

GARSINGTON (OX)

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882/99

Garsington Parish Council

St Mary's Church, Garsington, Oxfordshire

NGR SP 458 203

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Oxford Archaeological Unit

October 1999

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Prepared by: 

Date: 26/10/99

Checked by: 

Date: 3/11/99

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Oxford Archaeological Unit

October 1999

Summary

On the 25th of October 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at St Mary's Church, Garsington, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 458 203). No archaeological features were seen and no finds were retrieved.

1 Introduction

The development proposal comprised the excavation of a trench through the churchyard, prior to the installation of new floodlighting.

The watching brief was commissioned by St Mary's Parish Council. It was undertaken in consultation with the DAC Archaeological Advisor.

2 Background

The church stands on a slight terrace at the south-west edge of the village. The West Tower dates from c. 1200 AD, the nave and north and south aisles from the 13th-century and the Chancel is of 14th-century date. The church was restored in 1849 by J Clarke, who rebuilt the Chancel arch. The east window is of very high quality and did not originate with the church, being moved here from St Giles, Oxford, in 1898 (Pevsner & Sherwood 1974).

An earlier watching brief during floor restoration work in 1992, revealed the remains of the robbed footing of an earlier phase of the church (OAU 1993). A watching brief in December 1994 during the excavation of soakaway trenches outside the building revealed some disarticulated human bones within excavated soil layers and partially exposed an *in-situ* Victorian burial, but produced no evidence of earlier structural phases of the church (OAU 1995). A further watching brief in August 1997 during the excavation of a trench for a new electricity cable located an undated brick burial vault and a dump of 19th-century building material (OAU 1997).

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

The site was visited on 25th October 1999 in order to inspect the excavated trench, which extended around the south and west sides of the church and a record of the trench as seen was made.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results

The trench measured on average 0.30 m wide by 0.50 m deep; natural deposits were not exposed. The earliest deposit seen was the subsoil/graveyard soil which consisted of a fairly mixed mid brown/gray with lenses of pale yellowish/brown sandy silt. This deposit was consistent to the base of the cut and was sealed by a well-rooted topsoil, a mid gray silty clay loam on average 0.14 m thick.

The trench sections on the west and north-west sides of the church were relatively clean, except for some minor disturbance caused by the recent drainage works. On the south and south-west sides some disarticulated charnel and stone fragments were seen in the subsoil; the fragments were cleaned and examined but neither carvings nor inscriptions were seen.

6 Finds

No finds were retrieved during the course of the watching brief.

7 Environmental results

Due to the absence of any significant archaeology, no environmental soil samples were taken.

8 Discussion

The limited nature of the excavation meant that only relatively modern deposits were disturbed. It is thought likely that the stone fragments seen in the subsoil south of the church are either from headstones which have been relocated to form the coping of the churchyard boundary wall, or derive from the 1849 restoration.

The few fragments of human bone encountered are typical of such churchyard work, where the digging of burials and works to the church have disturbed *in-situ* burials. All bone fragments were reburied on the completion of works.

References.

OAU 1993 St Mary's Church, Garsington, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Watching Brief Report.

OAU 1995 St Mary's Church, Garsington, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Watching Brief Report.

OAU 1997 St Mary's Church, Garsington, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Watching Brief Report.

Pevsner N & Sherwood J 1974 *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire*.

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

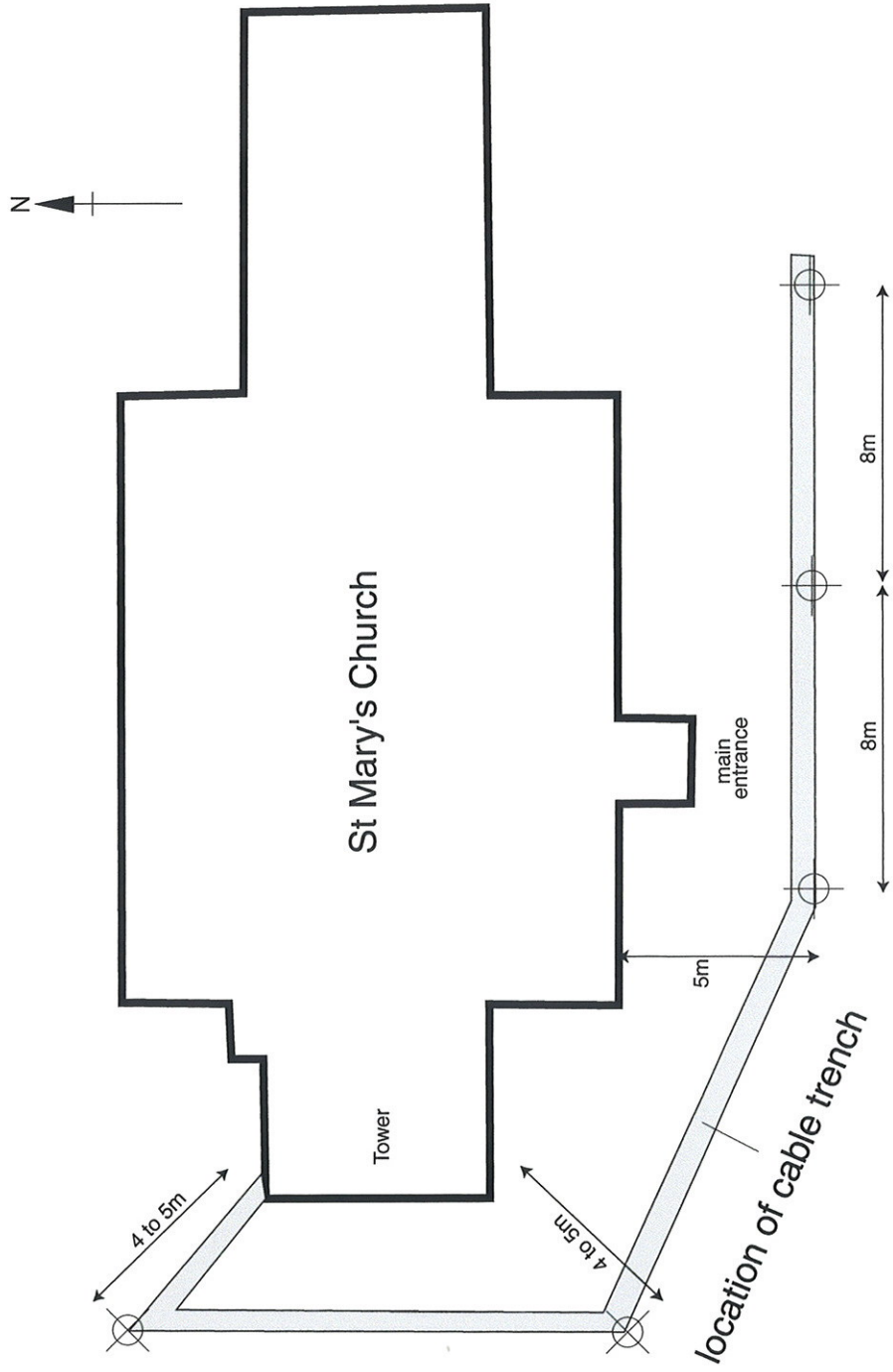


Figure 1: plan of site



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