

Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary Lillingstone Lovell Buckinghamshire



Watching Brief



November 2005

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Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Lillingstone Lovell, Buckinghamshire

NGR: SP 712 404

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In September 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Lillingstone Lovell, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 712 404). Because of subsidence on the south wall of the chancel, the work was commissioned by Acanthus Clews Architects in advance of test pits to investigate the foundations of the east end of the church. The watching brief revealed the limestone foundations of the chancel with the foundation trench backfill. The foundations were later truncated by the insertion of a brick built drain to carry rain/surface water away from the foundations.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In September 2005, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Lillingstone Lovell, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SP 712 404)(Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Acanthus Clews Architects in advance of the excavation of test pits to investigate the foundations of the east end of the chancel.

1.1.2 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the Stage 1 Grant from English Heritage for renovations to the church.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The underlying geology is Blisworth Clay (Great Oolite Clay) and the site lies at a general level of 100 m OD. The site is currently in use as a working church and churchyard.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2005) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The church mostly dates to c AD 1300 though parts of the nave, a high window in the south wall and some pitched stonework in the area of the porch could suggest earlier origins. The north aisle windows are early 14th century in date (Pevsner and Williamson, 580).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.

2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Because of damage to the chancel caused by subsidence, two test pits were hand excavated along the east wall of the chancel in order to enable an investigation of the foundations.

2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Test Pit 1 (Fig 2, section 1)

3.1.1 Test Pit 1 measured 1 m x 0.75 m and 1 m deep. A 0.7 m thick layer of very dark grey brown silty clay loam (3), interpreted as a graveyard soil, was cut by a foundation cut (11), that had a vertical eastern side and a flat base. It measured 0.4 m in depth and 0.3 m wide and was filled by an offset foundation plinth of rough limestone blocks with a light brown sandy mortar (13). Overlying this was a 0.1 m thick layer of building/construction material of compact light reddish brown silty clay (2) with mortar, CBM and tile fragments. This was overlain by a 0.20 m thick layer of topsoil (1), which had been cut by a late 19th century brick gully drain (12), around the base of church walls.

Test Pit 2 (Fig 2, section 2)

3.1.2 Test Pit 2 measured 1 m x 1.2 m and 1.2 m deep. and cut into the top of the natural (9) of yellowish brown clay. This was sealed by a 0.5 m thick layer of dark grey brown silty clay loam interpreted as a relict topsoil (5). This had been cut by a foundation trench (4) for a stone buttress (6), which had vertical sides and flat base. The buttress (6) was partly exposed in the test pit. It measured 1 m x 1 m x 1 m and was constructed rough limestone blocks with a light brown sandy mortar. Filling in between the foundation cut (4) and stone buttress (6) was a backfill of dark brown silty clay (7) with fragments of stone and mortar. On top of the buttress was observed the remains of a mortar deposit (8), that measured 1 m x 0.48 m x 0.08 m and was the remains of buttress above ground. Against the stone buttress (6) was 0.5 m thick layer of very dark grey brown silty clay loam (3) of graveyard soil. This was sealed below a 0.14 m thick layer of building/construction material of compact light reddish brown silty clay (2) with mortar, CBM and tile fragments. Overlying this was a 0.14 m thick layer of topsoil (1), which had been cut by the late 19th century brick gully drain (12) around the base of the church walls.

3.2 **Finds**

3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief and therefore no samples were collected.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 The watching brief revealed the trench-built limestone foundations of the chancel. Whilst the foundations appeared to be of a substantial build, the later insertion of a 19th century brick built gully drain around the base of the walls would suggest that surface and rain water had been percolating through the underlying backfill and may have been causing some subsidence to the foundations and the main structure above.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Layer	0.20 m			Present topsoil
2	Layer	0.14 m			Building/construction material
3	Layer	0.70 m			Old grave yard soil
4	Cut				Foundation cut for buttress
5	Layer	0.50 m			Earlier topsoil
6	Foundation				Buttress
7	Fill				Back fill of foundation trench
8	Structure				Bonding of earlier wall on buttress foundation
9	Natural				Natural
10	Cut				Construction trench of 19th century drain
11	Cut				Foundation cut to wall foundation
12	Structure				19th century brick drain
13	Structure				East chancel wall foundation

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson)

Pevsner N and Williamson, E 1994 *The Buildings of England, Buckinghamshire*. Penguin

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Virgin Mary Church, Lillingstone Lovell, Buckinghamshire

Site code: LILOV 05

Grid reference: NGR SP 712 404

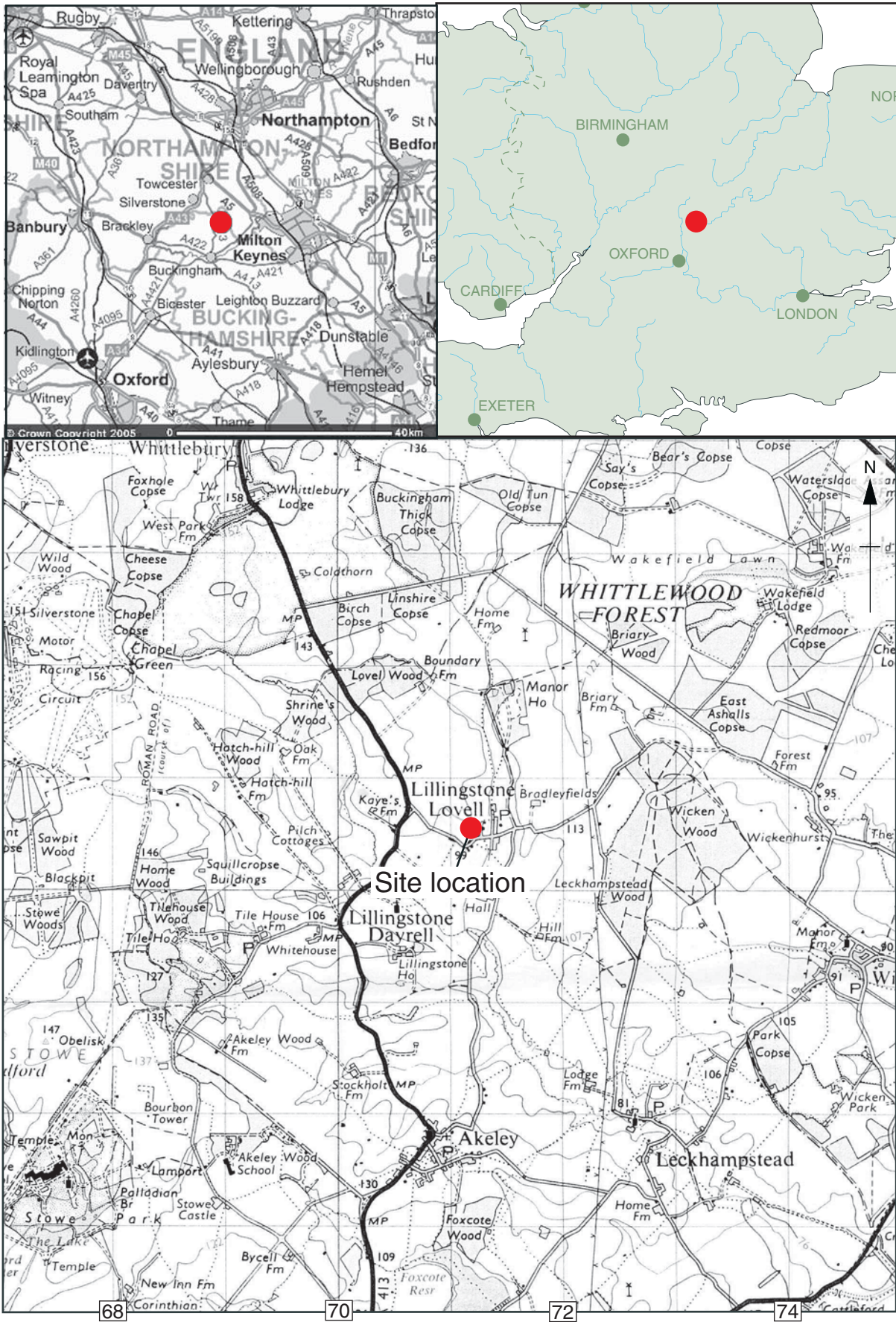
Type of watching brief: Test pits to examine foundations of church.

Date and duration of project: Two visits on the 12th and 15th of September 2005.

Area of site: Two test pits 1 m x 1.2 m x 1.2 m and 1 m x 0.75 m x 1 m.

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed the limestone foundations of the chancel and a 19th century brick built rain/surface water drain.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: AYBCM:2005.100



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Figure 1: Site location

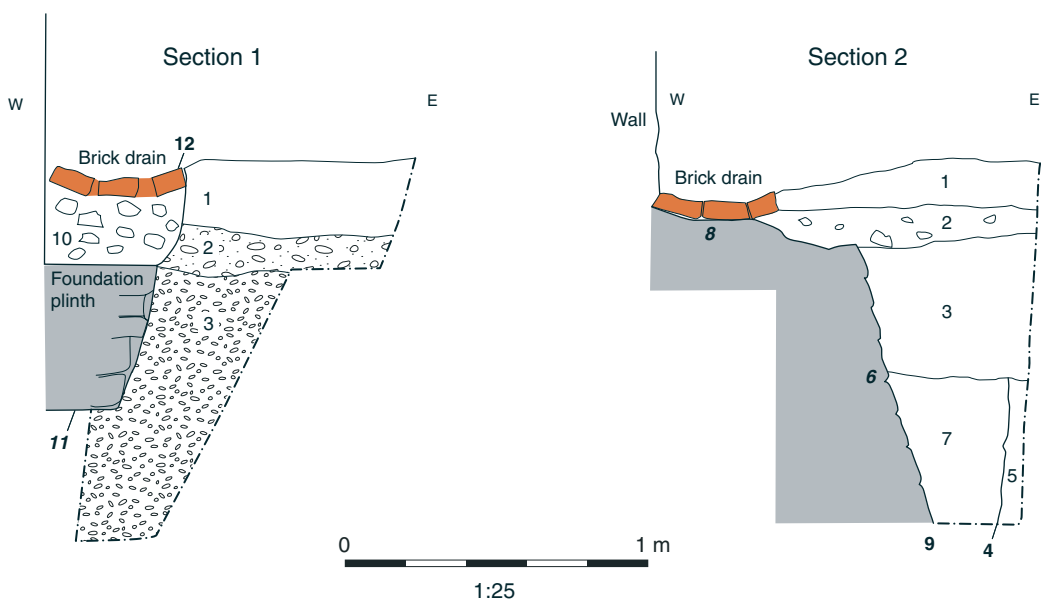
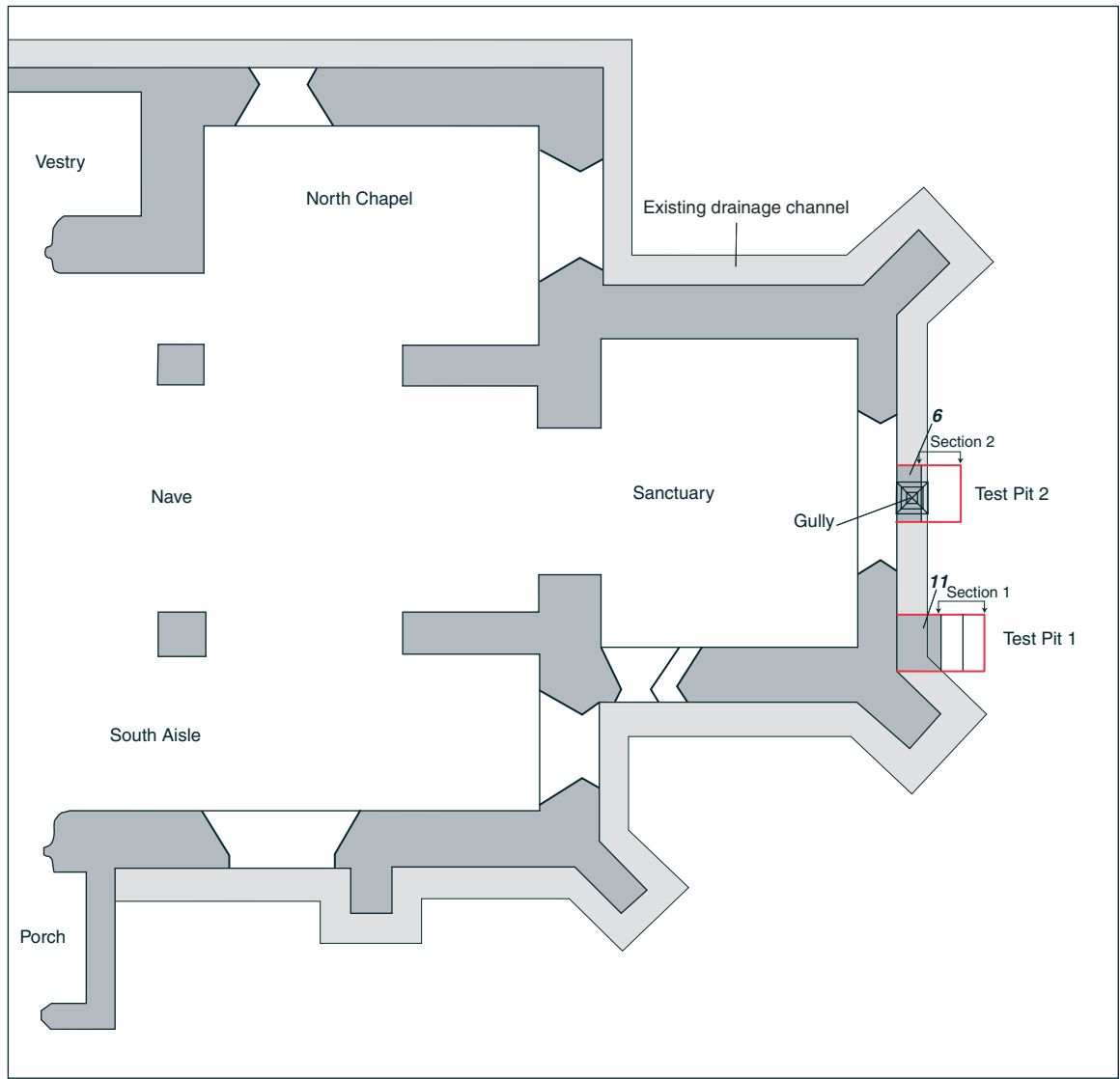


Figure 2: Site plan and sections 1 and 2.



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