



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, SANDFORD ON THAMES,

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR: SP 53391 01766

*On behalf of
The Parochial Church Council, St Andrews*

NOVEMBER 2016

REPORT FOR The Parochial Church Council
St Andrew's
Church Road
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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief in the churchyard of St Andrew's Church, Church Road, Sandford upon Thames, Oxfordshire. The work was carried out during the excavation of a cable trench for a new ground-source heating system. The excavations produced a small number of disarticulated human bone fragments and some animal bone from the topsoil. No other finds or features were identified. A buried soil horizon near to the tower which contained frequent inclusions of limestone chipping may relate to the construction of the church tower in the 19th century. Deposits of made up ground in the eastern foundation trench may derive from the construction of the adjacent village hall and it is possible that earthworks relating to deserted medieval village may have been buried by these deposits.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site lies in the village of Sandford on Thames to the south of Oxford and to the east of the Thames. The development site is located in the churchyard to the north of St Andrew's Church, Church Road (NGR SP 53391 01766). The site is located on the boundary of a group of geologies including the Littlemore member (Marl & Limestone), the Ampthill Clay Formation (mudstones with bands of limestone nodules) and Kimmeridge Clay formation (grey mudstones with beds of silt and sand) (OA 2016).

1.2 Planning Background

A development was proposed at the site to install a new ground-source heating system with three deep boreholes, 100m deep, adjacent to the recreation ground and away from the church. The boreholes were to be connected to the church by a cable trench which would extend around the northern side of the church to a new free standing wooden cabinet on the north side of the tower.

A planning application was made for the new wooden cabinet and both the county archaeological authorities and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) Archaeological Advisor were consulted on potential archaeological issues.

The planning archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council advised that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out during any groundworks at the site. The watching brief was not to include observance of the excavation of the boreholes as it was considered that the small diameter of these made observance unnecessary.

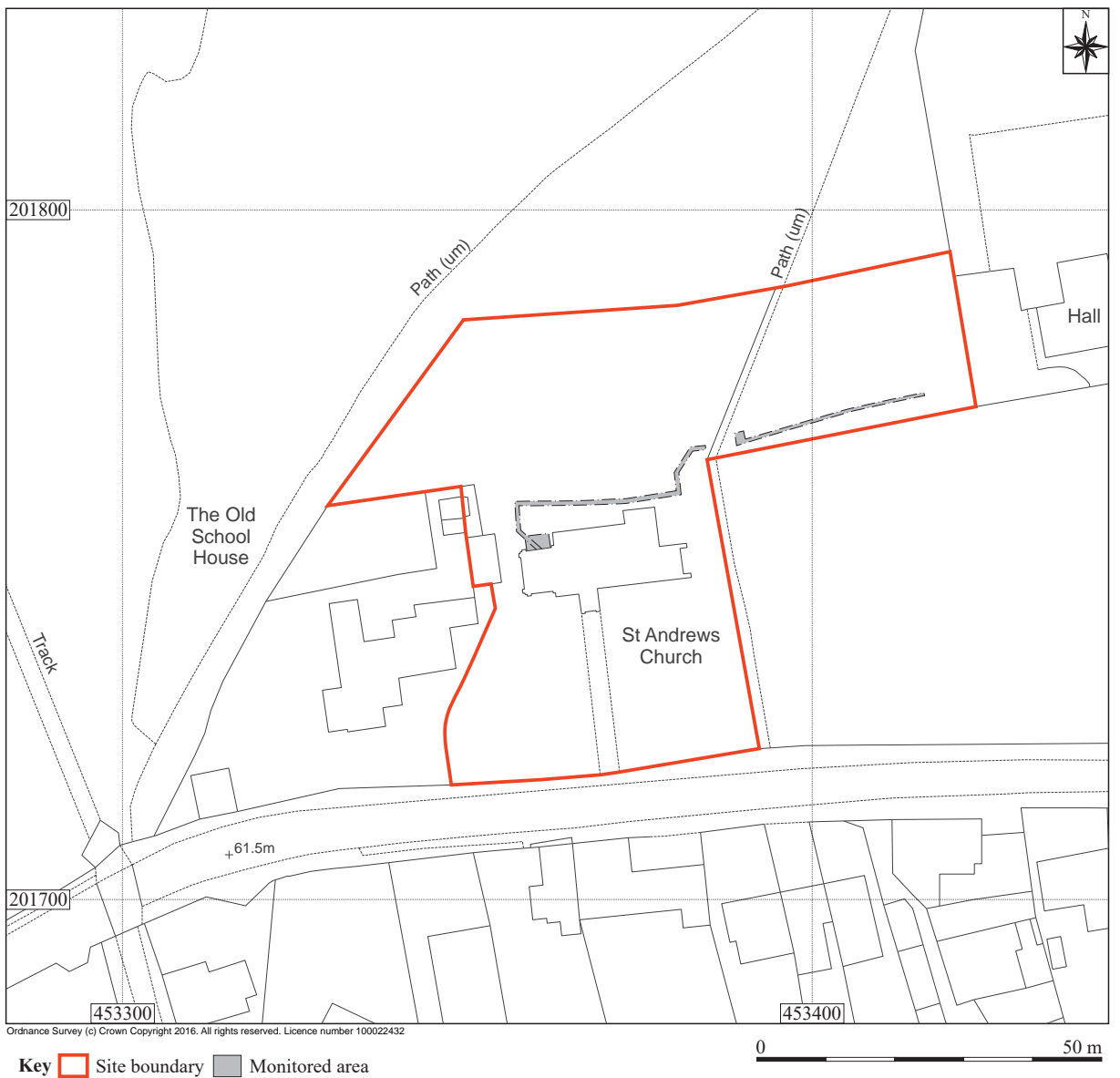
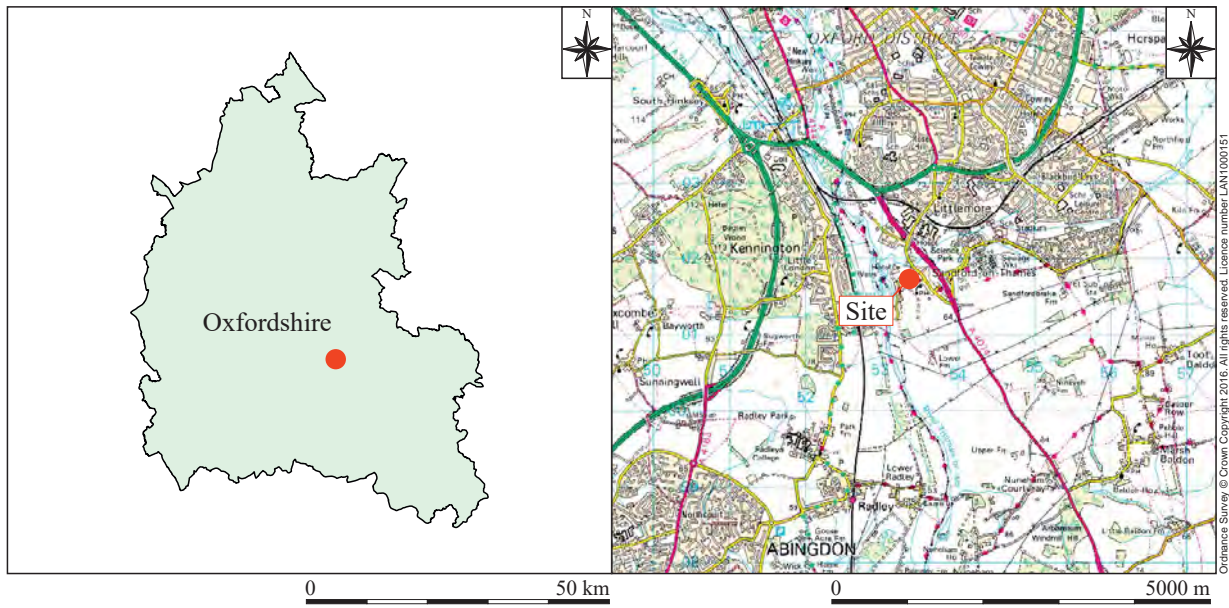
1.3 Archaeological Background

Large quantities of imitation Samian ware are known to have been made at Sandford, dating from the 3rd and 4th centuries and the settlement of Sandford is first referred to in a charter of 811 (OA 2016).

The original church is dated to 11th century although there is little survival of the Early Norman building. The east and south walls of the chancel and nave are original, and also a Norman chancel window with a roll label and jamb shafts and cushion capitals. The north wall was rebuilt in 1865 and there were other major Victorian alterations (Sherwood & Pevsner 1974, p.749).

The location of the site in the grounds of a medieval church has the potential for unmarked medieval and post medieval graves.

Deposits relating to the deserted medieval village may be present on the eastern area of the site.



Key Site boundary Monitored area

Figure 1: Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The general aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To determine the location extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the site
- To assess vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains
- To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence
- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of any proposed development to be assessed

The site specific aims include:

- The identification of articulated and disarticulated human remains and the appropriate recovery, recording and reburial in line with the conditions laid down in the faculty for the works.
- The identification of archaeology relating to the history of the church.
- To identify and record any archaeological features or deposits that may relate to the deserted medieval settlement, especially towards the eastern side of the cable trench.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2016).

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present during the excavation of the western excavation of the cable trench in the area of the church yard immediately north of the church. The open excavations of the eastern excavations, located north of the recreation ground were observed post excavation.

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.

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, and any disarticulated human bone recovered was reburied below the limit of excavation.

4 RESULTS (figure 1)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts and numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. Numbers in bold indicate structural features.

The area of cable trench located towards the east of the site had been excavated prior to the attendance of the archaeologist but was left open for inspection. The lowest layer was greater than 0.4m thick and was a very light yellow and white sand with clay patches (5). This was identified as a natural geological horizon, and above this was a 0.2m to 0.3m thick mid to dark red brown clay loam (4). This layer was a buried soil horizon and probably an original subsoil layer. Overlying this layer was a 0.35m layer of mid to dark brown sandy loam that was identified as a buried topsoil horizon (3). A 0.3m thick deposit of very light yellow brown sandy clay (2) which was deposited above was identified as a layer of made up ground and above this was a 0.15m layer of sandy silt loam with a high humic content (1), This layer was the present topsoil layer.

In the western area of the excavations the lowest layer was the natural geology (10) The geology here appeared to be darker yellow or orange in places Towards the far west this layer was more sandy and gravelly with less clay compared to horizon (5). It was not, however, uniform across the western area and there was no clear horizon between (10 and (5). Deposited above this was a 0.3m thick layer of mid to dark brown, fine sandy loam (9). This deposit was very diffuse and was only identified from approximately 8.5m from the west end of the cable trench. The layer was identified as a buried soil horizon and deposited above this, and mostly towards the western end of the cable trench near the area of the tower, was 0.3m to 0.4m thick deposit of mid grey brown sandy silt loam (8). The layer contained moderate to frequent inclusions of small to medium angular limestone fragments which became more frequent towards the area of the tower. Above context (8) was a mid grey brown sandy loam topsoil (7) which was between 0.2m and 0.4m thick. This deposit contained a few small fragments of human and animal bone. The uppermost layer was a 0.1m to 0.2m thick layer of sandy silt loam (6).

5 FINDS

A small amount of animal bone was recovered but was not retained.

The small amount of disarticulated human bone was recovered from the excavations and was reburied below the limit of the excavation.

6 DISCUSSION

A very small amount of disarticulated human bone fragments were recovered from the spoil heaps and returned to the ground. A small amount of animal bone was also recovered but was not removed from the site.

No archaeological features were identified but it is probable that the frequency of limestone chippings in deposit (8) are related to masonry work on the site. The frequency seemed especially concentrated towards the tower and it is likely that they were deposited across the original soil horizon during the construction of the tower in the 19th century.

In the east of the site below the current topsoil was a buried layer of made up ground (2). This layer contained no visible organic material and could be identified as a layer of re-deposited material from the natural geological horizon. This made up ground is likely to date from the construction of the adjacent village hall, which could mean that the earthworks of the deserted medieval village, that formally occupied the site but are not visible on LIDAR images may have been buried rather than removed (Oram 2016, pers.comm 14th Nov). There was nothing in the section of the trench that could be identified as earthworks. It is, however, possible that such a narrow trench may have missed any major earthworks or there may have been some levelling and so the potential for survival of the earthworks still remains (Oram 2016, pers.comm, 15th Nov).

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