

# St Leonards Church St Leonards Buckinghamshire



## Archaeological Evaluation



Oxford Archaeology

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Signed.....

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**St Leonards Church  
St Leonards  
Buckinghamshire**

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION*

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## SUMMARY

*In April 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at St Leonards Church, St Leonards Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 9100 0700) on behalf of St Leonards Parochial Church Council. The evaluation revealed the foundations of a small 19th century building, which may have been associated with a late 19th century Vicarage, which has since been demolished. A single undated post hole was also discovered.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In April 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at St Leonards Church, St Leonards, Buckinghamshire, on behalf of St Leonards Parochial Church Council (Fig. 1). The work was in respect of a planning application for a new church hall (Planning Application No. 01/0804) and a brief set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed with Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service. The development site is situated to the east of the present church hall and is *c* 0.01 hectares in area.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on clay with flints overlying upper chalk at *c* 217 m above OD. The site is situated on grassland, to the east of the church, which was previously the rear garden of a 19th century rectory.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation has been collated from a visit to the Buckinghamshire SMR by OA's Andy Buckley on the 20th March 2002, the results of which are presented below. The site itself has produced limited archaeological evidence. There are no known sites with archaeological remains adjacent to the development site. The Church of St Leonards is contained within the modern parish of Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards. The 250 m study area that surrounds the site of proposed development lay within the limits of the ancient parish of Aston Clinton. While the dedication to St. Leonard hints at some sort of continuity from the Romano-British period archaeological evidence within the area is almost non-existent.

1.3.2 The only entry recorded in the Buckinghamshire SMR within the study area is the chapel of St Leonard. First mentioned in a 12<sup>th</sup> century charter, the chapel is believed to have been built in 1278 on the site of a ancient hermitage or cell. Throughout the medieval period the chapel served the small hamlet of St Leonard's. Destroyed in the Civil War it was thereafter rebuilt, finally becoming a parish church in 1860.

1.3.3 There is almost nothing known about the origins and archaeology of Chiltern chapels and their associated settlements.

## 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Thanks must be extended to Sheila Davies, St Leonards Church Warden, for her assistance during the evaluation.

## 2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.
- 2.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

## 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of one trench measuring *c* 10 m by 1.6 m (Fig. 2). The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a mini kubota mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. The trench was shorter than the planned 10 m because of sensitive ash roots to the north and immovable tree stumps to the south.

### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trench was cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

### 3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 Due to the absence of significant archaeological deposits no environmental samples were taken.

### 3.5 Presentation of results

- 3.5.1 Section 5 includes individual context descriptions, with archaeological deposits and features described from earliest to latest. Context information is summarised in the context inventory (Appendix 1).

## 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site consisted of a clay natural below loamy soils. Although the excavation was carried out during heavy rain no problems were encountered. The positioning of the trench was made difficult by the presence of large tree stumps to the south and an ash tree to the north, the roots of which extended into the evaluation area and were to be avoided.

### 4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 The archaeology encountered consisted of the remains of a structure to the north of the trench and an undated post hole to the south of the trench.

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits

- 5.1.1 Natural clay (4) was encountered at 0.30 m below ground level (bgl) in the north of the trench and 0.70 m bgl in the south of the trench. A possible post hole, 0.30 m in diameter and 0.10 m deep, (7) cut the natural in the south of the trench and was filled with a brown sandy clay (8). A redeposited post-medieval garden soil (3) appeared to seal the post hole and was truncated by a rectilinear foundation cut (5). The construction trench was to the north of the trench and was 0.35 m wide, over 0.35 m deep and over 1 m long. The cut contained a wall foundation constructed from flint nodules and machine made bricks (6). The bricks were only present in the south-west corner of the construction. A layer of rubble demolition (2) overlay the foundations, and was in turn sealed by a garden soil (1) (Fig. 2).

### 5.2 Finds

#### *Post Medieval Pottery*

- 5.2.1 One sherd of post medieval pottery, which was in production from the 17th century to the early 20th century, was retrieved from context 3, an imported soil. Jane Timby of OA has assigned a date from the 18th or 19th century.

#### *Ceramic Building Material*

- 5.2.2 A brick was recovered from wall 6 which was machine made but not frogged or stamped. It measured 0.22 m by 0.105 m by 0.06 m and was dated to the 19th century.

### *Slag*

- 5.2.3 One piece of slag was retrieved from context 3, the imported soil, and was not dated.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The evaluation was in an area with a large amount of tree and root disturbance which may have disturbed any archaeological remains. The 19th century structure encountered may have also disturbed earlier remains although the lack of residual finds would indicate an absence of archaeological activity in the vicinity. The structure encountered was along the north-eastern edge of the trench and so a large percentage of the trench was seen to be undisturbed and devoid of cut features. The results of the evaluation would therefore appear reliable.

### 6.2 Overall interpretation

#### *Summary of results*

- 6.2.1 A single post hole was found to the south of the trench, and appeared to be sealed by an imported soil overlying the natural. The one sherd of pottery recovered from the overlying soil was dated to the 18th or 19th century and it is therefore difficult to assign an accurate date to the post hole.
- 6.2.2 A 19th century wall foundation was seen in the north of the trench, which appeared to be the remains of the base of a small building. This would have been situated to the south of the 19th century rectory (Sheila Davies *pers comm*) and so could have been a small out building. It is most likely that the post hole was related to this period of occupation and was the remains of a 19th century fence post.
- 6.2.3 There was no evidence for human burials in this part of the church grounds.

#### *Significance*

- 6.2.4 No evidence of any remains pre-dating the 13th century church were encountered, the archaeological remains, revealed in the evaluation, hold little significance for the archaeology of the area.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
001	1	Layer	Topsoil			
	2	Layer	Demolition			
	3	Layer	Imported Soil	pot/slag	1/1	18-19thC
	4	Layer	Natural			
	5	Cut	Foundation cut			
	6	Structure	Foundation			19thC
	7	Cut	Post hole			
	8	Fill	Post hole fill			

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Wilkinson, D, 1992 Field Manual (Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd)

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** St Leonards Church, St Leonards, Buckinghamshire

**Site code:** STLEC02

**Grid reference:** SP 9100 0700

**Type of evaluation:** One 10 m trench.

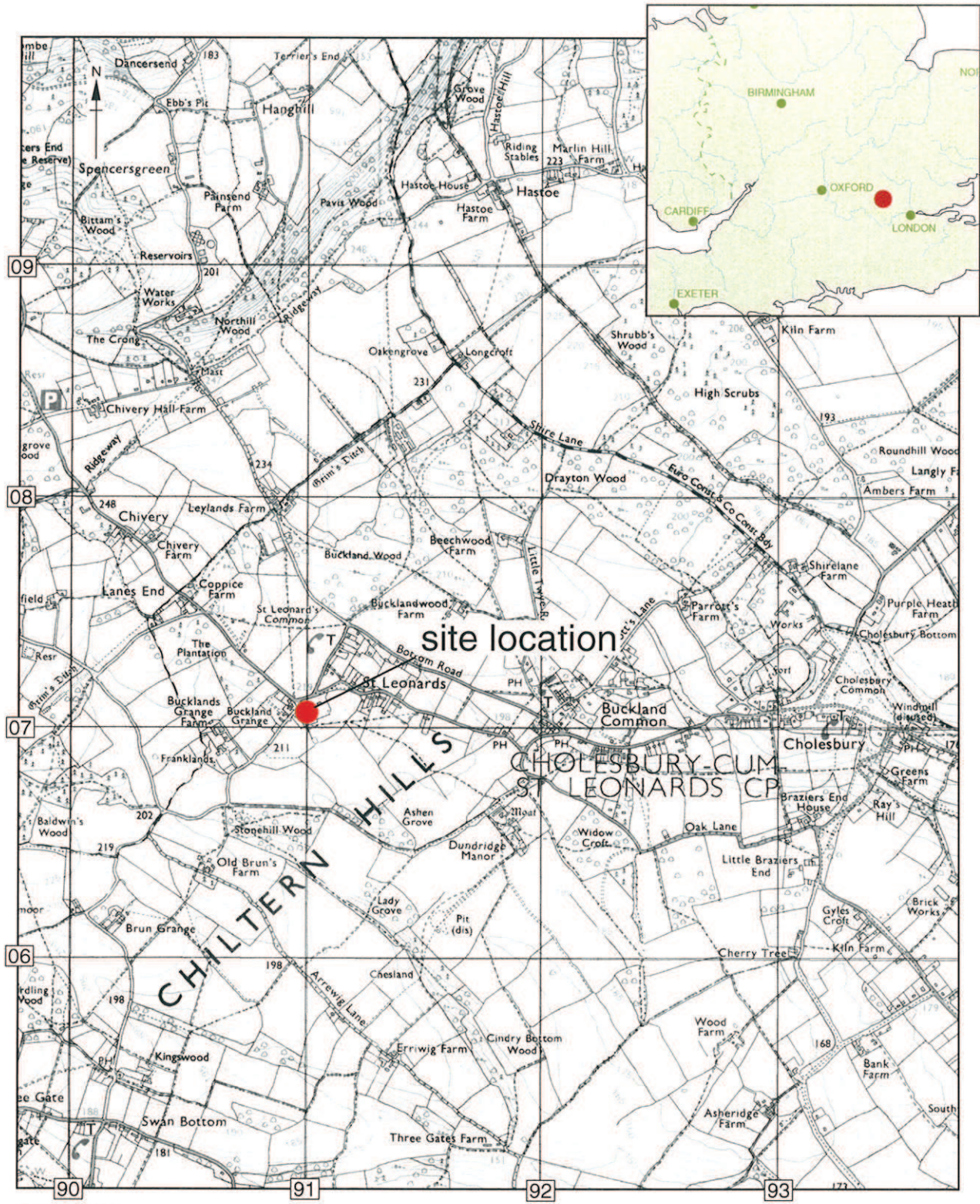
**Date and duration of project:** One day on 30/4/02

**Area of site:** 0.01 ha

**Summary of results:** One undated post hole and the foundations of a 19th century out building were discovered.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: 2002.48





Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

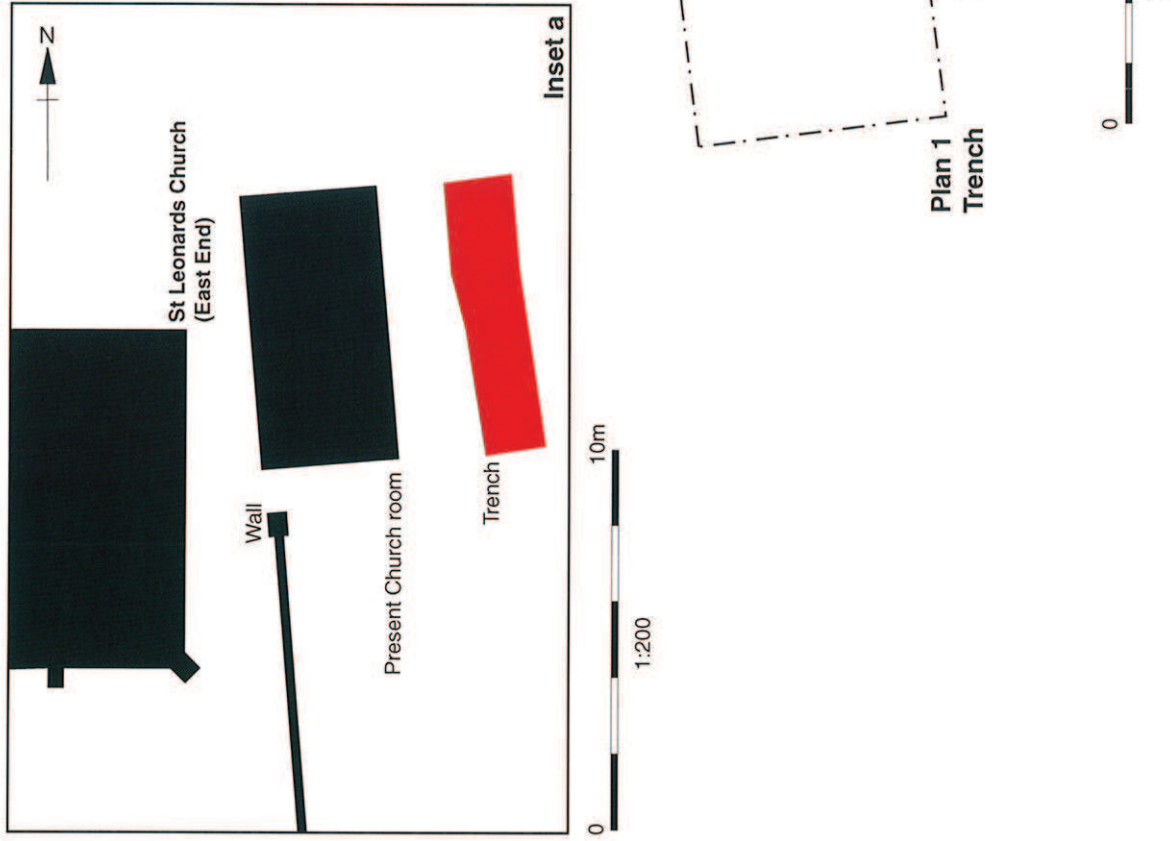


Figure 2 : Plan 1, showing sections 1 and 2, Inset (a) Showing location of trench



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