

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Church of St Michael and All Angels,
Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Site Code: WCB17/52

(SP 7402 1697)

**Church of St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon,
Buckinghamshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For The Incumbent and Church Wardens of

St Michael and All Angels

by Andrew Mordin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WCB 17/52

May 2017

Summary

Site name: Church of St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP 7402 1697

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 2nd to 9th May 2017

Project Coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisor: Genni Elliott, Andrew MUNDIN

Site code: WCB 17/52

Area of site: 630 sq m

Summary of results: Six test pits in total were excavated in the interior and the exterior of the church. Two pits were excavated through existing drainage to expose the foundation of the north aisle wall, and the vestry wall in the south. Four test pits in the interior, were placed through the suspended floor in the nave, and the north and south aisles. Disarticulated human bone was recovered from test pit 1 and *in situ* remains were uncovered in test pit 4.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire Museum Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 23.05.17 Steve Preston ✓ 22.05.17

Church of St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Munding

Report 17/52

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the Church of St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire (SP 7402 1697) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Camilla Finley, of Acanthus Clews Architects, Acanthus House, 57 Hightown Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX16 9BE, on behalf of the Incumbent and Church Wardens of the church.

An emergency faculty has been gained from the Diocese of Oxford to excavate a series of six test pits in advance of proposed new flooring and new exterior drainage at the church. The excavation would require the removal of some of the existing floor structure and removal of pews to access original ground surfaces under the floor. A french drain is proposed around the outside of the building. Two test pits would investigate the exterior north aisle foundation and the exterior vestry wall in the south. An archaeological watching brief has been requested to be undertaken during the excavation of these works.

These works have been carried out in accordance with a specification approved by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser, Mr Julian Mumby. The investigation was carried out by Genni Elliott, Andrew Munding and Danielle Milbank between 2nd and 9th May 2017. The site code is WCB 17/52.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The Church is on the western edge of the village, which is built up on both sides of the A41, west of Aylesbury (Fig. 1). The Church is on the northern side of the road on a slight rising slope. Access is in the west and south. The modern graveyard is to the north of the Church. The underlying geology is Kimmeridge Clay Mudstone overlying Amptill Clay Mudstone (BGS 1994). The bench mark on the church on its south-west corner buttress is 107.06m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Archaeological background

The Church is one of the oldest surviving elements of the village, and though the current route of the A41 is relatively modern, it partly follows the line of Akeman Street, a Roman road. Its projected course in this area, according to the Ordnance Survey (Fig. 1), runs between the modern village and Lodge Hill on which stands Waddesdon Manor. Evidence has been found of roadside settlement about 2km from Waddesdon to the south-east at Fleet Marston (NA 2007). Waddesdon (*Votesdone*) is mentioned at the time of Domesday Book from the 11th century, as both a manor and a Hundred (Williams and Martin 2002).

The Church is of some significance and is described in the RCHM Inventory of Buckinghamshire, and in Pevsner (1978). In summary, the church is of 12th-century origin with several phases of development in the 13th and 15th century. It was greatly reconstructed in the 19th century, with the tower rebuilt in the 1890s, and the 14th-century porch rebuilt in 1902.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the digging of the test pits in the graveyard on the church exterior and in the interior.

Specific aims were to:

- determine to what extent human remains survived at the test pit locations;
- observe the presence of undisturbed graves and vaults.

All test pits were approximately 1.5m x 1m to allow adequate access to the deposits. Once excavated by hand, all locations were fully recorded and photographed (Pls 1-6). All finds recovered were retained in the church, and *in situ* human remains were not disturbed.

Results

Two test pits (1 and 2) were excavated on the exterior of the church (Fig. 2). Test pit 1 was placed against the north aisle wall, relatively central. Test pit 2 was placed on the south-western corner of the main church building, against the modern vestry wall.

Exterior

Test pit 1 (Figs 2, 4 and 5; Pl. 1)

This test pit was 1.6m long by 1.3m wide, and 0.9m deep. Once the bricks for the drainage channel had been taken out, the concrete setting needed to be broken through. Turf and topsoil (0.1m deep) was removed from the

south side of the test pit. This covered a firm, light brown silty clay deposit (50) with was present across the extent of the excavated area, up to the brick foundation. It was 0.36m at its thickest at the south of the test pit. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was recovered from this deposit. No pottery was recovered to indicate date of the deposits, though tile was present, and metalwork recovered included an identifiable portion of a coffin handle.

This deposit in turn overlay a light brown grey silty clay with occasional brick and limestone inclusions (51), up to 0.44m thick. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was recovered from this deposit. No pottery was recovered to indicate date of the deposit, though again tile was recorded. A brick foundation had been built parallel with the original foundation and the base was encountered in the base of the test pit. It was covered with a sloped cap of mortar, and sat 0.25m from the exterior wall. The top of the capping was directly beneath the mortar of the drainage. Perpendicular drainage, that led away from the drain run northwards, was not removed. It was noted that the drainage cut the exterior brick foundation, therefore making the foundation older than the drain.

Test pit 2 (Figs 2, 4 and 5; Pl. 2)

This test pit was 1.3m long by 1.07m wide, and was 0.75m deep. Once the bricks for the drainage channel had been taken out, the concrete setting needed to be broken out by mechanical means. Directly under the concrete was a 0.37m strip of disturbed mixed fill of tile and brick with grey brown sandy silt that appeared modern. In the south of the test pit, under turf, topsoil reached a depth of 0.22m. This in turn overlay a light grey sandy silty clay with frequent limestone fragments, up to 0.26m deep. Two fragments of tile were recovered from this fill, one a fragment of medieval glazed floor tile.

A step was created in the base of the test pit, to expose the lower limestone foundation step, which was course and not faced. The top of this step was 0.42m deep and stepped out 0.2m from the base of the exterior wall. The lowest fill of this test pit covered this foundation, and was firm, light brown sandy silty clay with occasional brick crumb in the fill. This deposit was excavated to a depth of 0.29m thick but extended beyond the base of excavation. No finds were recovered from this fill.

Interior

The remaining four test pits were dug in the interior of the church. All were placed on boarded flooring, which once removed exposed the void beneath.

Test pit 3 (Fig. 3; Pl. 3)

This test pit was positioned in the north aisle, east of the north aisle access. The area exposed removed boarding from the interior wall, 1.5m long and 1m wide. Once the pews and floor had been removed, it was noted that a modern concrete slab was under the suspended floor. Two other small points of investigation were undertaken in the north aisle suspended floor, and concrete was found throughout. A relatively modern wooden joist utilised the old joist holes visible at the base of the existing wall.

Test pit 4 (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pl. 4)

This test pit was positioned in the nave, on the suspended floor directly to the west of the marble pulpit. This measured 1.75m by 0.9m. Below the flooring, part of a brick support was visible under the eastern joist, but the western side of the area exposed soil. A slot 1.47m long by 0.4m wide was hand excavated through dark brown sandy silt, 0.1m thick which contained 19th-century pottery, metalwork and four clay tobacco pipe stems and bowls.

This overlay a compact earth surface, which was light yellow sandy clay and contained crushed mortar (54). This in turn overlay two areas of softer fill. The fill of the south was a light brown yellow sandy clayey silt with frequent crushed red plaster and limestone inclusions (58). The base of this fill was not reached at the base of excavation at 0.35m. In the north of this test pit, a limestone-edged grave (1) was discovered on a W-E axis. The pelvic area of one *in situ* individual was encountered (sk56), with a second individual present directly over the top of the lower remains. The bones that were present of Sk56 were either side of the pelvic bone, both parts of the forearms and bones of both hands. Both of the top portions of the femurs were present. The second individual was represented by one femur and one side of the pelvis. The limestone blocks were 0.15m high (57) forming very different facings of the grave with a probably carved slab on the northern edge and unworked rounded stones making its southern edge. The upper parts of the skeleton were 0.28m deep.

No finds were recovered from the fill of the grave (55) which was a soft, light brown yellow sandy clay silt and contained frequent limestone pieces. The bones were left *in situ*.

Test pit 5 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 5)

This test pit was excavated in the south aisle to the east of the main south doorway. This pit measured 1.6m by 1.2m. The excavated area of the soil that was exposed under the suspended floor was 1m by 0.7m. The top layer

was a soft dark brown black silty ash (61), 0.28m deep, similar to test pit 4. Pottery and metal finds were recovered from this fill, all suggesting a 19th-century date. Underlying this was a firm, light brown sandy chalky clay (62). Two pieces of disarticulated human infant bone were recovered from this fill. A small area of compact chalky clay was noted in the north-eastern part of the test pit at the base of excavation (63).

Three courses of interior stone foundation were exposed in section, which were roughly faced, but the current joist did not use the original joist holes created in the upper part of the foundation.

Test pit 6 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 6)

This test pit was 1.6m by 1.4m, on exposed flooring in the south-west of the church to the north of the modern vestry. An excavated hole was dug 1.1m by 0.9m. The top of a crypt tomb was present in the east and was left undisturbed. The top deposit excavated was a soft brownish yellow sandy clay with occasional limestone fragments (59), reaching a depth just 0.06m and is interpreted as a trample layer. This overlay a course of unbonded limestone rubble within a soft light brown yellow sandy clay loam mixed with occasional coarse mortar (60). No identifiable edge of this material was discovered. The surface was extremely uneven and there appeared to be more than a single course. The crypt to the east would have cut through this layer. This deposit appears too massive to be a wall base and too uneven to be a floor: possibly it was the base of the original (late 14th century) tower. The excavation did not exceed 0.22m. No finds were uncovered in this excavation.

Finds

All finds were returned to the Church after excavation, but minimal reporting can be undertaken on the recovered material. Most of the human bone from Test pit 2, Test pit 4 and Test pit 5, was out of context, apart from the three finger (phalanges) bones disturbed from Grave 1.

The clay tobacco pipes recovered from the top fill of Test pit 4 date to the 1850s. A miniature portrait, on ceramic, which would have been inset in a brooch or necklace is hand painted and probably dates to *c.*1840. Pottery encountered in upper layers in the interior excavation was all of 19th or early 20th century date.

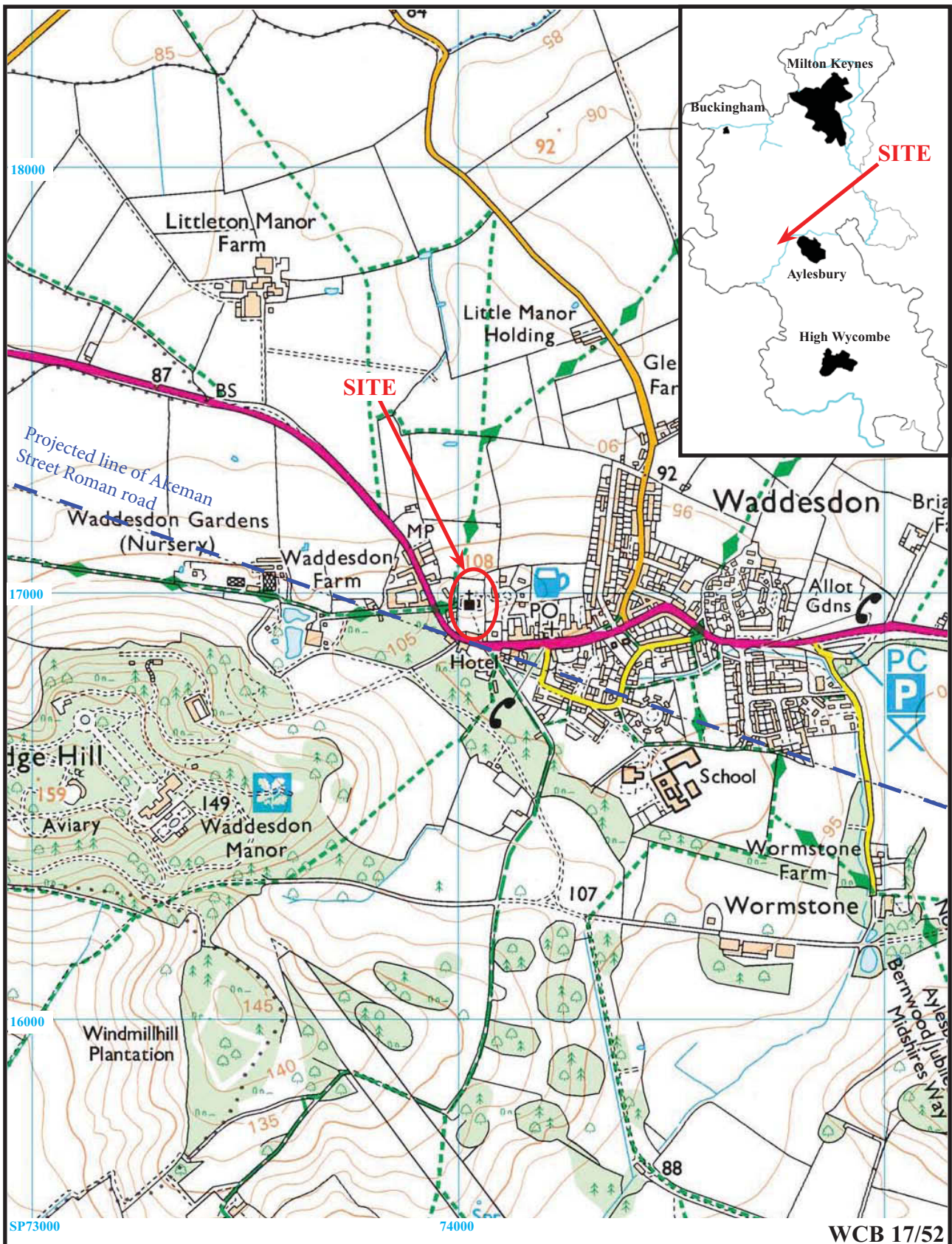
The most interesting finds are two fragments of glazed tile; one fragment of bichrome tile recovered from fill 52 in Test pit 2 and a larger fragment from fill 62 in test pit 5, both of probable 15th-century date.

Conclusion

Part of one *in situ* skeleton was uncovered in test pit 4, with a part of another presumably disturbed, within the same grave. No further disturbance of this burial is required. No Medieval pottery was encountered, though Medieval tile was. No deposits can firmly be dated as Medieval, although this would seem to be the most likely context for the limestone layer at the base of test pit 6. The nave is known to have been extended westwards in the mid 14th century and a tower added in the latter part of that century (VCH 1927, 117–18). The existing tower is a complete replacement dating from 1891–2.

References

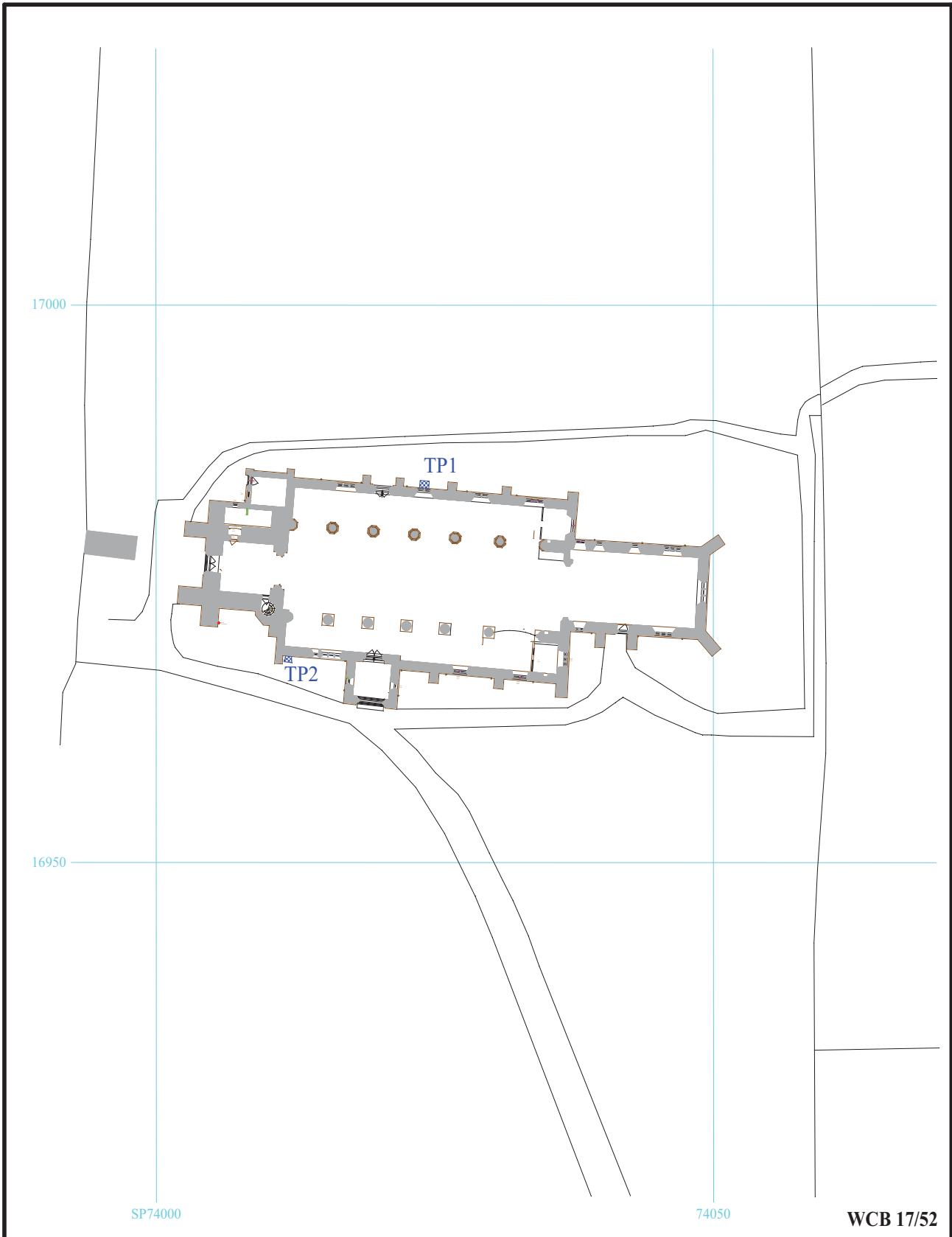
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 Figure 1. Location of site within Waddesdon and
 Buckinghamshire.

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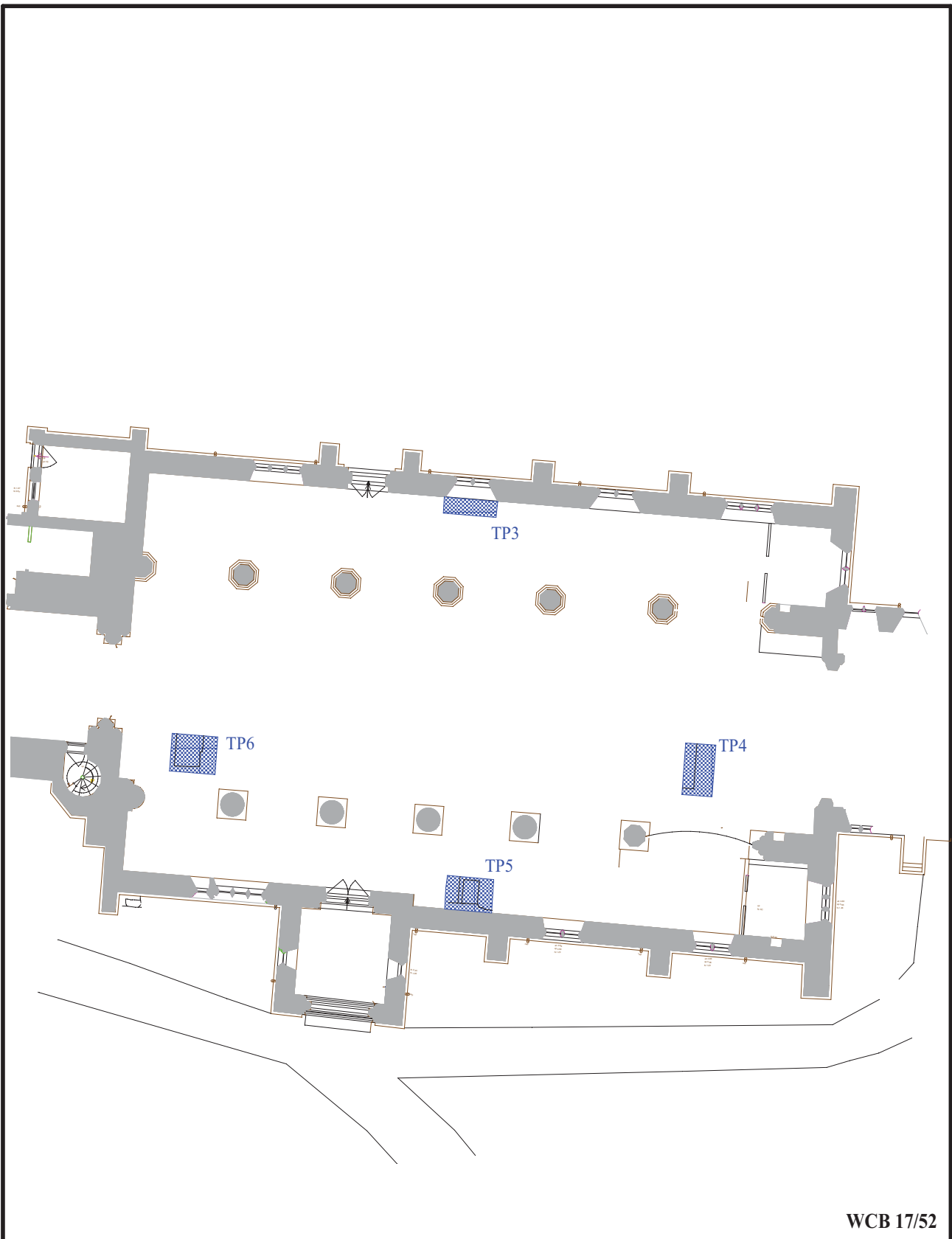
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Figure 2. Location of exterior test pits.





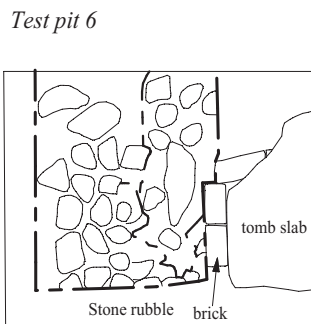
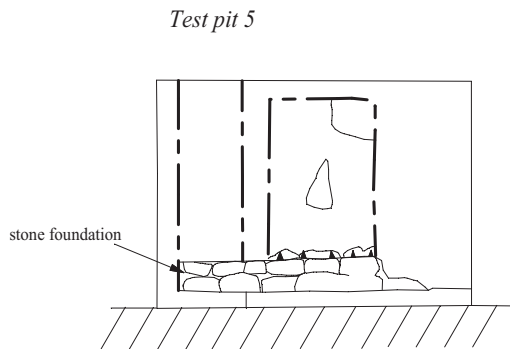
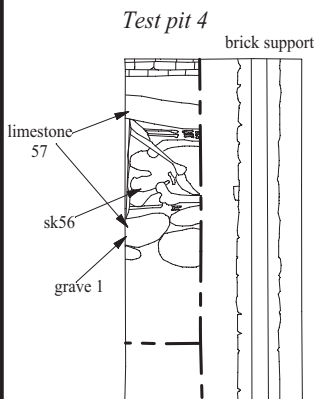
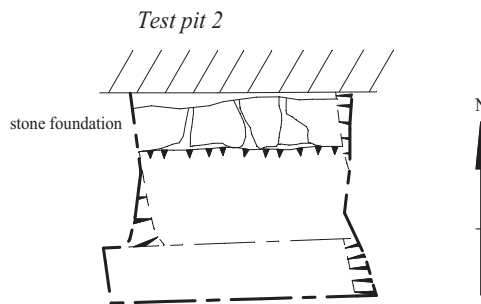
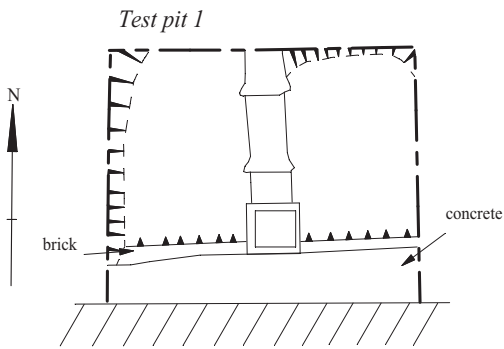
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Figure 3. Location of interior test pits.



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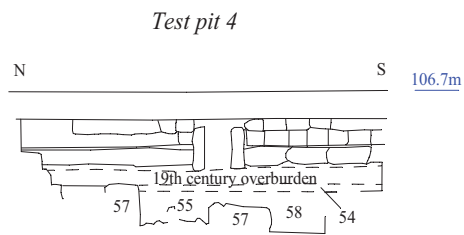
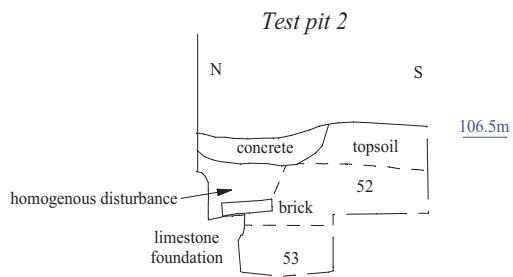
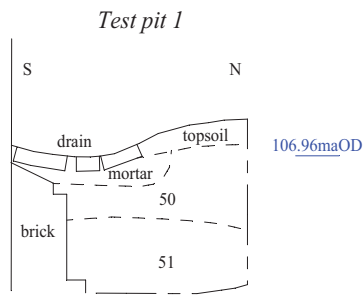
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Figure 4. Detail of exterior test pits.



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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Exterior, test pit 1, looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Exterior, test pit 2, looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Interior, test pit 3, looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Interior, test pit 4, looking north, Scales: 1m x2.

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Plates 3 and 4.

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Plate 5. Interior, test pit 5, looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 6. Interior, test pit 6, looking north, Scales: 1m x2.

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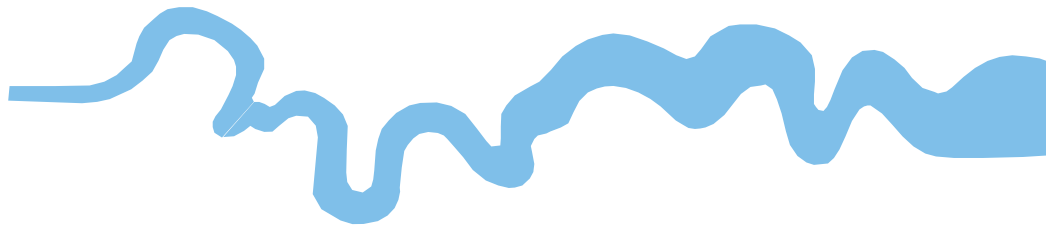
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Plates 5 and 6.**

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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