

ST PETER AND ST PAUL'S CHURCH,  
PICKERING, NORTH YORKSHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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On behalf of

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c/o Mr C Taplin  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In October 2006, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by St Peter and St Paul's Parochial Church Council (PCC), through their architect Mr Peter Gaze Pace, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the creation of a new ramp to provide disabled access into the church. The archaeological recording was made a condition of a Diocesan faculty.

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 groundworks. However, the foundations underlying the south wall of the chancel and the west wall of the south chapel were seen in the two excavated trenches. These foundations have a slightly different alignment to the walls above, and it is possible that they represent the remains of an earlier structure. The south chancel wall and priest's door are associated with a wider rebuilding of this end of the church in the 14th century, while the south chapel was built in the 15th century, and it is known that there was an earlier structure somewhere on the site (Russell 1968, 471-472). The exposed, slightly differently aligned, foundations may therefore represent part of this earlier structure, but it is equally possible that they are simply the original substantial footings for the medieval elements which survive today.

It was not possible to determine whether the curious upstanding structural element under the south-west buttress of the south chapel is part of the exposed foundations. It is assumed that this element is earlier than the 15th century buttress that sits upon it, and so it might be a remnant of an earlier building. However, it is also possible that this element is later in date, and that it was crudely inserted under the buttress to help support a failing structure. It does appear to incorporate reused material, and it is curious that the stones were never faced or treated in any way.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2006, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by St Peter and St Paul's Parochial Church Council (PCC), through their architect Mr Peter Gaze Pace, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the creation of a new ramp to provide disabled access into the church. The archaeological recording was made a condition of a Diocesan faculty, issued by the Diocese of York on 21st November 2005.

## 2 SITE LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 St Peter and St Paul's Church occupies an elevated position in the centre of the town of Pickering in Ryedale, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 79908402) (see figure 1). The building is cut into a natural north-south slope and the grave yard extends almost all around the church.
- 2.2 No specification or methods statement was produced for the archaeological work, 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 access ramp leading to the north-east corner of the south transept, and to recover information relating to any archaeological features or deposits which might be uncovered or disturbed.
- 2.3 The groundworks were carried out by the church's building contractor, using a pick and shovel or spade, as appropriate, and the work was monitored continuously by the archaeologist on 22nd and 23rd November 2006. 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, and more detailed drawings were made as necessary; a photographic record was also maintained using 35mm colour and digital prints.
- 2.4 Trench 1, c.1.5m wide and sloping slightly upwards to the north, was excavated along the west side of the south chapel, up to a maximum of 0.53m below the existing ground surface. Trench 2, c.1.1m wide, ran west from the north end of Trench 1 along the south side of the chancel to a new door which had been created in the north-east corner of the south transept; this trench was excavated to a maximum of 0.58m below the existing ground surface.
- 2.5 With the agreement of the PCC, the project archive, comprising written and photographic elements, has been deposited with Scarborough Museum Service (site code SPP 06). No artefacts were retained from the watching brief and a few disarticulated human bones which were encountered were gathered together and put aside for later reburial.

## 3 OUTLINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The church comprises a west tower and spire, nave and chancel, south aisle, south porch, north aisle, and north and south transepts (see figure 2). The Roucliffe

chapel lies on the south side of the chancel and there is an organ chamber with heating chamber beneath on the north side, on the site of the Bruce chapel. A choir vestry, priest's vestry, cloakroom and lobby are located in a single story building adjoining the exterior wall of the north aisle.

- 3.2 The building is a complex structure, but a summary of the history of development is provided by Pevsner (1966, 282-283), Russell (1968, 471-474) and Ellis (1996). It is reputed that a church stood on the site in Saxon times, but only a fragment of a cross-shaft remains from this period. The earliest surviving part of the church is the north arcade and aisle of the nave which, judging by the round piers, scalloped capitals, square abaci and unmoulded arches, dates from the mid 12th century. The early Norman church may have been aisleless with a central tower, but it had transepts, as indicated by the present aisles which comprise four bays plus one extra bay; the wall between represents the Norman arch to the crossing. The south arcade and south aisle were built in the late 12th century, as indicated by the square piers with four semicircular projects, the waterleaf capitals, and the arches with two slight chamfers. However, the two western bays of the south arcade are a later Perpendicular remodeling, although the earlier arches remain. The arches into the transepts were rebuilt at the same time as the arcades, and these responds also survive.
- 3.3 The west tower, with its flat broad clasping buttresses, and the south transept date to the early 13th century although the bell-openings belong to the later Decorated style and the spire may be even later. The arch to the nave, although over-restored, is typically early English and the restored south transept is early 13th century although it has a Victorian appearance. The arches from the nave and into the west transept are later. During the 14th century the chancel was widened and entirely rebuilt, and the embattled south porch was added and the upper part of the tower reconstructed to receive the stone spire. In the early 15th century the two storey south chapel was built on to the chancel and a north chapel was also probably built during the same period, although this no longer exists; Ellis suggests that the north chapel was built earlier in 1337 (Ellis 1996, 3). The embattled clerestory is also of 15th century date. The church was then extensively restored in 1876-79 at a cost of £8,000, and the organ chamber is a modern addition.
- 3.4 The interior of the church contains several important monuments, such as the Bruce effigy, an alabaster figure of a recumbent knight dating to 1340-50, below the lectern, and the effigies of Sir David and Dame Margery Roucliffe located in the south chapel. However, the most notable features are the 15th century wall paintings which ordain the nave; these represent one of the most complete sets of wall paintings in England and they depict various ecclesiastical scenes such as St George slaying the dragon, the beheading of John the Baptist, the seven corporal Acts of Mercy and the descent into Hell (Ellis 1996).

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

- 4.1 A certain amount of excavation had already been carried out some time prior to the archaeologist arriving on site, cutting through a large accumulation of soil and rubble (018, 015 and 016) between the south transept and south chapel, in order to insert the new door and threshold into the east wall of the south transept. The removal of the remaining accumulation of rubble in this area was done at a later date, without notification and so was consequently not monitored. The flagstones (001) forming the path and steps to the blocked chancel door, and some stone slab fragments re-used as kerbing (007) along the west side of the path, had already been lifted and removed in advance of the formal watching brief.

- 4.2 At the north end of Trench 1, under the existing flagstone path (001), was a thin layer of a firm dark brown loam (002) overlying a firm yellow clay (003) up to 0.2m thick containing numerous sandstone rubble fragments (004). Below this was a firm, wet grey-brown gritty clay (013) which contained small stones and grit as well as a moderate amount of human bone fragments; this deposit was visible in both trenches. Some dressed and rubble sandstone / limestone fragments, former grave slabs and pavers, (012) were also exposed in the west side of Trench 1, embedded in the grey-brown gritty clay (013), tilted down towards the west by the insertion of kerb stones (007) forming the west side of the former path here.
- 4.3 Halfway along Trench 1, an east-west aligned salt-glazed ceramic drainage pipe (009) was seen below the flagstone path (001), running away from a downpipe secured to the west wall of the south chapel (see plate 3). The pipe had been inserted into a 0.3m wide trench (011) which had been cut through the dark brown loam (002) and into the grey-brown gritty clay (013). The flagstones forming the surface of the path in the southern part of the trench were simply lifted and relaid, with no further ground disturbance.
- 4.4 To the west of the path leading to the 14th century priest's door in the south chancel wall, there was a large accumulation of soil (018), rubble and other stone fragments (015), and mortar and crushed stone (016), piled up against the chancel wall to the top of the chamfered plinth (022 and 019); these deposits overlay the grey-brown gritty clay (013). These deposits were cut through by Trench 2, although the westernmost area had already been cleared for the new door and threshold to be fitted (see above). Clay pipe stems and 19th century pottery fragments were present in the upper rubble layer (015).
- 4.5 The layer of distinctive dark orangey-yellow coarse mortar and crushed stone (016), up to 0.29m thick, sloped down to the south, from the chamfered plinth which appeared to be bedded on this material. The chamfer of the plinth (022) was only slightly dressed and was of somewhat irregularly shaped stone formerly, and there was a single course of c.0.28m high ashlar blocks (019) below; the chamfer was further damaged during the excavations and was subsequently thoroughly re-pointed. A step (023) to the chancel south door was clearly modern and was founded on a spread of cement mortar (005) and limestone rubble which had been used as a levelling material (021). Beneath this was a broken, ceramic unglazed drainage pipe (008), running off in a south-westerly direction (see plate 3); the cut for the drain trench (014) was just visible in the south side of Trench 2.
- 4.6 The foundations of the west wall of the south chapel and the south wall of the chancel (006 and 017 respectively) were exposed by the groundworks, and were both seen to be composed of soft yellow semi-dressed sandstone rubble of a generally uniform character (see plates 1 and 2). These foundations stepped out from, and appeared to be on a slightly different alignment to, the chamfered plinths and walls of the south side of the chancel (022 and 019) and the west wall of the south chapel (020), which have a more east-west alignment but which rest on these foundations. It appears that the foundations might well be those of an earlier structure, and this is reinforced by the curious relationship between the upper and lower parts of the buttress located at the south-west corner of the south chapel.
- 4.7 This south-west corner buttress appears to have been built on top of what seems to be a differently aligned and presumed older structure (010), possibly another buttress (see plate 4). The angle of the older rubble stonework (010) is more consistent with the adjacent exposed foundations (006) to the north, although it is not perfectly aligned, and the top of the older stonework lies 0.28m above the

exposed foundations and 0.71m above the existing adjacent ground level. The upper part of the east side of the buttress is flush with the presumed older base, which may have been reshaped to fit. Without exposing more of the older structure (010), which was not within the area of the watching brief, it was not possible to clarify its relationship with the other foundations (006) or indeed the south chapel in general. However, it was noted that one of the partially visible large limestone fragments (024) forming the top of the presumed older structure was dressed and had a large chamfer visible; it might possibly be a re-used hog-back stone or a remnant from a chamfered plinth, placed upside down. The adjacent stone, also forming the top of the older structure, was an unusual dark grey stone (025) of uncertain origin.

- 4.8 Relatively little pottery was found during the watching brief. Only one small piece of medieval or post/medieval ware was found - a body sherd from a thin-walled splash-glazed vessel was found on top of foundation 006, beneath the clay and rubble layers (003/004) in Trench 1. Two fragments of plain clay pipe stems were also found within the rubble (021) beneath the step (023) of the blocked chancel door.
- 4.9 Once the work was complete, the chamfered plinth of the south chancel wall (019 and 022) was repointed. The exposed foundations in both trenches (006 and 017) were covered by the newly made path/ramp and its gravel border, but some of the yellow sandstone pieces appear to have been re-positioned at the bottom of the south chapel wall between the south-west buttress and the side door, thus changing the original alignment as recorded by the watching brief. It was also noted that items of carved stonework found in the graveyard have been inserted into the external fabric of the porch/chancel during the 20th and possibly 21st century.

## 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 groundworks. However, the foundations underlying the south wall of the chancel and the west wall of the south chapel were seen in the two excavated trenches (017 and 006 respectively). These foundations have a slightly different alignment to the walls above, and it is possible that they represent the remains of an earlier structure, which was demolished and the foundations reused for the south chapel and the south side of the chancel. Unfortunately, no artefacts were found which might have shed light on this relationship – only one small piece of medieval or post/medieval ware was found, on top of the foundations (006) in Trench 1 – but this is not sufficient to date the foundations. The south chancel wall and priest's door are associated with a wider rebuilding of this end of the church in the 14th century, while the south chapel was built in the 15th century, and it is known that there was an earlier structure somewhere on the site (Russell 1968, 471-472). The exposed, slightly differently aligned, foundations (006 and 017) may therefore represent part of this earlier structure, but it is equally possible that they are simply the original substantial footings for the late medieval elements which survive today.
- 5.2 It was not possible to determine whether the curious upstanding structural element under the south-west buttress of the south chapel is part of the exposed foundations. It is assumed that this element is earlier than the 15th century buttress that sits upon it, and so it might be a remnant of an earlier building. However, it is also possible that this element is later in date, and that it was crudely inserted under the buttress to help support a failing structure. It does appear to incorporate reused material, and it is curious that the stones were never faced or treated in any way.

## 6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ellis, C 1996 *St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Pickering* (church pamphlet)

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

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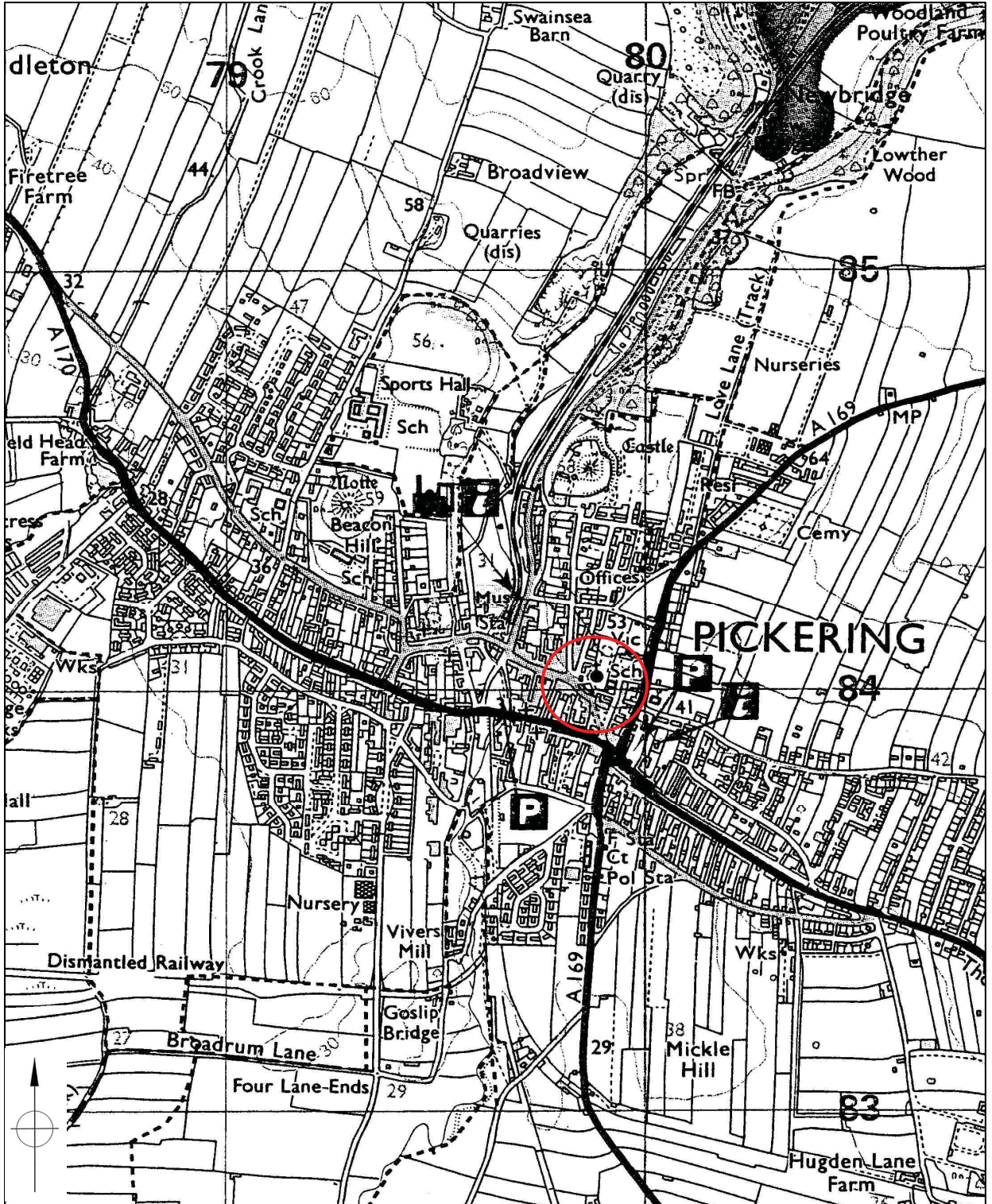
Russell, A 1968 "Pickering". In Page, W (ed) *The Victoria History of the County of York North Riding Volume 2*, 461-476

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 The archaeological watching brief at St Peter and St Paul's Church was commissioned by the PCC, through their architect, Peter Gaze Pace. EDAS would like to thank all concerned, including Mr Charles Taplin and Peter Gaze Pace, for their co-operation whilst carrying out the archaeological work.

7.2 The on-site recording was undertaken by Kate Dennett, who also produced the fieldwork records and a draft report. The final report was produced by Ed Dennison, with whom the responsibility for any errors remains.

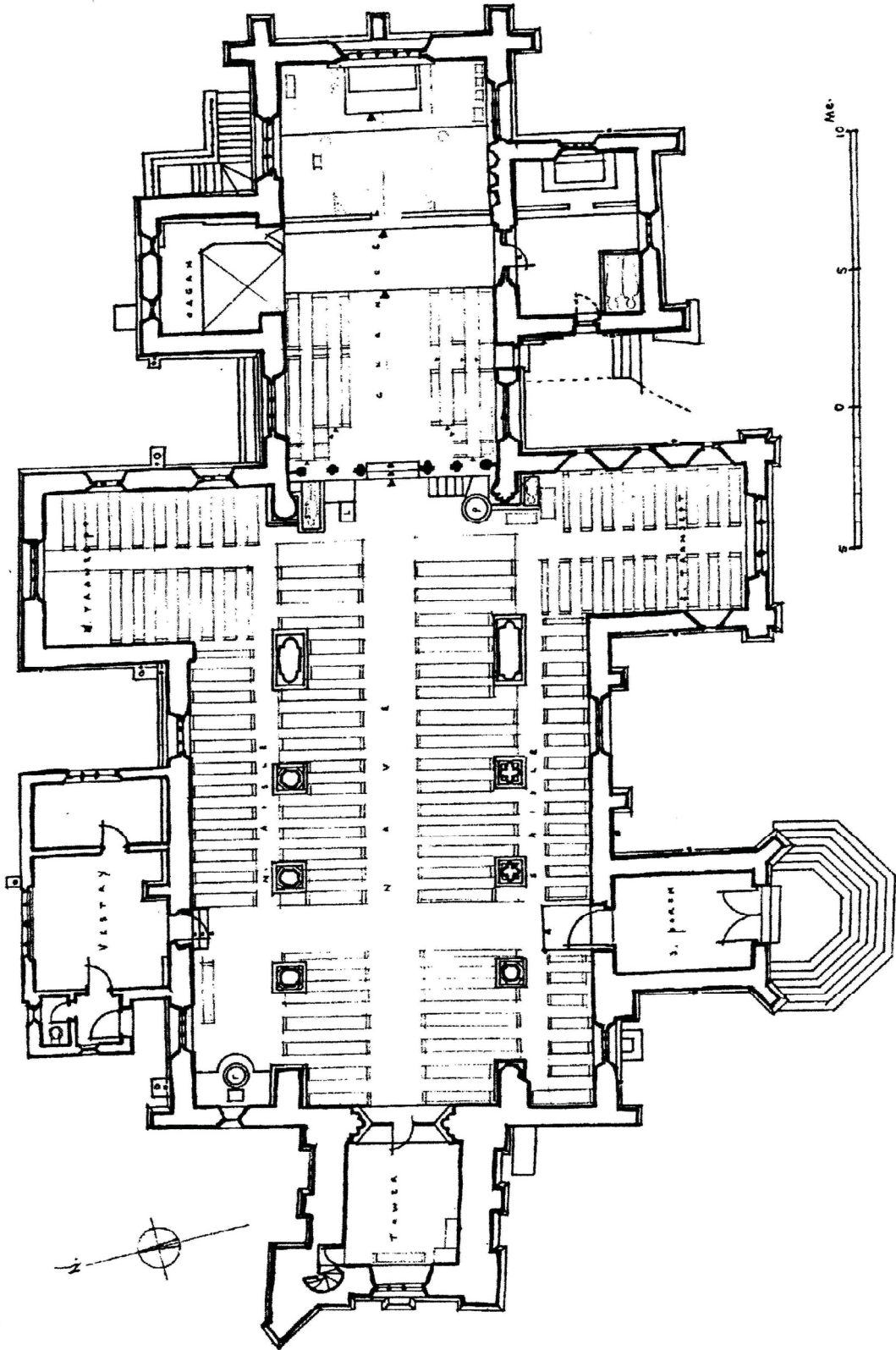




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PROJECT		PICKERING CHURCH	
TITLE		GENERAL LOCATION	
SCALE	NTS	DATE	JUL 2007
EDAS		FIGURE	1

ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL PICKERING  
 GROUND PLAN - AS EXISTING AUG. 1997  
 PETER GAZE PACE ARCHITECTY YORK.



Plan provided by Peter Gaze Pace.

PROJECT		PICKERING CHURCH	
TITLE		PLAN OF CHURCH	
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	JUL 2007
EDAS		FIGURE	2







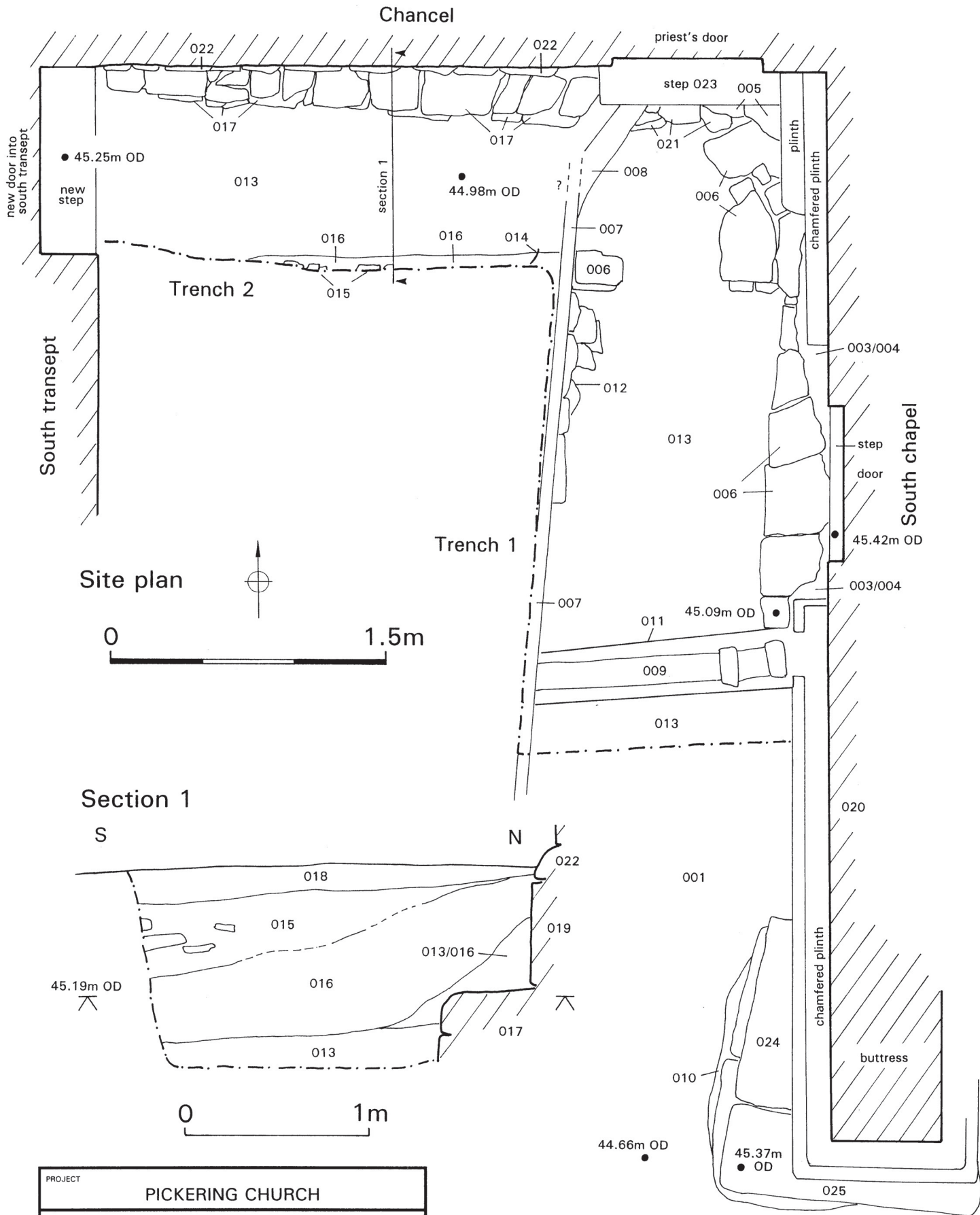






Plate 1: Exposed foundations of south chancel wall (017), looking N.



Plate 2: Exposed foundations of west wall of south chapel (006), looking E.





Plate 3: General view of Trench 1, looking N.



Plate 4: Completed works, looking N.

## **APPENDIX 1**



## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

- 001 Flagstones and steps of old path between south chapel and south transept.
- 002 Dark brown loam with small stones beneath 001, <0.06m thick.
- 003 Soft clean fine yellow clay, <0.18m thick.
- 004 Firm fine yellow clay similar to 003, but with sandstone rubble, <0.2m thick.
- 005 Cement mortar.
- 006 Sandstone rubble forming foundations beneath west chapel wall, >0.25m thick.
- 007 Kerbstones along west side of former path 001.
- 008 Unglazed ceramic drainage pipe, 0.15m wide.
- 009 Salt-glazed ceramic drainage pipe 0.15m wide.
- 010 Rubble foundation under south-west buttress of south chapel.
- 011 Linear cut for drainage trench 009, 0.3m wide.
- 012 Broken grave slabs / pavers beneath kerbs 007.
- 013 Firm grey-brown clay of undetermined depth.
- 014 Vertical cut for drain 008.
- 015 Friable brown loam containing assorted mixed rubble stone fragments, <0.18m thick.
- 016 Friable orange-brown loam containing mixed and crushed rubble stone, <0.29m thick.
- 017 Sandstone rubble forming foundations beneath south chancel wall, <0.29m thick.
- 018 Topsoil / vegetation and other debris over 015, 0.1m thick.
- 019 Limestone blocks forming part of chamfered plinth to south chancel wall, c.0.5m long by 0.28m high.
- 020 West wall of south chapel.
- 021 Limestone rubble beneath south chancel door, 0.15m thick.
- 022 Chamfered course forming part of chamfered plinth to south chancel wall.
- 023 Concrete step to south chancel door.
- 024 Dressed stone used for top of early buttress 010.
- 025 Unidentified stone used for top of early buttress 010.

## APPENDIX 2

## APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Location : PARISH CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL, PICKERING, RYEDALE, NORTH YORKSHIRE

IoE number : 328128

Date listed : 24 OCTOBER 1950

Date of last amendment : 24 OCTOBER 1950

Grade : A

### PICKERING

1.  
5340

Parish Church of  
St Peter and St Paul

SE7984 2/47

24.10.50

Built on site of Saxon Church. Consists of Nave, Chancel, North and South Aisles, Transepts and Chapel, Tower and Spire. Belfry. South porch. Nave C12 and Transitional, with C15 clerestory. The remainder of the church C14 and C15. Main feature is wall paintings of mid C15, above nave arcade, one of the most complete series in English churches. Late C18 pulpit. Effigies of crusader of mid C14, and truncated effigy of knight of same date. Effigy of knight of circa 1400. Late C18 and early C19 memorial tablets. Church restored late C19. Forms a visual group with premises in the Market Place, Willowgate, Birdgate and Hall Garth.

Source: Images of England website ([www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk))