

## CASE 2

### **QUERY**

Dear Joseph

I have a query following your talk on the treatment of human remains at the ALGAO day in York the other week. I may have mentioned to you that I have an architect hoping to construct a church hall within the ruins of All Saints Church, Pontefract. The architect has stated that they need to undertake site investigation works within the church, essentially drilling a series of boreholes to examine the subsoil within the body of the church to inform the foundation design. I have not been informed by the architect of the likely diameter of the boreholes, however I would expect them to be about 4-6 inches.

I would be interested to receive your advice on this matter, while it is not piling it is highly likely that human remains may well be impacted by the works. My current assumption is that any human remains would need to be recovered from these cores and reburied.

Dr Chris Constable

## **RESPONSE**



# **Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Christian Burials in England (APACBE)**

## **Case 2**

20<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Advice to Christopher Constable, Senior Historic Buildings Officer with West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service, regarding proposed bore-holes within the ruined church of All Saints, Pontefract

the Advisory Panel (see [www.britarch.ac.uk/churches/humanremains/index.html](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/churches/humanremains/index.html)) has considered your request for advice, and makes the following comments. The advice is not intended to supplant that of the Diocesan Advisory Committee or other curatorial body in this case, but to give an overview of current best practice.

In general, one should follow the guidance set out in the Church of England/English Heritage guidance document which can be accessed through the APACBE web site.

Bore holes like this (especially within churches) should only be allowed, if at all, once proper assessment and if necessary evaluation has been carried out. This is not something that should be regarded as *de minimis*, as there are potentially serious archaeological, human remains and health & safety issues. Specifically:

1) The proposed boring has the effect of small-scale piling, and if done without prior assessment and if necessary evaluation has the potential to cause significant damage to archaeological deposits and features and human remains, including perhaps vaults or sealed coffin burials.

2) One might question the need for these bore holes - non-intrusive methods could be used, particularly GPR to ascertain presence of vaults.

3) A desk based assessment should be done to determine the likelihood of burials etc within the church before any work is carried out.

4) Arising from the results of this, appropriate methods of mitigation should be considered - from avoidance of disturbance altogether to archaeological evaluation of the area concerned.

5) If this boring is undertaken, any human remains disturbed should be reburied, normally within the churchyard as close as possible to their place of burial, but taking care not to disturb archaeological deposits or features or other burials. This may be done within the faculty issued for the work, or under a licence issued under the 1857 Burials Act by the Department for Constitutional Affairs. The latter would be necessary, for example, if the remains were reinterred in the original grave or vault.

We hope this advice is useful.

Chair, Joseph Elders  
Secretary, Simon Mays