

**The Masonic Centre,
Goldsmiths Lane, Wallingford, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Wallingford Masonic Centre Ltd**

by Graham Hull
Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code MCW99/31

May 1999

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Report 99/31

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Masonic Centre, Goldsmiths Lane, Wallingford, Oxon (NGR SU6054 8944) (Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Richard Cain, Carroll and Partners, on behalf of Wallingford Masonic Centre Limited. Alteration and refurbishment of existing buildings has been undertaken at the Masonic Centre Club, to provide three residential units with parking (three flats and one house). This involves the underpinning of one wall of an 18th century property. Archaeological monitoring and recording was requested by Paul Smith, Archaeological Officer, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1991) and policy CON18 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (1997). The fieldwork was carried out by Steve Ford and Graham Hull in May 1999 and the site code is MCW99/31.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site lies to the west of Goldsmiths Lane at its northern junction with the High Street, Wallingford (Figs 2 and 3). The standing building examined was probably a stable block constructed in the late 18th century. It had evidence of a hay loft and overlooked a yard to the rear of the Masonic Hall. An 18th century servants block was sited between the stables and the house. The underpinning was located at the south-west corner of the former stables (Fig 3).

Archaeological Background

The site lies within the historic core of the Medieval town and within an area of the gridded street plan that is thought to have come into existence at the same time as the defences of the late Saxon town. It is also close to the minor Medieval church of St Peters in the West. Cable trenching in nearby Kincroft produced pits containing 12th century pottery.

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe, excavate and record all archaeological deposits within areas of ground disturbance associated with the alteration of the building. Where possible, relative and absolute dating and phasing was to be obtained for any archaeological features.

Particular attention was paid to the underpinning excavations below the south-west wall. The slots for the underpinning were inspected and the spoil was retained and examined by archaeological staff.

Results (Figs 2 and 3)

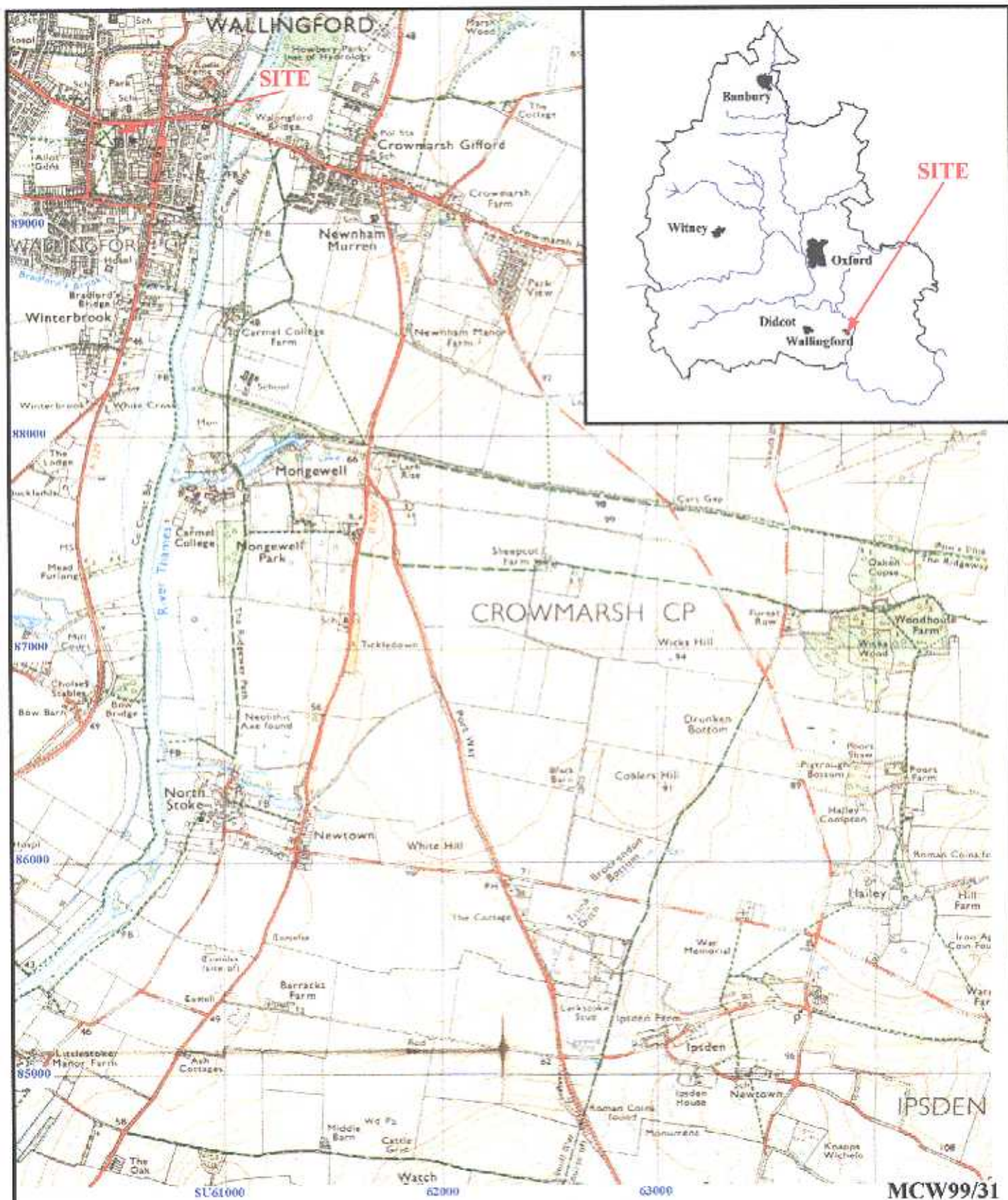
The excavation of the slot for underpinning was conducted in two stages. The slot was 3.5 m long, in an 'L' shape, and 0.5 m wide. At its deepest it was 0.8 m below the modern ground surface. A homogenous buried loamy garden soil was observed in the slot. No cut features were seen. Pottery fragments, brick pieces and clay pipe stems (not retained) indicated a late 18th century deposition date. This deposit stratigraphically predated the building but was clearly deposited (perhaps as household refuse) towards the end of the 18th century.

Conclusion

The garden soil below the south-west corner of the building to the rear of the Masonic Centre Club was of late 18th century date. No artefacts earlier than the 18th century were observed and no cut archaeological features were encountered. If the latter are present on this site it is likely that they lie at a greater depth than 0.8 m, as observed in the underpinning trench.

References

PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Department of the Environment Planning Policy
Guidance Note 16, HMSO



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Figure 1. Location of site within Wallingford and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of watching brief.

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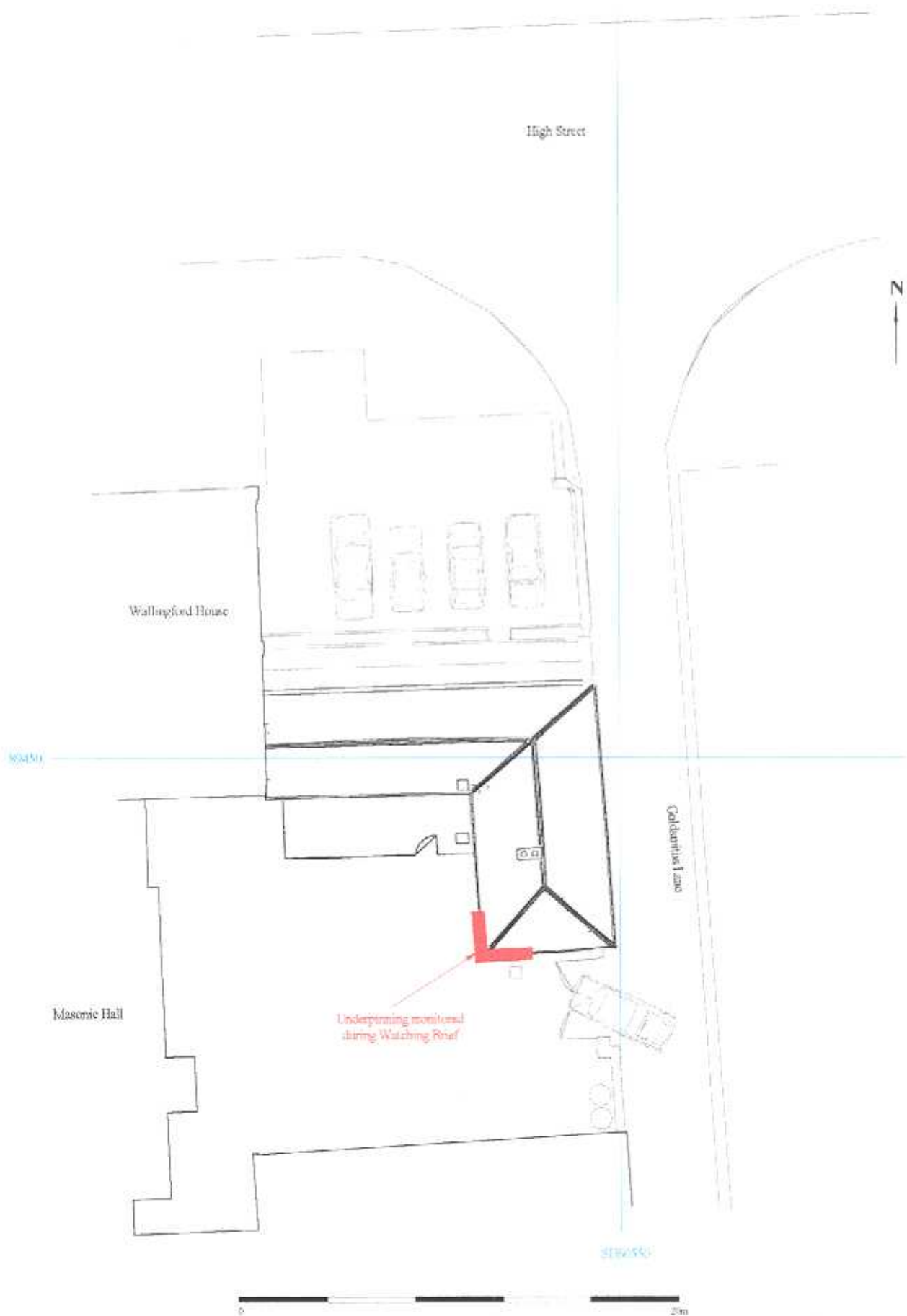


Figure 3 Location of underpinning