



St Kenelems Church Minster Lovell Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



January 2006

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**St Kenelms Church,
Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Cover picture: Saint Kenelms Church viewed from the north

SUMMARY

On 15th August 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Kenelms Church, Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 324 114). The work was commissioned by Father Gabb Jones in advance of excavation of a sewer trench and septic tank. The watching brief revealed topsoil directly overlying undisturbed natural with no evidence for occupation or burials observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On 15th August Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Kenelms Church, Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 324 114). The work was commissioned by Father Gabb Jones in respect of the proposed excavation of a sewerage trench and septic (“Kargester”) tank.
- 1.1.2 Julian Munby, the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, on behalf of the Parish Churches Committee (PCC), requested that an archaeologist be present during the excavations.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies approximately 2 km west of the town of Witney, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The church is sited on gently sloping ground running down to the north bank of the River Windrush at roughly 90 m above OD, adjacent to the ruins of Minster Lovell Hall. The church is separated from the current core of the village of Minster Lovell by both the B4047 and the river. The underlying geology is alluvium overlying Grater Oolite (Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet no. 236).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief has been prepared using historical research originally compiled for sites adjacent to the church (OAU, 1995a and OAU, 1995b) and has been updated to reflect the location.
- 1.3.2 Akeman street, the Roman road from Alchester to Cirencester runs to the north of the village. There are several known villas in the area to the east around Asthall, on Akeman Street. A 5th-century Saxon cemetery was found in 1872 at Minster Lovell, and the Church of St Kenelm is known to be a late Saxon Minster Church, with a college of priests. Minsters of this date are usually seen as royal foundations. It is probable that this Minster became regulated as an alien cell of the Abbey of Ivry, in Normandy after the Conquest. By the 12th-century the area had come into the hands of the Lovell family who had links with the Abbey giving the village its name.

- 1.3.3 Minster Lovell was included in the medieval forest of Wychwood and there was also Minster Wood, a park. The church and the adjacent hall were rebuilt in the first half of the 15th-century by William, seventh Baron Lovell of Tichmarsh. After the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 the Lovell estates were seized by the crown as John Lovell was a supporter of Richard III.
- 1.3.4 A coin of Marcus Aurelius was found at Manor Farm and in 1995, 8 graves 20 m to the west of the current churchyard were discovered (OAU, 1995b) possibly relating to an earlier medieval cemetery (which may be late Saxon related to the Minster or post-conquest related to the priory) or possibly from a non-conformist cemetery outside the churchyard wall.

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 in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits or features disturbed or destroyed by the current works.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a site visit after completion of the excavations. These consisted of approximately 10 m length of 0.5 m wide by 0.6 m deep trench running from the vestry door on the north side of the church to a "Klargester" installation sited adjacent to the eastern wall of the churchyard where the excavation reached a depth of 1.4 m.
- 2.2.2 A plan of the works was drawn at a scale of 1:100 and a sample section drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and the section 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

- 3.1.1 The excavations encountered the natural cornbrash (2) at a depth of 0.25 m below ground level (Fig. 3, section 1). This could be seen to be in excess of 1.15 m deep within the section of the "Klargester" pit. This was sealed by a 0.25 m thick layer of dark yellow-brown clay loam (1), a layer of topsoil and turf.

3.2 **Finds**

3.2.1 No dating evidence was encountered during the course of the watching brief.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The watching brief showed that the trench had been excavated through undisturbed ground and that no evidence for structures, occupation or inhumations was encountered.

4.1.2 The closeness of the site to the course of the River Windrush suggests that the area may have been within the floodplain, and was used as permanent pasture prior to inclusion within the churchyard.

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	0.25 m	-	Topsoil and turf	-	C20th
2	Layer	> 1.15 m	-	Cornbrash, undisturbed natural	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
- OA, 1992 *Field Manual (ed. Wilkinson D)*
- OAU, 1995a *Minster Lovell Hall, Site Information Panels*
- OAU, 1995b *Minster Lovell Hall Access Road, Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire: Evaluation Report*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Kenelms Church, Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire

Site code: MLSKC 05

Grid reference: SP 324 114

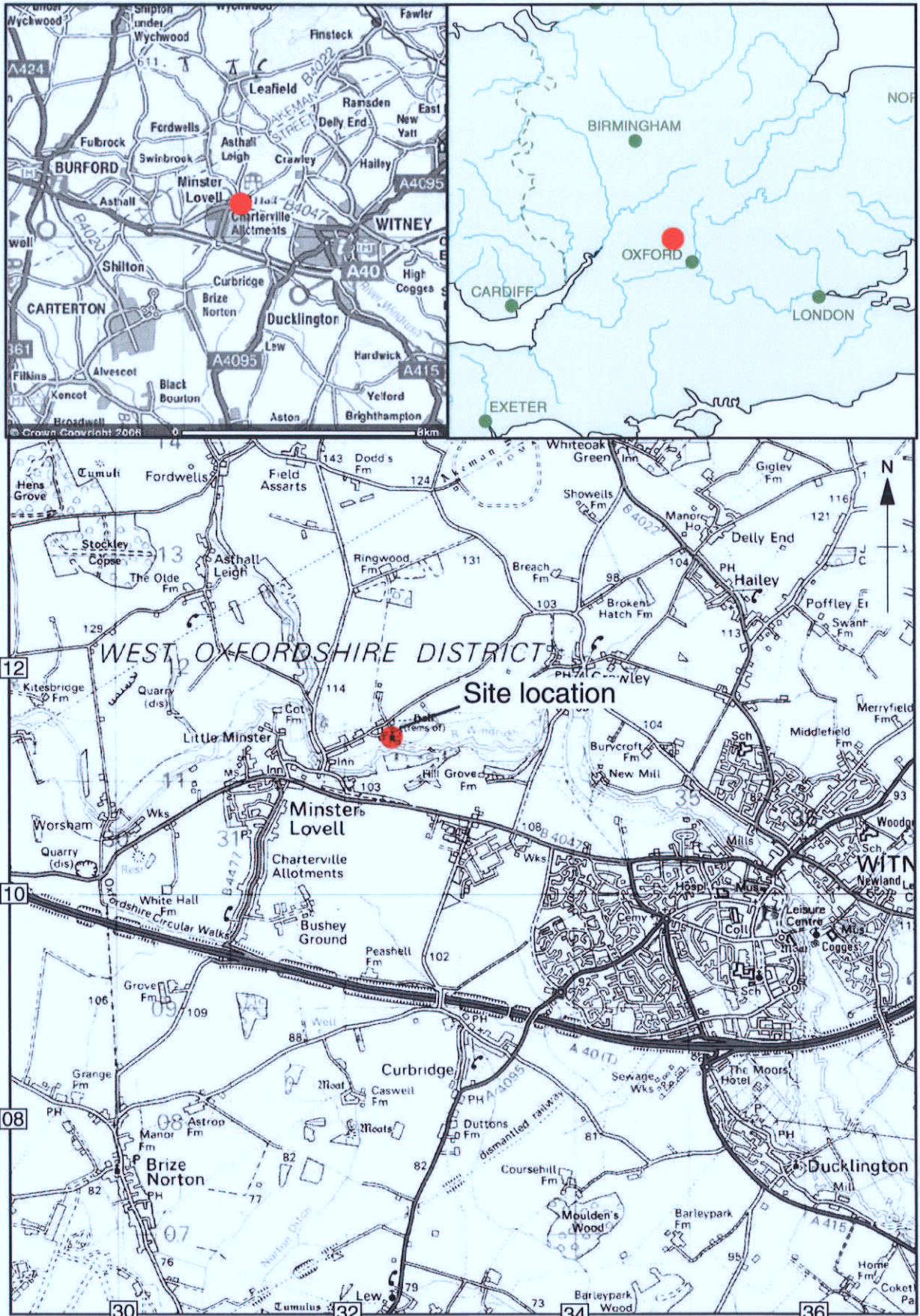
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of sewer trench and septic tank

Date and duration of project: 15/8/05, 1 day

Area of site: 100 m²

Summary of results: The watching brief observed topsoil overlying undisturbed natural, no archaeology was encountered.

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: OCMS:2005.104



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Figure 1: Site location

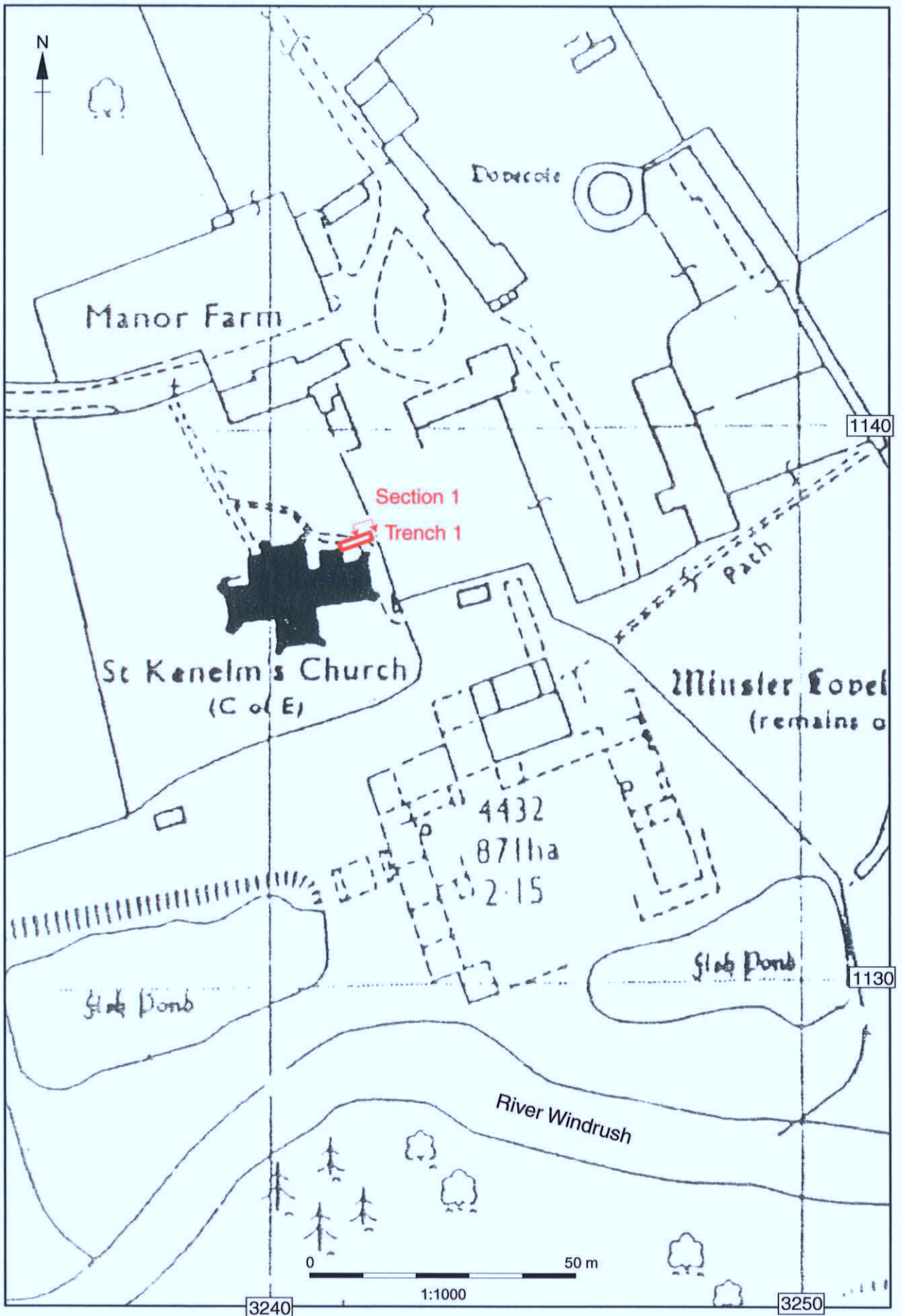


Figure 2: Site plan

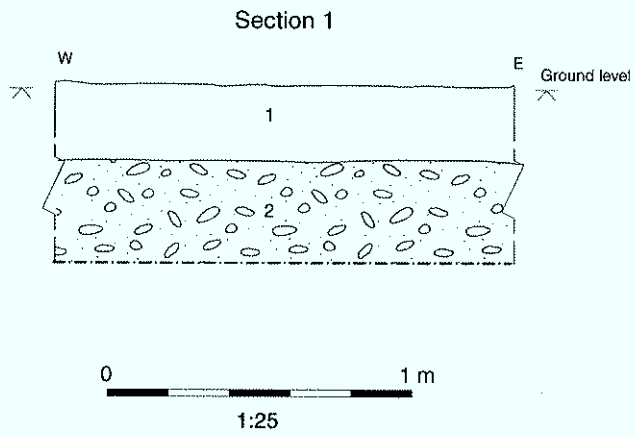


Figure 3 : Section



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