

# Urban Archaeology

*...define, record, remove...*



## **Church of St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe, Gloucestershire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

**For Adrian Walters on behalf of  
Western Power Distribution**

**Chiz Harward BA MCIfA**

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

# Church of St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe, Gloucestershire

Client:	Adrian Walters, on behalf of Western Power Distribution
Diocese:	Gloucester
Faculty date:	23rd August 2019
NGR:	SO 85152 08255
Project no:	UA215
Author:	Chiz Harward BA MCIfA
Doc Ref:	UA215_WB_report_v1
Date:	June 14th 2021
Site Code:	PIT20
OASIS ref:	urbanarc1-384167

*Front cover: view of Trench 2 looking towards the church*

## Urban Archaeology

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## Non Technical Summary

On May 11th 2020 and May 26–27th 2021, Urban Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief for Adrian Walters, on behalf of Western Power Distribution, at the church of St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe, Gloucestershire. The work comprised the undergrounding of overhead power cables crossing the churchyard at Pitchcombe; the main cable trench ran along the north-eastern boundary of the churchyard, with a spur extension across the churchyard to the north-east corner of the church.

The works were carried out in a manner that minimised the impact on the graveyard, with no burials disturbed during works. The natural substrate was a sandy clay with limestone inclusions, this was sealed by a subsoil containing daub, medieval and post medieval pottery, post-medieval tile and twelve fragments of human bone. The human remains will be reburied within the churchyard. The results of the watching brief are of local significance only and no further work is recommended on the site archive.

# 1 Introduction and Faculty background

- 1.1 On May 11th 2020 and May 26–27th 2021 Urban Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief for Adrian Walters, on behalf of Western Power Distribution, at the church of St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe, Gloucestershire, GL6 6LP, SO 85152 08255 (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The work comprised the undergrounding of overhead power cables crossing the churchyard at Pitchcombe; in addition it was proposed to lay fibre-optic cables at the same time for potential future use. The main cable trench (Trench 1) ran along the north-eastern boundary of the churchyard, with a spur extension (Trench 2) across the churchyard to the north-east corner of the church (Fig. 2).
- 1.3 A Faculty for the works was granted on 23rd August 2019; advice given by the Diocesan Advisory Committee stated that a watching brief should accompany all new trenching work. A brief for archaeological investigation and recording was prepared by Dr David Thackray, Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA) to Gloucester Diocese, (Thackray 2019) and a *Written Scheme of Investigation, or Method Statement*, was prepared by Chiz Harward, BA MCIfA and approved by the Diocese of Gloucester as a methodology for the archaeological program of works required to discharge the Faculty condition (Harward 2020).
- 1.4 The fieldwork followed the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (CIfA 2014a), and the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager’s Guide (EH 2006).
- 1.5 The Site Code for archaeological work was PIT20.

# 2 Site background

- 2.1 The church of St John the Baptist is Grade 2 Listed (List no 1156385, Appendix 1) and located within its churchyard at the north of the village of Pitchcombe, Gloucestershire. There are several Grade 2 listed monuments within the churchyard (List nos 1091231, 1156395, 1156474, 1302874, 1340409) and the western gate and gateway to the churchyard are listed Grade 2 (List no 1091230). The church lies on the western side of the valley of the Painswick Stream within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Magic 2020). The church lies at approximately 120m OD.
- 2.2 The geology of the site is mapped as Lias Group and Inferior Oolite Group - Limestone, argillaceous rocks and subordinate sandstone. No superficial deposits are recorded (British Geological Survey 2020).

# 3 Archaeological and historical background

- 3.1 A search of the Historic Environment Survey was not required by the brief, a search on Heritage Gateway, Know Your Place, OASIS and of ‘Iron Age and Romano-British monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds’ failed to raise any records of archaeological excavations or artefact findspots within 500m of the church (Heritage Gateway 2020, Know Your Place

- 2020, OASIS 2020, HMSO 1976), however there are a number of potential features recorded from LIDAR and aerial photographs in the vicinity of the church (Know Your Place 2020).
- 3.2 Pitchcombe is not mentioned in the Domesday survey (Open Domesday 2020) and it is first mentioned in the 12th Century when Gilbert Foliot, then Abbott of St. Peter's Monastery in Gloucester, wrote to the Bishop of Salisbury complaining of the criminal activities of one *Walter de Pinhcum*. The placename has had many variations including *Pichelecumb*, *Pinchenecumbe* and *Pychecombe* (Pitchcombe Village History 2020).
  - 3.3 A church was built in 1376 (Pitchcombe Village History 2020) and was entirely rebuilt by a new church designed by William Franklin in 1819, local custom has it that the new church was built around the old church, which was then demolished (Nigel Shaw, *pers. comm*). The church is described in detail in the listing text (Appendix 1) and in Buildings of England where it is described, unfairly, as having a '*rather haggard*' west tower (Verey and Brooks 1999, 560–1). The church was restored in 1869–70 by Medland & Son, rebuilding the chancel and adding a south porch.
  - 3.4 The churchyard contains a number of fine tombs apparently by the Painswick school of masons, several of which are listed (Historic England 2020). A plan and record of memorials in the churchyard dated 1906 shows rows of numbered graves to the north of the church and in the northwest corner of the churchyard, some of which are still marked by gravestones, however earlier graves will also be present across the churchyard (Fig. 3; Little 1906). The Sunday School, now Village Hall, lies in the northeast corner of the churchyard and was built in 1803; it and the churchyard are shown on the 1885 OS 25 inch map (Ordnance Survey 2020).
  - 3.5 There are a number of post-medieval buildings known nearby from (Heritage Gateway 2020); to the northeast of the church, Wragg Castle is a house, built in the early 17th century (Verey and Brooks 1999, 561) and supposed to be on the site of an earlier castle; there are three post-medieval mill sites on nearby ponds and streams (Heritage Gateway 2020). The A4173 road immediately west of the church was a new turnpike built in 1818 to link Stroud and Gloucester (A P Baggs, A R J Jurica and W J Sheils 1976).
  - 3.6 The 1870–2 Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales described Pitchcombe as '*a parish in Stroud district, Gloucester; 2 miles N of Stroud r. station. Post-town, Stroud. Acres, 217. Real property, £770. Pop., 178. Houses, 34. P. House is the seat of J. Little, Esq. Extensive chemical works are partly within the boundary. The living is a rectory, annexed to the rectory of Harescomb, in the diocese of Gloucester and Bristol. The church was rebuilt in 1819. There is an Independent chapel*' (GB Historical GIS, 2020).

## 4 Research aims

- 4.1 The research aims are to minimise disturbance to archaeological remains and to record, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains that will be exposed or destroyed by the proposed development. Attention will be given to sites and remains of all periods (including evidence of past environments).

## 5 Methodology

- 5.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the relevant *Standards and Guidance* produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and followed the methodology set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Harward 2020). The watching brief was carried out in two phases: the machine excavation of a new cable trench (Trench 1) across the churchyard with a spur to the village hall on 11th May 2020, whilst on 26th and 27th May 2021 Trench 2 was hand-dug by the author from the north-eastern corner of the chancel to meet the previous trench opposite the porch to the village hall (Fig 2).
- 5.2 Levels were taken relative to the OS benchmark on the gate of St John the Baptist churchyard (value 121.67m OD, Ordnance Survey 2019).

## 6 Results

- 6.1 This section provides an overview of the watching brief; summaries of the recorded contexts and a Harris matrix are to be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

### Trench 1

- 6.2 Trench 1 was 0.3m wide and between 0.46 and 0.85m deep and was excavated by machine, the trench ran for 24.25m across the northern end of the churchyard (Fig. 3), with a spur leading up to the 19th century village hall.
- 6.3 The natural substrate (3), was a stiff mid orange-brown sandy clay with frequent fragments of limestone; no burials were observed cutting into the natural substrate. Natural substrate was sealed by a compact midgrey-orange sandy silt subsoil (2) from which 12 fragments of human remains were recovered (Fig. 4). Sealing the subsoil was a 0.2m thick turf and topsoil layer (1), with a surface sloping from 123.04m OD at the west end of the trench, to 120.91m OD at the east end of the churchyard.

### Trench 2

- 6.4 Trench 2 ran from the northeast corner of the chancel northeast to join Trench 1 opposite the porch of the village hall (Front cover). The trench was 0.2m wide and was hand dug to a depth of 0.27–0.31m. Due to its shallow depth the natural substrate was not reached within Trench 2, with the subsoil (2) observed across the length of the trench, areas of stone inclusions suggest the presence of graves at a lower level. The subsoil was sealed by topsoil and turf (1) (Fig. 5). Ground level by the chancel was at 122.37m OD and 121.60m OD at the junction with Trench 1.

## 7 Finds

### The pottery

Paul Blinkhorn

- 7.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 9 sherds with a total weight of 217g. It was all post-medieval and was classified using the coding system of the Gloucester City type-series (e.g. Vince 1984). The following fabric types were noted:

**TF52: Oxidized glazed Malvernian Ware**, 14<sup>th</sup> – early 17<sup>th</sup> century. 4 sherds, 53g.

**TF69: Creamware**, AD1740-1850. 1 sherd, 62g.

**TF80: Ashton Keynes-type Earthenware**, 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century. 4 sherds, 102g.

- 7.2 All the pottery occurred in context (2), a subsoil or cemetery soil. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The assemblage appears to be in reasonably good condition.

### The Ceramic Building Material

Paul Blinkhorn

- 7.3 A small assemblage of fired clay building material occurred in context (2). There were four fragments of unglazed Malvernian roof-tile (weight = 282g), possibly all from a single example, and all c 12mm thick. Such tiles generally date to the late 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century (Vince 1977, 275). The same context also produced a small, amorphous piece of burnt daub weighing 2g; it is undateable.

### The human remains

Chiz Harward

- 7.4 Twelve fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered from context (2), a subsoil or cemetery soil. These were returned to the church for reburial following standard Diocesan practice.

## 8 Conclusions and statement of significance

- 8.1 The work at St John the Baptist was limited in archaeological impact by design, with adjustments made to the scheme to limit impact on buried human remains by reducing the depth of the cable trench through the area of burials known from the 1906 graveyard plan (Little, 1906).
- 8.2 Within Trench 1 the natural substrate was overlain by a natural subsoil and topsoil with turf; no burials were observed and the area is likely to lie outside the main area of historic burial (although occasional burials could lie to the north of this trench). In Trench 2, which was dug to a shallower depth than Trench 1, natural ground was not observed and it is likely that the ground has been disturbed by the repeated digging of graves in this area. It is likely that significant numbers of graves lie in the area of the Trench 2 which crosses the area of burials marked on the 1906 graveyard plan (Little, 1906). A small amount of human bone was recovered from the site, this is obviously to be expected in a parish graveyard.
- 8.3 The finding of medieval and post-medieval pottery, tile, and daub is to be expected on such a site and probably represents casual loss and breakage over time within the churchyard. The post-medieval tile could possibly derive from the church building which was rebuilt in 1819 and then restored in 1869–70, and is currently roofed with stone slates.
- 8.4 The watching brief has added to our understanding of the site of St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe, in helping to define the probable northern extent of the area of burial, broadly confirming the 1906 graveyard survey.
- 8.5 The works were carried out in a manner that minimised the impact on the graveyard, with no burials disturbed during works. The small amount of human remains which were recovered will be reburied within the churchyard and the other finds will not be retained as they have no further research potential. The results of the watching brief are of local significance only and no further work is recommended on the site archive.



## 8 Acknowledgements

- 8.1 Urban Archaeology would like to thank Adrian Walters for commissioning the watching brief on behalf of Western Power Distribution and to him and Julian Slark of WPD for information on the scheme, and for allowing Trench 2 to be dug at reduced depth to avoid impact on burials. Nigel Shaw was point of contact with the PCC and is thanked for providing information on the churchyard. We would also like to thank Adam Klups (DAC Secretary) and Dr David Thackray (DAA) for their help and advice. The watching brief was carried out by the author.

## 9 Archive

- 9.1 The site code PIT20 has been allocated to the watching brief.
- 9.2 The archive from the watching brief is currently held by Urban Archaeology at their offices in Stroud. The site archive will comprise all written, drawn and photographic records and subject to the agreement of the legal landowner will be deposited at Stroud Museum in the Park and/or the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) as appropriate.
- 9.3 The archive will be prepared in accordance with Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990), specifically complying with Gloucestershire and OASIS/ADS guidelines. Stroud Museum in the Park archive is currently closed to new depositions and archive will be held at Urban Archaeology offices until it reopens, or until a further avenue for archiving is agreed with the DAA.
- 9.4 A copy of this report and a summary of information from this project will be submitted to the OASIS database of archaeological publications (Appendix 4). A further copy of the report will be submitted to Gloucestershire HER. Shape files of the watching brief trench locations will also be submitted to the HER and OASIS.

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## Project drawings:

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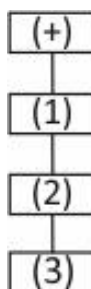
## Appendix 1 Context Register

Context no	Type	Description
1	Deposit	Topsoil and turf
2	Deposit	Subsoil
3	Deposit	Natural clay and limestone substrate

Table 1: Context register

## Appendix 2 Harris matrix

Harris matrix of PIT20



## Appendix 3 Archive contents

### Finds archive

Type	Number	Comments
Pottery	9 sherds	Discarded
CBM	4 fragments	Discarded
Daub	1 fragment	Discarded
Human bone	12 fragments	Reburied

Table 2: Digital archive

### Digital archive

Type	Number	Comments
Digital photographs	12 images	Archived with ADS

Table 3: Digital archive

### Paper archive

Type	Number	Comments
Trench Record Sheet	2	
Site drawings	2	Plans, levels and context descriptions

Table 4: Paper archive

## Appendix 4 OASIS Form

OASIS ID: urbanarc1-384167

Project details	
Project name	St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe
Short description of the project	On May 5th 2020 and May 26-27th 2021 Urban Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief for Adrian Walters, on behalf of Western Power Distribution, at the church of St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe, Gloucestershire. The work comprised the undergrounding of overhead power cables crossing the churchyard at Pitchcombe; the main cable trench ran along the north-eastern boundary of the churchyard, with a spur extension across the churchyard to the north-east corner of the church. A second trench ran from the northeast corner of the chancel to meet the first trench opposite the Village Hall. The works were carried out in a manner that minimised the impact on the graveyard, with no burials disturbed during works. Natural substrate was a sandy clay with limestone inclusions, this was sealed by subsoil containing daub, medieval and post medieval pottery, post-medieval tile and twelve fragments of human bone. The human remains will be reburied within the churchyard. The results of the watching brief are of local significance only and no further work is recommended on the site archive.
Project dates	Start: 11-05-2020 End: 27-05-2021
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	UA215 - Contracting Unit No. PIT20 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building; Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GLOUCESTERSHIRE STROUD PITCHCOMBE St John the Baptist church
Postcode	GL6 6LP
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	SO 8515 0825 51.772273970261 -2.215243340633 51 46 20 N 002 12 54 W Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Urban Archaeology
Project brief originator	Diocesan Archaeologist
Project design originator	Urban Archaeology
Project director/manager	Chiz Harward
Project supervisor	Chiz Harward
Type of sponsor/funding body	Electricity Authority/Company
Name of sponsor/funding body	Western Power Distribution
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Urban Archaeology
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Drawing","Unpublished Text"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Church of St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe, Gloucestershire. An Archaeological Watching Brief Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Harward, C

Date	2021
Issuer or publisher	Urban Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Stroud
Description	Illustrated typescript report
Entered by	Chiz Harward (chiz@urban-archaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	23 May 2021

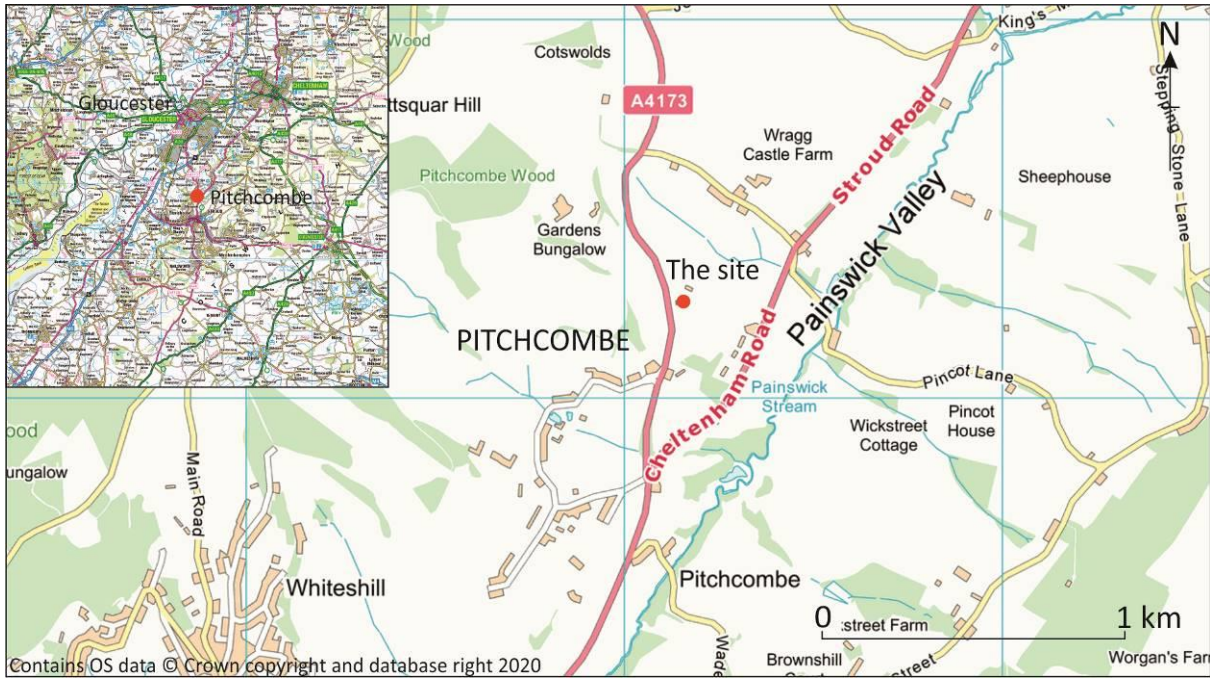


Fig. 1 Site location

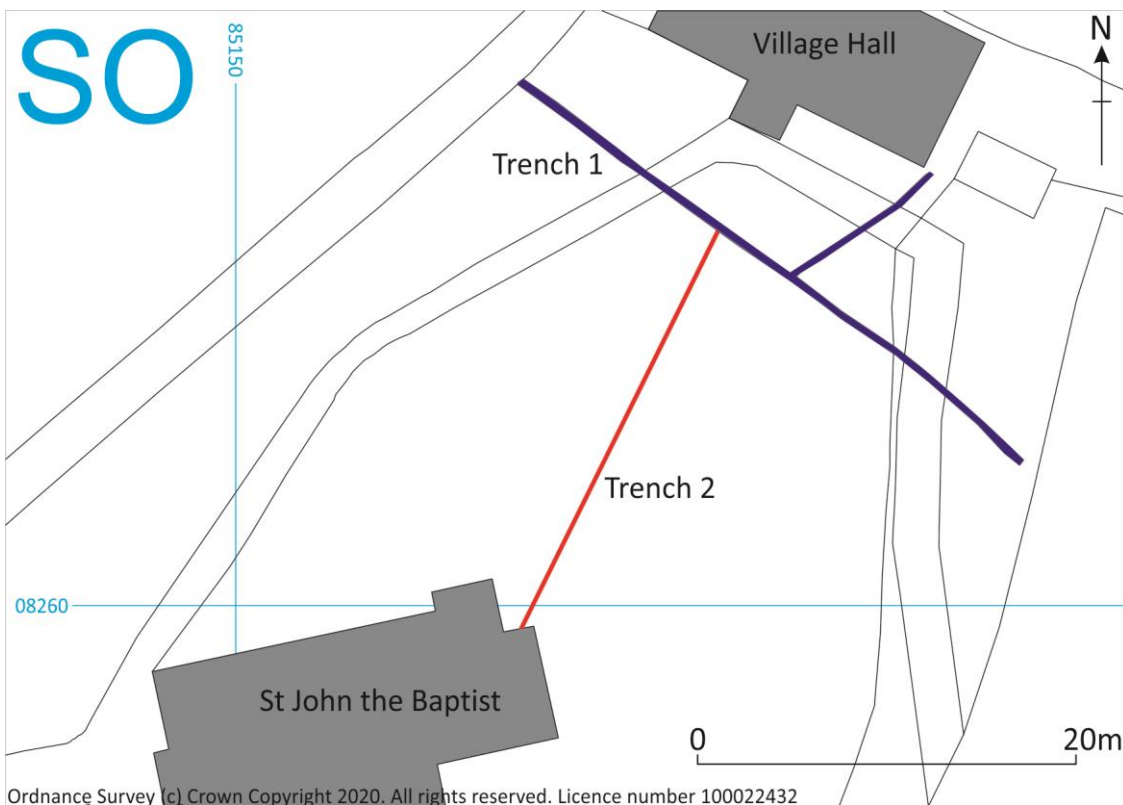


Fig. 2 Trench location





Fig. 3 View of Trench 1 looking northwest; scale 1m



Fig. 4 View of Trench 1 looking north showing topsoil and subsoil; scale 1m



Fig. 5 View of Trench 2 looking northwest showing topsoil and subsoil; scale 0.5m