

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**St Michaels Church Hall, Vicarage Drive,
Bray, Maidenhead, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: SMB16/170

(SU 9016 7974)

**St Michael's Church Hall, Vicarage Drive,
Bray, Maidenhead, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For St Michael's Church PCC

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SMB 16/170

December 2017

Summary

Site name: St Michaels Church Hall, Vicarage Drive, Bray, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9016 7974

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 8th-14th June 2017

Project coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisor: Rebecca Constable and Jon Tierney

Site code: SMB 16/170

Area of site: c.36 sq m

Summary of results: No deposits or finds of any archaeological interest were observed. What might be the end of a brick vault was noted in the section but not disturbed by the works.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a local museum willing to accept archive material.

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Report 16/170

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Michaels Church Hall, Vicarage Drive, Bray, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 9016 7974) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Philip Tilbury of Herbert J. Stribling & Partners, New Inn, 51 Eton Square, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 6BQ on behalf of St Michaels Church PCC.

Planning permission (ref. 14/02387) has been gained from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the building of a replacement toilet block with disabled access at the church hall. The consent includes a condition (3) relating to archaeology which requires that a watching brief be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Roland Smith, Archaeological Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Rebecca Constable and Jon Tierney between 8th and 14th June 2017 and the site code is SMB 16/170.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a local museum willing to accept archive material in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the southern margins of Maidenhead and on the northern edge of Bray (Fig. 1) and on the southern side of Vicarage Drive (Fig. 2). The River Thames flows just to the north. It consisted of grass from the gardens associated with the church hall. The underlying geology is mapped as Flood Plain Gravel (BGS 1981), although no natural geology was reached during the course of the watching brief.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location at the parish church which is usually considered to lie at the centre of the historic core of a settlement. The church has medieval (12th-century) origins and Bray itself is mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002) and has late Saxon origins. The settlement

had one characteristic indicative of urban status (individual representation in assizes) but this is thought only to reflect that the village had royal connections (Astill 1978).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was:

- to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks for the new extension;
- to determine the extent to which human remains survive within the area of the extension; and
- to observe the presence of graves and vaults.

Foundation trenches of the new extension were to be observed. These were to be dug by a small 360°-type machine under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

The foundation trenches for the new toilet block were observed (Fig. 3). The trenches measured 0.65m wide and 1.4m to 1.6m deep and in the main encountered modern disturbed ground, with natural geology not reached. This disturbance relates to construction of the previous toilet block at the site. The north and west trenches also showed signs of heavy rooting. An electrical cable, modern water pipe and gas pipe were observed (and excavation around these undertaken by hand where necessary).

The stratigraphy varied only in the uppermost levels. In the east and south trench were two layers of concrete (0.23m deep) above 0.31m of made ground consisting of concrete and brick rubble overlying a dark brown grey sandy silt disturbed grave soil (50) to the full depth of the trench (Fig. 4; Pl. 1). In the north and west trenches a single concrete spread (0.10m deep) overlay a thin topsoil spread (0.05m deep) above the disturbed grave soil (50). This was found to contain disarticulated human bone, animal bone, 'china' pottery fragments, nails and occasional coffin handles and a "Golden Wonder" crisp packet. No articulated burials were observed and none of the finds were removed from the site. The concentration of human bone was particularly high in the west trench.

In the south-eastern corner of the southern trench was part of a brick wall (Pl. 2). This may be the end of a tomb and from the observed bricks could be late medieval, although more likely early post-medieval. It survived ten courses high (it deep not appear to extend below the base of the trench but this was not definitely established) and was only very loosely bonded. An unrelated return wall along the south corner of the west trench was clearly later.

Finds

None of the finds observed (human bone, animal bone, china fragments, nails and occasional coffin handles) were removed from the site and were reburied at the church.

Conclusion

All invasive groundwork was monitored and human remains lifted for later reburial. Despite the site's potential for archaeology to be present no deposits or finds of any archaeological interest were observed. Construction of the previous toilet block had disturbed the entire area. No articulated human remains were encountered with only disarticulated pieces noted from within the grave soil, which were not removed from site. Part of a brick wall may be an early post-medieval vault but it lay outside the trenches.

References

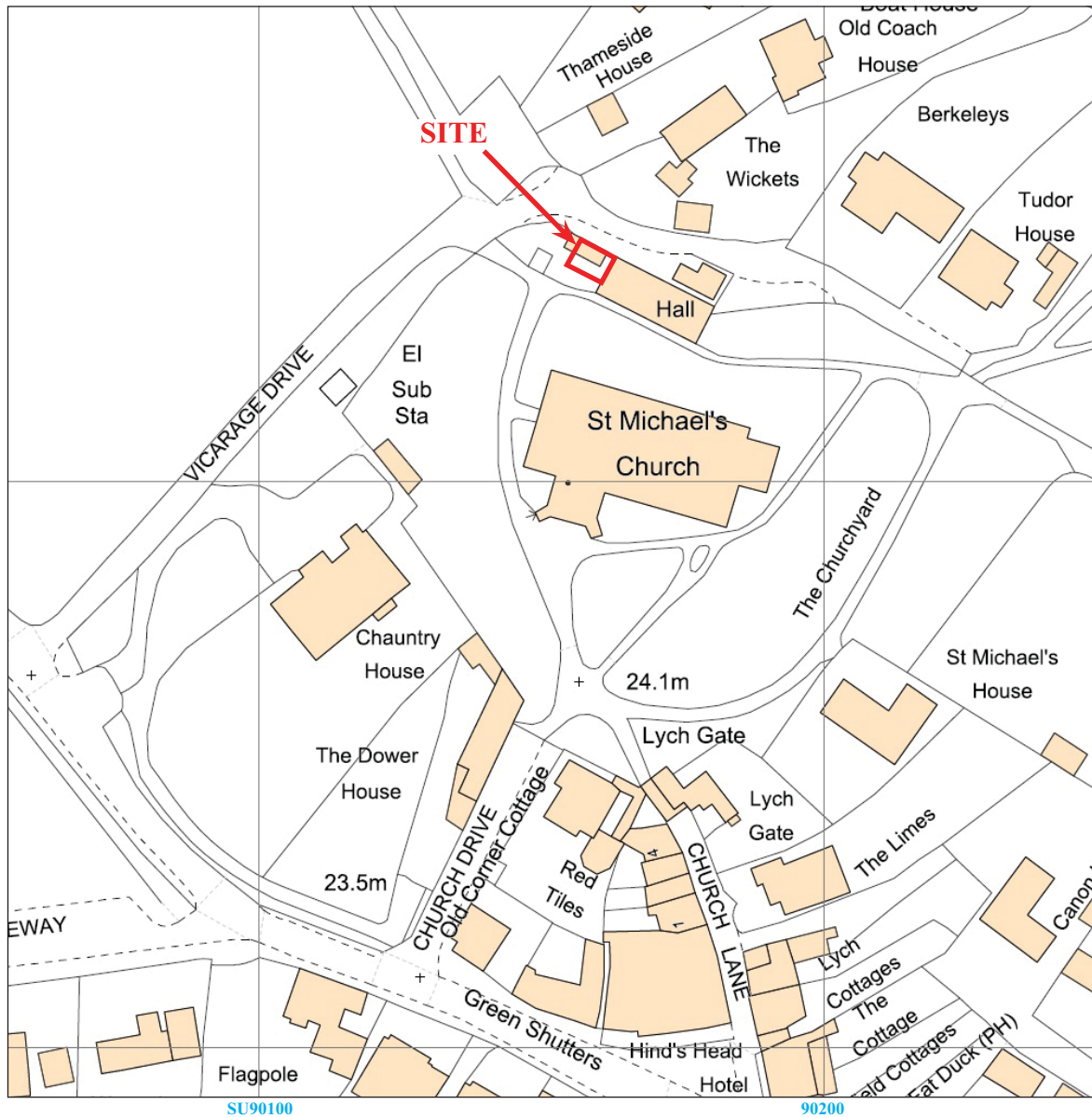
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NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
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Figure 1. Location of site within Bray and Berkshire.



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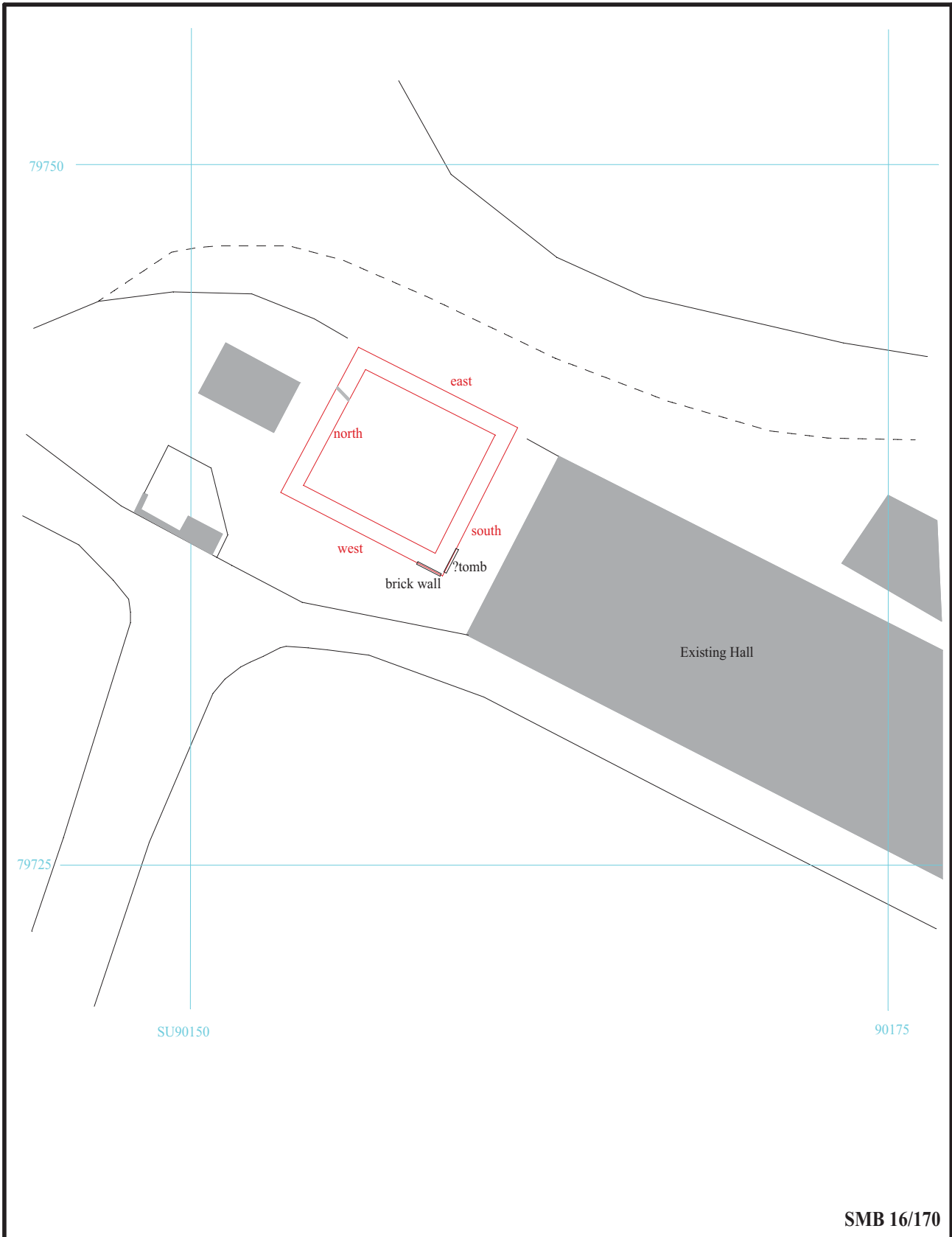
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.**

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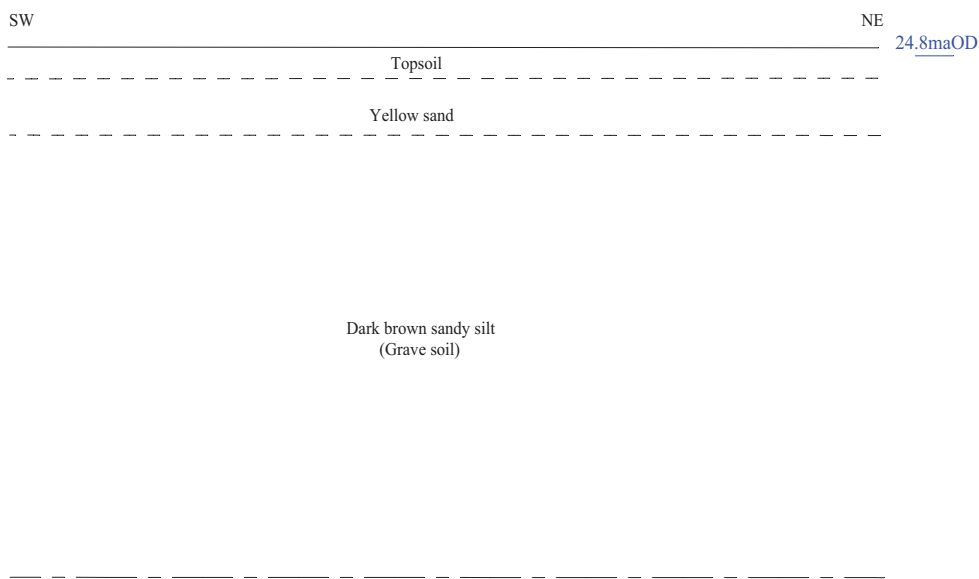
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.

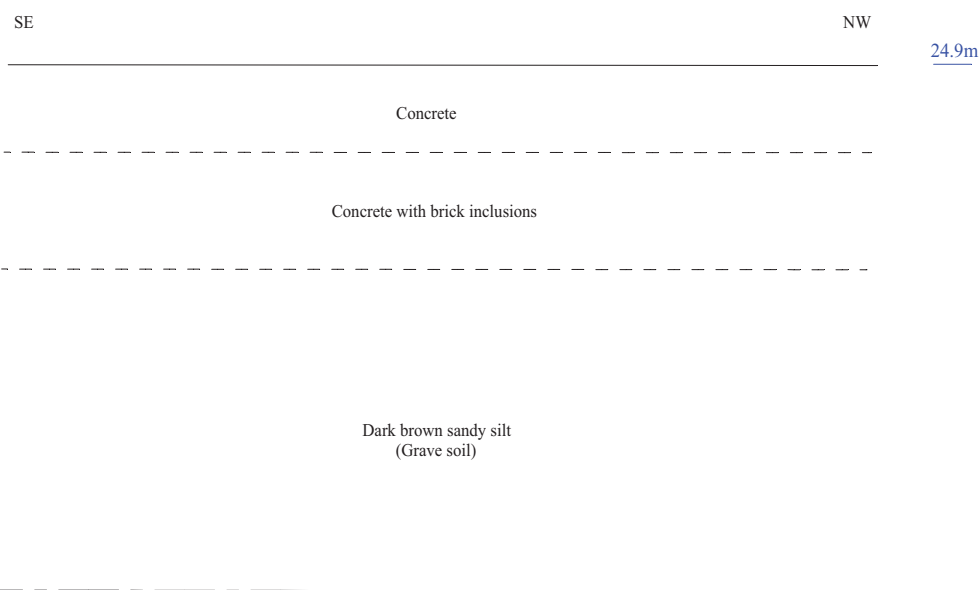


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North trench



South trench



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Figure 4. Representative sections.



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Plate 1. West trench, looking south west, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 2m.



Plate 2. End of wall in south trench, looking south-east.

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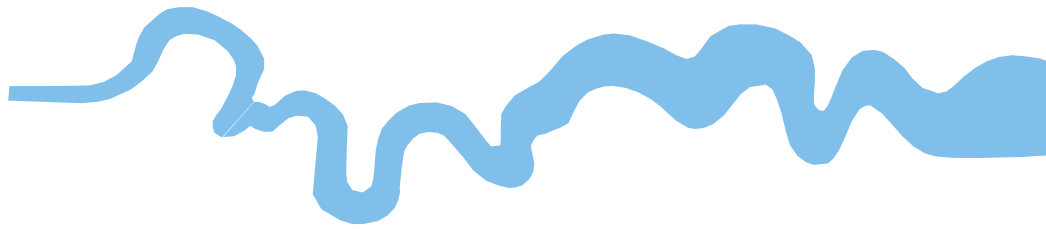
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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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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