

# St Bartholomew's Church Lower Basildon Berkshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

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# St. Bartholomew's Church, Lower Basildon, Berkshire

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*On July 29<sup>th</sup> 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St. Bartholomew's church, Lower Basildon, Berkshire (NGR SU 612 793). The work was commissioned by the Churches Conservation Trust in advance of the excavation of a cable trench to reconnect the church to the mains electricity grid. The watching brief revealed a sequence of raised ground levels overlying construction debris relating to the building of the 18th century west tower. No archaeological features, burials or human remains were encountered during the monitoring of works.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 On July 29<sup>th</sup> 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St. Bartholomew's Church, Lower Basildon, Berkshire (NGR SU 612 793). The work was commissioned by the Church Conservation Trust in respect of the excavation of a service trench to reconnect the mains electricity, which stopped approximately three metres short of the church.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by the Church Conservation Trust. A Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how OA would meet the requirements of the brief was produced and approved by the trust.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on a level river terrace at approximately 45 m above OD. The site is situated to the south-west of the River Thames overlying alluvial deposits and is approximately 0.18 hectares in area.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2003) and is summarised below.

1.3.2 The church dates to the late thirteenth century as indicated by the Y-tracery of the nave, the geometrical tracery of the chancel side windows, and the chancel east window of three pointed-trefoiled, steeply stepped lights under one arch. The west tower, built in blue and red brick, was added in 1734. The rest of the church was restored between 1875 and 1876 (Pevsner, 1966).

1.3.3 Internal features of the church date all periods from the Saxon to the 19th century with the earliest brass monument dated 1497 of John Clark and his wife. Later tablets and monuments are generally 19th century in date and include a monument in the churchyard to two Deverill boys drowned in 1886 (Pevsner, 1966).



## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains within the service trench.
- 2.1.2 To recover for future re-interment any human skeletal remains disturbed during the works.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The service trench was hand excavated to the specified dimensions required by Southern Electricity. All excavations were carried out under the supervision of a qualified archaeologist.
- 2.2.2 A representative number of sections were recorded throughout the length of the trench. These were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A plan showing the location of these sections and the extent and location of the trench was prepared at a scale of 1:100. 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

- 3.1.1 A total of four deposits were exposed during the excavation of the trench. The present day topsoil and turf was a friable greyish brown loamy silt (100), which was between 0.1 m to 0.2 m in depth. This sealed a very compacted layer of clay silt (101) mixed with fragments of CBM, mortar and flint gravels, gradually increasing in depth from 0.1 m to 0.2 m as it neared the tower. The underlying deposit (101) was a friable yellowish brown clay silt (102), representing alluvium from the nearby River Thames. At the base of the west tower a compacted mortar spread (103) was observed under layer (101), identified as the construction debris from the construction of the tower.

### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A number of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century artefacts such as transfer printed ware and bottle glass were identified from the topsoil layer (100). These were evaluated on site and were not retained. A number of fragments of pale green window glass were recovered from the construction layer (101) and may represent stained glass from an earlier window pane.
- 3.2.2 No further finds were recovered.

### 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No Palaeo-environmental deposits were identified during the watching brief.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The methods of excavation and the conditions on the day (good visibility, dry ground) provided optimum conditions to determine whether any archaeological deposits were present.

4.1.2 The ground level to the west and south of the tower show evidence of having been raised and landscaped using redeposited topsoil, which would also have sealed the construction debris associated with the building of the west tower. The fact that this construction layer lies directly on top of undisturbed alluvium could suggest that the ground was stripped prior to construction. This action would have removed any surviving archaeological remains above the alluvium, before being re-instated after construction of the west tower (in 1734). However the apparent lack of any residual remains of human bones within this area may equally suggest that no burials, whether sanctified or not, were placed in this area of the churchyard.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
100	Layer	0.1-0.2m	Present day topsoil and turf	Pottery, glass	C19th & C20th
101	Layer	0.1-0.2m	Mixed construction debris and soils	Fragmented CBM	Possible C18th
102	Layer	0.1m plus	Natural alluvium	None	-
103	Layer	0.05m	Construction layer	None	C18th

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Pevsner, N 1966 *The Buildings of England, Berkshire*. Penguin, Harmondsworth

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual*, (Ed. D. Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

IFA 1999 *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** St. Bartholomew's Church, Lower Basildon, Berkshire.

**Site code:** LOBBAR 03

**Grid reference:** SU 612 793

**Type of watching brief:** Monitoring of service trench for electric cable.

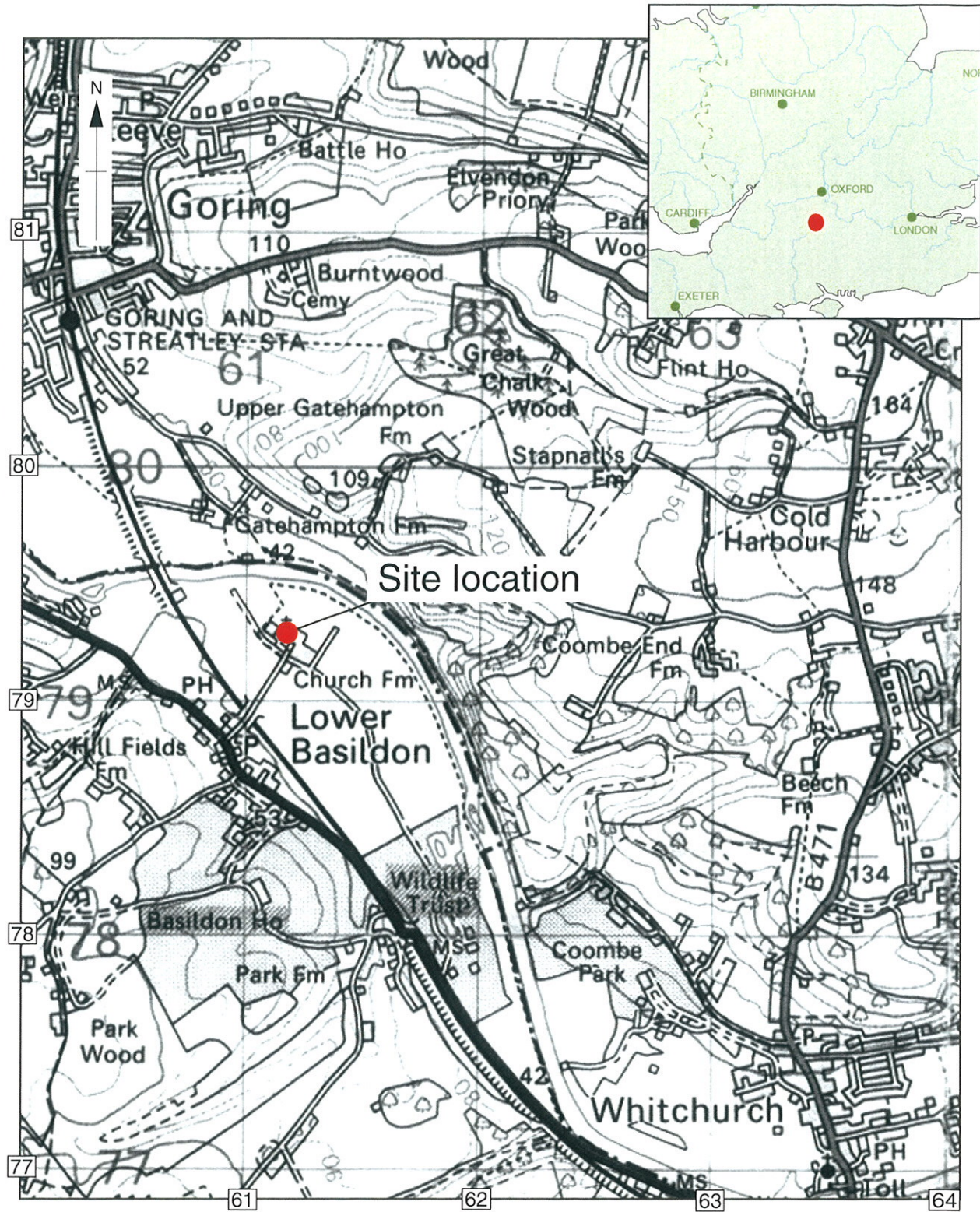
**Date and duration of project:** One day, 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2003

**Area of site:** Approximately 0.18 Hectare

**Summary of results:** Present day topsoil, overlying construction layers and debris relating to the construction of the 18th century west tower.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with West Berkshire Heritage Services in due course.





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Figure 1: Site location



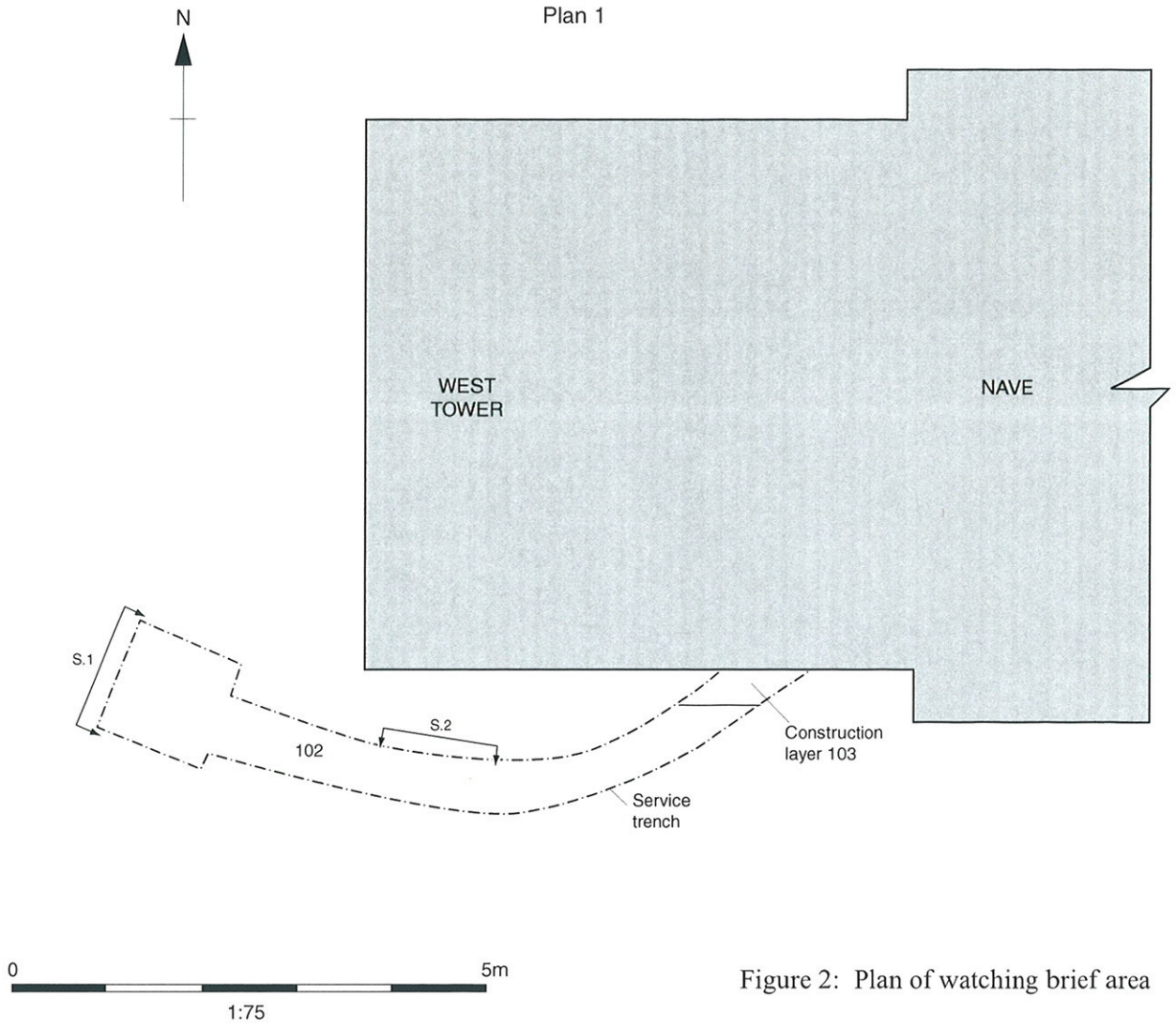


Figure 2: Plan of watching brief area

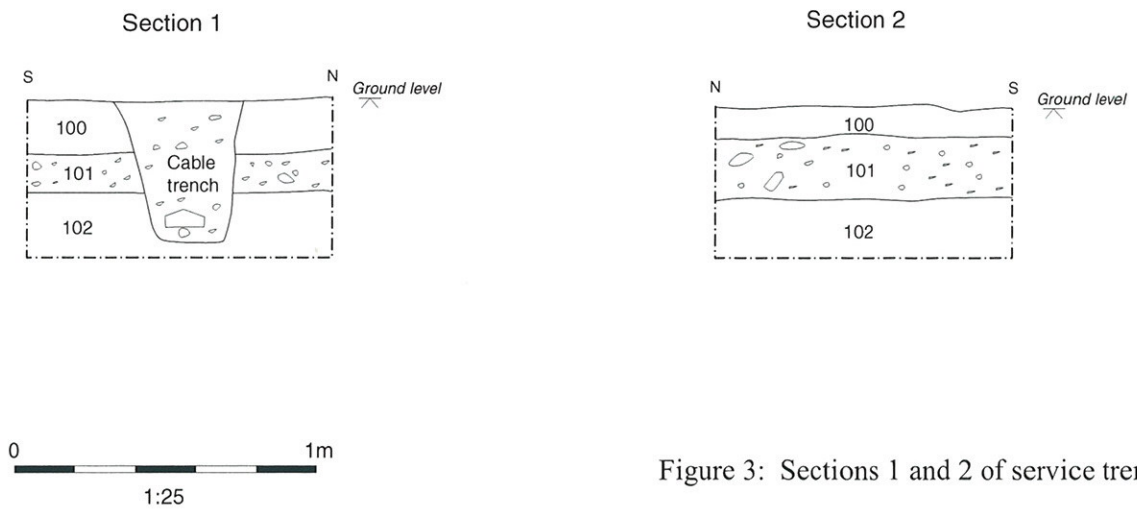














Figure 3: Sections 1 and 2 of service trench

	Section line and number
	Interior section line and number
	Limit of excavation
	Sondage / Interior limit of excavation
	Fill line and number
	Cut line and number
	Structure number
	Unclear boundary
	Stones
	Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature
	Levels
	Grid point