St Leonard's Church is located within the village of Thrybergh, 4.5km to the north-east of Rotherham in South Yorkshire, on the west side of the A630 Doncaster Road (see figure 1). The church stands in an elevated position at c.64m AOD, in the centre of a large churchyard (see figure 2). The ground surface within the churchyard slopes away gently to the east, south and west of the church, but rises very gently to the north. There are marked graves close to the south and west sides of the church, whereas at the east end, a raised area of ground appears to mark a former eastern extension of the chancel comprising an apse with a burial vault beneath. The church is a Grade II* Listed Building (see Appendix 2).
- 2.2 The church is thought to have pre-Conquest origins, dating back to c.900 AD, and traces of this structure survive within the east part of the nave, including a blocked doorway beneath a later window in the south wall, and perhaps a part of the north wall of the chancel; at the west end of the north wall of the chancel are traces of herringbone work. The chancel was also extended and an apse was added to the east end with a burial crypt beneath. The Norman nave was subsequently extended to the west, as is evidenced by a blocked Norman doorway on the north side; any evidence for a north porch has disappeared. A tower was added to the west end of the church, and this was raised in height during the 15th century, when the clerestory was added. A south porch was added in c.1640 and the apse was demolished, with the stone being used to raise the height of the tower. Inside the church are a number of significant monuments to members of the Reresby family and their successors - the Reresby family were lords of the manor from the 13th until the 17th century. The churchyard also contains the remains of St. Leonard's Cross, an Anglo-Saxon cross possibly reused in the 12th century, which was brought here relatively recently from a site at the east end of the village. The church was restored in 1871 and 1984, and an extension by architect George Gaze Pace added in 1970 stands at the south-west corner of the church (Knapton und.; Pevsner 1979, 516-517; Ryder 1982, 98).
- 2.3 The archaeological potential of the churchyard was assessed on 17th May 2011, when the excavation of three water percolation pits was monitored by EDAS, and the exposed deposits and features recorded (Richardson & Dennison 2011). All three exposed similar deposits at similar levels. An c.0.20m depth of turf and silt topsoil overlay a sandy silt containing frequent inclusions of sandstone rubble; in Pit 3, to the west of the church, the sandy silt was observed to overlay a hard greyish-brown clay. Although no human remains, including *ex situ* bone, were exposed by the works, it was recommended that an archaeological watching brief should be maintained during any future drainage works, so that any archaeological deposits and/or human burials that were disturbed could be afforded an appropriate level of archaeological recording.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The archaeological recording was not defined by a 'Written Scheme of Investigation' or methods statement, although general advice produced by the Institute for Archaeologists in relation to watching briefs (IFA 1999), by English Heritage/Church of England in relation to the treatment of human remains (EH/CoE 2005), and by the Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists in relation to work in churchyards (ADCA 2004) was followed.
- 3.2 The aim of the archaeological recording was to monitor the groundworks (topsoil stripping and the excavation of various trenches and soakaway pits) associated with a new surface water drainage system, in order to record and recover information relating to the nature, date, depth and significance of any archaeological features which might be present and damaged by the works. On the north side of the church, the works comprised the removal of the existing concrete channels from the base of the nave wall, and the excavation of a 0.30m wide and 0.75m deep trench on the north side of this cleared area for a new French drain. The drainage trench then continued east slightly away but still parallel to the north side of the chancel, and then north-east across a path to a soakaway (no. 2) which was to be 1.80m diameter and 1.65m deep. A similar trench was dug parallel to the south side of the nave and chancel after clearance of the existing concrete channels, extending south-east on a dog-leg plan adjacent and across another path to another new soakaway (no. 1). A further drainage trench was to be dug around the west tower and south-west vestry block, running west from the south-west corner to a third new soakaway pit (no. 3), but this was not monitored as these works had been dug prior to an archaeologist being on site.
- 3.3 The archaeological recording was carried out over a total of 12 days, between 30th October 2012 and 5th March 2013. Two new narrow drainage trenches dug along the north and south sides of the church (Trenches 1 and 3) were monitored, together with their connections to two new separate soakaways (Trenches 2 and 4). Trench 1 measured c.37.0m long by 0.30m wide by 0.60m deep, Trench 2 was 1.50m square by 1.50m deep, Trench 3 measured c.40.0m long by 0.30m wide by 0.60m deep, and Trench 4 was 1.20m square by 1.30m deep. For the most part, the groundworks were excavated using a mini-excavator fitted with a 0.25m wide toothless bucket, although the drainage trenches close to the walls of the church were dug by hand.
- 3.4 Following standard archaeological procedures, each discrete stratigraphic entity (e.g. a cut, fill or layer) was assigned an individual three digit context number and detailed information was recorded on *pro forma* context sheets. A total of 24 archaeological contexts were recorded (see Appendix 1), which are referred to in the following text as three figure numbers in square brackets, e.g. [102]. In-house recording and quality control procedures ensured that all recorded information was cross-referenced as appropriate. The positions of the monitored groundworks were marked on a general site plan at 1:200 scale and an additional plan at 1:10 scale was also produced. A general digital photographic record was also made.
- 3.5 Given the lack of archaeological finds, no archive for the project was formally deposited with the local registered archaeological museum, although site notes, plans and photographs have been retained by EDAS (site code SLT 12).

4 RESULTS FROM THE WATCHING BRIEF (see figures 3 and 4)

Trench 1

- 4.1 This trench was dug along, and parallel to, the north side of the church, with an extension to the north-east from the east end running to a new soakway (Trench 2). Trench 1 measured c.37.0m long by 0.30m wide, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.60m (see plates 1 and 3). A natural deposit [105] composed of fragmented sandstone bedrock was encountered in the base of the trench at c.0.60m BGL (below ground level). Overlying this was either a levelling or demolition layer [104] up to 0.30m thick that was composed of loose sandstone rubble.
- 4.2 Dug into this layer [104], in the eastern half of the trench, were two mortared sandstone rubble foundations [101] and [102]. Both foundations measured 0.50m wide and were aligned north-south across the width of the trench, c.2.90m apart from each other. The western foundation [101] was partly visible on the surface and appeared to be contemporary with the existing nave wall; it was aligned on the north-east corner of the nave (see plate 2). The function of these two foundations, or indeed any relationship between the two, could not be established. Located to the east of foundation [102] was a north-east/south-west aligned red brick and sandstone capped culvert [103], 0.30m wide, which was associated with the former roof drainage system. Sealing the two foundations [101] and [102], and culvert [103], was a 0.10m depth of dark brown sandy silt topsoil and turf [100].
- 4.3 Small fragments of unstratified disarticulated human bone were recovered during the excavation of Trench 1, which were reburied within the base of the new drainage channel. No other finds were recovered from this trench.

Trench 2

- 4.4 Trench 2 was excavated for a soakaway (no. 2) located in the north-east corner of the churchyard; the excavation measured 1.50m square and it was dug to a maximum depth of 1.50m. The soakaway lay c.6m to the west of one of the percolation pits (PP2) dug in 2011.
- 4.5 The underlying natural deposit [204] was composed of the same fragmented sandstone bedrock seen in Trench 1, here encountered at c.0.70m BGL. The natural was sealed by a 0.50m depth of a greyish-brown sandy silt graveyard soil [203]. Cut into this graveyard soil along the north side of the trench was a probable east-west grave cut [202] that was exposed for a depth of 0.80m and a width of 0.50m (see plate 4). The grave cut contained a mixed dark brown sandy-silt fill [201], 0.80m deep, as well as fragmented inclusions of re-deposited natural sandstone. Sealing the grave fill was a dark brown sandy silt topsoil and turf [200] that was 0.20m deep. On the south side of the trench, the greyish-brown sandy silt graveyard soil [203] lay directly under the dark brown sandy silt topsoil [200] which was 0.20m thick.

Trench 3

- 4.6 This trench was dug along, and parallel to, the south side of the church, with a dog-leg extension from the east end running to a soakaway (Trench 4); the trench measured c.40.0m long by 0.25m-0.30m wide and 0.60m deep (see plates 6 and 8). The natural fragmented sandstone bedrock [309] was encountered at c.0.35m BGL along the majority of the trench closest to the church walls.

- 4.7 Towards the centre of the trench, adjacent to the junction of the nave and chancel, a grave cut [305] was partly exposed cut into the natural [309]. The cut [305] measured 1.60m long and was exposed for a width of 0.25m and a depth of 0.20m. Excavation of the cut revealed the left side of an inhumation [304] in an extended supine position and orientated east-west with the skull (not exposed by excavation) at the west end of the grave; the top of the skeleton lay at a depth of 0.35m BGL while the base of the grave was at 0.44m BGL (see figure 4). The left arm was slightly flexed with the hand rested on the pelvic area and the left leg was extended - the lower leg had been initially disturbed by the excavation work (see plate 5). The grave contained a single fill consisting of a dark brownish-grey clayey-sandy-silt [303], with occasional sandstone and charcoal fleck inclusions. A number of small copper alloy studs were recovered from the fill just above the pelvic area along with a larger ferrous metal stud/nail, which implies the presence of a coffin although no remains were visible within the excavated trench. A single sherd of residual medieval pottery was also recovered from the grave fill [303]. The excavated remains were reburied within the base of the excavated trench.
- 4.8 Just to the east of grave 305 was another grave cut [307] that was exposed for a length of 1.00m and width of 0.30m. It contained a fill that consisted of a dark brown-grey clayey-sandy-silt [306], with occasional sandstone and charcoal fleck inclusions. This grave cut was revealed during the removal of a concrete drain and disarticulated human bone was recovered during this process, including the damaged skull (see plate 7). It is likely that the burial had been disturbed by the previous installation of the concrete drain. Once again, the bones were replaced in the excavated trench.
- 4.9 Both graves were sealed by a graveyard soil [302] consisting of a greyish-brown sandy-silt that was 0.10m thick. This was overlaid by a concrete path [301] and associated stone kerbs [300].
- 4.10 Towards the south-east corner of the chancel, Trench 3 was diverted to the south-east towards Trench 4. It was at this point that layer 308 became prevalent and sealed the natural deposits [309]. Layer 308 consisted of loose brownish-orange sandstone and sandy silt with a maximum depth of 0.40m, and they appeared to represent either a landscaping deposit or a graveyard soil sealed by a dark brown sandy silt topsoil and turf 0.20m deep [310].

Trench 4

- 4.11 Trench 4 was another soakaway (no. 1) located in the south-east corner of the churchyard, and the area of excavation measured 1.20m by 1.20m. Although the trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.30m, natural deposits were not exposed. The soakaway lay c.4m to the north-west of one of the percolation pits (PP1) dug in 2011.
- 4.12 A loose brownish-orange sandstone and sandy silt [401] with an exposed depth of 1.10m was seen, which represents a continuation of layer 308 recorded in Trench 3 (see plate 9). Within the southern edge of the trench, layer 401 appeared disturbed possibly indicating the presence of an adjacent grave, although no such feature was noted in the excavation. Sealing layer 401 was a dark brown sandy-silt topsoil and turf [400], 0.20m thick. No finds were recovered from Trench 4.

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1 Given the origins and age of the church, and the longevity of the associated churchyard, it was not unsurprising that the below-ground excavations, although relatively limited in extent, identified one confirmed *in situ* human burial [304] and the probable sites of two other graves [307 and 202]. The *in situ* burial [304] lay on the south side of the church, close to the junction of the nave and chancel, at a depth of 0.35m-0.44m BGL - it comprised the left side of an extended east-west aligned inhumation. Not all remains of this burial were excavated, as it extended beyond the limits of the trench, and the bones were reinterred in the same position in the base of the excavation. The burial could not be dated with any certainty, although the metal studs recovered from the fill of the grave [303] would indicate an 18th-19th century date. The remains of another undated east-west aligned burial [307] were identified just to the east in the same trench, although this had been disturbed by previous drainage work. A further grave cut [202] was noted in the north-eastern soakaway, and hints of another were noted in the south-east soakaway; in these latter two cases, no human remains were identified.
- 5.2 The two parallel 0.50m wide sandstone foundations [101 and 102] exposed on the north side of the church at the west end of the chancel are of interest, and they may represent the remains of an earlier and/or attached structure here. However, the location and orientation of the western foundation [101] implies that it might be a former buttress. Unfortunately, the limited scale of the excavations meant that the dates and functions of the foundations could not be ascertained, or even if the two foundations were related.
- 5.3 The presence of a loose brownish-orange sandstone and sandy silt [308 and 401], seen in the eastern extent of Trench 3 and in the adjacent soakaway (Trench 4), and which extended to a depth of 1.10m below the topsoil, suggests that the area off the south-east corner of the church is made-up ground, possibly associated with former landscaping.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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IFA (Institute for Archaeologists) 1999 *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (and subsequent revisions)

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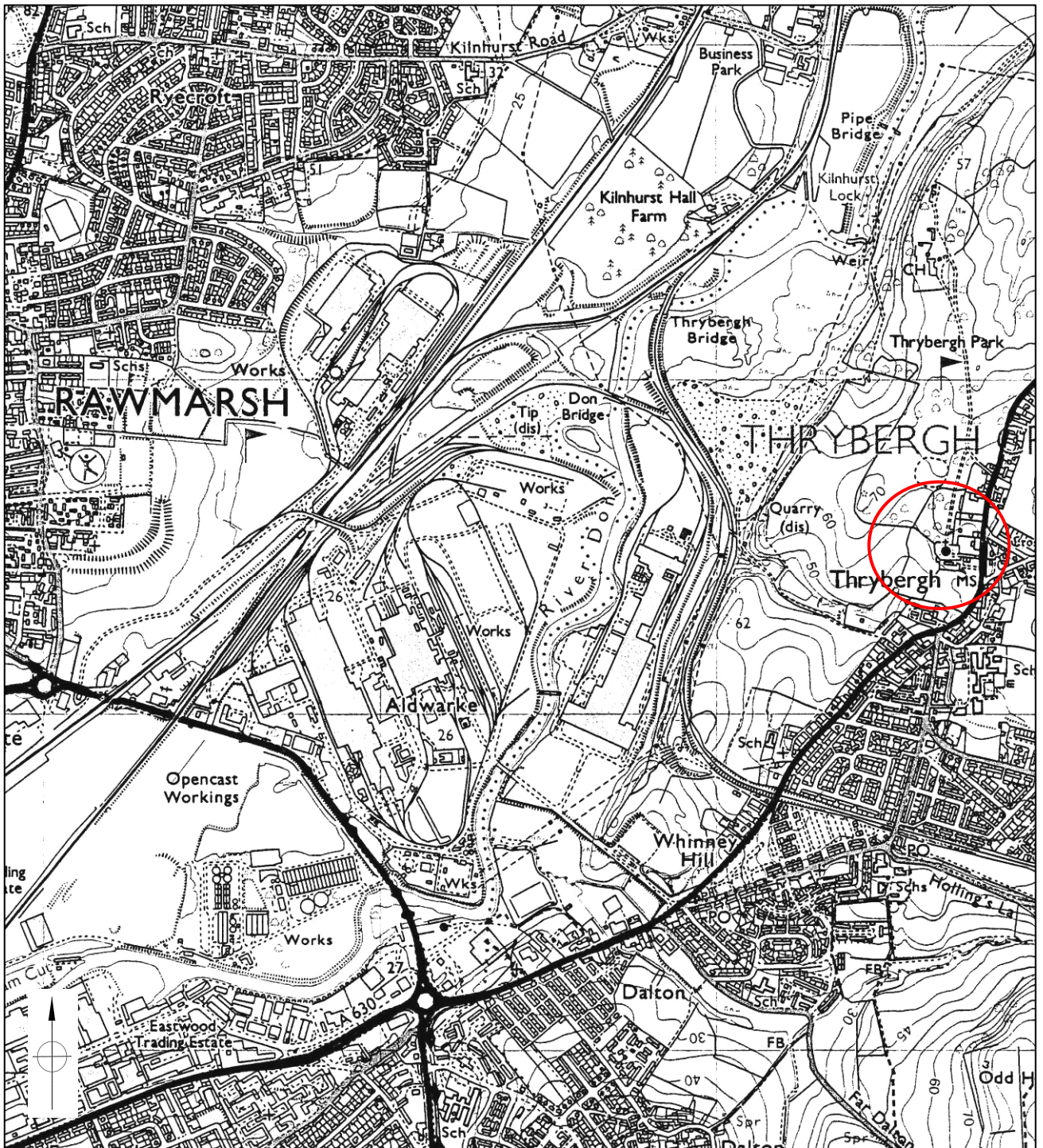
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Ryder, P 1982 *Saxon Churches in South Yorkshire*

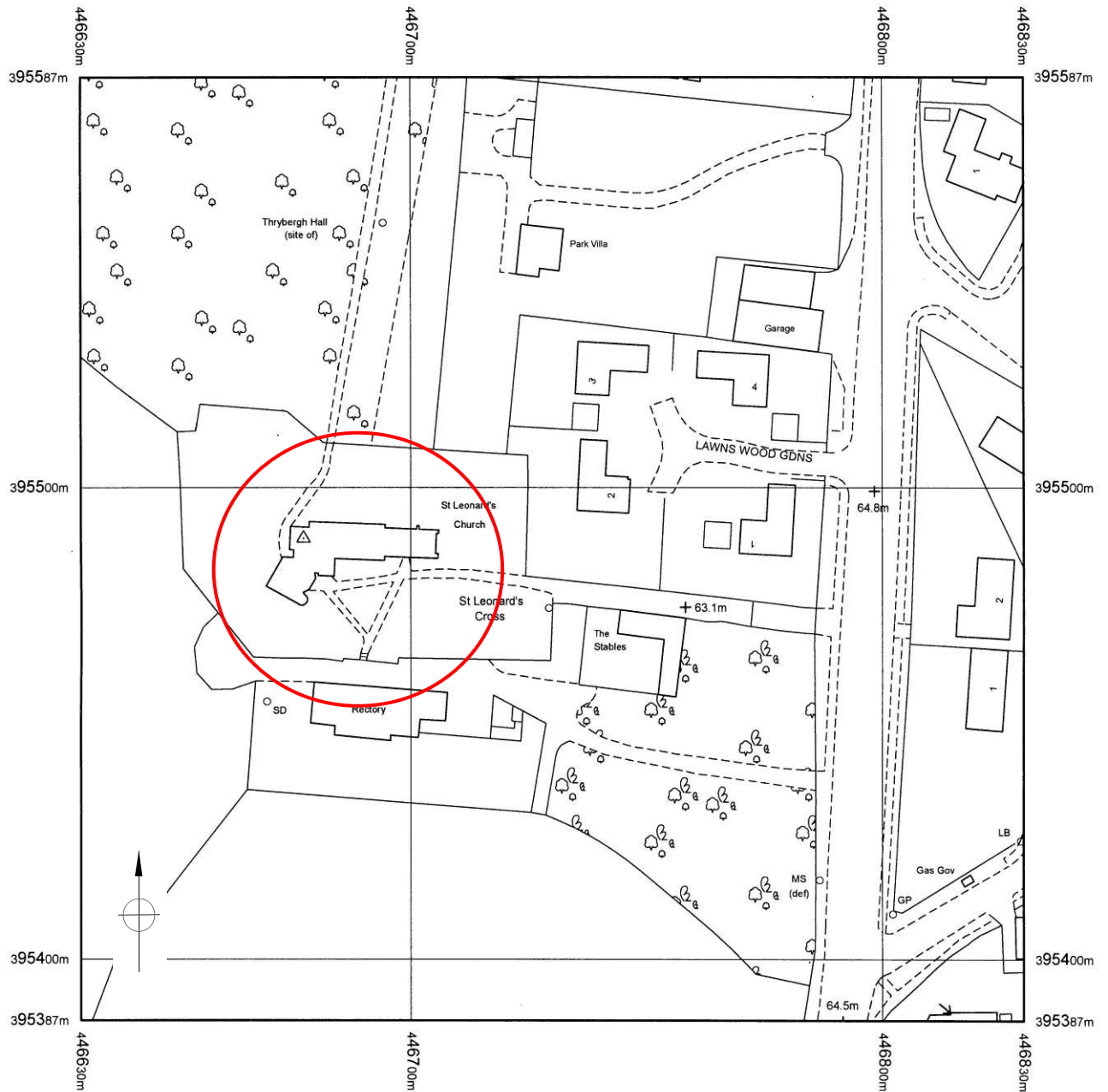
7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The archaeological watching brief was commissioned and funded by St Leonard's Church Parochial Church Council, and EDAS would like them, Brian Foxley (architect), and the contractors (G L Beal Building Contractors) for their help and cooperation in carrying out the archaeological work.
- 7.2 The site recording was undertaken by James Stanley and Berny McCluskey of On Site Archaeology on behalf of EDAS, and they produced the fieldwork records. Ed Dennison produced the final report and drawings, and the responsibility for any errors or inconsistencies remains with him.



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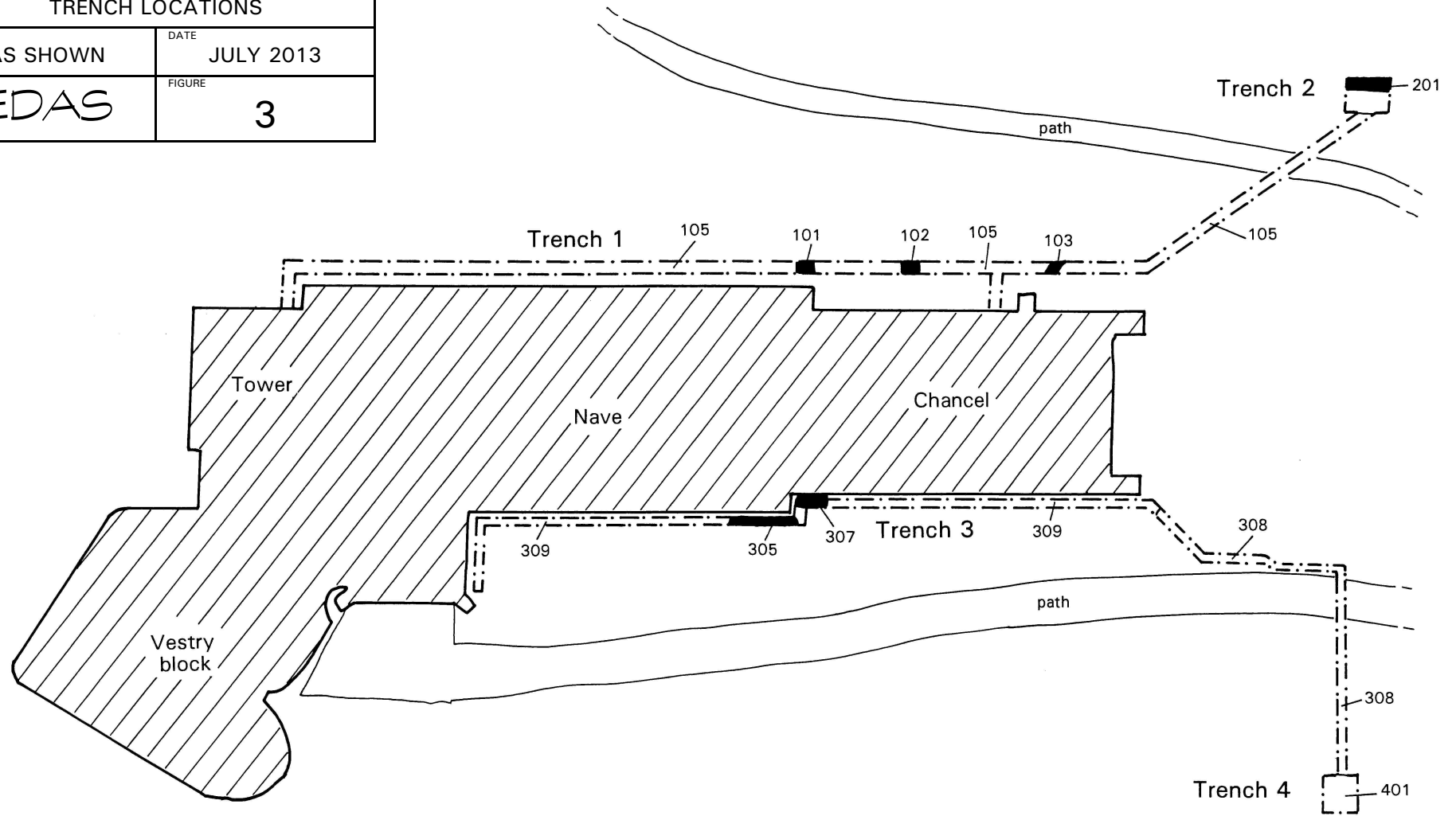
PROJECT	THRYBERGH CHURCH	
TITLE	GENERAL LOCATION	
SCALE	NTS	DATE JULY 2013
EDAS	FIGURE	1



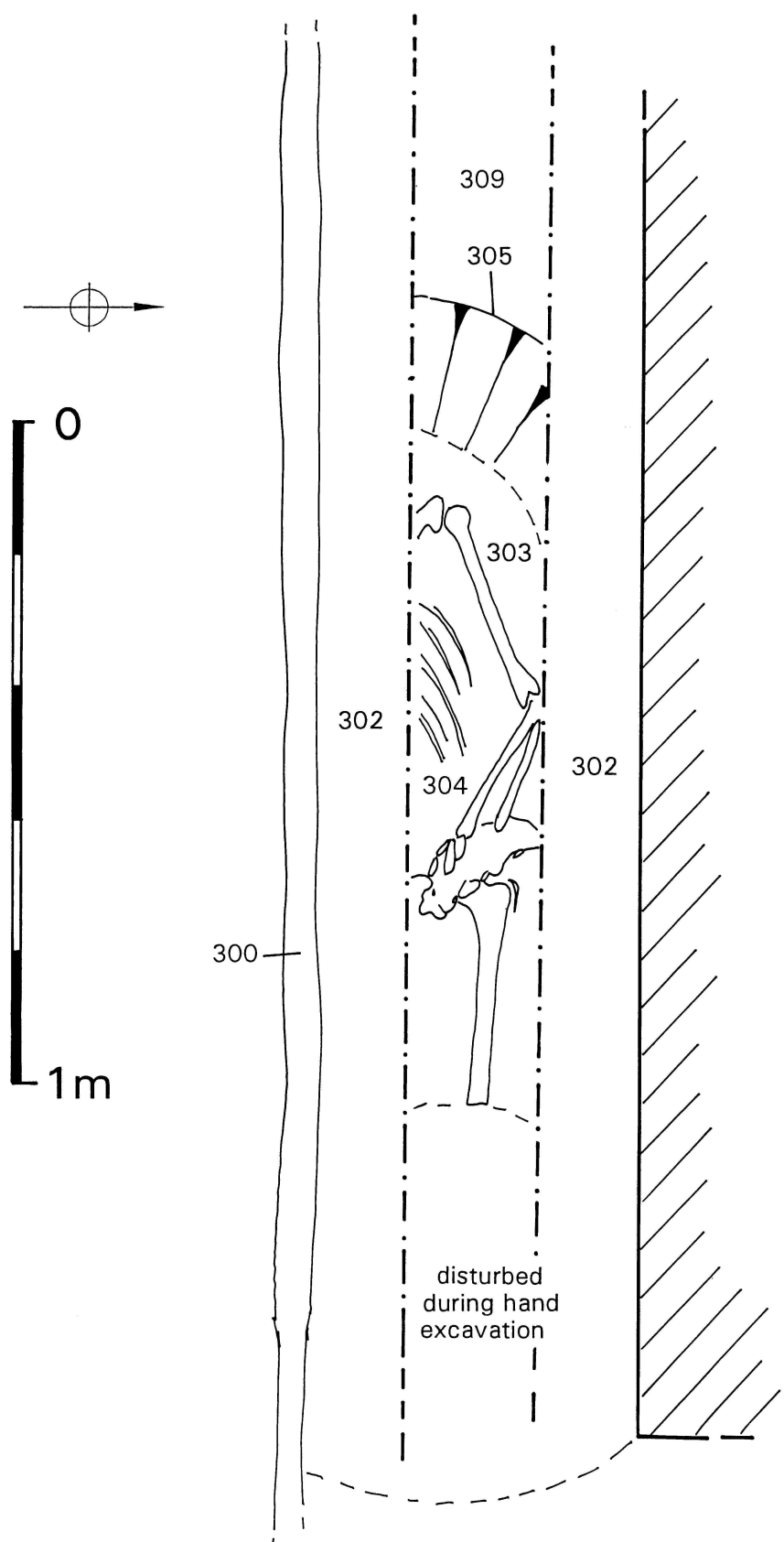
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PROJECT	THRYBERGH CHURCH	
TITLE	DETAILED LOCATION	
SCALE	NTS	DATE JULY 2013
	EDAS	FIGURE 2

PROJECT THRYBERGH CHURCH	
TITLE TRENCH LOCATIONS	
SCALE AS SHOWN	DATE JULY 2013
EDAS	FIGURE 3



Plan based on original supplied
by Brian Foxley (architect)



PROJECT		THRYBERGH CHURCH	
TITLE		PLAN OF BURIAL 304	
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	JULY 2013
EDAS		FIGURE	4



Plate 1: General view of excavated Trench 1 within cleared area on north side of nave, looking W.



Plate 2: Foundation [101] exposed in Trench 1, at junction of nave and chancel, looking S.



Plate 3: General view of east end of Trench 1, looking NE towards Trench 2.



Plate 4: West side of Trench 2 (soakaway) showing grave cut [202] on right, looking NW.



Plate 5: In situ burial [304] exposed in Trench 3 at east end of south side of nave, looking E.



Plate 6: General view of Trench 3 along south side of nave, looking E.



Plate 7: Disturbed in situ burial [307] exposed in Trench 3 at west end of south side of chancel, looking E.



Plate 8: Excavation of Trench 3 on south side of path towards Trench 4, looking E.



Plate 9: General view of Trench 4 (soakaway) after excavation, looking W.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description and Interpretation</i>	<i>Area of Site</i>
100	Dark brown sandy silt, 0.10m thick. Topsoil.	T1
101	Mortared sandstone rubble foundation, 0.50m wide. Structure.	T1
102	Mortared sandstone rubble foundation, 0.50m wide. Structure.	T1
103	Red brick and sandstone capped culvert. 0.50m wide.	T1
104	Loose sandstone rubble, 0.30m thick. Levelling/demolition layer.	T1
105	Fragmented sandstone bedrock. Natural.	T1
200	Dark brown sandy silt, 0.20m thick. Topsoil	T2
201	Mixed dark brown sandy silt soil and re-deposited fragmented sandstone. Fill of grave 202.	T2
202	Grave cut, 0.80m deep and 0.50m wide.	T2
203	Grey-brown sandy silt, 0.50m thick. Graveyard soil.	T2
204	Fragmented sandstone bedrock. Natural.	T2
300	Stone kerbs to path.	T3
301	Concrete path, 0.13m thick.	T3
302	Grey-brown sandy silt, 0.10m thick. Graveyard soil.	T3
303	Dark brown-grey clayey sandy silt with occasional sandstone fragments and charcoal fleck inclusions. Fill of grave 305.	T3
304	Inhumation.	T3
305	Grave cut, 1.60m long x 0.25m wide (not fully exposed) x 0.20m deep.	T3
306	Dark brown-grey clayey sandy silt with occasional sandstone fragments and charcoal fleck inclusions. Fill of grave 307.	T3
307	Grave cut, 1.00m long x 0.30m wide.	T3
308	Loose brown-orange sandstone and sandy soils, up to 0.40m thick. Landscaping/graveyard soil.	T3
309	Fragmented sandstone bedrock. Natural.	T3
310	Dark brown sandy silt, 0.20m thick. Topsoil.	
400	Dark brown sandy silt, 0.20m thick. Topsoil.	T4
401	Loose brown-orange sandstone and sandy soils, 1.10m thick. Landscaping/graveyard soil.	T4

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION



IoE Number: 335545

Location: CHURCH OF ST LEONARD, DONCASTER ROAD (west off)
THRYBERGH, ROTHERHAM, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Date listed: 29 March 1968

Date of last amendment: 29 March 1968

Grade II*

THRYBERGH DONCASTER ROAD (west side, off) 6/36 Church of St. Leonard 29.3.68 GV II*

Church. C11 and C12 nave with C15-style windows; chancel C14; tower C15; all much restored 1871 and 1894; vestry block added 1970 by Pace of York. Irregular sandstone rubble to earliest work; coursed rubble to chancel; otherwise ashlar. Stone slates to porch; other roofs lead. West tower with spire; 3-bay nave with south porch and C20 vestry adjoining in angle with tower; 2-bay chancel. Tower: triple-chamfered plinth. 3-light west window with hoodmould. Clock on south side. String course beneath 2-light belfry openings; another string with gargoyles beneath embattled parapet; recessed, crocketed spire with weathervane. Nave: gabled porch with moulded plinth and quadrant-moulded arch to west of two 3-light Perpendicular windows with hoodmoulds. Quoins of blocked south doorway beneath bay-2 window. Upper wall ashlar; moulded parapet copings and cross to east gable. Round-arched north doorway within ashlar extension to west of original short nave. Chancel: narrower and lower; chamfered plinth. C19 priest's door beneath medieval niche; weathered carving in small triangular panel over. To left a restored 3-light window with geometrical tracery; to right a square-headed 2-light window with ogee-shaped transoms. Upper walling renewed C20; parapet as nave. Restored 4-light east window in Decorated style flanked by offset buttresses. Interior: chancel and tower arches renewed. Nave roof: framed with moulded, cambered tie-beams. C14 effigy set against south wall of tower, another within C20 vestry. Niche at south-east end of nave contains tomb of Ralph Reresby (d.1530): incised depiction of knight; reredos with arms and Latin inscription. Another table tomb, now cut in half, and fixed in south-east corner of chancel. Nave and chancel display an excellent sequence of wall monuments ranging from late C16 to early C19. Of particular note that on north wall of chancel to Lionel Reresby and wife Anne (d.1587): 2 kneelers each beneath canopy, mourners below. In addition to monuments described by Pevsner (B.O.E., pp516-517) are those to Sir John Reresby I (d.1668) over nave south door and to his son Sir John II: panel with carved skulls and trophies, plaque with scrolled pediment above. Reresby brass 1668 near chancel arch. Restored C15 stained glass in easternmost window of nave south wall. N. Pevsner, B.O.E. Yorkshire West Riding, 1967 ed.

Source: Images of England website (www.imagesofengland.org.uk)