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Howes, Allen and Montgomery

St Nicholas' Church, Chadlington, Oxfordshire

NGR SP 326 221

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Oxford Archaeological Unit
May 2001

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Prepared by: J Dalton/J Hiller

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ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Date: 4/5/2001

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Summary

In May 2000 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at St Nicholas' Church, Chadlington, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 326 221). No archaeological features were seen and no finds were retrieved during the course of the watching brief. Limited observations were made of stonework present in part of the trenches, though no certain interpretation was made of this on site within the limited confines of the trench.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In May 2000 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at St Nicholas' Church, Chadlington, Oxfordshire. (Fig. 1) The church is centred at NGR SP 326 221. The development proposal comprised the excavation of a new drainage ditch around the north transept of the church, and the installation of new pipework.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned by Howes Allen & Montgomery, Chartered Architects, on behalf of Chadlington PCC. It was undertaken in consultation with Mr J T Munby, the Diocesan Advisory Committee's archaeological advisor.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Eynsham Rolls of 1197 contain references to the "...chapels of Chadlington and Shorthampton"; however the building which stands today contains elements which date from the Saxon period.
- 2.2 Externally the church has several features of interest; on the east wall of the nave, above the chancel, is a carving of the Green Man. This figure is unusual in that the tree, or foliage, is usually shown growing downwards so that the branches form his beard. Here the tree is set squarely on the face, with the tree trunk forming the nose and the branches and leaves forming the eyebrows and hair. There are also several carved water spouts in the form of gargoyles; on the south side of the church there is a carving of two figures clasping a tun, or barrel, between them. This is a reference to the two manors which comprise the village, Chadlingtons East and West, and a pun on the place-name itself "Chad's Little Tun or Town".
- 2.3 Internally, the round arch on the north wall of the nave dates from the Saxon period, although it is now incorporated into a wall of a much later date. Further pointed arches in the nave are in the Early English style and date from between

1190 and 1275; the rounded arch in the south door is in the transitional style and dates from between 1150 and 1190, as are some of the windows lining the south aisle. The north transept is in decorated style and dates from between 1275 and 1375; this part of the church has links with the Manor of Chadlington West. The Lords of this Manor were the Osbaldeston family, to whom is dedicated a tablet on the east wall of the church; from the notes of a visitor to the church in 1676 there was a tomb of John Osbaldeston and his wife in the churchyard, however the location of this tomb has since been lost.

- 2.4 The Abbey Rolls of 1354 refer to the re-roofing of the chancel of St Nicholas', Chadlington; this part of the church, and by inference the church itself, must have already been old by this date. The church tower is not original, and it is thought likely that there was an earlier tower, or spire. During restoration works to the roof in 1870, grooves and marks were found on the interior wall of the tower indicating a previous roof level; thus either the roof was raised after the tower was built, or the interior wall of the existing tower is a part of the original tower.

3 Aims

- 3.1 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 (OAU, 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

- 4.1 The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits; all excavation was undertaken by hand.
- 4.2 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 (Fig 2)

5.1 The Drainage Trench

- 5.1.1 The drainage trench had been partly excavated prior to archaeological inspection; the earliest deposit seen at the base of the trench was a brown clay loam with 2% gravel. This was overlain by a grey clay loam with 5% fine-medium subangular gravel, 0.4 m thick.
- 5.1.2 Unworked limestone pieces were seen throughout both deposits, mostly in the vicinity of those redundant services being replaced. The trench measured 0.6 m wide by 0.4 m deep and was almost totally within the cut for the previous drainage works. Ragged limestone footings were partially exposed at the base

of the trench, but to an extent insufficient to inform any meaningful interpretation. The only cut feature seen was that for the redundant services and no finds were retrieved from either of the deposits; no human charnel was seen either *in situ* or within the excavated spoil, which was hand-sorted both for this material and for any stray finds. It is thought likely that any human bone present in this area was removed during the installation of the redundant services.

5.2 The Soakaway and Drainage Run

5.2.1 Limited observations were made during the excavations for the drainage run and new soakaway that were cut through similar churchyard soils as elsewhere. No finds were recovered in the course of the work, and no human remains encountered.

6 Finds

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

7 Environmental results

7.1 Full consideration was given to various sampling strategies however, due to the absence of any significant archaeology, no environmental soil samples were taken.

8 Discussion

8.1 The watching brief did not identify archaeology of any significance within the affected area; this is not thought to be especially significant as much of this area had been comprehensively dug over in the recent past during the installation of the previous drainage system, as indicated by the absence of any human bone.

8.2 The drain run and new soakaway revealed no archaeologically significant deposits.

Reference

OAU 1992, Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992)

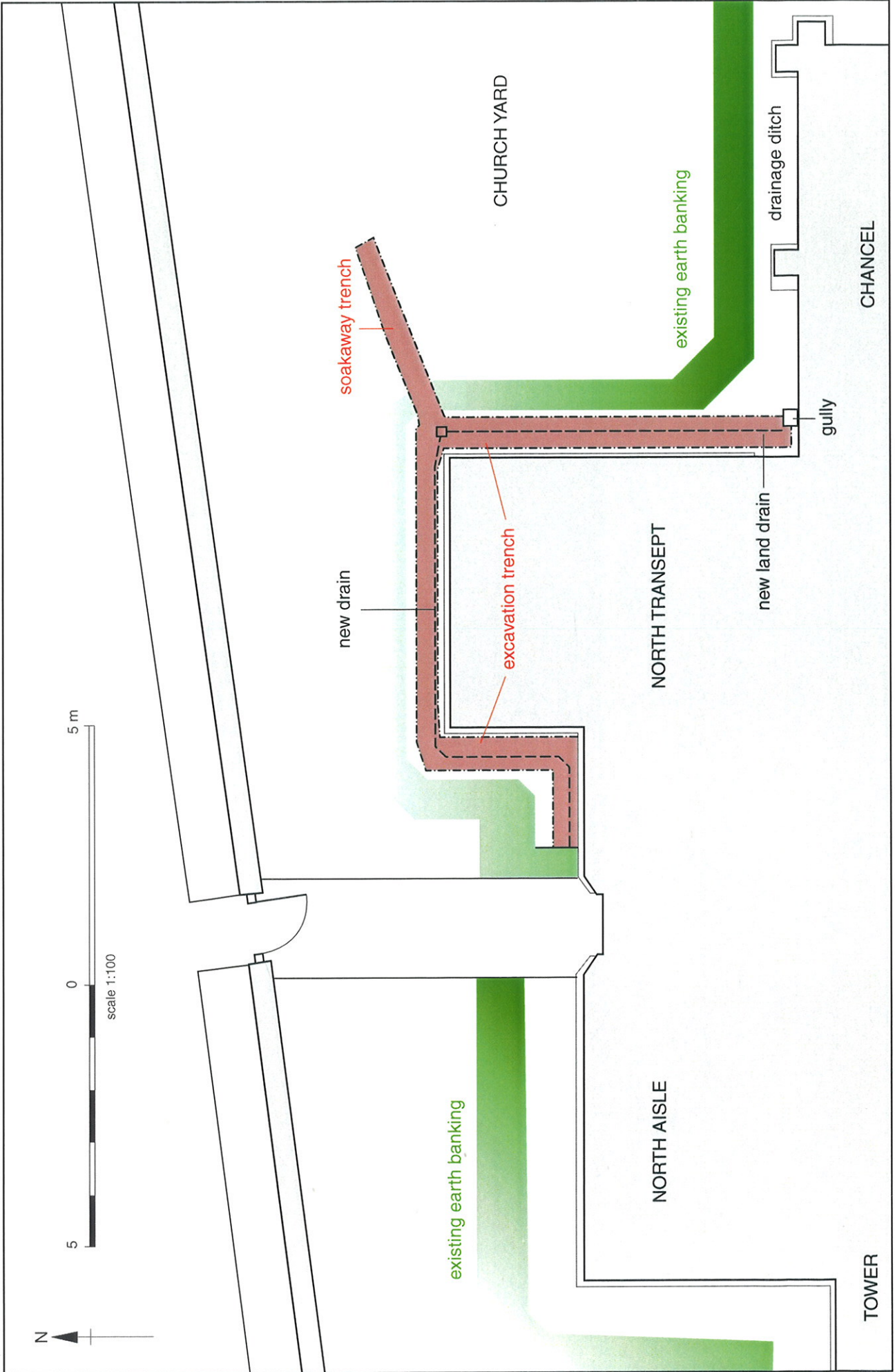


Figure 2: Site plan



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