

ALL SAINTS CHURCH,
SKIPSEA, EAST YORKSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd
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Beverley
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On behalf of

All Saints PCC
c/o Mrs M Silby-Furness
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East Yorkshire YO25 8TA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2005, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by All Saints Parochial Church Council (PCC), through their architect Mr Peter Gaze Pace, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the completion of new external drainage facilities. The archaeological recording was made a condition of a Diocesan faculty, issued by the Diocese of York on 9th May 2006.

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the results of the watching brief, as only a relatively small area was investigated or disturbed by the external groundworks. The foundations underlying the south wall of the chancel, and the east and south walls of the south aisle, were seen in a drainage trench excavated along the base of these walls (021, 014 and 016 respectively). As might be expected, the foundations of the south aisle were very different in character to those of the south wall of the chancel, and the latter were underlain by another set of cobble foundations (023). The chancel was rebuilt in 1824 and restored in 1865-66, and so the earlier foundations are likely to relate to the pre-1824 structure. The south aisle, and presumably its foundations by contrast, are 15th century in date.

An *in-situ* burial (011) was uncovered by the excavations for the soakaway pit, at a depth of 1.26m below ground level, but this was left intact and not disturbed further; it is possible that the timber coffin was marked with a stone kerb (009). A further, higher, burial (025) in a partially surviving wooden coffin was also disturbed by the excavations which, given the long period of use of the graveyard, is not surprising. Some mid 18th-mid 19th century coffin furniture was recovered, but there was no dating evidence for either burial, although it is presumed that the lower one is earlier in date than the higher one.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2005, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by All Saints Parochial Church Council (PCC), through their architect Mr Peter Gaze Pace, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the completion of new external drainage facilities. The archaeological recording was made a condition of a Diocesan faculty, issued by the Diocese of York on 9th May 2006, as well as being a condition of grant aid by English Heritage.

2 SITE LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 All Saints Church occupies an elevated position at c.8m AOD, at the west end of the village of Skipsea, adjacent to the B1249 Beeford to Skipsea road, in East Yorkshire (NGR TA16555498) (see figures 1 and 2). The church overlooks the former Skipsea mere, located at the north end of the Holderness plain, which is characterised by a landscape of hummocky till with occasional hills, overlooking extensive, low-lying flat land. The surface soils of the area are surface water gleys and brown soils, which overlie glacially deposited clays and gravels. The church is cut into a natural north-south slope and the grave yard extends almost all around the church, and is retained by a low cobble and brick wall.
- 2.2 No specification or methods statement was produced for the archaeological recording, although documents produced by EDAS for similar watching briefs elsewhere in the area were followed. More general advice produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists in relation to watching briefs (IFA 1999) was also considered. The aim of the watching brief was to monitor the groundworks associated with the provision of the new drainage, and to recover information relating to any archaeological features or deposits which might be uncovered or disturbed.
- 2.3 A drainage trench, 0.36m deep by 0.50m wide, had already been dug along both sides of the south porch and along the south side of the south aisle and chancel before the archaeologist was notified, as was the greater part of a c.1.0m square soakaway pit located off the south-east corner of the chancel. On 23rd April 2007, the soakaway pit was examined by the archaeologist and the previously exposed sections were cleaned and recorded; the pit was then dug deeper by hand by the archaeologist. After an *in-situ* burial was exposed in the base of the pit, at a depth of 1.26m below ground level, it was decided to curtail the excavations to avoid further disturbance. The hand excavation of a further drainage trench, 0.23m wide and up to 0.30m deep, dug to connect the chancel drain with the soakaway pit, was also monitored by the archaeologist on 23rd April 2007. On the following day, the foundations of the south side of the church, still partially visible in the open drainage trench, were cleaned and archaeologically recorded. Recording of the exposed burial in the soakaway pit was also completed on 24th April 2007.
- 2.4 The fine soil removed from the excavated trenches was re-deposited by the contractors on the surface of the graveyard, at the base of the slope to the south-west of the church. The surface layer of this spoil was briefly examined by the archaeologist. It may be of interest to note that, according to a local farmer, a considerable depth of soil had been removed relatively recently from a large area on the south side of the graveyard.
- 2.5 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 25 archaeological

contexts were recorded; these are described in the following text as three digit numbers (e.g. 005). In-house recording and quality control procedures ensured that all recorded information was cross-referenced as appropriate. The positions of all monitored groundworks were marked on a general site plan at 1:100 scale, and more detailed drawings were made as necessary. A photographic record was also maintained using 35mm colour and digital prints.

- 2.6 With the agreement of the PCC, the project archive, comprising written and photographic elements, has been deposited with the East Riding of Yorkshire Museum Service (site code ASS 07; accession number 2007/82). A few artefacts associated with the human burials were retained from the watching brief, but the disarticulated human bones disturbed by the works were gathered together and put aside for later reburial in the churchyard.

3 OUTLINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The church comprises a west tower, a nave and chancel, north and south aisles with clerestories, a south porch, and a vestry in the angle between the chancel and the north aisle (see figure 3).
- 3.2 The Grade I Listed Building is particularly well proportioned. The west tower is of three stages with diagonal buttresses, while the south aisle is of four bays with traceried three-light windows to the south and east and a two-light window to the west. The porch projects from the second bay to the west. The north aisle is of similar proportions, but with only one north window, a blocked north door and a two-light west window. The chancel has a blocked priest's door and a three-light perpendicular window on the south side, and the one-bay vestry to the north. Internally, the nave arcades are of four bays.
- 3.3 The tower is built of a mixture of cobble and rubble, with calcareous sandstone dressings. A similar mix of materials is used for the north aisle, clerestory (with some brick), chancel and vestry. The chancel's north and south walls have cobbles laid in a herring-bone pattern. The south aisle is of fine magnesian limestone ashlar, but the porch is probably of brick under a cement render. The tower roof is of lead, with stainless steel for the nave and aisle, lead for the vestry, Westmorland slates for the chancel, and Welsh slates for the porch and boiler room.
- 3.4 The building is a complex structure, but a summary of the history of its development is provided by Pevsner and Neave (1995, 686), Baines (2003, 36-38) and Kent (2002, 399-400), from whom the following text is summarised. The original church, thought to have been entirely of cobbles, was built around 1090 by Odo, Duke of Albemarle and Lord of Holderness. His son, Stephen, granted it to the Abbey of Aumale in Normandy in 1100. When the Albermarles died out, the estate reverted to the Crown and Edward I became patron in 1294. Edward I granted the church to Meaux Abbey in 1305, and it was entirely rebuilt during the 14th century. After appropriation in 1309-10, Meaux Abbey and later the archbishop or his lessees were responsible for the chancel, with the rest of the church being maintained by the townships of Skipsea, Dringhoe, Ulrome and Bonwick.
- 3.5 There are some traces of Norman work in the church, including a reused section of dog-tooth carving set into the east walls of the chancel. However, the earliest substantial remains are the nave arcades and the east window, which date to the early 14th century, while Meaux Abbey added a north window or windows to the chancel and repaired the roof twice towards the end of that century. The aisles, clerestory and embattlements are 15th century, and the west tower was probably

rebuilt at the same time. The south porch appears to be of 18th century origin. An engraving of 1784 shows the chancel in a poor state of repair, without a roof.

- 3.6 In 1824 the Revd. John Gilby, lessee of the rectory, rebuilt the ruined chancel and the nave was re-roofed in 1827. Nevertheless, the church was “almost ruinous” before 1865, and it was extensively restored in 1865-66 by James Fowler of Louth in a 15th century style. This work included the restoration of the chancel and the renewal of the roofs (except that to the tower), arcades, floors and furnishings, although a lack of money presumably precluded the restoration of the tower parapet and pinnacles, and the rebuilding of the south porch; the herring-bone pattern of cobbles in the chancel walls probably date from this period. The vestry was added in 1874, apparently replacing an earlier chapel or vestry. The tower was restored in 1893 and 1932. A rendered brick boiler chamber was subsequently added to the north side of the tower, probably in the early 20th century.
- 3.7 It should be noted that the external drainage works recorded by this watching brief represent only part of the repairs which were undertaken at the church between 2006 and 2007. These works, which form Phase 4 of a major repair programme, included the formation of a ramp at the south-east entrance to the graveyard, various stonework and glazing repairs to the south aisle west window, the replacement of rotted pew platforms with solid tiled floors in the north aisle, west end of the nave and the south aisle, the formation of an access ramp and steps to the south door in the south aisle entrance, and internal repairs to the walls and plaster ceilings. Previous phases of work included the recovering of the nave and south aisle roofs in the 1980s (Phase 1), the recovering of the tower roof in 1994-97 (Phase 2), and the recovering of the north aisle and masonry repairs to the aisle and tower in 2001-03 (Phase 3). As far as has been determined, none of these works were subject to archaeological monitoring or recording, although a photographic and drawn record was made during the replacement of the pews and their platforms (Pace 2004).

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

Soakaway pit and trench

- 4.1 As previously noted, the c.1.0m square soakaway pit had already been dug by spade down into the firm brown loamy subsoil (002) to a depth of c.1.0m from the existing ground level and topsoil/turf (001) in advance of an archaeological presence on site. As might be expected, a large number of disarticulated human bones were present in the subsoil, and these had been put on one side by the contractor. Some bones showed evidence of previous disturbance, whilst others appeared to have been newly disturbed and were probably part of *in-situ* burials.
- 4.2 Further hand excavation by the archaeologist, initially to tidy up the soakaway pit and make the sides vertical, exposed several coffin nails with preserved timber, a substantial heavy decorated cast-iron coffin handle, a plain lightweight iron coffin handle, and an eroded fragment of a thin lead-alloy coffin breastplate (measuring c.10cm by c.5cm) decorated with a pressed Rococo-style design. All of these artefacts were dated to the mid 18th-mid 19th century (Lisa Wasling, Humber Field Archaeology, *pers. comm.*) but none could be assigned to a particular burial.
- 4.3 Further cleaning in the north corner of the soakaway pit, around newly damaged east-west aligned human femurs (025), revealed part of a decayed timber coffin (006) extending through the section from 0.98m to 1.15m below ground level, together with several coffin nails. The timber (006) and the adjacent dark brown

backfilled soil (005) were wet and loose. An adjacent linear cut (004) into the hard brown natural clay (003), running approximately east-west and visible for a length of 0.54m, is likely to be associated with this burial. Only the damaged femurs of the burial were evident, the main part of the east-west aligned skeleton lying beyond the excavated pit.

- 4.4 At a depth of 1.26m below ground level, in the base of the soakaway pit, a largely undisturbed extended adult skeleton (011) was revealed, lying east-west across the centre of the pit (see plate 2). The burial was in good condition, but only sufficient was exposed for recording purposes. The surrounding mid-brown loamy backfilled soil (010) was dry and firm and there was no evidence of a coffin, and no dating material was recovered. What appeared to be the base of a linear cut (008) for this burial, cut into the brown natural clay (003), was clear on the north side but less clear on the south.
- 4.5 On the south side of the skeleton, adjacent to the abdominal and thoracic area, were four cobbles (009) apparently set on edge, aligned parallel to the skeleton, which formed an edging to the grave. The cobbles typically measured at least 0.40m long by up to 0.06m wide, and they appeared to be continuing towards the west, although it was not possible without further excavation to ascertain that this was actually the case. Whilst it is possible that the cobbles were merely part of the grave backfill (010) fallen up against a coffin edge, their position, proximity and orientation makes this unlikely. Only one piece of cobble was present on the opposite side of the burial, but if a similar kerbing had existed here, it is likely to have been removed by the digging of the grave for the adjacent skeleton (025) immediately to the north.
- 4.6 It was noted that beneath the decayed coffin lid (006), there appeared to be a thin 0.2m thick deposit of clean, yellow-brown, sandy gravel (007) overlying over the brown natural clay (003). Patches of this material were also present to the south of the *in-situ* skeleton (011), but it was not possible to determine whether it was a naturally occurring layer on the surface of the clay or a laid deposit.
- 4.7 Nothing significant was recorded in the drainage trench which was excavated towards the soakway pit. Only two deposits were seen, the 0.05m thick topsoil and turf (001) which overlay the firm brown loam (002) which was at least 1.16m thick.

Drainage Trench

- 4.8 The drainage trench dug along the base of the much-repaired south wall of the chancel (020) revealed a 0.36m depth of mid-brown firm sandy loam (012) underneath the topsoil/turf (001). The wall was founded on a varied limestone and cobble foundation (021), with stones varying in size from between 0.20m-0.29m long and 0.14m-0.20m deep (see plate 3). They were quite different in character from the more uniform and larger foundations (016) (cobblestones typically up to 0.50m long and 0.23m deep) beneath the dressed south wall of the south aisle (017) (see plate 4).
- 4.9 The foundation of the south wall of the chancel (021) was bedded on a 0.05-0.09m thick layer of creamy-grey lime mortar (022) which tipped slightly inwards, which was laid over an earlier deposit of smaller cobbles (023). In places, the lime mortar layer had been laid over a firm mid-brown loamy soil layer (013) which had built up over the lower cobbles. These lower cobbles (023) would appear to be the remains of the earlier chancel, which was thought to have been built entirely of this material. In places, fragments of human bone were embedded in this lower deposit.

- 4.10 The dressed magnesian limestone east wall of the south aisle (015) was also founded on cobbles and roughly dressed limestone rubble (014), with individual stones typically up to 0.3m long and 0.18m deep.
- 4.11 A slab of shale (024), much decayed and 0.16m thick by 0.76m wide but of undetermined length, possibly of glacial erratic origin, was exposed at a depth of 0.29m from the existing ground surface in the north-facing section of the drainage trench, adjacent to a blocked doorway into the chancel; this may have been part of a former pathway to the door. The drainage trench also exposed the rather insubstantial brick foundations (018) of the 18th century south porch walls (019).
- 4.12 It was noted during the watching brief that there were several pieces of dressed masonry on a spoil heap outside the church. These had been removed from the interior of the church during works which were not monitored by the archaeologist, and so it was not possible to know whether they were all from a former rubble infill beneath the floor or whether some had been *in-situ*.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the results of the watching brief, as only a relatively small area was investigated or disturbed by the external groundworks. The foundations underlying the south wall of the chancel, and the east and south walls of the south aisle, were seen in the drainage trench excavated along the base of these walls (021, 014 and 016 respectively). As might be expected, the foundations of the south aisle were very different in character to those of the south wall of the chancel, and the latter were underlain by another set of cobble foundations (023). The chancel was rebuilt in 1824 and restored in 1865-66, and so the earlier foundations are likely to relate to the pre-1824 structure. The south aisle, and presumably its foundations by contrast, are 15th century in date.
- 5.2 An *in-situ* burial (011) was uncovered by the excavations for the soakaway pit, at a depth of 1.26m below ground level, but this was left intact and not disturbed further; it is possible that the timber coffin was marked with a stone kerb (009). A further, higher, burial (025) in a partially surviving wooden coffin was also disturbed by the excavations which, given the long period of use of the graveyard, is not surprising. Some mid 18th-mid 19th century coffin furniture was recovered, but there was no dating evidence for either burial, although it is presumed that the lower one is earlier in date than the higher one.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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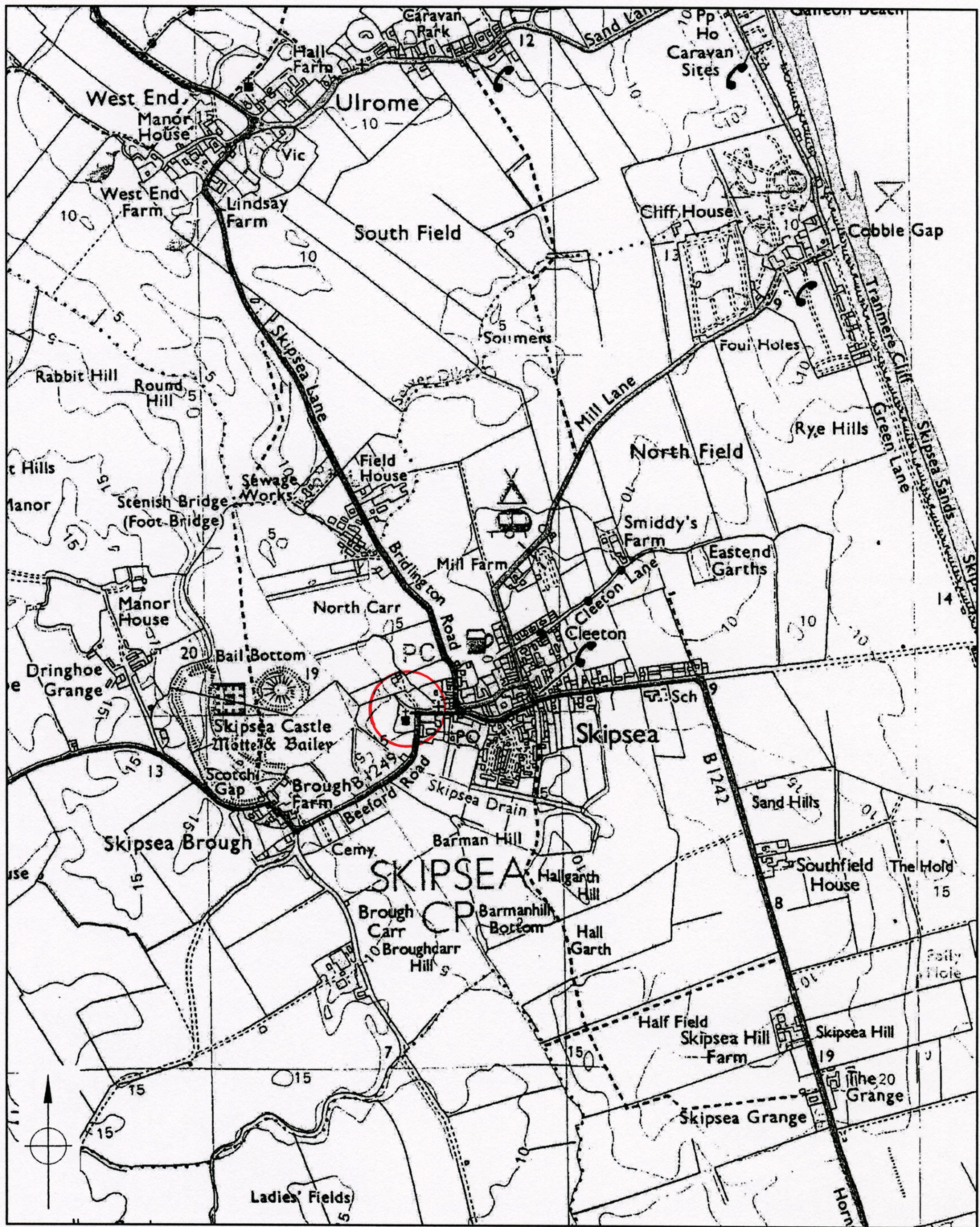
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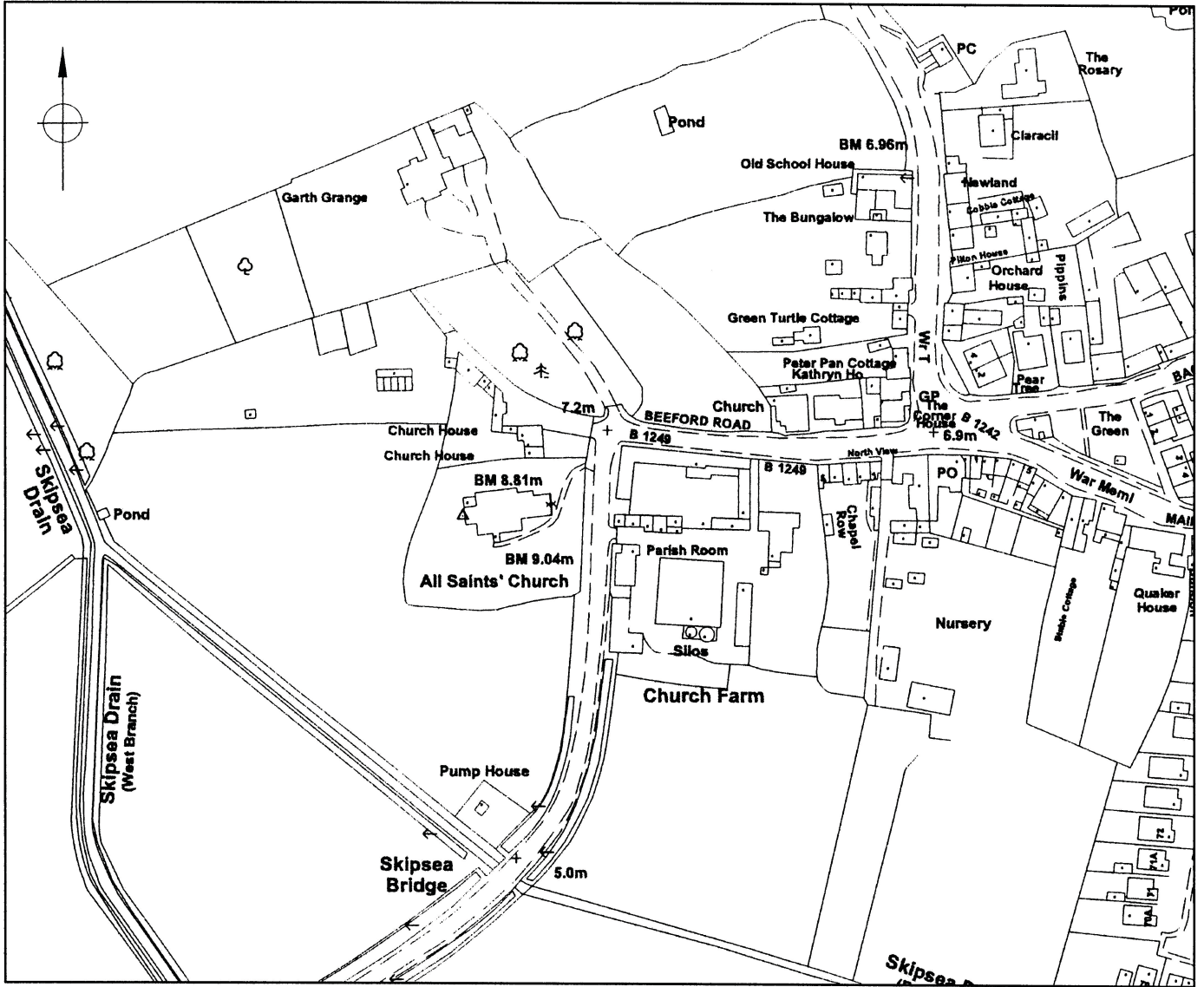
7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The archaeological watching brief at All Saints Church was commissioned by the PCC, through their architect, Peter Gaze Pace. EDAS would like to thank all concerned for their co-operation whilst carrying out the archaeological work.
- 7.2 The on-site recording was undertaken by Kate Dennett and Rod Mackey, and Kate Dennett also produced the fieldwork records and a draft report. The photographs were taken by Rod Mackey. The final report was produced by Ed Dennison, with whom the responsibility for any errors remains.



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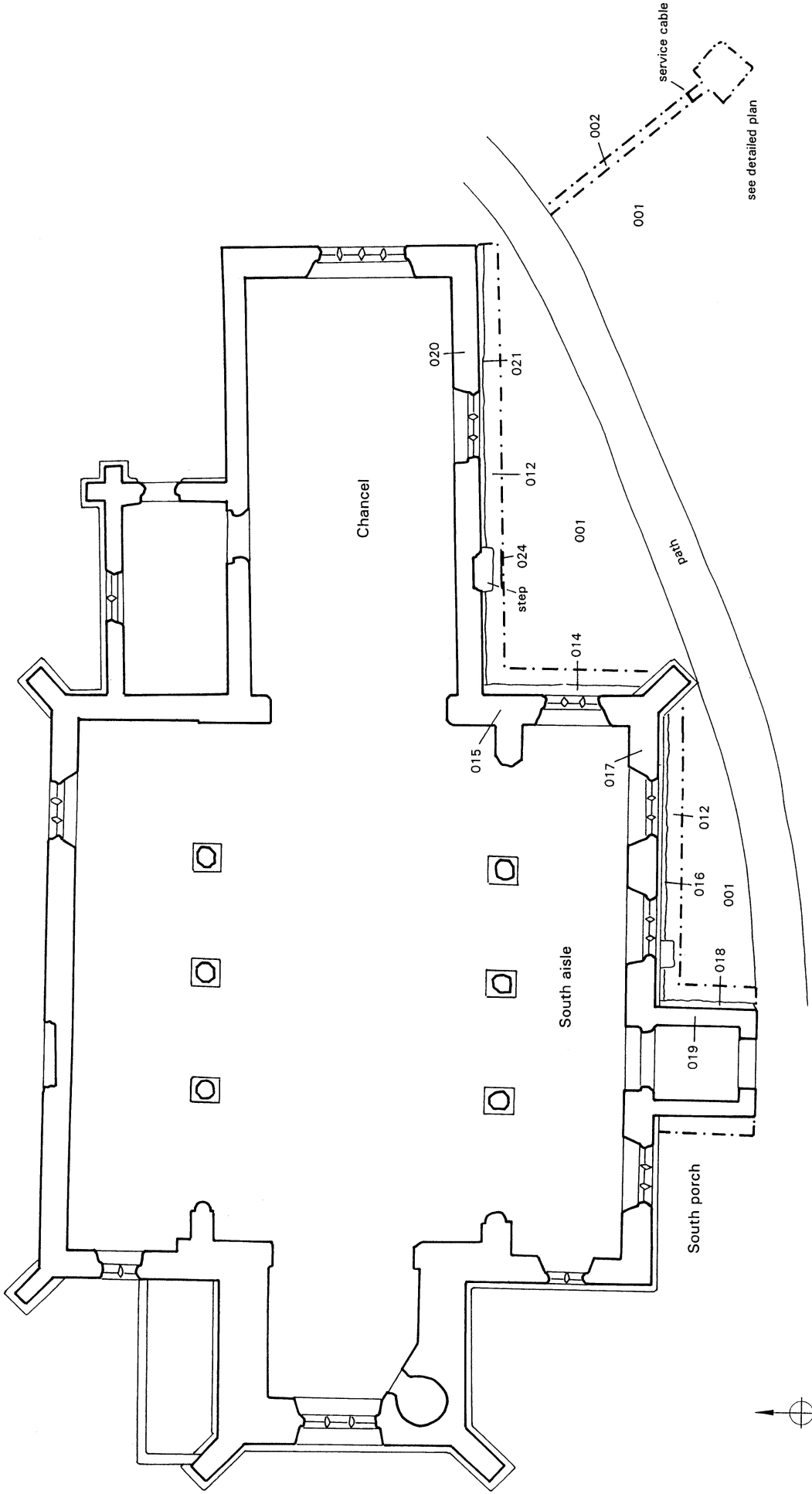
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|---------|-----|----------------------------|----------|
| PROJECT | | ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SKIPSEA | |
| TITLE | | GENERAL LOCATION | |
| SCALE | NTS | DATE | SEP 2007 |
| EDAS | | FIGURE | 1 |



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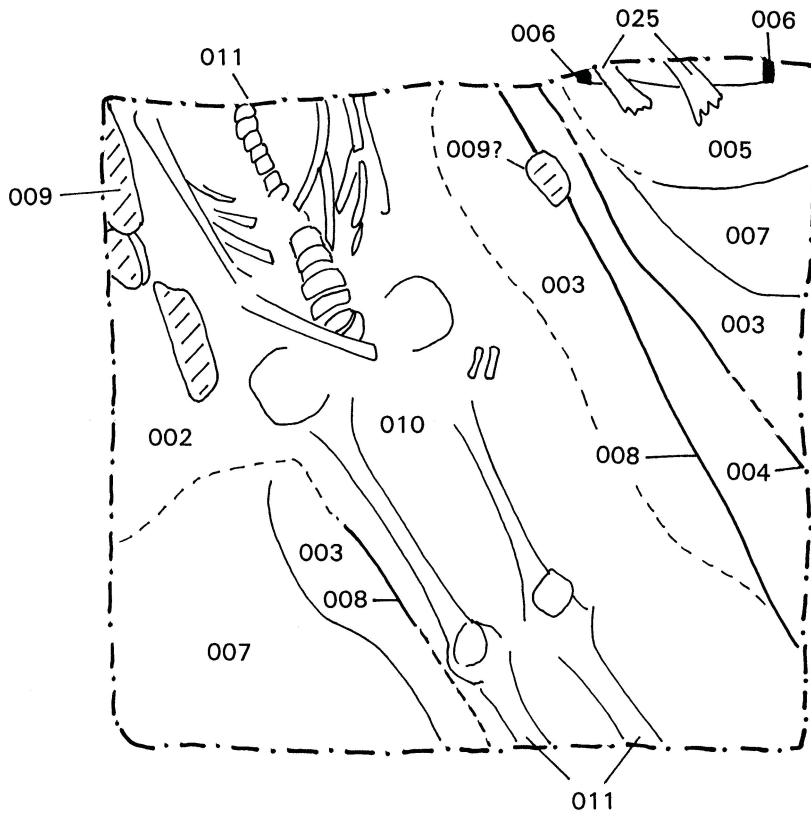
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|---------|-----|----------------------------|----------|
| PROJECT | | ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SKIPSEA | |
| TITLE | | DETAILED LOCATION | |
| SCALE | NTS | DATE | SEP 2007 |
| EDAS | | FIGURE | 2 |

| | | | |
|---------|----------------------------|--------|----------|
| PROJECT | ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SKIPSEA | | |
| TITLE | EXCAVATED FEATURES | | |
| SCALE | AS SHOWN | DATE | SEP 2007 |
| | EDAS | FIGURE | 3 |



0 10m

Base plan provided by Peter Pace



0 0.5m



| | | | |
|---------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|
| PROJECT | | ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SKIPSEA | |
| TITLE | | BASE OF SOAKAWAY PIT - PLAN | |
| SCALE | AS SHOWN | DATE | SEP 2007 |
| EDAS | | FIGURE | 4 |



Plate 1: General view of work in progress, looking NW.



Plate 2: Exposed in-situ burial (011) in soakaway pit, looking NW.



Plate 3: Exposed foundations (021) of south chancel wall, looking W.



Plate 4: Exposed foundations (016) of south aisle wall, looking E.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

- 001 Turf/ topsoil of graveyard, 0.05m thick.
- 002 Brown loam subsoil, at least 1.16m thick.
- 003 Natural brown clay.
- 004 Linear cut for grave 1, approx east-west.
- 005 Loose wet dark brown loam with small stones and flint fragments – backfill of grave 1.
- 006 Timber coffin for grave 1.
- 007 Firm yellow-brown fine sandy gravel, c.0.2m thick.
- 008 Linear cut for grave 2, approx east-west.
- 009 Cobbles set on edge.
- 010 Firm mid-brown loam with occasional small stones, c.0.44m thick – backfill of grave 2.
- 011 Extended adult skeleton in grave 2.
- 012 Firm mid-brown sandy loam subsoil adjacent to church, at least 0.36m thick.
- 013 Very firm mid-brown loam.
- 014 Cobble and limestone foundation of east wall of south aisle.
- 015 Dressed magnesian limestone east wall of south aisle.
- 016 Cobble and limestone foundation of south wall of south aisle.
- 017 Dressed magnesian limestone south wall of south aisle.
- 018 Brick foundation of south porch.
- 019 Rendered brick wall of south porch.
- 020 Repaired south wall of chancel.
- 021 Cobble foundation of south wall of chancel.
- 022 Creamy/grey lime mortar layer, 0.05-0.09m thick, bedding for 021.
- 023 Small cobble foundation of lower south chancel wall, under 022 and 021.
- 024 Slab of shaley stone, 0.76m wide by 0.16m thick.
- 025 Extended adult skeleton in grave 1.

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Location : CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS, BEEFORD ROAD (south west side), SKIPSEA, EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE

IoE number : 167802

Date listed : 30 JUNE 1966

Date of last amendment : 30 JUNE 1966

Grade : 1

| | | |
|------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| TA15SE | SKIPSEA | BEEFORD ROAD (west side) |
| 10/47 30.6.66 | | Church of All Saints |

Church. C11 nave and chancel with later additions and alterations including C15 tower, aisles and clerestory, and additions and restorations of c1856-60 by Fowler of Louth including south porch, north vestry and arcades; C20 boiler house of no special interest. Coursed and galleted pebbles with brick and ashlar dressings; magnesian limestone south aisle, slate roof. 3- stage west tower, 4-bay aisled nave with clerestory, south porch, 2-bay chancel. Tower: chamfered plinth. Diagonal buttresses with offsets. To west end a 3-light pointed window with Perpendicular tracery to head, with re-cut hollow-chamfered mullions and within chamfered surround. Slit window. Boiler house to north. Second stage has slit window to south. Band. Twin-light bell opening with Perpendicular tracery to heads within pointed double-chamfered surrounds. Low parapet. Nave: south aisle has chamfered plinth and diagonal buttress with offsets to eastern end. Entrance to south porch in second bay, a round-arched opening below shaped gable; within a plank door in moulded surround. 3-light pointed windows with Perpendicular tracery to heads throughout, some re-cut, with continuous sill band. Hollow-chamfered eaves string course. Battlements. North aisle: diagonal buttresses with offsets. Off-centre entrance, now blocked, within double-ovolo-moulded surround under hoodmould, 3-light window with Perpendicular tracery under hoodmould. Battlements. To west return a similar 2-light window. Clerestory: 2-trefoiled-light, straight-headed windows. Battlements with crocketed corner pinnacles. Chancel: to south side a blocked priest's door within pointed chamfered surround under hoodmould, 3-light pointed Perpendicular window under hoodmould with face stops. To north side a single-bay vestry with chamfered plinth, angle buttresses with offsets, 2-light Perpendicular-type windows and entrance to east return, a plank door within chamfered surround under hoodmould with face stops, battlements. East end: 4-light pointed window with reticulated tracery to head within double-chamfered surround. Stone coping with ridge cross. Interior. Pointed double-chamfered tower arch on octagonal responds with moulded capitals and chamfered bases. 4-bay double-chamfered arcade on octagonal piers with moulded bases and capitals. Double-chamfered chancel arch on moulded corbels and under hoodmould. Chancel has plank door to vestry in pointed, chamfered surround under hoodmould. Neo-classical monument to George Green d 1831 by Thomas Earle of Hull. Pevsner N, Yorkshire, York and the East Riding, 1978, p340.

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