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St James the Less Church Winterbourne West Berkshire



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology

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Prepared by: James Mumford
Position: Supervisor
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Checked by: Jon Hiller
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 17th October 2002

Approved by: Robert Williams
Position: Director, Head of Business and Operations
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Signed 

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Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

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Church of St James the Less, Winterbourne, West Berkshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In September 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Church of St James the Less, Winterbourne, West Berkshire (NGR SU 4501 7200). The work was commissioned by Roger Pope Associates in advance of the construction of a new tile floor and a disabled toilet with service trench. The watching brief revealed the remains of an earlier tower or wall pre-dating the present brick tower of 1759 and possibly that of the 14th century church.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In September 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Church of St James the Less, Winterbourne, West Berkshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Roger Pope Associates in respect of the construction of a toilet with service trench and the laying of a new floor within the west tower.

1.1.2 The OA worked to a project brief, which was set by Julian Munby, the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on Reading Beds of clay and sand over Upper Chalk at 120 m above OD. The site is situated to the south-west of the village of Winterbourne on a hill.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the Archaeological Recording Specification and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 St James the Less Church was almost completely rebuilt in 1854 by Hugall. However some features of the early 14th century church were reused. The chancel was further restored in 1895 by Hudson. The north chapel dates from 1712 while the tower, of red and blue brick, was added in 1759.

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 The OA wish to thank Roger Pope and H.G. Wells Builders for their help and co-operation during the period of the watching brief.

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 tower was reduced by hand to a depth of 0.3 m below the floor surface and a small basement containing a boiler in south-east corner of the tower was filled in. The drainage trench in the churchyard was excavated by a JCB equipped with a 0.5 m toothed bucket. A 2 m x 2.8 m hole was also excavated for a new septic tank (Fig. 2).
- 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

Drainage trench

- 3.1.1 The trench was excavated from the west end of the north aisle joining to a manhole that connected to the new toilet in the tower. From the manhole the trench ran westwards to the site of the new septic tank, then to another manhole before heading southwards. The trench was 0.5 m wide and sloped from a depth of 0.5 m to 1 m before entering the septic tank trench (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 The trench and hole for the septic tank cut through a 0.26 m thick layer of dark grey-brown topsoil (1) overlying a 0.2-3 m thick layer reddish brown silty clay (2), which appears to be disturbed subsoil from burial activity in the graveyard. Sealed below this was the subsoil of dark reddish brown silty clay loam (5) over a natural of yellowish brown clay with flints (6) (Fig. 4, section 2).
- 3.1.3 In the area where the service trench extended from the tower and north aisle walls, the remains of a flint wall (3) of flint nodules bonded with a yellowish brown sandy mortar was observed. The wall had been constructed in a vertical sided foundation trench (4) (Fig. 4, section 1). The wall had been badly truncated by the construction of a French drain around the base of the tower.
- 3.1.4 A possible grave cut, part of a soakaway and two land drains were noted in the trench (Fig. 2).

Tower Floor

- 3.1.5 The floor of the tower was reduced by 0.33 m and involved removing the old brick tile floor and thin layers of concrete. These were bedded on a 0.03 m thick layer of compacted sand. In the south-east corner of the tower, a small basement (13) had been constructed measuring 2.6 m x 1.45 m x 1.45 m. It had a concrete floor and concrete cast wall (14), with a partly covered reinforced concrete roof that was 0.08 m thick. This housed an old boiler for the late 1800s heating system (Fig. 3).

3.1.6 Sealed below the sand and also cut by the basement, the construction trench (11) for the 1759 tower was exposed. This was filled by a dark brown silty sand (12) with building debris, which lay against reused worked stone possibly from the old tower. Across the centre of the tower was a north-south aligned wall (8) constructed of flint bonded with a yellow-brown sandy mortar. The wall measured 1.85 m x 1 0.25 m. This had been constructed in a foundation trench (7) that was 1.9 m long and 1.38 m wide, with vertical sides extending below the depth of excavation. The void between the wall (8) and the foundation cut (7) was infilled with chalk, flint and mortar fragments (9). The trench cut into a layer of light reddish brown silty sand loam (10), which represented disturbed ground from the construction of the church (Fig. 3).

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No finds were recovered from the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The results from the watching brief exposed the remains of a flint stone wall (8), which continued on the north side of the tower, but had been badly truncated by later drainage work.

4.1.2 This wall could be part of the west wall of the 14th century church or an associated tower pre-dating the 1759 brick-built tower. No dating evidence was recovered to aid interpretation. The service trench exposed one possible grave cut, and no human remains were disturbed in the course of the excavations.

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	0.25 m			Topsoil of graveyard	None
2	Layer	0.2 – 3 m			Disturbed grave yard soil	None
3	Wall	0.3 m	1.3 m	1.5 m	Wall	
4	Cut				Foundation Cut	
5	Layer				Subsoil	None
6	Natural				Natural Clay	None
7	Cut		1.38 m	1.9 m	Foundation Cut	
8	Wall	0.25 m	1 m	1.85 m	Wall	
9	Fill				Fill between wall and cut	None
10	Layer				Disturbed soil from church construction	None
11	Cut		0.3 m		1759 foundation cut	
12	Fill				Fill between wall and cut	None
13	Cut	1.45 m	1.45 m	2.6 m	1800's Basement Cut	
14	Structure				Concrete Basement	
15	not used					
16	Structure				Reused stone work base of brick tower	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

D Wilkinson Ed, 1992; *OAU Fieldwork Manual*

Berkshire Archdeaconry: Newbury Deanery *St James the Less Church, Winterbourne Archaeological Recording Specification*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Church of St James the Less, Winterbourne, West Berkshire

Site code: WIJAM 02

Grid reference: NGR SU 4501 7200

Type of watching brief: Service trench for the construction of new toilet in tower.

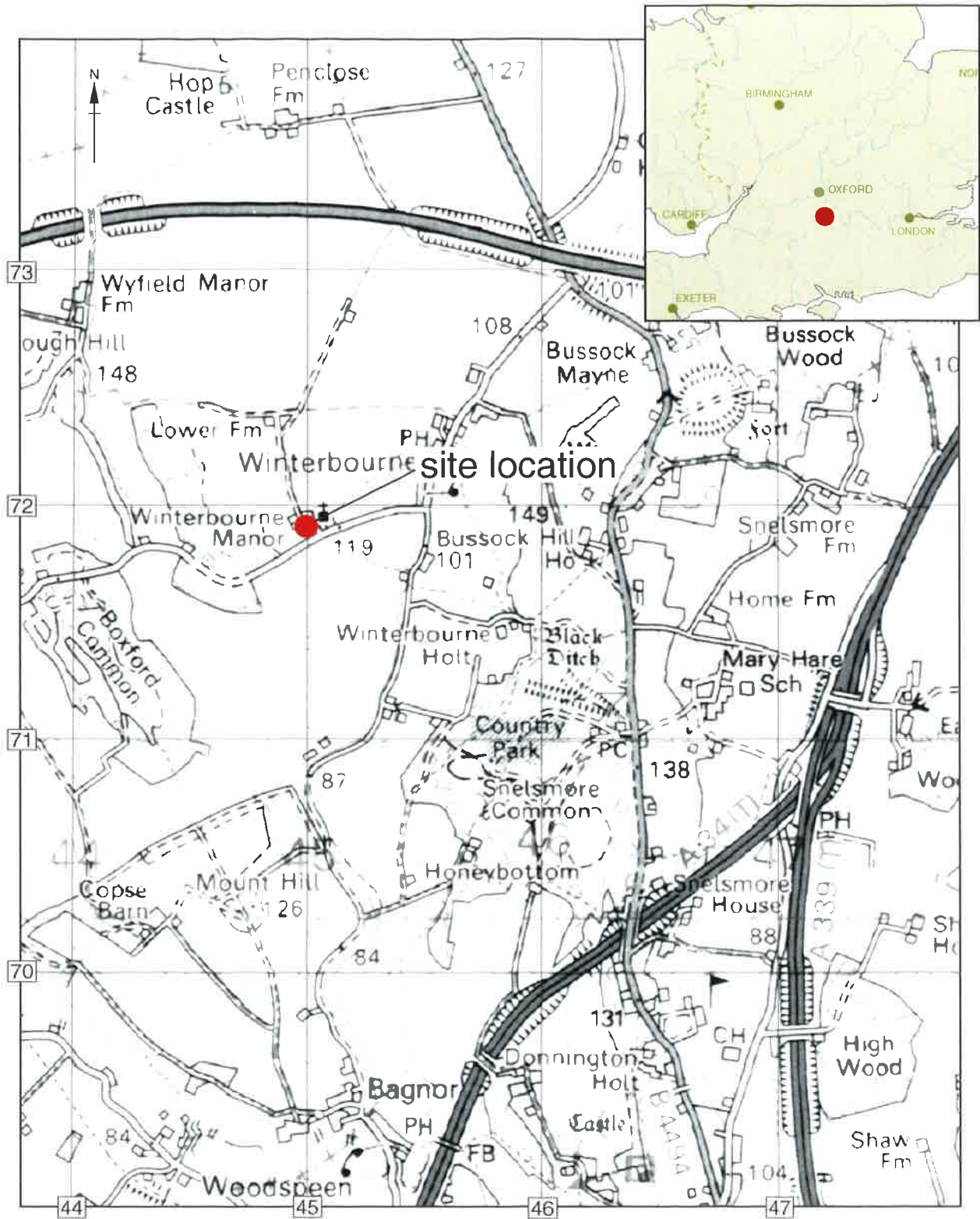
Date and duration of project: Two visits on the 19/09/2002 and 25/09/2002.

Area of site: 3 x 3.6 m in tower and 20 m of trench.

Summary of results: The results from the watching brief exposed remains of an earlier tower or wall pre-dating the 1759 brick tower.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with West Berks Heritage Service, The Wharf,

Newbury, Berks, RG14 5AS in due course, under the following accession number: NEBYM
2002.27



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

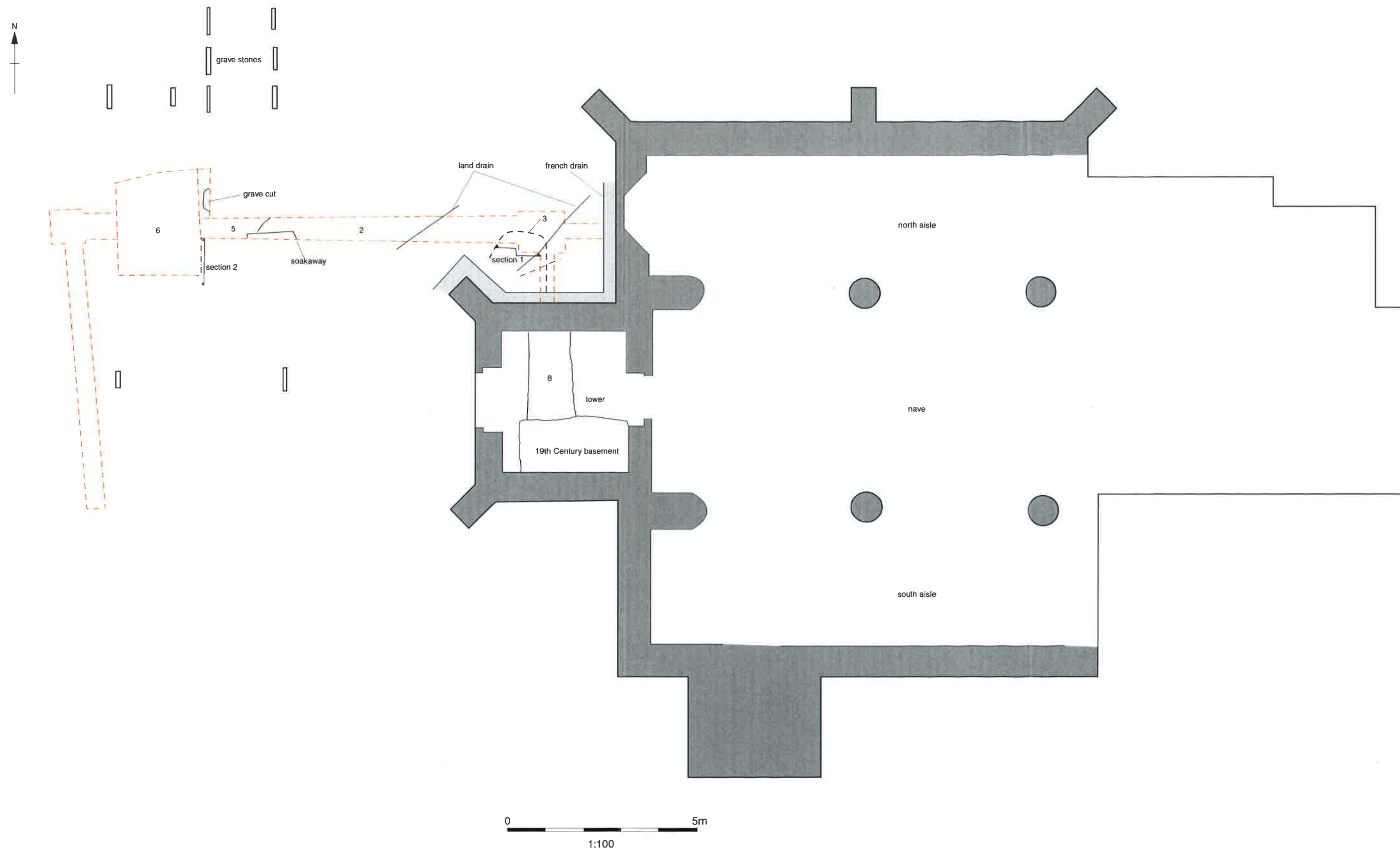


Figure 2 : Location of Service Trench and Sections.

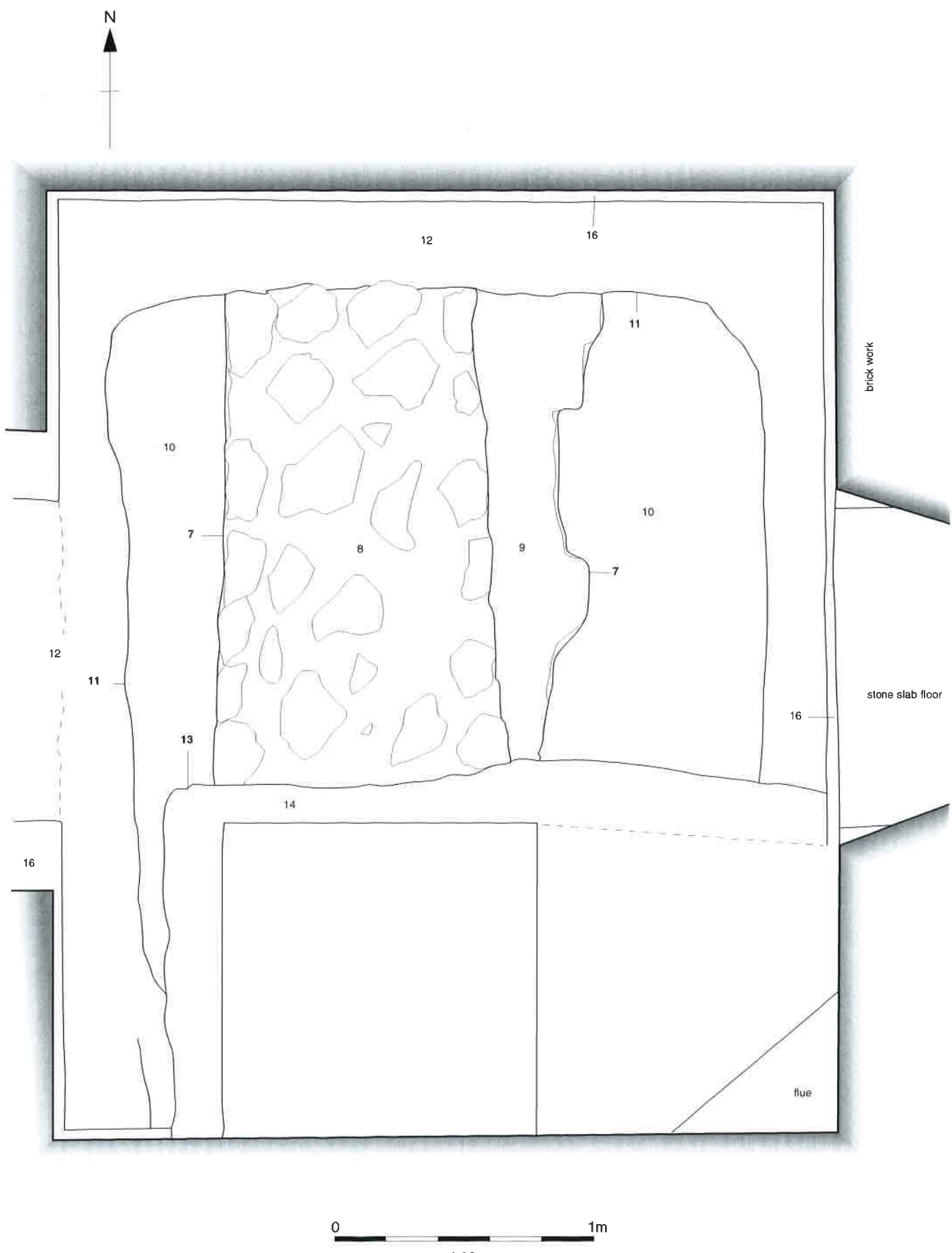


Figure 3 : Plan of Tower

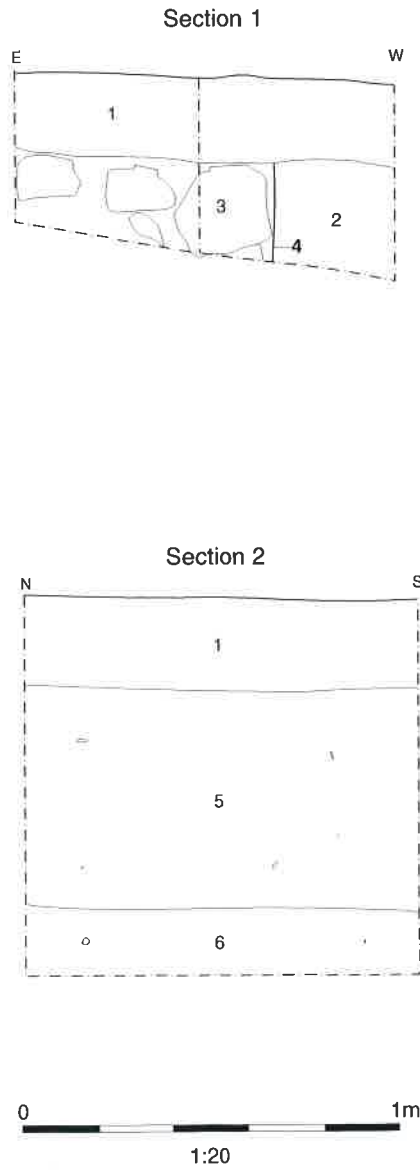


Figure 4 : Sections



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 848666
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA



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