

**St Mary's, Cowl Lane  
Winchcombe  
Gloucestershire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

*for*

**Mr D Banks**


CA Project: 4475  
CA Report: 13566

October 2013

St Mary's, Cowl Lane  
Winchcombe  
Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief

CA Project: 4475  
CA Report: 13566

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date	4 October 2013
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date	10 October 2013
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signed	
date	15 October 2013
issue	01

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## SUMMARY

<b>Project Name:</b>	St Mary's
<b>Location:</b>	Cowl Lane, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire
<b>NGR:</b>	SP 0246 2834
<b>Type:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>Date:</b>	2 September 2013
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	13/00467/FUL
<b>SMC Reference:</b>	SO 500065063
<b>Location of Archive:</b>	To be deposited with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum
<b>Site Code:</b>	MCL 13

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a garage building at St Mary's, Cowl Lane, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire.

Two probable pits were observed in the western corner of the groundworks. The pits remained unexcavated and undated.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2013 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Mr D Banks at St Mary's, Cowl Lane, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire (centred on NGR: SP 0246 2834; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to planning consent for a proposed garage building with increased parking area granted by Tewkesbury Borough Council (Planning ref: 13/00467/FUL note 3).
- 1.2 Scheduled Monument Consent (ref SO 500065063; dated 19 July 2013) for the development has also been granted by English Heritage, conditional (condition b) on a programme of archaeological work being carried out during the development. Condition 'd' attached to the Scheduled Monument Consent restricted the proposed groundworks to a depth not exceeding 0.7m below present ground surface (bpgl). The objective of the watching brief was to record all archaeological remains exposed during the development.
- 1.3 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2013) and approved by Melanie Barge, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2009), the *Statement of Standards and Practices Appropriate for Archaeological Fieldwork in Gloucestershire* (Gloucestershire County Council 1995), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006).

### **The site**

- 1.4 The development area is currently used as a garden, bounded by domestic dwellings which front Cowl Lane, Winchcombe. The current property has recently changed its name from Pigeon Close to Ashby, and more recently to St Mary's, with the adjacent property to the north changing from St Mary's to Cloisters. The site lies at approximately 94m AOD and is approximately 0.2ha in extent. The ground is flat at the front of the property with a slight slope upwards away from the house towards the Abbey grounds.

- 1.5 Winchcombe lies on the Severn Floodplain at the foot of the Cotswold Hills. The solid geology of the site is mapped as Charmouth Mudstone Formation of the Sinemurian to Pliensbachian geological era (BGS 2013). The natural substrate encountered during the groundworks comprised limestone brash.

### ***Archaeological background***

- 1.6 The proposed development area lies within the bounds of Scheduled Monument National No. 28873 (Winchcombe Abbey) as amended in June 2000. The monument formerly consisted of Gloucestershire Monuments 411 (the site of St Mary's Abbey) and 28503 (Churchyard cross in St Peter's churchyard) which have been amalgamated and extended to include the full extent of the former monastic precinct.
- 1.7 Only limited evidence of prehistoric activity has been identified within Winchcombe. By contrast, evidence for Roman activity has been recorded throughout the town, suggesting that a settlement lay within the immediate vicinity, although its nature and extent remains unknown. The earliest post-Roman evidence within the area comprises an early medieval cemetery discovered in 1977 at North Street (Saville 1985). A total of six inhumations were recorded during a salvage excavation, the earliest of which was radiocarbon dated to approximately AD 630 (Mullin 2005). The same excavation also produced pottery, animal bone and smithing evidence of 10th to 12th-century date (GCC 2007).
- 1.8 Evidence for an abbey at Winchcombe is first recorded c. AD 787 (ibid.). This is the probable date of the establishment of the first monastery at Winchcombe by Offa of Mercia. By AD 811 an Abbey was located in the town, dedicated to St Mary. It was refounded as a Benedictine community c. AD 969. The significance of the town as a national centre is underlined by the burial of the Mercian King Coenwolf at the Abbey in AD 821, and by the holding of a witenagemot (an assembly of the national elite) at the Abbey, attended by various Kings, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other political figures (ibid.). The importance of the town extended beyond purely religious functions, and a mint is recorded at the town from c. AD 959 to 1087 (Mullin 2005). A Mercian royal palace is also believed to have been present to the south of the Abbey, and immediately south of the current site (GCC 2007).

- 1.9 Winchcombe probably became a fortified burgh settlement during the 9th century, and evidence for a defensive wall has been recorded to the north-west of the site at Back Lane (Ellis 1986). This comprised a 1-metre high clay rampart, with a stone track on the inside, of Late Saxon date (Mullin 2005). Medieval burgage plots lie to the east of the current site fronting Cowl Lane (ibid.).
- 1.10 An archaeological evaluation immediately to the north at The Cloisters (then St Mary's), recorded deposits dating from the medieval through to the modern period (CAT 2000). It remained undetermined whether these deposits were representative of deliberate episodes of dumping/levelling or of gradual accumulation (ibid.).
- 1.11 Archaeological excavations immediately east of Cowl Lane during redevelopment of the Parish Hall in 2011 identified evidence for two ditches, interpreted as the boundaries to burgage plots, as well as extensive evidence for later, 11th to 13th century, pitting (CA in prep).

### ***Archaeological objectives***

- 1.12 The objectives of the archaeological works were:
- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;
  - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

### ***Methodology***

- 1.13 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2013). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks throughout the garage footprint and additional parking area to a maximum depth of 0.7m bpgl (Fig. 2).
- 1.14 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).

- 1.15 The archive from the watching brief is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble and will be deposited with Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## 2. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3)

- 2.1 Natural geological substrate 108, consisting of limestone brash was revealed solely in the western corner of the excavation area at a depth of 0.7m bpgl. Cut into the top of the natural brash were two probable pits, 105 and 107, that were both only partially exposed during the groundworks (Fig. 3). Both pits contained red brown sandy clay fills, 104 and 106 respectively, and remained undated. Both features remained unexcavated as the agreed formation depth of 0.7m bpgl had already been achieved in this area.
- 2.2 The natural substrate and both pit fills were sealed by subsoil 103 that averaged 0.2m in thickness. This was sealed by 0.25m of topsoil, 102, which was covered by garden soil 100 in the south-western extent of the excavation area and an existing gravel surface, 101, throughout the remainder of the site. Throughout the majority of the excavation area, subsoil 103 was the lowest deposit encountered (see Fig. 3).

## 3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 Two probable pits were observed in the western corner of the groundworks; however, both remained unexcavated and undated, consequently their date and function remains undetermined. However, the possibility that they are representative of medieval activity to the rear of tenement plots fronting Cowl Lane should not be overlooked. Previous archaeological excavation to the east of Cowl Lane in 2011 (CA in prep) identified extensive pitting activity to the rear of tenement properties. These pits were attributed to a change in land use from small scale, rear of property activities, to larger scale communal disposal of domestic waste. It is possible that pit 107, only a quadrant of which was revealed in the current excavation, may be contemporary. Pit 105 appears to be too small to be a refuse pit, and could also be interpreted as a post hole.



- 3.2 Throughout the majority of the site, groundworks only penetrated into the subsoil. Therefore the potential for more archaeological features to survive beneath this deposit remains probable, if unproven.

#### 4. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Tom Weavill who also wrote the report. The illustrations were prepared by Lucy Martin. The archive has been compiled by Tom Weavill, and prepared for deposition by Jennie Hughes. The project was managed for CA by Cliff Bateman

#### 5. REFERENCES

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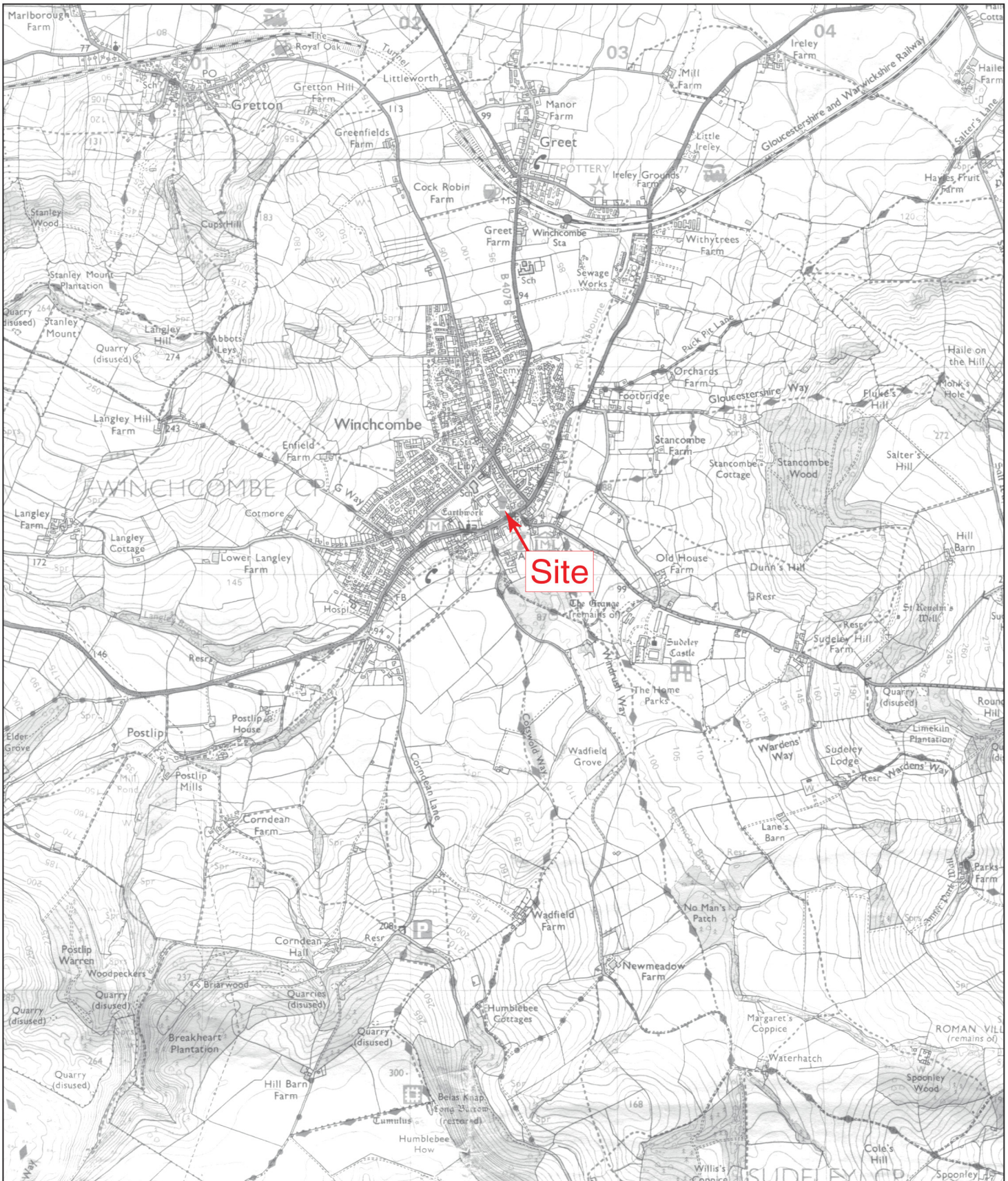


## APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		Garden soil	Dark grey silty loam	>4.7	>1.7	0.35	
1	101	Layer		Gravel	Gravel surface	>7.4	>4.7	0.10	
1	102	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey silty clay	>9.1	>4.7	0.25	
1	103	Layer		Subsoil	Light greyish brown sandy clay	>9.1	>4.7	0.20	
1	104	Fill	105	Fill of pit	Mid reddish brown sandy clay	0.33	<0.20		
1	105	Cut		Pit	Sub-circular in plan	0.33	<0.20		
1	106	Fill	107	Fill of pit	Mid reddish brown sandy clay	>1.8	>1.4		
1	107	Cut		Pit	Sub-circular in plan	>1.8	>1.4		
1	108	Layer		Natural substrate	Limestone brash				

**APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	St Mary's, Cowl Lane, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire	
Short description	<p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a garage building at St Mary's, Cowl Lane, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire.</p> <p>Two probable pits were observed in the western corner of the groundworks. The pits remained undated and unexcavated.</p>	
Project dates	2 September 2013	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	St Mary's, Cowl Lane, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)	0.2ha	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	SP 0246 2834	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	None	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Cliff Bateman	
Project Supervisor	Tom Weavill	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>		
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS</b>	None	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	N/A	None
Paper	Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum	Trench record sheets, digital photo register
Digital	Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum	Digital photos
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
<p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013 <i>St Mary's, Cowl Lane, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Evaluation</i>. CA typescript report <b>13566</b></p>		



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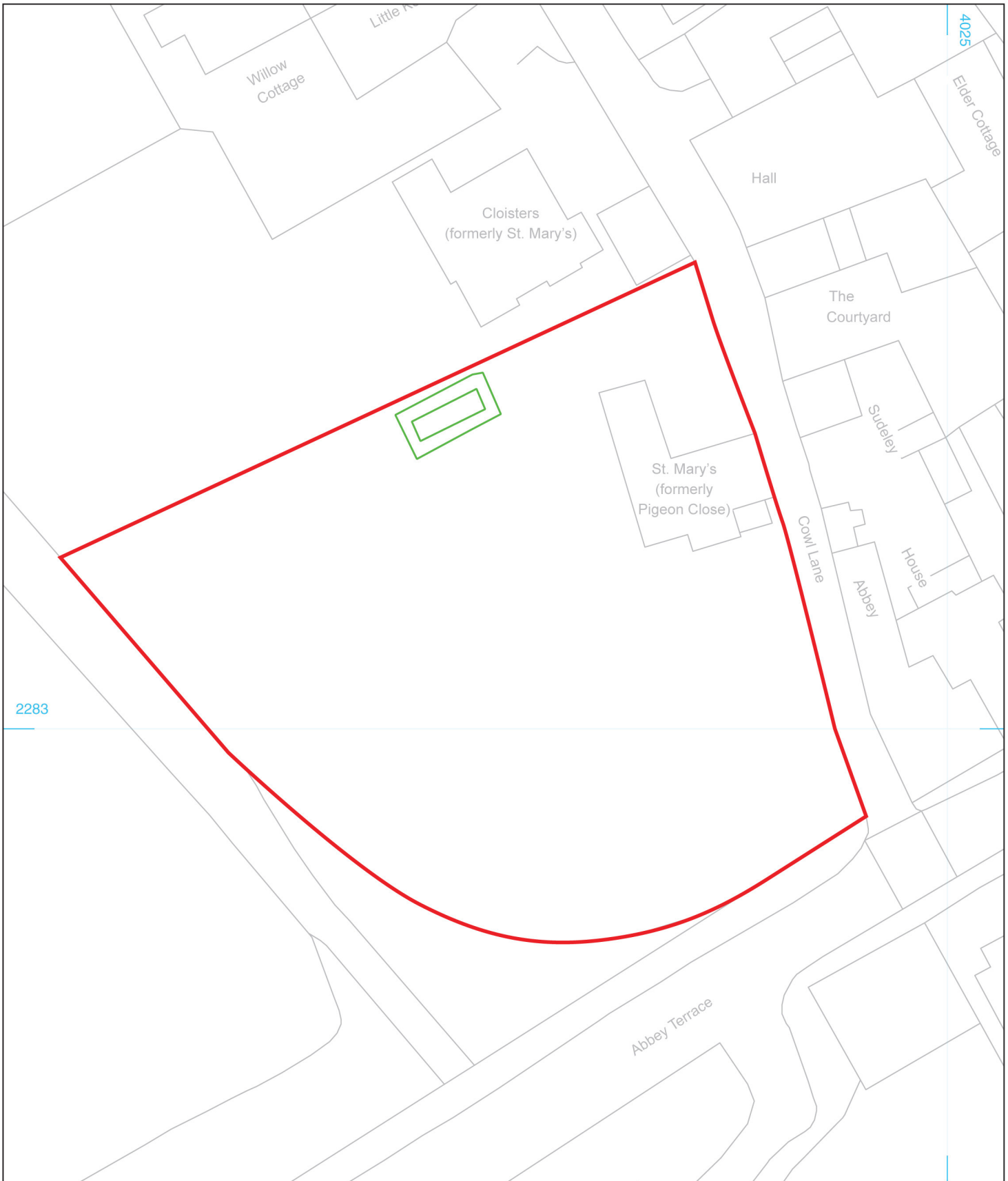
**PROJECT TITLE**  
 St. Mary's, Cowl Lane, Winchcombe  
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**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Site location plan

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PROJECT NO. 4475 DATE 07-10-2013  
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FIGURE NO.  
**1**



-  site
-  observed groundworks



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**PROJECT TITLE**

**St. Mary's, Cowl Lane, Winchcombe  
 Gloucestershire**

**FIGURE TITLE**

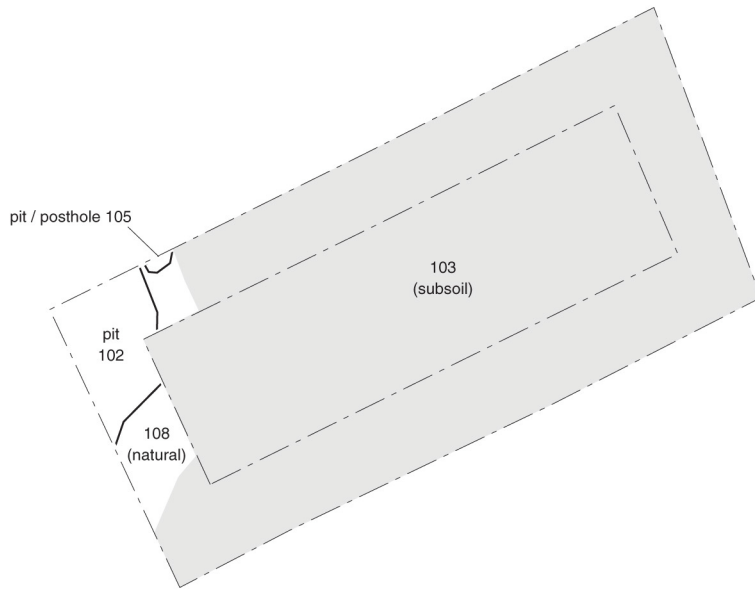
**The site, showing location of  
 groundworks**



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FIGURE NO.

**2**



0 5m



View of groundworks, looking north-east



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FIGURE TITLE

Plan of groundworks and photograph

PROJECT NO. 4475 DATE 07-10-2013  
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 APPROVED BY LM SCALE@A4 1:100

FIGURE NO.

3