

Church of St Mary the Virgin Iffley, Oxford



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



June 2009

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Church of St Mary the Virgin, Iffley, Oxford, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	1
1.2 Geology and topography.....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	1
2.1 Aims.....	2
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results.....	2
3.1 Description of deposits.....	2
3.2 Finds.....	2
4 Discussion And Conclusions.....	2
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references.....	4
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	4

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Site plan and sections.

SUMMARY

Between August and September 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Church of St Mary the Virgin, Iffley, Oxford, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 527 034). The work was commissioned by John Perryman Architects on behalf of the PCC in advance of new drainage around the walls of the church. The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits within the new drainage trench.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Iffley, Oxford, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by John Perryman Architects on behalf of the PCC in respect of new drainage around the walls of the church.

1.1.2 An archaeological recording specification was set by Julian Munby Diocesan Archaeological Adviser to the Diocesan of Oxford (DAA 2005).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.1.3 The site lies on 1st terrace gravel at 65 m above OD. The site is situated on the south side of Mill Lane at its southern end.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.1.4 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the archaeological recording specification for the project and is reproduced below.

1.1.5 St Mary the Virgin Church, Iffley was built the Romanesque style in 1175-82, with nave, central tower and chancel. A further two bays were added to the chancel in the 13th century, in the Early English style. Unusually, the original high, narrow layout has been preserved. Some new windows were inserted in the 13th and 15th centuries and parapets added in the 17th century. Restoration work during the 19th century included the reinsertion of a round window in the west front. The south and west doorways have some fine Norman decoration, although the former door is blocked on the inside by the altar. The church is a Grade 1 Listed Building.

1.1.6 During the 13th century an anchorite, Annora, is believed to have lived for nine years in a cell on the south side of the church. The cell could have been of timber or stone construction and there may have been a window from it into the church. No evidence has yet been uncovered showing the position of this structure. Anchorites lived with their future coffin lid and were buried under the stone.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 1.1.7 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 1.1.8 Record exposed fabric and foundations of church and possible impact on remains of the anchorite's cell.
- 1.1.9 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 1.1.10 A trench was excavated along the line of the old drainage system removing the old drainage pipes and runs. The two chambers at the north-west and south-west corners of the church were retained with the new drainage system being connected to them.
- 1.1.11 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 also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 1.1.12 The new drainage trench was approximately 0.5 m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.45 to 0.85 m around the base of the church (Fig. 2). Part of the new trench was within the old drainage trench, but towards the eastern end of the trench, the new trench was up to 0.3 m deeper to allow for new fall of the drains.
- 1.1.13 The new drainage trench cut through a 0.10 m thick dark grey brown silty sand loam (100 and 102) topsoil, which overlaid a light grey brown silty sand loam (101 and 103) old graveyard soil. A fragment of skull was recovered from this layer on the north side of the church (Fig. 2). This was a piece of charnel and reburied on the site. Sections of the stone foundations were observed and had been recorded in the 1995 (OAU 1995) works when the drainage system was installed.

3.2 Finds

- 1.1.14 No other finds than the skull fragment were recovered during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1.1.15 The excavation works were mainly within the earlier trench for the earlier drainage system and only went deeper where a fall was to be attained into the chambers at the north-west and south-west corners of the church. The trench cut through topsoil and into earlier graveyard soil. No grave cuts or building structure were observed within the confines of the trench. A fragment of charnel was uncovered and reburied on site.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>
100	Layer	0.10 m	0.45m to 1 m	Topsoil
101	Layer	0.30 m to 0.85 m	0.45m to 1 m	Graveyard soil
102	Layer	0.10 m	0.45m to 1 m	Topsoil
103	Layer	0.30 m to 0.85 m	0.45m to 1 m	Graveyard soil

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992, *Fieldwork Manual* (1st Edition, August 1992)

DAA 1995 St Mary the Virgin Church, Iffley Archaeological Recording Specification

OAU 1995 Church of St Mary the Virgin, Iffley, *Oxford Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Church of St Mary the Virgin, Iffley, Oxford

Site code: OXIFMV 05

Grid reference: NGR SP 527 034

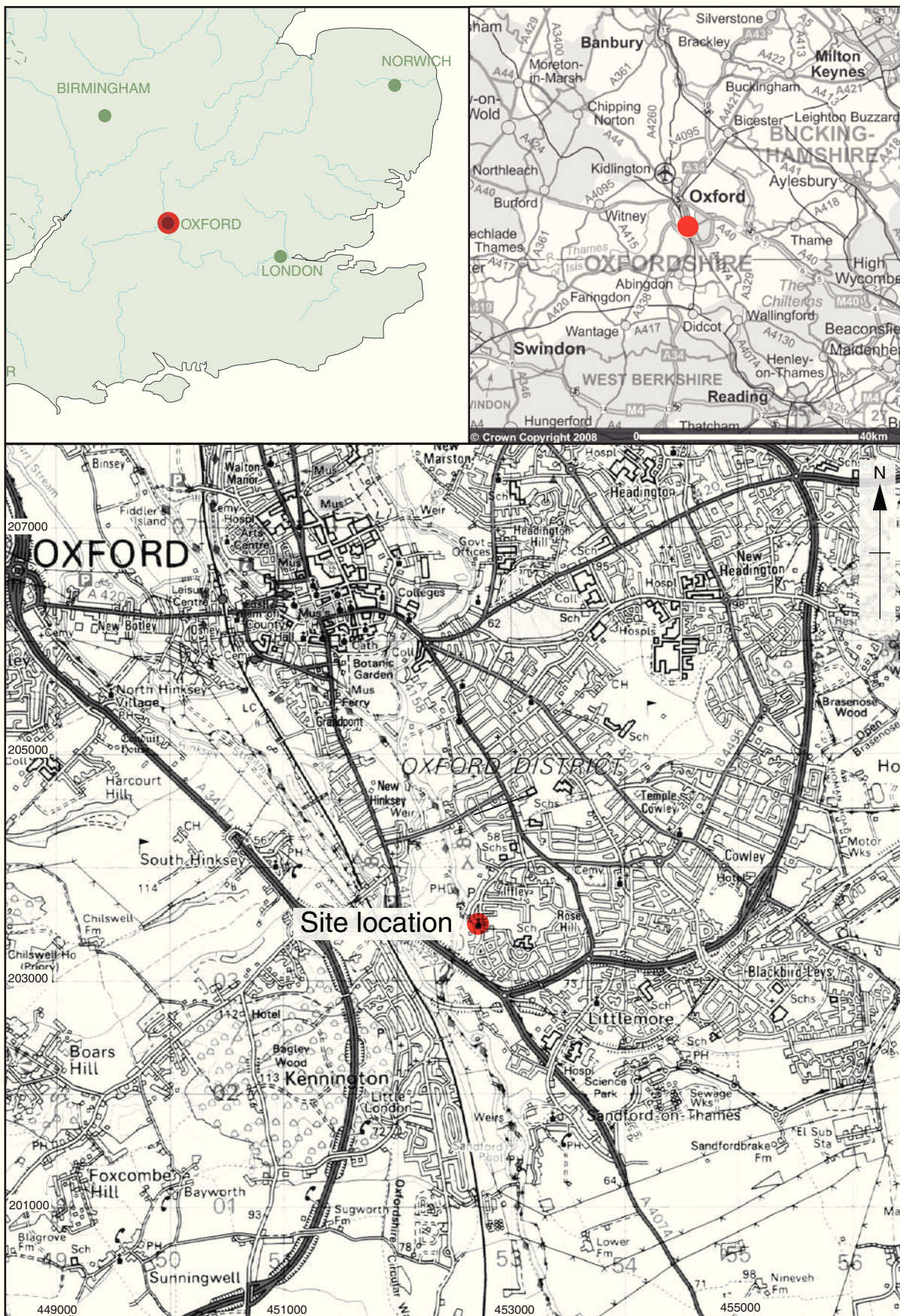
Type of watching brief: Excavation for new drainage around church.

Date and duration of project: Five visits from the 12/8/05 to the 6/9/05.

Area of site: Approximately 86 m long x 0.5 m wide trench around church.

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits within the new drainage trench.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2005.81



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Figure 1: Site location

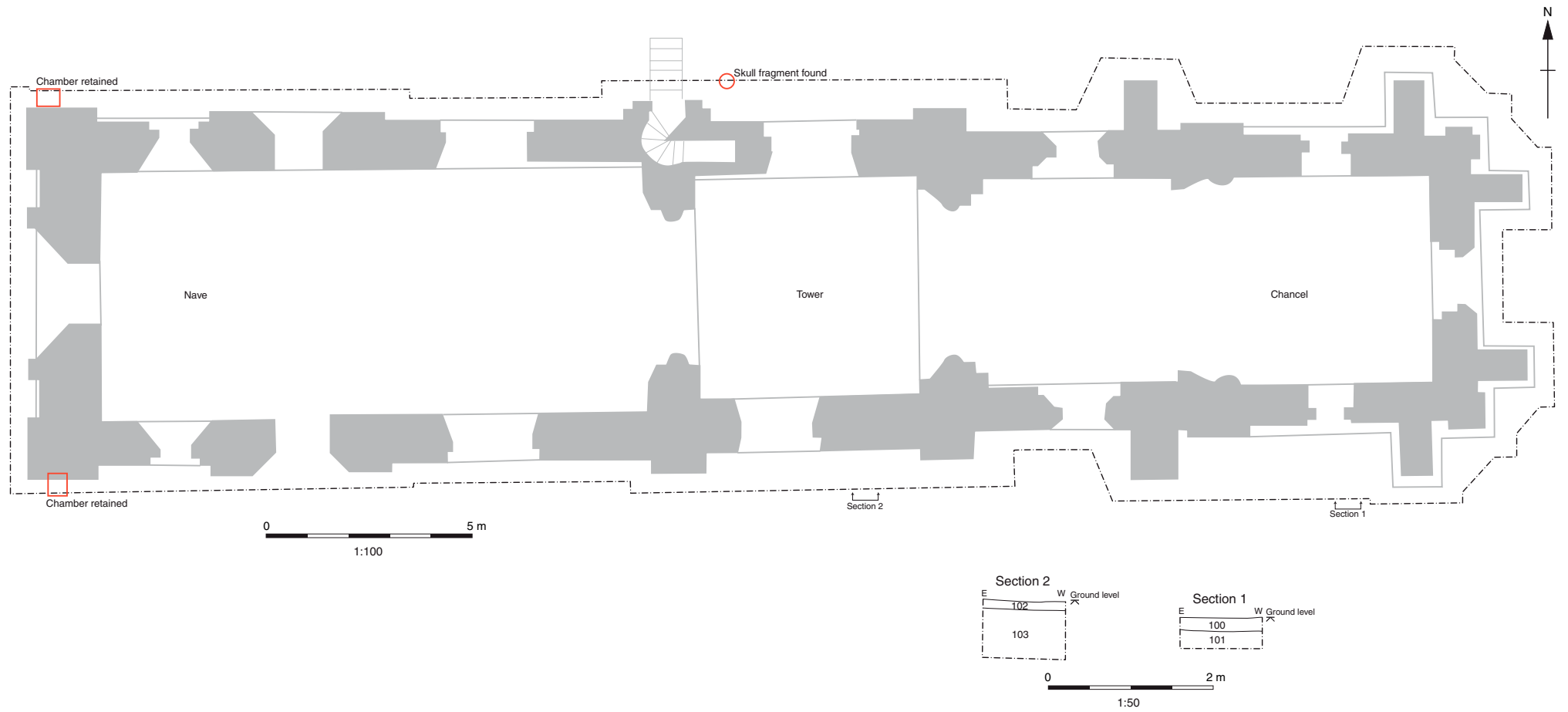


Figure 2 : Site plan and sections



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