

SNITTERFIELD (WA)

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272/98

David Robotham Limited, Chartered Architects

Church of St James the Great, Snitterfield, Warwickshire

*NGR SP 2183 6009*

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Oxford Archaeological Unit

April 1998

David Robotham Limited, Chartered Architects

Church of St James the Great, Snitterfield, Warwickshire

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Date: *3/4/98*

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Date: *27/4/98*

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Date: *29/4/1998*

Oxford Archaeological Unit

April 1998

## *Summary*

*On the 3rd of April 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at the Church of St James the Great, Snitterfield, Warwickshire (NGR SP 2183 6009). No archaeological features were seen; one sherd from a 19th century mustard pot was recovered from the subsoil. A small quantity of human charnel was disturbed and subsequently reburied.*

### **1 Introduction**

The development proposal comprised the provision of new toilet facilities, involving the excavation of a drain run from the foul main through the churchyard to the church, and the excavation of a small pit for a manhole adjacent to the south-west corner of the church itself.

The watching brief was commissioned by David Robotham Limited, Chartered Architects on behalf of St James' Church. It was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with the County Archaeological Officer.

### **2 Background**

The Church of St James consists of a chancel, a nave, north and south aisles and a west tower. The south arcade dates from the latter half of the 13th century, and the north from the 14th. A Clerestory was added in the early 16th century.

In the chancel, the roof is 18th century or later and is of a trussed rafter type. The choir stalls date from 1500 and have fine, intricate carved decoration, including the arms of England and France with greyhounds and dragons as borne by Henry VII. Also among the carvings is a figure of a bishop, a boy with wings and two figures of mermaids.

In the East window are representations of the Saxon saints Dunstan, Wolstan, Oswald and Edwin. There is also a memorial to Richard Jago, Vicar at Snitterfield for two years, who died in 1781; Jago was a member of the Warwickshire school of poets, his best known composition being 'Edgehill'.

The octagonal font is 14th century and is adorned with eight carved heads of men of various callings; one has a Bishop's mitre, one a knight's helmet and others have academic and legal caps.

The monks of St Sepulchres, who took possession of the church in the time of King Stephen, began work on the west tower. Construction halted during the Black Death (1348-1351), and the tower was thatched for almost a century until completed by Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, in the 15th century.

The exterior walls of the church are of undressed lias stone, with square buttresses of ashlar at the angles. The poet's uncle, Henry Shakespeare, is buried in the churchyard,

but the site of his grave was lost and remains unknown. Two further graves in the churchyard are protected with iron cages, originally designed to discourage bodysnatching.

### **3 Aims**

The aims of the watching brief were to record any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works to established standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure the preservation by record of any archaeology, the presence and nature of which could not be established in advance.

### **4 Methodology**

The manhole was excavated by hand and a constant presence was maintained on site during the work. Human remains, when encountered, were discreetly handled, covered and retained for reburial on completion of the work.

Within the constraints imposed by Health and Safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil descriptions use *estimated* percentages based on the use of standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

### **5 Results (Fig. 2)**

Two deposits were seen in the manhole excavation:

(1) was a thin skim of topsoil; 0.05 m of mid gray silty clay loam bearing scrubby grass.

(2) was a graveyard soil seen to the base of the excavation; 0.40 m of very stony mid brown/gray silty clay loam with 30% small-medium pebbles and cobbles c. 0.05 - 0.09 m in diameter, in an even distribution throughout this deposit.

This deposit produced the only find and also contained a disused cast-iron water pipe, surrounding which was a small quantity of human charnel. This was removed, prior to the removal of the pipe, and retained for reburial.

### **6 Finds**

The only find encountered was one sherd of a 19th century mustard pot, from deposit (2), on which can be made out the words "Moutarde...Vinaigrier...la Reine d'...et les Emp...d'Autriche".

## **7 Discussion**

The single sherd recovered would appear to indicate disturbance of the study area in the 19th century. No other finds were recovered despite careful sorting of the spoil, no cut features were seen and neither was natural. The watching brief successfully recorded those deposits which were revealed.

John Dalton  
OAU  
3/4/98

## **References.**

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

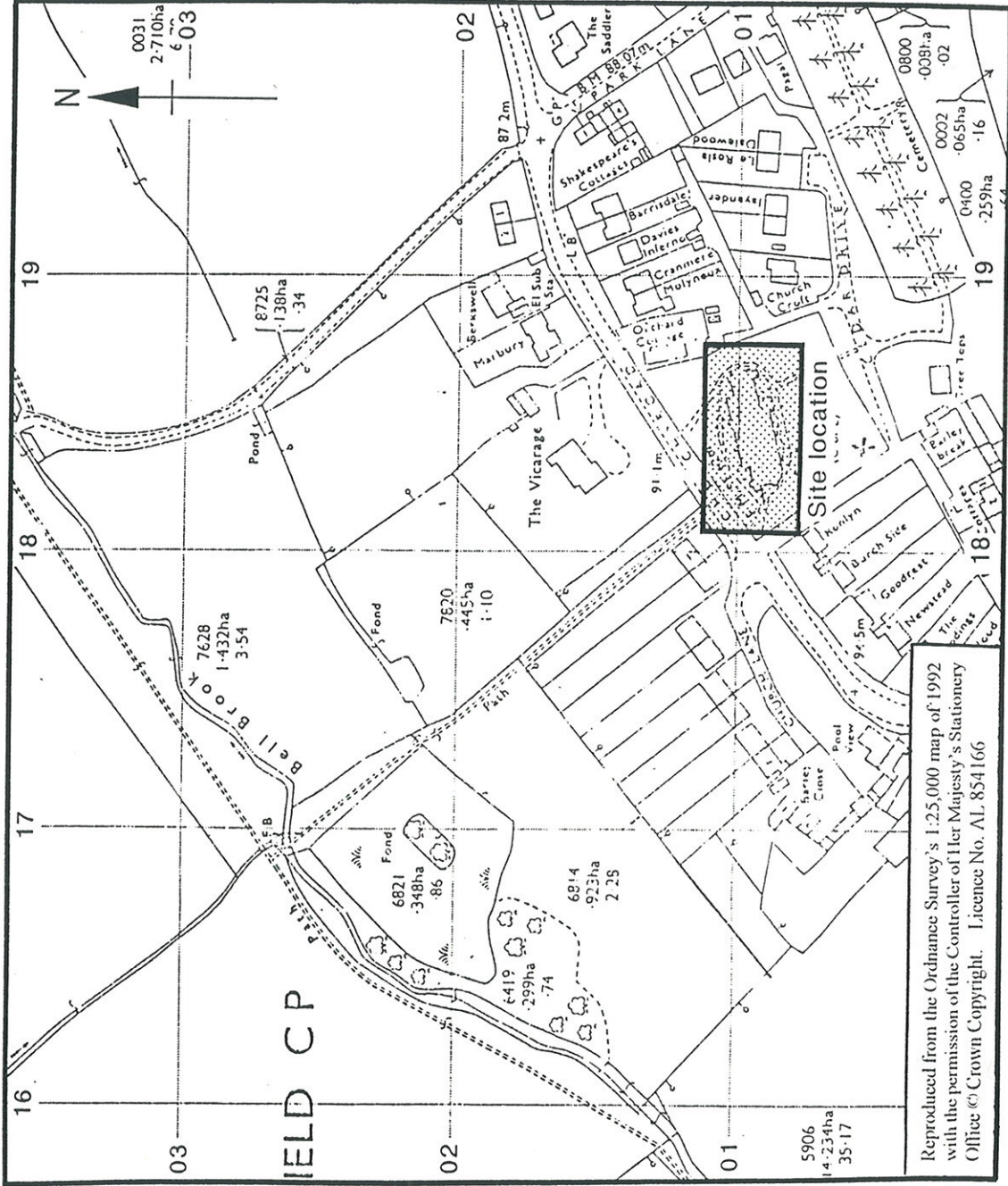


Figure 1

Location of site

scale 1:2500

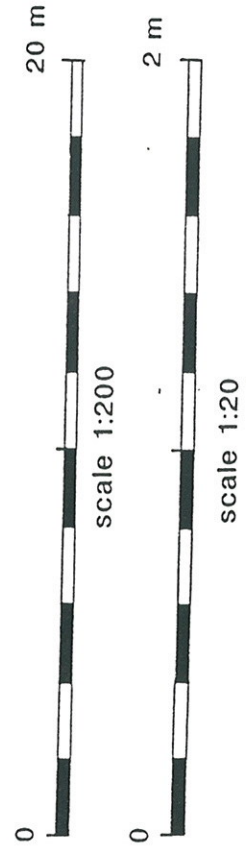
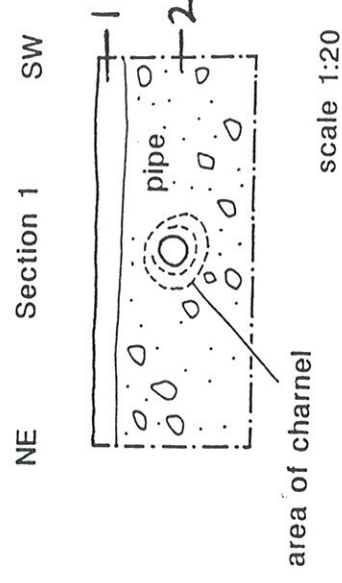
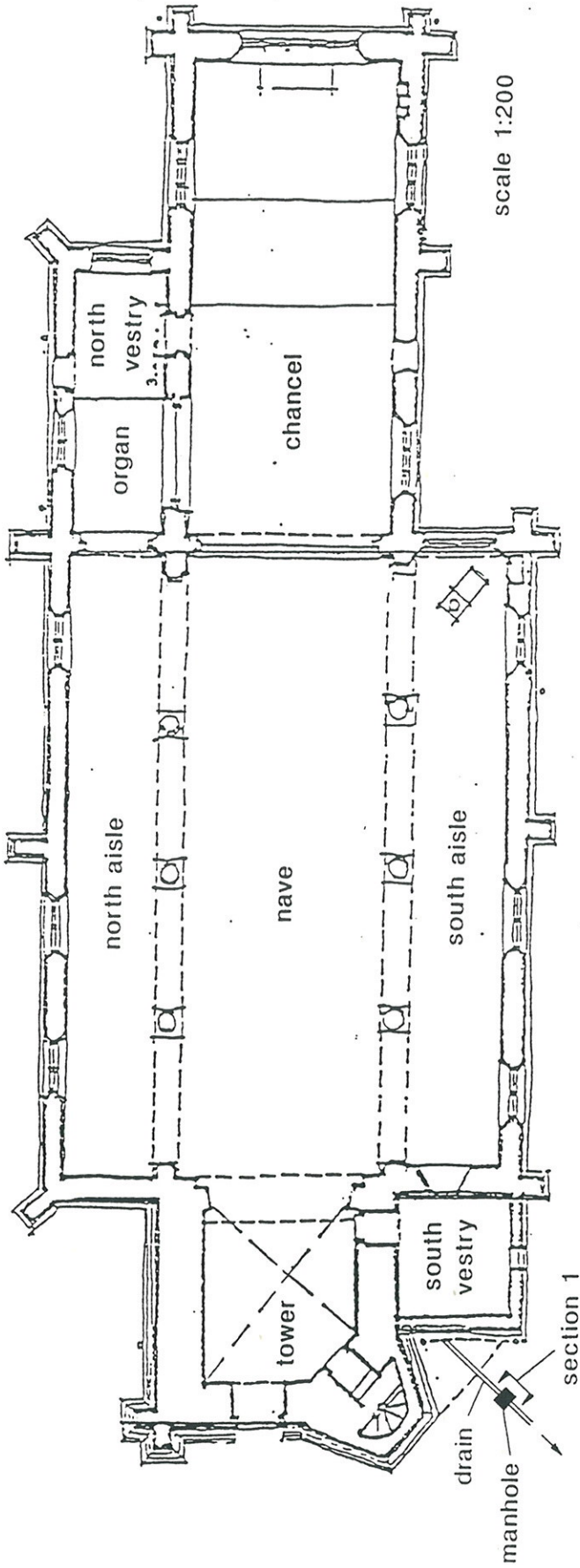


Figure 2

Site plan and section

