

ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SILKSTONE,
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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ALL SAINTS CHURCH,
SILKSTONE, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

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On behalf of

Rev'd Simon Moor
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, ALL SAINTS CHURCH,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with conservation work at All Saints Church, Silkstone, South Yorkshire (NGR SE29090583) by Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS), on behalf of the Rev'd Simon Moor and the Church Wardens. The first phase of the watching brief took place in November 2001 during the construction of a meeting room and toilet facilities within the west tower. The second phase took place in September 2005 during the excavation of a French drain around the north and south sides of the church.

The first phase of the watching brief uncovered only limited information relating to the construction of the west tower which took place in the late 15th century. However, the results did support a previous suggestion that there was a late change in the design of the tower, which may have resulted in it being 0.5m longer than was originally planned, and therefore not positioned symmetrically upon its foundations. The archaeological deposits recorded during this phase of the watching brief also suggest that the original west end of the nave was partly dismantled and a trench was dug to rob out the foundations. The surface of the natural clay to the west was then levelled to provide a flat surface for the new tower foundations. In 1934, the existing floor within the tower was taken up and relaid with flagstones, and these incorporate two fragments of re-used late 17th-early 18th century grave slabs.

The second phase of the watching brief again uncovered only limited structural information relating to the construction of the church. The uppermost level of footings around the majority of the church's north and south walls were exposed, but these contained few features of interest. However, the upper levels of a probable stone-lined burial vault were visible in plan on the north side of the north aisle; this was not investigated further.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2001, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by the Rev'd Simon Moor and the Church Wardens to undertake a programme of archaeological observation and recording (a watching brief) during ground works associated with conservation works at All Saint's Church, Silkstone, South Yorkshire (NGR SE29090583).
- 1.2 The watching brief was made a condition of two faculties granted by the Diocese of Wakefield on 11th September 2001 and 30th April 2003.

2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 All Saints Church lies in the village of Silkstone, some 5km to the west of Barnsley town centre, in South Yorkshire. The church is positioned on raised ground on the east side of the High Street, at the north end of the village (at NGR SE 29090583) (see figure 1). The site lies at about 105m AOD.

3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Although it has been suggested that the All Saints Church lies on or near the site of a wooden Anglo-Saxon church (Anon c.1993, 7-8), the present structure has 12th century origins but was largely remodelled in the 15th century. It is listed as being of Special Architectural and Historic Interest, Grade I (Department of the Environment 1967, 6); the full listed building description appears as Appendix 2.
- 3.2 The church has been described by Pevsner (1967, 483) and is briefly discussed by Ryder (1982, 96). The Church Wardens have also produced a booklet which describes the church and its fabric (Anon c.1993). An earlier watching brief was undertaken by Archaeological Services WYAS in June 2001, during the excavation of a French drain around the west end of the church (Roberts 2001).
- 3.3 In brief, All Saints Church comprises an aisled nave, a chancel with north and south chapels, a south porch, and a west tower, with a vestry at the south-east corner of the chancel. The following summary is taken from the accounts noted above, incorporating additional comments and observations where appropriate.
- 3.4 Externally, the church is almost entirely Perpendicular in appearance. It is noteworthy both for its two stage tower with angle buttresses, and for the low buttresses to the aisle walls which rise as square pinnacles and are connected to the wall by flying buttresses in the form of angels and grotesques. However, the present appearance of the church results from a later 15th century remodelling of an earlier 12th century structure; the latter had a central crossing tower, which was taken down in 1479 and replaced by the present west tower which was completed by 1495. Internally, the principal remains of the earlier church are represented by the chancel arch and the north chapel arcade, which are carried on semi-circular 12th century responds. The east arches of the aisles and that of the south doorway have sunk-quadrant mouldings, also indicative of an early 14th century date. The nave and aisles retain Perpendicular roofs with carved roof bosses. The chancel was rebuilt in 1852-58, and the church underwent further restoration in 1934-1939.
- 3.5 The Church Warden's booklet notes that the responsibility of repairing and/or altering the original crossing tower was the subject of much dispute between the local parishioners and St John's Priory in Pontefract. The latter had been given the church as part of a grant made by Robert de Laci in 1090, which was confirmed in

1155. The priory maintained that they only had responsibility for the chancel, whilst the parishioners replied that the nave was their sole responsibility. The matter was finally resolved after arbitration by the Archbishop of York, with the priory having to pay two thirds of the cost and the parishioners one third.

- 3.6 In addition to being a Grade I Listed Building, the church is registered on English Heritage's National Archaeological Record (site SE20NE2) and the South Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record (site 328/01).

4 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The watching brief took account of, and followed, existing guidance produced by the local archaeological curators (the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service), the Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists (ADCA 2004), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999). The aim of the watching brief was to monitor the groundworks associated with the creation of a new meeting room and toilet facilities inside the church tower and at the west end of the nave, and associated external drainage, and to record and recover any information relating to any archaeological features or deposits which might be uncovered or disturbed by the works.
- 4.2 The creation of the new facilities inside the church tower involved the removal of the existing flagstone floor, and the reduction of the floor level by some 0.60m to make it the same height as that of the nave. No other ground disturbance was proposed for the west end of the nave. To facilitate the external drainage, a new French drain was dug along the north and south sides of the church, together with three new man holes / inspection chambers. The drainage trench was on average 0.95m wide and was excavated to a depth of between c.0.20m and c.0.40m below the existing ground level.
- 4.3 The on-site archaeological recording took place in two distinct phases. The internal work in the church tower was undertaken on the 19th and 30th November 2001. Once the flagstones were lifted, a north-south aligned exploratory trial trench was excavated by hand across the area to be affected by the works. The sections and base of this trench were subsequently cleaned by hand, as far as was practicable, and any archaeological features and deposits were then recorded. The floor level in the rest of the space was then reduced to the same level as the trench. Subsequent to this, a pipe trench was excavated across the south-east corner of the inside of the tower to a maximum depth of 0.45m, i.e. c.1m below the original floor level, under archaeological supervision.
- 4.4 The French drain along the north and south sides of the church was excavated by hand in November 2005, and three new man holes / inspection chambers were created along its length. The drainage trench was excavated without archaeological supervision, but it was left open so that it could be inspected by EDAS, on the 28th November 2005. The Vicar reported that only a few fragments of *ex situ* human bone were uncovered during the digging of the trench, and these were re-buried elsewhere in the churchyard (Rev'd Simon Moor, *pers comm.*).
- 4.5 As part of the associated drainage works, a foul drain was also dug through the surrounding churchyard in a south-west direction from the tower, to link up with existing sewerage system. No advance notice of this work was given to EDAS or the church architect, and so this work was carried out without archaeological supervision. It was subsequently reported that no burials were disturbed (Peter Pace, church architect, *pers comm.*). It should also be noted that a c.2m wide east-

west aligned strip of bare soil running through the churchyard some c.13m to the south of the church, which has the appearance of a backfilled excavation trench, is in fact soil that was produced by the creation of a new garage platform closer to the Vicarage. This material was then used to infill / raise the level of a slightly sunken pathway running through the churchyard.

- 4.6 Each discrete stratigraphic entity (e.g. a cut, fill, or layer) recorded by the watching brief was assigned an individual context number and detailed information was recorded on *pro forma* context sheets. A total of ten archaeological contexts were recorded, and these are described in the following text as three digit numbers (e.g. 005) (see also Appendix 1). In-house recording and quality control procedures ensured that all recorded information was cross-referenced as appropriate. The positions of all excavations were marked on a general site plan, and more detailed plans and sections of each area were made as necessary; a photographic record was also maintained using 35mm colour prints. No artefacts were recovered, although several of the flagstones were revealed to be re-used grave slabs.
- 4.7 With the agreement of the church authorities, the project archive, comprising written and photographic elements, has been deposited with Doncaster Museum and Art Galley (site code SK 01; accession code DONMG 2006.13).

5 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

Internal works to the tower

- 5.1 Prior to the commencement of the works, the internal floor of the church tower consisted of north-south aligned rows of large rectangular sandstone flags (001) which had been laid down in 1934 as part of the restoration works carried out at that date (Rev'd Simon Moor, *pers comm*; see figure 2). This floor sloped gently downwards from west to east, and there were two steps on the east side leading down into the nave.
- 5.2 The flagstones were up to 0.10m thick, and two examples from beneath the screen on the east side of the tower were found to be re-used graveslab fragments. The first was undated but of late 17th or early 18th century style, with an incised frame and scrolled border, bearing the inscription "Here lyeth the body of Richard Sotwell (and?) of John Sotwell of (Hollinhill in the?) parish of Silkstone". The second had a rope-twist border and was inscribed "Son of Thomas Wood of Dodworth he departed this life 29th day of August Anno Domini 1719 aged 15 years".
- 5.3 The flagstones (001) were bedded on a 0.05m deep layer of gritty orange sand (002), which in turn overlay a deposit of mixed dry brown silt and yellow clay containing frequent inclusions of small angular stones (003) (see figure 3). Immediately beneath this were the foundations of the tower itself (004), formed by massive pieces of local Coal Measures sandstone up to 1.2m long by 1m wide by 0.3m deep and bonded with a yellow clay (see plate 1). Most pieces were irregularly coursed large flat slabs, but some had one or more faces dressed to a flat finish, suggesting that they may have been re-used. The foundations projected a maximum of 1.2m from the face of the west wall but only 0.65m from that of the south. The inside of the north wall of the tower was not exposed but where foundations could be seen, at the west end of the south-facing elevation of the excavated area, they projected by c.0.40m. Many of the largest foundation stones were set at an angle of c.45 degrees to the walls above, rather than in alignment.

- 5.4 At the east end of the south wall, the lowest course of the foundations was exposed by the pipe trench, and these were formed by large flat thin sandstone slabs (005), laid in regular courses. Immediately above the slabs, the sandstone rubble foundations were only 0.30m deep but, assuming the slabs are level around the tower, the foundations increase in depth to c.0.60m around the west door. The slabs were laid directly upon a dry natural yellow clay (006).
- 5.5 The pipe trench excavated across the south-east corner of the tower also exposed the west side of a north-south aligned cut (008), at least 1.10m wide. It was backfilled with hard packed angular pieces of sandstone rubble set within a dry yellow clay (007); the backfill of the cut appeared to overlay the lowest part of the tower foundations (005).

External French drain

- 5.6 Prior to the excavation of the French drain, the ground surface to the immediate north, south and east of the church was either turf and topsoil, or was covered with a bare mid brown / orange mottled silty clay (009) which contained frequent inclusions of small pieces of angular stone rubble. It should be noted that on the north side of the church, the French drain ran between the church and a concrete retaining wall, and so the drain was therefore excavated below the ground surface within this narrow space; the ground level beyond the wall was much higher.
- 5.7 As noted above, the French drain had been excavated entirely by hand, to a depth of between c.0.20m to 0.40m below the existing ground surface, with an average width of 0.95m. In all areas, it was observed that the mid brown / orange mottled silt clay (009) continued below the base of the excavation. Apart from the footings of the church, only a single archaeological feature (010) was noted. The results from this phase of the watching brief are described below, starting on the east side of the south porch and then moving around the exterior of the church in an anti-clockwise direction.
- 5.8 The chamfered plinth of the east buttress on the east side of the south porch (A on figure 4) was seen to rest on a single stone, which projected 0.10m out from the face of the plinth. Moving northwards towards the junction of the south porch with the south aisle, the porch's plinth rested on slightly projecting stone rubble. This ran as far as a drain; to the north, the rubble footings were approximately flush with the plinth above.
- 5.9 The south side of the south aisle is divided into three bays of equal size by two buttresses. To the west of the western buttress (B), the footings of the chamfered plinth were again formed by rough stone rubble which projected slightly from the plinth above. The western buttress itself rises from a large stone slab which projects beyond its south face, with smaller pieces of adjacent rubble. Between the two buttresses, the plinth footings comprise roughly squared rubble which projected 0.20m from the plinth face, whilst the footings of the eastern buttress (C) include a fragment of chamfered stone set at an angle to the buttress above (see plate 3). The plinth footings to the east were of the same form as those described between the two buttresses.
- 5.10 For the majority of its length, the ashlar masonry of the Wentworth Chapel continued below the base of the excavation for the French drain. However, the westernmost buttress (D) to the south wall had footings formed partially from inverted fragments of a chamfered offset, whilst beneath the easternmost buttress (E), the top of an *in*

situ chamfered offset was just visible emerging from the base of the drain excavation. Rubble footings were exposed beneath the south wall of the vestry.

- 5.11 Turning along the north side of the church, the ashlar masonry of the north wall of the chancel continued below the base of the French drain. However, a mass of rubble footings, c.2.5m long, projected from the east wall of the organ chamber. They were surmounted by three pieces of ashlar, apparently *in situ* and pre-dating the wall above. At the north end of the wall, the footings were only visible in plan, projecting 0.60m beyond the angle buttress (F) here; their form and size suggest that they might be the remnants of a larger earlier buttress, but this is not certain.
- 5.12 The only feature of interest exposed on the north side of the north aisle was a possible burial vault (010), located immediately adjacent to the north side of the easternmost buttress (G) of the north aisle (see plate 4). The possible vault was only partly visible in the base of the trench, the north side disappearing under the retaining wall of the churchyard. The vault was lined with stone rubble, roughly dressed to the inner face, with internal dimensions of 1.30m in length (east-west) by 0.33m wide (north-south). The fill was very similar in appearance to the surrounding sub-soil (009).

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief uncovered only limited information relating to the construction of the west tower of the church in the late 15th century. However, the results can be usefully compared and combined with the observations made during an earlier 2001 watching brief (Roberts 2001).
- 6.2 The foundations exposed in the interior of the tower, as might be expected, are very similar to those previously exposed around the exterior (see figure 4). The total width of the foundations beneath all three sides of the tower is up to c.3m, and they have an average depth of c.0.5m. The projection of the foundations beneath the west wall, up to 1.2m into the tower's interior, supports a previous suggestion that a late change in the design of the tower may have resulted in it being 0.50m longer than was originally planned, and therefore not positioned symmetrically to its foundations (Roberts 2001). The cut (008) exposed at the east end of the present watching brief area is probably the trench used to rob out the foundations of the original west end of the nave.
- 6.3 Based on the information outlined above, the following sequence of events can be suggested. The original west end of the nave was partly dismantled and a trench (008) was dug to rob out the foundations. The surface of the natural yellow clay (006) to the west was levelled to provide a flat surface for the lowest course (005) of the new tower's foundations; the nave robber trench was then backfilled with hard packed angular pieces of sandstone rubble set within a dry yellow clay (007). The foundations of the tower (004) were then constructed, but a late change in design may have resulted in the walls not being positioned symmetrically on the foundations. As noted above, these works probably took place in the late 15th century, but no dating evidence was uncovered by the current watching brief. In 1934, the internal floor surface of the tower was taken up and a levelling layer of clay and silt (003) was put down, overlain by a shallow bed of sand (002) for the flagstone floor (001). This new flagstone floor incorporated two fragments of re-used late 17th-early 18th century grave slabs.
- 6.4 Although the French drain exposed the uppermost level of the footings around the majority of the church's external walls, these contained little new structural

information. The mass of rubble and chamfered offset beneath the east wall of the organ chamber might be the remnants of an earlier structure here, perhaps pre-dating the work undertaken during the mid 19th century, although this is not certain. Similarly, the footings exposed beneath the angle buttress at the north end of the same wall might be the remains of an earlier, larger buttress, although the foundations revealed beneath the tower buttresses also projected outwards for some distance (Roberts 2001). Only the upper levels of a structure (010) exposed on the north side of the north aisle were revealed, but their size and orientation suggest that it is most likely to be a burial vault lined with stone rubble.

7 REFERENCES

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

Anon c.1993 *The History of All Saints Church, Silkstone* (anonymous pamphlet for sale within church)

Department of the Environment 1967 *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest: Penistone RD, Yorkshire West Riding*

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

Pevsner, N 1967 *Buildings of England: Yorkshire West Riding*

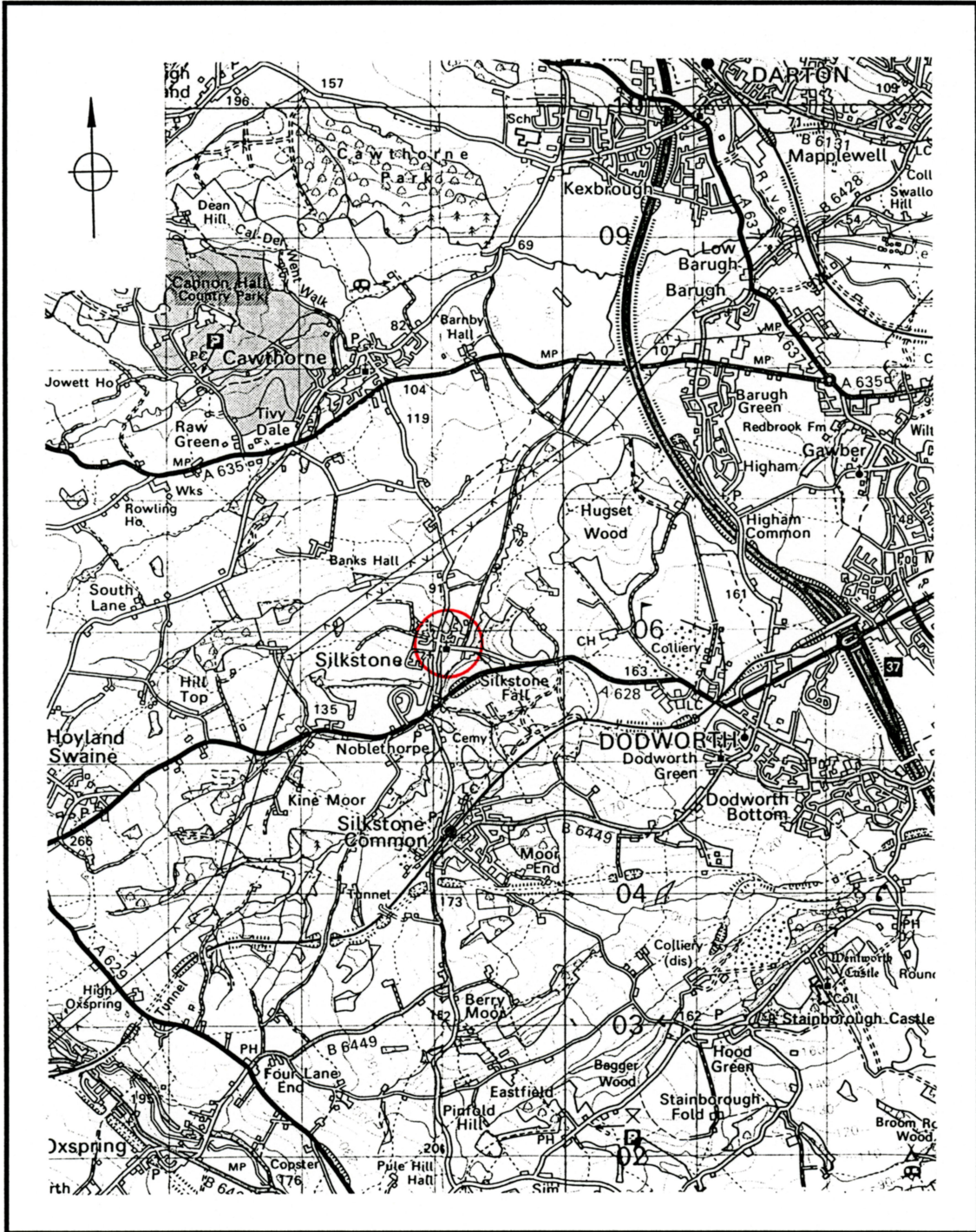
Roberts, I 2001 *All Saints Church, Silkstone, South Yorkshire: Archaeological Recording Brief* (Archaeological Services WYAS unpublished report no 904)

Ryder, P 1982 *Saxon Churches in South Yorkshire* (South Yorkshire County Archaeology Monograph No 2)

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8.1 The archaeological watching brief at All Saints Church was commissioned by the Rev'd Simon Moor and the Church Wardens. EDAS would like to thank them and Mr Peter Gaze Pace (church architect) for their co-operation in carrying out the archaeological watching brief.

8.2 Both phases of the watching brief were undertaken by Shaun Richardson of EDAS. Shaun Richardson produced the fieldwork records and Ed Dennison and Shaun Richardson produced the final report and drawings. The responsibility for any errors or inconsistencies remains with Ed Dennison.



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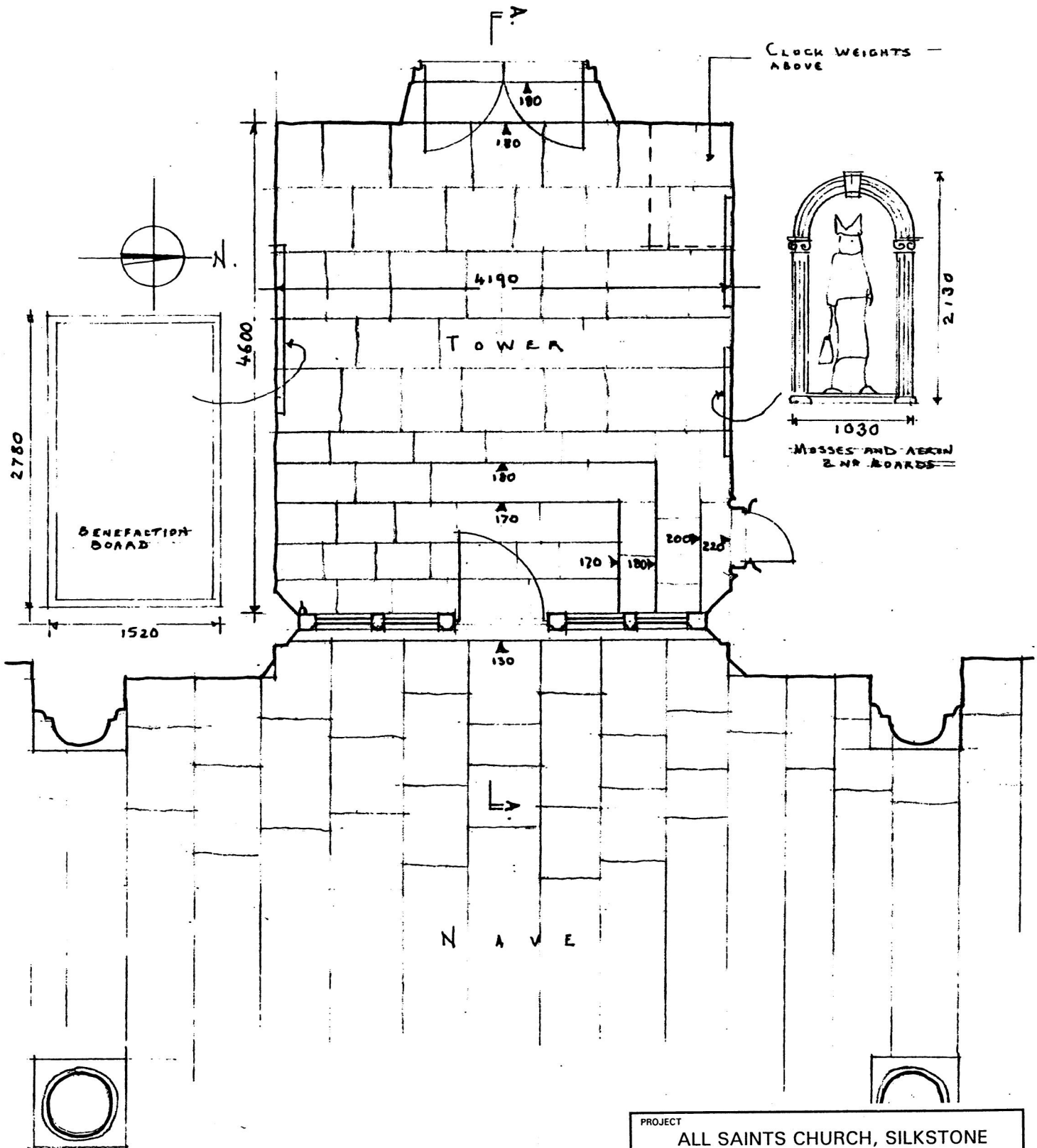
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TITLE		GENERAL LOCATION PLAN	
SCALE	1:50,000	DATE	MAR 2006
EDAS		FIGURE	1

ALL SAINTS CHURCH SILKSTONE.

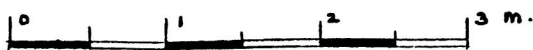
WEST END SURVEY AS EXISTING

SCALE 1:50

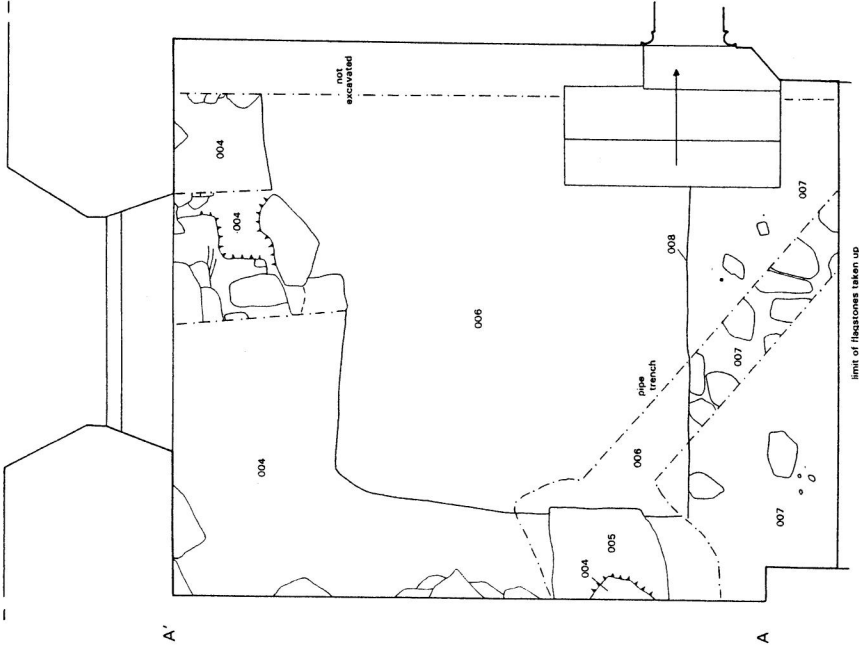
PETER GAZE PACE ARCHITECT ISA ARIBA ARCHITECT YORK OCT 2000.



Plan provided by Peter Gaze Pace,
Church Architect

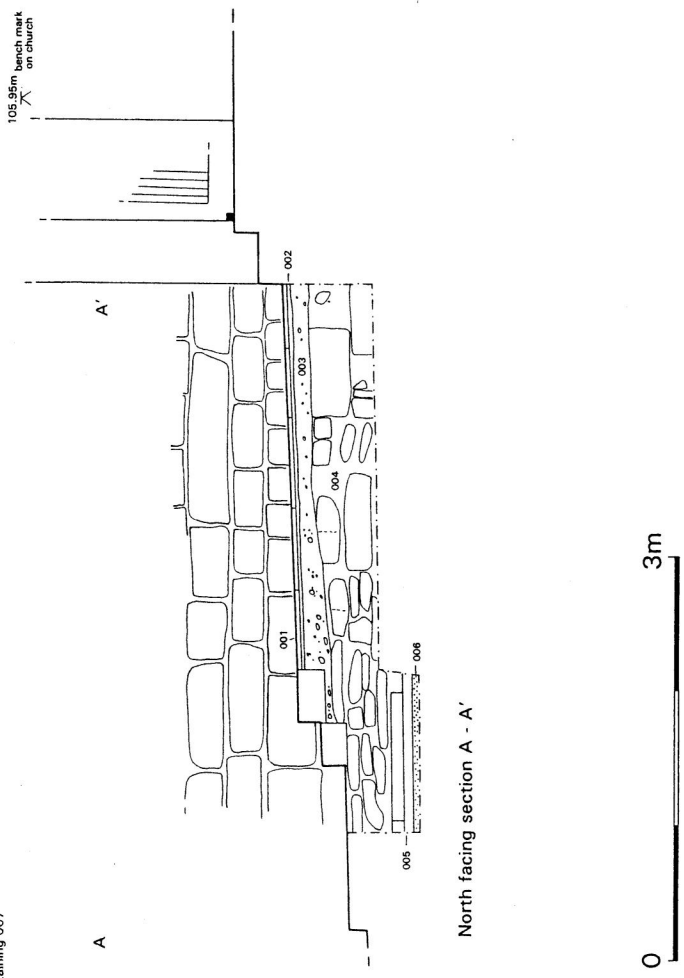


PROJECT ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SILKSTONE	
TITLE WEST END OF CHURCH AS EXISTING	
SCALE 1:50	DATE MAR 2006
EDAS	FIGURE 2



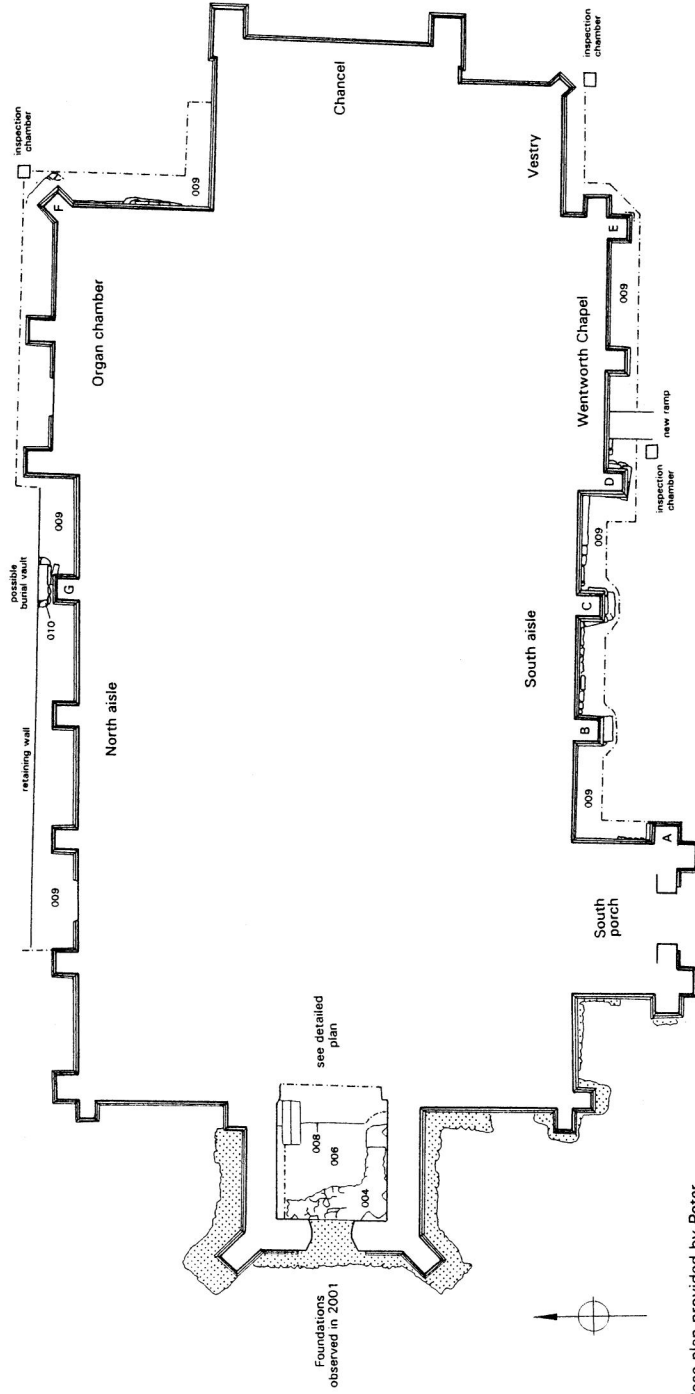
Composite plan

- List of contexts
- 001 Sandstone flags
 - 002 Gritty orange sand
 - 003 Mixed yellow clay/brown silt with stones
 - 004 Tower foundations - massive sandstone pieces
 - 005 Flat thin sandstone slabs
 - 006 Natural yellow clay
 - 007 Angular sandstone rubble in yellow clay
 - 008 Linear cut containing 007



North facing section A - A'

PROJECT		ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SILKSTONE
TITLE		WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS - TOWER
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE
		MAR 2006
FIGURE		3



Base plan provided by Peter Gaze Pace, Church Architect



PROJECT	ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SILKSTONE		
TITLE	WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS - CHURCH		
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	MAR 2006
	EDAS	FIGURE	4



Plate 1: Foundations (004) exposed beneath west wall of tower in initial trench, looking west.

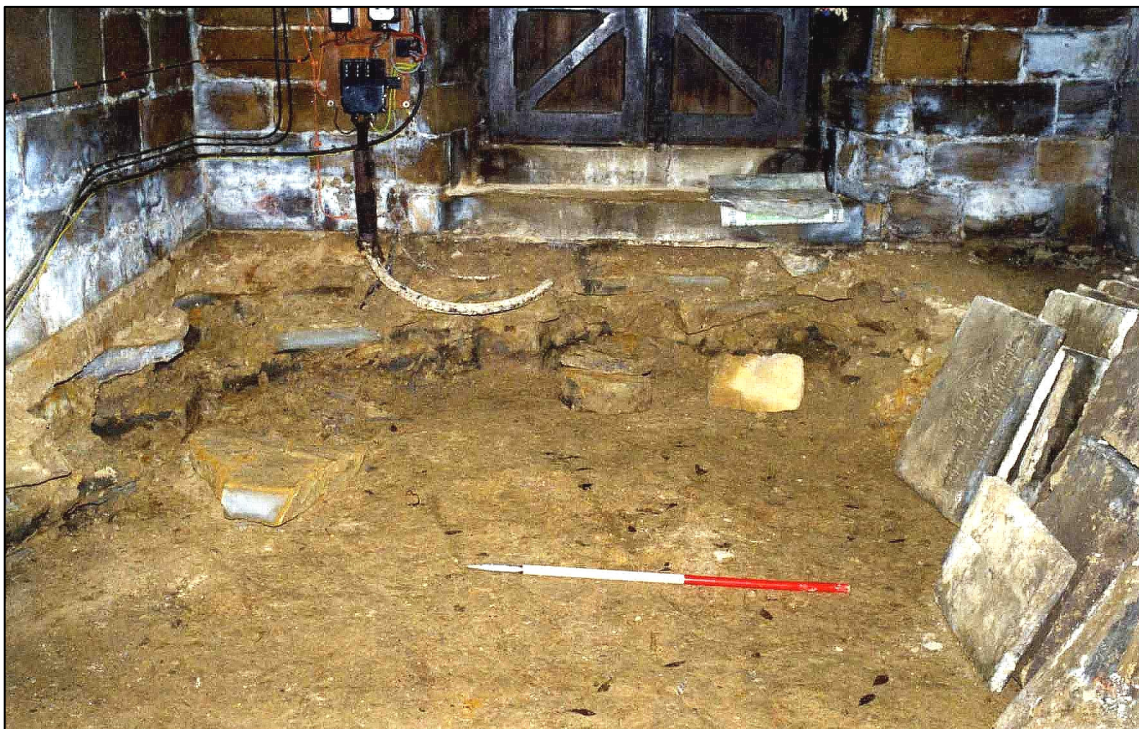


Plate 2: Interior of tower after reduction of floor level, looking west.



Plate 3: Footings beneath buttress C of south aisle, looking north-east.



Plate 4: Possible burial vault, north side of north aisle.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

- 001 Sandstone flagstones 0.10m thick
- 002 Gritty orange sand 0.05m thick
- 003 Mixed yellow clay/brown silt with stones
- 004 Foundations of west tower - massive sandstone pieces
- 005 Flat thin large sandstone slabs. 0.18m thick
- 006 Natural yellow clay
- 007 Angular sandstone rubble in yellow clay
- 008 Linear cut containing 007
- 009 Firm mid-brown/orange silty clay (subsoil)
- 010 Stone rubble structure, 1.60m long and 0.45m wide

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Location : CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS, HIGH STREET (east side), SILKSTONE, BARNSELY, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

IoE number : 334283

Date listed : 18 MARCH 1968

Date of last amendment : 18 MARCH 1968

Grade : I

SE2906

SILKSTONE

HIGH STREET
(east side)

11/154

Church of All Saints

Church. C12 in origin, remodelled later C15, and completed 1495, chancel rebuilt 1852-8, general C19 restoration. Ashlar. Lead chancel roof. West tower, 5-bay nave with lean-to aisles, south porch, 3-bay chancel with 2-bay aisles and single-bay vestry in south-east corner. Perpendicular style. Tall two-stage tower with diagonal buttresses. Moulded west doorway with deeply set, hollow-chamfered traceried window above. 2-light transomed, traceried bell-chamber openings. Crenellated parapets with corner gargoyles and pinnacles. Low nave and aisles with 2-light square-headed clerestorey windows and 3-light arched aisle windows. Blocked doorway on north side, west end. Taller chancel with low projecting chapels which have 3-light windows as before. Blocked south chapel door. The aisle walls have low buttresses which rise as square pinnacles and are connected back to the wall by flying buttresses in the form of angels, grotesque figures and beasts. Crenellated parapets to aisles and nave. Interior: 5-bay double-chamfered arcade on circular piers (possibly re-used (Pevsner)). Perpendicular roofs to nave and aisles with good bosses. Chancel arch and north chapel arcade on semi-circular responds of C12 date and survive from the crossing which supported a central tower. Blocked rood stair on south wall of south chapel. Perpendicular chancel and chapel screens, all different and slightly altered. Two medieval shields in east window of south chapel. Tomb in south chapel to Sir Thomas Wentworth d.1675 and his wife: white marble recumbent effigies the former in amour, on a large sarcophagus with relief trophies to sides. The memorial behind has colonnettes supporting an open segmental pediment with shield and urns. Sandstone cartouche in chancel to John Phipps of Pule Hill d.1718 with winged angels at top corners and skull and cross bones at bottom corners. Box pews of 1832-5. N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England*, 1967. P F Ryder, *Saxon Churches in South Yorkshire*, for the South Yorkshire Archaeological Service, 1982.

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