

Old School Shenington Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

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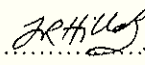
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Robert Gosney

**The Old School,
Shenington, Oxfordshire*****ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

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SUMMARY

In August and September 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Old School, Shenington, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 372 428). The work was commissioned by Mr Robert Gosney in advance of the construction of a two storey extension and undercroft parking. The watching brief revealed extensive truncation throughout the site and the presence of 20th century improvements associated with the school.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In August and September 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Old School, Shenington, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 372 428). The work was commissioned by Mr Robert Gosney in respect of a planning application for a two storey extension and undercroft parking (Planning Application No. 05/00477/F)
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Hannah Fluck, the planning archaeologist representing Oxfordshire County Council (OCAS, 2004)
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2005).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located in the village of Shenington, approximately 8 km west of Banbury. The development area is in the centre of the village, immediately south of the Holy Trinity Church (Fig. 1). The site is currently vacant but was used as a school until 2004. The site lies at approximately 169 m OD and the underlying geology is alluvium over Marlstone Rock (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no 201).

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 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The development site lies within the historic core of Shenington, immediately to the north of the Holy Trinity Church. The church is believed to date from the 12th century and would have been at the centre of medieval settlement at Shenington. To the south-east of the church remains of the shrunken medieval village of Shenington are still visible as earthworks. It is likely that settlement also continued north of the church in the area of the proposed development. It is likely that archaeological deposits relating to the medieval settlement at Shenington will be disturbed during the groundworks for this development, it is also possible that these archaeological deposits may include deposits relating to the church itself. The possibility that the

development may disturb human remains from the burial ground associated with the church cannot be ruled out.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality, character and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development, particular attention will be paid to the extent of the churches burial ground.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains which the groundworks will remove or damage within the development area.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief consisted of two visits to the site to monitor the progress and extent of the excavations and to record any remains exposed during the works.
- 2.2.2 These works consisted of the machine excavation of engineering trial pits, the removal of modern foundations and ground reduction.
- 2.2.3 A plan showing the extent and location of the excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20 (Fig.3). All excavations and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Engineering Trial Pits

- 3.1.1 Trial Pit 1 was located within the south-west corner of the site, over the location of the proposed undercroft parking. It measured 4 m by 1 m and was excavated to a depth of 3.3 m (Fig. 3, Section 1). A layer of the underlying natural, weathered and shattered Marlstone rock (2) was encountered at a depth of 0.1 m below the current ground level, and extended below the base of the pit. At the north-eastern end of the pit was a vertical sided cut (6), containing a circular brick structure with an approximate diameter of 2 m. This had been constructed using modern brick bonded with a light grey sandy mortar.

- 3.1.2 Sealing this structure was a concrete slab 0.3 m thick (5). The cut had been backfilled using redeposited natural (7). Both the slab and layer 2 were overlaid by a 0.1 m thick tarmac surface (1).
- 3.1.3 Trial Pit 2 was located 2 m north-west of the gable of the school building and measured 3 m by 1 m and was excavated to a depth of 2 m (Fig. 3, Section 2).
- 3.1.4 The underlying solid geology, Marlstone rock (3), was encountered at a depth of 1.9 m below ground level. This was overlaid by a continuation of the layer of weathered and shattered Marlstone (2) 1.8 m deep. The surface of this deposit produced a variety of CBM including tile, ceramic drain and broken bricks. This was sealed by a 0.1 m thick layer of tarmac.

Removal of Modern Foundations and Ground Reduction

- 3.1.5 As a preliminary to building work the foundations that supported a modern prefabricated building ("Terrapin") located to the north-east of the school building were removed. Exposed within the subsequent 0.6 m wide by 0.5 m deep trench was the layer of weathered rock (2) overlaid by a 0.1 m thick layer of tarmac (1) (Fig. 3, Section 3).
- 3.1.6 A reduction of the ground level to the north, south and west of the standing building was conducted in order to expose the damp course. This work consisted of the removal of the tarmac surface (1) and the reduction of layer (2) by a depth of between 0.15 m and 0.25 m. This was executed using the machine fitted with a 1.8 m wide toothless grading bucket. Layer 2 was seen to extend throughout the site. A path consisting of sandstone slabs measuring 0.5 m by 0.6 m (8) was seen to have been laid directly onto the surface of layer 2 around the south-west corner of the school and subsequently sealed by the tarmac surface 1. Other than the modern structure 4, noted within Trial Pit 1, no other archaeology was present.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Finds recovered from the surface of Layer 2 consisted of late post-medieval tile, ceramic drain and pieces of broken brick. These were recorded and evaluated on site, but not retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for paleo-environmental sampling were encountered during the watching brief

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief showed that the area to the west, south and north of the standing building had been heavily truncated in the past, probably when the standing school building was constructed. It is probable that this activity has removed any archaeology connected with the 12th century church or medieval village of

Shenington. The stone slab path (8) probably relates to the original construction of the school. The absence of any soils or silts between the tarmac and the underlying natural suggests that further truncation may have taken place during the laying of the tarmac playground. Structure 4 is a 20th century septic tank probably put in as part of the modernisation of the school, at which time the finds recovered from the surface of layer 2 were also deposited.

- 4.1.2 No evidence for the extension of the church's burial ground into the schoolyard, either in the form of grave cuts or charnel, was observed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.1 m	-	Tarmac playground surface	-	C20th
2	Layer	> 3.2 m	-	Weathered and shattered Marlstone rock	Tile, brick, ceramic pipe	C20th
3	Layer	>0.2 m	-	Solid Marlstone rock	-	-
4	Structure	> 2.9 m	2.0 m diameter	Modern septic tank	Brick	C20th
5	Structure	0.3 m	2.0 m diameter	Concrete cap over septic tank	-	C20th
6	Cut	> 3.2 m	> 2.0 m	Construction cut for septic tank	-	C20th
7	Fill	> 3.2 m	-	Backfill of construction cut	-	C20th
8	Surface	0.05 m	1.0 m	Sandstone slab path	-	C19th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
- OA, 1992 *Field Manual (ed. Wilkinson D)*
- OA, 2005 *Old School Shenington, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*
- OCAS, 2004 *The Old School, Shenington, Oxfordshire : Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Old School, Shenington, Oxfordshire

Site code: SHENOS 05

Grid reference: SP 372 428

Type of watching brief: Monitoring of Engineering Trial pits, removal of foundations and ground reduction.

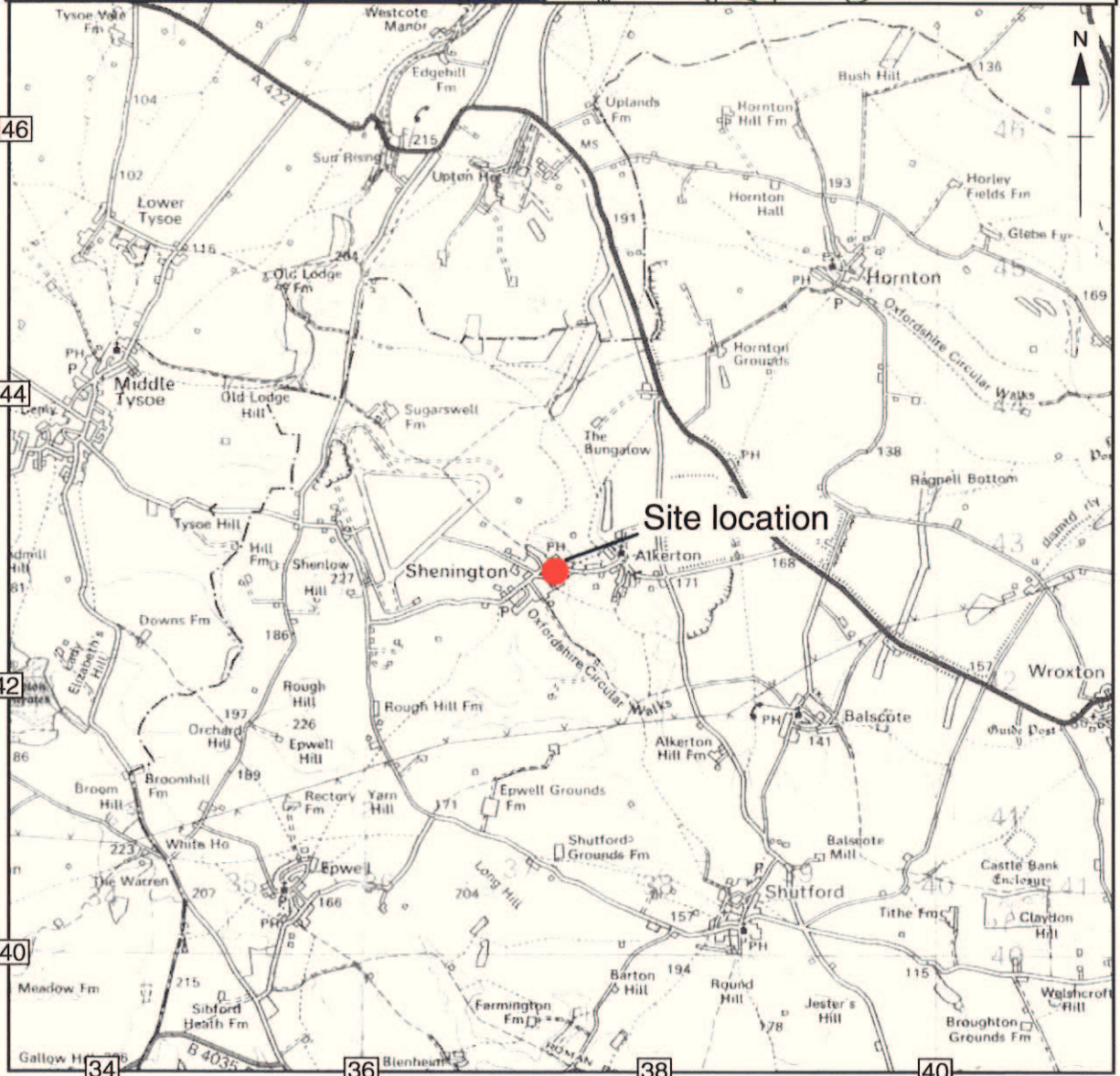
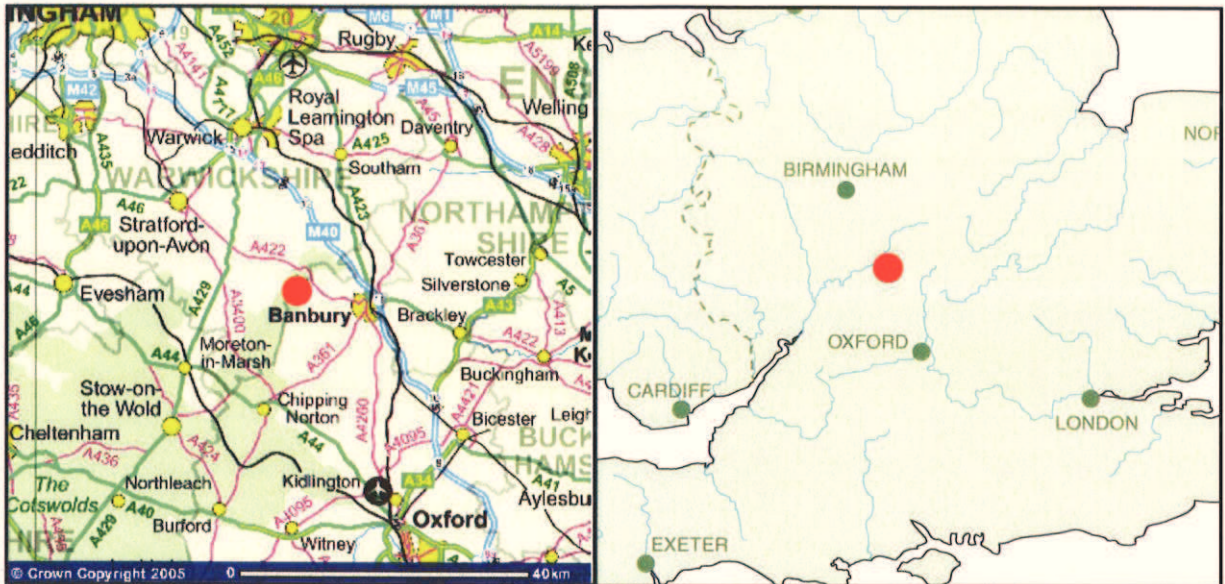
Date and duration of project: 2 visits, 15/8/05 and 22/09/05, 1 month

Area of site: 320 m²

Summary of results: Brick built septic tank and stone slab path associated with the school, evidence of truncation of earlier deposits

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: OXCMS2005.97

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Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

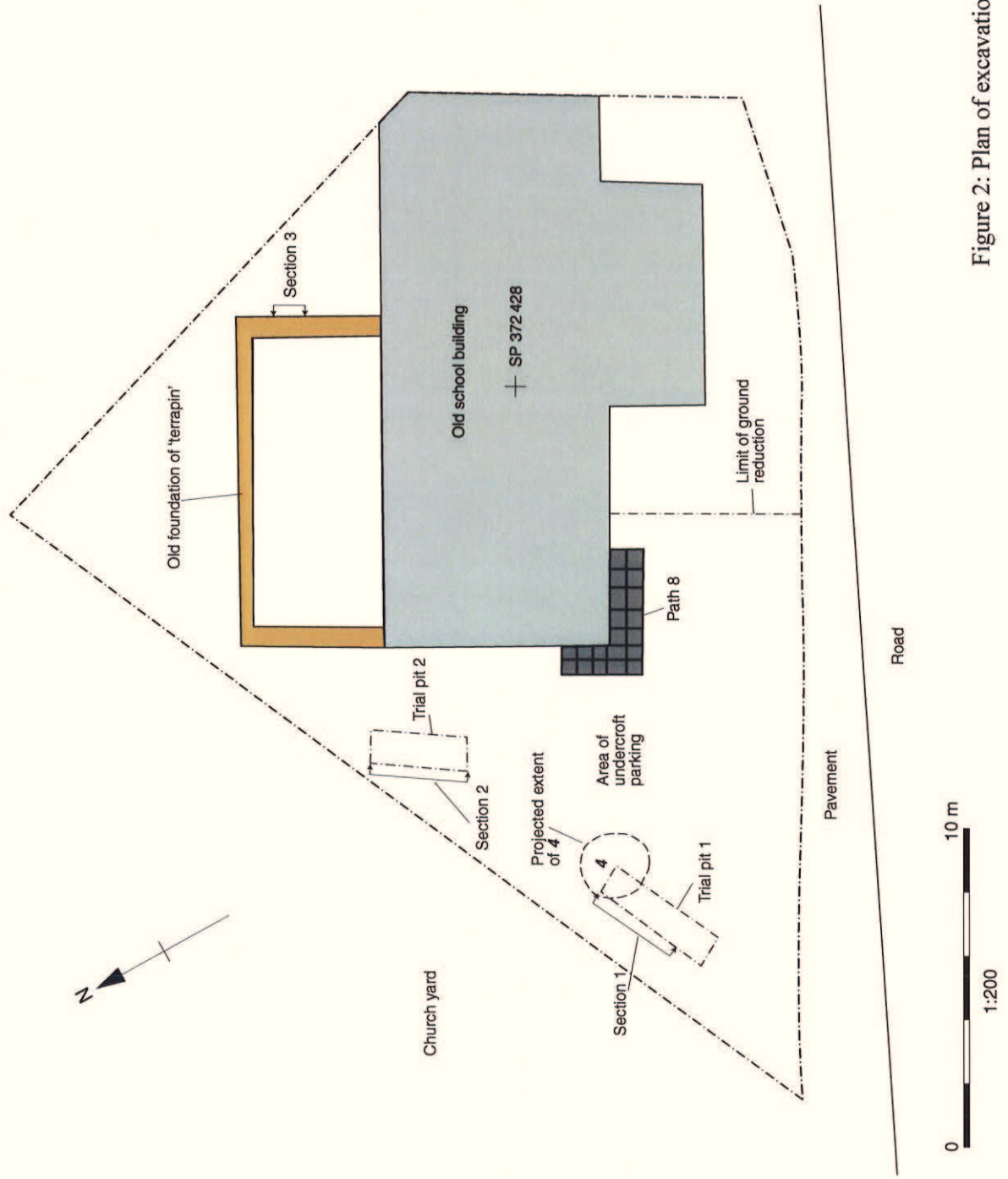


Figure 2: Plan of excavation area

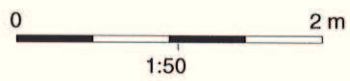
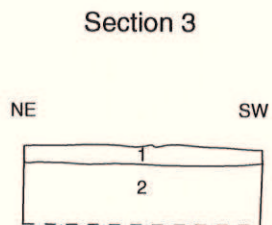
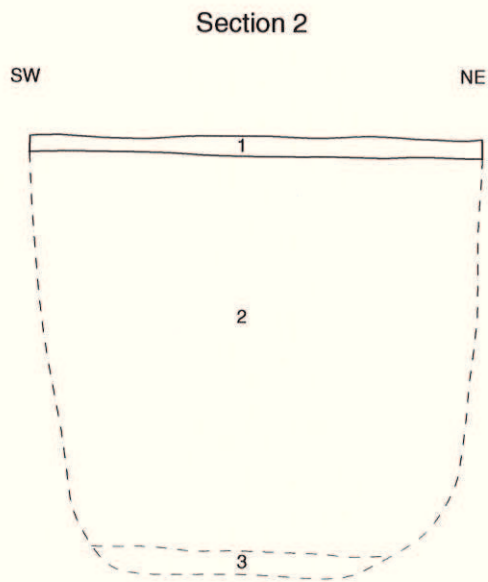
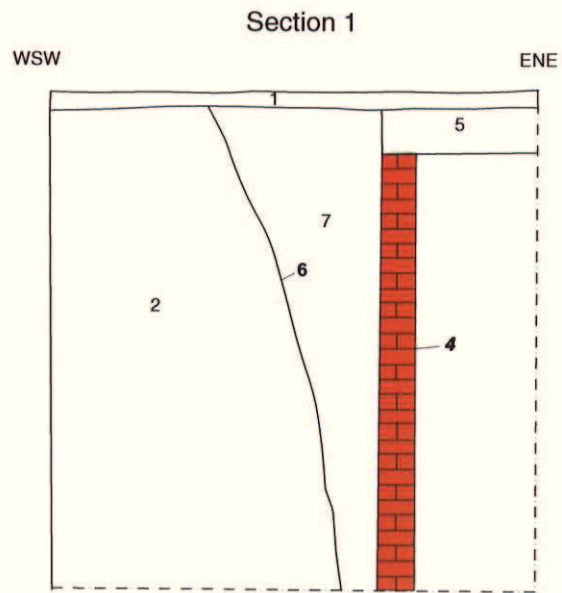


Figure 3: Sections 1-3.

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