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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**St Nicholas' Church, Barrack Hill, Nether Winchendon,  
Buckinghamshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Steven Crabb**

**Site Code: STW17/229**

**(SP 7735 1225)**

**St Nicholas' Church, Barrack Hill, Nether Winchendon,  
Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
For The Parochial Church Council**

by Steven Crabb

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code STW 17/229

**November 2017**

## Summary

**Site name:** St Nicholas' Church, Barrack Hill, Nether Winchendon, Buckinghamshire

**Grid reference:** SP 7735 1225

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 24th October to 10th November 2017

**Project coordinator:** Danielle Milbank

**Site supervisor:** Luis Esteves

**Site code:** STW 17/229

**Summary of results:** Observations were made for the excavation of the trenches for new drainage from the church roof. The trenches dug revealed 0.6m of made ground below the topsoil but did not reach natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were observed but a very worn Roman coin, pierced for use as a pendant or medallion was recovered from the graveyard soil.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 29.11.17
	Steve Preston ✓ 23.11.17

# **St Nicholas' Church, Barrack Hill, Nether Winchendon, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Steven Crabb

**Report 17/299**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Nicholas Church, Barrack Hill, Nether Winchendon, Buckinghamshire (SP 7735 1225) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Rory Duncan of Johnston Cave Associates on behalf of the Parochial Church Council of St Nicholas' Nether Winchendon. A faculty has been obtained from the Diocese of Oxford to repair the roof of St Nicholas' Church. The works include excavation of new drainage trenches and the digging of soakaways in the churchyard. An archaeological watching brief was requested during the groundworks associated with these.

The work was carried out in accordance with a specification approved by the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser, Dr Julian Mumby. The fieldwork was undertaken by Luis Esteves, between 24th October and 10th November 2017 and the site code is STW17/229. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located in the centre of Nether Winchendon to the south-west of Aylesbury on the edge of the river Thame floodplain (Fig. 1). The site is currently under grass and in use as the graveyard for St Nicholas' Church (SP 7735 1225). The Church stands on the west side of Barrack Hill, surrounded by the few houses of the hamlet (Fig. 2), at around 78m above Ordnance Datum, on a south-facing slope overlooking the river. The underlying geology is Princes Risborough Sand and Gravel (BGS 1994).

## **Archaeological background**

The church is a Grade I listed building which is considered to be at the centre of the historic core of the settlement. Nether Winchendon is mentioned in Domesday Book of AD 1086 (Williams and Martin 2002) and has origins in the late Saxon period. The current church has elements from the 13th century but parts of the base of the tower supposedly have Saxon origins. The church was largely rebuilt in the 14th century and further work on the tower was carried out in the 15th century. The chancel was substantially restored in the 19th century

(Pevsner 1960, 212). The west and south-western areas of the graveyard contain graves dating to the 18th century while the graves at the east end of the church are from the 20th century onwards.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks for the new drains and soakaways.

Specific aims were to:

- determine the extent to which human remains survive within the area of the extension.

- observe the presence of graves and vaults.

Archaeological deposits which were threatened by development were to be excavated and recorded. Sufficient time was to be allowed to carry this out within the groundworkers schedules without causing undue delay. The trenches excavated for both the drains and the soakaways were observed for archaeological deposits.

Any human remains of post-medieval or modern date were to be summarily recorded but not otherwise archaeologically excavated. Human remains of Medieval or earlier date were to be archaeologically recorded and excavated as necessary following receipt of the appropriate Consistory Court approval. All bones were to be returned to the church for re-interment.

## **Results**

Approximately 120m of drainage trench in total was excavated and observed for human remains and archaeological features. No archaeological information was revealed in either the main drainage trench or the smaller connecting trenches. A drainage trench along the northern wall had been excavated and filled prior to the commencement of archaeological observation.

### Main Drainage Trench (Fig. 3; Pl. 1)

The main trench was excavated using a small 360<sup>0</sup> tracked excavator, from the north-western corner of the church tower around the western end of the church in a south-easterly direction towards the gate at the south-east the churchyard, a total distance of around 60m. A spur trench was excavated from this to the eastern end of the church terminating at the north-eastern corner of the structure, some 28m long. Both of these were excavated to 0.6m wide and a depth of 0.8m. The stratigraphy revealed was 0.2m of turf and topsoil removed to reveal a dark brown clayey silt grave soil (made ground) deposit extending across the whole site to a thickness of at least 0.6m. It contained fragments of sub rounded chalk pieces and occasional fragments of disarticulated human bone

(Fig. 4). The natural geology was not observed in these trenches. A single broken gravestone base (uninscribed) was noted partly within the north side of the main trench, due south of the porch (Pl. 4) and left *in situ*. It was 0.5m tall, broken at the top roughly at topsoil depth, and set at the base level of the trench (or possibly deeper).

#### Hand dug drainage trenches (Pls 2 and 3)

Smaller connecting trenches (9m–15m long) were excavated by hand to connect the downpipes to the main drain: they were 0.4m wide and 0.4m deep. They extended from both northernmost corners of the porch to the main drain south-east of the porch. A third trench was dug alongside the southern wall of the nave and chancel to connect to the main drainage trench at the eastern end of the church (Fig. 3). They revealed the same stratigraphy as observed in the main trench, of 0.1m of turf and topsoil over dark brown clayey silt grave soil (made ground) deposit with sub angular chalk pieces and fragments of disarticulated human remains, to a thickness of 0.3m (Fig. 4, Pl. 3). The natural geology was not observed in these trenches.

## **Finds**

### *Coin by Pierre-Damien Manisse*

A single coin came from the grave soil (fill 51) of the main trench. Though very worn, some details could still be seen which allow it to be identified as a Roman coin, probably of the 2nd century or beginning of the 3rd. It does not provide a dating for the fill as it was reused at a later period as a medallion (Pl. 5). There is a 3mm wide perforation in it, offset towards the edge and not taking into account the engraved figure or bust. Such re-use was common, particularly in Saxon times when the coin's monetary value was lost but it retained some symbolic associations.

### **Catalogue**

1 - Roman *Aes*

Obverse/ Illegible - Laureate head right.

Reverse/ Illegible - Seated personification to the left, holding a cornucopia in left hand.

Weight: 16.5g    Diameter: 29mm    Axis: 12h

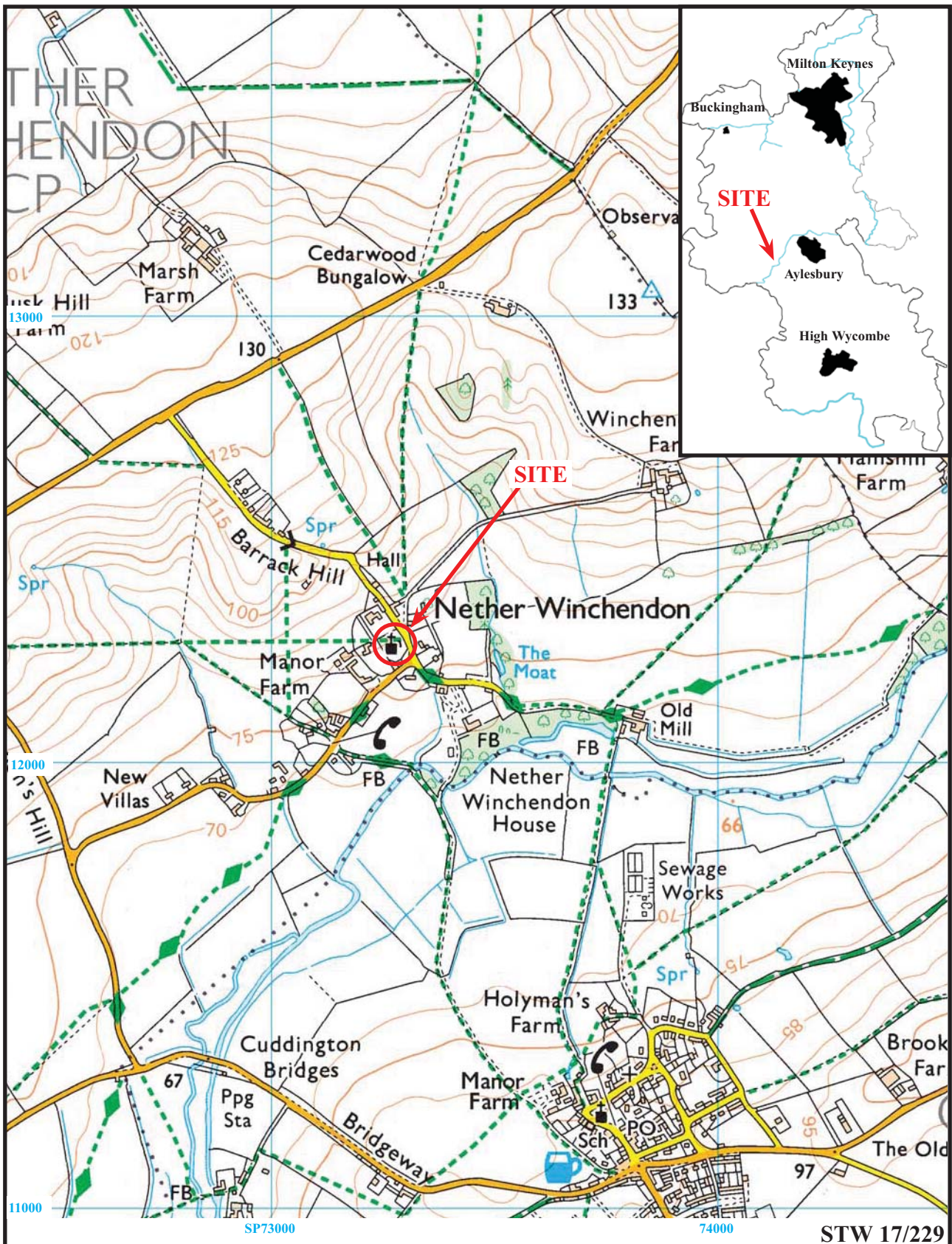
## **Conclusion**

Only one possible Roman coin was recovered as a residual find from the main trench in the grave soil. No other artefacts or deposits of archaeological interest were observed on this site. No graves or vaults were uncovered and no articulated human remains were observed during the excavation of the drainage trenches.

## References

- BGS, 1994, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 237, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Pevsner, N, 1960, *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*, London
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London





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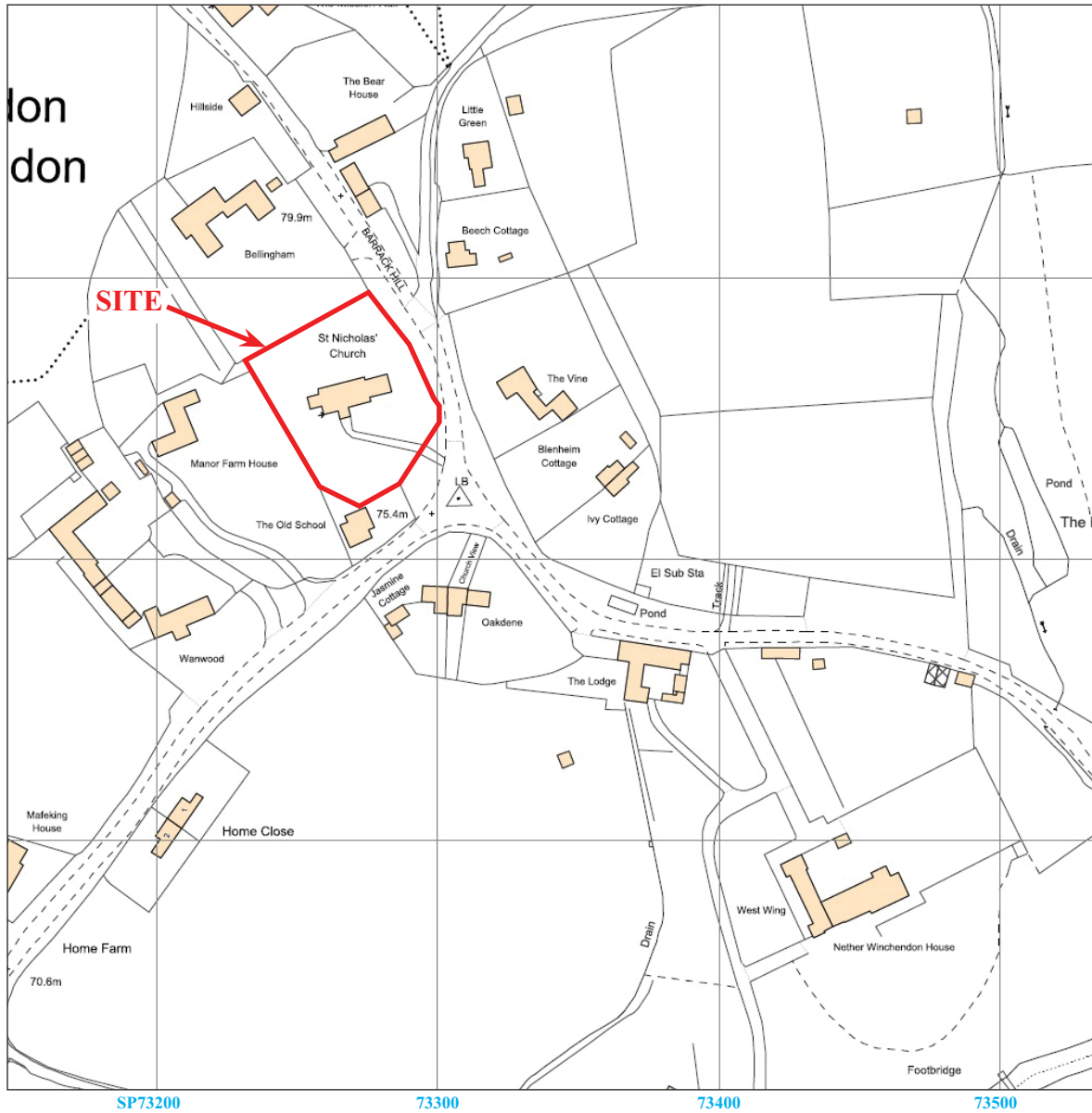
Figure 1. Location of site within Nether Winchendon and Buckinghamshire.

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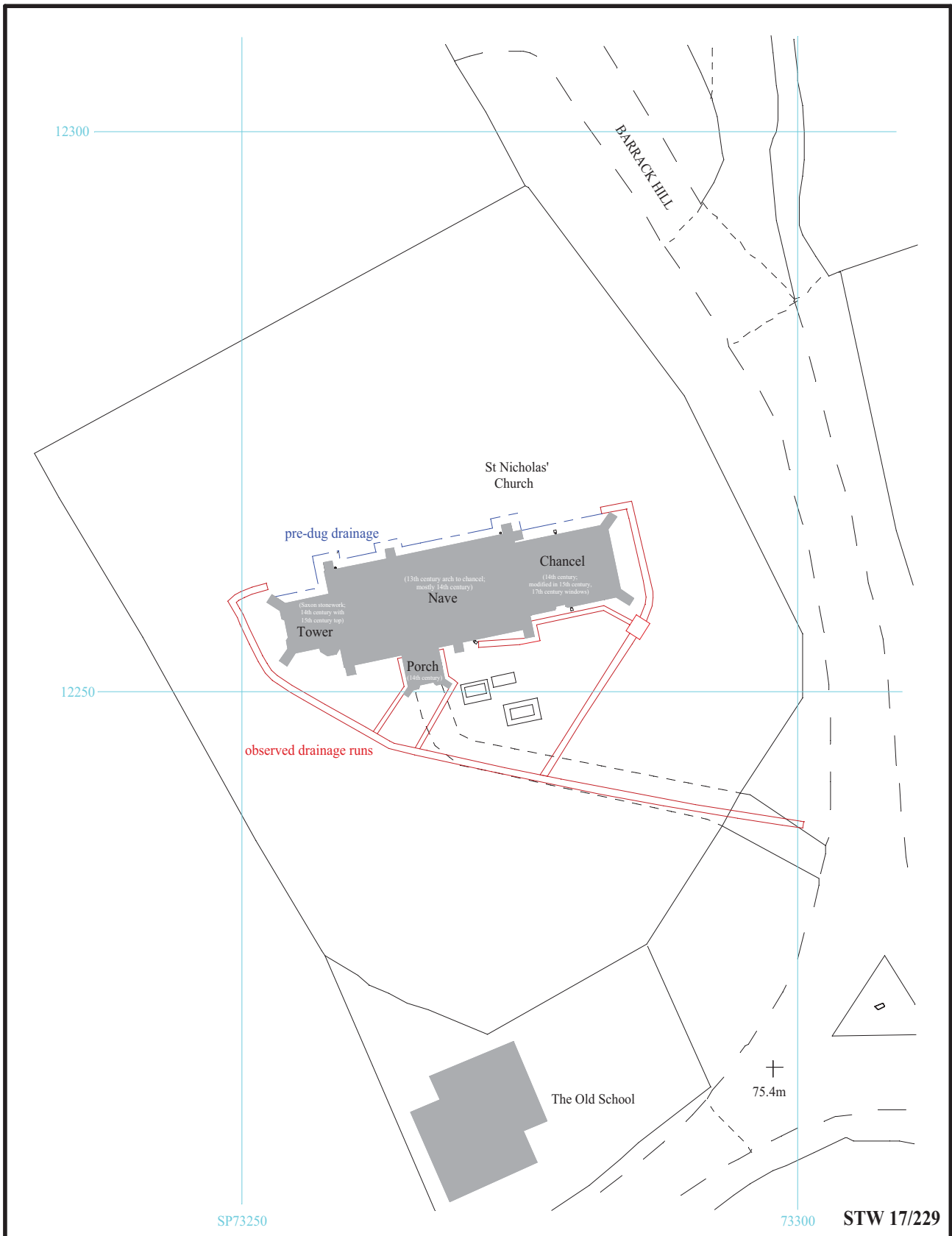
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site within the village.

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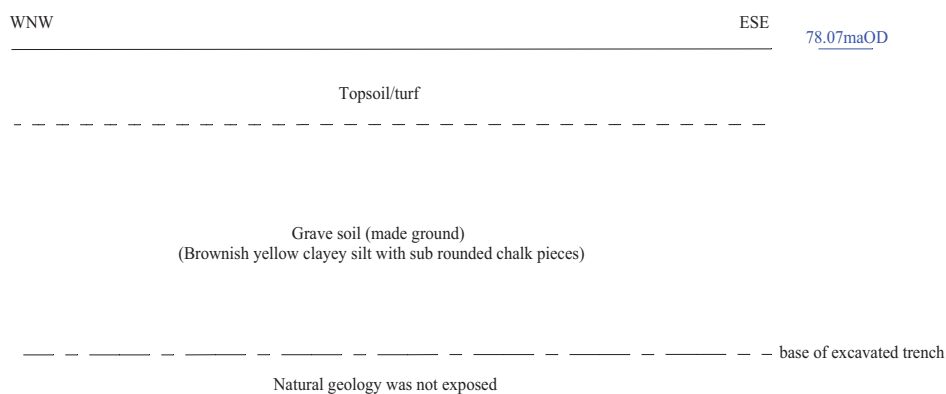
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.

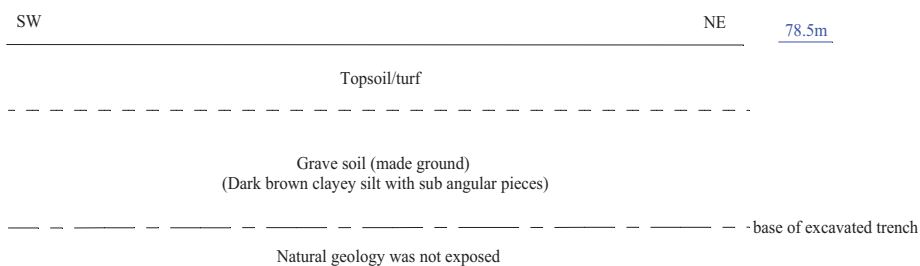


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*Main drainage trench*



*Hand dug drainage trench (shallow)  
Right hand side of porch*



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Figure 4. Representative sections.



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Plate 1. Main pipe trench in west, looking north west.



Plate 2. Drain junction, looking north north east, Scales: 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Hand dug trench against south nave wall and butress, looking north west,  
Scales: horizontal 1m and vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Broken gravestone base, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 3 and 4.**

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Plate 5. Medallion, found in the topsoil, Scales: 50mm

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Plate 5.

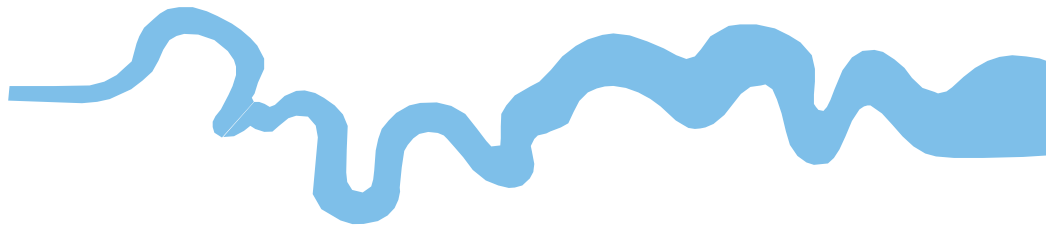
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## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late .....	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early .....	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late .....	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early .....	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper .....	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle .....	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower .....	2,000,000 BC





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