

St Peter's Church Iver

Buckinghamshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



September 2006

**Client: EPOC Ltd on behalf of
St Peters Church**

Issue N^o: 1
OA Job N^o: 2618
NGR: TQ 0500 8130

Client Name: EPOC Ltd on behalf of St Peter's Church

Client Ref No:

Document Title: St Peter's Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: NGR TQ 0500 8130
Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 2618
Site Code: IVSPC 05
Invoice Code: IVSPCEV
Receiving Museum: Buckinghamshire County Museum
Museum Accession No: 2005.35

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Document File Location U:/OAU/wbREPORTS/Bucks/IVSPC.doc
Graphics File Location Servergo:/oaupubs2 ithruq*IVSPC05*IVSPCWB*St
Peters Church, Iver*HRB*06.01.06

Illustrated by Hanna Brown

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Cover Plate: General view of the church from the north-west.

SUMMARY

In May 2005 and January 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Peter's Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire (NGR 0500 8130). The work was commissioned by EPOC Ltd on behalf of St Peter's Church in advance of the construction of a new extension on the north side of the church. The watching brief revealed an undated grave cut and construction works from alterations to the church in the 19th and 20th centuries.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In May 2005 and January 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Peter's Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by EPOC Ltd on behalf on St Peter's Church in respect of the construction of a new extension on the north side of the church.
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by David Radford, Planning Archaeologist for BCAS setting out the archaeological requirements of a planning condition (BCAS 2004).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2005).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on a glacial sand and gravel terrace above the Colne Brook, in a sheltered, well-drained location amidst fertile soils. The site is situated within the churchyard of St Peter's to the eastern end of the village at c 36.5 m above OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the project WSI (OA 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 There are several known sites and locations with archaeological remains near to the site of St Peter's.
- 1.3.3 Trenches dug between Iver Churchyard and the M25 to re-route electricity services in 1983 uncovered a Saxon grass-tempered pottery, medieval pottery sherds and undated burnt daub. In addition 4 test pits dug as part of the Iver-Arkley water pipe by RPS Clouston in 1994 recovered a retouched flint flake in one pit and charcoal in another. A watching brief undertaken by OA in 2001 within the churchyard showed that the area had been heavily disturbed by grave digging with no evidence for any possible earlier Saxon church observed (OA 2001).
- 1.3.4 Buckinghamshire SMR identifies a few prehistoric finds from this period in the study area. These are two Palaeolithic handaxes (SMR 2397 and 5982) and a Mesolithic

tranchet axe (SMR 5319). The geology of the site would have favoured settlement of the area from the prehistoric period onwards.

- 1.3.5 There are no records held by the SMR that indicates a Roman presence in the study area. However, the presence of some Roman brick used in the eastern angles of the nave of St. Peter's church (SMR 0846) may indicate Roman occupation nearby.
- 1.3.6 The first known reference to Iver appears in the *Chronicle of Aethelweard* under the year AD 893. The discovery of a Saxon grass-tempered sherd during the building of the M25 near the churchyard of St. Peter's also indicates a Saxon presence in the area at this time.
- 1.3.7 During the early medieval period, Buckinghamshire SMR records the presence of three mills (SMR 2829) and four fisheries (SMR 1680) within the parish; both are recorded in the Domesday Book.
- 1.3.8 The other place of interest close to the site of development is Delaford Park (SMR 4385). This comes from de la ford, meaning "place or person of the ford", referring to the crossing of the Colne brook. Records show that the earliest recorded residents of the manor of Delaford were known by the name Ford and it is likely that they took their family name from the place name.
- 1.3.9 The earliest documentary reference to Delaford was in about 1250-1260. The house at Delaford is not on the site of the original medieval manor. This was burnt down in 1845 and the present house built on top of its foundations.
- 1.3.10 While rapid expansion of Iver is evident from the 1801 Enclosure map when compared with the modern map of the area, this has not been as prominent around the church and is more noticeable to the west and south-west of St Peter's church.
- 1.3.11 The church dates from the 12th century with evidence of an Anglo-Saxon church in the north side of the chancel and reuse of Roman tiles from a nearby building. The tower, chancel and south aisle being added in the 13th century. From the 14th century onwards a number of alterations were carried out in the form of windows and internal details and monuments (Pevsner and Williamson, 1994).

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. In particular any buried remains, existing at a level that may be effected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To clarify the nature and extent of any modern disturbance on the site.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The area of the concrete slab and beam was reduced to impact level by a mini excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. This depth was no more than 0.35 m below present surface level and was carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100. All 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* (OAU 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Ground reduction for new extension

- 3.1.1 The excavation exposed a friable dark reddish brown silty sand loam (2), which was a very disturbed graveyard soil. It ran up against the Nave wall foundations and had been cut by the foundation trench (3) for the east wall of the 12th century North aisle. A later cut (4) for the late 19th century north-east buttress was observed. The construction cut (5) was revealed for the access steps down to the late 19th century basement boiler room and coal chute. To the north-east of the site two small brick piers (7 and 8) were exposed built into the graveyard soil. The northern pier 8 was exposed in the test pit (OA 2001) and was originally thought to be part of a brick lined vault. The piers were 0.5 m² and stood two course's high and thought to be part of a base for an oil tank pre-dating the vestry. A grave cut (9) was observed aligned east to west along the northern edge of the area of excavation. Its outline was unclear, measuring 2 m long by 0.6 m wide and was filled by a dark grey brown silty clay (10). Overlying all the features was a 0.05 m - 0.20 m thick layer of very dark grey brown silty sand loam (1) topsoil.

Wall removal at East End of north aisle

- 3.1.2 Part of the design for the new extension a new doorway was to be inserted through the east end of the north aisle (Fig. 4). Following the removal of the organ, a trail hole was knocked through the east wall of the north aisle. This revealed that the wall was 0.9 m thick and constructed of flint and coarse lime mortar. The area of wall that will be affected by the insertion of the new doorway covers 2.1 m x 1.6 m. The observed part of the wall was covered by a 0.02 m thick coarse lime mortar with a 0.02 m of fine plaster over the top. This appears to date from the 20th century when the east end of the aisle had been stripped and re-plastered before installation of the organ.

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.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief revealed a disturbed graveyard soil (2), which had been cut by an undated grave (9) and the foundation trench (3) for the 12th century north aisle of the church. There was a large area of disturbance from the excavation and construction of the basement (5) in the 19th century along with the foundation cut (4) in the north-west corner of the site for one of the buttress's along the north aisle. Also two brick pads were located in the area and were supports for a fuel tank for the church heating and appear to be 20th century in date. The works for the new doorway into the north aisle did not expose any earlier plasterwork and the whole of the east end of the north aisle had been re-plastered in the 20th century.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Layer	0.05 m - 0.20 m			Topsoil
2	Layer				Graveyard soil
3	Cut		0.10 m	4 m	Foundation trench
4	Cut		0.20 m	1 m	Foundation trench
5	Cut	2.50 m	2.10 m	5.20 m	Construction trench
6	Structure				Basement steps and coal chute
7	Structure	0.20 m	0.50 m	0.50 m	Brick pier
8	Structure	0.20 m	0.50 m	0.50 m	Brick Pier
9	Cut		0.60 m	2 m	Grave
10	Fill				Fill of grave

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BCAS, 2004 Brief for an Archaeological excavation and building recording (unpublished)

OA, 2001 St. Peter's Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire: Archaeological Watching Brief Report (unpublished)

OA 2005 St Peter's Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Excavation and Buildings Recording (unpublished)

OAU, 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: St Peter's Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire

Site code: IVSPC 05

Grid reference: NGR TQ 0500 8130

Type of watching brief: Groundwork for construction of extension and wall fabric recording during renovation of window in east end of north aisle.

Date and duration of project: Two site visits on the 25/5/2005 and 3/1/2006.

Area of site: 8.5 m x 5 m

Summary of results: The watching brief exposed an undated grave cut and construction works from alterations to the church from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckingham County Museum, Technical centre, Tring Rd, Halton, Aylesbury, Buckingham, HP22 5PJ in due course, under the following accession number: 2005.35



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

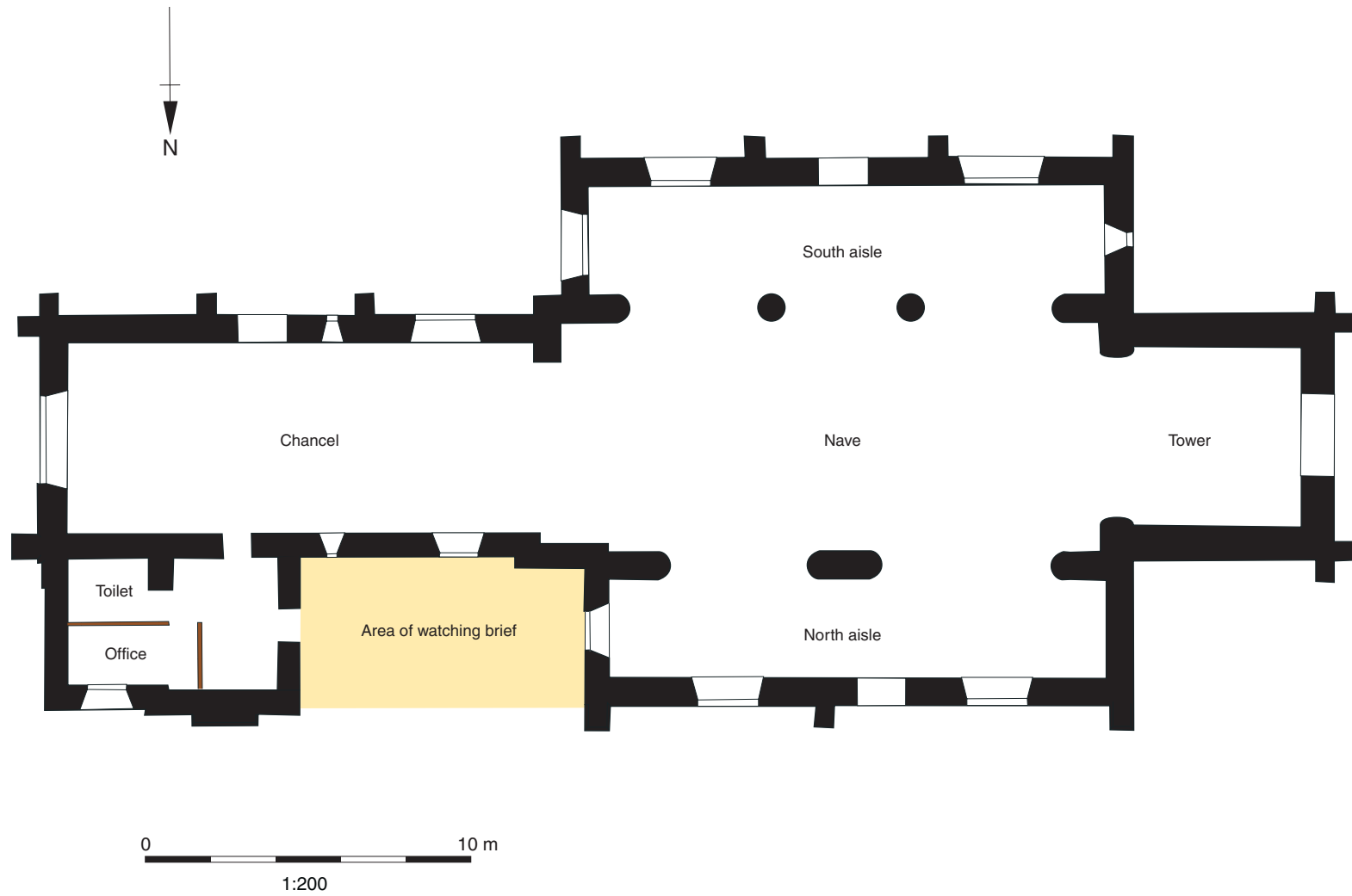


Figure 2: Site plan showing location of watching brief

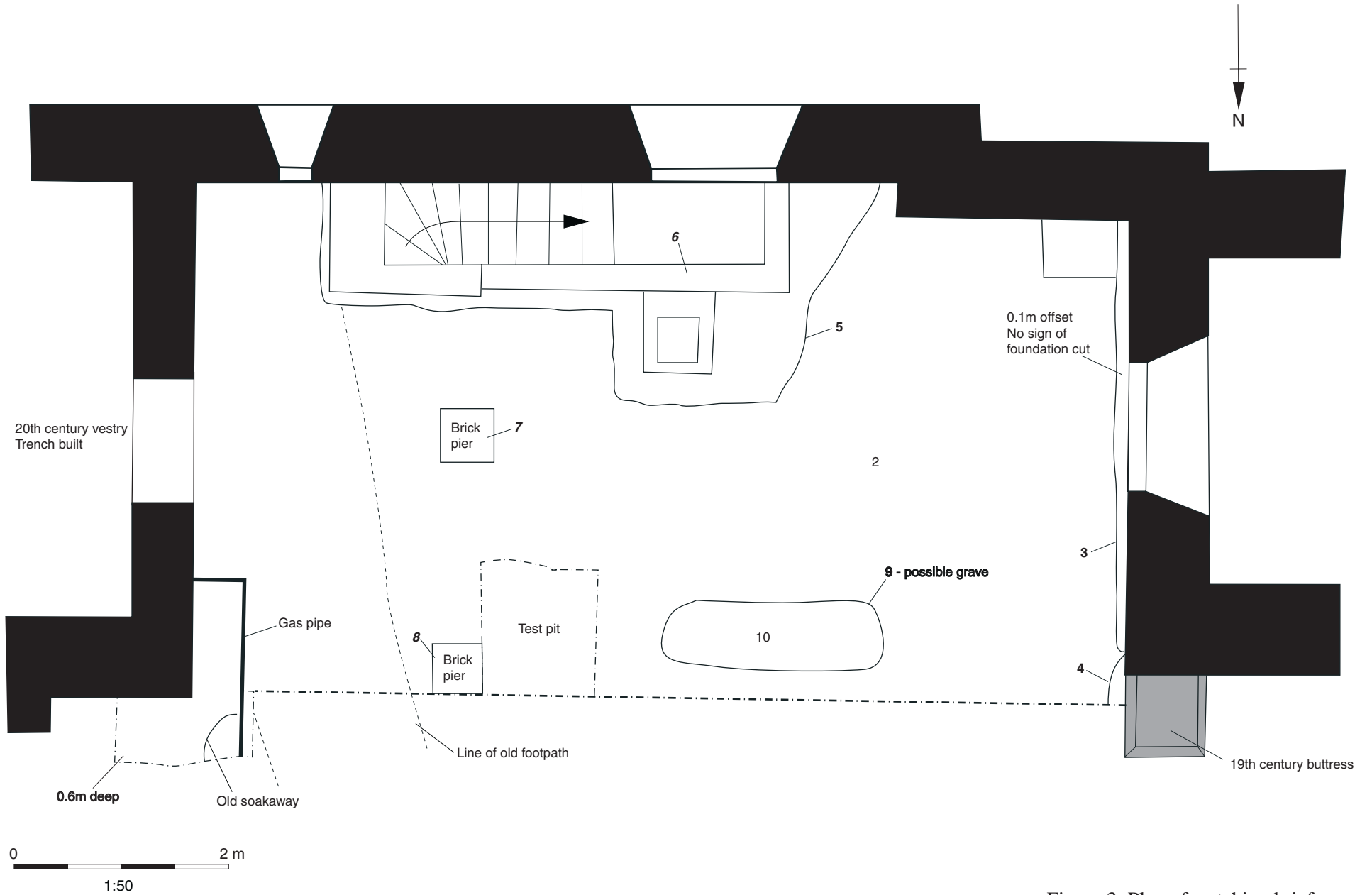
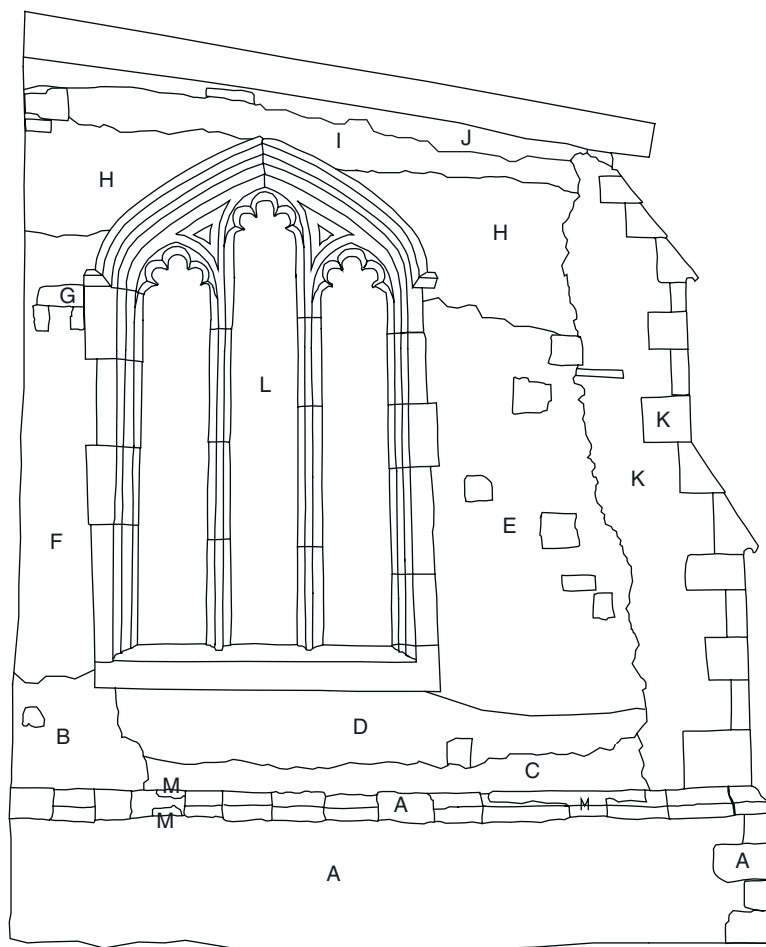


Figure 3: Plan of watching brief area



- A: Medieval flint plinth with stone quoins and chamfered stone dressings
- B: Flint with occasional limestone rubble
- C: Flint build above plinth
- D: Rough flint and conglomerate
- E: Flint with reused limestone and occasional conglomerate
- F: Coursed flintwork
- G: Putlog surround
- H: Flint walling above window
- I: Mixed build with flint tile and stone
- J: Capping of aisle wall, larger flint and stone
- K: 19th century rebuilt buttress
- L: Window, mostly 19th/20th century replacement
- M: Modern repair patches to plinth

Figure 4: East Elevation of North Aisle



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