

# St James Church Draycot Cerne Wiltshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

December 2004

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**Andrew Townsend Architects**

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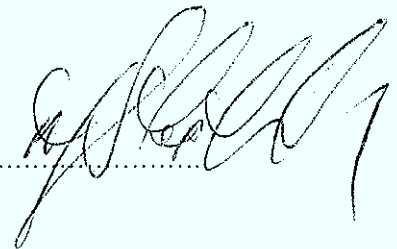
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Cover Plate: View of the church from the southeast.

## SUMMARY

*In November 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St James Church, Draycot Cerne, Wiltshire (NGR ST 935 787). The work was commissioned by Andrew Townsend Architects on behalf of the Churches Conservation Trust in advance of repair works to roof and pews. The watching brief revealed 18th and 19th century works to support the pews and a number of earlier features in the wall elevations pre-dating 14th and 19th century alterations.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In November 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St James Church, Draycot Cerne, Wiltshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Andrew Townsend Architects on behalf of the Churches Conservation Trust in respect of repair work being carried out on the roof and the chancel pew bases.

1.1.2 OA worked to the specification of works prepared by Andrew Townsend Architects, which was agreed by the DAC (ATA 2004).

#### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on Oxford Clay and Kellaways beds at 67 m above OD. The site is situated within the grounds to the southeast of the site of Draycot Cerne Manor.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The church dates from the late 12th century and consists of a chancel and nave. The chancel is built at a lower level than the nave, due to the natural slope of the land. The church was founded by the de Veniox family who held the manor of Draycot. This passed to the de Cerne family in the 13th century, who gave their name to the second part of the Manor, Draycot Cerne. Memorials to the de Cerne family buried in the chancel are that of Philip de Cerne (d. 1259?), an effigy of a recumbent knight in full armour with a dog resting at his feet. This was surrounded by a later 14th century cinquefoiled canopy. In the centre of the chancel floor the resting place of Sir Edward de Cerne (d. 1393) is marked by a monumental brass on a tombstone. Traces of four other monumental brasses' can be seen. One belonging to Philippa, daughter of Sir Edward de Cerne.

1.3.2 In 1452 the manor passed to the Long family who held the manor until 1863. In the early 17th century the tower was added and built of ashlar with a stairway in the northwest corner. The clock was added in 1865 by the Marquess of Salisbury. In 1692 'The Long Family Pew' was constructed by the family on the north side of the church. The vault was used from that point, with the burials recorded in marble tablets on the walls. With the death of William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley the last male descendent in the 1863 the manor passed to the Henry Wellesley, Earl Cowley.

The Cowley family repaired the church and remodelled the nave with a new south window to William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley by his friend Arthur Palliser. The stain glass of this window was added in 1896 to the memory of the 2nd Earl Cowley (d. 1895). In 1955 the manor house was demolished leaving the church as the only reminder of the estate, this closed in 1995 and is cared for by The Church Conservation trust (CCT 1998; Pevsner and Sherwood 1974, 200).

## 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 After the pews had been removed the areas under the pew bases were exposed, as were areas of the north and south walls formerly hidden behind the pew panelling. These areas were recorded and the pews reinstated with new or repaired bases.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:50. 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 *OA Field Manual* (OAU 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

#### *Pew bases (Fig. 2)*

- 3.1.1 Two pew bases at the east end of the nave were removed exposing a 0.3 m deep void approximately 5 m long by 2.2 m wide located north and south of the central aisle. This revealed a construction/floor make up layer of light reddish silty sand with mortar and plaster flecks and limestone fragments (1). Overlying this was a floor make up layer (2) consisting of limestone fragments around the edges of the voids, which supported the stone slab floor. On the north side of the nave a series of small drystone tabular limestone pillars (3) were used to support the frame of pew bases. At the western end some of these pillars had been replaced with Brick pillars (4) (0.22 m x 0.11 m x 0.08 m) using a light sandy mortar bond and measured 0.23 m<sup>2</sup> by 0.3 m high and dated to the late 19th century.
- 3.1.2 On the south side of the nave only three stone pillars were built, and across the centre a short narrow wall (5) all of tabular limestone of drystone construction. The remaining area was filled by loose limestone fragments (6) to build up to the floor level. At regular intervals around the edges of the pew areas were fragments of

worked stone used to support the pew bases and the stone slab floor of the aisle. These were bonded into place with a light brown sandy mortar.

### ***Wall elevations (Fig. 3)***

- 3.1.3 Following removal of the pew panelling from the walls a number of earlier features were exposed. The exposed north wall revealed a rough coursed face with the bottom splay of a narrow window (7) approximately 0.9 m from its east end. This had been cut and in-filled by the insertion of the two lancet windows. On the wall was the remnants of a fine light brown plaster (8) with an off white/beige paint and two thin red borderlines. Overlying this was a coarse light brown/white plaster (9) with pea gravel inclusions and coated with whitewash. This appears to fill possible earlier seating features, which were removed when the pews were fitted in the late 18th century.
- 3.1.4 The exposed south wall also revealed a rough coursed face with a partial robbed and in-filled doorway (10) at its east end. The doorway measured 1.95 m high by 1.05 m wide and contained the remains of a threshold stone and moulded quion of the west side doorway. On the face of the threshold stone a carving of a fleur-de-lys could be seen. The quion stone of the doorway was keyed in with the base of a splayed window (11) to the west of the door. Only part of the west side of the chamfered frame was observed under the existing plaster. The wall was covered with a coarse light brown/white coarse plaster (9) with pea gravel inclusions and coated with whitewash. This appears to fill possible earlier seating features, which were removed when the pews were fitted in the late 18th century as observed on the north wall. This early plaster, the door and window had all been damaged when the present stained glass window was inserted in the late 19th century.

## **3.2 Finds**

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

## **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 revealed a number of features relating to work carried out in the nave from the 18th century onwards. The area below the pew bases on the north side of the nave had been cleared and limestone fragments used to build up and level the paved aisle and to construct small pillars to support the frame of the pew bases. In the late 19th century the floor of the pews had been repaired and some of the original stone pillars beneath them replaced with brick pillars. However, in the south side only three stone pillars had been built and a small north-south support wall was constructed. The remaining part of the area had been filled and levelled with loose stone, a most likely a simple and cost effective alternative.



- 4.1.2 The elevations revealed a small narrow splayed window in the north wall opposite a blocked doorway and former window in the south wall. The north wall window had been cut by later 14th century windows. The marks of possible earlier seating arrangements were observed, but had been infilled by whitewashed plaster. This had also cover earlier painted plaster with red lined borders. The doorway in the south wall appears to be similar to the priest doorway in the south wall of the chancel, with a small window to the west of it. Along the north face of the threshold stone remnants of a carved Fleur-de-lys was observed and the remains of the lower part of a doorframe moulding. The base of the window next to the doorway was partially covered by later plaster. The present 19th century window had partly removed and in-filled these features, using the base stones of the earlier window frame to support the 19th century window.
- 4.1.3 The evidence here suggests that the nave was of similar construction to the 13th century chancel with narrow lancet windows spaced along the wall. These being removed by later alterations dating from the 14th to 19th centuries. It is not uncommon for more than one doorway to be found leading into a church. The small blocked doorway in the south wall could have provided private access to a family pew for instance.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer				Early floor make up	
2	Structure	0.3 m			Floor make up	
3	Structure	0.3 m	0.35 m	0.4 m	Stone pillars	
4	Structure	0.3 m	0.23 m	0.23 m	Brick pillars	
5	Structure	0.3 m	0.25 m	1.2 m	Support wall	
6	Layer	0.3 m			rubble in fill	
7	Structure	0.18 m	0.17 m		Blocked window	
8	Layer				Wall plaster	
9	Layer				Wall plaster	
10	Structure	1.95 m	1.05 m		Doorway	
11	Structure		1.68 m		Window frame	

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

ATA 2004 *Repairs to St James Church, Draycot Cerne, Wilts Specification & Schedule of Works* by Andrew Townsend Architects March 2004 (Rev A)

CCT 1998 *St James Church, Draycot Cerne, Wiltshire* by Tim Couzens Series 4 no. 106

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

Pevsner, N and Sherwood, J 1974 *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** St James Church, Draycot Cerne, Wiltshire

**Site code:** SBSJC 04

**Grid reference:** NGR: ST 935 787

**Type of watching brief:** Repair work to the base of pews.

**Date and duration of project:** Three site visits from the 4th to 11th of November 2004.

**Area of site:** Two areas measuring 5 m x 2.2 m.

**Summary of results:** The watching brief revealed 18th and 19th century works to support the pews and a number of earlier features in the wall elevations pre dating 14th and 19th century alterations.

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



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location



- KEY
- Stone pew pillars (3)
  - Other stone features
  - Rubble spread
  - Brick pew pillars (4)

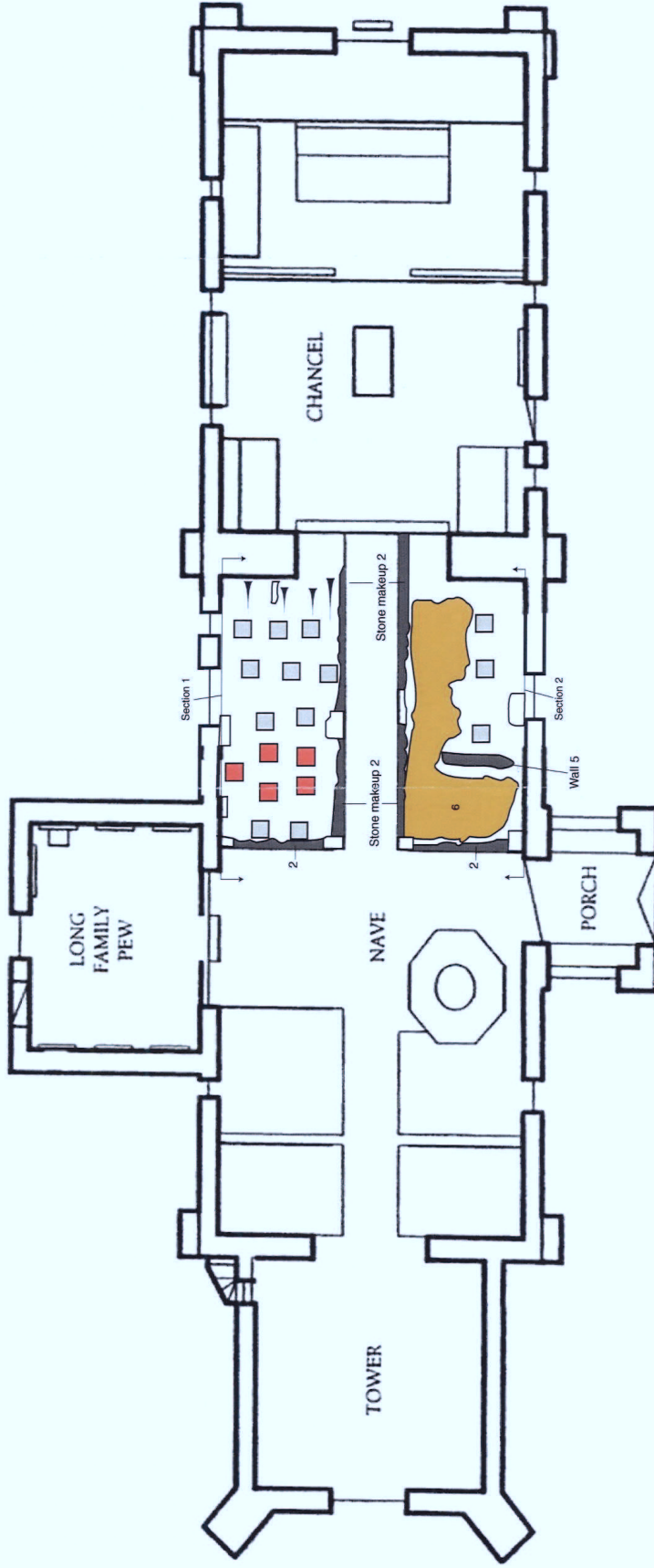


Figure 2: Plan of church showing location of sections and pew support pillars and walls



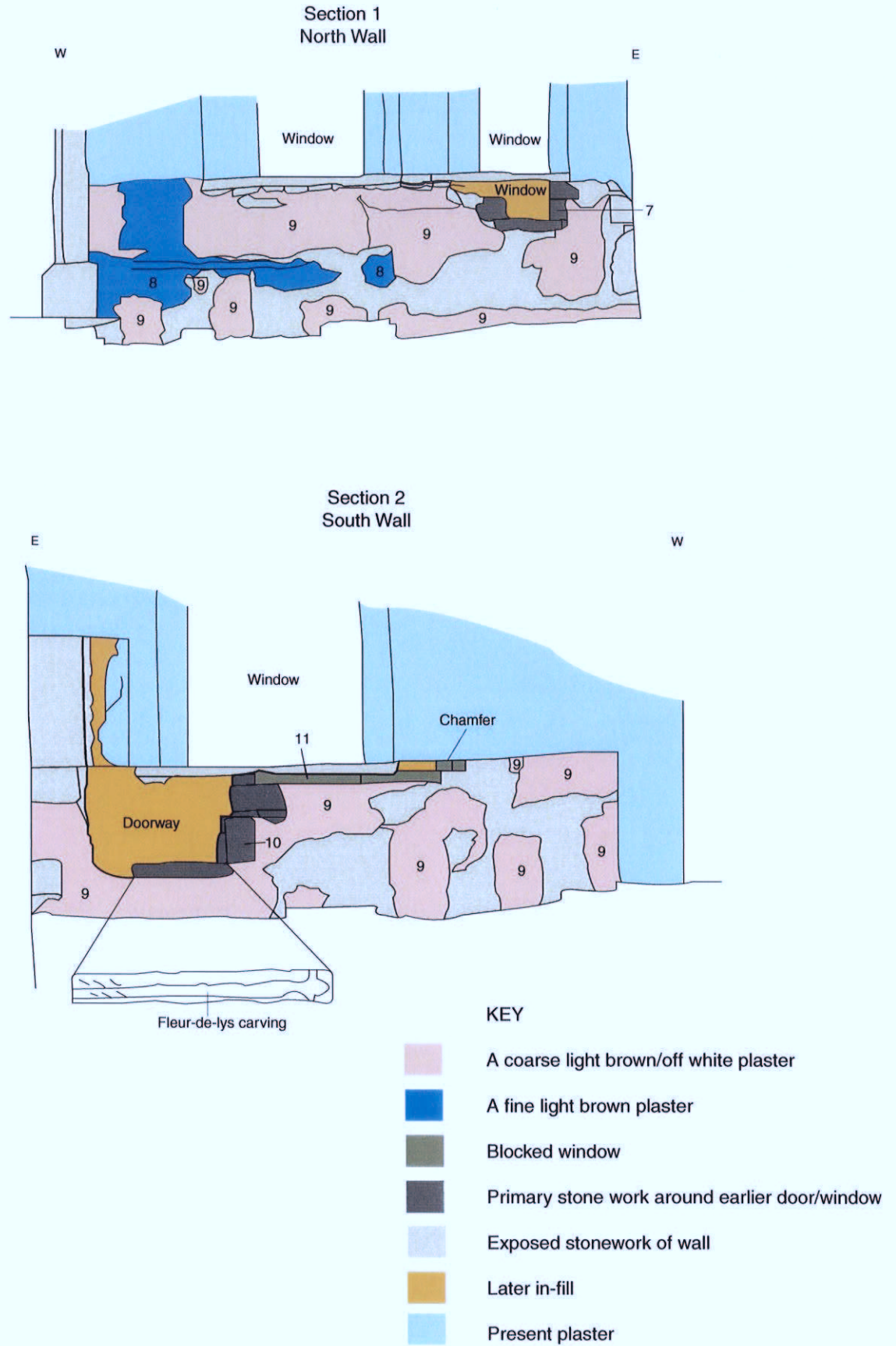


Figure 3: Elevations of north and south wall



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