

# St Kenelm's Church Church Enstone Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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1	Jim Mumford Field Supervisor	Louise Loe Head of Burials	Edward Biddulph Senior Project Manager	

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Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263800

e: oasouth@thehumanjourney.net

f: +44 (0) 1865 793496

w: oasouth.thehumanjourney.net

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## St Kenelm's Church, Enstone, Oxfordshire

### *Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Jim Mumford*

*and illustrated by Georgina Slater*

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## Summary

*A watching brief was undertaken in November 2012 during repairs at St Kenelm's church, Church Enstone. A pre- 19<sup>th</sup> century blocked doorway, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century memorial slabs and a late 18<sup>th</sup> century burial were revealed.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 In November 2012 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on repairs to external perimeter drains and part of the timber floor in the north east corner of the north aisle at St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone (SP 3795 2512). The work was commissioned by John Nigel Hammett of Cave Associates (Architects) on behalf of the Incumbent and Church Warden of St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 St Kenelm's church is situated between Church Road and Little Tew Road at a height of approximately 150 m AOD, in the village of Church Enstone. Church Enstone lies north of Enstone and south-east of Chipping Norton (Fig 1). The village is separated from Enstone by a small, steep valley and the river Glyme to the south and west. It is surrounded by open fields, small woods and plantations. The underlying geology is Chipping Norton limestone (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no. 218)

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 St Kenelm's Church has a Saxon dedication, but the earliest surviving elements are of 12<sup>th</sup> century date. Thereafter the church has a fairly complex architectural history, the restoration work carried out by Street in 1856 (Pevsner and Sherwood 1974, 593) being of particular note. The present structure has the west tower, nave, choir and chancel and north and south aisles. At the east end of the narrow north aisle is an organ chamber, and at the east end of the broader south aisle is a Lady Chapel. There is a south porch continuous with the west end of the south aisle.

1.3.2 In 1996 parts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century floor were replaced and a number of memorial slabs of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century date were revealed and archaeologically recorded (OAU 1996). In 2010, medieval remains of the church and medieval (or earlier) burials were identified during archaeological monitoring of building works for a boiler house and storage tank (TVAS 2010).

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of any archaeological remains exposed during the course of the works;
- 2.1.2 To mitigate the impact of the works on any surviving archaeology;
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.



## 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Recording followed procedures detailed in OA's fieldwork manual (Wilkinson 1992). Archaeology was recorded in plan (at a scale of 1:20), by digital photography and by written record. Coffin fittings were examined with reference to the catalogue of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century fittings from Christchurch, Spitalfields (Reeves and Adams 1993).

## 3 RESULTS

- 3.1.1 All archaeological deposits encountered were found in the area of the north aisle timber floor (Fig 2).

### 3.2 Description of deposits

- 3.2.1 The timber floor in the north-east corner of the north aisle was removed and exposed a number of east to west support beams. These were resting on low dwarf walls, consisting of two courses. The walls measured 3.2m x 0.26m x 0.22m and were constructed of rough hewn limestone blocks and fragments with a coarse lime mortar.
- 3.2.2 Between the dwarf walls was a surface of loose, light brown, silty, sand, loam which contained fragments of mortar, limestone, wood and ceramic building material (CBM). Three rectangular stone memorial slabs were present. The largest (c.2.08m x 0.9m) was in the north east corner and its inscription reads:

Here Lies the Body  
Nicholas Marshell Gent  
Who died March V 20<sup>th</sup> 1764  
Aged 61 Years  
Also  
The Body of  
Esther his wife who  
died December y 28<sup>th</sup> 1769  
Aged 63 Years

- 3.2.3 To the south side of this memorial slab, on the other side of dwarf wall, were two partially exposed, smaller memorial slabs. The western one reads:

Lieth the  
ELEANOR  
NICHOLAS MARS  
Who Departed the Life  
MARCH 8<sup>th</sup> 18\*\*  
Aged 87 Years.

- 3.2.4 The eastern slab reads:

Lieth  
NICHOLAS MARSH  
Who departed this Life



October the 28<sup>th</sup> 179\*

Aged 55 Years

- 3.2.5 In the process of removing debris, the eastern end of a coffin shaped stone lined grave was exposed. The grave was constructed of limestone tabular fragments with a flush lime mortar bond and had a number of rough hewn limestone slabs capping it. Only 0.26m x 0.47m x 0.47m was exposed, the remainder lying under the larger of the three memorial slabs described above. The end capping stone, which measured 0.9m x 0.38m x 0.08m, was removed revealing a collapsed coffin, presumably that of Esther Marshall listed on the grave slab. The coffin comprised a collapsed lead coffin with a wooden outer shell. Fragments of black fabric and rows of domed studs were preserved on some parts of the wooden outer shell. The studs appeared to have been arranged in a decorative pattern involving single and double rows and curves of studs across the corners. Heavily corroded grips and grip plates were observed at the foot end and on the sides. These were of the curved variety and appeared to have been decorated. The details of the decoration could not be determined, but they seemed to be similar to the type 4 or 6 seen among 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century burials from Christchurch Spitalfields (Reeve and Adams 1994). These types are among the most common and include depictions of foliage and cherubs (type 4) and foliage and a shield (type 6).
- 3.2.6 In the corner of the aisle in the east wall an 0.84m wide blocked doorway was observed. The blocking material had been built up from the pre-19<sup>th</sup> century floor surface and a void had formed necessitating the current underpinning.

### 3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 No finds were recovered from the site during the visit.

### 3.4 Environmental remains

- 3.4.1 No environmental samples were taken during the watching brief.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief revealed a number of earlier features pre-dating the 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration. These include a small blocked doorway in the corner of the east wall of the north aisle. Although the door jambs were visible in the inner face of the wall, these could not be identified on the wall's outer face, due to later rebuilds and re-pointing of the church.
- 4.1.2 Also revealed were three memorial slabs and an 18<sup>th</sup> century stone lined grave, located in the corner along the side of the north wall. A late 18<sup>th</sup> century coffin was observed in the grave, but was not disturbed. This had rows of stud work, upholstery fabric and grips and grip plates on the sides and the foot end, but the details of these were obscured because of limited access and corrosion.
- 4.1.3 Although limited, these observations suggest that the coffin is consistent with 18<sup>th</sup> century burial practices associated with the middle and upper classes of society. At this time, coffins of the middle and upper classes typically comprised a double thickness of wood, an outer wooden case and inner lead shell, a lead shell and inner wooden coffin, or a triple layer of wood-metal-wood (most commonly lead). Upholstery fabric on the exterior of the coffin was usually of velvet in more expensive coffins and baize in cheaper ones. This textile was secured and decorated with studs and punched metal plates. A full suite of coffin fittings comprised one to four *depositum* plates (an inner and outer breastplate, a headplate and a footplate), lid motifs, escutcheons, grips and grip



plates. *Depositum* plates were usually inscribed or painted with the name of the deceased, their age and date of death and, less commonly, included other biographical information (such as occupation and social relationships).

- 4.1.4 Brass or iron studs, originally used to secure upholstery to the wooden case, became a decorative device in their own right, being arranged to create a complex patterns on the coffin lid and side panels. Between four and eight grips, backed by a plate, were usually fitted to coffins. The grip plate was often decorated, either engraved, punched or embossed and the grip was either plain or cast in a decorative design (Litten 1991). Grips were not used to carry the coffin, but to steady it whilst it was carried to the church or graveside. The upholstery studs, grips and grip plates seen at St Kenelm's had all been positioned or cast in a decorative manner, but it was not possible to determine the styles of these in any detail.
- 4.1.5 The memorial slab for this burial had been placed over it and two smaller markers had been placed to its side. These were all from the same family dating between 1764 and the 1800s.
- 4.1.6 All of the funerary remains described in this report were left *in situ*, to be covered over by the new floor following repairs, including underpinning in the area of the blocked doorway.





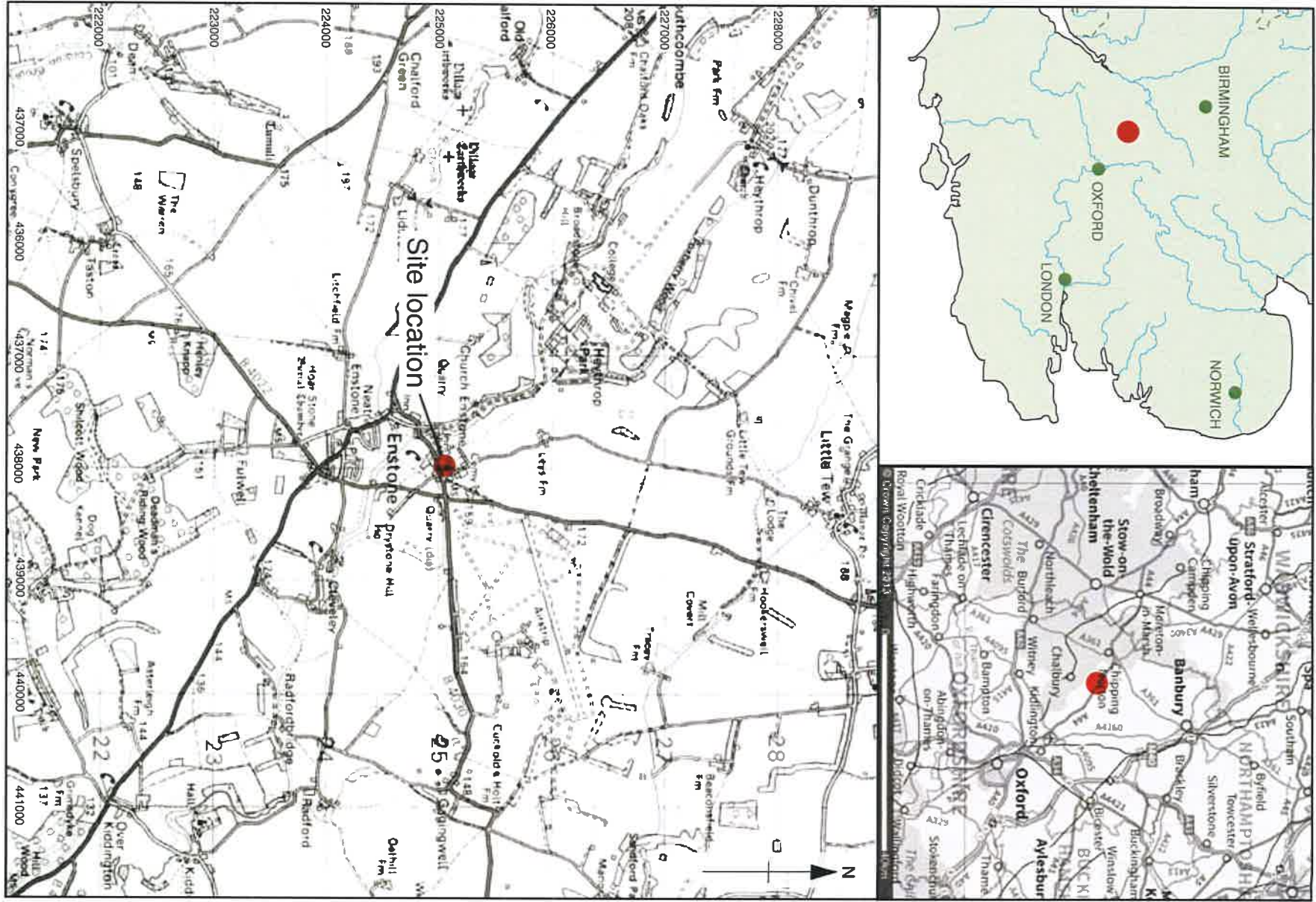
## APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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- TVAS 2010 *St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone, Archaeological Watching Brief*
- Wilkinson 1992 (ed) *Oxford Archaeology Fieldwork Manual*



## APPENDIX B. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone
Site code:	ENKEN12
Grid reference:	SP 3795 2512
Type of watching brief:	Repair works to church
Date and duration of project:	27.11.12; 0.5 days
Area of site:	North east corner of the church
Summary of results:	A watching brief was undertaken in November 2012 during repairs at St Kenelm's church, Church Enstone. A pre- 19 <sup>th</sup> century blocked doorway, 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> century memorial slabs and a late 18 <sup>th</sup> century burial were revealed.
Location of archive:	Oxfordshire Museum Service



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Figure 1: Site location

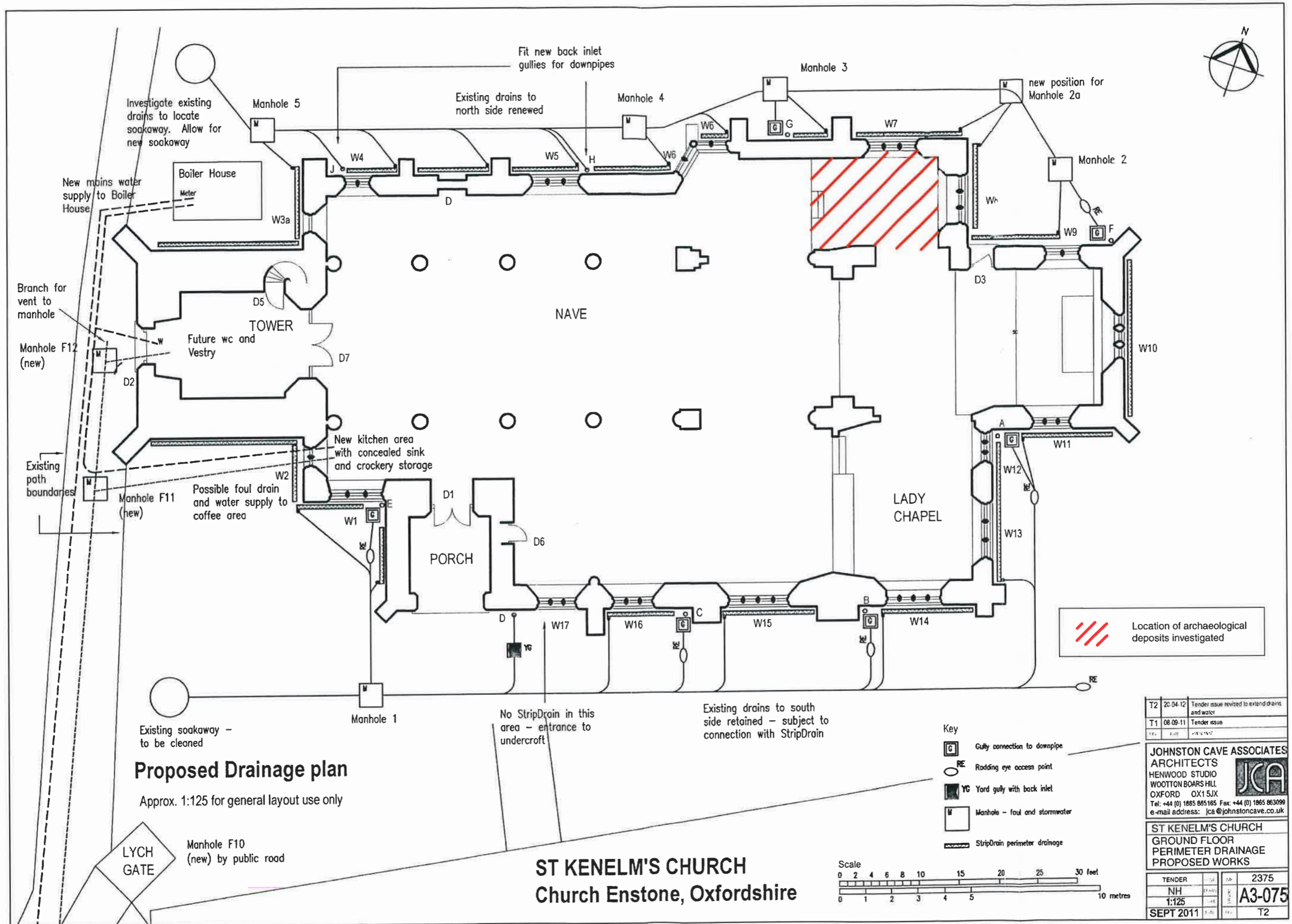


Figure 2: Location of archaeological deposits investigated (reproduced from Johnston Cave Associates Architects)



Plate 1: View of capping stones on grave



Plate 2: End of coffin exposed after stone removed



Plate 3: View of coffin down length of grave



Plate 4: Detail of coffin end



Plate 5: View of memorial slab



Plate 6: External view of blocked doorway?



**Head Office/Registered Office/  
OA South**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800  
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496  
e: [info@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

**OA North**

Mill 3  
Moor Lane  
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000  
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606  
e: [oanorth@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oanorth@thehumanjourney.net)  
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

**OA East**

15 Trafalgar Way  
Bar Hill  
Cambridgeshire  
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500  
f: +44 (0) 1223 850599  
e: [oaeast@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net)  
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>



**Director:** David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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