

INTERIM REPORT 1
APPENDIX A

AUGUST AND OCTOBER 2014

SITE EXCAVATION

Excavation of a mound in the southern area of the burial ground abutting the enclosure wall to the west.

Test Trenches – TT1: 2m x 1m, TT2: 2m x 1m, TT3: 1m x 1m, TT4: 1m x 1m, TT5: 6m x 1m

TT1:

Type: Test Pit: hand
N.G.R: (centre) SD 98785 52051 El. 129m.
Length: 2m
Width: 1m
Depth: 3cm
Platform:
Aligned: E- W
Context No's: 100 - 105
Object Ref:
Plate No: 2, 3, 4, and 5
Fig. No:

TT2:

Type: Test Pit: hand
N.G.R: (centre) SD 98785 52051 El. 129m.
Length: 2m
Width: 1m
Depth: 3cm
Platform:
Aligned: E- W
Context No's: 200 - 202
Object Ref:
Plate No: 2
Fig. No:

TT3:

Type: Test Pit: hand
N.G.R: (centre) SD 98785 52051 El. 129m.
Length: 1m
Width: 1m
Depth: 3cm
Platform:
Aligned: E- W

Context No's: 300 - 303

Object Ref:

Plate No: 4

Fig. No:

TT4:

Type: Test Pit: hand

N.G.R: (centre) SD 98785 52051 El. 129m.

Length: 1m

Width: 1m

Depth: 3cm

Platform:

Aligned: E- W

Context No's: 400 - 403

Object Ref:

Plate No:

Fig. No:

TT5:

Type: Test Pit: hand

N.G.R: (centre) SD 98785 52051 El. 129m.

Length: 6m

Width: 1m

Depth: 3cm

Platform:

Aligned: E- W

Context No's: 500 - 501

Object Ref:

Plate No: 6 & 7

Fig. No:

The excavation to expose the roof of the mortuary in Raikes Road Burial Ground, Skipton was planned to take place over two days 4th and 5th August 2014. A third day was arranged on the 14th October to expose the top of the mortuary walls. A small team of ten excavators were engaged.

The site was preparation prior to the excavation, by strimming the long grass, and this immediately exposed several stones which suggested the top of the south and north walls of the structure. Auguring over the area between the wall tops was followed by a decision to place Test Trench 1 (TT1) between the walls towards the eastern edge of the mound (away from the wall).

DAY 1

TT1 2m x 1m trench was opened in a EW direction on top of the mound. The turf was removed by spade followed by hand trowelling. The trench was prepared by straightening the edges a levelling the interior of the trench.

TT2 2m x 1m trench was opened on the east slope of the mound

TT3 1m x 1m trench was opened to locate the south east corner of the structure

DAY 2

TT4 1m x 1m trench was opened to locate the north east corner of the structure

DAY 3

TT5 - 6m x 1m from the wall surrounding the burial ground to the corner of (TT3) over the stones comprising the south wall of the mortuary. De-turfing took place using a spade followed by light trowelling to expose further the stones. The inner row of stone appeared to be at a lower level to the outer row suggesting that these were supports for the eaves on a roof structure.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION.

Following de-turfing a number of small artefacts was excavated in the top soil of TT1. At a depth of only 30mm below ground level a brick edging of a square shaft (flue) was located to the south of the test trench (Plate: 3). The shaft was void of material to a depth of 215mm, below this point rubble could be seen (Plate: 5) plus an opening on the north side. A double row of stones located at the east gable (TT1) forms a 220mm wide wall constructed of grey stones < 120mm in size (Plate 3). The wall is double only where the brick lined flue abuts it at the south side. A single row continues to north. A yellow/white, hard mortar filled the gaps. The same walling was located in TT3 and TT4 and both corners tie in with the east gable wall (Plate: 4). However, the exposed stone forming the north and south elevations (TT5) is of a different colour and size (Plate: 6 &7). These stones measure an average of 300mm L. x 150mm W. suggesting a different method of construction. All artefacts located in this test trench were immediately below the turf at a depth of 2cm. All were rubbish accumulated in modern period.

There was no evidence of an entry into the mortuary in TT2 (Plate: 2).

FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research suggests that mortuaries which were close to or within church/burial grounds had a change of use and became hearse houses. There is a strong suggestion that this occurred with the Raikes Road mortuary (Litton, pers. comm. 2014). Research in the form of a photograph shows a gun carriage (during the funeral of Private Hutton 1912) on Raikes Road showing the door jambs of the

The Burial Act of 18454 suggested that new cemeteries should have a mortuary. The reason for this was that most dwellings did not have the room or space for a coffin to be kept between death and burial (Litton, pers. comm. 2014).

The dead had to be separated from the living. Most families could only get together on a Sunday. If death occurred at the end of the week then the funeral was often postponed until the Sunday of the following week (Fisher, 2009, p: 4). It wasn't

unusual for coffins to be left in houses for up to three weeks - women and children having to live and sleep in the same room. There was some thought that this could cause the living illness. Embalming did not come into use until 1890 and was expensive so would not have been an option for the poor (Fisher, 2009, p: 1). Chapels of Rest did not become the norm until the 1880s (Litton, pers. comm. 2014).

It is possible following contact with Julian Litton, a researcher into this fascinating subject, that the Skipton (subterranean) mortuary may be the only one of its kind in the UK.

There are only three Mortuaries known to the (FRRBG) at the moment. **Saltburn by the sea** - is situated across the road from the Ship Inn (former resting place of corpses fished out of sea and prior to burial. It has recently been purchased and its fate may be to be turned into a museum. A potential mortuary (half submerged) at **Summerbridge**, (Nidderdale) a short distance from the former Yorke's Mill (Hooper, pers.comm. 2014) ;and another at **Pannal** (Harrogate) - The little hearse house opposite the Parochial Hall, now a private house, by the entrance of Sandy Bank Quarry. "It was used for storing corpses before they were taken to St. Robert's Church to be buried" (Smith, pers. comm. 2014).

FURTHER WORK

No further work on the mortuary at this stage would be feasible with limited funding. However, a survey of the mortuary and the chapel sites would be a useful activity. It would also be feasible to put a trench across the chapel to determine a floor surface, expose walls and consolidate the chapel (Figures 8 & 10).

Change of use of the mortuary - lock up for tools, storage etc. was discussed with the FRRBG. Further work in the burial ground would involve a survey of both the mortuary and the chapel sites, an archaeological excavation to remove the fill of the structure and ground work to provide access for an entry/access doorway. Openings - access doorway and roof structure would be the job of engineers arranged by the council.

Research Programme

Further research into mortuaries and work towards a publication. Since little research work has been done it would be a huge achievement to produce a book on this subject.

PERSONNEL

The excavation was undertaken by Janis Heward and Kev Cale and an excavation team which was made up from a small number of experienced amateur archaeologists from local groups:

Dawn Haida & Marie-Anne Hintz - Nidderdale Chase Heritage Group

Peter Gallagher & Ruth Spencer – Upper Wharfedale Heritage Group

Jean Robinson, Ann & Stuart Wilkinson – FRRBG

**Pauline Barber and two experienced student excavators: Shannon Wilson and Finn
Cale Upper Wharfedale School and Boroughbridge High School.**

APPENDIX B
PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 1. Mound after strimming



Plate 2. TT2. Measuring site profile

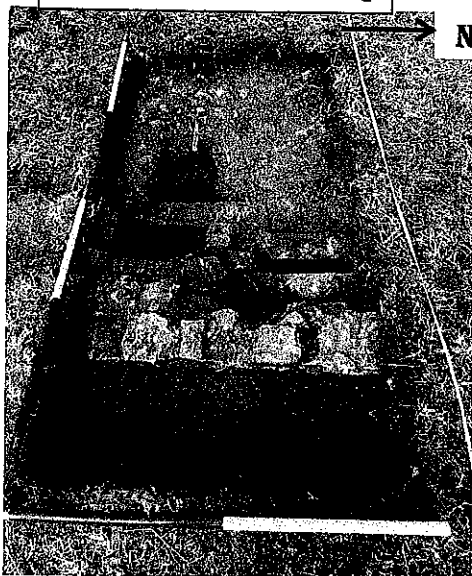


Plate 3. TT1. Exposed stone of east gable
Brick lined chimney/flue (centre left)

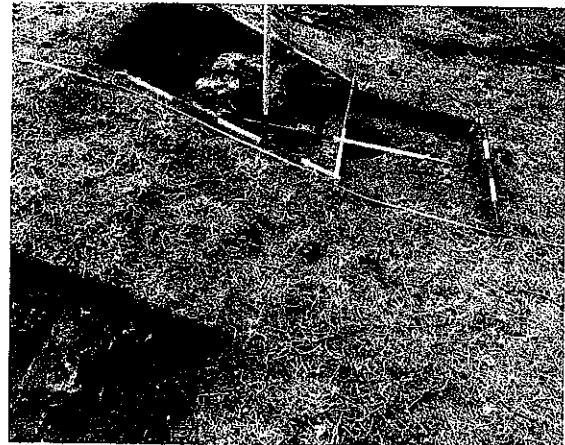


Plate 4. TT3 (foreground) looking across to
edge of south elevation (top right)



Plate 5. Brick lined chimney/flue



Plate 6 & 7. TT5. Exposed South elevation

REFERENCES

Fisher, P. 2009. Houses for the Dead: the Provision of Mortuaries in London, 1843 – 1889. In *The London Journal*, Vol. 34 No. 1, March, 2009, 1 – 15

Hooper, J. 2014. *pers.comm.* Jerry has a vast knowledge of the Nidderdale and an interest in buildings. He was part of a team which has recently recorded buildings within the Nidderdale AONB. Through his research Jerry has come to the conclusions that this tiny building may well have been a mortuary for New York Mill. Contact and discussion October 2014.

Litton, J. 2014 *pers. comm* Retired Curator at the Victoria and Albert, Commissioner of Cathedral Advisory Commission, Director of CBA and member of Royal Archaeological Institute, first honorary member of the British Institute of Funeral Directors in recognition of his research into the history of the trade, contact by letter 03/11/2014.

Smith, A. 2014 *pers. comm.* Local historian and author of the book 'Postcards from Pannal (p: 64 photograph of the Pannal Mortuary (late hearse house) who lives in Pannal village. Leonard Shutt who also lived in the village was the local joiner/undertaker. It was during a conversation between Anne Smith and Leonard Shutt's son which confirmed the building at Sandy Bank Quarry had indeed been a mortuary. Contact and discussion December 2014.

www.gargrave.org.uk › Photograph of the funeral of Private Hutton 1912 (Rowley Collection) accessed September 2014.

Janis Heward

December 2014