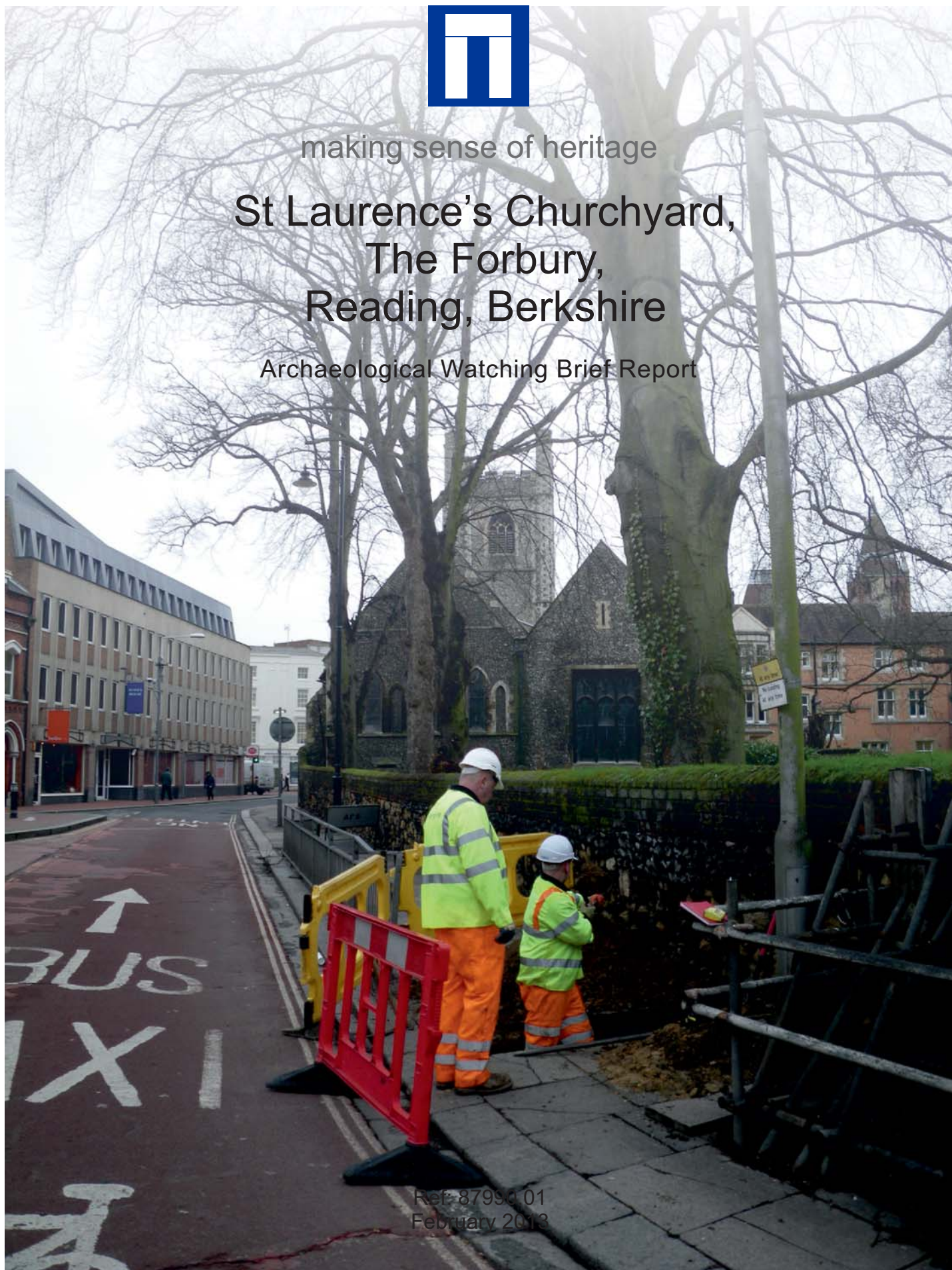




making sense of heritage

St Laurence's Churchyard, The Forbury, Reading, Berkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Ref: 87990 01
February 2013



**ST LAURENCE'S CHURCHYARD, THE FORBURY,
READING, BERKSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Prepared for:

CgMs,
140 London Wall,
London
EC2Y 5DN

On behalf of:

Reading Borough Council,
Civic Centre,
Reading,
RG1 7TD

Prepared by:

Wessex Archaeology
Portway House,
Old Sarum Park,
Salisbury,
Wilts,
SP4 6EB

www.wessexarch.co.uk

February 2013

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ST LAURENCE'S CHURCHYARD, THE FORBURY, READING, BERKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Quality Assurance

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* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

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ST LAURENCES CHURCHYARD, THE FORBURY, READING, BERKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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ST LAURENCE'S CHURCHYARD, THE FORBURY, READING, BERKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out an archaeological watching brief on four geotechnical observation pits and two borehole locations at St Laurence's Churchyard, The Forbury, Reading, Berkshire (NGR 471280 173600). The location of the geotechnical pits were targeted on the foundations of the current churchyard wall (late 18th century). A scheme has been proposed seeking to sensitively repair the existing wall which is generally in poor condition. All of the geotechnical pits were excavated on the outer side of the wall. The work was undertaken on the 11th and 12th of February 2013.

The objective of the watching brief was to record the location, extent and character of any archaeological remains seen within the geotechnical pits. The watching brief was specifically interested in any foundations beneath the current red brick wall and if present, ascertaining if they represented *in situ* remains of an earlier medieval wall. The work also attempted to ascertain if any flint rubble/courses remaining could be determined as re-used material from the previous medieval churchyard wall.

The watching brief was successful in identifying foundations in three of the four test pits. Flint courses of a wall foundation were noted in Test Pits 2 and 3, represented by flint rubble up to five courses in depth. The flint footings are likely to represent the foundations for the wall when the churchyard was enlarged in 1791. It is possible that the material used to form the courses was re-used medieval material. It was not clarified if the flint rubble represented the foundations of an original medieval wall or the re-use of the original material once the churchyard had been extended.

Test Pit 4 recorded substantial stone footings beneath the current wall on the southern edge of the churchyard. This section of the wall, made from large stone blocks supplemented with flint nodules, is thought to represent the earliest phase of construction datable to the 16th century. Indeed, the flint material seen within the wall is also seen within the main body of the church as well as the 15th century tower. The deep stone wall foundations seen during the watching brief appear to represent a contemporary phase with the construction of the perimeter wall in the 16th century.

The watching brief was not successful in ascertaining the exact dating of the wall phases and no datable material was recovered. Excavation of underlying deposits beneath the wall foundations in Test Pits 2 and 3 yielded several medieval tile fragments.

No archaeological remains were noted during the excavation of the boreholes.



ST LAURENCE'S CHURCHYARD, THE FORBURY, READING, BERKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank CgMs Consulting, for commissioning the archaeological watching brief, and in particular Matthew Smith in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank the groundwork team of CC Ground Investigations, in particular Chris Scrivens, for their assistance during the course of the works. The groundwork team of Dean Park Contractors are also thanked for their help.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Gareth Chaffey. This report was compiled by Simon Flaherty and edited by Gareth Chaffey. The report illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth James and the project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Richard Greatorex, who also edited the final report.



ST LAURENCE'S CHURCHYARD READING, BERKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting (The Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief on Geotechnical Observation Pits and boreholes which are focussed at the perimeter wall foundations, at St Laurence's Churchyard, The Forbury, Reading, Berkshire. The Churchyard is located at National Grid Reference (NGR) 471280 173600 (hereafter referred to as the Site, **Figure 1**).

1.1.2 The watching brief took place on the 11th and 12th of February 2013.

1.2 The Site, location and geology

1.2.1 St Laurence's Church lies in the centre of Reading, north-west of The Forbury (**Figure 1**), with the churchyard retaining wall forming the Site boundary beyond which is a pavement. The retaining wall (mainly of brick construction) lies at a higher level than the pavement beyond the Site. The Site was centred approximately on 471280 173600.

1.2.2 The underlying geology consisted of Valley Gravel (British Geological Survey Sheet 268, Reading).

1.2.3 The Site lies at between 43m and 45m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The Church of St Laurence has been an important part of Reading's history since the Norman period (CgMs 2012, 11). The church is Grade I Listed and lies in the centre of the town, north-west of The Forbury. It was built next to the main gate of Reading Abbey, and was first documented (as a chapel) in the early 12th century, the date given for its present south wall. The church was enlarged in the 1190s to cater for the needs of St John's Hospital which butted on to the north of the church. A north chapel and aisle was added in the 13th century. In the 15th century the church was re-roofed and the west tower added; the north aisle was rebuilt in 1522. The church was restored between 1848 and 1881.

2.1.2 In an account by Rev. Charles Coates in his published work, *The Histories and Antiquities of Reading*, 1802, indicates that a churchyard wall was constructed around the church in 1556, Queen Mary granted "a certayne grounde lying next unto the parishe church... to erecte and make thereof a churche-yarde...as by the wall and inclosure thereof". Coates suggests the wall was further extended towards the east in 1791 into land known as The Forbury in an agreement between George Vinsittart and John Blaggrave. This evidence is corroborated by a drawing entitled 'Plan of Forbury at the Dissolution' in Man's *History and Antiquities of Reading*, published in 1816, in which it shows the earlier wall and then the later extension to the east (CgMs 2012, 12).



- 2.1.3 It is thought that the existing wall is a mixture of 16th and 18th century construction, although it is not possible to clarify the exact dates at which work occurred due to the discrepancy between sources. The gate piers associated with the retaining wall to the graveyard are inscribed as "Rebuilt AD 1791" and are in red brick with Portland stone plinths, block cappings and ball finials. The retaining wall is in red brick except for the south length of about 50m, where the lower part is older and constructed of flint. Flint material also forms the body of the church as well as its 15th century tower.
- 2.1.4 In 2006, Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Reading Borough Council to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the hand-excavation of eight test pits preceding remedial works to the retaining wall of St Laurence's Churchyard. The work was to provide information about the foundations to enable a remedial programme of works to be designed. The test pits were excavated on both the outer and inner side of the wall.
- 2.1.5 The watching brief identified that the extant late 18th century brick retaining wall was built on flint rubble courses. It was not clarified if the flint rubble was the foundations of an original medieval wall or the re-use of the original material once the churchyard had been extended.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The objective of the watching brief was to record during the excavation of the geotechnical Observation Pits, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, nature, character and relationships of any surviving archaeological remains observed during the groundwork programme.
- 3.1.2 Specifically, the watching brief hoped to ascertain if the foundations of the red brick wall are *in situ* medieval remains or if the flint rubble is re-used material from the previous medieval churchyard wall.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Fieldwork methodology

- 4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out within the WSI. All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the guidance and standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (as amended 2008).
- 4.1.2 A total of four test pits were excavated, positioned to correspond with the proposed locations supplied by CC Ground Investigations by their own staff. Two borehole locations were positioned in the same way. All of the geotechnical pits were excavated on the outer side of the existing wall.
- 4.1.3 Works comprised the archaeological monitoring by an experience archaeologist. All four of the test pits were hand excavated by staff of Dean Park Contractors in the anticipation of finding live services. The excavation of the test pits followed the removal of paving slabs which form the pedestrian pavement. All were c. 0.60m in width, allowed good identification of archaeological deposits.
- 4.1.4 Where practicable and safe to do so, all archaeological deposits and features observed during the watching brief were then cleaned manually to an acceptable standard by the present archaeologist and planned and/or drawn in section and located on a site plan. The



excavated spoil from the groundwork was stored adjacent to the test pits and was scanned for artefacts.

- 4.1.5 Recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets. Representative soil profile sections of the test pits were drawn. A total of 83 digital images were taken of ground work operations during the watching brief.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1.1 This section provides a descriptive summary of information derived from the geotechnical test pits and contained in the archive of written drawn and photographic records. The archive is held by Wessex Archaeology under project code 87990.
- 5.1.2 Tabulated test pit summaries, giving brief soil descriptions, dimensions and finds information are provided in **Appendix 1**. A plan showing the location of the test pits is provided on **Figure 1**.
- 5.1.3 All of the test pits contained a layer for the current ground surface of either tarmacadam or paving slab that was 0.05m in depth. This sealed a layer of modern deliberate backfill that ranged in depth from 0.09m-0.24m.
- 5.1.4 No archaeological features beyond remnants of wall footings were noted within the watching brief. The contexts found within the test pits are described in **Appendix 1**. Details of individual test pits are noted below.

5.2 Test Pit 1

- 5.2.1 Test Pit 1 (**Figure 1, Plates 1 and 2**), was located on the north-east side of the wall, and recording demonstrated that wall (**105**) continued for four courses beneath the current ground surface. The wall was a continuation of the current red brick wall that encompasses the current churchyard and is of 18th century date. This was built upon a foundation layer of mixed sand and clay deposit (**103**) and contained abundant flint fragments with occasional brick. The natural gravel was encountered at a depth of 0.50m. No flint footings were seen.

5.3 Test Pit 2

- 5.3.1 Test Pit 2 (**Figure 1, Plates 3 and 4**) was located on the south-east side of the wall. Below the foundation layer (**202**) for the current pavement was a layer of made-ground (**203**) to a depth of 0.52m. This deposit contained an abundant quantity of ceramic building material and post-medieval pottery. This in turn overlay a further layer of made-ground (**204**) that reached a depth of 0.68m. These layers abutted flint wall (**208**) and contained flint rubble that formed five rough courses to a depth of 0.60m. This may represent an earlier wall or may have formed the foundation of for the current/18th century wall (**207**).
- 5.3.2 Flint wall (**208**) sealed a friable greyish brown silty clay layer (**205**) that appeared to be the foundation deposit upon which the wall was built. This deposit was 0.18m thick and overlay a further layer of dark greyish brown silty loam (**206**). This deposit contained patches of mortar, common charcoal and occasional medieval tile fragments.

5.4 Test Pit 3

- 5.4.1 Test Pit 3 (**Figure 1, Plates 5 and 6**) was located to the south-west of Test Pit 2 on the south-east side of the wall. It was stratigraphically very similar to Test Pit 2. It comprised of the remnants of a flint coursed wall (**307**) that was sealed by the retaining red brick wall (**306**). The remnant flint formed five courses and was joined by a lime mortar. The flint wall



may represent an earlier wall or was the foundation for the 18th century wall (307). This flint wall sealed a greyish brown silty clay layer (305) and was very similar to layer (205) within Test Pit 2. Layer (305) contained medieval tile fragments.

- 5.4.2 The flint wall courses (307) were abutted in section by two layers of made-ground (303) and (304). Layer (303), 0.07m in depth, represented a light greyish brown loam with abundant gravel inclusions and occasional tile fragments. This in turn sealed a further compacted layer (304) that was 0.22m thick and contained common tile and flint/gravels. It is likely that this layer represented the initial backfilling against the wall.

5.5 Test Pit 4

- 5.5.1 Test Pit 4 (Figure 1, Plates 7 and 8) was located on the southern perimeter of the churchyard. Wall (406) comprised of a mixture of stone and flint and was thought to represent the oldest part of the wall (CgMs 2013, 4). This wall was seen to overlay the footings of a substantial wall (possibly sandstone) (407), at least nine courses to a depth of 1.24m. A foundation stone (408) was encountered at a depth of 1.24m and protruded from the wall by 0.12m. It is likely that walls (407) and (408) represent the original medieval wall. It is possible that later wall (406) (the extant wall forming the southern boundary of the churchyard) used some of the stone from the original wall and was supplemented with flint.
- 5.5.2 A number of made ground layers were encountered abutting the walls. Layer (403), a fairly loose deposit with abundant gravel inclusions (0.34m thick), is thought to be modern deposition caused by modern service disturbance. This sealed layer (404) which was identical to layer (304) within Test Pit 3. This was a light yellowish brown silty clay with abundant gravel and tile fragments, 0.19m thick. Layer (405) was a loose greyish brown friable layer that contained common medieval tile fragments; it was very reminiscent of layer (205). The bottom of the deposit was not found and it seems likely the deposit was a deliberate back fill against the wall foundations when it was initially constructed, although the layer is undated. Medieval tile fragments were recovered from layer (405).
- 5.5.3 A possible foundation cut associated with the construction of the wall was noted during the excavation of Test Pit 4. However, due to the limitations of the investigation and the presence of modern services, this could not be clarified.

6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

- 6.1.1 Small quantities of archaeological artefacts were recovered during the watching brief. Samples of these were retained for identification and dating.
- 6.1.2 Layer (205) contained fragments of medieval roof tile, animal bone, oyster shell. Layer (206) yielded medieval tile fragments, an iron nail and a fragment of a medieval floor tile. Medieval tile fragments and a single stone fragment were recovered from layer (405).

7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

- 7.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the course of this work.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1.1 The watching brief was successful in identifying wall foundations in three of the four test pits. Test Pits 2 and 3 both identified flint rubble courses, up to five courses in depth. In both cases the courses were overlain by the current red brick wall although the interface

between the two was obscured by layers of modern cement. Deposits on which the flint rubble lay was excavated in both test pits (typically a friable grey loam material). No datable material was recovered from the deposits, although several fragments of medieval tile were recovered. Early made-ground deposits of likely medieval and post-medieval date were also witnessed in all of the test pits. These were overlain by modern made-ground deposits and paving slabs.

- 8.1.2 Test Pit 4 recorded very substantial stone footings beneath the current wall on the southern edge of the churchyard. The excavations reached a depth of 1.2m, although the base of the wall was not reached. A step, possibly representing the foundations of the wall, was seen towards the base of the test pit at a depth of 1.10m and was noted to continue into the lowest deposit. Medieval roof tile and a single fragment of floor tile was recovered from the base of the test pit.
- 8.1.3 The southern wall is formed of both large stone blocks and supplemented with flint nodules - this section of retaining wall is thought to be older than the red brick wall dated to the late 18th century. The results from Test Pit 4 suggest that the large stone blocks represent the remains of the original medieval wall. The findings appear to confirm the 'Plan of Forbury at the Dissolution' from 1816, which showed the land being extended to the east. Such deposits would not have been encountered within the other test pits as the remainder of the earlier wall would be expected within the churchyard.
- 8.1.4 Flint courses of a wall foundation were noted in Test Pits 2 and 3, whilst substantial stone foundations of a medieval wall were noted in Test Pit 4. It is likely that the use of flint represents re-used material from a former phase of medieval churchyard wall which were incorporated into the foundations for the later red brick wall.
- 8.1.5 No earlier foundations were noted beneath the current red brick wall in Test Pit 1, although it is thought that earlier wall foundations may lie further to the west (seen in earlier watching brief, Wessex Archaeology 2005, Test Pit 7). It was not clarified at the time, if the flint rubble represented the foundations of an original medieval wall or the re-use of original material following the extension of the churchyard.
- 8.1.6 A possible foundation cut associated with the construction of wall (407) and (408) was noted within Test Pit 4. However, the limitations of the investigations could not confirm this.
- 8.1.7 No archaeological remains were noted during the excavation of the boreholes.

9 STORAGE AND CURATION

9.1 Preparation and Deposition

- 9.1.1 The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990)*. Details of the watching brief will also be entered into the online "OASIS" database maintained by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS). A copy of the OASIS entry will be included in this written report.

9.2 Archive

- 9.2.1 The watching brief project archive consists of:
- One A4 file containing the paper records and drawings
 - Digital data (Site photographs, word and pdf files)



- 9.2.2 The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology (WA) in Salisbury under WA report reference **87990**. On completion of the project, the archive will be deposited with Reading Museum under the Site Code/Accession Code **87990**.

9.3 Copyright

- 9.3.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003.

9.4 Security Copy

- 9.4.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Monuments Record Centre (Swindon), a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records at the Museum, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

10 REFERENCES

CgMs Consulting, 2012, Draft Heritage Statement: St Laurence Churchyard, Reading

CgMs Consulting, 2013, Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief: St Lawrence's Churchyard, The Forbury, Reading, Berkshire

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

Wessex Archaeology, 2006. *St Laurence's Church Yard, The Forbury, Reading, Berkshire: Archaeological Watching Brief, Report Reference: 62060.01*



Appendix 1: Trench Descriptions

Trench 1	Dimensions :	1.95m x 0.57m x 0.53m	
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)
101	Layer	Modern pavement surface	0-0.05m
102	Layer	Made Ground. Modern made ground, levelling deposit in relation to the pavement, post medieval to modern in date.	0.05m-0.14m
103	Layer	Made Ground. Mixed deposits, sand and clay with abundant flint inclusions, sub angular > 0.05m, 20%, occasional brick fragments.	0.14m-0.50m
104	Layer	Natural. Natural gravels undisturbed	0.50m+
105	Wall	Brick wall, retaining brick wall, red brick, c.18 th , 3-4 courses exposed below pavement surface.	

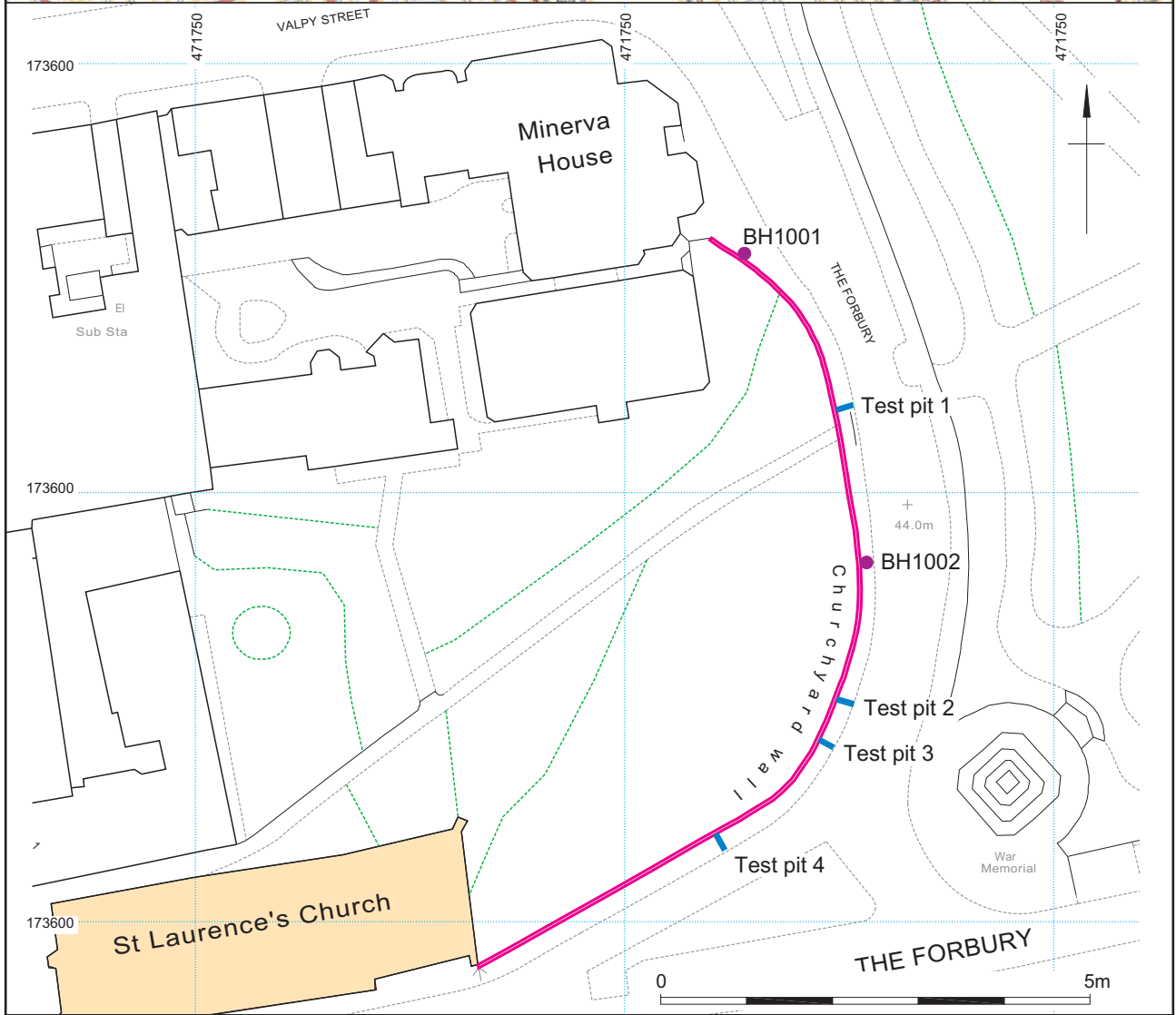
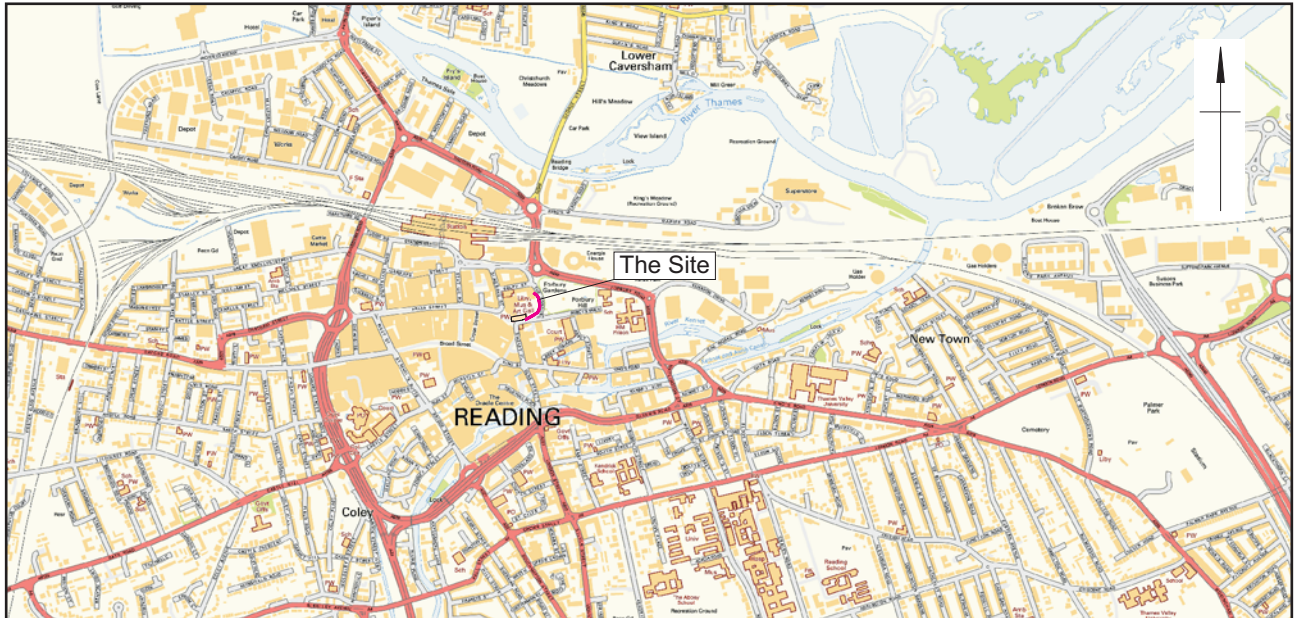
Trench 2	Dimensions :	2.00m x 0.62m x 0.76m	
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)
201	Layer	Modern pavement surface.	0-0.05m
202	Layer	Made Ground. Modern backfill, levelling deposit in relation to pavement. Compacted.	0.05m-0.29m
203	Layer	Made Ground. Highly compacted layer, possibly compacted prior to pavement going in? (mechanised), Abundant C.B.M, post-medieval pottery fragments, animal bone, oyster shell and occasional slag.	0.29m-0.52m
204	Layer	Made Ground. Mortar rich backfill, loose deposit, mixed with grey silty loam. Occasional tile/C.B.M fragments.	0.52m-0.68m
205	Layer	Layer. Greyish brown silty clay. Friable deposit. Runs beneath flint courses. No inclusions or finds.	0.68m-0.86m
206	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty loam, compact layer, abundant patches of mortar, common charcoal, tile fragments but no pottery.	0.86m+
207	Wall	Brick Wall. Returning brick wall, c.18 th , only 1x course exposed below the line of the pavement	-0.08m
208	Wall	Flint wall. Flint rubble forming 5 rough courses. Immediately below brick wall, interface obscured by concrete.	0.08-0.68m




Trench 3	Dimensions :	1.83m x 0.58m x 0.72m	
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)
301	Layer	Modern pavement surface.	0-0.05m
302	Layer	Made ground. Modern backfill, levelling deposit	0.05-0.25m



		in relation to pavement. Compacted layer.	
303	Layer	Made ground. Compacted layer, possibly compacted prior to pavement installation? Abundant gravel inclusions, 20% <0.04m, occasional tile, C.B.M frags. Light greyish brown.	0.25m-0.32m
304	Layer	Compacted layer, stubborn to remove, initial backfill against wall, common tile and flint/gravel through out.	0.32-0.54m
305	Layer	Greyish brown silty clay layer, similar to 205 in TP2. Runs beneath flint courses 307 . Reasonably compact, contains tile fragments.	0.54m-
306	Wall	Brick wall. Retaining brick wall, c.18 th 1 course in depth.	
307	Wall	Flint wall. Remnant flint courses, forms 5 courses, lime mortar, immediately beneath later brick wall 306 , although interface between the obscured by concrete.	

Trench 4	Dimensions :	2.08m x 0.60m x 1.32m	
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)
401	Layer	Paving slab. Modern pavement surface	0-0.05m
402	Layer	Made ground. Modern backfill, levelling deposit in relation to pavement	0.05m-0.15m
403	Layer	Made ground. Modern backfill, fairly loose compaction, likely disturbed by modern services in the near vicinity.	0.15m-0.49m
404	Layer	Made ground. Compacted layer, same as 304 , tile frags and gravel throughout deposit. Light yellowish brown silty loam.	0.49m-0.68m
405	Layer	Loose deposit. Reminiscent of 205 , greyish brown friable layer. Contained common tile fragments. Bottom of deposit not found. Likely to be initial deposit after foundation of the wall installed. Undated though.	0.68m-
406	Wall	Remnant wall, extant, thought to represent oldest part of the wall. Mix of stone and flint. Stone likely to be medieval, with flint nodules supplementing wall formation.	
407	Wall	Footings of substantial stone? (sandstone) wall. Likely to represent the true foundations of the medieval wall surrounding the churchyard. 9 courses noted to depth of 1.24m, sits on top of a foundation of bricks and stone.	0-1.24m
408	Wall	Foundation stone seen beneath wall 407 , protrudes from wall by 0.12m extents/depths not seen due to limitations of excavation.	1.24m+



	 Geotechnical test pit  Borehole	Digital data reproduced from Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright 2013. All rights reserved. Reference Number: 100020449. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2013. This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.	
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Site, test pit and borehole location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: North-east facing section of Test pit 1



Plate 2: South-west facing section of Test pit 1


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Plate 3: East facing section of Test pit 2



Plate 4: South facing section of Test pit 2


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Plate 5: South-east facing section of Test pit 3



Plate 6: South-west facing section of Test pit 3


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Plate 7: South-east facing section of Test pit 4



Plate 8: North-east facing section of Test pit 4

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salisbury rochester sheffield edinburgh



Wessex Archaeology Ltd registered office Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB
Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

