

# Urban Archaeology

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



## **Church of St Lawrence, Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

**For Nigel Jones on behalf of  
Lechlade PCC**

**Chiz Harward BA MCifA**

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## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

# Church of St Lawrence, Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire

Client:	Nigel Jones, on behalf of Lechlade PCC
Diocese:	Gloucester
Faculty date:	n/a
NGR:	SU 21494 99503
Project no:	UA201
Author:	Chiz Harward BA MCIfA
Doc Ref:	UA201_WB_v2
Date:	February 29th 2020
Site Code:	LEC20
OASIS ref:	urbanarc1-384223

*Front cover: view looking north showing ledger of Robert Hitchman, with Test pits 3 and 4 and showing pier overlying the ledger; scale 0.15m*

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## Non Technical Summary

On 25th February 2020 Urban Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief for Nigel Jones, on behalf of Lechlade PCC, at the church of St Lawrence, Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire. The watching brief covered excavation of six test pits adjacent to the three ledgers set in the floor of the church aisles.

A similar sequence was recorded in all the test pits: the foundations of the medieval arcade piers were recorded, these were sealed by a sandy gravel levelling layer dating from the Victorian restoration of 1882. The ledgers were placed on this sandy gravel and a lean-mix limecrete screed was laid around the slabs, with a tile floor forming the present floor surface.

# 1 Introduction and Faculty background

- 1.1 On 25th February 2020 Urban Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief for Nigel Jones, on behalf of Lechlade PCC, at the church of St Lawrence, Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire, GL7 3AB, SU 21494 99503 (Fig. 1). As part of planning for a potential reordering of the church six trial pits were excavated adjacent to the three ledger stones which are set into the floor of the church, in order to establish their relationship to the Victorian limecrete screed which is known to lie across the church interior (Fig. 2).
- 1.2 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 (Harward 2020).
- 1.3 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).
- 1.4 The Site Code for archaeological work was LEC20.

## 2 Site background

- 2.1 The church of St Lawrence is Grade 1 Listed (List no 1155874, Appendix 1) located to the east side of Market Place in the centre of Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire. It is the parish church for the town of Lechlade in the Diocese of Gloucester and lies within the Lechlade Conservation Area (Magic 2020). The church lies at approximately 77m OD.
- 2.2 The geology of the site is mapped as Oxford Clay Formation covered by superficial deposits of the Summertown-Radley Sand and Gravel Member (British Geological Survey 2020).

## 3 Archaeological and historical background

- 3.1 The history and significance of the church has recently been summarised in a Statement of Significance (Restoration and Reordering Project Group 2020) from which the following is extracted:
- 3.2 Lechlade-on-Thames is located in an important position at the top of the navigable river Thames, set on a major coaching route and the place where the ancient trackways of the Welsh Way and the Salt Way from Droitwich had joined the river. A borough and market town from the early 13th century, it later played a part in the Cotswold wool trade and Lechlade drew its evident prosperity from trade in wool, cheese and other goods that passed through the town and its wharves.
- 3.3 Lechlade is mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 and was enlarged by Isabel de Mortimer when she founded a borough in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century; she obtained grant of a market in 1210 and c1230 Lechlade was referred to as her 'new market town'. The church itself is not documented until 1255, although the fair granted for St Lawrence's day in 1210 suggests the church existed by then. The church is dedicated to St Lawrence, a 3<sup>rd</sup> century

Spanish saint and deacon of the Roman church who met his martyrdom being grilled over a fire.

- 3.4 Fragments of this 13<sup>th</sup> century church survive, but the church we know now was largely built between 1470 and 1476. According to Bigland, writing in 1792, *'This church was built in the reign of Edward 4<sup>th</sup> by Conrad Ney then Vicar and the benefactors of the Priory and Inhabitants'*. He speaks of chantries as having existed at the east end of each aisle and that the pulpit and font were of carved stone. Atkyns however writes *'that the church was new build by Conrad Ney, vicar of this place in the reign of King Henry 7<sup>th</sup> by the assistance of the Priory and its inhabitants'*, possibly conflating the two phases of building and referring to early 16<sup>th</sup> century additions and alterations.
- 3.5 The standing church is a particularly fine example of the Perpendicular style, consisting of nave with clerestory, north and south aisles, and chancel. Verey describes St Lawrence Church as *'one of the greatest Gloucestershire wool churches; wholly perpendicular, built of dressed freestone from Taynton'*.
- 3.6 In 1470 the church, presumably the nave and aisles, was rebuilt by vicar Conrad Nye, who stated his intention to rebuild the chancel *'with some friends'*. Whilst the plan of the church reflected the trend to larger churches, the detailing is quite dated.
- 3.7 In 1472 two chantries were founded at the east of the aisles; the north chantry was dedicated to St Mary and was served by three chaplains. It was founded by Cecily, Duchess of York using funds from the suppression of St John's Priory. The south chantry, dedicated to St Blaise, was founded by John Twyniho, Lord of Butler's Court manor, and was assigned a pension of 10 marks from the hospital estate. St Mary's chantry was dissolved in 1508, St Blaise's chantry survived until the dissolution of the chantries.
- 3.8 The chancel was probably only completed in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the roofline of its predecessor still visible on the east wall of the nave. The clerestory is in a more recognisable Late Perpendicular style and may also be an early 16th century addition, as is the fine embattled north porch with its flat stone ceiling with star pattern of lierne ribs.
- 3.9 In 1882 Waller commented that *'The Tower and Spire were erected subsequently and after this for some reason now impossible to discover the original roofs of the Nave and Chancel were removed and the roofs of a much lower pitch but placed at a higher level being adopted and at the same time clear storey windows were erected over the arcades of the Nave and a five light window was inserted in the South wall of the Chancel.'* The vestry was also probably added at this time and the external door was made in 1882.
- 3.10 There are records of a west singing gallery from 1740 with up to nine male singers employed to sing at divine services. The singers appear to have been licensed by the Bishop.
- 3.11 In 1828–9 architect Richard Pace carried out a reordering including the provision of two new side galleries to the west end and north side of the church. A balcony was constructed at the west end within the western arch of the nave; access steps are shown on the drawings at the far west end. A balcony was also constructed over the north aisle and a pulpit placed

part-way down the aisle. These galleries were removed in the 1882 as they were considered unsafe.

- 3.12 The first organ was provided in 1835 by the vicar at that time. Photographs show that an organ, brought from Faringdon in 1854, was placed to the rear of the western balcony.
- 3.13 Drawings show that the 1828–9 reordering included box pews across the whole of the nave, north and south aisles and extending into the current organ area, choir and Blaise chapel. Some were designated as ‘free’.
- 3.14 In 1882 a major reordering by the Victorian architect Frederick Waller removed the galleries which were deemed unsafe, and also ripped out the box pews and stone and wooden floors. Waller removed the pews and floor, building a new limecrete screed with a tile floor at a lower level than previously in the nave and aisles. He raised the level of the chancel by two steps, he also added bench pews. The organ was moved to St Mary’s chapel.
- 3.15 In his report dated 1882 Waller stated that *‘The church as it has come down to us from our 15<sup>th</sup> Century ancestors is singularly complete and perfect and unaltered with the exception of the internal fittings all of which, consisting no doubt of oak seats stalls screens and have been removed and have given place to modern high pews and galleries. The roofs, walls, arcades, doorways and windows exist as they were originally designed. They are all excellent of their kind though necessarily dilapidated after more than 400 years of wear and tear’*.
- 3.16 Coring of the floor at several locations has confirmed the presence of a consolidation layer of dry clay-bound hoggin or gravel beneath a c125mm thick limecrete screed, with tile floor finish (Nigel Jones, *pers. comm.*). Three ledger slabs were set in this floor at the 1882 reordering but earlier plans show that these are not in their original positions and immediately prior to 1882 they were located along the central aisle. A recent GPR radar survey suggests that there are no tombs or vaults under the current locations of the ledgers (Archaeological Services Ltd 2018). The survey showed that although there were some vaults or graves in the north and south aisles it is likely that these voids were backfilled with rubble and soil.
- 3.17 In the floor of the north aisle, near the organ, is a limestone memorial slab commemorating John Townsend and his wife Ellen with their brasses. He died in 1458 and was a wool merchant and benefactor to both the church and to the poor, his bequest of £120 probably helped pay for the church rebuilding. Drawings suggest that this ledger has been relocated from the nave and geophysics show no evidence of any burial underneath.
- 3.18 A second limestone memorial, located at the east end of the south aisle, is to the memory of Robert Hitchman who died in 1510. His wife’s brass is missing. Drawings suggest that this ledger has also been relocated from the nave and there is no evidence of any burial underneath. There is a third, 17th century, black marble ledger to Edward Bathurst at the west end of the north aisle, similarly moved from the nave, and geophysics show no evidence of any burial underneath.

## 4 Research aims

- 4.1 The research aims were 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 were exposed. Attention was given to sites and remains of all periods (including evidence of past environments).
- 4.2 The site-specific aims were to understand the relationship between the ledger stones and the concrete screed and the church structures, and to provide information to assist in decision-making regarding the feasibility of lifting the slabs., or for their ongoing conservation.

## 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 on the 25th February 2020
- 5.2 Levels were taken relative to the OS benchmark on St Lawrence's Church (value 77.73m OD, Ordnance Survey 2020).
- 5.3 The Site Code for the archaeological work was LEC20.

## 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.

### Test pits 1 and 6

- 6.2 Test pits 1 and 6 were located at the west end of the north aisle next to a black marble ledger [3] commemorating Edward Bathurst †1677. The ledger measures 1.95m x 0.99m x 0.14m thick. The ledger was formerly set in the central aisle of the nave, being moved in the 1882 reordering. Test pit 1 was located at the southwest corner of the ledger, next to a heating duct, whilst Test pit 6 was located at the southeast corner near to the western column of the north arcade.
- 6.3 An *in situ* block of limestone [26] was revealed at the base of Test pit 6 at a depth of 0.15m, this is most likely part of the base of the western column of the north arcade (Figs 3 and 4).
- 6.4 At the west of the ledger the adjacent heating duct was constructed from red bricks, with a metal grille. A later of trampled grey sandy silt (5) was located at the base of Test pit 1 at a depth of 0.21m (76.50m OD); this may be a trample layer from the construction of the ducting, or from works carried out prior to the installation of the Victorian floor.
- 6.5 Layers of loosely compacted yellow-orange dirty sandy gravel (4, 25) were recorded in both test pits, lying above the sandy silt in Test pit 1 and sealing the column foundation in Test pit 6 and the heating duct. The ledger was laid on the gravel and sand. The sandy gravel was

sealed in both Test pits by a 0.14–0.15m thick layer of lean-mix limecrete screed [2, 24] which was laid around the ledger. The screed was topped by the present floor surface of earthenware tiles [1, 23] with a surface at 76.71m OD.

## Test pits 2 and 5

- 6.6 Test pits 2 and 5 were located at the east end of the north aisle next to the limestone ledger commemorating John Townsend †1458 and his wife Ellen with their brasses [8]. The ledger measures 2.40m x 1.21m x 0.14m thick. Drawings suggest that this ledger has been relocated from the nave and geophysics show no evidence of any vault underneath.
- 6.7 Test pit 2 was located at the southeast corner of the ledger, next to the eastern pier of the north arcade, which slightly overlies the ledger. Test pit 5 was located at the northwest corner of the ledger.
- 6.8 The offset foundation of the eastern pier [9] of the north arcade was revealed in Test pit 2 at a depth of 0.17m (Figs 5 and 6). The foundation was of roughly dressed limestone, the lowest block of the pier was in dressed limestone, with finely dressed stone above the current floor level.
- 6.9 Layers of loosely compacted yellow-orange dirty sandy gravel (10, 22) were recorded in both test pits, sealing the column foundation in Test pit 2. The ledger was laid on the gravel and sand. The sandy gravel was sealed in both Test pits by a 0.1–0.11m thick layer of lean-mix limecrete screed [7, 21] which was laid around the ledger. The screed was topped by the present floor surface of earthenware tiles [6, 20] with a surface at 76.71m OD. The ledger was partially overlain by a Victorian stone piecing at the base of the pier.

## Test pits 3 and 4

- 6.10 Test pits 3 and 4 were located at the east end of the south aisle next to a limestone ledger [16] with inlaid brass commemorating Robert Hitchman †1510; his wife's brass is missing. The ledger measures 2.66m x 1.19m x 0.11m x 0.14m thick. Drawings suggest that this ledger has been relocated from the nave and geophysics shows no evidence of any vault underneath.
- 6.11 Test pit 3 was located at the north of the ledger, next to the eastern pier of the south arcade, which slightly overlies the ledger. Test pit 4 was located at the southwest corner of the ledger.
- 6.12 The offset foundation of the eastern pier [13] of the south arcade was revealed in Test pit 3 at a depth of 0.13m (Figs 7 and 8). The foundation was of roughly dressed limestone, the lowest block of the pier was in dressed limestone, with finely dressed stone only above the current floor level. The foundation was sealed by a layer of lime mortar construction trample (15).
- 6.13 Layers of loosely compacted yellow-orange dirty sandy gravel (14, 19) were recorded in both test pits, sealing the column foundation in Test pit 3. The ledger was laid on the gravel and sand. The sandy gravel was sealed in both Test pits by a 0.1m thick layer of lean-mix



limecrete screed [12, 18] which was laid around the ledger. The screed was topped by the present floor surface of earthenware tiles [11, 17] with a surface at 76.71m OD. The ledger was partially overlain by a Victorian piecing at the base of the pier.

## 7 Conclusions and statement of significance

- 7.1 A similar sequence of deposits was recorded in each of the test pits. Natural substrate was not encountered during the watching brief. The earliest deposits revealed in the test pits were the foundations of the medieval arcade columns. This suggests the column foundation bases lie c0.13–0.17m below present floor level and are wider than the column superstructure as is to be expected.
- 7.2 The column foundations were of roughly squared limestone blocks, with the lowest course of the columns in roughly dressed blocks, fine tool marks were only observed about the present floor level suggesting the medieval floor level was not lower than the present floor.
- 7.3 It is not clear whether the foundations have been truncated, however there was no evidence of any floor levels or internal deposits predating Wallers' restoration. The layer of silty sand trample in TP1 is probably associated with the construction of the ducting around the nave perimeter. The lime construction trample in Test pit 3 may be from the medieval construction, or the Victorian restoration. The layer of sandy gravel recorded in all test pits was recorded in the earlier core drilling and is almost certainly the layer of consolidation laid down by Waller's builders after they had removed the internal graves and the medieval and post-Reformation floor levels.
- 7.4 The sandy gravel appears to be a homogenous deposit and the ledger slabs were all placed on top of this layer, with a lean-mix limecrete screed laid around the slab. The two eastern slabs were partially set under the arcade columns, which would have been chased out locally to receive the edge of the ledgers. Stone piecings were carefully fitted to the columns to make good the damage caused by inserting the ledgers.
- 7.5 Tiles were lain on top of the screed to form the present floor level. There was evidence for some repairs with harder concrete in Test Pit 2
- 7.6 The limecrete screed breaks away from the ledgers and it is considered that the ledgers are not irreversibly bonded into the limecrete layer, and that it may be feasible to move the ledgers without causing irreversible damage. The advice of a stonemason experienced in such matters should be sought.
- 7.7 To move the ledgers from their current location would require the breaking out of the surrounding limecrete and the removal of the stone piecings on the columns that overly the ledgers. If straps, wires or similar were needed to be placed under the slabs to lift them then the sandy gravel could be excavated locally to allow the straps to be placed under the stones. The southeastern ledger has a crack which has been repaired *in situ*; it is not known whether the crack goes full depth and whether the ledger is in fact effectively in two pieces.

- 7.8 The slabs are not in their original positions and may have been moved twice. If the slabs were to be moved then consideration should be given to whether a watching brief should be carried out during this to monitor any excavation required, to fully record the slabs, and record any deposits or structures exposed once the ledgers have been lifted.
- 7.9 The watching brief has added to our understanding of the position and setting of the ledger slabs and their relationship to the Victorian screed and medieval foundations. It has also added to our understanding of the survival of pre-1882 deposits beneath the current floor. The results of the watching brief are of local significance only and no further work is recommended on the site archive.

## 10 Acknowledgements

- 10.1 Urban Archaeology would like to thank Nigel Jones and Richard Bell for commissioning the watching brief on behalf of Lechlade PCC and for their work on site excavating the test pits. Nigel Jones provided information and drawings that were invaluable in preparation of this report. We would also like to thank Adam Klups, DAC Secretary and David Thackray, DAA, for their help and advice, and Richard Codd (Chedburn Codd architects) for drawings and discussions of the scheme. The watching brief was carried out by the author.

## 11 Archive

- 11.1 The site code LEC20 has been allocated to the watching brief.
- 11.2 The archive from the watching brief (Appendix 3) 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 the Corinium Museum and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).
- 11.3 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. The archive will be presented to the receiving museum within six months of the completion of the fieldwork (unless alternative arrangements have been agreed in writing with the Diocese). The archive will then become publicly accessible.
- 11.4 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.

## 12 Bibliography

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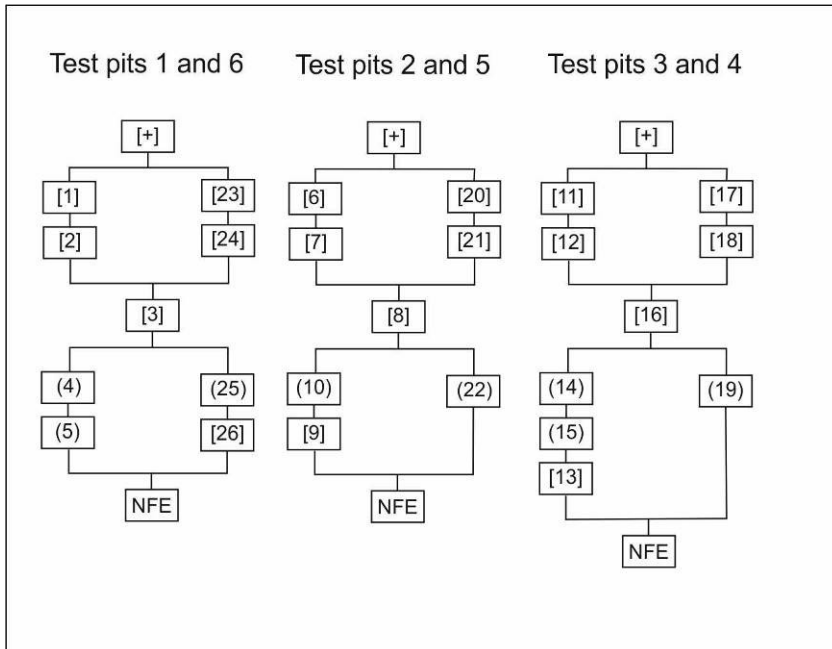
## Appendix 1 Context Register

Context no	Location	Type	Description
1	TP1	Masonry	6 inch tiles
P2	TP1	Masonry	Lean-mix limecrete screed
3	TP1	Masonry	Black marble ledger slab: Edward Bathurst
4	TP1	Deposit	Loose yellow-orange sandy gravel
5	TP1	Deposit	Compact grey sandy silt
6	TP2	Masonry	Floor tiles 105mm x 105mm
7	TP2	Masonry	Lean-mix limecrete screed
8	TP2	Masonry	Ledger slab
9	TP2	Masonry	Pier foundation
10	TP2	Deposit	Loose yellow-orange sandy gravel
11	TP3	Masonry	Floor tiles 105mm x 105mm
12	TP3	Masonry	Lean-mix limecrete screed
13	TP3	Masonry	Pier foundation
14	TP3	Deposit	Loose yellow-orange sandy gravel
15	TP3	Deposit	Lime mortar construction trample
16	TP3	Masonry	Ledger slab
17	TP4	Masonry	6 inch tiles laid on cement
18	TP4	Masonry	Lean-mix limecrete screed
19	TP4	Deposit	Loose yellow-orange sandy gravel
20	TP5	Masonry	6 inch tiles laid on cement
21	TP5	Masonry	Lean-mix limecrete screed
22	TP5	Deposit	Loose yellow-orange sandy gravel
23	TP6	Masonry	6 inch tiles laid on cement
24	TP6	Masonry	Lean-mix limecrete screed
25	TP6	Deposit	Gravel and sand blinding
26	TP6	Masonry	Pier foundation

Table 1: Context register

## Appendix 2 Harris matrix

Harris matrix of LEC20



## Appendix 3 Archive contents

### Digital archive

Type	Number	Comments
Digital photographs	18 images plus digital register	To be archived with ADS

Table 2: Digital archive

### Paper archive

Type	Number	Comments
Trench Record Sheets	6	

Table 3: Paper archive

### Drawn archive

Type	Number	Comments
Permatrace	1 sheet	1 section sheet

Table 4: Drawn archive

## Appendix 4 OASIS Form

OASIS ID: urbanarc1- 384223

Project details	
Project name	St Lawrence Lechlade
Short description of the project	On 25th February 2020 Urban Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief for Nigel Jones, on behalf of Lechlade PCC, at the church of St Lawrence, Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire. The watching brief covered excavation of a six test pits adjacent to three ledgers set in the floor of the church nave and aisles. A similar sequence was recorded in all the test pits: the foundations of the medieval arcade piers was recorded, these were sealed by a sandy gravel levelling layer dating from the Victorian restoration of 1882. The ledgers were placed on this sandy gravel and a lean-mix limecrete screed was laid around the slabs with a tile floor forming the present floor surface.
Project dates	Start: 25-02-2020 End: 25-02-2020
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	LEC20 – Sitecode UA201 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	CHURCH Medieval; CHURCH Post Medieval
Significant Finds	LEDGER Post Medieval
Investigation type	""Test-Pit Survey"", ""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GLOUCESTERSHIRE COTSWOLD LECHLADE St Lawrence Lechlade
Postcode	GL7 3AB
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 21494 99503 51.693405040075 -1.688996800074 51 41 36 N 001 41 20 W Point
Project creators	



Name of Organisation	Urban Archaeology
Project brief originator	Contractor (design and execute)
Project design originator	Urban Archaeology
Project director/manager	Chiz Harward
Project supervisor	Chiz Harward
Type of sponsor/funding body	PCC
Name of sponsor/funding body	Lechlade PCC
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	ADS
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Corinium Museum
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Report", "Section"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Church of St Lawrence, Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire An Archaeological Watching Brief Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Harward, C
Date	2020
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	28 February 2020

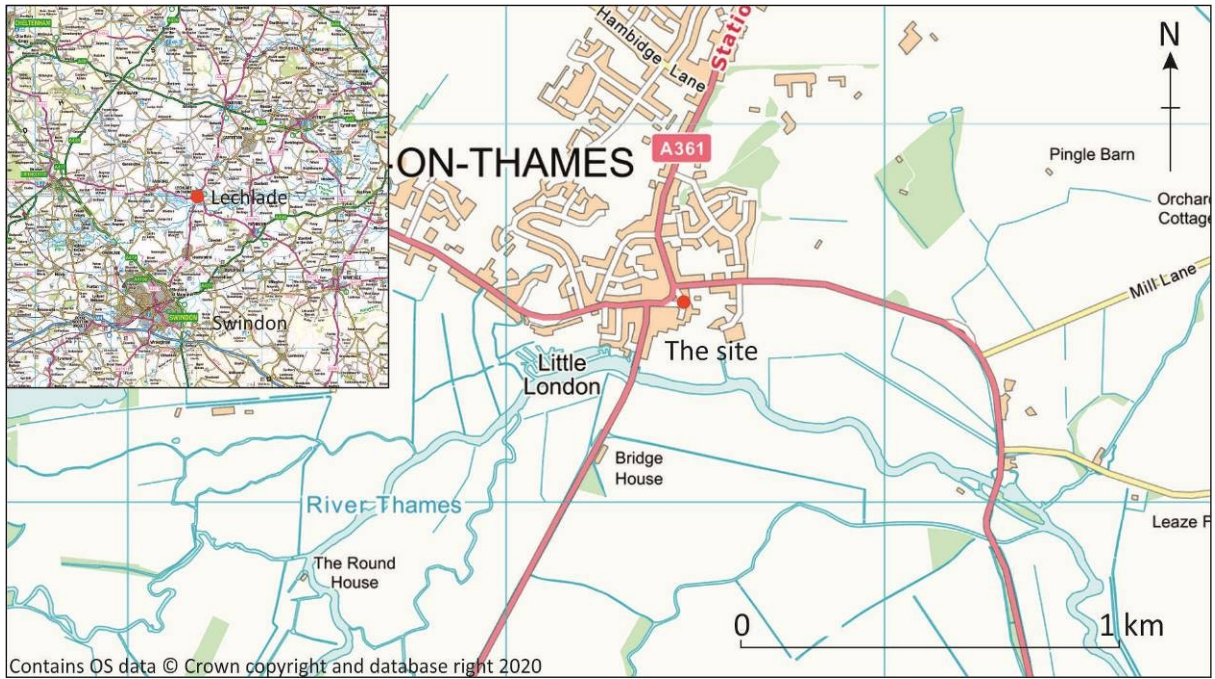


Fig. 1 Site location

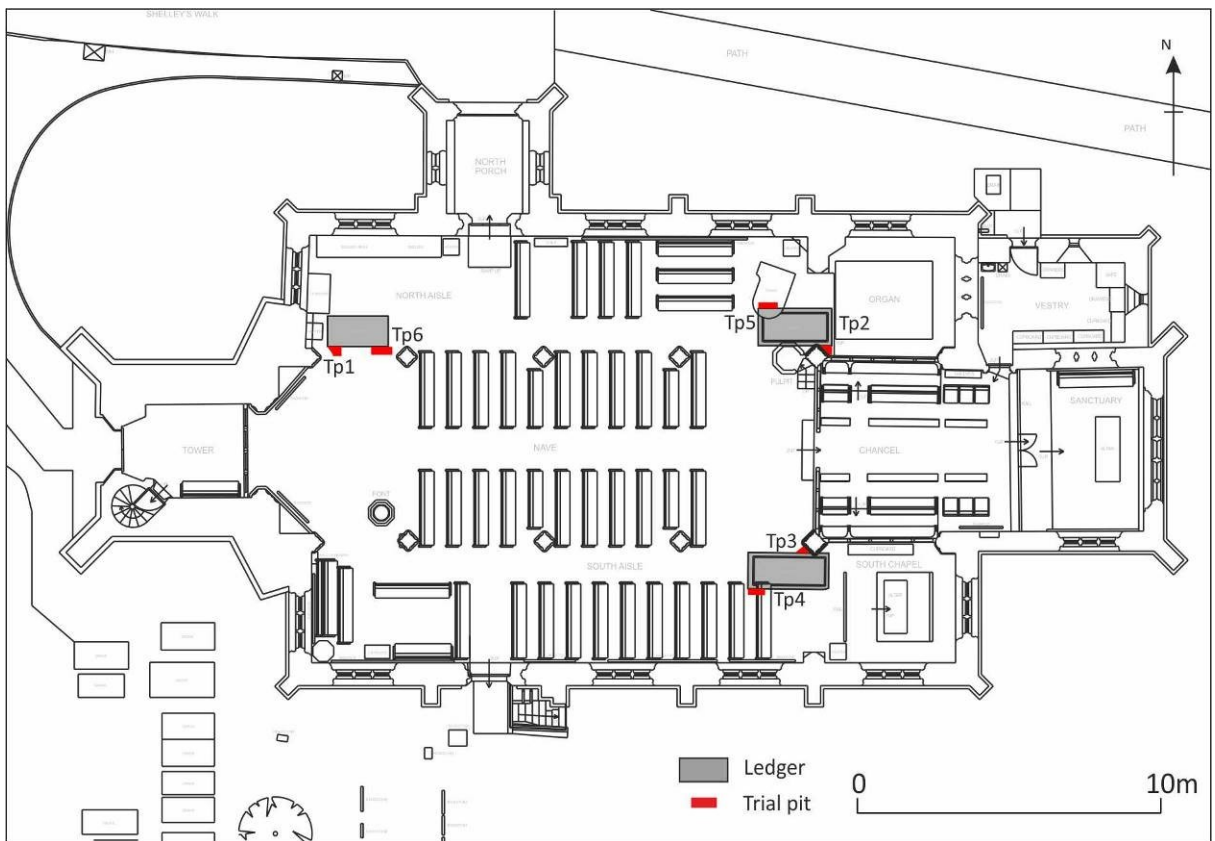


Fig. 2 Location of test pits



Fig.3 Views of Test pit 1 (left) and Test pit 6 (right, showing ledger and limecrete screed, with pier foundation, scale 0.15m

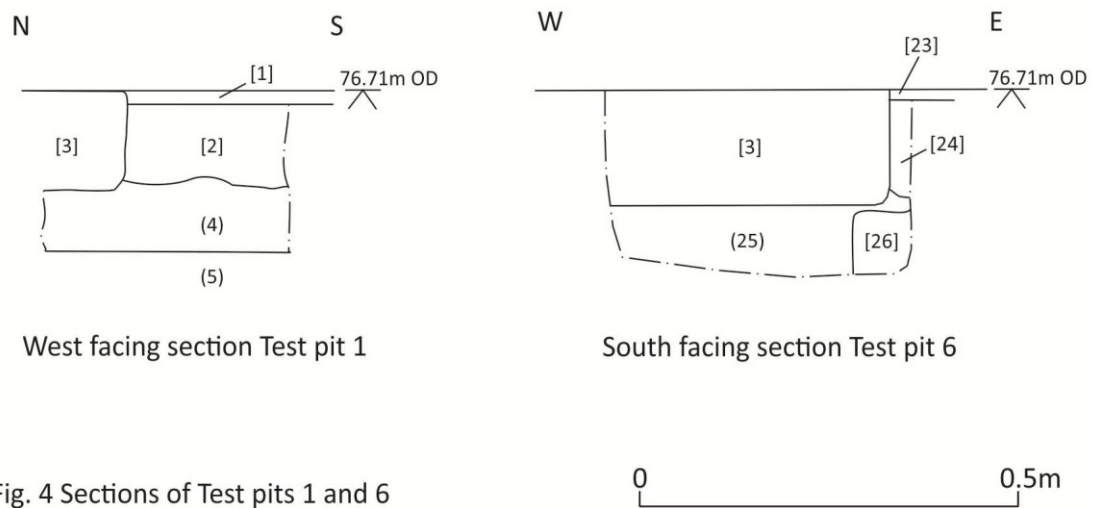
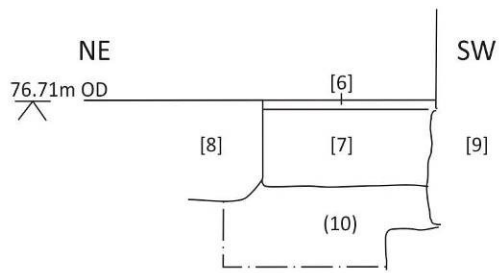


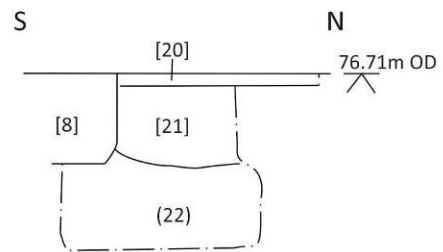
Fig. 4 Sections of Test pits 1 and 6



Fig. 5 Views of Test pit 2 (left) and Test pit 5 (right, showing ledger and limecrete screed, with pier foundation, scale 0.15m



North west facing section Test Pit 2



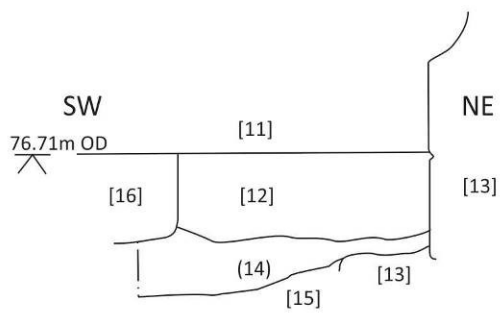
East facing section Test pit 5

Fig. 6 Sections of Test pits 2 and 5

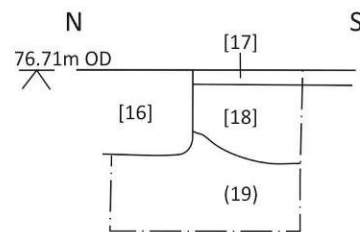




Fig. 7 Views of Test pit 3 (left) and Test pit 4 (right, showing ledger, limecrete screed and pier foundation, scale 0.15m



Southeast facing section Test pit 3



West facing section Test pit 4

Fig. 8 Sections of Test pits 3 and 4

