

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**New parish rooms, St Andrew's Church,
Sonning, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by David Sanchez

Site Code: ACS13/99

(SU 7553 7553)

New parish rooms, St Andrew's Church, Sonning, Berkshire

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

by David Sanchez

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ACS 13/99

May 2017

Summary

Site name: New parish rooms, St Andrew's Church, Sonning, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7553 7553

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7th - 8th November 2016

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Ellen McManus-Fry

Site code: ACS 13/99

Summary of results: The archaeological watching brief monitored the groundworks for the connection of gas and water services for new parish rooms. The excavation of two trenches did not reach the natural geology, uncovering only modern made ground deposits. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered. If any archaeological features did exist below the made ground, these will have been preserved *in situ*.

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

This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website: www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 16.05.17 Steve Preston ✓ 15.05.17

New parish rooms, St Andrew's Church, Sonning, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by David Sanchez

Report 13/99b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Andrew's Church, Sonning, Berkshire (SU 7553 7553) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Perry Mills of Oaktree Interiors Ltd, Frederick House, 498 Reading Road, Winnersh, Berkshire, RG41 5EX on behalf of the Parochial Church Council.

Planning permission (app F/2014/0049) has been gained from Wokingham Council for the construction of new parish rooms as two blocks. The consent is subject to a condition (13) relating to archaeology. Initial trial trenching (Elliot 2013) had revealed the presence of Iron Age and Medieval deposits on the site, and as a consequence of this a watching brief has been required.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald of Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ellen McManus-Fry, between 7th and 8th November 2016 and the site code is ACS 13/99.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an approved local Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

St Andrew's Church is located in the village of Sonning to the north-east of Reading. The church is located to the west of the High Street, behind the Bull Inn and just south-east of the River Thames (Fig. 1). The site for the new building itself lies to the south-west of the church within a walled area, the eastern end of which is now part of the graveyard (Fig. 2). The location of the new buildings lies on a patch of unused land, partially grassed over and partially overgrown with weeds. The ground is uneven and rises slightly from the north to the south, from 40.74m to 42.92m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is described as being on the border between Gravel and Upper Chalk (BGS 2000).

Archaeological background

In general terms the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with important prehistoric and Roman remains visible from the air situated to the east of the village (Ford 1987; Gates 1975; Slade 1964; Dawson 2012). St. Andrew's Church lies within the Saxon and medieval settlement of Sonning which was an important administrative and ecclesiastical centre. Various fieldwork projects have revealed deposits within the settlement. To the south is the site of a Bishop's Palace, whose known remains, which date from the 13th century, were partly excavated during the First World War (Brakspear 1916). More recent fieldwork has examined a part of the later Elizabethan mansion on that site (Milbank 2010). Other excavations for the building of a new vicarage, just to the north, uncovered deposits of late Saxon and early medieval date (Hull and Hall 2003). Charnel deposits of uncertain date have been recovered from the Bull Inn to the east (Milbank 2007) with Saxon inhumations nearby. At Old Walls, to the south, medieval boundary features have been found (Milbank 2006, Taylor 2006).

A field evaluation undertaken on the present site (Elliott 2013) revealed the presence of archaeological deposits of Iron Age and Medieval date, deeply buried below made ground. A moderate collection of struck flint of Mesolithic to Bronze Age date was also recovered suggesting earlier prehistoric activity in the area of the site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This consisted of the excavation of two services trenches. Any archaeological deposits uncovered during the groundworks were to be excavated and recorded. The design of the foundations for the new parish rooms was such that they were kept high in the stratigraphic sequence and restricted only to the modern made ground levels lying above the archaeologically relevant horizon; The features previously identified by the evaluation would be preserved *in situ*. The depth of the service trenches, however, was unclear and lay in an area not explored by the trenching. It was possible that additional deposits of archaeological interest might be disturbed by these trenches.

Results

The groundworks monitored during the watching brief consisted of the excavation of two trenches (Fig. 3) for the connection of gas and water services to the new building.

Trench 1 (Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was 15m long and 0.35m wide with a maximum depth of 0.70m. The stratigraphy (Fig. 4) uncovered consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.25m of dark greyish brown sandy silt (52) with frequent gravel and occasional brick and tile fragments, overlying mid orange brown sandy silt (53) with gravel and occasional brick and tile fragments. The trench did not penetrate to the natural geology. At the north end of this trench, a 16m length of the trench for a previous water pipe was uncovered. This area was already disturbed by the excavation of the previous trench.

One possible pit was uncovered during the excavation of this trench and was hand cleaned and investigated, showing this to be filled with mid brown silt and gravel inclusions and modern brick and tile fragments.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 24m long and 0.35m wide with a maximum depth of 0.70m. The stratigraphy observed consisted of a made ground sequence, formed by 0.30m of dark brown sandy silt with gravels and brick and tile fragments, 0.20m of mid yellowish brown sandy silt with gravels and chalk inclusions, overlying mid reddish brown sandy silt with occasional brick and tile fragments. This trench continued beyond the northern wall of the site with similar stratigraphy. The natural geology was not reached and no archaeological finds or features were present.

Finds

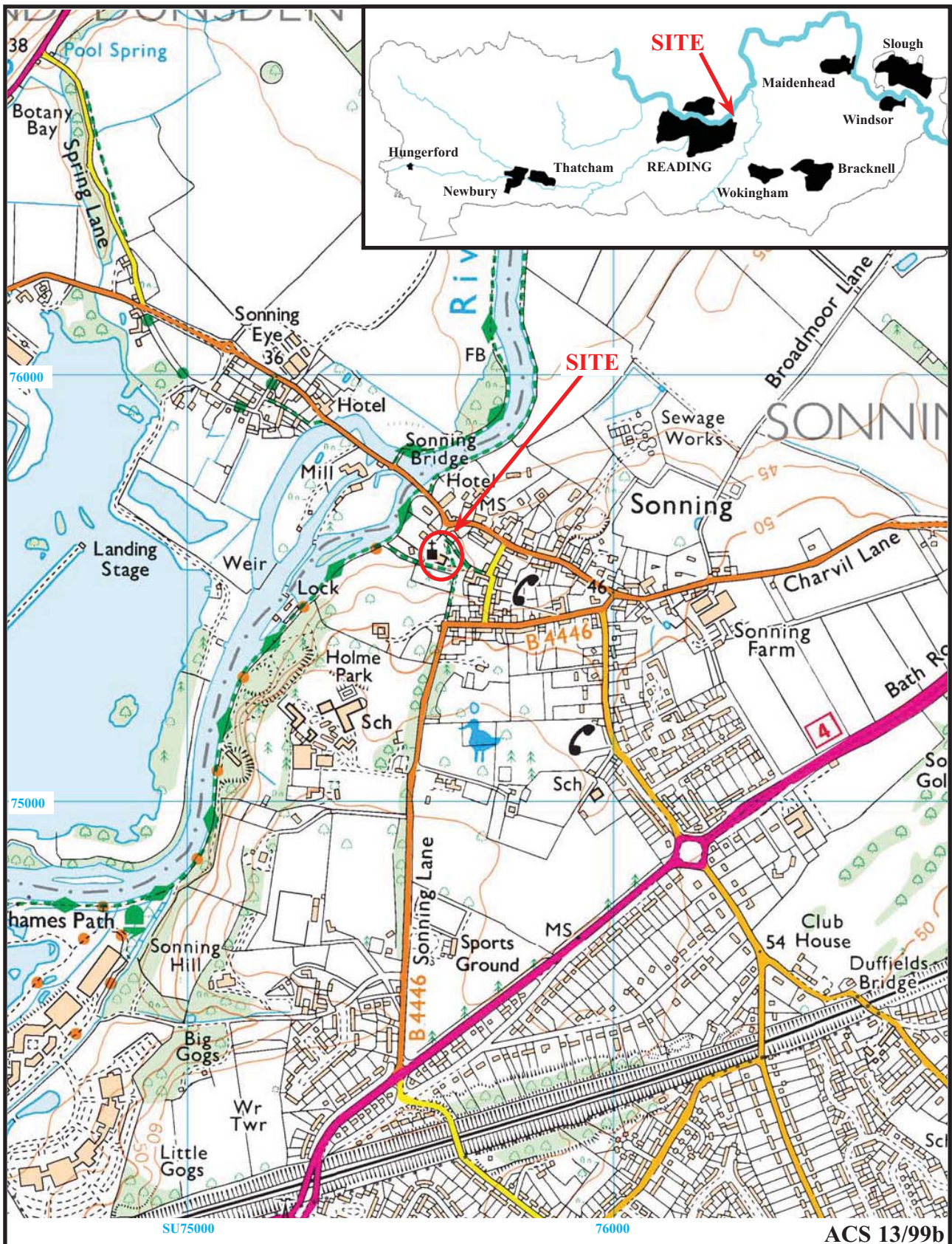
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered during the archaeological excavation. Brick and tile fragments recovered for dating purposes from the modern pit investigated in trench 1 were discarded when the fieldwork was completed.

Conclusion

The archaeological watching brief undertaken at St. Andrew Church monitored the groundworks for the connection gas and water services for the new parish rooms. The excavation of two service trenches did not affect the natural geology, uncovering only modern made ground deposits. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered. If any archaeological features did exist below the made ground, these will have been preserved *in situ*. As for those beneath the parish rooms themselves.

References

- BGS, 2000, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Brakspear, H, 1916, 'The Bishop's Palace, Sonning', *Berkshire Archaeol J*, **22**, 9–21
- Dawson, T, 2012, 'Straighthanger Field, Sonning, Berkshire; A Geophysical Survey (Magnetic)', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep **12/6**, Reading
- Elliot, G, 2013, 'St Andrew's Church, Sonning, Berkshire: an archaeological evaluation,' Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep **13/99**, Reading.
- Gates, T, 1975, *The Thames Valley, An Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Pubn 1, Reading
- Hull, G and Hall, M, 2003, 'Excavation of medieval features at St. Andrews Church vicarage, Sonning Berkshire', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **76** (for 1998-2003), 73–93
- Milbank, D, 2006, 'New swimming pool, Old Walls, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Berkshire, An archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep **06/36b**, Reading.
- Milbank, D, 2007, 'The Bull Inn, High Street, Sonning, Berkshire, An Archaeological watching brief and salvage excavation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep **07/26**, Reading
- Milbank, D, 2010, 'Bishops Close, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Berkshire: an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep **06/111b**, Reading
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Slade, C F, 1964, 'A late Neolithic enclosure at Sonning, Berkshire', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **61**, 4–19
- Taylor, A, 2006, 'Old Walls, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Berkshire, An archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep **06/36**, Reading

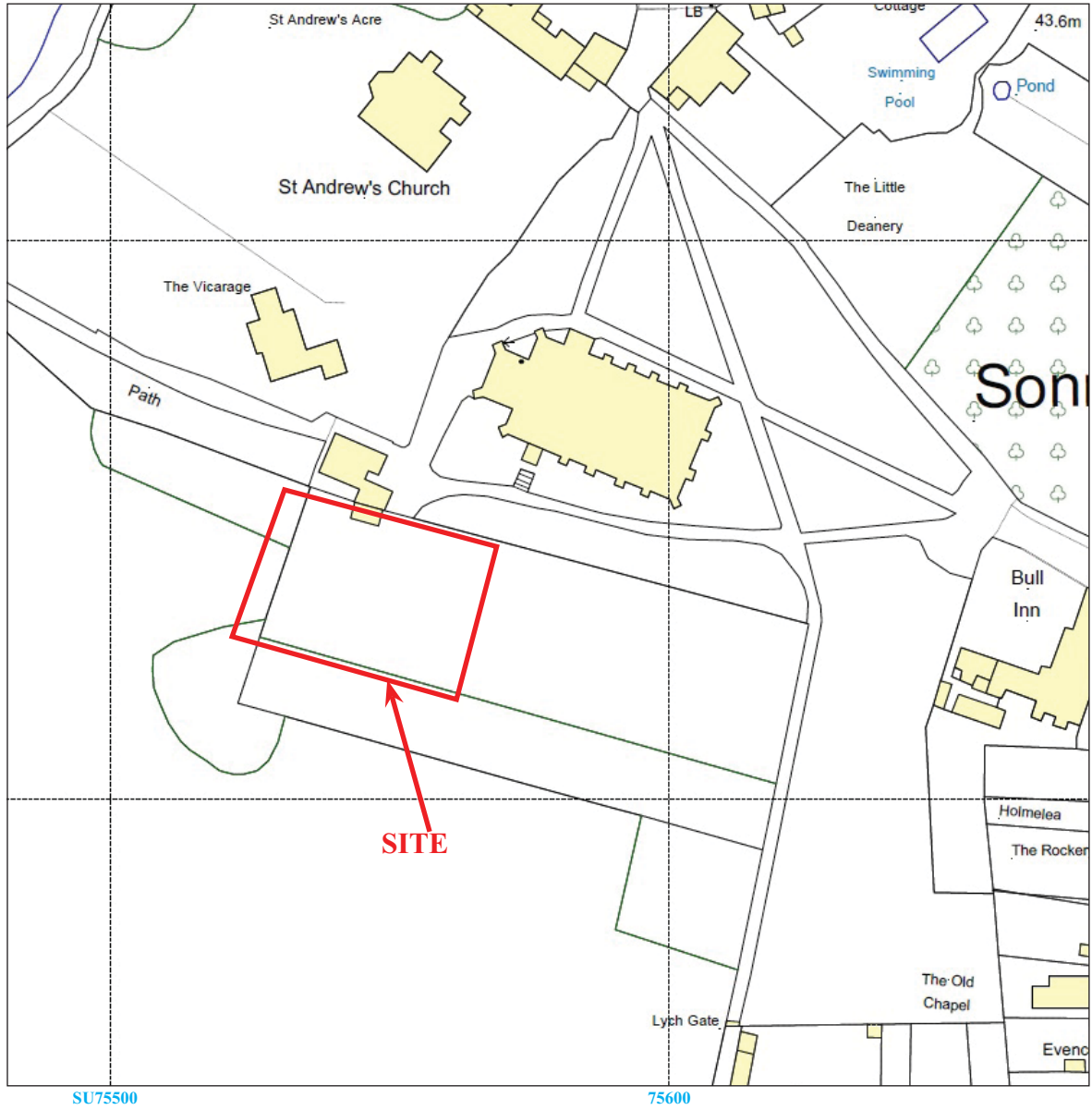


**New parish rooms, St. Andrew's Church,
Sonning, Berkshire, 2016
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Sonning and Berkshire.

Reproduced under licence from Ordnance Survey Explorer Digital mapping at 1:12500
Crown Copyright reserved

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



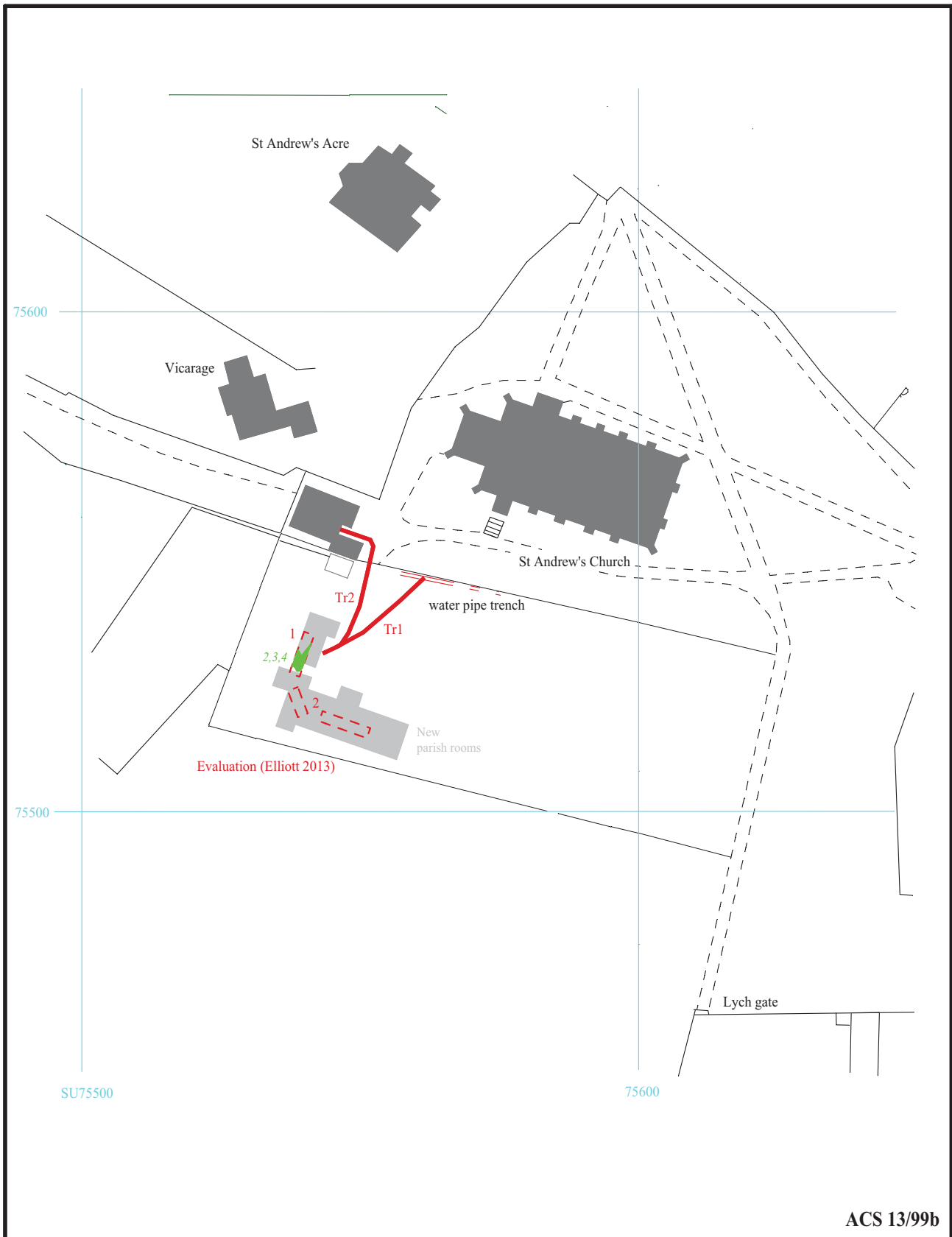
ACS 13/99b



**New parish rooms, St. Andrew's Church,
Sonning, Berkshire**
Archaeological Desk-based Assessment
 Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping under licence.
 Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:1250

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
 SERVICES



ACS 13/99b

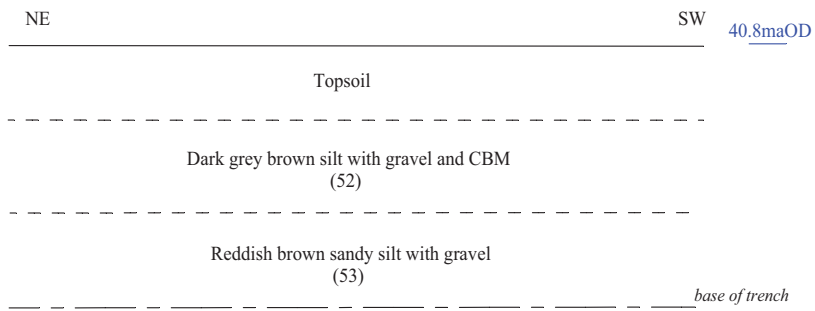
**New parish rooms, St. Andrew's Church,
Sonning, Berkshire
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Location of new services, related to location of previous evaluation trenches.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

Trench 1



ACS 13/99b

**New parish rooms, St. Andrew's Church,
Sonning, Berkshire
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Representative section.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking South West, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking West, Scales: 1m and 0.50m.

ACS 13/99b

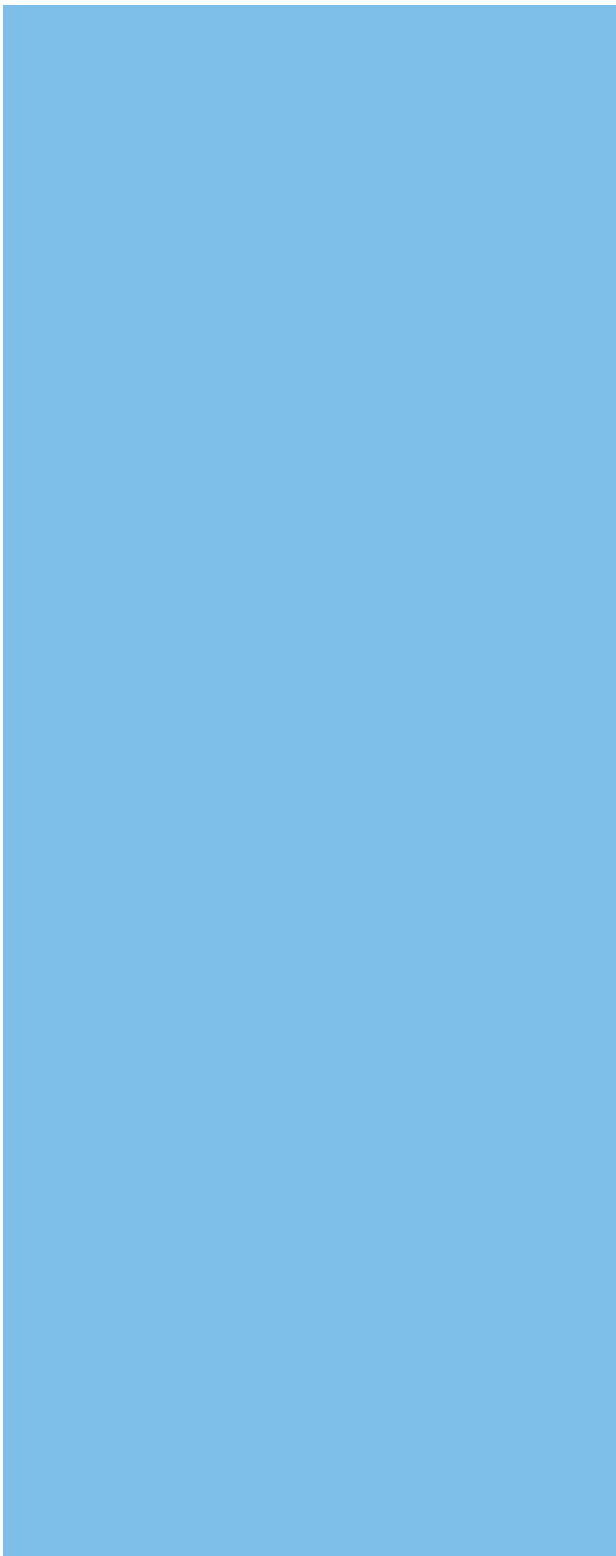
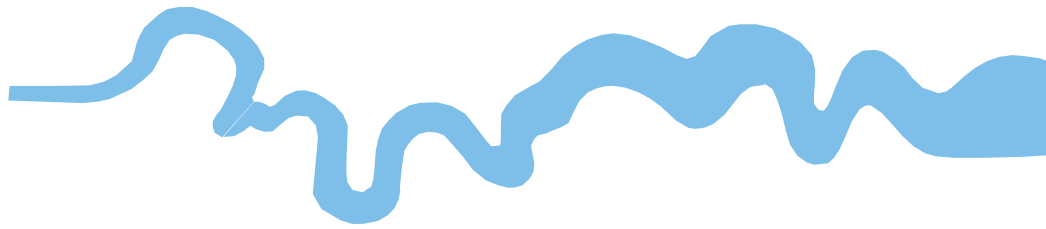
**New parish rooms, St Andrew's Church
Sonning, Berkshire
Archaeological Watching Brief
Plates 1 and 2.**

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road,
Reading RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**

*Offices in:
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent and Ennis (Ireland)*