

# St John the Baptist Church Burford Oxfordshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

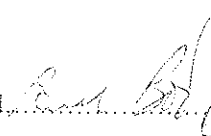
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## St John the Baptist Church, Burford, Oxfordshire

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

## CONTENTS

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Location and scope of work .....	1
1.2 Geology and topography .....	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background .....	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	1
2.1 Aims .....	1
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results .....	2
3.1 Description of deposits .....	2
3.2 Finds .....	4
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains .....	4
4 Discussion and Conclusions .....	4
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory .....	5
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References .....	6
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	6

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location  
 Fig. 2 Site plan of trench and section location.  
 Fig. 3 Plan of excavation for septic tank.  
 Fig. 4 Sections 1 to 6

## SUMMARY

*Between November 2002 to February 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St John the Baptist Church, Burford, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 2525 1242). The work was commissioned by Horner Allen Partnership Ltd in advance of laying new foul and service trench. The watching brief recorded a number of burials and exposed the wall to the Guild Chapel.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 From November to February 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St John the Baptist Church, Burford, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Horner Allen Partnership Ltd in respect of a faculty for laying of new foul and installation of electrical cables.

1.1.2 A project brief was set by Julian Munby, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor to the Diocese of Oxford.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies at c. 101 m OD and the underlying geology is alluvium over gravel and limestone with clay patches.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

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

1.3.2 St John the Baptist Church was constructed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but only parts of the tower and the west wall of the nave can be dated to that period. Major additions were made in the late 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries when the south aisles and transepts were built. The church was remodelled in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Restoration by Street during the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not include structural alterations.

### 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 service trench was excavated in a number of sections by a mini excavator with a 0.4 m wide bucket to a depth of 0.5-6 m below the surface. A large hole to house a new septic tank for the new toilet to be installed in the church was excavated. A small hole was cut into the church floor and a hole knocked through the church wall for the services. A large hole for a new manhole connecting to the main sewer at the end of Lawrence Lane was excavated by mini excavator (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). The burials were archaeologically recorded and left *in situ* where possible or removed and kept in the church for reburial where disturbance was unavoidable.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

#### *Service Trench*

- 3.1.1 A service trench was excavated from the west end of the church and along its south side to the east end. The natural subsoil was yellowish brown gravel. This was overlain by a thick layer of light reddish brown silty sand loam (3), the cultivate graveyard soil. This had been cut by a number of features. The foundation for the south wall of the Guild Chapel prior to it being shortened in 1475 was exposed (Guide to Burford Church). It was constructed in a trench (4) with vertical sides and a base below impact level that was not exposed. It contained the base of the wall (5) constructed of rough limestone blocks laid in six courses and bonded with a yellowish brown silty clay and measured 0.8 m x 1 m x 0.65 m. There was a fill of material of dark brown silty sand (6) between the wall and the trench (Figs 2 and 4, Section 1).
- 3.1.2 Where the manhole at the south-west corner was placed a grave (9) was uncovered and left *in situ*. It was sub rectangular in shape with vertical sides and concave base and measured 1.8 m x 0.4 m x 0.9 m. It was filled by a dark brown silty clay (10) with the remains of a human skeleton in the base. In the trench immediately south at the south-west corner of the chapel, three fragments of limestone (11) were laid across the base of the trench. These were thought to be part of the foundations for the chapel. Resting on these and seen in the north face of the trench was a brick base (12) with grey cement bonding set in a vertical sided cut (13). This was the support for a large stone slab monument on the south side of the trench (Fig. 4, Section 2).
- 3.1.3 Just to the east of the south door the top of a limestone-built vault was uncovered, but was not disturbed as the trench was moved to the north to avoid it. It was sealed by 0.30 m of graveyard topsoil (35) (Fig. 2).

*Manhole connection in road.*

- 3.1.4 At the junction of the new services with the main sewer pipe in Lawrence Lane a 2 m x 1.8 m square hole was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m. It exposed the natural gravel (17) overlain by a 0.5 m reddish brown silty sand (16) cultivated soil similar to the disturbed graveyard soil (3). This was sealed below a 0.4 m thick dark brown silty sand (15) with limestone fragments to make up the ground for the lane. Overlying this was 0.2 m thick layer of reddish brown silty clay (14) forming the road base for Lawrence Lane, which consisted of layers of tarmac (Fig. 4, Section 3).

*Excavation for septic tank and connection to toilet*

- 3.1.5 This work was located in the south-east corner of the church where the south chancel chapel meets the east wall of the south aisle of the church. The work consisted of the excavation of a small hole in the inside of the church. This measured 0.4 m x 0.5 m x 0.46 m and cut through a 0.05 m thick stone floor slab into a 0.16 m thick layer of sand and hardcore floor make up. Sealed below this was disturbed dark brown silty sand similar to context 3. A hole was then knocked through the south wall of the Chancel Chapel (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.6 On the outside of the wall a large hole 1 m x 0.95 m x 0.6 m was excavated for the service connections. This cut into the graveyard soil (3) and exposed a number of features, which included a partly exposed grave (18) filled by a dark brown silty sand loam with remains of a skeleton in the base. This was left *in situ* at just below the service pipes (Figs 3 and 4, section 4). The foundation trench (23) for the east wall of the south aisle was exposed. It had a vertical side, but its base was below the impact level and therefore not exposed. It was filled by a mid brown silty sand (24). Both features 23 and grave 18 were cut by the vertical sided foundation trench (20) for the south wall (21) of the chancel chapel that cut up against the east wall of the south aisle (36) against which the chapel wall was butted. The base was not seen as it was below impact level. The construction trench was filled by mid brown silty sand (22). These were all sealed below the topsoil (35) (Figs 3 and 4, Sections 4 and 5).
- 3.1.7 From the service connection excavation a 0.45 m deep trench for water pipes and electricity cables ran north-south alongside the south aisle. This trench cut through the topsoil (35) and into the graveyard soil (3). Running south-east from the hole was a 0.60 m wide trench, which sloped from 0.55 m to 1.05 m into a 1.3 m x 1.3 x 1.9 m hole for the new septic tank. This cut across a grave (29) measuring 0.8 m x 0.5 m x 0.85 m and filled by a dark brown silty sand (30) with a skeleton in the base. During the initial excavation of the hole the corner of a 19th century brick-lined vault (31) was exposed. The hole for the tank was relocated to the south to avoid the vault (Fig. 3).
- 3.1.8 The excavation for the tank cut 0.7 m into the natural gravel (17), which was 1.2 m below the surface. Sealing this was a light brown silty sand subsoil (40), overlain by disturbed graveyard soil (3). This had been cut by a number of features. The first was a grave (32) measuring 1.6 m x 0.6 m x 0.5 m with vertical sides and a flat base, filled by a dark brown silty sand (33) with a skeleton in the base. Above this was

another grave (27) with vertical sides and a flat base, measuring 1.2 m x 0.6 m x 0.85 m and filled by a mid brown silty sand loam (28) with a skeleton in the base. Both these graves had been cut by a small sub circular charnel pit (34) with vertical sides and a concave base. It measured 0.45 m x 0.3 m x 1.5 m and was filled by mid brown silty sand (37) with assorted bones and a sherd of pottery. These remains may have been disturbed by the construction of the brick lined vault (31). Pit (34) had been cut by another grave (25) measuring 1.1 m x 0.5 m x 0.8 m with a fill of dark grey brown silty sand (26) with remains of a skeleton and coffin in the base. In the west corner of the septic tank pit a soakaway (38) was partly exposed measuring 0.4 m x 0.35 m x 0.5 m with a dark brown silty sand (39) fill containing numerous limestone fragments. All were sealed below a 0.24 m thick layer of very dark grey brown silty sand topsoil (35) with lenses of gravel from the graveyard footpath around the east end of the church (Figs 3 and 4, Section 6).

### 3.2 Finds

3.2.1 The human remains recovered during the ground works were retained in the church for reburial. A small number of finds were recovered during the watching brief and consisted of the following:

Context 26 Two fragments of pottery: red glazed earthenware.

Context 33 One fragment of pottery tin glaze earthenware dated mid to late 17th century.

Fragments of a coffin handle dated between 1747 to 1847 (J Reeves and M Adams).

Context 37 One fragment of pottery glazed ware dated late 17th to 18th century.

### 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 exposed foundation trenches for the south aisle wall and chancel chapel and the wall relationships were confirmed. At the west end of the church the service trench revealed the line of the south wall of the Guilds Chapel as it was before the chapel was shortened in 1475 to become the present Lady Chapel. Along the south side of the Lady Chapel either the top of another vault or part of the chapel footings was revealed. A total of six unmarked graves from the post-medieval period were uncovered. Four of these removed for reburial and the other two left *in-situ*. Two vaults, one brick lined dating to 19th century and the other of limestone construction, were uncovered and were undisturbed. A large amount of charnel bone was recovered during the works. This was also collected for reburial.

## 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	0.1 m			Tarmac	
2	Layer	0.1 m			Tarmac	
3	Layer	0.5 m			Disturbed Soil	
4	Cut	0.65 m	1 m	0.8 m	Foundation Cut	
5	Wall	0.65 m	1 m	0.8 m	Chapel Wall	
6	Fill				Fill of 4	
7	Cut	0.6 m	0.5 m	0.8 m	Service Cut	
8	Fill				Fill of 7	
9	Cut	0.9 m	0.4 m	1.8 m	Grave	
10	Fill				Fill of grave 9	
11	Structure				Limestone base	
12	Structure				Brick base	
13	Cut				Cut for base 12	
14	Layer	0.2 m			Ground make up	
15	Layer	0.4 m			Ground make up	
16	Layer	0.5 m			Disturbed Soil	
17	Natural				Gravel over Limestone	
18	Cut	0.68 m	0.30 m	0.32 m	Grave Cut	
19	Fill				Fill of Grave 18	
20	Cut	0.50 m	0.30 m	0.90 m	Foundation Trench	
21	Wall		0.2 m	1 m	South of Chapel	
22	Fill				Fill in Trench 20	
23	Cut	0.50 m	0.40 m	0.50 m	Foundation Trench	
24	Fill				Fill in Trench 23	
25	Cut	0.80 m	0.50 m	1.10 m	Grave Cut	
26	Fill				Fill of Grave 25	Pottery
27	Cut	0.85 m	0.60 m	1.20 m	Grave Cut	
28	Fill				Fill of Grave 27	
29	Cut	0.85 m	0.50 m	0.80 m	Grave Cut	
30	Fill				Fill of Grave 29	
31	Structure	0.45 m	0.70 m	0.60 m	Partly exposed 19th Century Vault	



Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds
32	Cut	0.50 m	0.60 m	1.60 m	Grave Cut	
33	Fill				Fill of Grave 32	Metal fitting and pottery
34	Cut	1.55 m	0.30 m	0.45 m	Charnel Pit	
35	Layer	0.18 m			Topsoil	
36	Structure				East wall of South aisle	
37	Fill				Fill of Charnel Pit 34	Pottery
38	Cut	0.50 m	0.35 m	0.40 m	Soakaway	
39	Fill				Fill of soakaway 38	
40	Layer	0.08 m			Subsoil	

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

D Wilkinson, 1992, *OAU Fieldwork Manual*.

Sherwood and Nickolaus Pevsner, 1974, *The buildings of England: Oxfordshire*.

J Reeve and M Adams, 1993 *The Spitalfields Project Volume 1-The Archaeology Across the Street*. CBA Research Report

The Friends of Burford Church, 1989, *A Guide to Burford Church*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St John the Baptist Church, Burford, Oxfordshire

Site code: BUSTJO 02

Grid reference: NGR SP 2525 1242

Type of watching brief: Excavation of new foul and service trench and installation of septic tank.

Date and duration of project: A total of ten site visits from the 27/11/2002 to 26/2/2003.

Area of site:

Summary of results: The watching brief recorded a number of burials and exposed the wall to the Guild chapel.

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 2002.218



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Site plan of trench and section locations

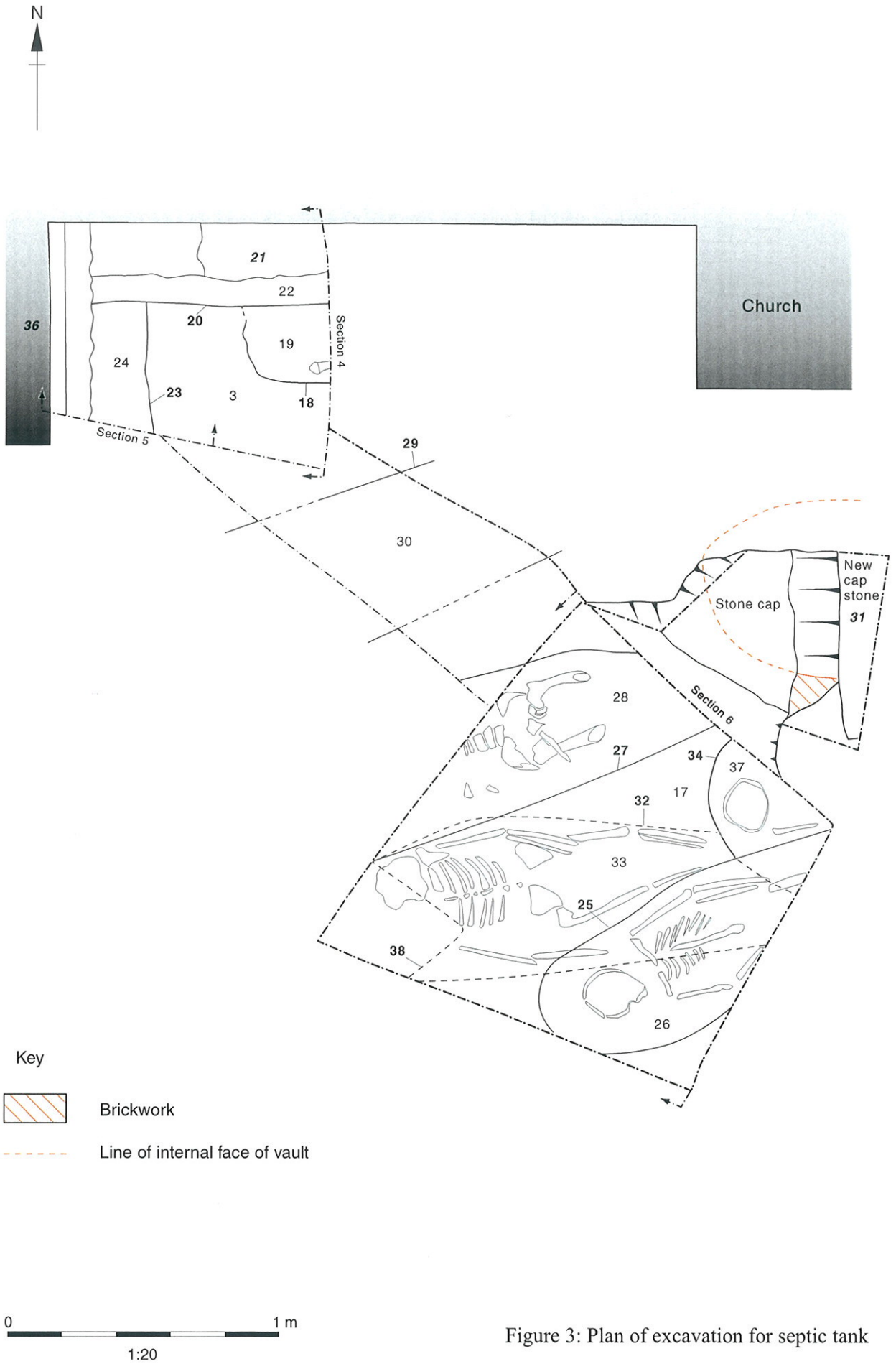











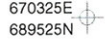


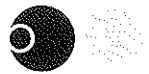


Figure 3: Plan of excavation for septic tank



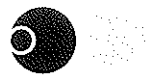
	Section line and number
	Interior section line and number
	Limit of excavation
	Sondage / Interior limit of excavation
	Fill line and number
	Cut line and number
	Structure number
	Unclear boundary
	Stones
	Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature
	Levels
	Grid point
	Brickwork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



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