St Mary’s Church
Lower Heyford
Oxfordshire

Archaeological
Watching Brief Report

Oxford Archaeology
October 2005

Client: Montgomery Architects

Issue No: 1
OA Job No: 2932
NGR: SP 485 248
Client Name: Montgomery Architects

Document Title: St Mary's Church, Lower Heyford, Oxfordshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SP 485 248

OA Job Number: 2932
Site Code: LHSMC 05
Invoice Code: LHSMCWB
Receiving Museum: TBC

Prepared by: Mike Sims
Position: SWD Project Supervisor
Date: 6th October 2005

Checked by: Dan Dodds
Position: Head of Small Works
Date: 10th October 2005

Approved by: Nick Shepherd
Position: Head of Fieldwork
Date: 12th October 2005

Document File Location: \Projects\Oxfordshire\OX\Cherwell CH6070 St Mary's Church, Lower Heyford\REP.doc

Graphics File Location: Server<og>\ompubs 1 1 thru O*LHSMCW*B*St Marys Church, Lower Heyford, Oxfordshire*eas*11.10.05

Illustrated by: Elin

Disclaimer:
This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person(s) using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person(s) by whom it was commissioned.

Oxford Archaeology
© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2005

House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: (0044) 01865 263800
t: (0044) 01865 793496
c: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627
St Mary’s Church,
Lower Heyford, Oxfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary ............................................................................................................. 1
1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
  1.1 Scope of work .................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Location, geology and topography .............................................................. 1
  1.3 Archaeological and historical background .................................................. 1
2 Project Aims and Methodology ....................................................................... 2
  2.1 Aims .............................................................................................................. 2
  2.2 Methodology ................................................................................................. 2
3 Results ............................................................................................................... 2
  3.1 Description of deposits ............................................................................... 2
  3.2 Finds ............................................................................................................. 3
  3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains .................................................................... 3
4 Discussion and Conclusions .......................................................................... 3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory ................................................. 4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References ......................................................... 4
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details ................................................................. 4

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1 Site location
Fig. 2 Plan showing area of watching brief and section 1
SUMMARY

On October 6th 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Mary’s Church, Lower Heyford, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 485 248). The work was commissioned by Montgomery Architects in advance of the excavation of a pipe duct within the church. The watching brief revealed deposits of construction debris associated with the 1848 and 1867 renovations of the church but no earlier deposits.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On October 6th 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Mary’s Church, Lower Heyford, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 485 248). The work was commissioned by Montgomery Architects in respect of the proposed excavation of a pipe duct within the church.

1.1.2 A project design was agreed with Julian Munby, the Archaeological Consultant for the Diocesan Archaeological Committee (DAC), on behalf of the Church Commissioners.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The church is sited on the northern edge of the village of Lower Heyford within the valley of the River Cherwell. The churchyard runs up to the southern bank of the Oxford Canal (Fig. 1). The church occupies an area of approximately 0.4 hectares and lies at approximately 68 m above OD. The underlying geology is alluvium overlying Terrace deposits (British Geological Survey Sheet 218).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the watching brief has been prepared from the official history of the church and an abridged version is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The first church on the site was consecrated by the Anglo-Saxon Bishop Wulfin of Dorchester (1053 - 1067), probably about the time of the Norman Conquest. By 1338, the chancel was reported to be in disrepair leading to the church being almost completely rebuilt in the 14th century, probably before 1350.

1.3.3 By the 15th century the church was again being remodelled, with the aisle walls being raised and a clerestorey added in the perpendicular style. The tower, porch, the rood screen and the stair-turret also date to this period.

1.3.4 In 1533 Corpus Christi College bought the village, acquiring the “living” allowing the college to choose and support the Rectors.
1.3.5 In 1739 the floor was described as "paving, uneven and broken", while the churchwardens were reprimanded for allowing the church to fall into a general state of disrepair. The porch was described as in danger of falling down, the whole building overrun with ivy and even the Bible "imperfect and out of binding".

1.3.6 By the 19th century the church was again perceived as being in need of renovation and work was carried out in 1848 by H.J. Underwood, and in 1867 by C. Buckeridge. These works included the installation of the current stone slab and tile flooring.

1.3.7 In February 1941 a central heating boiler house was excavated on the north side of the church. During this work a coin from the period of Constantine the Great (307AD to 337AD) was recovered.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

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

2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that might be disturbed or destroyed during the development.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The work was completed under archaeological supervision and comprised the lifting of the existing stone slab floor and the excavation of a 0.15 m wide by 0.2 m deep trench across the northern doorway.

2.2.2 The excavations were planned at a scale of 1:50 and a sample section was drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 2). The excavations were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The base of the trench cut 0.1 m deep into the top of a layer of friable dark yellow-brown sandy silt (4). This produced small stone fragments, fragments of white wall plaster and inclusions of a pinkish lime mortar. Overlying this was a 0.16 m thick layer of friable, pale yellow-brown sandy silt (3). This context also contained small stone fragments and fragments of white wall plaster. This was sealed by a 0.08 m thick layer of grey lime mortar (2), which formed the bed for the 19th century stone slab floor (1) (Fig. 2, section 1).
3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Undiagnostic fragments of red brick were observed in both layers (3) and (4), these were evaluated on site but not retained. No other dating evidence was recovered.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for Palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

4.1.1 The depth of the excavation was such that only construction levels relating to the 19th century renovation of the church were encountered, and that no evidence for earlier deposits or structures was observed.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1  ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Depth/Height</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Finds</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Surface</td>
<td>0.08 m</td>
<td>1.16 m</td>
<td>Stone slab floor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>C19th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>0.025 m</td>
<td>1.16 m</td>
<td>Lime mortar bed for</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>C19th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>surface 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>0.16 m</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Construction level</td>
<td>Wall plaster, stone, brick</td>
<td>C19th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>&gt; 0.1 m</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Construction level</td>
<td>Wall plaster, lime mortar, stone, brick</td>
<td>C19th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 2  BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

R. Griffiths, R Hepworth and L. Fray, 2001  *St. Mary, Lower Heyford: A Brief History*

IFA, 2001  *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*


APPENDIX 3  SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St. Mary’s Church, Lower Heyford, Oxfordshire
Site code: LHSMC 05
Grid reference: SP 485 248
Type of watching brief: Hand dug service trench
Date and duration of project: October 6th, 2005, 3 hours
Area of site: 4 m²
Summary of results: 19th century construction levels from the 1848 and 1867 renovations
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.
Figure 1: Site location
Figure 2: Plan showing area of watching brief and section 1