

STRUCTURAL INVESTIGATION WORKS,
ALL SAINTS CHURCH,
WISTOW, NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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On behalf of

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STRUCTURAL INVESTIGATION WORKS,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2015, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by the Wistow All Saints Heritage Appeal (WASHA), through Robin Poskitt, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during limited groundworks associated with structural investigations to the masonry of the east gable wall of the chancel at All Saints Church, Wistow, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 59230 35655). Advice from the Heritage Lottery Fund was to commission an archaeological watching brief during the investigations, in case unrecorded burials and other items of archaeological significance were uncovered.

The watching brief was carried out on 10th April 2015. A single trench, measuring 2.90m long by 0.45m wide by up to 1.00m deep, was excavated in the churchyard, against the approximate centre of the chancel's east wall. The excavation uncovered the footings of this wall, which were of the form and depth which would be expected for a medieval church. No evidence for any earlier structures or features was encountered, and no articulated burials were uncovered. A small amount of disarticulated human bone was recovered, and this was re-buried in the bottom of the excavated trench prior to backfilling.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In March 2015, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by the Wistow All Saints Heritage Appeal (WASHA), through Robin Poskitt, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during limited groundworks associated with structural investigations to the masonry of the east gable wall of the chancel at All Saints Church, Wistow, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 59230 35655). Advice from the Heritage Lottery Fund was to commission an archaeological watching brief during the investigations, in case unrecorded burials and other items of archaeological significance were uncovered.

2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 All Saints Church lies on the north side of Church Hill, in the centre of Wistow village, which itself lies 4km to the north-west of Selby in North Yorkshire (see figure 1). The surrounding churchyard extends to the north, east and south, and the majority of the gravestones and other monuments are still standing (see figure 2).
- 2.2 The church largely dates to the 13th-14th century, and comprises an aisled nave, chancel, south porch and west tower. It is a Grade I Listed Building, first listed on 17th November 1966 (National Heritage List for England entry 1174776). The Listed Building description reads: *Church. C13, C14, C15 with probable earlier origins and C19 vestry and restoration. Magnesian limestone with red plain tile and Welsh slate roof. 3-bay chancel, aisled 3-bay nave, south porch and west tower. Chancel: C15 flat-headed windows of 3 trefoil-headed lights. C14 5-light east window with Curvilinear tracery. Nave: aisles retain C13 lancet windows and door to west. Window with Y-tracery to east end of south aisle, window with cusped intersecting tracery to north aisle. A similar window inserted in C19 vestry. Otherwise windows with Perpendicular tracery. Perpendicular 3-stage tower with stepped diagonal buttresses. Doorway to west has hood-mould with 2 demi-figures of angels as stops. Similar hood-moulds to window and bell-openings. Interior: early C13 arcade to south aisle has short cylindrical piers, keeled responds, and double-chamfered arches on octagonal piers. Blocked doorway in north aisle contains C18 carved death's head and painted shield. Some medieval glass to lancets in nave aisles. Pevsner, N., Yorkshire, The West Riding, 1979, p555.*

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The aim of the archaeological recording was to monitor the limited below-ground excavations associated with the structural investigations, in order to record and recover information relating to the nature, date, depth and significance of any archaeological features which might be present. All excavated material was also visually inspected for any finds.
- 3.2 The archaeological recording was not defined by an EDAS 'Written Scheme of Investigation', although general advice produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in relation to watching briefs (CIfA 2014), 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 considered.
- 3.3 The watching brief was carried out on 10th April 2015. A single trench measuring 2.90m long by 0.45m wide by up to 1.00m deep was excavated by hand, under

direct archaeological supervision. When structures, features or finds of archaeological interest were exposed or disturbed, time was allowed for EDAS to clean, assess, and quickly hand excavate, sample and record the archaeological remains, as necessary and appropriate according to the nature of the remains.

- 3.4 A written, drawn and photographic record of all deposits and material revealed during the course of the excavations was made. A general site plan at a scale of 1:50 was sufficient to show all the areas of ground disturbance and the archaeological deposits which were exposed. The plan includes spot-heights related to Ordnance Datum in metres as correct to two decimal places; the benchmark used to obtain the spot-heights was located on the south face of the church tower (9.39m AOD) and all levels were taken using a dumpy level.
- 3.5 Human remains that were encountered during the course of the groundworks were treated in accordance with current advice (EH/CoE 2005, 23). In the event, no articulated burials were encountered, although there was a small amount of disarticulated remains. As the excavation was to be backfilled on the same day, the disarticulated bone was temporarily bagged adjacent to the excavation and then re-placed in the base of the trench prior to backfilling.
- 3.6 Following standard archaeological procedures, each discrete stratigraphic entity (e.g. a cut, fill or layer) was assigned an individual context number and detailed information was recorded on *pro forma* context sheets. A total of three archaeological contexts were recorded; these are described in the following text as three digit numbers (e.g. 002). In-house recording and quality control procedures ensured that all recorded information was cross-referenced as appropriate. A photographic record was also maintained using a digital camera.
- 3.7 No dateable finds were observed or recovered from the excavations. Given the lack of archaeological finds, and the small-scale nature of the work, no archive for the project was deposited with any local museum, although site notes, plans and photographs have been retained by EDAS (site code ASW 15).

4 RESULTS FROM THE WATCHING BRIEF (see figure 3)

- 4.1 The single trench was excavated in the churchyard, at the base of the approximate centre of the chancel's east wall (see plates 1 and 2). The trench was aligned parallel to the wall (i.e. north-south). As previously noted, the trench averaged 0.45m wide throughout, and had a maximum length of 2.90m. Prior to excavation, the ground surface was formed by a decayed concrete surface drain running along the base of the chancel wall. At the south end of the trench, the ground surface was set at 7.66m AOD, and at the north end it was at 7.58m AOD. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.02m below ground level (BGL), so that the base of the trench lay at 6.56m-6.66m AOD. Two 19th century grave slabs lay close to the east side of the trench.
- 4.2 The chancel wall footings were exposed in the north side of the trench (see plate 3). A chamfered plinth extends across the whole of the chancel's east wall. The course forming the plinth is of Magnesian limestone, like much of the rest of the church; the individual stones are square and coursed, with neatly tooled faces. At its south end, above the trench, the top of the chamfered plinth was set at 8.06m AOD, whereas the north end was slightly lower at 7.97m AOD. Below the plinth course, the wall face dropped vertically for three courses. The upper two courses were of a similar stone to the plinth, but the stones of the third course were less well dressed; one stone projected from the wall face above, but this was a result of

movement, rather than being an earlier or decayed structural feature. Below the third course, the footings of the chancel wall were exposed. These were formed by a single course of large, crudely squared and dressed stones, projecting up to 0.12m from the wall face above. At both ends of the trench, the base of the footings was set at the same level as the limit of excavation (6.66m AOD at the south end, and 6.56m AOD at the north end).

- 4.3 In the north, west and south sections of the trench, the same sequence of three deposits was observed. The uppermost deposit (001) was formed by the concrete surface drain and the hardcore upon which it stood, which extended to 0.14m BGL. The concrete and hardcore overlay a level deposit of compacted mid-brown sandy silt (002), 0.54m thick, containing very frequent inclusions of red tile and handmade red brick, up to 0.10m across, and also a small amount of disarticulated human bone. Beneath this, a stiff mid-brown sandy clay (003) was encountered. This was a relatively clean deposit, but it did include some disarticulated human bone within its lower limits. This clay (003) continued below the bottom of the trench, and also underlay the base of the footings of the chancel wall in the north side of the trench.

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1 The excavation of the trench uncovered the footings of the chancel's east wall, which were of the form and depth which would be expected for a medieval church. No evidence for any earlier structures or features was encountered, and no articulated burials were uncovered. A small amount of disarticulated human bone was recovered, and this was re-buried in the bottom of the excavated trench prior to backfilling.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

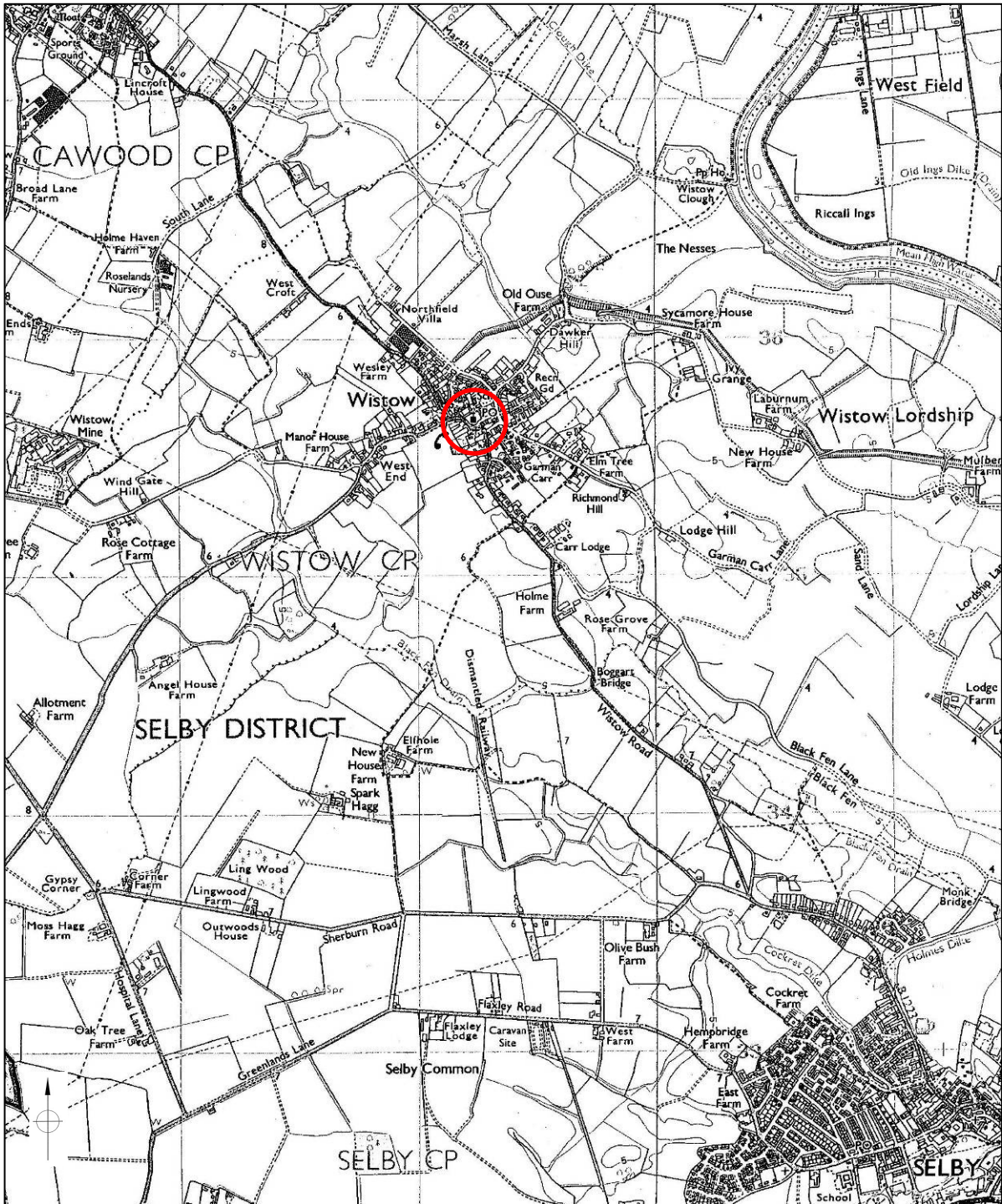
ADCA (Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists) 2004 *Guidance Note 1: Archaeological Requirements for Works on Churches and Churchyards*

CIFA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2014 *Standard and Guidance: Archaeological Watching Brief*

EH/CoE (English Heritage/Church of England) 2005 *Guidance for Best Practice for Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England*

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The archaeological watching brief was commissioned and funded by Wistow All Saints Heritage Appeal, and EDAS would like them and Robin Poskitt for their help and cooperation in carrying out the archaeological recording. The site recording was undertaken by Shaun Richardson, who also produced the fieldwork records. Ed Dennison produced the final report and drawings, and the responsibility for any errors or inconsistencies remains with him.



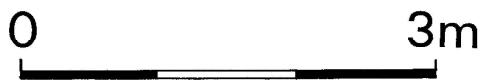
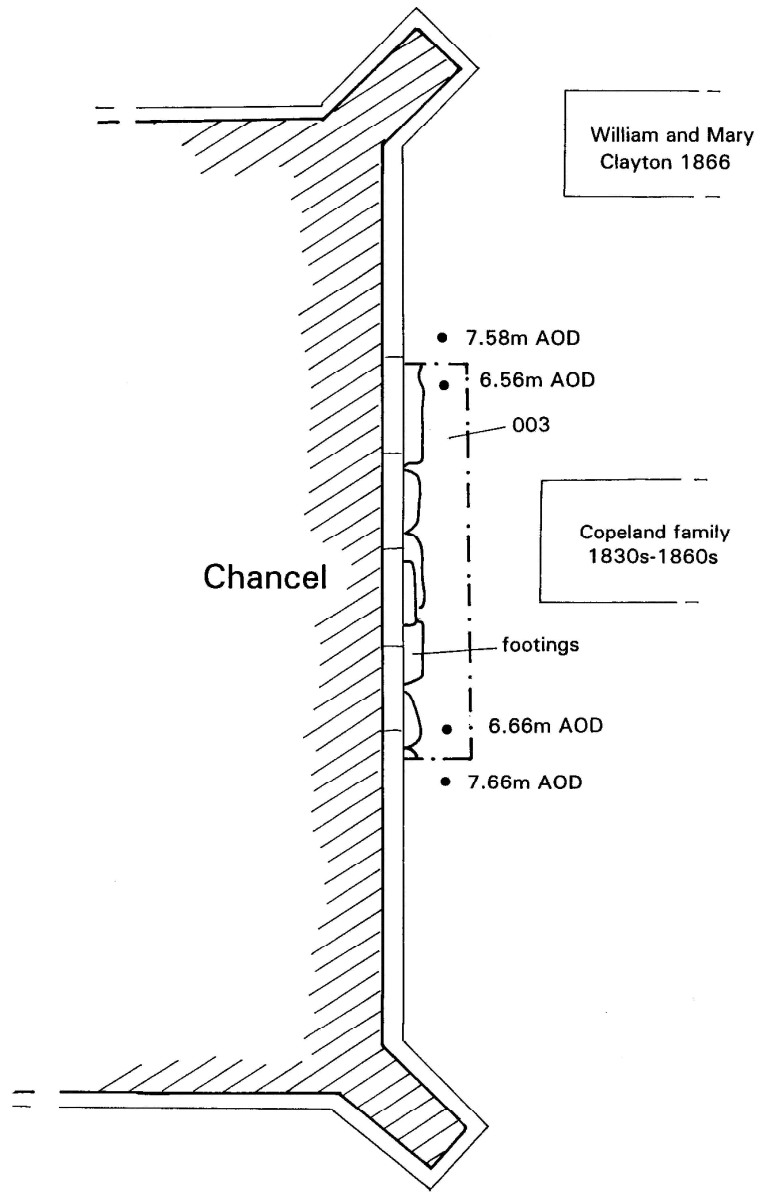
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PROJECT		ALL SAINTS CHURCH, WISTOW	
TITLE		GENERAL LOCATION	
SCALE	DATE	NTS	MAY 2015
EDAS		FIGURE	1



Source: Google Earth image,
July 2007 imagery.

PROJECT		ALL SAINTS CHURCH, WISTOW	
TITLE		DETAILED LOCATION	
SCALE	NTS	DATE	MAY 2015
EDAS		FIGURE	2



PROJECT		ALL SAINTS CHURCH, WISTOW	
TITLE		WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS	
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	MAY 2015
EDAS		FIGURE	3



Plate 1: View of east end of chancel prior to excavation of trench, looking NW.



Plate 2: Trench after excavation, looking N.



Plate 3: Trench after excavation, showing foundations of chancel wall, looking SW.