

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH,

HIGH WYCOMBE,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

NGR SU 86564 93084

On behalf of

PCC All Saints High Wycombe

APRIL 2013

REPORT FOR PCC All Saints High Wycombe
c/o Oxley Conservation
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Summary

Heritage Services conducted a watching brief on exploratory sondages to determine the underground features around the south porch at All Saints' Church, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (NGR SU 86564 93084). The excavation uncovered the foundations of the porch and its buttresses that had been reworked in places with the addition of later bricks into a mainly flint foundation, along with a series of layered deposits that were different on the inside and outside of the church. No dating evidence was recovered from the surrounding layers and only one or two fragmentary pieces of disarticulated human bone were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at the site of All Saints' Church, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (NGR SU 86564 93084). High Wycombe is a historic parish in the historic county of Buckinghamshire, and in the hundred of Desborough; named after a hill-fort located to the southwest of High Wycombe.

The church of All Saints stands in the town of High Wycombe. It is bounded on the east by a car park, and on the south by Church Square and buildings fronting onto High Street including the Red Lion and the Antelope. To the west is a further stretch of Church Street and to the north Castle Street.

The site lies between on a south facing slope at about 70m OD.

The underlying geology is New Pit Chalk Formation; a chalk sedimentary bedrock formed 89 to 94 million years ago in the Cretaceous period. To the south of the church and possibly underlying Church Street to the south are Alluvium deposits formed of clay, silt, sand and gravel, superficial deposits formed 2m years ago in the Quaternary Period.

1.2 Planning Background

Faculty has approved exploratory work to be carried out on the porch of All Saints' Church at High Wycombe. Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the church as the mother church of the medieval borough a watching brief was requested. The PCC appointed John Moore Heritage Services to carry out the archaeological watching brief.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Roman remains have been recovered from High Wycombe. Early excavations on Penn Mead at the west end of the Rye that unearthed a settlement of some significant (VCH 1925, 112-34). This is significant as the earliest recognised name for the Wycombe's in general is *Wicumun* c. 970 (Mawer and Stenton 1925, 200-1). Initially the name was considered to be derived from the River Wye, but the *wicum* name could mean at the dwelling (Watts 2004, 706), or with the excessive Roman finds could be derived from **wīcham**, a *vicus* or Roman town (Gelling 1967, 87-104).

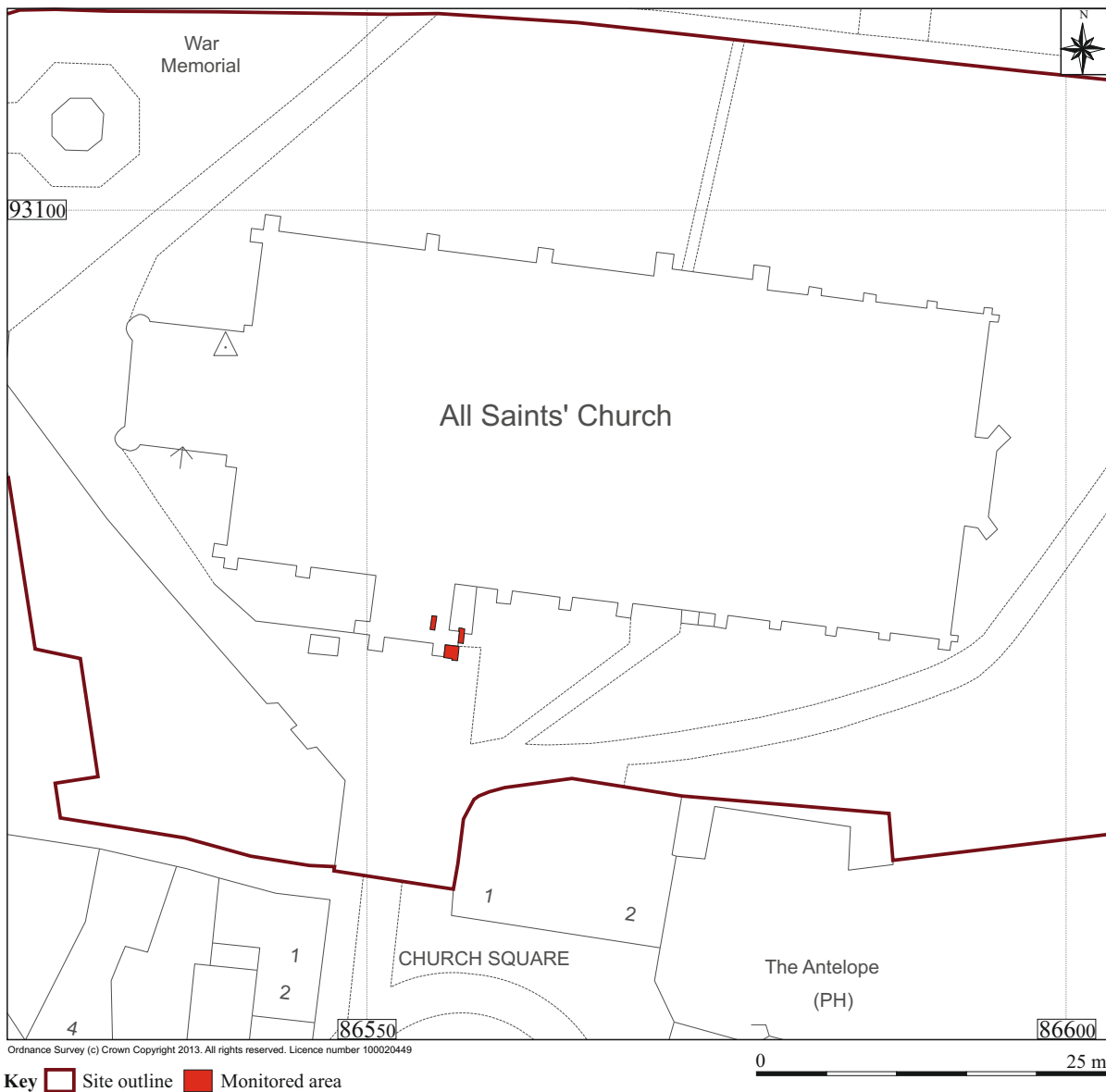
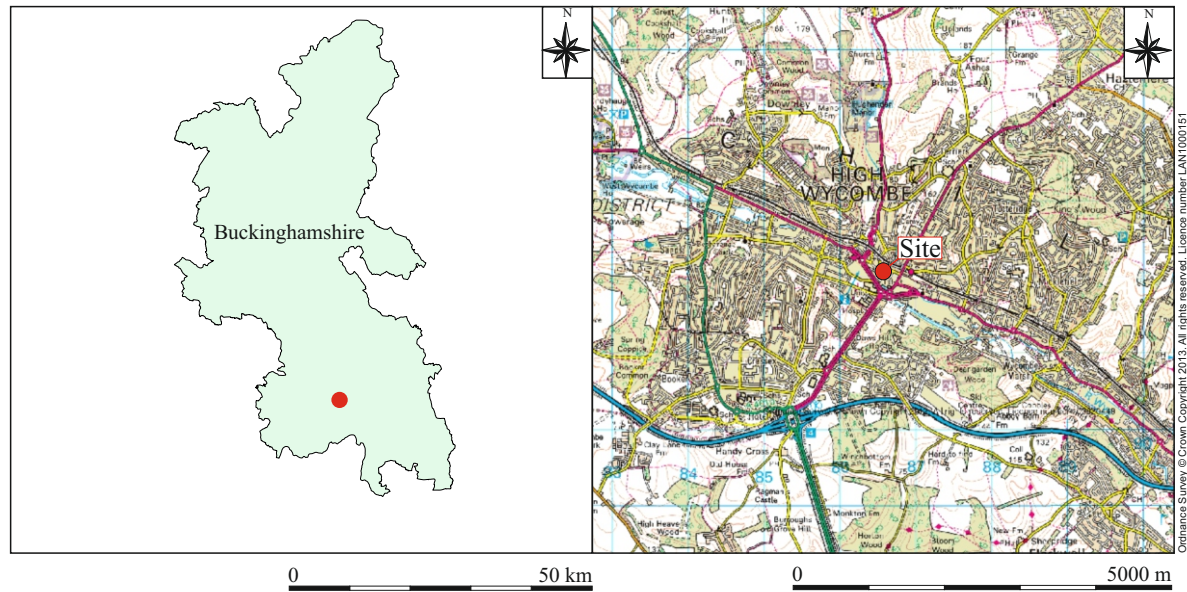


Figure 1. Site location

In 1086 the manor was attached to the fief of Robert D'Oilly and accounted for 10 hides (Morris 1978, 19.2). The estate had 40 villagers, 8 smallholders, 8 slaves, 4 boors and 6 mills. In 1066 Brictric held the manor from Queen Edith.

Maud the daughter of Robert married Miles Crispin with the combined manorial holdings becoming known as the honour of Wallingford (VCH 1925, 112-34). In the reign of King Stephen the manor came to Duke Henry, later Henry II, and thus with the honour of Wallingford into royal hands.

A borough existed at High Wycombe by the reign of Henry II, as indicated by references to burgage plots before 1185 (VCH 1925, 112-34).

The church is claimed to have been founded by Bishop Wulfstan from 1072-92 (VCH 1925, 112-134).

The early indications are that the advowson belonged to the crown and that it was granted by Henry II to Godstow Abbey (VCH 1925, 112-34). The church was appropriated by Godstow Abbey before 1220. The demesne tithes of High Wycombe were granted by Miles Crispin to the abbot of Bec. After the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century the advowson passed to the Raunce family. In 1629 the citizens of London presented to All Saints. In 1660 the advowson came to Matthew Archdale of Temple Wycombe Manor.

The present church is considered to be 12th century in origin and of a cruciform shape with a central tower (VCH 1925, 112-134). The aisles were added at a later date. The porch is considered to have been erected in the 13th century and the interior walls of the arcade contain what remain of original arcades of three bays with trefoil heads, from which ribs spring. The shafts of the arcades are modern, and the external part of the church has been restored.

The church is a grade I listed building (EHBID 45992: SU 86564 93084), and its designated description is as followed:

Originally Norman, rebuilt 1273, heightened and altered C15. The tower, originally over the crossing, was rebuilt at the west end circa 1521-35 under supervision of a certain Roland Messenger; cornice, parapet and pinnacles added circa 1755 by Henry Keene. Restored by G E Street, 1873-5, and by J OIdrid Scott 1889-9. Impressive architectural wall, monument in north chapel to 1st Earl of Shelburne, 1754 by Scheemakers. Other monuments include one to Sophia Countess of Shelburne, 1771 by Agostino Carlini in south chapel, Shrimpton monument by Westmacott, 1784. The church is long with slender pillars to arcades of lofty nave. South porch of circa 1275.

Church of All Saints, Churchyard Gates together with No 2, The Antelope Public House, No 5 and No 6 form a group with Nos 1 to 3 (consec) High Street.

The description largely follows that of the VCH, and is replicated in *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire* where the porch is described as being of the late 13th century (Pevsner and Williamson 1994, 384-6).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation were as follows:

- To record the archaeological remains as observed.

In particular:

- To record (photograph) and date the archaeology and the structure of the foundations.
- To identify any burials.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Heritage Services carried out the work as agreed with the faculty to the See of Oxford. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present to observe the open sondages.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

The natural chalk was not encountered in each of the sondages, internal and external to the porch. The layers identified in each of the sondages were different .

4.1 Phase 1: Medieval

The level from which the wall was built was not seen. The layers seen are thought to be later than the wall construction. The wall 105 was of flint and bonded by mortar, as the wall has been stylistically dated to the 13th century then it is presumed that the flint foundation is of this date.

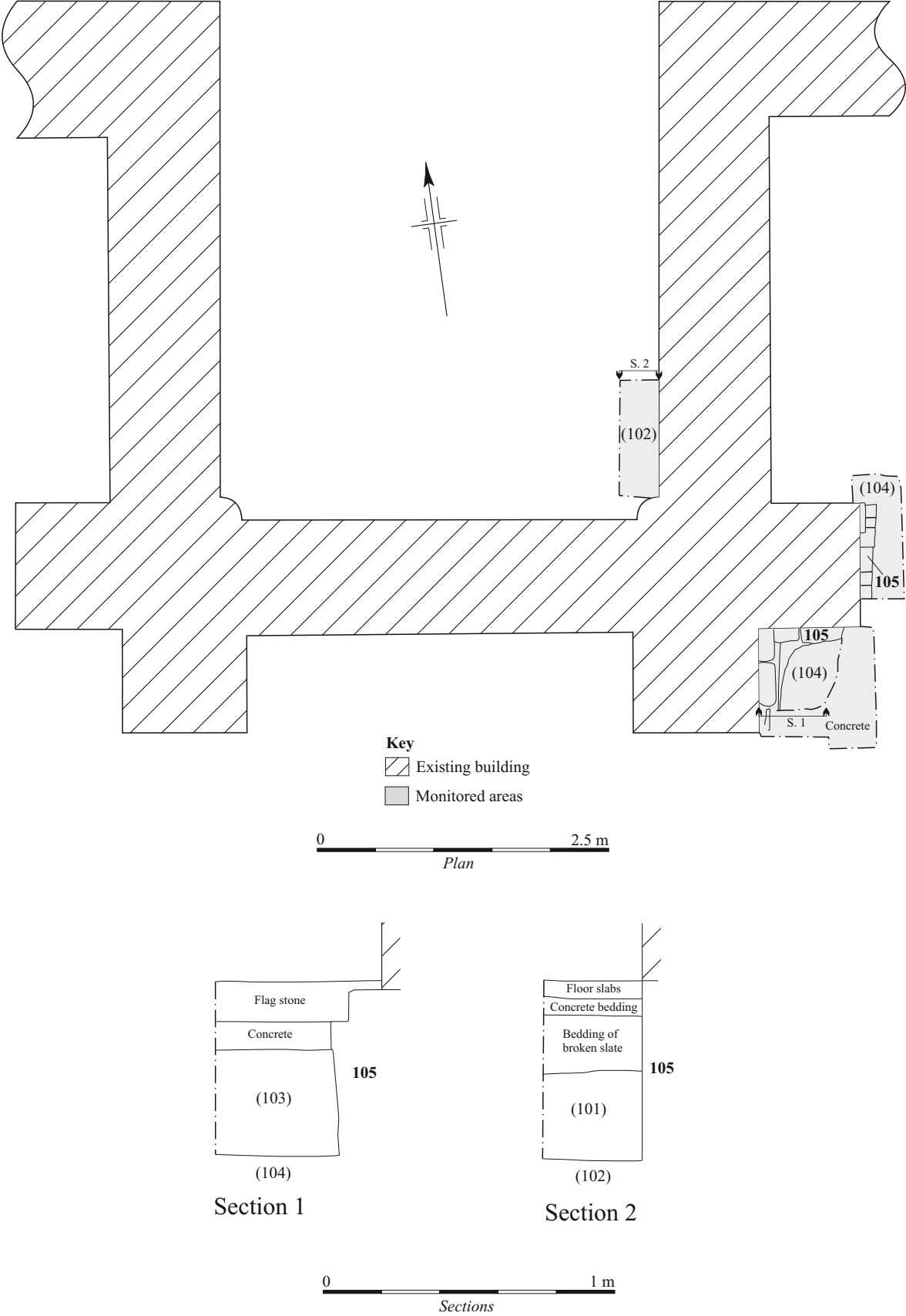


Figure 2. Plan and sections

4.2 Phase 2: Undated deposits

Two deposits could be identified in the sondage internal to the porch. The lowest layer here was deposit (102), a hard red silt sand, which was not bottomed. This butted up to the flint wall. Deposit (102) was covered by layer (101) a compact yellow silt clay with flint and bone.

Externally the lowest layer was deposit (104) that butted up to the flint wall 105. Layer (104) was a compact brown clay. This was sealed by layer (103) a compact silt sand, which stopped at the base of the bricks inserted into the refurbished wall.

It is difficult from the size of the sondage to ascertain where the foundation cut for the wall was. That different layers were evident either side of the wall implies that the deposits were all probably laid down up against the wall. The alternative to this is that the foundation cut truncated layer (103) outside the porch, and that internally the layers had been lowered at sometime in the past.

4.3 Phase 3: 19th -20th centuries

Internally ashlar cut stones stood above the floor line on this wall, clearly replaced. Externally yellow bricks had been inserted into the wall at ground level, from one of the periods of renovation in 1873-5 or 1889-9.

Internally layer (101) was covered by a layer of broken slate that may have been used in an attempt, unsuccessfully, to stop the water damage. This was covered by a concrete bedding onto which the floor slabs were place.

Externally a concrete layer overlay deposit (103) and butted up to the yellow bricks. This concrete was covered by external flagstones.

5 FINDS

No finds were seen.

6 DISCUSSION

The small keyhole sondages revealed some information on the construction of the church, but little extra information to what was already known. It is known that the depth of 0.5m can be reached in the porch and that the foundations continue down and that the bedrock has not been reached. No dating evidence was found to contradict the suggested 13th century date of the flint foundations. The layers internally were all laid down after the construction of the porch. The layers outside are assumed here to have been deposited against the wall as it is known that graveyard soil levels rise with the interment of more burials.

The wall was evidently repaired at sometime after 1850 as indicated by the yellow bricks and internal paving and external flagstones were bedded on concrete.

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