

St Firmin's, North Crawley, District Church Council

St Firmin's Church, North Crawley, Buckinghamshire

NGR SP 9270 4475

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. 99.00694/MK

Oxford Archaeological Unit

October 1999

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Prepared by: John Datt

Date: 19/10/99

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Date: 19/10/99

Approved by: R. Williams HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date: 22/10/1999

Oxford Archaeological Unit

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Summary

In October 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at St Firmin's Church, North Crawley, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 9270 4475). No archaeological features were seen and no finds were retrieved.

1 Introduction (Fig. 1)

The development proposal (planning application no. 99/00694/MK) comprised the installation of a new liquefied petroleum gas tank in the churchyard and the excavation of a trench through the churchyard and around the north, east and south faces of the church, prior to the installation of a new gas central heating system.

The watching brief was commissioned by St Firmin's, North Crawley, District Church Council. It was undertaken to a WSI agreed with the DAC Archaeological Advisor.

2 Background

The church, dedicated to the patron saint of bullfighters, was originally constructed towards the end of the 11th century, although nothing of this building now remains above ground. The Nave and the Chancel are of 12th century date, although the Chancel was substantially rebuilt in the 13th century. The South Aisle dates to the early 13th century along with both the Nave and the tower. The North Aisle, the font and the upper stage of the tower were all added in the 14th century. Both aisles were remodelled and a clerestory, and therefore a new roof, was added in the 15th century. The earliest existing pews date from the 16th century.

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 watching brief was undertaken by means of one site visit on the 13th of October 1999; all excavation was by JCB mechanical excavator.

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 pipe trench measured 0.60 m in depth by 0.45 m wide. A consistent sequence of deposits was exposed throughout the trench:

- (1) – 0.14 m of mid gray silty clay loam with 5% subrounded fine gravel; topsoil.
- (2) – 0.24 m light gray silty clay loam with 2% subrounded fine gravel; subsoil/graveyard soil.
- (3) – 0.22 m dark gray silty clay with 2% subrounded fine gravel. This deposit contained very occasional small fragments of previously disturbed human bone, all of which was reburied at the conclusion of works.

The only exception to this sequence occurred in the trench to the north-east of the north porch where a 20th-century builder's dump was identified. It contained mortared modern housebrick, broken pieces of headstone (all of which were examined, but neither carving nor inscription could be identified) and roof tile and window glass fragments.

The foundation for the gas tank comprised a concrete apron 0.12 m thick; only topsoil was removed here. The spoil was hand-sorted for finds but none were retrieved.

6 Finds

Several pieces from the builder's dump were examined on site but not retained; all were of 20th century.

7 Environmental results

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

8 Discussion

The watching brief did not locate archaeology of any significance; this is at least partly a reflection on the limited nature of the excavations.

References.

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

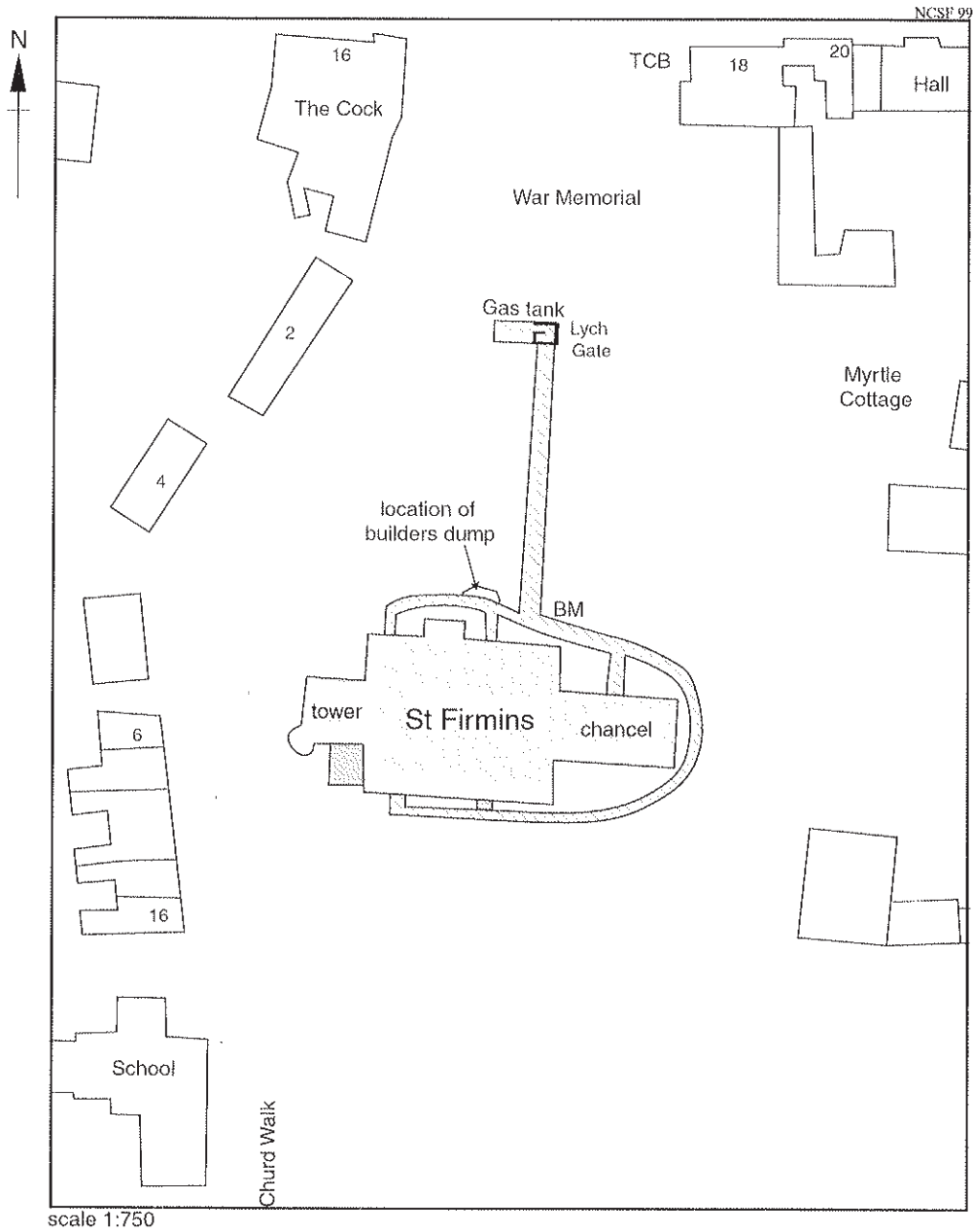


figure 1: site location