

St GILES CHURCH OXFORD. OXSGC94(SP 512071)ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT.INTRODUCTION.

The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief at St. Giles Church, Oxford, during the renewal of the floor of the South Chapel.

St. Giles Church was originally built by Edwin Godgoose in the 12th century, although most of the present structure dates to the second half of the 13th century. The S chapel itself was largely rebuilt in the mid 19th century.

The work entailed the removal of material underneath the floor to a depth of 0.9 m.

The site was visited on February 28th, and on the completion of the excavation on March 2nd.

RESULTS Figs 1 & 2.

Along the S side of the chapel was a 1.0 m deep pipe gully which was not disturbed by the excavation. The remaining area was filled with a very loose dumped deposit (1) of mid brown sandy silt, with considerable quantities of brick fragments, concrete and light gravel.

Retrieved from this deposit were scattered redeposited bones from at least six burials, three of them infants. These were put aside for reburial. Fragments of Medieval and Post-Medieval inlaid floor tile were also recovered.

In the top of layer 1 was found a partly corroded tinplate locket (Small Find No.1) containing a small alloy figure of a Saint, or possibly the Virgin Mary.

Layer 1 was removed to a depth of 0.9 m, revealing two partly demolished brick walls (2), oriented W-E and one course thick, extending below the limit of excavation. The walls were 1.35 m apart, and the N wall was revealed sufficiently to indicate a length of 1.8 m, and a return to the S.

The face of the E wall of the chapel showed traces of a plaster rendering between the two brick walls.

The stepped out footings of the N wall of the chapel were revealed; these continued along the E wall to the N brick wall.

To the W of the walls (2) was an area of compact dark brown gravelly silt (4), cut through from W-E and backfilled with material similar to layer 1. No finds were recovered from the excavated part of layer 4.

#### INTERPRETATION

Visible under the floor to the W of the excavated area was the barrel top of a brick vault, extending to the W. It is reasonable to conclude that the brick walls (2) represent the surviving structure of another vault, demolished and backfilled. It would appear that the construction of the vault entailed the cutting back of the E wall footing. The backfilled cut through layer 4 may have been a common entrance to both vaults.

Layer 4 itself would appear to be surviving medieval ploughsoil, although no dating evidence was retrieved to confirm this.

It was not possible to tell if the burials in the vault had been removed prior to its demolition, but it is possible that some of the retrieved human bone may belong to its original occupants.

Brick burial vaults were popular in the late 18th century, and, for want of any definitive dating evidence, the part demolished vault probably dates from this period. No evidence for the date or reason for its demolition was found, but it may have occurred at the same time as the pipe duct was constructed, early this century.

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Oxford St. Giles Church

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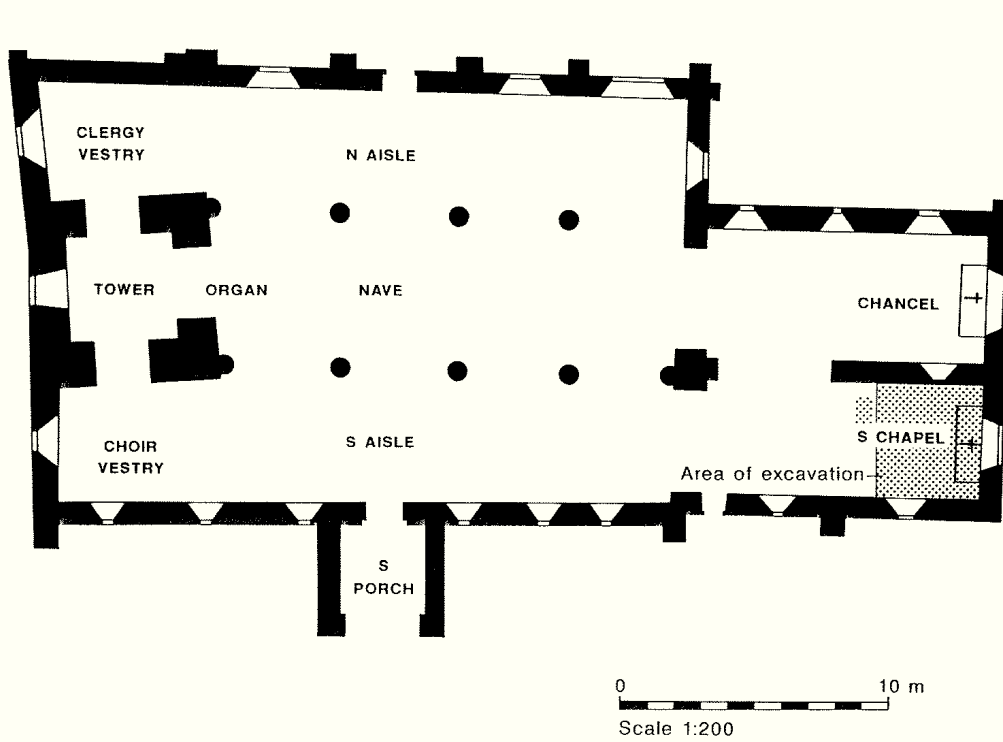


figure 1

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