Proposed St. Dunstan’s Church Hall,
Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire

An Archaeological Evaluation
for St. Dunstan’s Parish Church

by Sarah Coles and Steve Hammond
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

April 2002
Summary

Site name: Proposed St. Dunstan’s Church Hall, Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP 8125 0440

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 12th April 2002

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Hammond

Site code: DMR 02/25

Area of site: 36 sq m

Summary of results: No archaeology was observed, only a layer of topsoil onto a levelling layer onto a buried topsoil onto the natural geology.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is currently held at 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR but will be deposited in due course with Buckinghamshire Museum Services.
Introduction
This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at St. Dunstan’s Church Hall, Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire (SP 8125 0440) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Phillip Hughes of PHD Chartered Town Planners, PO Box 700, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL2 3WB on behalf of the church hall planning committee of St. Dunstan’s Parish Church, Monks Risborough.

A planning application (01/6296) has been made to Wycombe District Council to erect a new church hall adjacent to the current temporary structure. A requirement of the current planning permission is to establish the archaeological impact of the proposed development. The field evaluation would provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site so as to mitigate the effects of the development. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and the District policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Sandy Kidd, Senior Archaeological Officer, Buckinghamshire County Council. The fieldwork was supervised by Steve Hammond who was assisted in the field by Sarah Coles. The work was undertaken on the 12th April 2002 and the site code is DMR 02/25.

Location, topography and geology
The site is located on the southern side of St Dunstan’s Church, Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire, and is approximately 36sq m in size (Fig 1 and 2). The village itself can be found just north of Princes Risborough and to the south of Aylesbury. The parcel of land is relatively flat and lies at a height of c.112m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying Geology as shown on maps (BGS 1993) is Chalk Marl. This was confirmed in the evaluation.

Archaeological background
The brief for the site prepared by Mr. Sandy Kidd of Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service has highlighted its archaeological potential. The site lies within the historic core of the settlement close to the church. The settlement may have late Saxon origins with the existence of a late Saxon charter defining the boundaries of
the Parish. By the late 10th century the manor belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury and by the time of Domesday Book (1086) was a substantial rural settlement. The courts held there by the Archbishop in the 11th century reflect the importance of the manor. The proposal site lies adjacent to one of the main axes of the medieval settlement.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims of the project are:

- To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.
- To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
- To determine if there are any late Saxon or Medieval deposits present related to the manor.
- To determine if there are any burial deposits present.

The potential and significance of any such deposits located was to be assessed according to research priorities such as those set out in Exploring Our Past (English Heritage 1991, 36) and English Heritage Research Agenda (English Heritage 1997) or any more local or thematic research priorities as appropriate.

The specification called for the excavation of 10m of trenching. Two trenches, each 5m long and 1.60m wide, were to be located to provide coverage of the footprints of the proposed new buildings where access was possible. In the event the location and lengths of the trenches were altered due to the presence of trees. The trenches were excavated by a Kubota-type machine with a toothless ditching bucket. This process was undertaken under direct and continuous archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results

Two trenches were excavated, respectively 3.40m and 7.20m in length (Fig. 3). Trench 1 was shortened and moved to the south west to avoid the extant large trees, resulting in the extension of Trench 2 from 5.m to 7.20m to compensate.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

This was aligned NE-SW and was between 1.00m and 1.10m deep. Topsoil overlay 0.25m of a pale brownish white (redeposited) levelling layer which sealed a buried topsoil. The buried topsoil was a mid grey silty clay
and contained moderate amounts of brick and tile dating from the late post-medieval period. This overlay weathered natural marl (Fig. 4).

Trench 2
This was aligned NW- SE and was between 0.80m and 1.04m deep. Topsoil overlay 0.12m of a pale brownish white (redeposited) levelling layer which sealed a buried topsoil. The mid grey silty clay buried soil was deeper at the north-western end of the trench (0.56m compared to 0.29m at the SE end) and contained moderate amounts of late post-medieval brick and tile. The buried soil overlay weathered natural marl.

Finds
Late post-medieval brick and tile was found in the buried topsoil of both trenches. Although noted, these finds were not retained. No other finds were recovered.

Conclusion
Trench 1 had to be relocated and shortened slightly due to the presence of an existing tree. Trench 2 was lengthened to compensate for this. No archaeological features or finds of any significance were found during the evaluation. The complete lack of any archaeological deposits, especially those of late Saxon or Medieval date diminishes the importance of the site within the context of St Dunstan’s Church and Monks Risborough. It is very unlikely therefore using the results of the evaluation, that any site of archaeological importance will be affected by the proposed development.

References
English Heritage 1997, Archaeology Division Research Agenda (Draft), London
APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at south or west end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench No.</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Breadth (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>NE1.10</td>
<td>SW1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trench shortened and moved to the SW due to trees. 0.16m Topsoil onto 0.25m pale brownish white levelling layer (redeposited), onto 0.50m of buried topsoil onto weathered natural layer 0.09m thick onto solid natural [Plates 1 and 2].</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>NW1.04</td>
<td>SE0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trench lengthened to make up 10m of total trenching. NW end 0.12m topsoil onto 0.12m pale brownish white levelling layer (redeposited), onto 0.56m of buried topsoil onto an interface layer 0.21m thick onto natural. SE end 0.10m topsoil onto 0.13m pale brownish white levelling layer (redeposited), onto 0.29m buried topsoil onto a weathered natural layer 0.23m thick onto solid natural.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
St Dunstan’s Church Hall, Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire, 2002

Figure 1. Location of site within Monks Risborough and Buckinghamshire.

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Figure 2: Location of site in Monks Risborough.
Figure 3. Location of trenches on the proposed footprint of the new church hall.
St Dunstan's Church Hall, Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire

Figure 4. Section of Trench 1.

REDOSITED LEVELLING LAYER

BURIED TOPSOIL

WEATHERED NATURAL

NATURAL CLAY

TOPSOIL

0 1m 3m
Plate 1. General site view of Trench 1, looking south-east, horizontal scale 1m, vertical scale 2m.

Plate 2. Trench 1 looking south-east, horizontal scale 1m, vertical scale 2m.