

St Mary's Church
Cogges
Witney
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



June 2006

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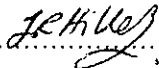
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St Mary's Church, Cogges, Witney, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Cover Plate: View of church from the south-west.

SUMMARY

In May 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Mary's Church, Cogges, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 361 096). The work was commissioned by the Parish Church Council in advance of new floor with under floor heating in the church. The watching brief revealed a vault, two earlier floor surfaces and the top of a wall pre-dating the 19th century flooring.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In May 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Mary's Church, Cogges, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the Parish Church Council in respect of a new floor and under floor heating in the church.
- 1.1.2 A archaeological record specification was set by Julian Munby, Archaeological Advisor to the Diocese of Oxford (ODAC).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on 1st Terrace river gravel deposits at 81.71 m above OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was taken from an earlier watching brief carried out by OA in 2003 that involved monitoring trenching in the graveyard (OA 2003) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 St Mary's Church was originally a two-cell late Saxon foundation. This was rebuilt in the 12th century and enlarged in the 14th century when the north tower was added. It has an unusual position diagonally across the west end of the north aisle. The south doorway and two bays of the south aisle are 12th century work. The porch and chancel date from the 13th century. Both the north aisle and north chapel are 14th century.
- 1.3.3 The site of Cogges was held by the Arsic family from the late 11th to mid 13th centuries. In 1103 they granted land to Fecamp Abbey who established an alien priory. The monks used St Mary's church until the priory was dissolved in 1414. The 1340 north chapel contains effigies of the de Grey family to whom the manor had passed and may have been used as a chantry.

- 1.3.4 The site of Cogges manor and priory has been designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 28177), the area of which includes St Mary's Church.

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 The floor of the church was lifted by hand over a number of weeks, and the stone slabs were saved for reuse. The old floor make up layer was then reduced by hand with help of a kangoo to the required depth. A service trench was cut east to west along north side of the church. This was carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 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 (*Fig. 2*)

- 3.1.1 The earliest deposit exposed was a dark reddish brown silty sand loam (1), a disturbed soil layer, which was observed in the bottom of the service trench and the north chancel floor area. This had been cut by the construction of a brick barrelled vault (4). It measured 3.1 m long x 1.4 m wide and was located in the north-west corner of the north chapel. In the south-east corner of the south aisle the remains of the top of a wall or foundation (5) was located. It measured 1.4 m long x 0.4 m wide built of large limestone fragments with a coarse yellowish brown mortar. These were all covered in a 0.20 m thick layer of crushed stone and mortar (2) floor make-up laid in the late 19th-century for the old floor of wooden blocks (3). A small bone comb was recovered from this layer.
- 3.1.2 Floor make-up layer (2) also sealed a flagstone floor (7) in the base of the bell tower that was made of cut limestone flagstone with a sandy mortar bond. At the east end of the church in front of the altar, under the step from the chancel to the altar, a remaining strip of the old 19th-century floor tiles (6) remained. These were of three colours of black, red and cream. The tiles measured 0.11 m x 0.11 m x 0.01 m and bedded in grey sand cement. These were sealed below the new chancel and altar floor

laid in the 1960s and consisting of stone slabs and re-used gravestone lay on a bed of concrete.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A Double Sided Simple bone comb was recovered from context 2. This example is unusually small and finely made. The middle section is wide and straight with both sets of teeth being very fine. The ends are slightly convex which is common in combs dating from the 17th century and later (Biddle M 1990).

Object	Context	Length mm	Parallel
Comb	2	42mm	Galloway 1990. 665 - 692, fig 185, No 2185

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 in the disturbed soil horizon (1) and a stone slab floor (7) in base of tower. These were all sealed below 19th century floor make-up for the wooden block floor and tiled floor (6) of the chancel. Part of the tiled floor was exposed, sealed under the 1960's stone slab floor of the chancel and altar area.
- 4.1.2 The two features that were exposed in the disturbed soil horizon (1) were a barrel vaulted brick lined burial shaft dating from the 18th century (4) and was located in the north-west corner of the north chapel. In the south-east corner of the south aisle the top of a wall or foundation (5) was exposed and could either be the edge of a vault or support for one of a number pew layout shown on church floor plans dating from 1830 to 1836 by James Long and pre-dating the old 19th-century wooden block floor.

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				Disturbed soil	
2	Layer				19th century floor make-up	bone comb
3	Layer				19th-century floor surface	
4	Vault				Brick lined shaft	
5	Wall				Stone wall or foundation	
6	Layer				19th-century floor tiles	
7	Layer				Stone slab floor	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Biddle M 1990, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester*, Oxford University Press.

Galloway P 1990, 'Toilet Equipment; Combs of Bone, Antler and Ivory' in Biddle M 1990, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester*, Oxford University Press.

OA 2003 *St Mary's Church, Cogges, Oxfordshire Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Mary's Church, Cogges, Witney, Oxfordshire

Site code: WITSM 06

Grid reference: NGR SP 361 096

Type of watching brief: Reduction of church floor for new heating and new floor.

Date and duration of project: A total of five visits from the 16/5/2006 to the 30/5/2006.

Area of site: 20m x 12.5 m

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed a vault, two earlier floor surfaces and top of a wall pre-dating the 19th century flooring.

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:2006.62



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

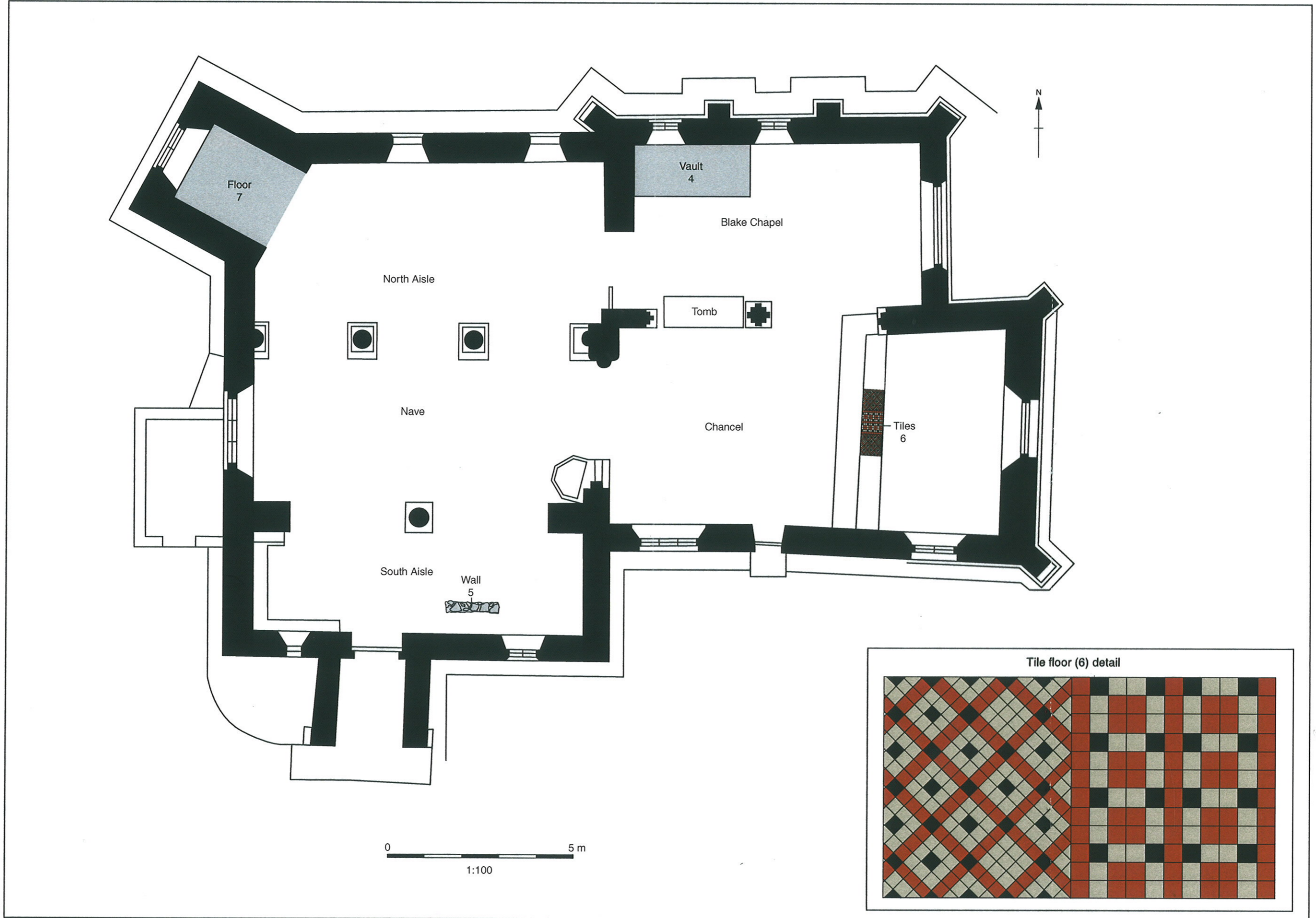


Figure 2: Site plan of features exposed in St Mary's Church, during floor reduction



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