

WANTAGE (OX)

WANPPWB  
228/98

**SS Peter and Paul**

**SS Peter and Paul, Church Street, Wantage, Oxon.**

**NGR SU 3969 8791**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

**Oxford Archaeological Unit**

**April 1998**

SS Peter and Paul

SS Peter and Paul, Church Street, Wantage, Oxon.

NGR SU 3969 8791

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Prepared by: *[Signature]*

Date: *12/3/98*

Checked by: *Anne D.H.*

Date: *17/4/98*

Approved by: *R. Williams* HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date: *17/4/1998*

Oxford Archaeological Unit

April 1998

## **Summary**

*In February 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at SS Peter and Paul, Church Street, Wantage, Oxon (NGR SU 3969 8791). No archaeological features were seen and no finds were retrieved. A small quantity of disarticulated human charnel was disturbed during the course of the works. This material was retrieved, bagged and retained for reburial at the completion of works.*

### **1 Introduction (Fig. 1)**

The development proposal comprised the provision of a new foul run for the church, which entailed the excavation of a drainage trench running north from the church, through the churchyard, to join with the foul main in The Cloisters.

The watching brief was commissioned by Joy Ripley, the Churchwarden, on behalf of the Church. It was undertaken in consultation with Mr David Miles, the Diocesan Advisory Committee's archaeological advisor.

### **2 Background**

The origins and development of the town of Wantage are not well understood at present. It was probably the site of a small Romano-British town, and coins and large quantities of pottery have been recovered during building operations in the area. Most of this material dates from the 2nd to the 4th centuries AD. The Cotswold Archaeological Trust recently excavated a substantial Roman settlement at Mill Street, a short distance to the north-west of SS Peter and Paul Church (CAT 1993).

Wantage was the birthplace of King Alfred, and its minster church and mill were mentioned in Domesday. However, evidence relating to the growth of the medieval town is scanty. A town was probably in existence by the 12th century but it is not possible accurately to estimate its size at that time. Medieval street planning, back lanes and burgage plots are all evident, but would appear to be later additions to an earlier pattern, with buildings visibly encroaching onto and over the large rectangular market place.

The present church of SS Peter and Paul dates largely from the 13th to the 15th centuries. In the 16th century two churches stood in the churchyard, one of which was quite small and was used as a school. It had a Norman door, and was demolished in 1850; a possibly 9th-century ornamented cross-shaft was recovered from the demolition rubble.

### **3 Aims**

The aims of the watching brief were to minimise any accidental exposure of and disturbance to human remains during the course of the works; to record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works to established standards (Wilkinson 1992), and to secure the preservation by record of any archaeology, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance.

#### **4 Methodology**

Separate inspection visits were made to the site as work progressed; all excavation was by hand. Human remains, when encountered, were carefully recovered and bagged, and discreetly handled, being kept covered prior to reinterment within the churchyard.

Within the constraints imposed by Health and Safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets.

#### **5 Results (Fig. 2)**

Two deposits were exposed in the drainage trench and manhole excavations; neither of them produced any artefactual evidence. A small quantity of human chanel was disturbed in the drainage trench, and also in the manhole excavation at the northern end of the drainage trench.

(1) was a friable mid-dark gray silty clay loam with 5% fine subangular silt, 0.10 m thick.

(2) was a mid gray clay loam with 10% medium silt and 10% medium subrounded gravel, and 2% small unworked limestone pieces; it also contained infrequent small percentages of modern house brick and tile. This deposit measured 0.50 m to the base of the excavation at the southern end of the trench, thickening to 0.90 m at the northern end. As seen in the northern manhole excavation, to a depth of 1.80 m, this deposit does not substantially change apart from becoming darker and containing a higher percentage of unworked limestone pieces. A small percentage - 5% - of small subangular chalk pieces were also noted towards the base of the excavation here.

#### **6 Discussion**

No archaeology was seen during the watching brief. The excavations in the churchyard disturbed a small quantity of disarticulated human chanel, which subsequently was bagged for reburial.

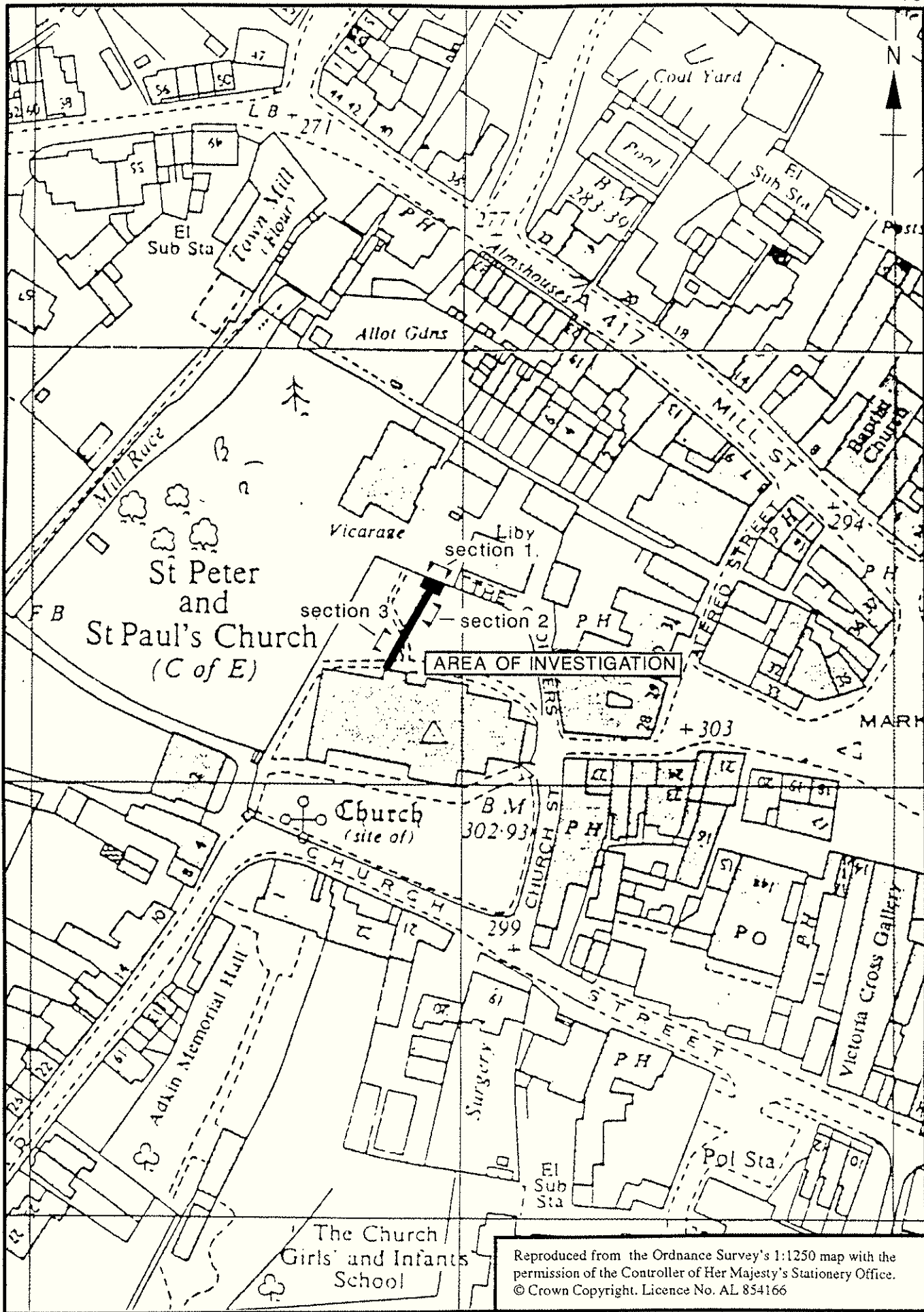
The watching brief successfully recorded those deposits that were revealed.

#### **References.**

CAT 1993 Excavations at Mill Street, Wantage, Oxon.

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).

John Dalton  
OAU  
February 1998

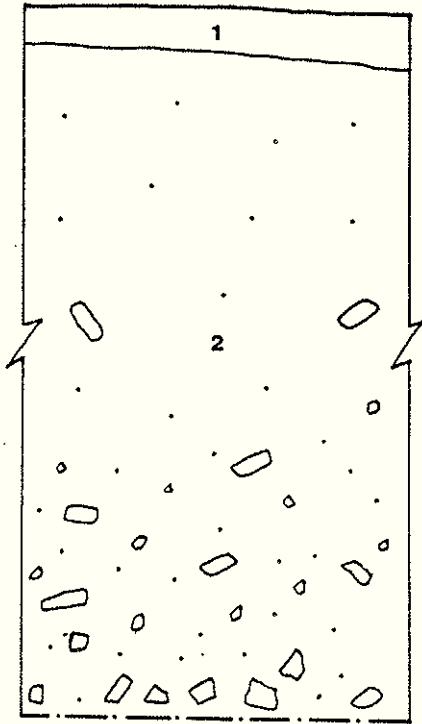


scale 1:1250

Location of site

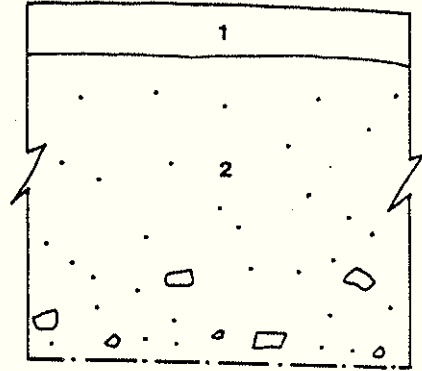
Figure 1

NW Section 1 SE



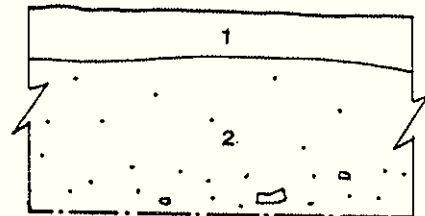
scale 1:20

NE Section 2 SW

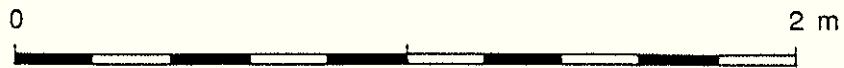


scale 1:20

SW Section 3 NE



scale 1:20



scale 1:20

Sections

Figure 2

