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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT ST. NICHOLAS, RICHMOND

Introduction

In the autumn of 1995 two yew trees in the grounds of St. Nicholas, Maison Dieu, Richmond (fig 1), were cut down and removed in order to create car parking space near the rear entrance to the buildings. In recent years burials (at a depth of c.4.5 metres) and the apse of a church were found in the grounds of St. Nicholas near to the house, and the possibility of further archaeological remains in the environs meant that an archaeological watching brief was required on ground disturbance work involved in the removal of the trees and levelling of the ground. This work took place on 7 and 9 November 1995.

The Watching Brief

The area of disturbance was restricted by an existing gravel drive to one side, and a stone wall and other trees on the other sides. The ground around the tree stumps was raised above the level of the drive, owing to the accumulation of humous around the trees. An attempt was made to remove the tree stumps with a chain attached to a tractor, but this was only partially successful, so a JCB was brought in. This successfully lifted the two stumps.

The ground was disturbed to a depth of approximately 1.5 metres around the roots. Apart from one piece of modern pottery and a fragment of a stone roof tile, no archaeological finds or features were observed. The levelling of the ground consisted entirely of refilling the root holes with the earth which had been disturbed and creating a level surface. No earth was removed from the site. The soil was a mid-brown humous over a dry brown sandy loam, the horizon between the two being indistinct and its depth dependant on the amount of root disturbance.

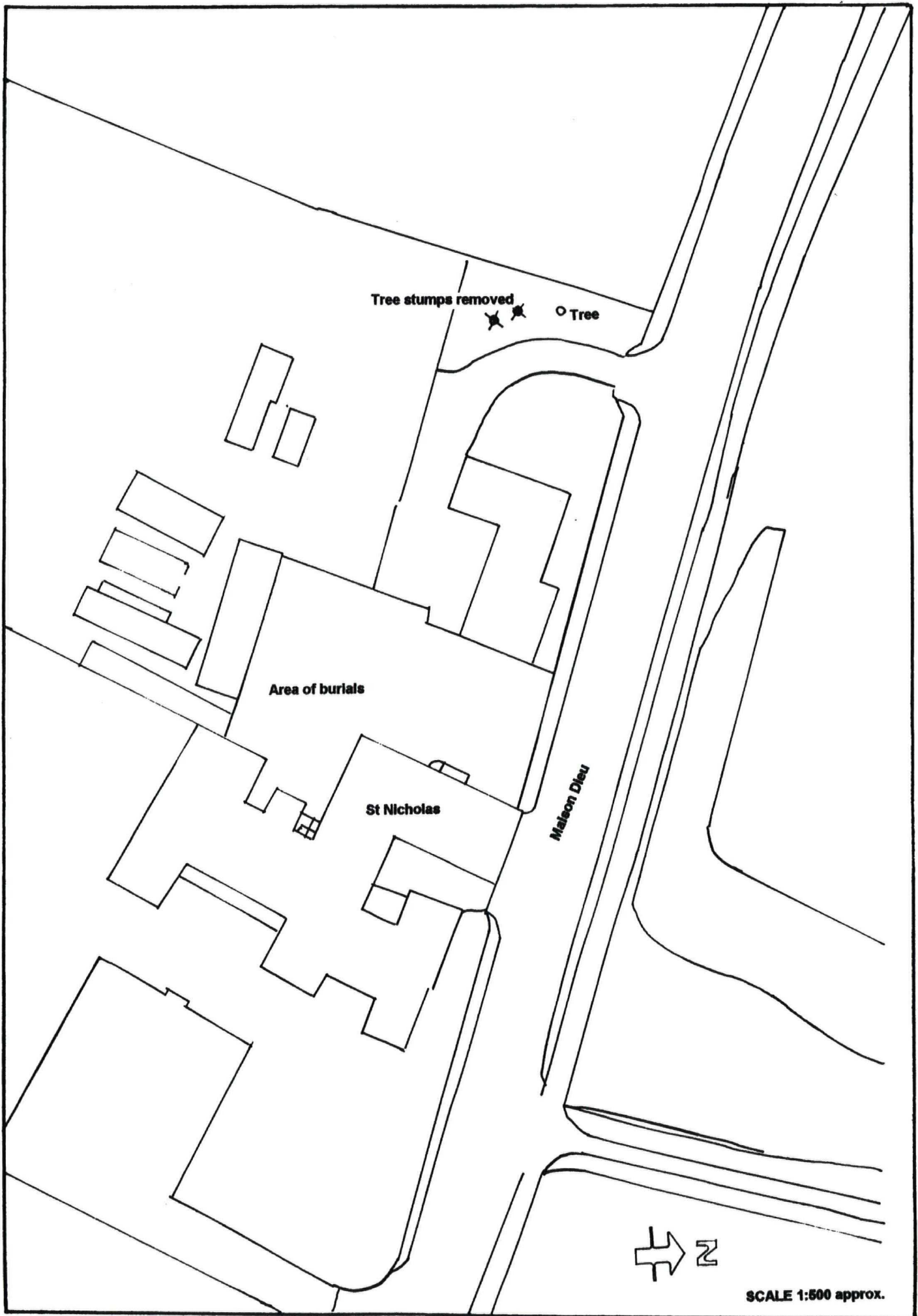
Conclusions

The area disturbed by the tree stump removal was some distance from the burials and other remains, and in the event, the ground disturbance did not reach the depth of the burials. The fact that the ground was itself higher around the trees because of the build up of humous and roots meant that archaeological deposits were less likely to be disturbed, and if archaeological remains do exist in this part of St Nicholas, they are more deeply buried.

Alison Clarke

November 1995

ST NICHOLAS, RICHMOND PLAN 1 LOCATION OF SITE



SCALE 1:500 approx.