

**St Leonard's, Seaford (SLD 06)
Archaeological Monitoring**

A Brief Report on the Findings

(NGR 548275, 090350)

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ASE Project No. 2612

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St Leonard's Church, Seaford, East Sussex Archaeological Monitoring

Archaeology South-East (ASE) were commissioned by St Leonard's Church to monitor works associated with the construction of a new floor within the Nave and Aisles of the church, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The work was carried out under the instruction of The Archdeacon of Lewes and Hastings, The Venerable Philip Jones, acting on the advice of the Diocesan Advisory Committee's archaeological advisor, Vivienne Coad. The fieldwork and reporting were carried out by Jon Sygrave (Senior Archaeologist) and the project managed by Darryl Palmer (Senior Project Manager).

Prior to ASE's involvement the old wooden floor of the church had been removed and the tops of raised sections of the underlying surface investigated by the contractors, with a view to ground reduction. These investigations had revealed the presence of several crypts and several pieces of disarticulate bone.

The construction of the new floor required the excavation of several footing trenches, running east west, which would house the supporting concrete beams. The excavation of the trenches was monitored by a member of ASE staff and one burial recorded (**see Fig 1**).

All observations of the crypts were made from the surface and no remains were disturbed. **Crypts 1 and 3** were observed through small holes and accurate measurement was difficult. The fieldwork was carried out on 4.09.06.

Crypt 1 (see Plates 1 to 4 and Fig 1) was located in the eastern nave of the church below and in front of the altar. The crypt was observed as a brick barrel vaulted tomb, the roof of which lay c.200mm below the previous floor height. The tomb measured c 2.6m by c. 2.3m by c. 1.6m deep and was constructed of a single thickness of stretchers capped with a barrel roof of 'on edge' bricks. Four probable lead lined coffins in caskets were observed, in two stacks of two. Internal photographs of the crypt, taken by the Honorary Church Archivist (Bob Gerring), show that the top coffin in the southern stack has a coffin plate referring to a Captain George Clarke Hurdis RN. This suggests that the crypt relates to a commemorative plaque by the church's main entrance, and that the four coffins are those of James and Ann Hurdis, Captain George Clarke Hurdis and his wife Sarah Hurdis.

Crypt 2 (see Plate 5 and Fig 1) was located to the south east of **Crypt 1** and measured 1.4m by 0.7m by 0.8m deep. The crypt was constructed of a single thickness of stretchers capped with a barrel roof of 'on edge' bricks c. 200mm below the original floor level. The crypt was completely open and only vestiges of the roof survived. The interred remains were those of a child/adolescent within a lead and timber coffin, broken in antiquity. None of the memorials observed within the church refer to a child or adolescent and their identity is unknown.

Crypt 3 (see Plates 6 and 7 and Fig 1) was located in the western nave and constructed of a single thickness of stretchers capped with a probable re-used gravestone. The crypt measured c. 0.9m by c. 2.3m by c. 0.8m deep, c. 200mm below the original floor level. A lead and timber coffin was observed within the crypt but had been broken in antiquity and appeared to contain no human remains, although observations were only made via a small hole in the roof of the crypt. The identity of the individual is unknown.

Backfilled heating duct (see Plate 8 and Fig 1)

In the western nave a probable backfilled heating duct was observed filled with degraded wood. No human remains or coffin remnants were observed and the internal walls were covered with soot.

Burial (see Plate 9 and Fig 1)

In the centre of the northern aisle a burial was recorded c. 450mm below the original floor surface. The burial was that of an adult and had been truncated just below the pelvis. The northern aisle was built as an extension to the church in the 19th century and was constructed over the graveyard. The shallowness of the burial, date of the extension and the condition of the bones suggest that the burial was at least pre 1850. The remains were exhumed prior to the excavation of the new floors footing trenches and will be re-interred below the new floor.

Bibliography

Taylor, J.G. 1990 *The Parish Church of St Leonard Seaford Descriptive Historical Pictorial* Sumfield & Day

Acknowledgements

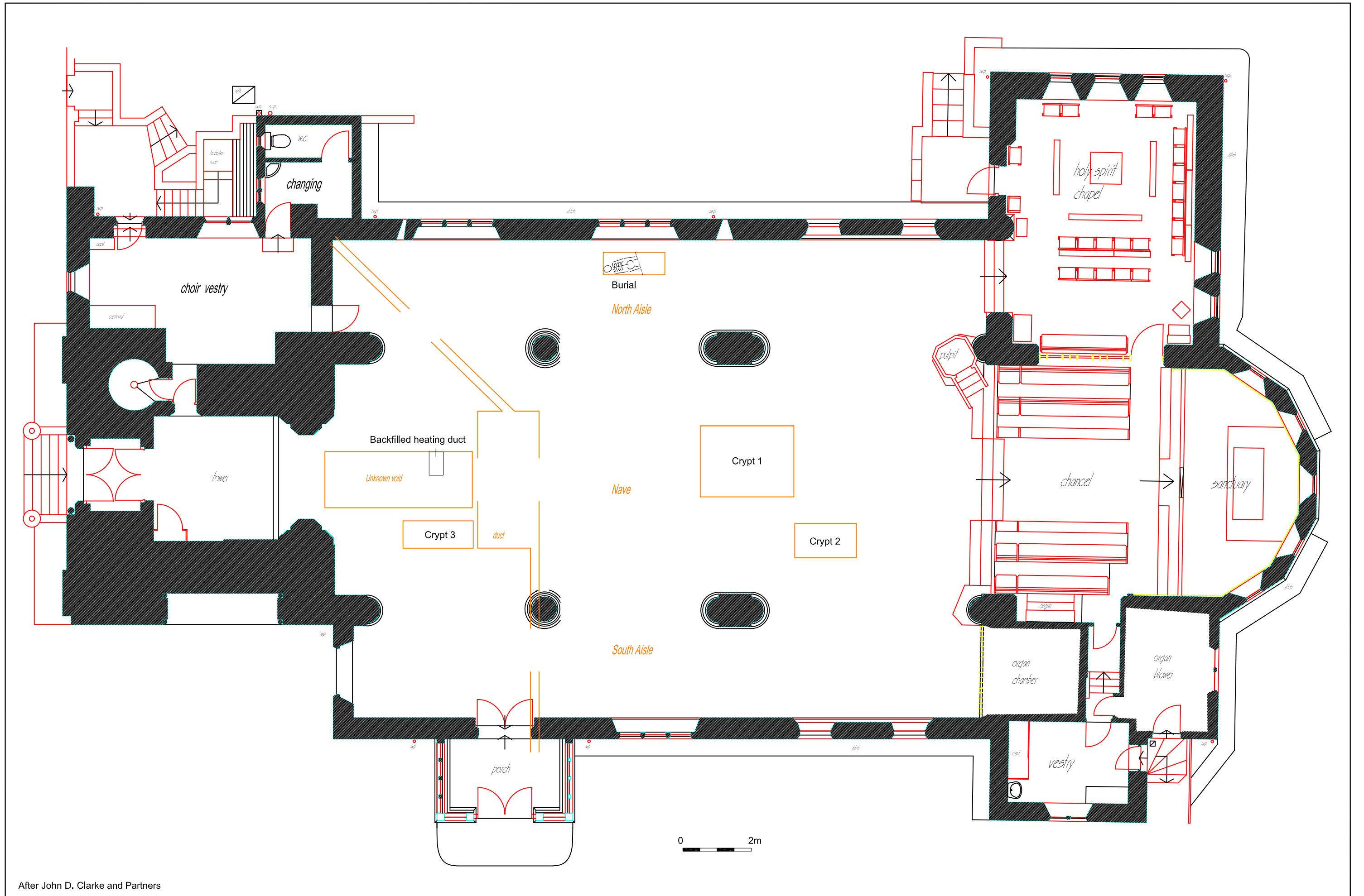
Thanks go to Bob Gerring for his photograph of the coffin plate in Crypt 1 (see accompanying cd), to John D Clarke and Partners Architects for the use of their survey plan and to the contractors for their help on site.

Figures

Figure 1 Plan of the Church showing location of Crypts and Burial

Plates

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Plate 1 | Crypt 1 external shot facing east |
| Plate 2 | Crypt 1 internal shot facing east |
| Plate 3 | Crypt 1 coffin plate (photo by Bob Gerring) |
| Plate 4 | Crypt 1 memorial |
| Plate 5 | Crypt 2 east facing shot |
| Plate 6 | Crypt 3 external |
| Plate 7 | Crypt 3 internal west facing |
| Plate 8 | Backfilled heating duct |
| Plate 9 | Burial west facing |



After John D. Clarke and Partners

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| © Archaeology South-East | | St. Leonard's Church, Seaford | | Fig. 1 |
| Ref: 2612 | Oct 2006 | Drawn by: JLR | Site Plan | |



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3

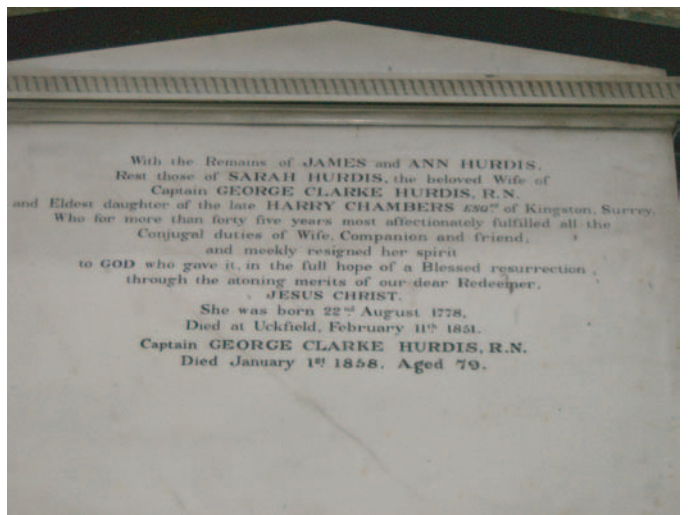


Plate 4

With the Remains of JAMES and ANN HURDIS,
Rest those of SARAH HURDIS, the beloved Wife of
Captain GEORGE CLARKE HURDIS, R.N.
and Eldest daughter of the late HARRY CHAMBERS Esq^r of Kingston, Surrey,
Who for more than forty five years most affectionately fulfilled all the
Conjugal duties of Wife, Companion and friend,
and meekly resigned her spirit
to GOD who gave it, in the full hope of a Blessed resurrection,
through the atoning merits of our dear Redeemer,
JESUS CHRIST.
She was born 22nd August 1778,
Died at Uckfield, February 11th 1851.
Captain GEORGE CLARKE HURDIS, R.N.
Died January 1st 1858. Aged 79.



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9

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