

St Mary's Church Little Coxwell Faringdon Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

21st November 2002

**Client Name: Andrew Townsend
Architects**

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 1563

NGR: SP 2265 0140

Client Name: Andrew Townsend Architects

Client Ref No:

Document Title: St Mary's Church, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Oxfordshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1


National Grid Reference: NGR SP 2265 0140
Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 1563
Site Code: LICOSM 02
Invoice Code: LICOSMWB
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Museum Accession No: OXCMS 2002.219

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Document File Location U:/OAU/wbREPORTS/Oxfordshire/LICOSM.doc
Graphics File Location Server10(W):/OAUpubs 1/ItoQ*LICOSMWB*St Mary's,
Little Coxwell, Oxford*CL*19/11.02

Illustrated by Christina Large

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St Mary's Church, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Location and scope of work	1
1.2 Geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology	2
2.1 Aims	2
2.2 Methodology.....	2
3 Results	2
3.1 Description of deposits	2
3.2 Finds	2
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains	2
4 Discussion and Conclusions	3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References	4
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	4

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
Fig. 2 Site Plan

SUMMARY

In November 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Mary's Church, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 2265 0140). The work was commissioned by Andrew Townsend Architects, Faringdon in advance of the excavation of new drainage in the churchyard. The watching brief revealed only a homogenous 'graveyard' soil. No significant archaeological features or deposits and no human remains were uncovered or disturbed by the groundwork.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In November 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Mary's Church, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Andrew Townsend Architects in respect of the installation of new drainage in the graveyard.
- 1.1.2 A brief was set by Julian Munby the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAC 2002).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies to the north of the village on Lower Greensand at 123 m above OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI (OA, 2002) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The earliest parts of the standing building date to the 12th century. This was the Chapel of Ease built by the monks of Beaulieu Abbey and the chancel arch, although this was substantially rebuilt in the 15th century. The nave and the chancel are both Norman. From the outside the most striking part of the church is the 13th century double bellcote; inside are a 15th century octagonal font and a carved wooden rail screening the organ loft. It is thought likely that the rail is a part of the pre-Reformation rood screen, known to have existed in the church.
- 1.3.3 In the vicinity is an Iron Age hillfort, located on Furze Hill. This feature has been badly damaged by ploughing, and only the ramparts on the western side survive, and comprise a double bank and ditch.
- 1.3.4 Oxford Archaeology (formerly Oxford Archaeological Unit, OAU) carried out a watching brief at the church in 1999. A few pieces of disarticulated bone were noted but no archaeological features were seen (OAU, 1999).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trenches for the new drains were all excavated by hand, except for long stretch of drain from the south west manhole to the west boundary of graveyard. This was excavated using a mini digger.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The trenches for the new drains were 0.4 – 5 m wide and 0.4 – 5 m deep depending on the contours of the surface. This exposed the natural dark yellowish brown sand (3) sealed below the topsoil (1) at the west end of the graveyard beyond the old boundary wall (4). The wall (4) was constructed of limestone fragments laid in rough courses and bonded with dark yellowish silty clay bond. It was constructed in a trench (5) cut through topsoil with vertical sides and flat base. To the east of the wall surrounding the church and overlying the natural was a layer of dark reddish brown silty sand (2) with limestone fragments (mainly around church) and patches of yellowish brown sand. This represented disturbed soil from burials and root action. This was sealed below a 0.5 – 6 m thick layer of very dark greyish brown silty sand (1) topsoil (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 No grave cuts were observed in any of the trenches except one to the south east of the church. In the trenches on the west side of the north porch, the remains of a 20th century lean-to shed (6) was observed cut into the topsoil. The foundations consisted of 0.2 m thick brick walls bonded with a light grey cement, with a floor of concrete laid on hardcore of broken brick and stone (Fig. 2).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief revealed no archaeological features. This was due to the shallow depth of the drainage trenches, which only just cut through the topsoil. These only exposed the top of the disturbed subsoil from burials and root action in which only one grave cut was observed. The topsoil had been cut by two 20th century features consisting of a previous western graveyard boundary wall and a small lean to shed against the north side of the church.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.5 – 6 m			Topsoil	None
2	Layer				Disturbed graveyard soil	None
3	Layer				Natural	
4	Structure	0.5 m	0.7 m	0.5 m	Old boundary wall	
5	Cut				Foundation trench	
6	Structure		1.8 m	3 m	Foundations of shed	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

DAC, 2002, St Mary's Church, Little Coxwell. Brief for archaeological recording (watching brief)

OA, 1992, Fieldwork Manual, (Ed. D. Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

OAU, 1999, *St Mary's Church, Little Coxwell, Oxfordshire* Archaeological Watching Brief report

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Mary's Church, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Oxfordshire

Site code: LICOSM 02

Grid reference: NGR SP 2265 0140

Type of watching brief: Installation of new drainage in graveyard.

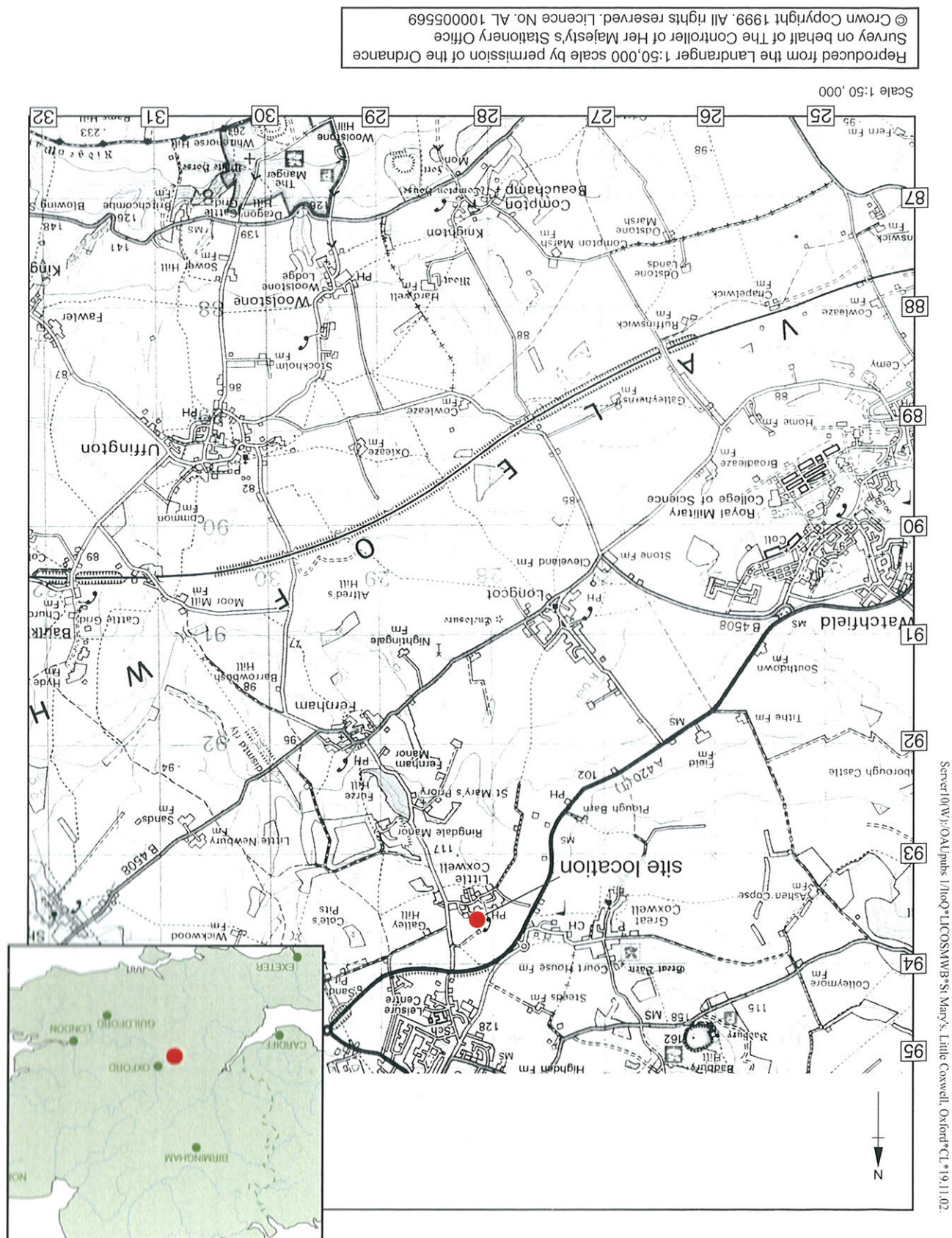
Date and duration of project: Five visits from the 4/11/2002 to 12/11/2002.

Area of site: 63 m x 38 m

Summary of results: No archaeological features or burials were observed. Two features from the 20th century were recorded.

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: OXCMS 2002.219

Figure 1: Site location



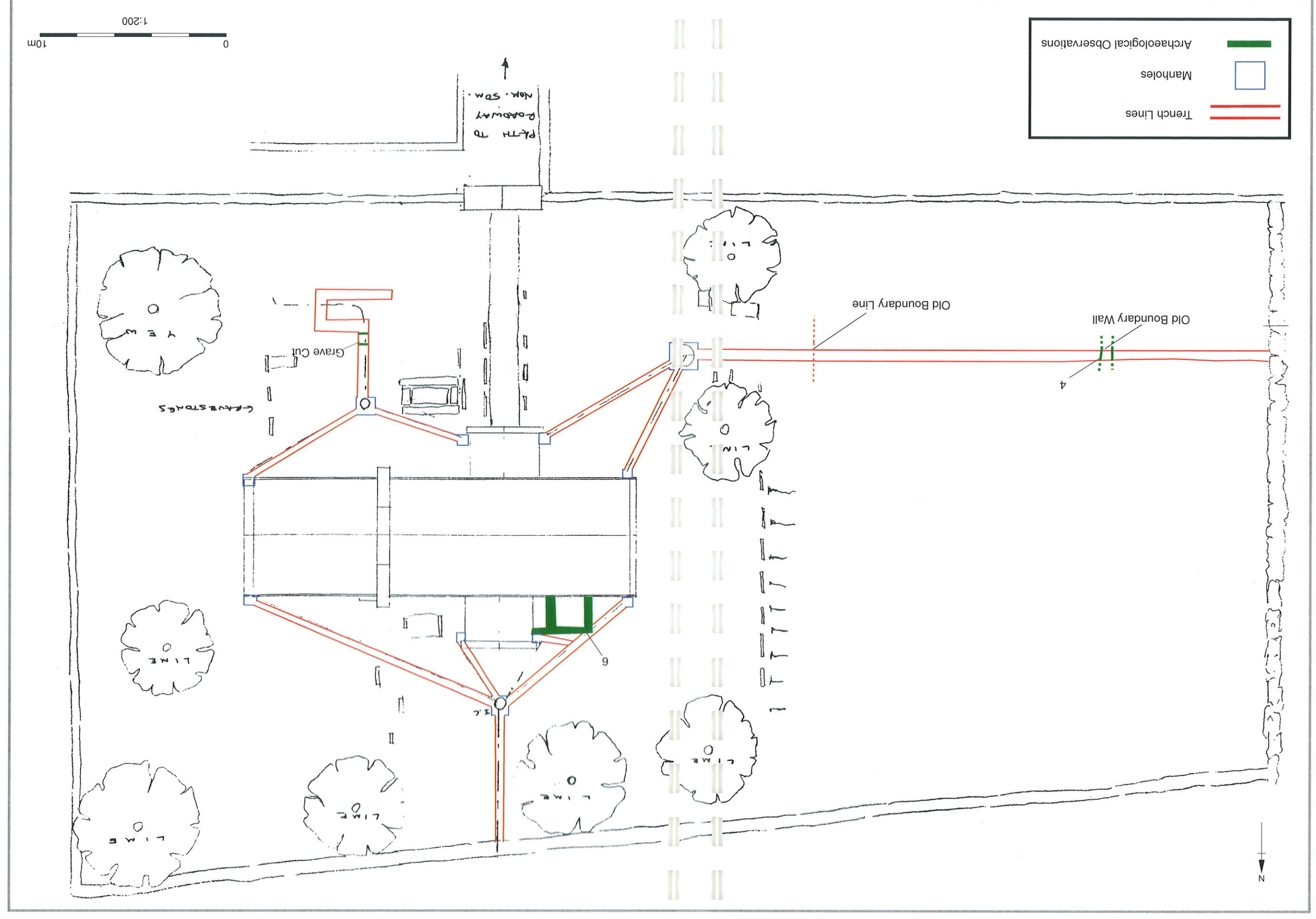


Figure 2: Site Plan



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