



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

ST MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH,

CHURCH LANE, ASHBURY,

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU26535 84920

JANURARY 2020

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FIELDWORK DATE 21-23rd January 2020

REPORT ISSUED 27th January 2020

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JMHS Project No: 4150
OASIS No: johnmoor1-382407
Site Code: ASCL 19
Archive Location: A copy of the digital archive is maintained by
John Moore Heritage Services (ID 4150)
Digitised copies of the primary records are
available on OASIS



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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Mary the Virgin Church, Church Lane, Ashbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 26535 84915). Excavation of a service trench took place in the north of the churchyard, and due to the shallow nature of the excavation no archaeological features were observed. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site of St Mary the Virgin Church is located off Church Lane, in the south-east of the village of Ashbury (SU 26535 84915). The site lies between 136m and 162m AOD. The underlying geology is Zig Zag chalk formation. No superficial deposits are recorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>)

1.2 Planning Background

The Vale of the White Horse District Council granted planning permission for an underground drainage connection from the church to a mains sewer (P19/V0027/FUL). Due to the potential to disturb archaeological remains conditions were attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of all groundworks taking place on site. This was in accordance with Saved Policy HE11 of the Local Plan 2011, and provisions of the NPPF 2018.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Ashbury is a twelfth century church and the graveyard would have been utilised for burials since its construction and therefore this development was considered very likely to encounter medieval and later burials. The development connects to the west end of the church and so it was possible that it could encounter any surviving remains of any earlier church buildings. (The above is taken from an advice note issued by the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service)

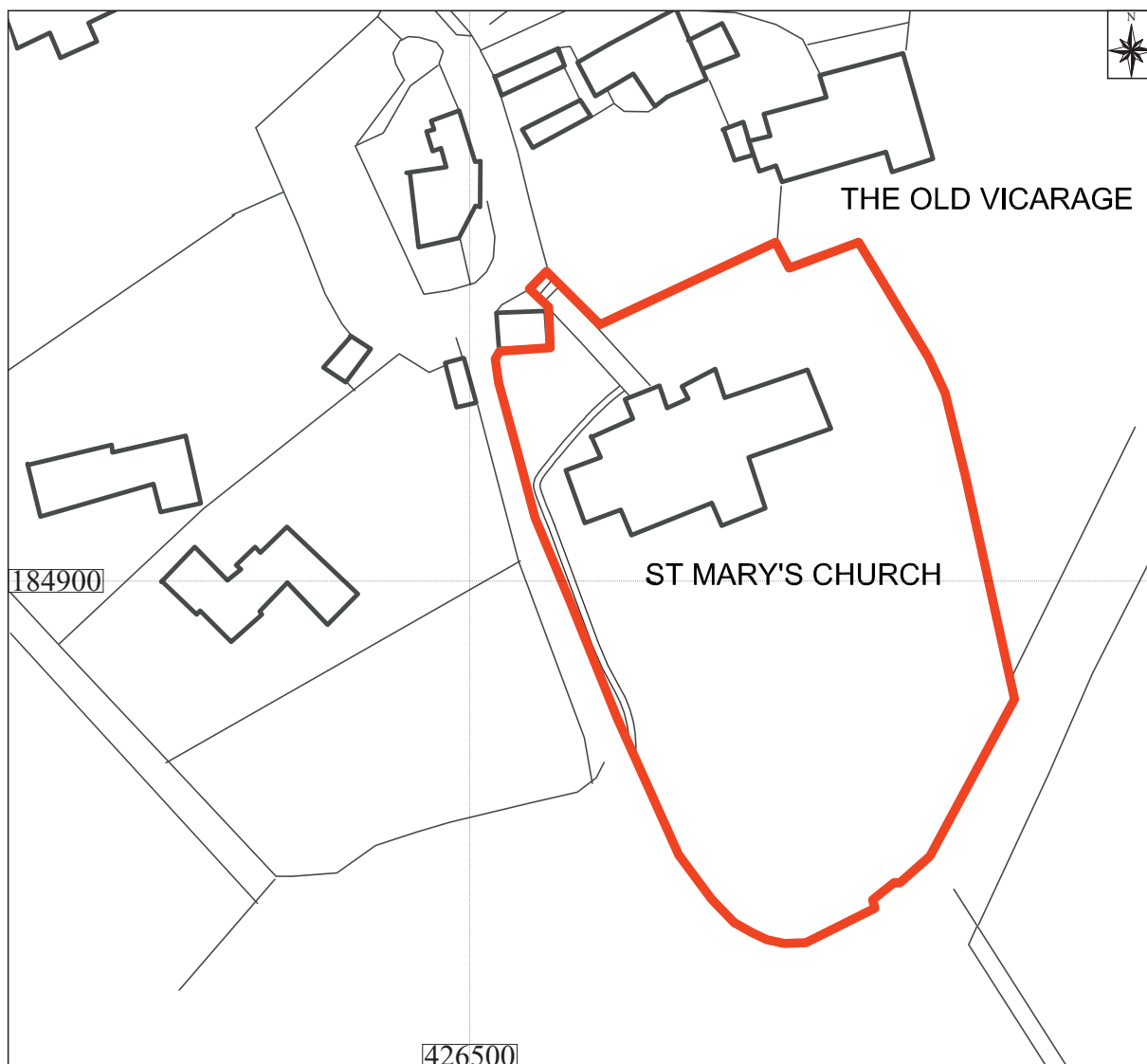
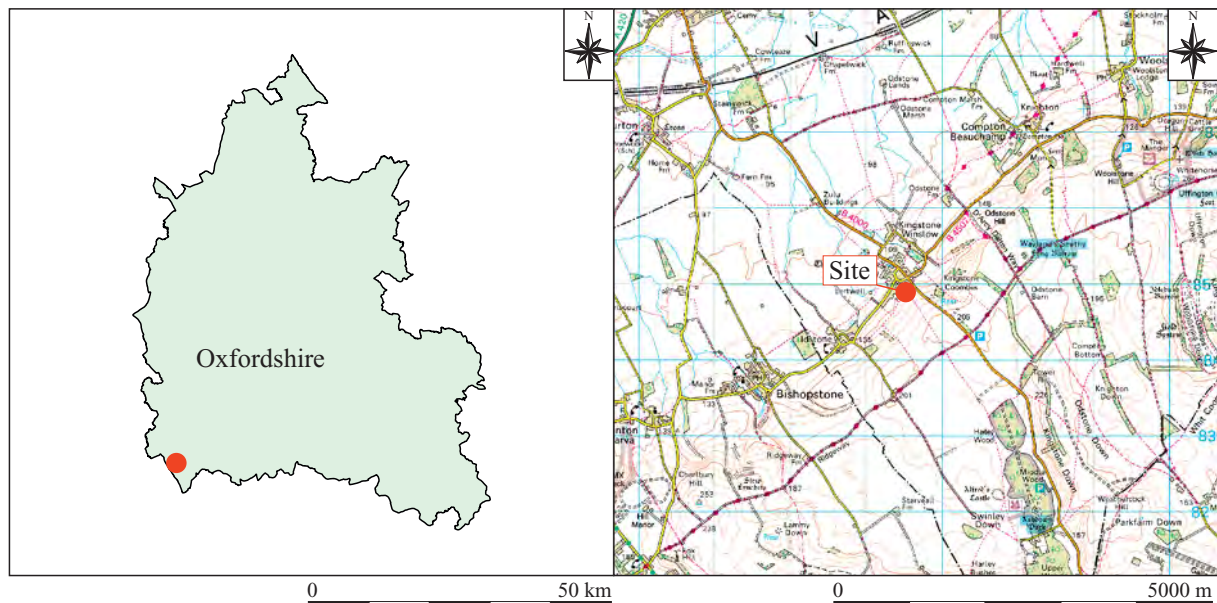
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any remains of an earlier church remains and/or burials.



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Key Site boundary Evaluation trenches
 Archaeological features Study Building

0 50 m
1:1000

Figure 1: Site location

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological advisors to the Vale of the White Horse District Council. The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

Where archaeological horizons were encountered they were cleaned by hand and excavated appropriately. 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.

Machine excavation of the foul pipe trench was monitored for the extent of the north to south portion of the trench. This was undertaken using a 0.3m flat bladed bucket, excavating in 50mm spits. The pipe was then laid, outside of archaeological monitoring, and the trench backfilled. Monitoring resumed for the hand excavation of the trench through the cobbled path and up to the boundary fence.

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for human bone which may have been disturbed.

4 RESULTS (Figures 2 & 3)

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

The lowest deposit encountered was a graveyard soil (02) of chalk clay; a reworked mixture of subsoil and degraded geology from constant excavation within the graveyard (Plate 1). This was present throughout the foul pipe trench, with a maximum thickness of 0.4m to the limit of excavation.

Two paths and a brick gutter were laid directly onto the graveyard soil (02). The path from the road to the main entrance of the church (05) consisted of flint and sarsen cobbles 0.16m in thickness. This path (05) was set also directly into the graveyard soil (02), which can be seen between the cobbles (Plate 2).

A brick gutter (03) ran round the edge of the church. This consisted of grey bricks, and was 50mm, or one brick thick (Plate 3).

An asphalt path (04) branches off path (05) on a NE-SW orientation. This consisted of a 0.2m thick sandy gravel bedding, and a 40mm thick asphalt pathway, with concrete curb edging (Plate 4). The paths and gutter all cut the topsoil (01), which was a loose mid grey brown clay silt, 0.16m in thickness, with light rooting inclusions.

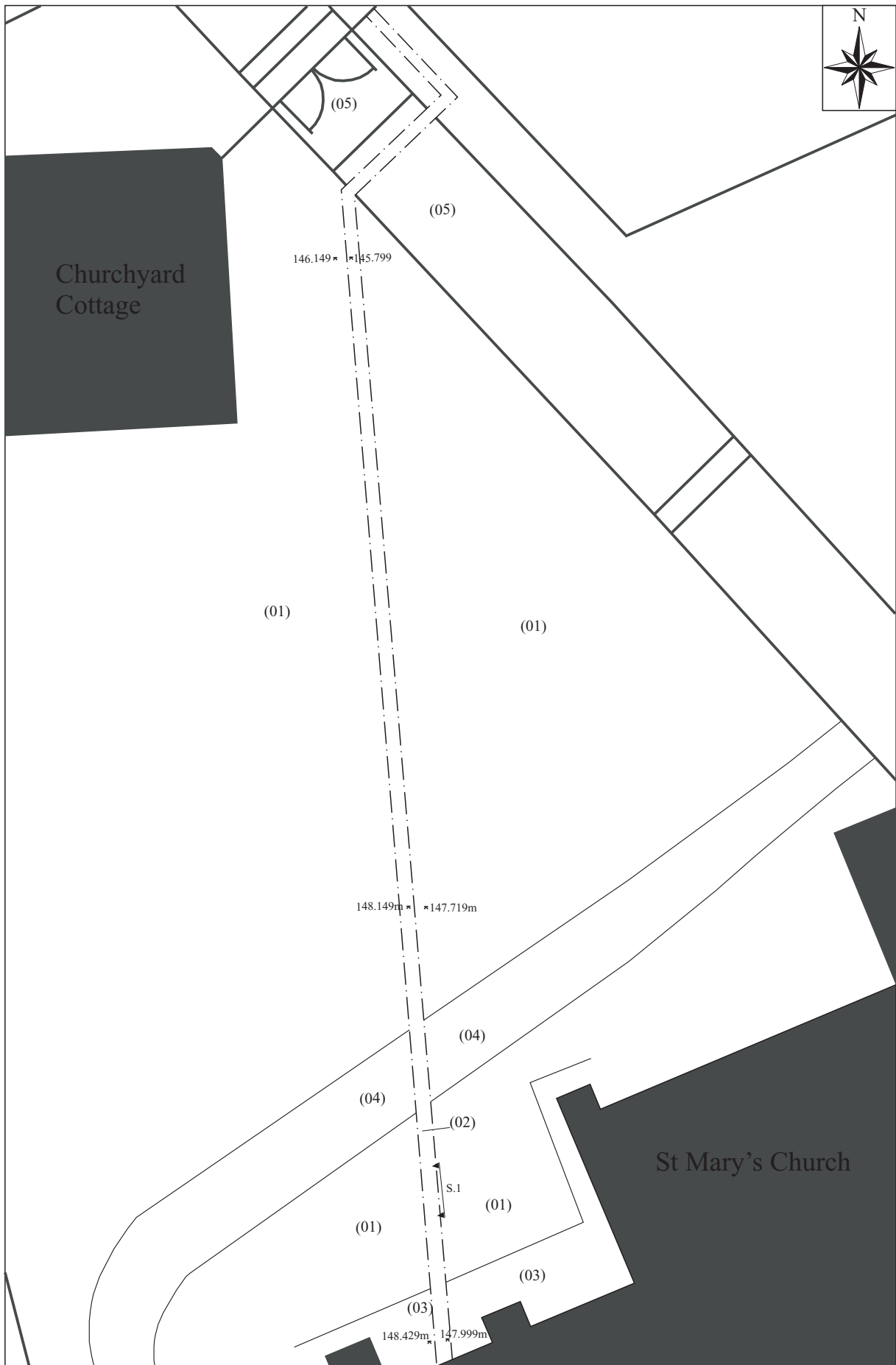


Figure 2: Site Plan

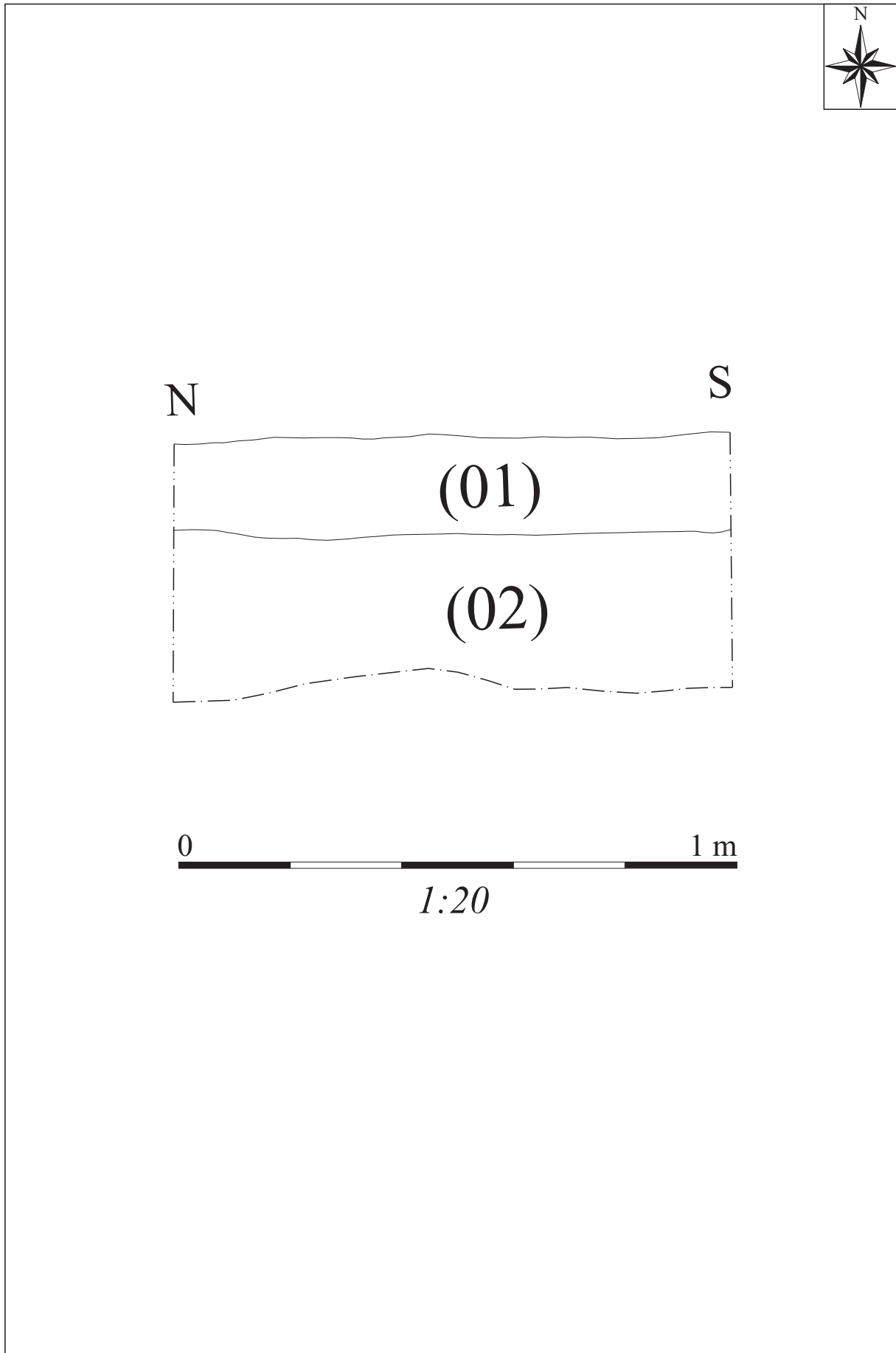


Figure 2: West Facing
Section of Pipe Trench



Plate 1: Section 1 looking east



Plate 2: Path (05) looking southeast



Plate 3: Brick Gutter (03) looking east



Plate 4: Path (04) looking east

Reliability of Results

The monitored work was undertaken in frosty, but dry conditions, with excellent cooperation from site staff, ensuring that the archaeological investigation could be undertaken without impediment.

5 FINDS

As Specified in the Written Scheme of Investigation:

Finds and human remains will be dealt with in accordance with schedule 2 to 4 of the faculty no 2018-020178 issued by the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Oxford which states that:

- 2. If any articulated human remains are discovered, they are not to be removed or otherwise disturbed, all work in the immediate area of the remains must cease forthwith and the applicants must apply to the Court for directions.*
- 3. If any disarticulated human remains are discovered, they must be reverently reburied in the churchyard as soon as reasonably practicable*
- 4. No artefact or ecofact is to be removed from the church or churchyard without further Order of the Court or an order of the Archdeacon under Section 21 of Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991.*

No artefacts were found during the Watching Brief, however a small quantity of disarticulated human bone was recovered. This was left in a safe place at the church, following direction on where would be appropriate from Maggie Simons (Church Warden).

6 DISCUSSION

Other than the small quantity of disarticulated human bone mentioned in section 5 above, there were no other finds or features observed during the groundworks at St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashbury. While it is certain that there are burials present in the area of the churchyard in which the watching brief took place, the shallow depth of the excavations did not disturb any, with only previously disturbed bones being retrieved. These bones having been disturbed by later burials cutting through earlier graves, and the bones being mixed up in the later grave fills.

7 ARCHIVE

A Digital Archive is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services (ID 4150) and will be made available upon request (to admin@jmheritageservices.co.uk). Digitised copies of all the primary records will be made publicly available as appendix to the Final Report submitted to OASIS (ID johnmoor1-382407).

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

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OASIS ID: johnmoor1-382407

Project details

Project name	St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashbury
Short description of the project	John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief on/at St Mary the Virgin Church, Church Lane, Ashbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 26535 84915). Excavation of a service trench took place in the north of the church yard, and due to the shallow nature of the excavation no archaeological features were observed. A small quantity of disarticulated human bone was recovered.
Project dates	Start: 21-01-2020 End: 23-01-2020
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	4150 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	P19/V0027/FUL - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	ASCL 19 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	CHURCH Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	OXFORDSHIRE VALE OF WHITE HORSE ASHBURY St Mary the Virgin Church, Ashbury
Postcode	SN6 8LN
Study area	44 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 26535 84915 51.562012413862 -1.617164344061 51 33 43 N 001 37 01 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0.18m Max: 0.18m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	John Moore Heritage Services
Project brief originator	Vale of White Horse District Council
Project design originator	John Moore
Project director/manager	John Moore
Project supervisor	Steffan Klemenic
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic","other"
Digital Media available	"Text"
Digital Archive notes	digitised versions of the primary records and digital photos are attached to the final report as appendix. All digital files are maintained by JMHS and are publicly available upon request
Paper Archive Exists?	No

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT ST MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH, CHURCH LANE, ASHBURY, OXFORDSHIRE
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Klemenic, S.
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Moore, J.
Other bibliographic details	JMHS report no.4150
Date	2020
Issuer or publisher	John Moore Heritage Services
Place of issue or publication	Wheatley
Entered by	Simona Denis (admin@jmheritageservices.co.uk)
Entered on	27 January 2020

OASIS:

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