

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT THE
PARISH CHURCH OF St LAURENCE
MILCOMBE
OXFORDSHIRE**

SP 41048 34592

On behalf of

Acanthus Clews Architects

June 2014

REPORT FOR Acanthus Clews Architects
Acanthus House
57 Hightown Road
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX16 9BE

PREPARED BY Gavin Davis

EDITED BY John Moore

ILLUSTRATION BY Gavin Davis

FIELDWORK 17th & 18th June 2014

REPORT ISSUED 30th June 2014

ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Hill View
Woodperry Road
Beckley
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ

Tel/Fax 01865 358300
Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk

Site Code MCSL 14
JMHS Project No: 3088

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	1
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4 RESULTS	3
5 FINDS	4
6 DISCUSSION	4
7 ARCHIVE	4
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	4
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site location	2

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief during the excavation of drainage trenches and a soakaway in the churchyard at the Parish Church of St Laurence, Milcombe, Oxfordshire. Two pieces of corroded iron and a piece of late post-medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the south side of Main Road, Milcombe, Oxfordshire (SP 41048 34592). The drainage works were on the north and south side of the church. The underlying geology is Whitby Mudstone overlying marlstone rock formations.

1.2 Archaeological Background

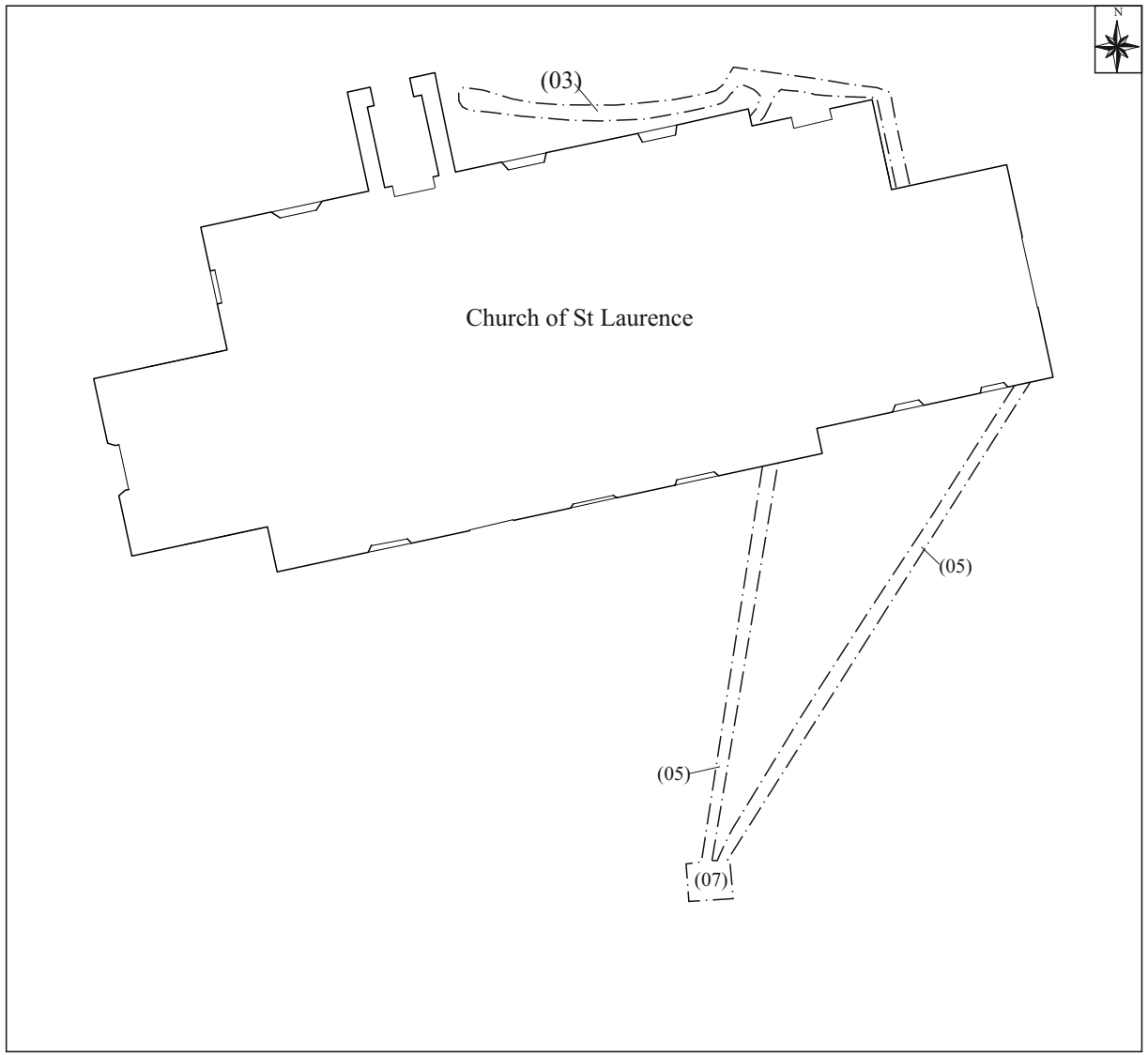
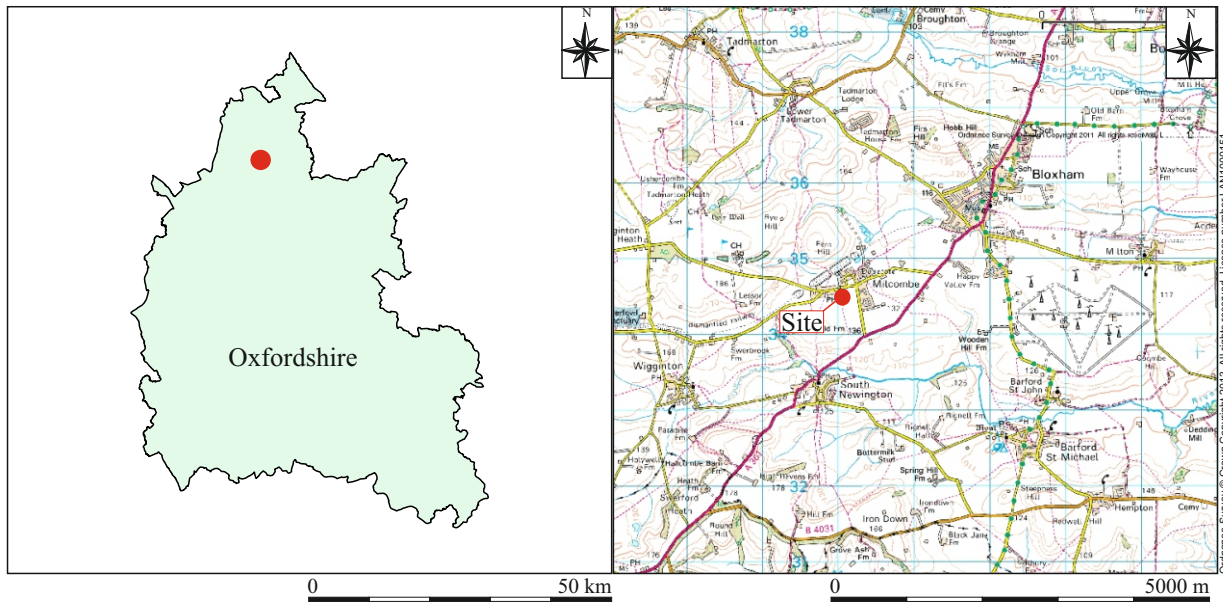
The area of the drainage works is located within the churchyard of St Laurence's Church, Milcombe. A chapel at Milcombe had been in existence since before c. 1200 and Milcombe was a dependent chapelry of Bloxham until it became a separate parish in 1854 (Lobeland & Crossley (eds) 1969).

The Church of St Laurence, Milcombe appears to have been built in the 13th century (Lobeland & Crossley (eds) 1969). The current layout consists of chancel, vestry, nave, north aisle, which is separated from the nave by an early English arcade, north porch and an embattled western tower which was added in the 14th century. Windows were added to the main body of the church in the 14th and 15th centuries but have since been removed and rebuilt and the nave was re-roofed in the 15th century. The north aisle was rebuilt in the 18th century and other repairs were carried out to the church. By 1859 the church was reported as being very dilapidated and 1860s the main body of the church was largely rebuilt (Lobeland & Crossley (eds) 1969).

In 1708 it was stated that the churchyard was not consecrated for burial and that it was customary for inhabitants of Milcombe to be buried at Bloxham or Wiggington. The church at Milcombe did not acquire its own burial license until the 19th century (Lobeland & Crossley (eds) 1969) and so it is expected that any burials will date from this period or later.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to identify any human remains which the excavations could disturb.



Key
Drainage trenches — — — — —

Figure 1: Site location

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with photographs, 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 (2008).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains.

4 RESULTS

The drainage trenches were positioned so as to avoid disturbing any known burials and were appropriately shallow. The only deep excavation was for the soakaways. The soakaway at the front (north) of the church was located at the entrance to the churchyard underneath the path to the north porch. The area was already disturbed by previous services and was considered to have a low potential for surviving archaeology. The soakaway at the south side of the church was located in an area outside of the area occupied by known burials.

The first drainage trench was excavated from the east side of the north porch along the northern edge of the church towards the east (fig 1). The trench was between 0.25m and 0.3m deep and between 0.3 m and 0.6m wide. The lowest layer identified (03) was a mid yellow brown silty clay loam which was dug through to a depth of around 0.1m. It contained frequent angular limestone ranging in size from c.0.1m by 0.05m by 0.05m to c. 0.25m by 0.15m by 0.1m. There were also some larger stones that were c. 0.3m by 0.3m by 0.15m. Deposited above this was a layer of dark brown loamy silt (02) which was 0.15m deep and contained a piece of pottery which was late post medieval or modern. The highest layer (01) was a layer of gravel that was deposited between the perimeter path and the church.

Towards the rear of the church two more drainage trenches were excavated both connected to a soakaway (fig 1). The drainage trenches were 0.3m deep and 0.35m wide. The soakaway was 1m deep, and 1m by 1.4m wide. The lowest layer identified in the soakaway was a layer of yellow brown natural clay with grey streaks (07). This layer was excavated to a thickness of 0.4m. Deposited above (07) was a mid brown clay loam (08) that was 0.25m thick. Above this layer was a 0.15m thick layer of slightly loamy sandy subsoil with a dominant inclusion of angular limestone (05). Deposited above (05) was a layer of cinders (06). Context (06) was identified in both drainage trenches but only towards the last to 3-6m of the southern part of each trench. Context (06) was 0.12m thick and had been deposited where the churchyard sloped south towards lower ground and to the area where the soakaway was located. The deposit was a mixture of slightly loamy sand with a higher proportion of cinders.

Context (06) was deposited over an area that was 2.8m north to south and greater than 2.8m east to west. The deposit was not present within the area of the soakaway. Above context (06) was context (04) a 0.1 to 0.22m thick layer of friable silty sandy topsoil. Context (04) contained two iron objects but no other finds were present.

The soakaway at north side of the church was dug into previously disturbed ground with pipe work running under the paving to north porch and main entrance of the church. The soakaway did not disturb any archaeology or human remains.

5 FINDS

Two corroded iron objects were recovered from the topsoil (04). One object was a flattish item that was not positively identified. It was 65mm wide tapering to 30mm or less. The item was 135mm in length and had a thickness of c.13mm. There was also a square hole towards the wider end of the object. The other iron object looked like a large bent nail that would have been greater than 152 mm when extended. A single piece of pottery with a red fabric and an orange glaze was recovered from the topsoil (02) and was identified as late post medieval or modern. None of the material was retained.

6 DISCUSSION

A burial licence was only acquired by St Laurence's in the 19th century. Before this time it was customary for inhabitants to be buried at Bloxham or Wiggington. Considering the late foundation for burials at Milcombe it is likely that the extent of the oldest parts of the graveyard are still clearly visible to this day. The only deep excavations were in an area that had already been deeply disturbed by modern drainage under the north pathway entrance to the church, an area that would not have been appropriate for burial, and on the south side of the churchyard in an area clearly outside the extent of current burial. The shallow drainage trenches were routed away from known graves and would only have been deep enough to disturb the uppermost deposits of any grave. No burials were uncovered during the excavations and no disarticulated human bone was recovered from any of the contexts. No archaeological features were uncovered in any of the excavated areas and none of the finds were considered worthy of removal and further examination.

7 ARCHIVE

No archive will be made. The records are stored at the offices of John Moore Heritage Services.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey: Geology of Britain Viewer. Web 27 June 2014
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*

Lobeland, Mary D. and Crossley, Alan (eds) "Parishes: Bloxham." A History of the County of Oxford : Volume 9: Bloxham Hundred (1969): 53-85. British History Online. Web 27 June 2014.
<http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=101914&stquery=>