

ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCH, HOLME CHURCH LANE,
BEVERLEY, EAST YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,
INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

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On behalf of

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2007, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by St Nicholas's Church Parochial Church Council (PCC) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording (a watching brief) during the excavation of a trench for a new gas service pipe through the churchyard of St Nicholas's Church, Beverley, East Yorkshire (NGR TA04403948). The archaeological recording was made a condition of a Diocesan faculty.

The watching brief uncovered no features of archaeological significance, and the shallow nature of the works meant that no *in situ* burials were disturbed by the installation of the new gas service pipe.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2007, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by St Nicholas's Church Parochial Church Council (PCC) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording (a watching brief) during groundworks associated with a new gas service pipe through the churchyard of St Nicholas's Church, Beverley, East Yorkshire (NGR TA04403948). The archaeological recording was made a condition of a Diocesan faculty (no 295/06), issued by the Diocese of York on 14th November 2006.

2 SITE LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The church of St Nicholas lies on the south-east side of Beverley, at the junction of Mintfield Road and Holme Church Lane, and to the north of the Beverley Beck. It is surrounded by residential development on all sides (see figures 1 and 2). The site lies at an elevation of c. 5m AOD.
- 2.2 No specification or methods statement was produced for the archaeological work, although documents produced by the local archaeological curators, the Humber Archaeology Partnership, for similar watching briefs elsewhere in Beverley 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 a new gas service pipe through the churchyard, and to recover information relating to any archaeological features or deposits which might be uncovered or disturbed.
- 2.3 The archaeological fieldwork took place on the 23rd May 2007. The area of the churchyard through which the new pipe was to pass was a relatively level area of grass; part of the proposed trench was to follow the line of an existing path and there were no marked graves on its route, although two lay close by to the south. The service trench was excavated entirely by hand. It was aligned north-east/south-west, running east from the north-east corner of the existing vestry to the east boundary wall of the churchyard. Overall, the trench measured 17.90m long (east-west) and was an average of 0.35m wide. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.40m below ground level (BGL) or 5.02m AOD (c.1.18m below the top of the plinth on the adjacent house). The excavation of the trench was observed in its entirety.
- 2.4 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. Only two 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 of each area as necessary; a photographic record was also maintained using 35mm colour prints.
- 2.5 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 SNB 07; accession number 2007.62). No artefacts were retained from the watching brief.

3 OUTLINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The medieval church of St Nicholas is first mentioned in the mid 12th century, although it stood to the south of the present church on the opposite side of Holme Church Lane (at NGR TA04443943). It consisted of a chancel, transepts, aisled nave and west tower, and was partly demolished in 1653-55, with the remainder, including part of the tower, being used to repair St Mary's Church and the Minster at the end of the 17th century (Allison 1989, 240-241). Excavations by Carr and MacMahon in 1938-39 uncovered some of the remains (Miller *et al* 1982, 47-48).
- 3.2 The existing church was built between 1879-80 to the designs of F S Brodrick. It was erected as a memorial to the family of the first Lord Wolverton. The initial designs for the church were provided by J S Crowther, and work commenced in 1876, but Crowther's designs proved too costly and work stopped in 1876. Brodrick provided a less costly design, which was completed in 1880, incorporating parts of Crowther's uncompleted work. The church is in the Decorated style, built of Bradford stone with Whitby stone dressings; it comprises a clerestoried nave with south aisle, south transept and south-west tower over a porch (Pevsner & Neave 1995, 299-300). The vestry on the north side of the church is a later addition, built in 1934.
- 3.3 The church, which was consecrated in 1880, initially served as a chapel of ease and was served by one of the assistant curates of St Mary's Church. In 1886 the chapel was also licensed for marriages, and the yard was consecrated for burials of parishioners living to the east of the railway line. A parsonage house, No 251 Grovehill Road, was bought for the curate in charge in 1925. After St Nicholas's was made a parish church in 1959, a new vicarage house, No 72 Grovehill Road, was built in 1963 (Allison 1989, 241).

4 RESULTS FROM THE WATCHING BRIEF (see figure 3)

- 4.1 Beneath the turf and black silty topsoil (001), which averaged 0.13m deep, a dry and friable dark brown sandy silt (002) was revealed, which continued below the base of the 0.40m deep trench. This sandy silt contained a very small number of fragments of disarticulated human bone and a single piece of 19th century blue and white transfer printed ware, together with frequent inclusions of red handmade brick and pantile fragments. At either end of the trench, adjacent to the vestry and the east churchyard boundary wall, the sandy silt was seen to be mixed with a silty mid brown clay; another poorly defined spread of mixed silt/clay was noted in the base of the trench between c.6.5m to 8.5m east of the vestry. The size and apparent orientation of the spread may suggest that it formed the uppermost part of the fill of a grave cut, but this is not certain.
- 4.2 The trench did not disturb any *in situ* burials. Two marked graves lay close to its south side. The west grave (A) was marked by a Commonwealth War Graves headstone of Private C Priestman (41505) of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers who died 3rd November 1918 aged 20; the plot also contains the remains of his parents. The east grave (B) was marked by a headstone commemorating James Armitage, who died 31st December 1907, aged 86 years.
- 4.3 The east boundary wall of the churchyard was revealed to be set upon footings which continued below the base of the trench; the footings were built of the same material as the wall above, namely neat red handmade bricks (average dimensions 230mm by 110mm by 75mm) laid in stretcher bond and set with a light brown lime mortar. The chamfered plinth of the vestry was seen to rest on a shallow concrete

footing, whilst a low chamfered plinth to the east of the vestry may form a remnant of Crowther's original scheme for the church which was not subsequently re-used by Brodrick.

- 4.4 The watching brief uncovered no features of archaeological significance, and the shallow nature of the works meant that no *in situ* burials were disturbed by the installation of the new gas service pipe.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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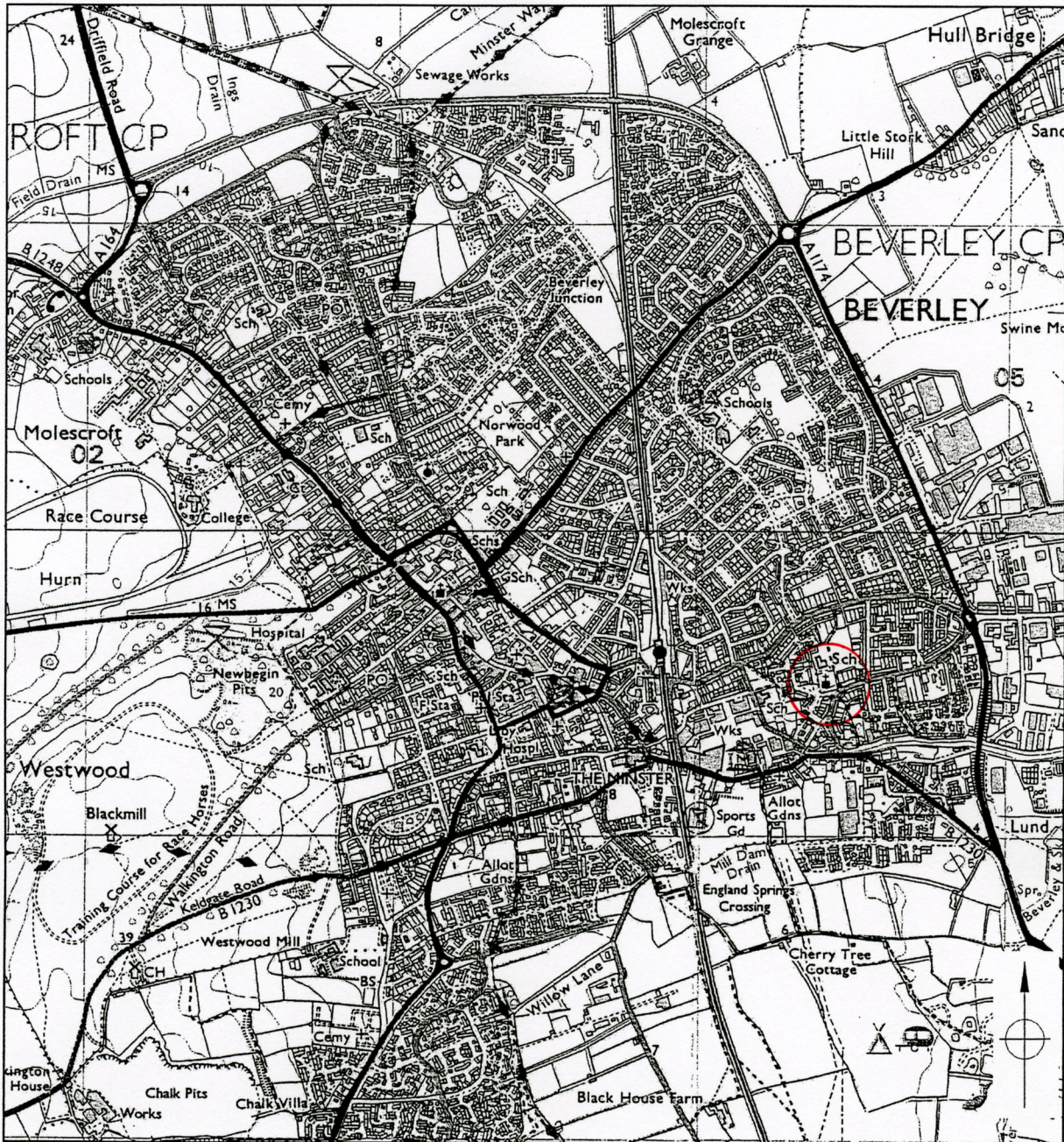
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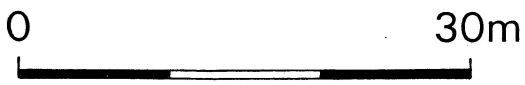
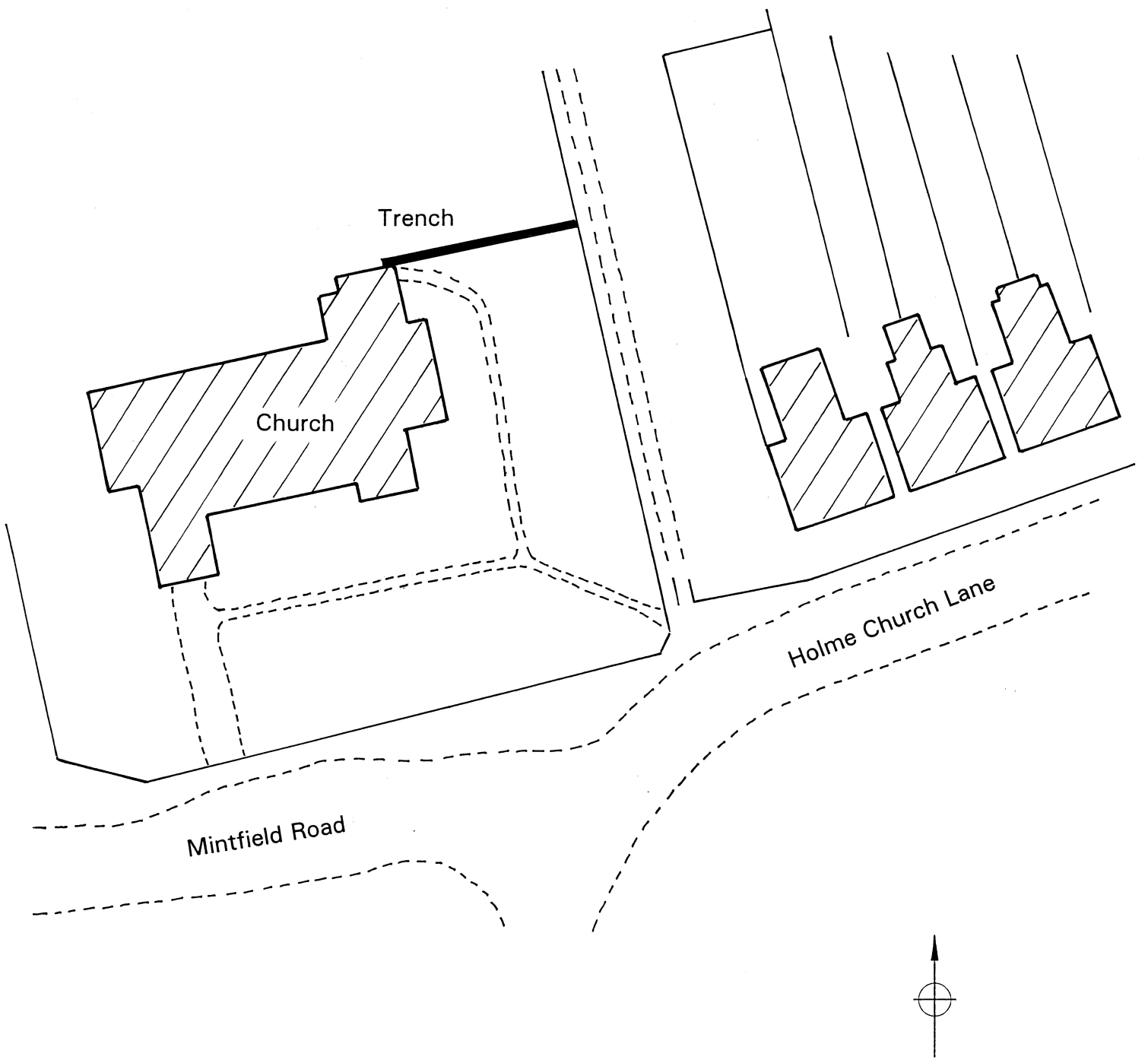
6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The archaeological watching brief at St Nicholas's Church was commissioned by the PCC. EDAS would like to thank all concerned, including Mr John Emmerson and Jonathan Hobson, the church architect, for their co-operation in carrying out the archaeological work.
- 6.2 The on-site recording was undertaken by Shaun Richardson, 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.

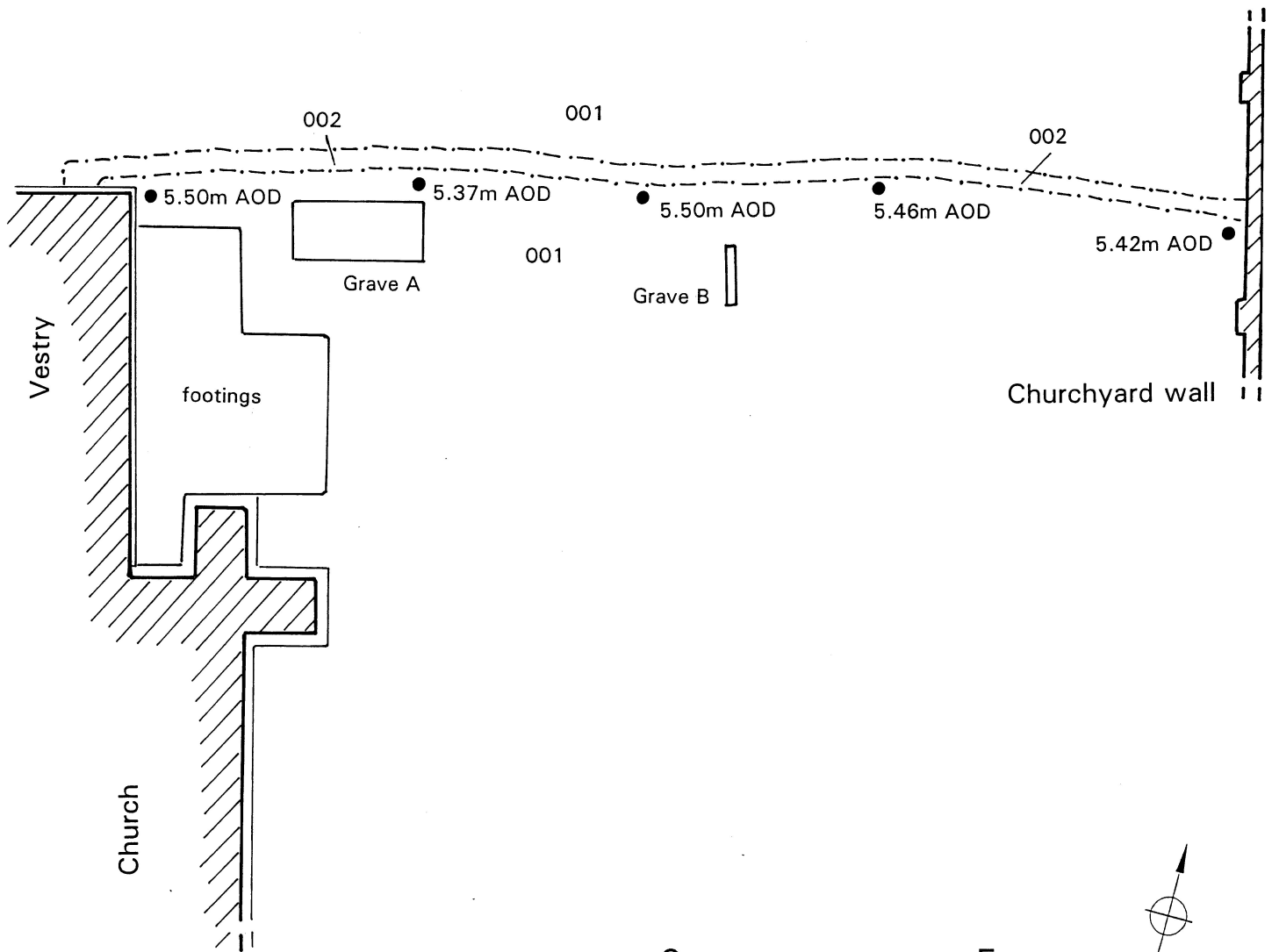


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PROJECT	
ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCH, BEVERLEY	
TITLE	
GENERAL LOCATION	
SCALE	DATE
NTS	JUN 2007
EDAS	FIGURE
	1



PROJECT	
ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCH, BEVERLEY	
TITLE	
DETAILED LOCATION	
SCALE	DATE
AS SHOWN	JUN 2007
EDAS	FIGURE
	2



PROJECT	
ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCH, BEVERLEY	
TITLE	
RESULTS OF WATCHING BRIEF	
SCALE	DATE
AS SHOWN	JUN 2007
EDAS	FIGURE
	3



Plate 1: Footings of NE corner of vestry, looking SW.



Plate 2: Excavated trench, looking NE.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

- 001 Turf and compacted black silty topsoil, average 0.13m thick.
- 002 Friable dark brown sandy silt, at least 0.22m thick.