

St Peter's Church, Rylstone, North Yorkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Prepared for

**Morrison Water Services on behalf of
Yorkshire Water**

February 2023

Ecus Ltd

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Originated By: *Holly Drinkwater*
Project Supervisor
Date: 07/02/2023

Reviewed By: *D. Ronan*
Damien Ronan
Project Manager
Date: 17/02/2023

Approved By: *DMF*
David Fell
Associate Director
Date: 20/02/2023

Prepared by:
Marwood House, Harmire Enterprise Park, Barnard Castle, County Durham, DL12 8BN
01833 690 800

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Summary

In January 2023, Ecus Ltd were commissioned by Morrisons Water Services on behalf of Yorkshire Water to carry out archaeological monitoring during the installation of a water pipe within the grounds of St Peter's Church, Rylstone, North Yorkshire.

The work comprised machine excavation of a narrow trench to accommodate the new water pipe. It extended from the north-eastern boundary of the churchyard to the north-western corner of the church building. Two pits were hand-excavated to locate existing supply pipes.

Relatively recent archaeological remains were encountered in the vicinity of the church building and comprised the construction cut and foundation course of the 19th century church building along with a contemporary sandstone culvert. Two unmarked graves were also recorded; an undisturbed adult grave containing the remnants of a wooden coffin was visible in the trench section, and an infant burial was disturbed in the path of the pipe trench. The disturbed infant remains were dealt with in accordance with guidelines outlined in "*Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England*" (APABE 2017) and reburied in the original grave at edge of the new pipe trench.

No datable artefacts were recovered during the course of the works.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Ecus Ltd. was commissioned by Morrison Water Services, on behalf of Yorkshire Water, to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring (a “watching brief”) during the installation of a new water supply in the churchyard of St Peter’s Church, Rylstone, North Yorkshire (NGR SD 97171 58838; Fig.1).
- 1.1.2 This report presents the results of the archaeological watching brief.

1.2 Site Description

- 1.2.1 St Peter’s Church is located to the north-east of Rylstone village, to the south of the B6265.
- 1.2.2 The churchyard is irregular in plan and grass covered, encompassing an area of approximately 0.5ha, and is bounded by an active dairy farm to the north, the former rectory to the north-west, an agricultural field to the west and an access road to the south and east.
- 1.2.3 The churchyard slopes significantly, from c.219m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north-western corner to 212m aOD in the south-west.
- 1.2.4 The area to the south of the church is occupied by defined rows of graves, marked by headstones and grave slabs which almost exclusively date to the 19th century and later. In the area to the north of the church, only a single row of 20th century graves is clearly marked, close to the northern boundary. A small number of toppled headstones were dispersed across the area and potentially mark the location of existing burials, however it is highly likely that unmarked graves and those whose markers have been removed exist across the area.
- 1.2.5 A footpath constructed of 18th century headstones runs around the church building, indicating that burials pre-dating the current 1850s church were likely disturbed during its construction, or at the very least deprived of their grave markers.

Geology

- 1.2.6 The British Geological Survey (<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer/> 2023) identifies the underlying bedrock below the site as being Carboniferous limestone of the Rain Gill Limestone Member, overlain by Devensian Diamicton Till.

1.3 Acknowledgements

- 1.3.1 Ecus wishes to extend thanks to Tony Watson and John Gilbert of Morrison Water Services and to Sarah Hartley of Rylstone parochial church council (PCC), on behalf of the Diocese of Leeds Advisory Committee.

1.3.2 The archaeological watching brief was conducted by Holly Drinkwater of Ecus Ltd.

2. Archaeological and Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 An archaeological appraisal of the route of the recent Cracoe to Rylstone Pipeline Scheme (NAA 2020) included the location of the current site. The following section has been summarised from that report.

2.2 Background

2.2.1 No evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity has been recorded in the immediate vicinity of Rylstone. Although Rylstone is suggested to have early medieval origins, no early medieval features have been recorded in the direct hinterland of the village.

2.2.2 According to the Yorkshire Dales National Park Historic Environment Record (HER), the settlement at Rylstone was first documented following the Norman Conquest when William I granted the surrounding land to the Norman baron Robert de Romille.

2.2.3 From the early 15th century until the mid-16th century, Rylstone was the centre of the Norton Family estate and formed a high-status late-medieval settlement. Following the demise of the Norton Family at the beginning of the 17th century, the estate was acquired by the Clifford Family of Skipton, who quickly sold the land. Following this sale, some of the high-status buildings fell out of use. These include the Norton Family manor house, located to the east of the village, and which was quarried for stone at the beginning of the 18th century. Building material from the manor house can be seen in the fabric of several later post-medieval buildings in the village. Likewise, the 'Old Hall' and associated fishponds, located to the north-east of St Peter's Church, also fell out of use and now exist as earthworks.

2.2.4 The Church of St. Peter in Rylstone is Listed Grade II (NHLE No. 1132129). It was rebuilt in 1853 to replace a medieval Chapel of Ease.

2.3 Previous Archaeological Works

2.3.1 A scheme of geophysical survey, a topographic earthwork survey and archaeological monitoring was undertaken as part of the Cracoe to Rylstone Pipeline Scheme (NAA 2021). The route of the pipeline ran west to east, across fields directly to the north of Rylstone village, beneath the B6265 and across the field to the west of St Peter's Church. The pipeline route then skirted the churchyard and ran beneath the access road to the south.

2.3.2 The geophysical and earthwork surveys outlined a busy archaeological landscape of enclosures, terraces and hollow ways that likely represented the rear of settlement plots of the medieval village of Rylstone. In the field directly to the west of St Peter's Church was a clearly defined corner of a

likely square enclosure and anomalies relating to ridge and furrow cultivation, however no features were highlighted in the direct vicinity of the church.

2.3.3 Thirteen small trenches were excavated to facilitate horizontal directional drilling of the new water pipeline. These were concentrated solely within the field to the north of Rylstone, but no archaeological features were identified and no finds recovered. A consistent thick subsoil horizon was recorded across all 13 trenches and likely represents continual ploughing of the area during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

3. Methodology

3.1 Standards

3.1.1 The project conformed to current national guidance set out in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2020a); *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA, 2020b); and *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (CIfA, 2020c).

Site specific guidance was obtained from *Yorkshire, the Humber & the North East: A Regional Statement of Good Practice for Archaeology in the Development Process* (South Yorkshire Archaeology Service 2018); and *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England. Second Edition* (Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Burials in England (APABE) 2017).

3.2 Scope of Works

3.2.1 The works comprised the machine excavation of a narrow, open-cut trench within the churchyard to connect a new water supply to the church building, a trough at the north-western edge of the churchyard and to the Rectory. Two small pits were also dug to disconnect and cap the pipes relating to the original supply.

3.3 Aims and Objectives

3.3.1 The aim of archaeological monitoring was to identify the presence and location of archaeological remains within the watching brief area, in accordance with a methodology outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation (NAA 2022) approved by the Client, Church faculty and Senior Historic Environment Officer at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.

3.3.2 The objectives of monitoring were to:

- establish the presence, nature, extent, preservation and significance of any archaeological remains within the parts of the churchyard crossed by the works;
- provide a detailed record of any such archaeological remains;
- recover and assess any associated structural, artefactual and environmental evidence;
- determine whether human remains were to be disturbed by the works, and if so to limit that disturbance as far as possible;
- undertake a programme of investigation that meets with national and regional standards (Historic England 2015a; CIfA 2020a-c; South Yorkshire Archaeology Service 2018); and

- prepare an illustrated report on the results of archaeological monitoring to be deposited with the North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 All work was undertaken by experienced Ecus staff who are corporate members of the ClfA and who demonstrably work to appropriate standards of archaeological fieldwork.

Excavation Methodology

3.4.2 A single linear trench was excavated for the water pipe, connecting the existing supply (installed in the farm access track) to the north-western corner of the church building (Fig. 2). Excavation was undertaken by a tracked excavator using a toothless trenching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Soil was carefully removed in spits, to avoid damage to, and allow the recording of any unmarked burials and archaeological remains encountered.

3.4.3 Excavation, recording and pipe installation was carried out in segments to minimise disturbance in the churchyard. Any segments left open for further work were fenced off.

3.4.4 The requisite depth for the new pipeline was 0.7m, in order to prevent freezing in cold weather. Natural limestone bedrock was often encountered at between 0.4m to 0.6m depth, and this necessitated the use of a pneumatic breaker.

3.4.5 Archaeological remains, including unmarked burials were identified in the direct vicinity of the church building. An infant burial was uncovered at the bend in the pipe trench, along with the western end of a probable adult grave, approximately three metres to the north of the church wall. All work was stopped while the human remains were assessed by the archaeologist and screened from view. The Ecus Project Manager and the Client were informed, who in turn consulted with the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

3.4.6 Following a site visit by Sarah Hartley from Rylstone PCC, it was agreed that the disturbed infant remains within the pipe trench would be carefully excavated by the archaeologist and reburied with the articulated portion of the skeleton in the edge of the trench. The area surrounding the burial would then be secured from further disturbance using wooden boards (Plate 1). Excavation of the remainder of the pipe trench to the church wall was then conducted by hand by the archaeologist.

3.4.7 Originally, a second trench was to be excavated to supply the trough and the Rectory, however an existing service was located within the first trench that was able to be adapted and thus negated the need for any further excavation within the church yard.

3.4.8 Two hand-dug pits were excavated by the contractor over the location of existing water pipes (Fig. 2). They were monitored by the archaeologist, but as they were located within previous service trenches, no archaeological deposits were encountered.

Recording Methodology

- 3.4.9 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using a continuous numbered context system on a pro-forma recording system in accordance with industry standards. Written records were created in a digital format using the DiggIt application (<https://www.diggitararchaeology.com>).
- 3.4.10 Identified archaeological features were drawn in section at a scale of 1:10 and located on a site plan using a differential Global Positioning System (DGPS). Drawings were made in pencil on permanent drafting film.
- 3.4.11 A full photographic record was maintained, using a digital camera equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images will be subject to managed quality control and curation processes which will embed appropriate metadata within the image and ensure long term accessibility of the image set. Output will be in TIFF/JPEG format. Digital records created as part of the project comply with specific data standards (Historic England 2015b).
- 3.4.12 No finds or environmental samples were recovered from the excavation.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The following section presents the results of the archaeological watching brief. The context descriptions for the recorded archaeological features are reproduced in Appendix 1.
- 4.1.2 The excavation consisted of a single mechanically-excavated pipe trench and two hand-dug pits. Their locations are shown on Figure 2.

4.2 Pipe Trench (Fig. 2).

- 4.2.1 The pipe trench connected the existing service trench (located in the farm access track to the north-west of the churchyard) to the north-western corner of the church building. The trench measured 0.4m wide, by 0.7m deep and ran on a north-east to south-west alignment over a distance of 26.5m, before turning to the south-east for 3.5m where it intersected the northern church wall (Fig. 2).
- 4.2.2 No archaeological remains were encountered within the majority of the north-east to south-west stretch of the pipeline route. The limestone bedrock (**05**) was encountered at a depth of between 0.4m and 0.7m and was covered by a thin deposit of natural orange-brown clay (**04**), up to 0.12m thick. Above the natural clay a subsoil deposit (**03**) of mid reddish-brown silty clay, of up to 0.3m thick, had accumulated, this was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil (**02**) along the length of the pipe trench (Plate 2).
- 4.2.3 The north-west to south-east section of the pipe trench uncovered a number of archaeological features, perhaps unsurprisingly given its proximity to the church building.
- 4.2.4 Potentially the earliest archaeological features were two unmarked graves, their headstones possibly removed prior to the construction of the current church building in the 1850s. Many of these earlier headstones, the majority dating to the 18th century, had been reused as paving around the edge of the church. Four of these reused headstones had to be moved prior to the excavation of the new pipe trench. They were cleaned, photographed in situ and then relocated against the northern wall of the church (Plate 3).
- 4.2.5 Both graves lay directly beneath the topsoil (**02**) and were cut through the subsoil (**03**) and natural deposits (**04, 05**) beneath.
- 4.2.6 The first grave to be encountered was that of an infant (**SK01**), which was located directly at the south-western corner of the pipe trench, approximately 3.5m north-west of the church (Plate 4). The grave cut (**06**) measured 0.35m in width, 0.6m in length by 0.23m deep and was orientated north-east to south-west, parallel with the church building. A band of dark reddish-brown staining around the edges of the grave cut indicated that **SK01** had been buried in a container made from

organic material, presumably a small wooden box or coffin, and the grave backfilled with fine, grey silty clay (**07**). The infant had been buried with head to the east, and the skull and upper body remained undisturbed in the trench section. The torso and lower body had been disturbed by the excavation. The exposed remains were carefully excavated and collected by the archaeologist and reburied with the articulated portion of the skeleton at the edge of the trench.

4.2.7 The second grave (**08**) was located approximately 0.4m to the south-east of grave **06**. Only the western end of the grave was disturbed by the excavation and no human remains were exposed (Plate 5). A fragment of wooden plank with an iron nail, probably representing the western end of a coffin, was displaced during the excavation. Grave **08** was over 1m in width at its upper edge and 0.5m in width at the base, with moderately sloping edges. It was 0.5m deep, the base excavated c.0.1m into the natural limestone bedrock (**05**), fragments of which were frequent within the loose mid orange-brown silty clay (**09**) backfill of the grave.

4.2.8 The southern edge of grave **08** had been truncated by a steep-sided cut (**10**), 0.45m in width and 0.5m deep, which contained a ceramic and concrete drain and had been backfilled by a deposit of dark-brown stony clay (**11**). The drain was oriented north-west to south-east, parallel to the church, 1.5m from its northern wall. The pipe appeared to date to the 20th century.

4.2.9 The final group of recorded features related to the construction of the current church building (Plate 6). The new pipe trench was excavated up to the northern wall of the church and revealed its foundation course, through which a hole would be drilled to admit the new water pipe. The foundation course (**17**) was made of finely-tooled sandstone blocks and stepped outwards from the main building by 0.15m. The foundation exposed within the new pipe trench was 0.5m in height and had been constructed on the natural limestone bedrock. It sat within a 1.3m wide cut (**12**), 0.5m deep, which had a sharply sloping northern edge, and had been backfilled by a deposit of compacted sandstone rubble, clay and lime mortar (**13**). A 0.5m wide culvert constructed of sandstone slabs (**15**), had been installed within a steep-sided cut (**14**) excavated centrally within the backfill of construction cut **12**. The culvert consisted of two courses of roughly-squared sandstone blocks, 0.15m apart, capped with a sandstone slab, the culvert cut was backfilled with a dark bluish-black deposit of fine silty-sand (**16**).

4.2.10 No finds were recovered from the excavation of the new pipe trench.

4.3 Pit 1

4.3.1 Pit 1 measured 0.7m by 0.7m and was located in the eastern corner of the churchyard. The pit was sited to locate and expose the original water supply to the church, a galvanised metal pipe at a depth of 0.7m. The pit was dug through 0.3m of topsoil into the backfill of the original service trench, the pit was recorded by photograph (Plate 7).

4.4 Pit 2

4.4.1 Pit 2 measured 0.7m by 0.7m and was located against the north-western wall of the churchyard, between an inspection chamber and a concrete animal trough. The pit was positioned to expose the existing water supply to the trough and the rectory. As with Pit 1, the deposits encountered within Pit 2 were mixed backfill deposits of the original service trench and no archaeological material was identified (Plate 8).

5. Conclusion

- 5.1.1 The trench for the new water supply pipe encountered no archaeological remains along its main north-east to south-west alignment, only topsoil, subsoil and natural deposits. No artefacts were recovered to allow dating of the subsoil horizon, but it did not appear to have been utilised for burials, in what was a dense graveyard elsewhere. This may have been due to the shallow depth of the natural bedrock, ranging from between 0.4m and 0.6m below present ground surface.
- 5.1.2 All the archaeological features recorded during the works were concentrated within the 3.5m segment of the pipe trench closest to the church building.
- 5.1.3 The re-use of 18th century grave stones around the outside of the church demonstrates that there has been a significant re-organisation of the churchyard, probably, when the building was re-constructed in the 1850s. The two unmarked graves (**06**, **08**) may previously have been marked by one or more of these headstones, or could relate to an earlier period. It is unclear whether the adult interred within grave **08** and infant **SK01** were related, but due to their proximity could potentially have been buried together in a family plot. Their current shallow depth, at just 0.5m to 0.6m below the modern ground surface, could be a result of landscaping of the churchyard prior to the construction of the current building.
- 5.1.4 The remaining recorded features relate directly to the construction of the church building. A 1.3m wide cut (**12**) was excavated to the level of the natural bedrock and the lime mortared foundation course (**17**) built directly on top. Only a single course was recorded in the new water pipe trench, but this likely varied around the footprint of the church, depending on the natural topography. The construction cut was then backfilled before a sandstone culvert (**14**) was installed within, which likely related to drainage of rainwater from the church eaves. No dating evidence was recovered from the construction cut or culvert and the techniques used are themselves undiagnostic.
- 5.1.5 The 19th/20th century drain (**10**) was a later addition but ran parallel to the church, and likely fulfilled the same function as culvert **14**.
- 5.1.6 No demolition rubble or evidence for the earlier phases of the church building was identified during the current work, and few indicators remain in the church fabric that indicate its medieval origins. The floor surface within the existing building has in-situ gravestones relating to early 18th century burials and it is probable that the floor and footings remained untouched in the later round of rebuilding and renovation that focussed on changes to the superstructure.

6. Archive and copyright

6.1 Site archive

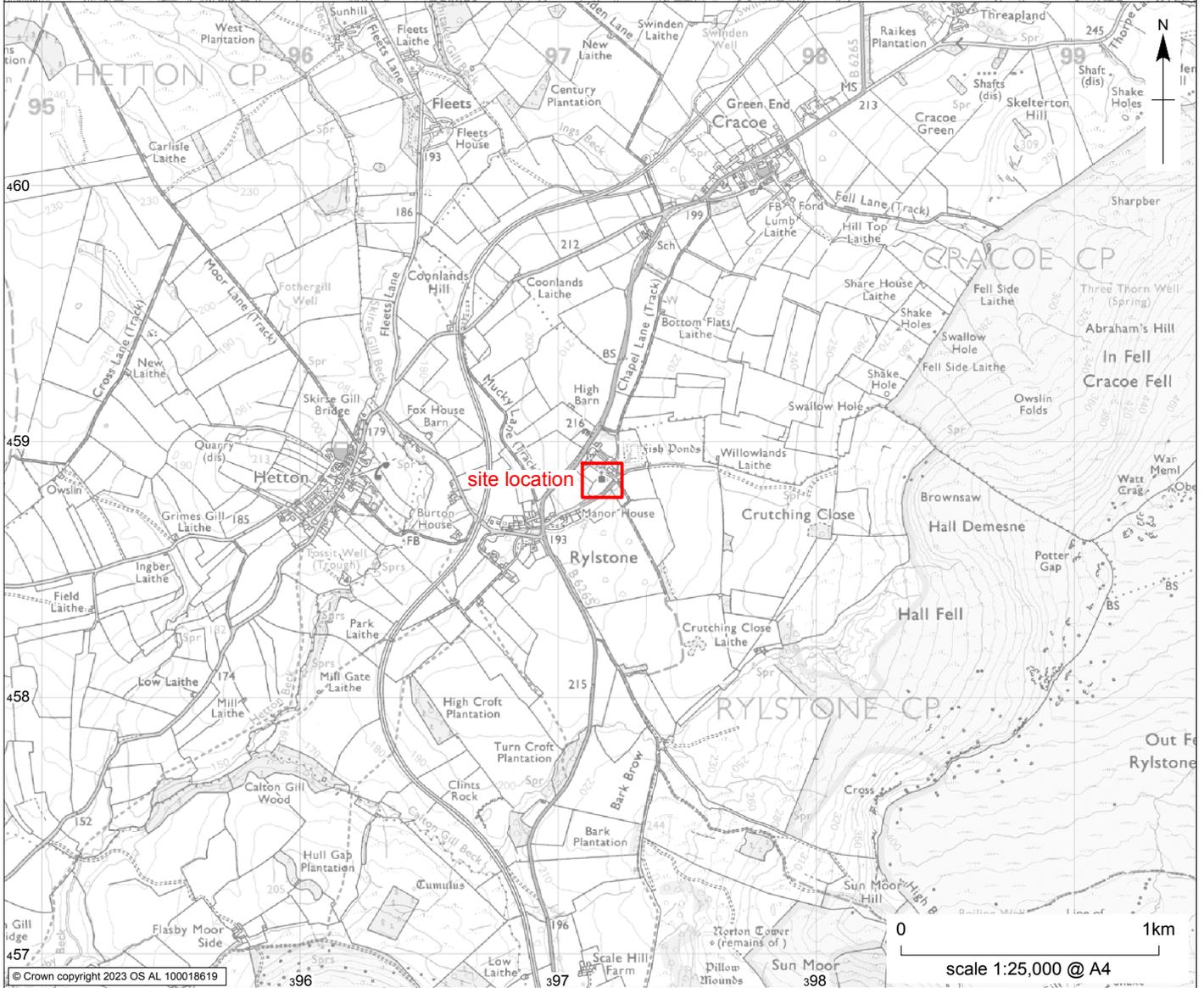
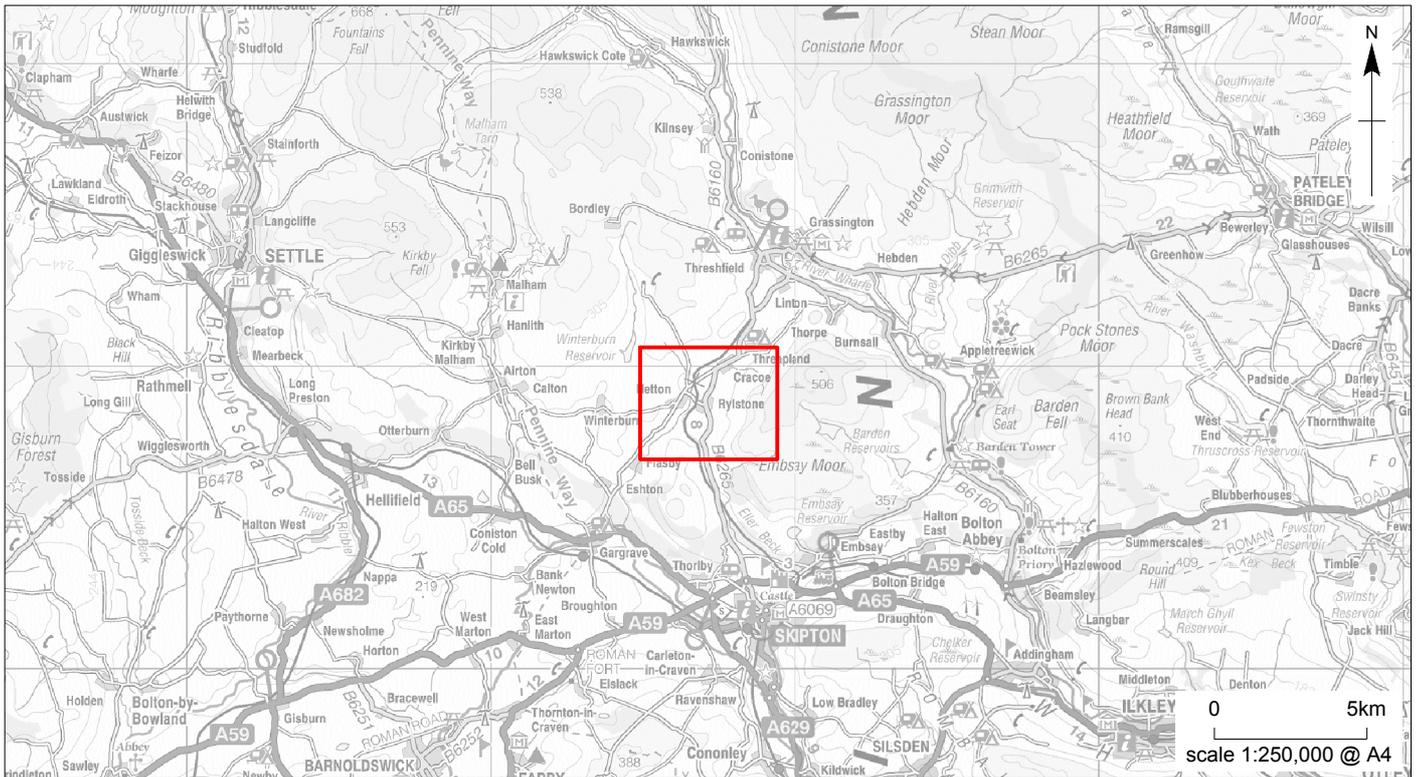
6.1.1 An OASIS form has been compiled for the results of the works; ecus1-513268 (Appendix 2). This will include submission of a PDF version of the report(s) to the Archaeology Data Service via the OASIS form. The form will be submitted following approval of the report by the Client, the DAC and the YDNPA Archaeologist.

6.2 Copyright and publicity

6.2.1 The copyright of any written, graphic or photographic records and reports will rest with Ecus. Ecus will grant licences in favour of the Client and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Historic Environment Record to use such documentation for their statutory and related functions and to provide copies to third parties as an incidental to such functions.

7. References

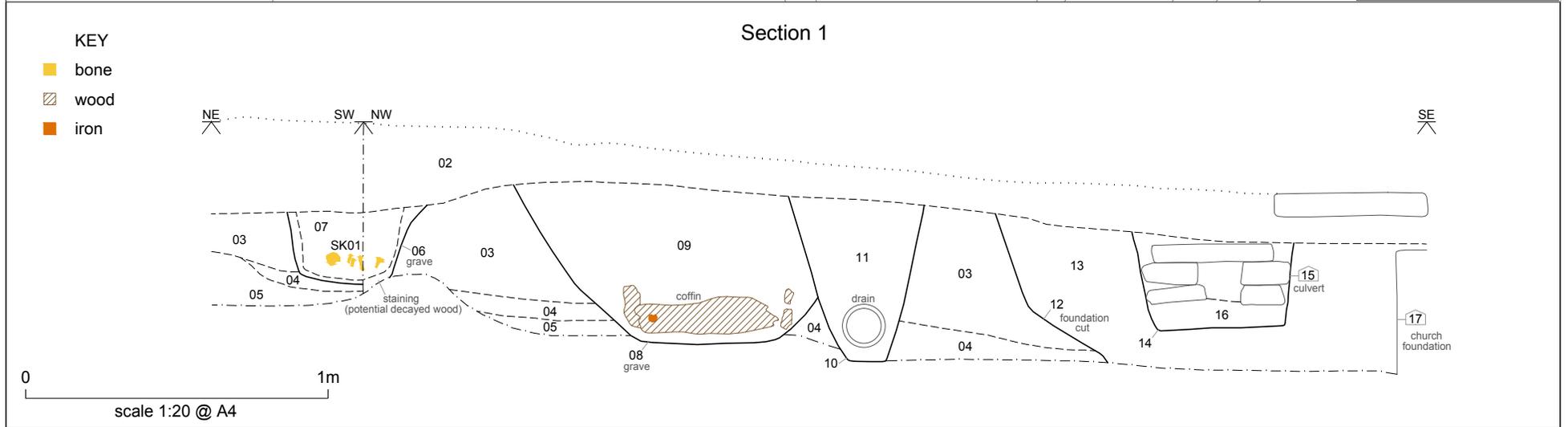
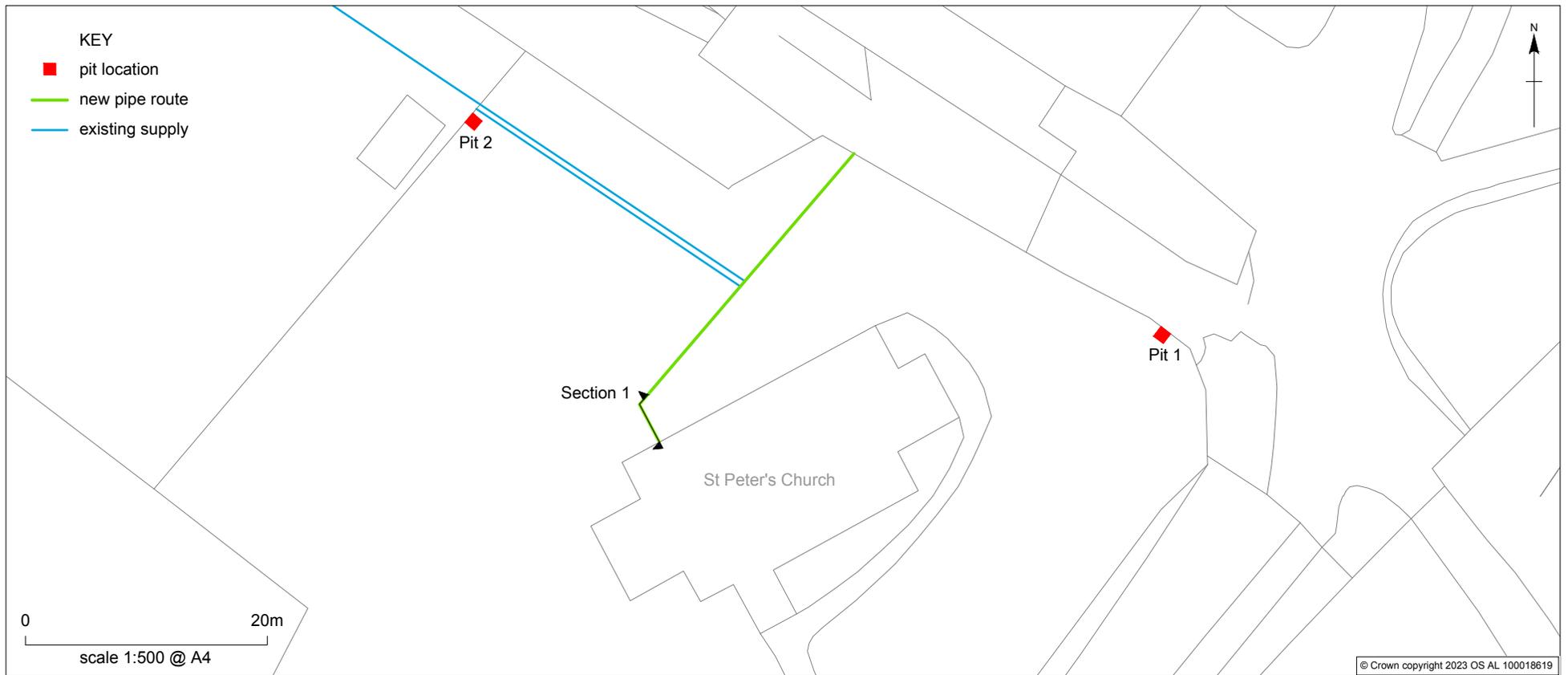
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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: site location

Figure 1





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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: remediation measures for reinterment of SK01 Plate 1



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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: topsoil, subsoil and natural clay and bedrock

Plate 2



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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: re-sited gravestones along the north wall of the church

Plate 3



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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: the disturbed remains of SK01, looking south

Plate 4



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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: western end of Grave 08,
with displaced coffin board

Plate 5



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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: construction features relating to
the church building. Foundation course, construction cut,
backfill and sandstone culvert.

Plate 6



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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: Pit 1, looking south-east, showing backfill within the service trench

Plate 7



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St Peter's Church, Rylstone: Pit 2, looking north-west, showing existing water pipe and backfill within the service trench

Plate 8

Appendix 1: Context Catalogue

Context Number	Context Description	Trench
SK01	Infant Skeleton	Pipe Trench
02	Topsoil	Pipe Trench
03	Subsoil	Pipe Trench
04	Natural Clay	Pipe Trench
05	Natural Bedrock	Pipe Trench
06	Cut of grave for SK01	Pipe Trench
07	Fill of grave 06	Pipe Trench
08	Cut of adult grave	Pipe Trench
09	Fill of grave 08	Pipe Trench
10	Cut of drain	Pipe Trench
11	Fill of drain 10	Pipe Trench
12	Construction cut for church building	Pipe Trench
13	Backfill of cut 12	Pipe Trench
14	Cut for sandstone culvert	Pipe Trench
15	Sandstone culvert	Pipe Trench
16	Fill of culvert	Pipe Trench

Context Number	Context Description	Trench
17	Foundation course of church building	Pipe Trench

Appendix 2: OASIS entry

Summary for ecusltd1-513268

OASIS ID (UID)	ecusltd1-513268
Project Name	Watching Brief at St Peter's Church, Rylstone, North Yorkshire
Sitename	St Peter's Church, Rylstone, North Yorkshire
Activity type	Watching Brief
Project Identifier(s)	
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Planning requirement
Organisation Responsible for work	ECUS ltd
Project Dates	02-Jan-2023 - 02-Jan-2023
Location	St Peter's Church, Rylstone, North Yorkshire NGR : SD 97171 58838 LL : 54.0255299318602, -2.04467406538017 12 Fig : 397171,458838
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : North Yorkshire District : Craven Parish : Rylstone
Project Methodology	Ecus Ltd were commissioned to carry out archaeological monitoring during the installation of a water pipe within the grounds of St Peter's Church, Rylstone, North Yorkshire. The work comprised machine excavation of a narrow trench to accommodate the new water pipe. It extended from the north-eastern boundary of the churchyard to the north-western corner of the church building. Two pits were hand excavated to locate existing supply pipes.
Project Results	The trench for the new water supply pipe encountered no archaeological remains along its main north-east to south-west alignment, only topsoil, subsoil and natural deposits. No artefacts were recovered to allow dating of the subsoil horizon, but it did not appear to have been utilised for burials, in what was a dense graveyard elsewhere. This may have been due to the shallow depth of the natural bedrock, ranging from between 0.4m and 0.6m below present ground surface. All the archaeological features recorded during the works were concentrated within the 3.5m segment of the pipe trench closest to the church building. The re-use of 18th century grave stones around the outside of the church demonstrates that there has been a significant re-organisation of the churchyard, probably, when the building was re-constructed in the 1850s. The two unmarked graves (06, 08) may previously have been marked by one or more of these headstones, or could relate to an earlier period.
Keywords	Grave - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Church - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Culvert - 20TH CENTURY - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	
HER	Yorkshire Dales National Park SMR - noRev - LITE
Person Responsible for work	Holly, Drinkwater
HER Identifiers	

