

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP  
AND RECORD EXCAVATION:  
FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST SCIENTIST,  
CORPORATION STREET, HIGH WYCOMBE  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

*on behalf of Croke Limited*



by  
**Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA**

**January 2007**

**ASC: 870/WCS/02**

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## Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	WCS	<i>Project no:</i>	870
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	High Wycombe		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Wycombe		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SU 86687 93070		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c. 5m x 18m		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Former church and car park		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Commercial building and car park		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Wycombe District Council		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	06/5913		
<i>Client:</i>	Croke Limited 31 High Street Haddenham Buckinghamshire HP17 8ES		
<i>Contact name:</i>	John Croke		
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## Internal Quality Check

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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	

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*Cover:* View SW of eastern end of church before demolition

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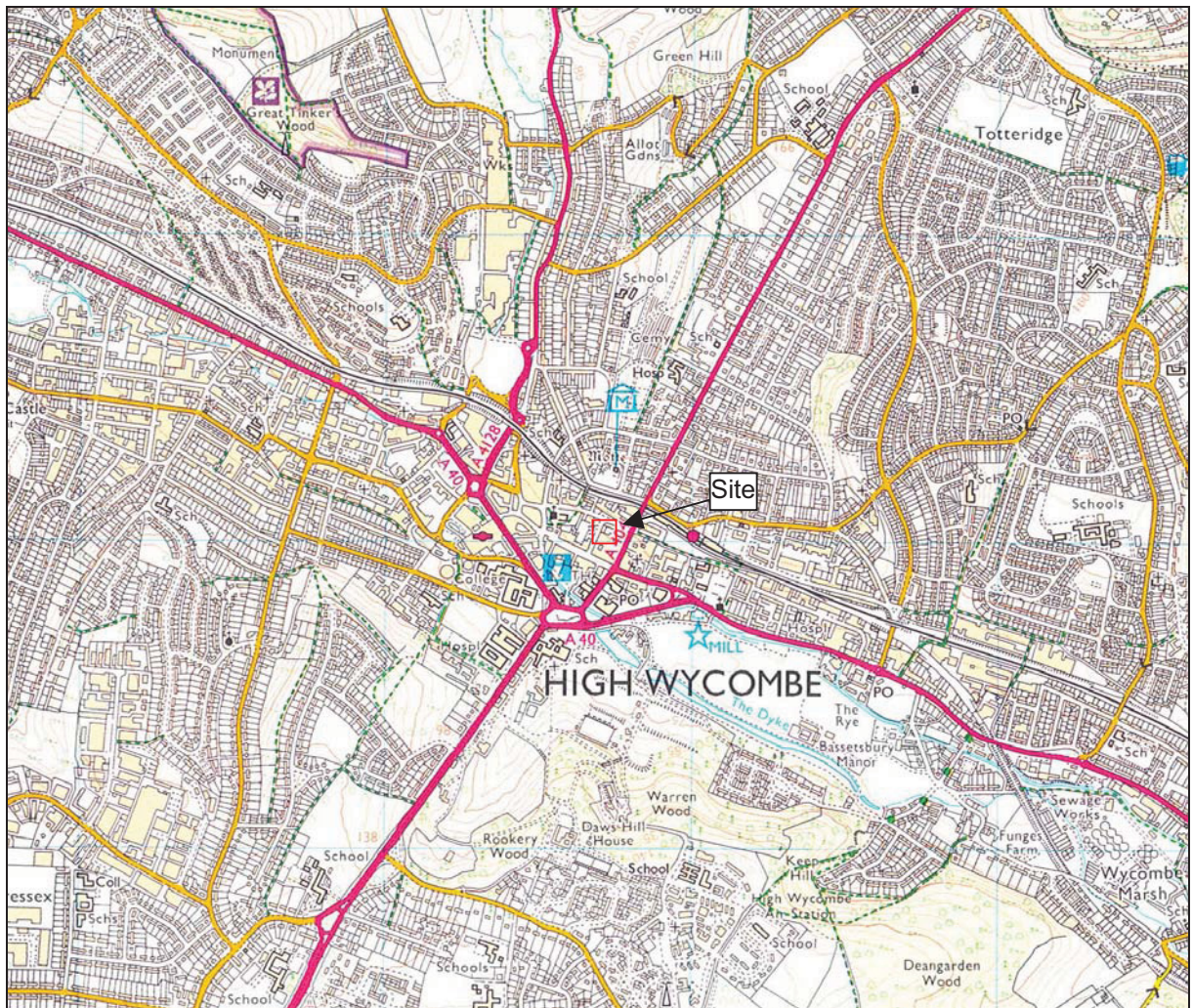


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

## Summary

*In early January 2007 Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd undertook a strip and record excavation on part of the former site of First Church of Christ Scientist at the junction of Corporation Street with Castle Street in High Wycombe. The work demonstrated that the site had been extensively terraced when it was developed for the church. Due to this truncation no archaeological features were detected nor were any artefacts detected in the overlying made up ground.*

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In January 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a strip and record excavation at the site of the former *First Church of Christ Scientist* at the junction of Corporation Street with Castle Street in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. (NGR SU 866 931: Figure 1). The project was commissioned by the client *Croke Ltd*, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Winter 2006), and a *brief* (Radford 2006) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Wycombe District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service*. The relevant planning application reference is 06/5913.

### 1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the demolition of the existing church and the construction of a new commercial building with underground parking.

### 1.3 *Location*

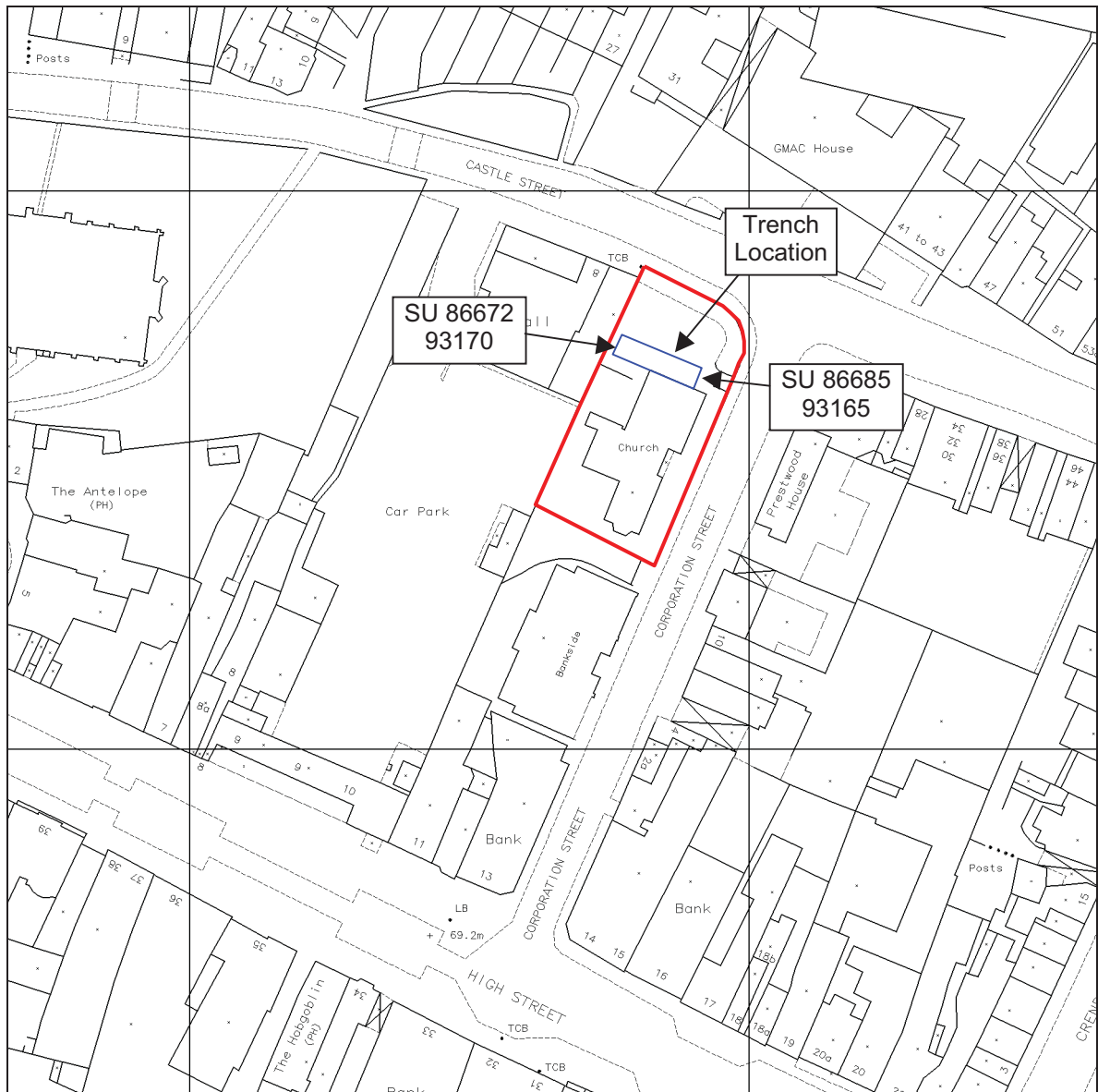
The site is situated in the administrative district of Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (Figure 1). It is located in the centre of High Wycombe, at the corner of Castle Street and Corporation Street and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 86687 93070 (Figure 2).

### 1.4 *Description*

The site is a roughly rectangular plot *c.* 45m x 25m in size. It lies on the west side of Corporation Street at the junction with Castle Street to the north (Plate 1). Its southern boundary is defined by a brick wall beyond which is a narrow area for car parking. On its western side is a large commercial building and *c.* 50m to the west lies the cemetery of the parish church of All Saints. A row of trees, subject to a *Tree Preservation Order*, is situated on the north side of the site.

### 1.5 *Geology and Topography*

The site is in an urban area and the natural soils have not survived. The local soils would have comprised the *Andover 1 Association*, namely shallow well drained calcareous silty soils over chalk (Soil Survey, 1983, 343h). The site is situated on the north slope of the valley of the river Wye, which flows from west to east through the town centre. The terrain slopes from north to south and it lies at an elevation of *c.* 75.25m OD.



**Figure 2:** Site Plan showing the Location of the Trench (Scale = 1:1250)

## 2 Aims and Methods

2.1 As described in the *brief* (Section 6), the aims of the project were:

- To establish (as far as practical) the chronology, plan, form and function of any archaeological features affected by development
- To interpret the results in terms of the documented history and historical topography of High Wycombe, with particular attention to the potential for occupation, property boundaries, commercial or industrial activities associated with the medieval town.
- Establish whether any late Saxon, medieval or post-medieval settlement remains or boundary features are present on the development site

### 2.2 *Standards*

The work conformed to the requirements of the *brief*, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001) and *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000a), to current English Heritage guidelines (EH1991; EH 1995), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

### 2.3 *Methods*

The work was carried out according to the *brief* (Section 8), which required:

- A 5m by 18m area to be excavated to the north of the existing church footprint and to the south of the root plates of the trees in the northern part of the site
- Each excavation area was to be cleaned by hand sufficiently to allow the identification and planning of archaeological features, and to be scanned with a metal detector. The trench was to be planned at an appropriate scale and spot levels taken as appropriate.
- Features were to be excavated by hand in accordance with the sampling criteria set out in the *brief*.
- Each context was to be recorded on pro forma records and cross referenced to the drawn, photographic and finds registers
- A black and white photo record was maintained of all significant features and overall site shots, with selected digital colour photographs
- All stratified finds were to be collected by context
- A programme of post-fieldwork analysis, archiving and publication, as appropriate.

### 2.4 *Constraints*

The trench was situated between the entrance to the site and a building beyond the west side of the site. The latter was associated with a drain (section 4.2, Context 4), which was situated at the west end of the trench. These factors necessitated a certain degree of foreshortening of the trench.

### 3 Archaeological and Historical Background

CAS = County Archaeological Service reference number

- 3.1 High Wycombe is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance (eg. Page 1925). The site has the potential to reveal evidence from a variety of periods, but the focus of interest is in the medieval period.
- 3.2 The chalk streams of the Buckinghamshire Chilterns have attracted settlement since the prehistoric periods and Iron Age and Roman settlement is known from the Wycombe area.
- 3.3 A possible Iron Age settlement is known north of Castle Hill, c.500m north of the site, within a now flattened earthwork enclosure (CAS373) and a Roman villa is known c.600m to the south. Slag, Roman coins (CAS605, 1215 and 1217), an 'ancient wall' (CAS616) and a tessellated pavement (CAS615) may indicate a second focus of Roman activity near the present parish church. Possible Roman or Saxon burials have been recorded near the church (CAS615) and a second area of burials, associated with early 7<sup>th</sup> century artefacts, has been found south-east of Castle Hill (CAS6105).
- 3.4 Little is known of the early development of High Wycombe, but a settlement may have developed during the Saxon period, perhaps at a natural crossing point on the river. A 10<sup>th</sup> century document referring to '*the Wycombes*' could imply that there were a number of dispersed settlements, rather than a single settlement with a nucleated core.
- 3.5 The settlement was included in the Domesday survey (1086) where it was recorded as '*Wicube*'. Sufficient land was available with 40 villeins, 8 bordars, 8 serfs, 4 boars, 30 ploughs, enough woodland for 500 pigs, and 6 mills (Morris 1978).
- 3.6 The settlement developed during the medieval period and was granted borough status by Henry II, though this was not confirmed until 1226 (Beresford & Finberg 1973, 72). The original market place appears to have comprised a large area between the river and the parish church.
- 3.7 A planned expansion of the town may have followed the grant of borough status, comprising of the laying out of burgage plots along the High Street. The site lies to the north of the High Street, and may be situated within the rear of one or more the burgage plots, fronting onto the north side of the High Street.
- 3.8 During the post-medieval period High Wycombe thrived as a market centre, with its wealth based on trade in corn, lace, paper and chairmaking. During this period the economic focus of the town shifted from the Market Place to the High Street, Church Street and White Hart Street.
- 3.9 Corporation Street is not shown on the 1899 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3) and during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the area between the High Street and Castle Street was occupied by a variety of buildings. The pattern of property boundaries probably broadly preserved the medieval burgage plots and Corporation Street may follow such a boundary. In 1901 the council constructed a new thoroughfare linking the High Street and Castle Street (Rattue 2002, 54). Its name derives from the original intention to locate new council offices and the Post Office, but this project never happened (*ibid.*).





Figure 3: Extract from OS 1897 Map of High Wycombe (Godfrey 1994)

## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 A single trench 5.1m wide and 12m long and orientated WNW-ESE was excavated towards the northern end of the site. Its northern edge was 12m from the northern edge of the site where two mature Sycamore trees are growing.

4.1.2 It was intended to leave a gap of *c.* 1.5m from the wall on the western boundary of the site (Plate 1). Within a short time it became apparent that a service trench (4) ran parallel with the boundary and the trench edge was moved a further 1.5m to the east in order to avoid this feature.

### **4.2 Results**

4.2.1 The contemporary ground surface comprised tarmac, below which was a deposit of modern brick rubble (1). They had a combined thickness of 0.33m and formed the makeup layer and surface of the church car park (Plates 2, 4 and 6).

4.2.2 A 0.5m thick deposit of dark brown silty clay (2) was present below the makeup ground. With the exception of an area on the south side of the trench, where it had been disturbed by the footings of the former church (Plate 5), this deposit was uniform across the entire trench and is interpreted as a buried soil layer.

4.2.3 The natural strata (3), which comprised chalky drift was reached at a depth of *c.*0.9m (Plates 5 and 6). No archaeological features or artefacts were present cutting into the natural material.



**Plate 1:** View northwards across the site



**Plate 2:** View east across trench with machining underway (Scale = 2m)



**Plate 3:** Detail of section across Ditch 4 (Scale = 2m)



**Plate 4:** Secondary machining in trench (Scale = 2m)



**Plate 5:** Overall view of trench looking ESE, showing the exposed natural strata (3) and modern disturbance (5) to right (Scale = 2m)



**Plate 6:** Detail of made up ground (1), soil layer (2) and natural strata (3) (Scale = 2m)

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 No archaeological remains were observed in the trench, which may be due to two factors. Firstly, the site probably remained open ground until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and this is illustrated on the 1897 edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3). Secondly, due to the natural slope of the ground, the site is unlikely to have been a preferred location, had others been available. In addition, the terrain itself had undergone considerable modification during the construction and subsequent use of the church.
- 5.2 The remainder of the site, to the south of the trench, is likely to have been heavily truncated, by the footings of the former church. It is unlikely that significant archaeological remains are present on the site.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to John Croke for commissioning this project and to Mr David Radford, Archaeological Officer of *Buckinghamshire County Council* for visiting the site and acting as curatorial monitor.

The fieldwork was undertaken for *ASC Ltd* by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA. The report was prepared by Jonathan Hunn and edited by David Fell BA MA MIFA.

## 7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project design
3. Clients site plan
4. Site records
5. List of photographs
6. B/W prints & negatives
7. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with *Buckinghamshire County Museum*: Accession number pending

## 8. References


### *Standards & Specifications*

- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.
- Radford D 2006 *Brief for an Archaeological Strip and Record Excavation. First Church of Christ Scientist, Corporation Street, High Wycombe*. Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service
- Winter M, 2006 *First Church of Christ Scientist, Corporation Street, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. Project Design for Archaeological Strip and Record Excavation*. Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd

### *Secondary Sources*

- Beresford, M. & Finberg, H.P.R 1973: *English Medieval Boroughs: a handlist*. David & Charles (Newton Abbot).
- Godfrey, A. 1994: *Old Ordnance Survey Maps: High Wycombe 1897*. Alan Godfrey Maps (Gateshead).
- Jarvis, M.G, Allen, R.H, Fordham, S.J, Hazelden, J., Moffat A.J and Sturdy, R.G 1984: *Soils and their Use in South East England*. Soil Survey of England and Wales Bulletin no. 15 (Harpenden)
- Morris J (ed) 1978: *The Domesday Book. Buckinghamshire*. History from the Sources. Phillimore (Chichester)
- Page, W. (ed), 1925: *The Victoria History of the County of Buckingham*. 3
- Rattue, J. 2002: *High Wycombe Past*. Phillimore (Chichester)
- Soil Survey 1983: *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).

### Appendix 1: Trench Summary Table

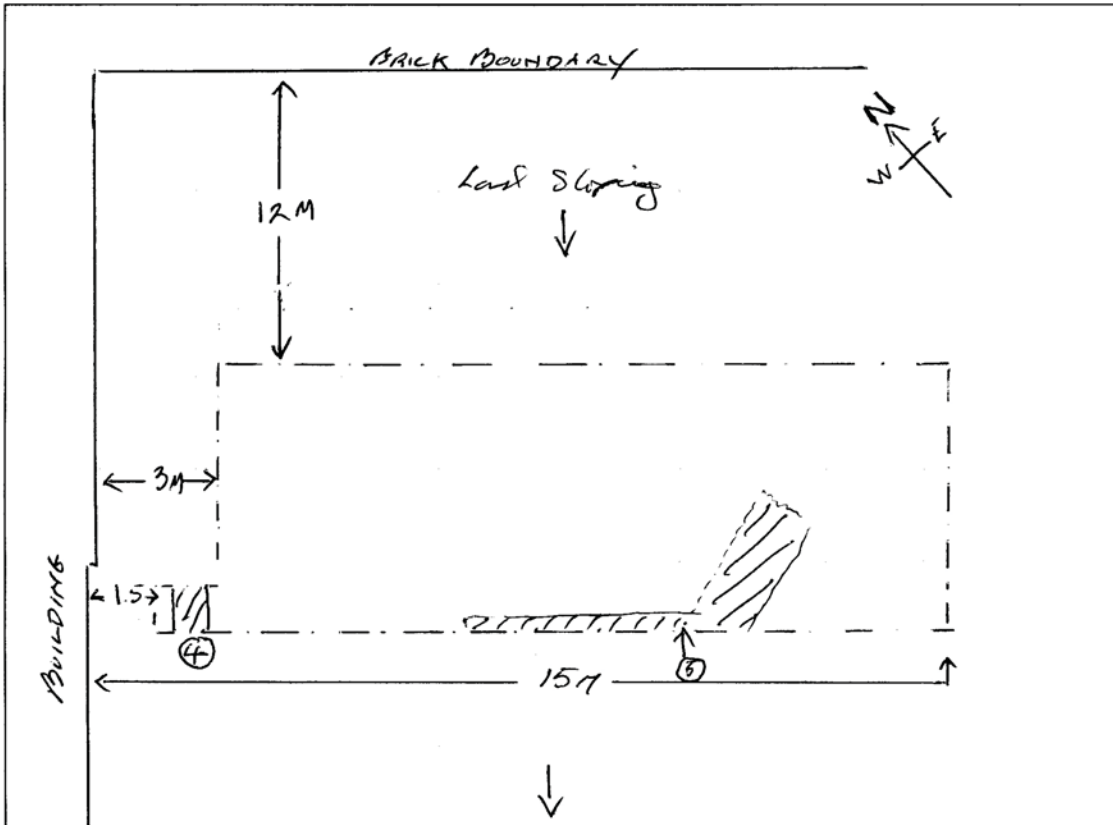
<b>Trench 1</b>						
	<b>Max Dimensions</b>					
	<b>Width</b>	5.1m	<b>Length</b>	12.0m	<b>Depth</b>	0.9-1.2m
	<b>Level (top)</b>		75.25m OD		<b>Level (base)</b>	
					c. 74.35m OD	
<b>NGR Co-ordinates</b>						
<b>W</b>	SU 86672 93170			<b>E</b>	SU 86685 93165	
<b>Orientation</b>		WNW-ESE				
<b>Reason for Trench</b>		Test for the presence of archaeological remains				
<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description and Interpretation</b>	<b>Max Width (mm)</b>	<b>Max Thckn (mm)</b>	<b>Depth BGL (mm)</b>	
1	Layer	Tarmac and modern brick rubble. Modern madeup ground and surface for car park	-	330	0	
7	Fill	Mixed brown fill. Modern debris	-	Un-exc	350	
5	Cut	Irregular cut on S side of trench. Modern disturbance, probably related to construction of the former church	-	Un-exc	350	
2	Layer	Dark brown silty clay. Buried soil layer	-	500	300	
6	Fill	Dark brown soil and bricks	c.750	1.2m+	0	
4	Cut	Construction cut. Modern service run	c.750	1.2m+	0	
3	Layer	White chalky drift. Natural strata	na	na	c.900	



A.S.C. LTD

SKETCH SHEET

Site Name: Corporation St, High Wyc.	Site Code: 870/WCS	Orientation: AS Shown
Context: Trench Plan.		



Depth 0.9 at W end and 1.2m at E end.

There are 3 distinct horizons:

- ① Tarmac surface makes up for parking c 33.4 thick
- ② Dark brown soil 0.5m thick
- ③ The underlying yellowish brown material containing one patch of flint.
- ④ Some track filled with dissolved chalk 0.75m wide
- ⑤ Dark brown modern fill - area cut above.

RECORDING NOTES

Recorded by: JAM.	Date: 18/1/07	Digitised by:	Date:	Sheet number: 1 of 1
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©ASC 2005



## Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Corporation St, High Wycombe, Buckingham				SITE NO/CODE: 870/WCS
Shot	B&W	Slide	Digital	Subject
1			✓	View northwards across the site <b>Plate 1</b>
2			✓	View east across trench with machining underway <b>Plate 2</b>
3			✓	Detail of section looking north
4			✓	Detail of service trench context 4 <b>Plate 3</b>
5			✓	Secondary machining <b>Plate 4</b>
6			✓	View ESE overall view of trench <b>Plate 5</b>
7			✓	Detail of made up ground looking north <b>Plate 6</b>
8	✓			Working shot of trench excavation looking north east
9	✓			General view of site looking north

**Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form**

PROJECT DETAILS						
Project Name:	First Church of Christ Scientist, Corporation Street, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire					
Short Description:	<i>In early January 2007 Archaeological Services &amp; Consultancy Ltd undertook a strip and record excavation on part of the former site of First Church of Christ Scientist at the junction of Corporation Street with Castle Street in High Wycombe. The work demonstrated that the site had been extensively terraced when it was developed for the church. Due to this truncation no archaeological features were detected nor were any artefacts detected in the overlying made up ground.</i>					
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	DBA	FW	Geophys	Survey	Bldg Rec	Post-Exc
	WB	<b>Strip &amp; Rec</b>	Trenching	Test pits	Exc	Other
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	none		Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)			
Current land use:	Vacant (demolished building)		Future work: (yes / no / unknown)		No	
Monument type:	NA		Monument period:		NA	
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None					
PROJECT LOCATION						
County:	Buckinghamshire		OS reference: (to at least 8 figures)		SU 86672 93170	
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Corporation Street, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire					
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	1125 sq. m		Height OD: (metres)		75.25m	
PROJECT CREATORS						
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd					
Project brief originator:	BCAS		Project design originator:		ASC Ltd	
Project Manager:	David Fell		Director/Supervisor:		J.R. Hunn	
Sponsor / funding body:	Croke (South Bucks) Ltd					
PROJECT DATE						
Start date:	January 10 <sup>th</sup> 2007		End date:		January 11 <sup>th</sup> 2007	
PROJECT ARCHIVES						
	Location (Accession no.)		Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)			
Physical:	no		No finds			
Paper:	Yes					
Digital:	Yes					
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)						
Title: NA	Archaeological Strip and Record Excavation: Corporation Street, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire					
Serial title & volume:	Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd Report					
Author(s):	J R Hunn					
Page nos			Date:			