

Church of St Mary the Virgin
Adderbury
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



October 2006

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St Mary the Virgin,
Fabric Committee**

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Prepared by: Mike Sims
Position: SWD Project Supervisor
Date: 27th October 2006

Checked by: Dan Dodds
Position: Head of Small Works
Date: 3rd November 2006

Approved by: Nick Shepherd
Position: Head of Fieldwork
Date: 3rd November 2006

Signed.....*Nick Shepherd*..... SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER
P.P. N. SHEPHERD.

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Oxford Archaeology
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Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

**Church of St Mary the Virgin,
Adderbury, Oxfordshire**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between July and October 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Adderbury, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 4708 3535). The work was commissioned by the Parish Church Committee (PCC) of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Fabric Committee, in advance of the removal of existing drainage gullies and their replacement with pipes and French drains, and new connections to existing drainage. The watching brief revealed the presence of a 19th century brick crypt alongside the north wall of the north transept but no evidence for any of the earlier phases of church construction.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between July and October 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Church of St Mary the Virgin at Adderbury, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 4708 3535). The work was commissioned by the PCC of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Fabric Committee, in respect of a proposal for the replacement of drainage gullies around the church with pipes and French drains and connection to mains drainage.

1.1.2 A project brief was agreed with the Church Commissioners and OA, setting out the standards and requirements for the conduction of a watching brief.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The village of Adderbury is formed of two settlements, East and West Adderbury and is located approximately 4 km south of the town of Banbury, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The church is sited within the centre of West Adderbury at the highest point of an outcrop formed by a loop of the Sor Brook and lies at 103 m above OD. The churchyard yard itself slopes down to the west, to a mill leat branching off the Sor Brook and occupies an area of c.0.8 hectares. The underlying geology is alluvium over Lower Lias deposits (Geological survey of Great Britain sheet no. 218).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The following is an edited history of Adderbury and the Church of St Mary the Virgin taken from the Victoria History of the County of Oxford, volume IX.

1.3.2 The parish of Adderbury is largely bounded by rivers, on the east the Cherwell separated it from Northamptonshire, on the south the River Swere was the dividing line with Deddington parish and Wootton Hundred, and on the west the Sor Brook separated it from Bloxham.

- 1.3.3 There are known Romano-British villa sites at Bodicote, 2 km to north-west and near to West Adderbury. It is uncertain when the first Anglo-Saxon settlements were made, but it is probable that the Cherwell area was settled in the 6th or early 7th centuries. The double village of Adderbury takes its name from an Anglo-Saxon saint, Eadburga, the earlier form of the place name being *Eadburgesbrig*. The village is first mentioned at the time of Wynflaed (c.950) and by the 11th century was one of the centres of a large royal estate. By the 13th and 14th centuries Adderbury had developed into two settlements, East and West Adderbury separated by the Sor Brook.
- 1.3.4 It is probable that the church at Adderbury was founded before the Conquest, with the Bishop of Winchester claiming that Athelstan had given the church to his see in 1014 or 1015.
- 1.3.5 The church of St Mary the Virgin is a large cruciform building with a chancel, north and south transepts, nave, north and south aisles with porches and a western tower with spire. The earliest work dates from the early 13th-century when a church with transepts and a nave of 5 bays was apparently built. In the east wall of the north transept are the remains of 13th-century lancet windows with wall paintings on the splays and on the north wall there are the remains of an arcade. It is probable that there was also once a 5-light lancet window in this wall.
- 1.3.6 Similarly in the south transept there are traces of lancets in the east wall and arcading on the south wall. Of the original 13th-century nave arcade the capitals alone survive. The piers and arches were reconstructed in the 14th-century, with only the westernmost bay retaining its original proportions. Excessive alterations were made in the late 13th and 14th centuries, the tower and spire were added and the nave arcade was reconstructed, with the arches of the eastern bays being enlarged so that there were 4 arches rather than the original 5 arches. The aisles were so much widened that they are now broader than the nave. Also at this time decorated windows of which the original tracery has since been destroyed, were inserted in the walls of the transepts in place of the former lancet and the north and south porches were added. Later in the 14th-century a clerestory was added to the nave and a new roof constructed. At a later date clerestories were added to the transepts and the easternmost windows of the nave clerestory were turned into interior windows. The chancel with a vestry on the north side was added in the early 15th-century.
- 1.3.7 It is probable that during the Civil War that the coloured glass in which the medieval church was particularly rich, was destroyed.
- 1.3.8 By the 18th century the church had fallen into disrepair, in 1770, 3 of the chancel windows were walled up, in 1777 part of the spire fell and between 1787 and 1789 the churchwardens had all the window tracery removed from the windows in the body of the church and replaced with plain stone bars. By 1815 restoration had started on the church with the top 17 feet of the spire being rebuilt. Between 1831 and 1834 the chancel was restored at the expense of New College and tracery was inserted in the 6 windows. Between 1866 and 1870 the body of the church was restored and new tracery

designed and installed in the transepts. As part of the restoration the north and south aisles and the north transept were re-roofed and the pitch raised to the original gables which survived. The spire was partly rebuilt in 1922 and the tower restored in 1927.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of any groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during any groundworks likely to disturb or damage potential archaeological deposits or features.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of these works was maintained at a scale of 1:100 and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and any recorded sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 Approximately 120 m of 0.5 m wide by 0.35 m deep trenching was hand excavated at the base of the walls along the southern, northern and eastern sides of the church. As part of this work an earlier concrete and brick gully was broken out prior to excavation starting. Where the new drains were connected into existing pipework the trenching was up to 0.7 m deep.
- 3.1.2 During the trenching along the southern and eastern sides of the church a layer of yellow-brown silt clay (2) was encountered 0.15 m below the current ground level (Fig. 3, Sections 1 and 2). This deposit contained many small fragments of stone and occasional fragments of ceramic tile and is probably the top of the underlying alluvium mixed with construction debris. This was overlaid by a 0.15 m deep layer of grey-brown clay loam (1) the present day topsoil and turf.
- 3.1.3 During the trenching along the northern side of the church a layer of dark red-brown clay silt (3) was encountered at a depth of 0.15 m below the current ground level (Fig. 3, Sections 3 and 4). Within the connections to the existing drains this could be seen to be in excess of 0.5 m deep. This layer contained numerous small fragments of

stone and fragments of red ceramic tile similar to layer (2), and is likewise a probable layer of the underlying alluvium mixed with construction debris. To the north wall of the north transept a 1.95 m long east-west aligned feature was observed within the northern edge of the trench (5) (Fig. 2). This was the edge of a grave cut containing a rectangular brick built crypt (4) made using bricks measuring 0.222 m long, 0.105 m wide and 0.062 m deep, bonded with a lime mortar. When observed through a gap left by a dislodged brick, the crypt could be seen to be capped with a brick arch and to contain a skeleton and coffin fittings. The size of the bricks and the crypt form suggests an early 19th century date. This was sealed by a 0.15 m layer of the present day topsoil and turf (1).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Small fragments of an abraded red ceramic, either roof or floor tile, was encountered within Layers 2 and 3. Its presence was noted, however it was not retained.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Evidence of an early 19th century brick built crypt was observed alongside the north wall of the north transept, however no other features were encountered. Layers 2 and 3 were probably formed during various phases of construction on the site, from construction debris worked into the underlying alluvium mixed with disturbed material from other grave cuts.
- 4.1.2 No evidence for any of the earlier phases of construction of the church was observed during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.15 m	-	Topsoil and turf	-	Modern
2	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Subsoil mixed with construction debris	Tile	-
3	Layer	> 0.5 m	-	Subsoil mixed with construction debris	Tile	-
4	Structure	> 0.3 m	c.1 m	Brick built crypt	Brick	C19th
5	Cut	> 0.3 m	c.1 m	Grave cut	-	C19th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

Victoria History of the County of Oxford Vol.IX (ed. R.B.Pugh, 1969)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Church of St Mary the Virgin, Adderbury, Oxfordshire

Site code: ADSMV 06

Grid reference: SP 4708 3535

Type of watching brief: Hand excavation of new drainage channels around the church

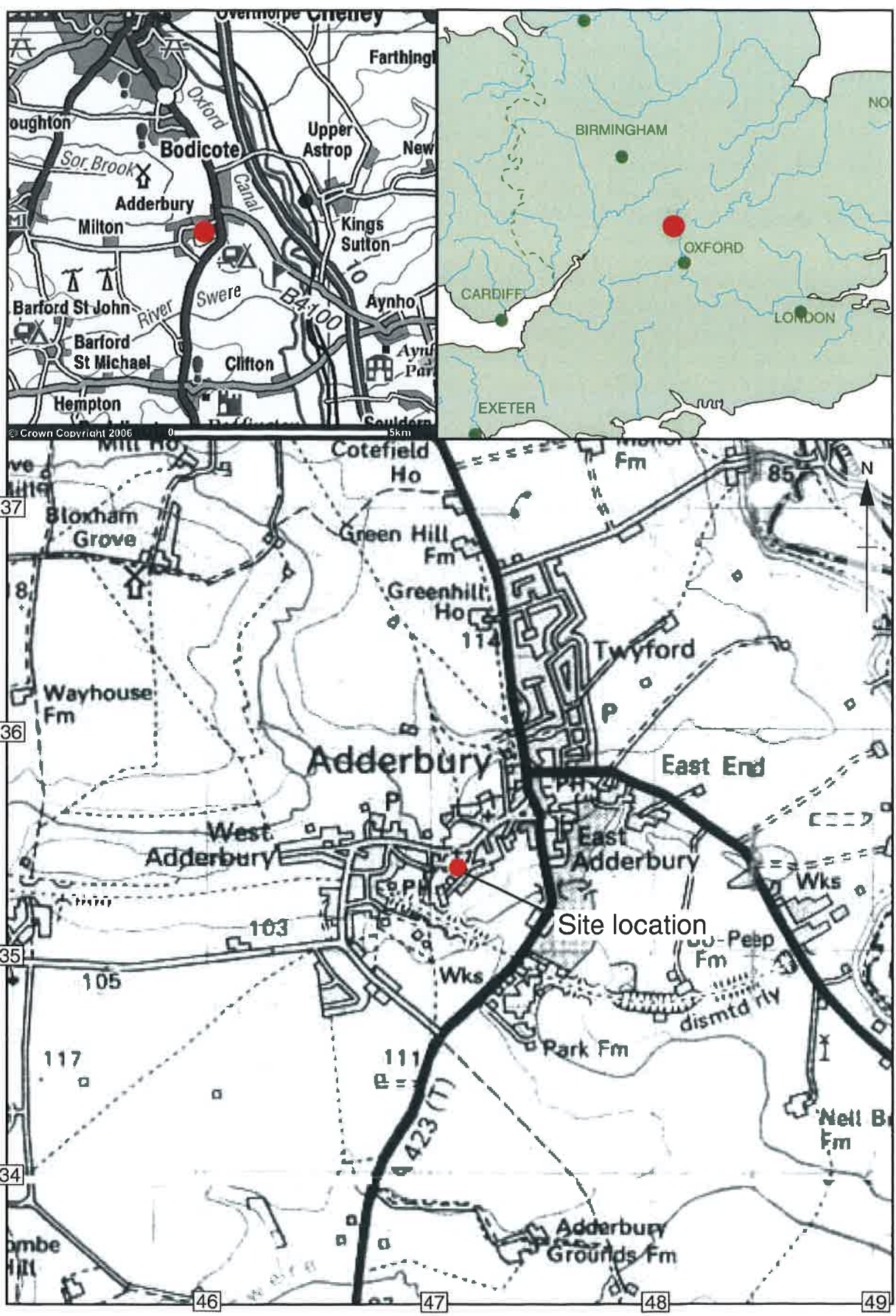
Date and duration of project: 14/6/06 to 24/10/06, 4 months

Area of site: 1560 m²

Summary of results: A 19th century brick built crypt was encountered alongside the north wall of the north transept, no evidence for any of the earlier phases of church construction was encountered.

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:2006.63

Server 10:\oapubsl_a thru it*ADSM\WB*ADSM\06*St Mary the Virgin, Adderbury*AH*2610 06



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Figure 1: Site location

Plan 1

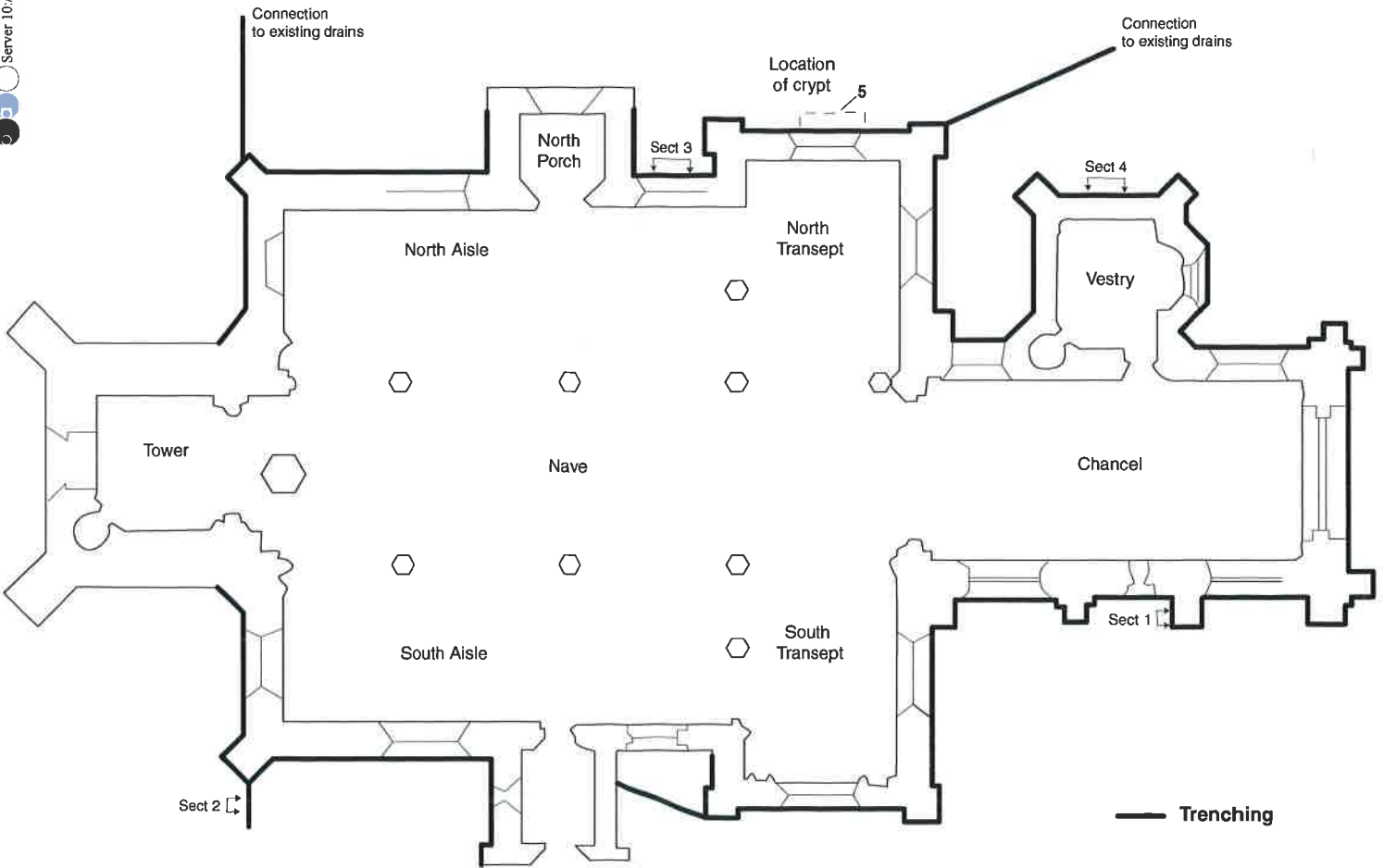


Figure 2 : Site plan

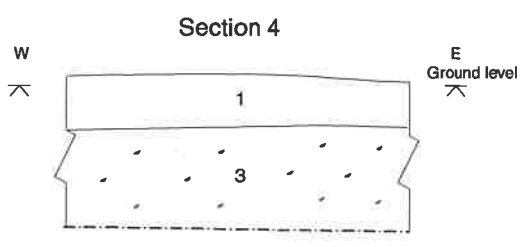
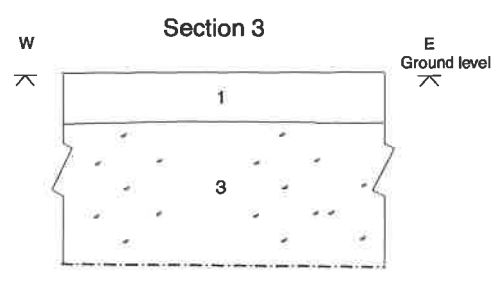
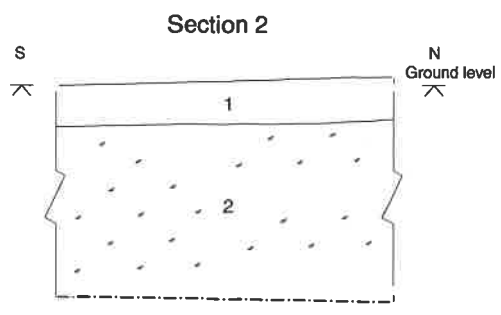
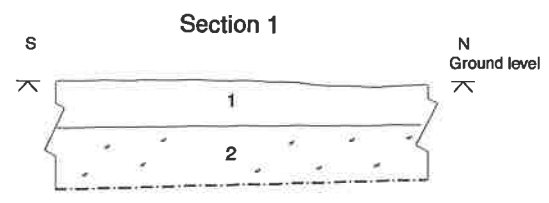


Figure 3 : Sections 1-4



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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