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Shenstone & Partners

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Ivinghoe,
Buckinghamshire

NGR SP 9455 1620

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Oxford Archaeological Unit

July 1999

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Date: 6/8/1999

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Date: 6/8/1999

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Summary

In April 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 9455 1620). No archaeological features were seen and no finds were retrieved. A quantity of disarticulated human charnel was retrieved from the excavations for both the drain runs and the soakaways; this material was bagged and stored prior to its reburial within the churchyard.

1 Introduction (Fig. 1)

The development proposal comprised improving drainage to the south aisle of the church through the excavation of a new French drain, two new drain runs and two new soakaways, as part of an extensive programme of repair and restoration to the fabric of the church.

The watching brief was commissioned by Shenstone & Partners, Architects Planners Surveyors, on behalf of St Mary the Virgin. It was required by Mr David Miles, the then archaeological advisor to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, and was undertaken in consultation with him.

2 Background

St Mary's was extensively restored by G E Street in 1871, however there has been a church on the site since the 13th-century, although the tower dates from the early 14th. 13th century features remaining today include the west doorway, being restored as part of the current programme, and the five bay arcades.

Externally, a water main serving the village was routed through the churchyard in the early 20th-century; although its precise route is unknown it was thought possible that it could impact on one or both of the drain runs and soakaways.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken by means of three separate inspection visits. The French drain and the drain runs were dug by hand, and the soakaways by Kubota mini-digger. Human remains, when encountered, were examined before being bagged and stored in the church prior to their reburial 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.

Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results

French Drain.

The French drain was dug to a mean depth of 0.42 m. At the base of the cut was seen a chalky mid grey clay natural 0.20 m thick, (4). This was sealed by patchy lenses of mortar with occasional fragments of red housebrick 0.01 m thick, (3). This was seen to underlie a chalky mid grey clay loam with occasional fragments of housebrick 0.15 m thick, (2), which in turn was sealed by a thin skim of topsoil 0.06 m thick, (1).

Drain runs.

The western drain run was completed first and was dug to a mean depth of 0.34 m. The earliest deposit seen here was the graveyard soil, (5), a mid grey chalky, silty clay loam much disturbed by root action which was consistent to the base of the cut; natural deposits were not seen. This was sealed by topsoil (1).

The eastern drain run was dug to similar dimensions and revealed exactly the same sequence of deposits, with the exception that here (5) was seen to contain large quantities of broken worked clunch stone and brick rubble. Also when the topsoil was removed over the location of the soakaway, the subsoil was seen to be sealed by a deposit of tarmac.

Soakaways.

The western soakaway was dug to a depth of 1.60 m and was circular in plan, measuring just over 1 m across its centre. The earliest deposit seen here was the chalky natural (4), to a thickness of 0.10 m to the base of the cut. This was sealed by graveyard soil (5), 1.29 m thick. This was seen to underlie subsoil (2), 0.15 m thick which in turn was sealed by topsoil (1), 0.06 m thick. The graveyard soil (5) produced sundry pieces of disarticulated human charnel, all of which were bagged and reburied.

The eastern soakaway was dug to a similar depth and dimensions and revealed an identical sequence of deposits, albeit heavily disturbed. Separating the topsoil (1) and subsoil (2) was a deposit of tarmac (6); the graveyard soil (5) was seen to contain fragmented red housebrick, a quantity of Victorian bottle glass and fragments of Victorian quarry floor tile and roof tile. (5) also produced a quantity of human charnel, which again was bagged and reburied.

6 Finds

Sundry pieces of Victorian glass, brick and tile were examined on site but not retained. No finds predating the 19th-century were seen.

7 Environmental results

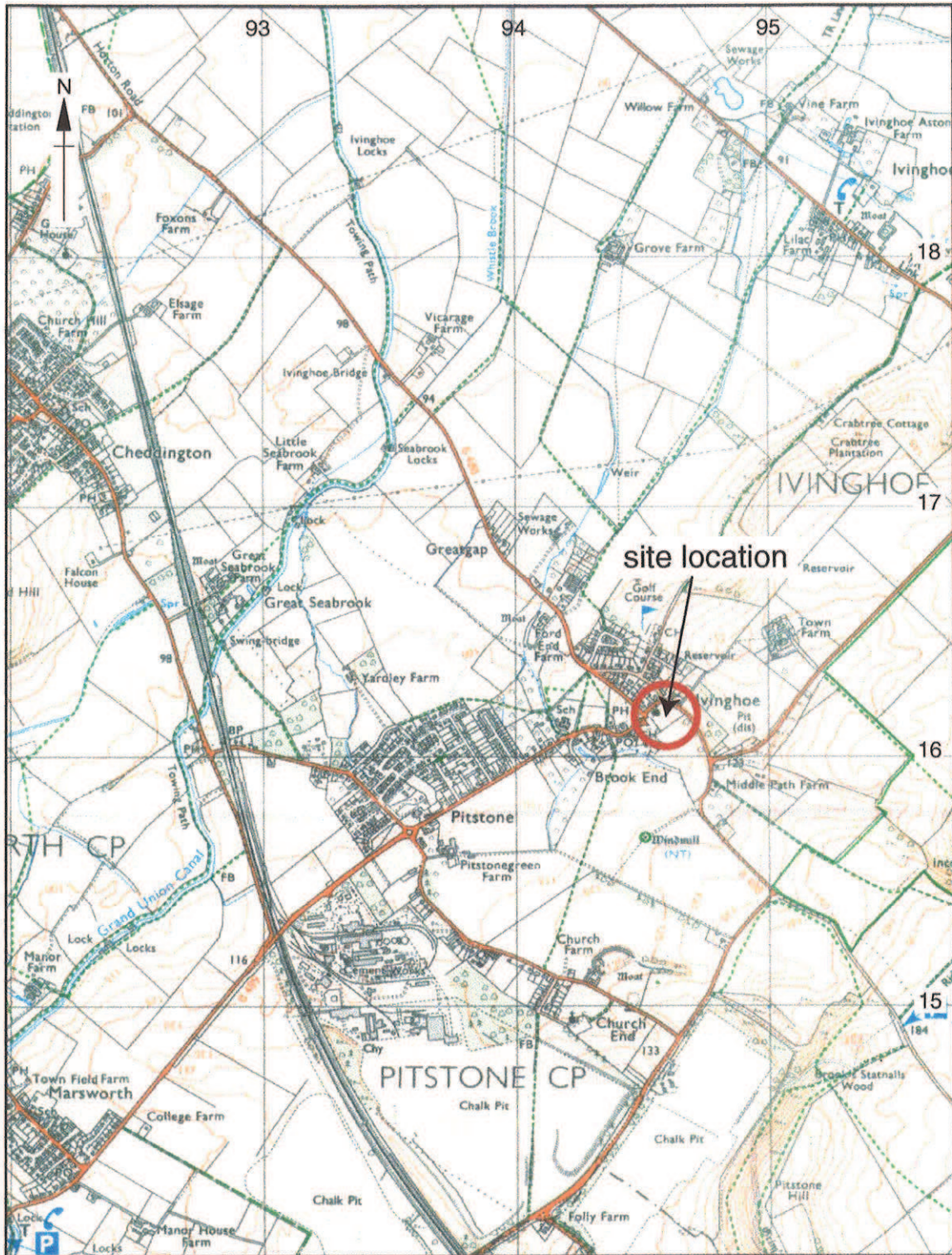
Due to the absence of any significant archaeology, no environmental soil samples were taken.

8 Discussion

The watching brief identified neither significant archaeological features nor finds; all human charnel seen was post-medieval and was bagged and reburied. The extensive disturbance seen in the churchyard in the vicinity of the eastern soakaway is thought likely to have resulted from the major restoration works in 1871, and possibly also the early 20th-century water main.

References.

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



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figure 1: site location



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