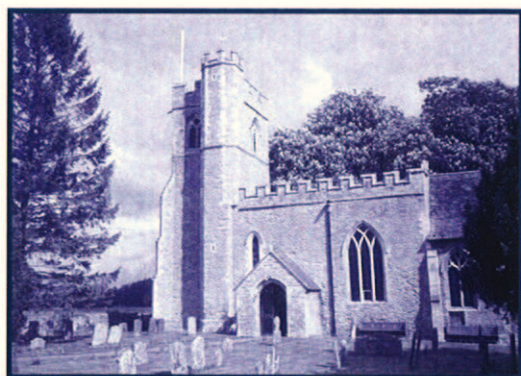


# St Nicholas Church Newton Blossomville Buckinghamshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

June 2003

**Client: Shenstone & Partners  
Architects**

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Signed.....



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Cover Plate: View of church from the south.

## SUMMARY

*In May and June 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Nicholas Church, Newton Bloomsville, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 925 515). The work was commissioned by Shenstone and Partners Architects in advance of installation of a new toilet and septic tank. The watching brief revealed a grave and the foundation cut for the tower, within a thick graveyard soil.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In May and June 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Nicholas Church, Newton Bloomsville, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Shenstone and Partners Architects in respect of the installation of toilet and kitchen area with new drainage and septic tank in graveyard.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Julian Munby, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor to the Diocese of Oxford.

1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on Upper lias at 50 m above OD. The site is situated on the north side of the village on the rise up from the river.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2003) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The church mostly dates to c. 1300 though parts of the nave, a high window in the south wall and some pitched stonework in the area of the porch could suggest earlier origins. The north aisle windows are early 14th century in date (Pevsner and Williamson, 1994, 580).

### 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.

2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

## 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 An archaeologist was present during all intrusive groundworks likely to affect archaeological deposits.
- 2.2.2 The trench for the waste pipe and hole for the septic tank were excavated by a mini excavator. The shallow water pipe trench was dug by hand from the church wall to join the new pipe trench into the church (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.3 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 In the hole excavated for the septic tank (Fig 3, section 3) the ground work exposed the natural of reddish brown silty clay (9) with limestone fragments. This had been overlain by a 0.7 m thick cultivated graveyard soil of dark brown silty sand loam (3), which had been cut by a grave (7). That part exposed measured 1.2 m x 0.7 m x 1.8 m deep with vertical sides and flat base and was filled by a dark reddish brown silty clay (8), with a skeleton and coffin in the base.
- 3.1.2 Where the pipe leaves the church tower it cut through the rough limestone block wall of the tower (Fig. 3, section 1) and through the vertical sided foundation trench (4). The base was below the impact level and the space between the wall and the cut was filled by a loose light brown silty sand loam (5). This was sealed below a 0.10 m thin layer of silty sand and gravel (2). This was the old path around church and across to the side gate. These were all sealed below 0.16 m thick layer of dark grey brown silty sand (1) topsoil. Along the north wall of the churchyard the graveyard soil (3) contained a large number of stone fragments extending no further than 3 m from the wall. This was debris from the wall construction and later rebuilds.
- 3.1.3 The water pipe trench was only 0.35 m deep and cut through the topsoil (1) into the graveyard soil (3) (Fig. 3, section 2).

### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A number of the coffin handles were recovered from grave fill (8), which dated to the early 19th century. The human remains were retained on site to be reburied at a later date.

### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

#### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief revealed two features: an unmarked grave from the 19th century and the foundation trench for the 14th century tower. These were both cut into a clean, but well-cultivated grave yard soil.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.16 m			Topsoil	
2	Layer	0.10 m			Pathway	
3	Layer	0.70 m			Graveyard soil	
4	Cut	0.55 m	0.50 m	0.40 m	Foundation trench	
5	Fill				Fill of cut 4	
6	Wall				West wall of tower	
7	Cut	1.80 m	0.70 m	1.20 m	Grave cut	
8	Fill				Fill of grave	Coffin handles
9	Natural					

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 2003 *Church of St Nicholas, Newton Blossomville, Buckinghamshire Written Scheme of Investigation*

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*

Pevsner N and Williamson, E 1994 *The Buildings of England, Buckinghamshire. Penguin*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** St Nicholas Church, Newton Blossomville, Buckinghamshire

**Site code:** NBLOS 03

**Grid reference:** NGR SP 9265 5170

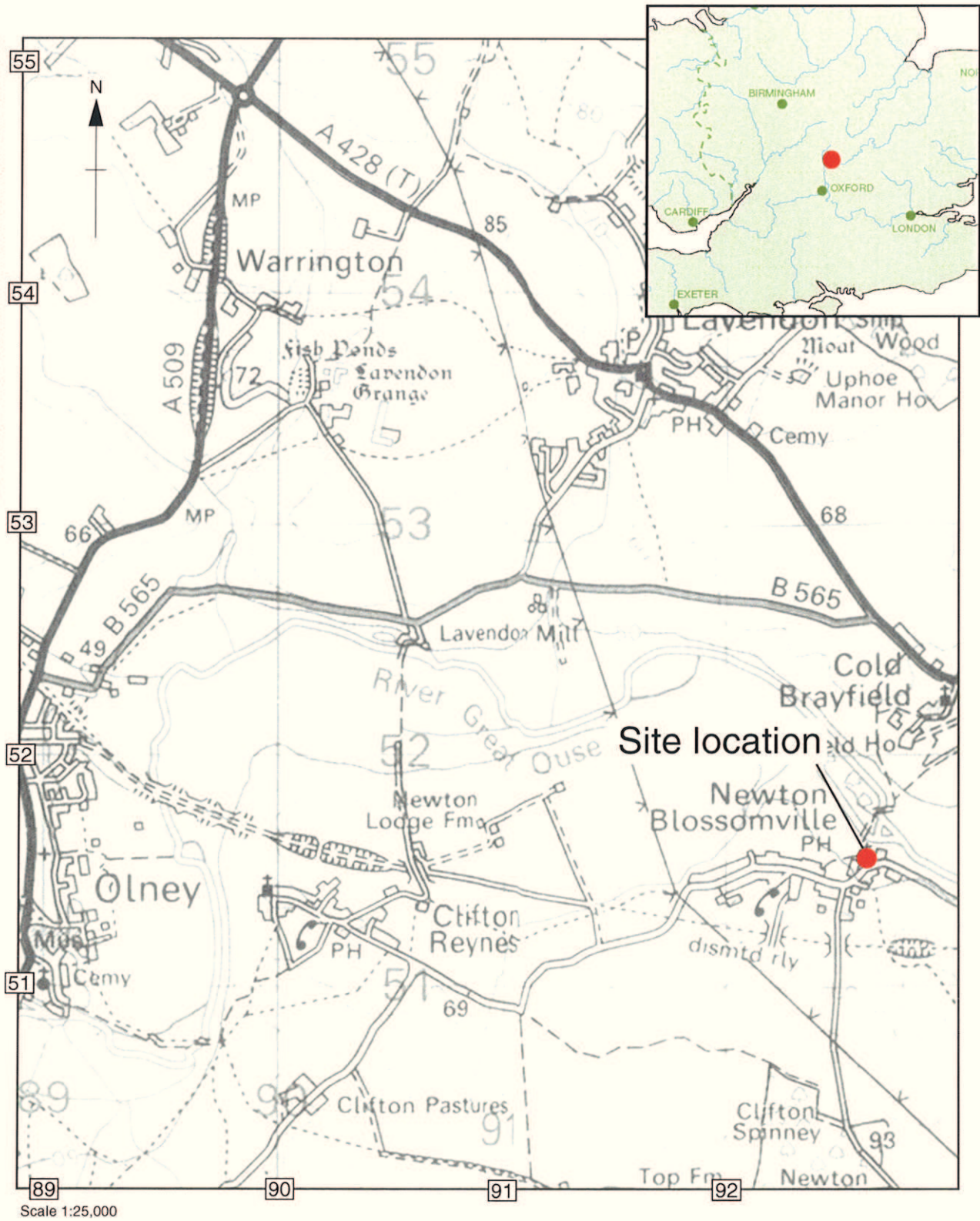
**Type of watching brief:** Ground works for installation of toilet in church.

**Date and duration of project:** Two site visits on the 13/5/2003 and 12/6/2003.

**Area of site:**

**Summary of results:** The watching brief recorded a grave and foundation cut for the 14th century tower in a thick graveyard soil.

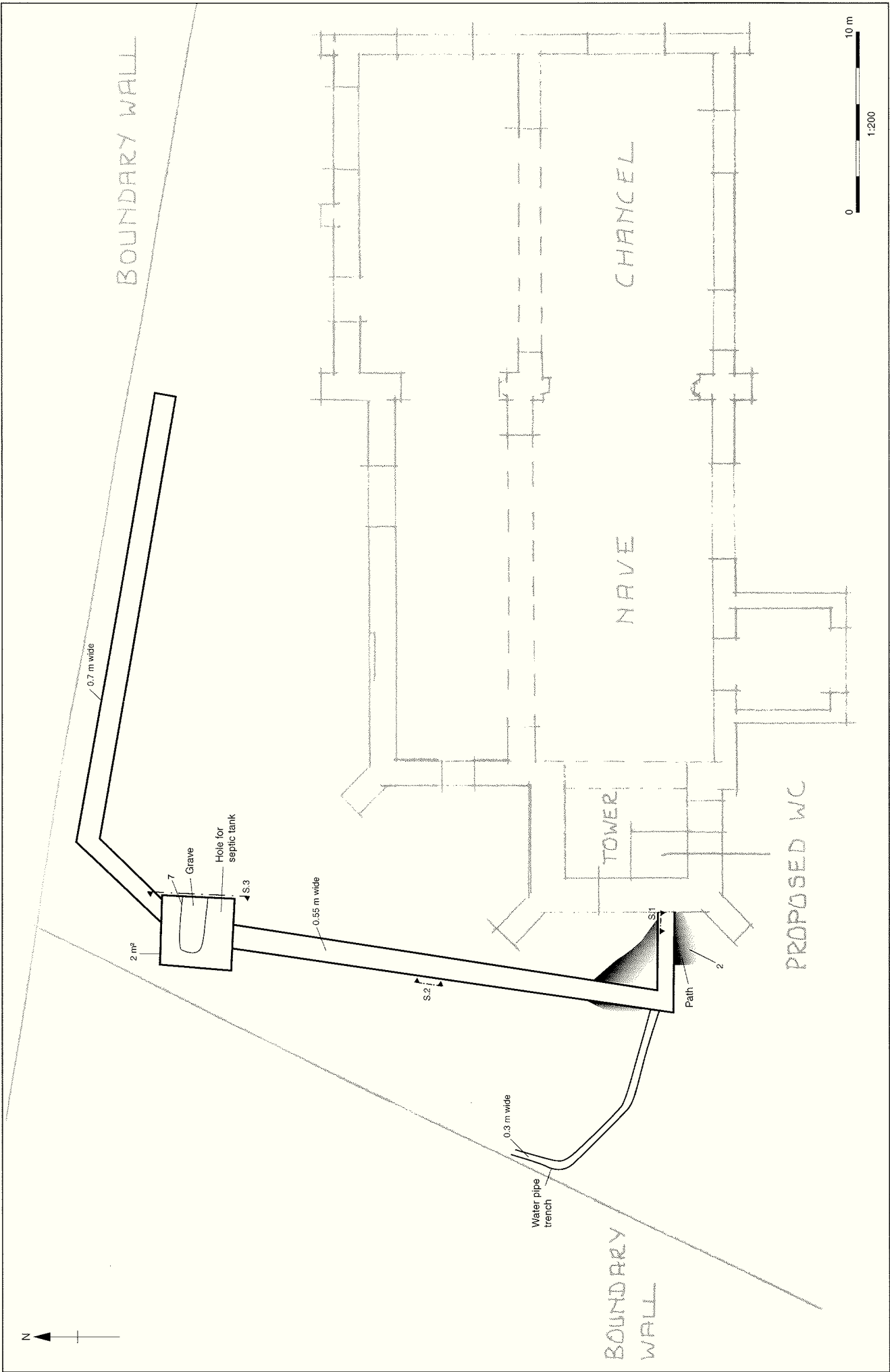
**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum, Technical Centre, Tring Rd, Halton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5PJ in due course, under the following accession number: ABYCM 2003.104



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Figure 1: Site location

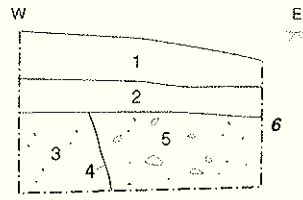




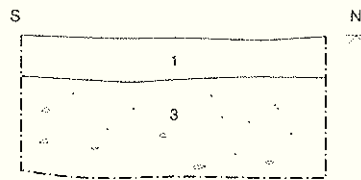
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Figure 2: Plan locating sections and showing features

Section 1



Section 2



Section 3

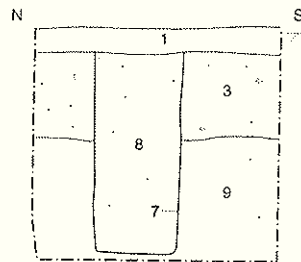






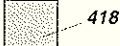





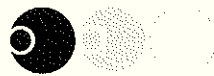


Figure 3: Sections 1-3

	Section line and number
	Interior section line and number
	Limit of excavation
	Sondage / Interior limit of excavation
	Fill line and number
	Cut line and number
	Structure number
	Unclear boundary
	Stones
	Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature
	Levels
	Grid point



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