

The Gathering Place All Saints Church Wokingham Berkshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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All Saints Church, Wokingham, Berkshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Front cover: South elevation of church

SUMMARY

In May and June 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at All Saints Church, Wokingham, Berkshire (NGR: SU 815 688). The work was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council in advance of the construction of an open area with associated walls, flower beds and a flight of steps to the south of the Cornerstone Community Hall. The watching brief revealed overall deposits of topsoil and turf sealing an earlier graveyard soil. The cuts for 4 graves of probable 19th or 20th-century date were observed within this layer but no inhumations were encountered. No other significant archaeology was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In May and June 2008 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at All Saints Church, Norreys Avenue, Wokingham, Berkshire (NGR: SU 815 688). The work was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council in respect of a proposal for the construction of a new open area with raised walls, new flower beds and a flight of steps, known as the 'Gathering Space' leading from a paved area south of the Cornerstone Community Hall.

1.1.2 A brief was produced by the Diocesan Advisor, Julian Munby detailing the specifications for the archaeological recording (Munby, J, 2004) and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2008).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The church is situated on the eastern edge of the historic centre of the town of Wokingham (Fig. 1). The churchyard is bounded to the west and south by the A329, to the north by Norreys Avenue and to the east by dwellings. The area of the new works is situated to the north of the church and immediately south of the Cornerstone Community Hall and measures c400 m² at a level of approximately 66 m above OD. The underlying geology is Flood Plain gravel over Lower Bagshot Bed sands and London clay (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no. 268).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological and historical background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2008) and is reproduced below.

1.3.1 All Saints Church was constructed in the 14th century on an older site. The tower and clerestory were added in the 15th century. A major restoration programme was carried out in 1864-6 by Henry Woodyer. His work is mainly in the style of the 14th

century, but includes a Norman-style doorway. The building is listed Grade II*. Thomas Godwin, Bishop of Bath and Wells, was buried there in 1590.

- 1.3.2 The site lies within the medieval core of Wokingham. Thought to be a market centre for central and east Berkshire, the medieval town is believed to have developed originally from a Saxon settlement, Wokingham meaning 'homestead of the Wocce', a Saxon place-name.
- 1.3.3 The earliest recorded settlement is documented to the 12th century and probably centred around the chapel which is mentioned in 1146 AD, and which later became the Parish Church of All Saints. This church contains Norman work but is predominantly 14th century in date with a 15th century tower. The Parish Office lies immediately to the west of this church.
- 1.3.4 The original plan of the town consists of two parallel streets; Rose and Peach Streets, with associated burgage plots. A large triangular market place was formed to the west of these streets entered from Broad Street and Denmark Street, both of which also contained burgage plots. It is on the eastern edge of this medieval centre that the development site is located. By the 18th and 19th century, the pressure to expand the town saw not only an extension towards Reading but the amalgamation of tenements in Broad Street to allow for larger houses with formal gardens.
- 1.3.5 A watching Brief was undertaken in 1991 on the north side of the church for works to install central heating. The investigation revealed two graves, one of which contained a skeleton.
- 1.3.6 In 2004, Oxford Archaeology carried out a small evaluation on the proposed site of the new steps at the Gathering Space (OA, 2004). A single trench measuring 3 m x 1 m revealed four graves, although no human remains were observed.

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 intrusive groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To allow for the recording, and if appropriate, lifting and reburial of any human remains encountered.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a continuous archaeological presence during any groundworks that had the potential to disturb any archaeological deposits.
- 2.2.2 The works consisted of a semi-circular area excavated in front of the doors of the Cornerstone Community Hall for a paved area (Fig. 2). A circular area was reduced in level immediately south of this for a tarmaced open space. This was flanked to the east and west by 0.6 m deep by 0.6 m wide foundations for low brick walls. A 1 m square by 0.75 m deep tree planting pit was excavated on the western edge of the reduced area. These works were mostly achieved using a small mechanical excavator with occasional hand digging.
- 2.2.3 A plan showing the extent and location of any excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:100 and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and 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 An overall layer of dark yellow-brown silt clay (2), was encountered throughout the excavations at a depth of between 0.18 m and 0.3 m below the existing ground level (Fig. 2, Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4). This layer contained occasional fragments of red brick (probably associated with the construction of the churchyard wall immediately north of the development area) and occasional gravel and probably represents a layer of disturbed churchyard soil.
- 3.1.2 The excavation of the tree planting pit showed this layer to be in excess of 0.75 m deep.
- 3.1.3 Visible cutting into this layer were 4 east-west aligned features running parallel to each other, filled with a yellow-brown silt clay containing fragments of red brick (Fig. 2). The shape, size and alignment of these features are indicative of grave cuts, although no evidence of interment was encountered at this level.
- 3.1.4 Sealing this deposit and the grave cuts was a layer of dark brown topsoil and turf (1) up to 0.3 m in depth (Fig. 2, Sections 1, 2 and 4). This layer was completely excavated within the foundation trenches, but was only partially removed within some parts of the area of the ground reduction.
- 3.1.5 Within the area of the existing tarmac path a 0.15 m deep layer of crushed brick (5) had been laid directly onto the surface of Layer 2 (Fig. 2, Section 3). This was overlaid by a 0.1 m deep layer of brown sand (4) which formed the base for the 0.08 m deep tarmac path (3).

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 Fragments of brick dating to the 19th century were observed within the topsoil and the earlier churchyard soil (Layers 1 and 2), but no other dating evidence was recovered. The presence of these finds was recorded but they were 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 The watching brief showed that the development area was within the boundary of the cemetery associated with All Saints Church. The depth of the excavations was sufficient to expose the tops of 4 probable grave cuts possibly indicating a row of burials running north-south across the area. The presence of brick fragments associated with the 19th-century churchyard wall within the fills of these cuts indicates that they post-date the construction of the wall and are probably late 19th-or early 20th-century in date.
- 4.1.2 When the plan for the 2004 evaluation was overlaid with the current excavations they could be seen to represent a continuation of one of the rows of graves running north-south across the site observed in 2004.
- 4.1.3 No other significant archaeology was observed.

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	0.18 m - 0.3 m	-	Topsoil and turf, current churchyard soil	Brick	C19th/ C20th
2	Layer	> 0.75 m	-	Earlier churchyard soil	Brick	C19th
3	Layer	0.08 m	1.2 m	Existing tarmac path	-	C20th
4	Layer	0.1 m	1.2 m	Sand base for tarmac path	-	C20th
5	Layer	0.15 m	1.2 m	Hardcore, crushed brick	Brick	C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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

Munby, J, 2004 *All Saints Church, Wokingham: Archaeological Recording Specification*

OA, 2004 *All Saints Church, Wokingham, Berkshire: Archaeological Evaluation Report*

OA, 2008 *All Saints Church, Wokingham, Berkshire : Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: The Gathering Place, All Saints Church, Wokingham, Berkshire

Site code: WOKAS 08

Grid reference: SU 815 688

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of new open space and associated garden walls.

Date and duration of project: 20th May to 9th June 2008, 3 weeks

Area of site: c400 m²

Summary of results: The watching brief exposed a continuation of one of the rows of grave cuts observed in the 2004 evaluation trench and a layer of earlier graveyard soil underneath modern topsoil and turf. No other significant archaeology was observed.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course, under the following accession number: REDMG:2008.276



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Figure 1: Site location

Plan of excavations

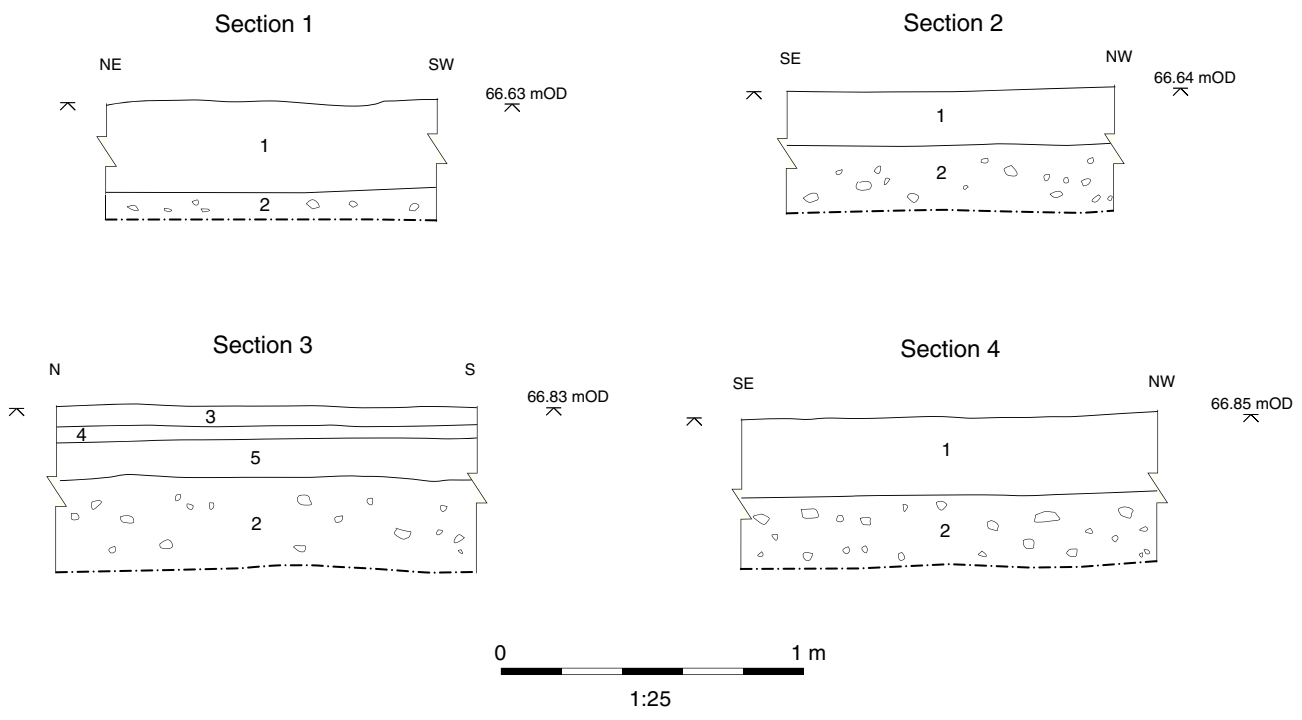
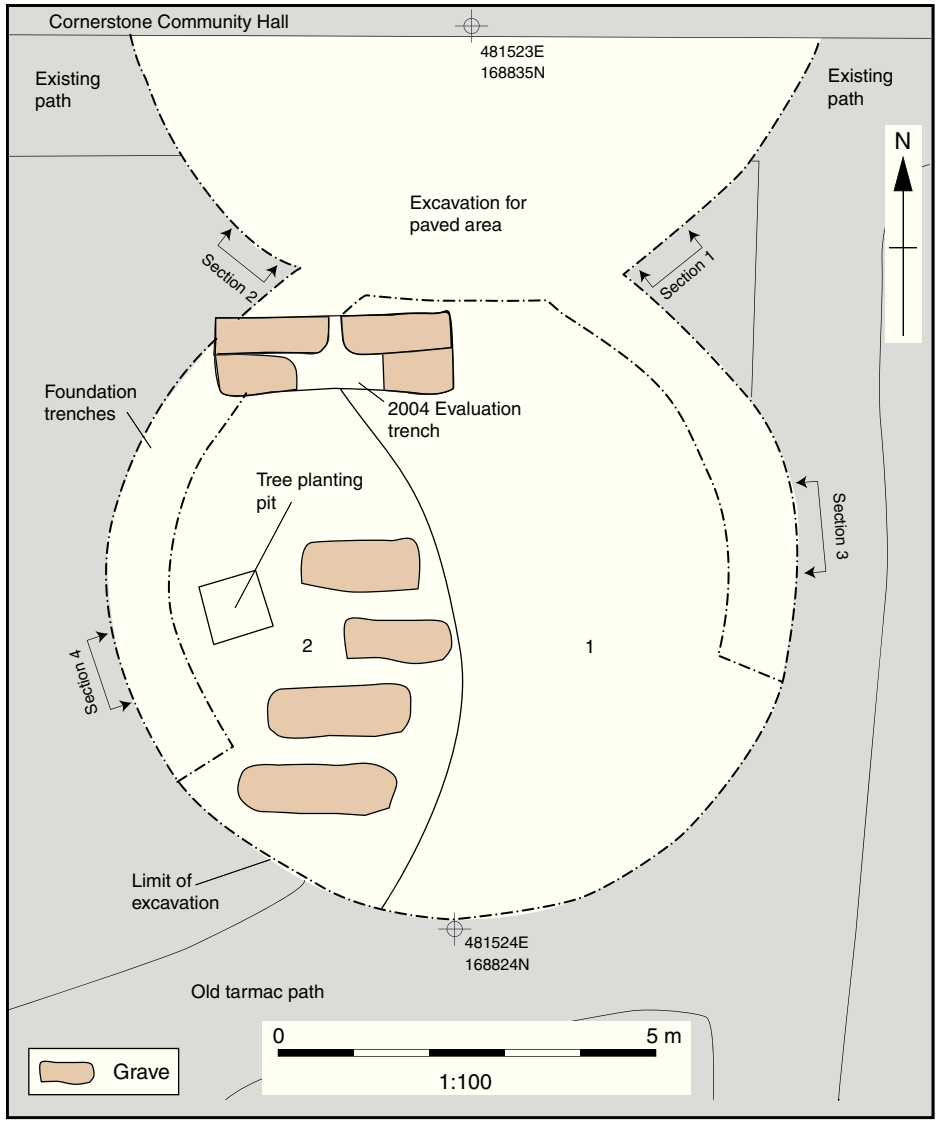


Figure 2: Plan of excavations and sections 1-4



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