

**CHURCH OF ST MARY,  
CHELTENHAM,  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE.**

**NGR: SO 9480 2250**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

May 2016  
Report No. 1125  
Author: T. Michaels



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES**

**CHURCH OF ST MARY,  
CHELTENHAM,  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE.**

**NGR: SO 948 225**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**



May 2016  
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**Quality Assurance**

This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008)

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at St Marys Church, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 948 225). The archaeological works were undertaken during excavations required to install a new underground supply cable to No. 208, The High Street. The project was commissioned by Trevor Doyle of Western Power Distribution.

The basal layer present within the trench consisted of a grey brown gritty clay silt (102), which contained frequent Modern/late Post-medieval brick fragments and had been disturbed by a number of service trenches. This deposit was present for a depth of over 0.53m and continued below the excavated depth of the service trench. Deposit (102) was then sealed by a layer of tarmac (101), which was 0.07m thick.

A single fragment of a long bone was contained within deposit (102). The bone was probably human and was most likely disarticulated bone from the church's graveyard. The bone was reinterred within the cable trench cut.

No significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were present within the cable trench.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### *Archaeology*

For the purpose of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from Prehistoric times to the Modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### *Medieval*

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *c.* AD 1500.

### *Natural*

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

### *NGR*

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### *OD*

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

### *OS*

Ordnance Survey.

### *Post-medieval*

The period from *c.* AD 1500 onwards.

### *Prehistoric*

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43. Traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – *c.* 500,000 BC to *c.* 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – *c.* 12,000 BC to *c.* 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – *c.* 4,500 BC to *c.* 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – *c.* 2,000 BC to *c.* 800 BC; *Iron Age* – *c.* 800 BC to AD 43.

### *Romano-British*

Term used to define the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture. Traditionally dated AD 43 to *c.* AD 410.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016 Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at St Marys Church, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (NGR: SO 948 225). The archaeological works were undertaken during excavations required to install a new underground supply cable to No. 208, The High Street. The project was commissioned by Trevor Doyle of Western Power Distribution.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2016). The WSI was produced in accordance with *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).
- 1.3 This document presents the findings of the archaeological watching brief.

## 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The works were required to provide a new supply cable (underground) to number 208 The High Street. The excavation consisted of a joint hole and cable trench in an existing Tarmac surfaced footway that runs through the north eastern side of St Mary's Churchyard and into an alleyway that joins to The High Street. The trench was approximately 17m in length, 0.3m wide and 0.6m deep.
- 2.2 The site is located in the heart of the Medieval core of the town.
- 2.3 The first documentary evidence for Cheltenham is in an account of the *Council of Cloveshoe* held in AD 803, which mentions the revenues of a monastery at *Celtanham*.
- 2.4 The probable focus of the earliest Medieval settlement within the town is the Church of St Mary itself. Before the development of Cheltenham as a spa town in the later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the town consisted of one long street (High Street), with a number of lanes and streets running off to the north and south, the Church of St Mary is located on the southern side of the High Street. The church is twelfth century in date but is thought to lie on the site of an earlier minster church. The manor house is believed to have been located to the south of the churchyard, though its full extent is not known. A Medieval monastery is also thought to be in the vicinity.
- 2.5 The underlying geology is recorded as *Charmouth Mudstone Formation* - mudstone, with superficial deposits of *Cheltenham Sand and Gravel* - sand and gravel ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)).
- 2.6 The study area therefore contained the potential for archaeological deposits associated with the Saxon, Medieval and later periods. This did not prejudice the watching brief against the recovery of data relating to other periods.

### **3 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological recording were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;
  - ii) to attempt to characterize the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;
  - iii) where possible to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 All intrusive groundworks were monitored and recorded in order to identify any archaeological finds, features or deposits. Groundworks were carried out under the constant supervision of the archaeologist. Where machine excavation was required, it was only used for the removal of non-significant overburden. Plant was suitable for the task and was equipped with a toothless grading bucket.
- 4.2 Appropriate sections were recorded to be able to characterise the stratigraphy of the area impacted by the groundworks.
- 4.3 All archaeological investigation and recording was undertaken in accordance with the methodologies detailed in the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

### **5 RESULTS AND CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The cable trench was approximately 17m long by 0.3m wide and 0.60m deep (see Figure 2). The trench was excavated within the tarmac footpath.
- 5.2 The basal layer present within the trench consisted of a grey brown gritty clay silt (102), which contained frequent Modern/late Post-medieval brick fragments and had been disturbed by a number of service trenches. This deposit was present for a depth of over 0.53m and continued below the excavated depth of the service trench. Deposit (102) was then sealed by a layer of tarmac (101), which was 0.07m thick.
- 5.3 A single fragment of a long bone was contained within deposit (102). The bone was probably human and was most likely disarticulated bone from the church's graveyard. The bone was reinterred within the cable trench cut.

- 5.4 No significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were present within the cable trench.
- 5.5 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited within 12 months with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

## **6 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*. Unpublished.

Foundations Archaeology. 2016. *Church of St Mary, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Watching Brief: Written Scheme of Investigation*. Unpublished.

## **7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Charles Parry of Gloucestershire County Council, Trevor Doyle of Western Power Distribution and the on-site workers for their help during the course of the project.

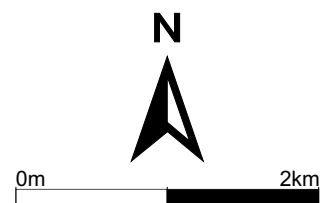




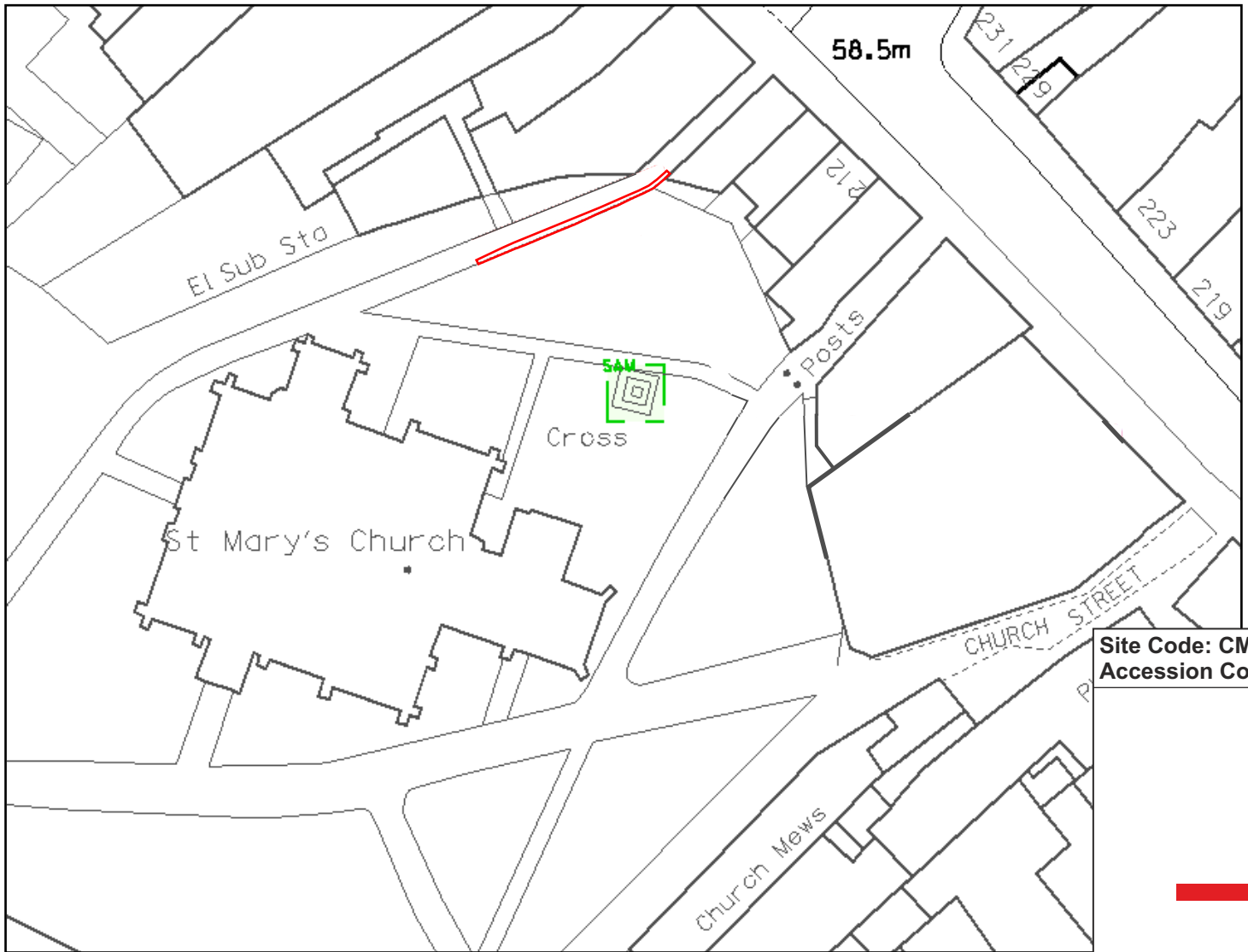
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**Site Code: CMC16 wb**

**Accession Code:**



**FIGURE 1: Site Location**



Site Code: CMC16  
Accession Code:



Location of Watching Brief



**FIGURE 2: Watched Area**