CONTENTS

List of illustrations 2
Glossary 3
Summary 4

1. INTRODUCTION 5
   1.1 Introduction
   1.2 Geology and topography
   1.3 Historical Background
   1.4 Methodology

2. BUILDING RECORDING RESULTS 8
   2.1 Description of the tower

3. PHASING 10

4. DISCUSSION 11

5. CONCLUSIONS 12

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 13

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY 13

ILLUSTRATIONS

APPENDIX 1 Report on tree ring analysis 14
APPENDIX 2 Photographic register 15
**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig 1</th>
<th>Location Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fig 2</td>
<td>Elevation drawings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 3</td>
<td>Plan view and connective details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig 4</td>
<td>Axonometric projection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 1</td>
<td>Bell tower and church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate 2</td>
<td>Cornice on North elevation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Plate 3 | Exposed brickwork and timber frame  
(West elevation) |
| Plate 4 | Horizontal rails (wall plates) |
| Plate 5 | Vertical corner posts   |
| Plate 6 | Frame, south-east corner |
| Plate 7 | T-Frame trenched into beam |
| Plate 8 | Blocked window, North elevation (interior) |
| Plate 9 | Floor timbers            |
| Plate 10| Debris filled notch     |
GLOSSARY

ARRIS
The sharp edge formed by the meeting of two straight or curved surfaces.

MEDIEVAL
Taken here as the period from the Norman invasion in AD 1066 to approximately AD 1500.

MORTICE AND TENON
Carpentry joint consisting of a projection left at the end of a piece of timber which is inserted into a socket, or mortice, made to receive it.

NGR
National Grid Reference given from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD
Ordnance Datum; used to express a given height above mean sea level.

QUOIN
Shaped or dressed stones used to form an external angle at the corner of a building.

SMR
Sites and Monument Register.
SUMMARY

St Mary's Church, Cokethorpe, Nr Witney, Oxon is situated on the eastern edge of Cokethorpe School and is used as the school chapel. The bell tower on the north western corner is thought to have medieval origins and may be as early as the 13th century. The main body of the church was extensively remodelled in the Victorian period and displays reused medieval material. The lower portion of the bell tower is constructed from stone with the upper timber framed section infilled with brick and covered in modern roughcasting.

A fire in the tower has destroyed the roof structure and partially removed the roughcasting to reveal sections of the timber framing and brick panels. A building recording project was undertaken prior to building work designed to stabilise and weatherproof the tower.

Tree-ring analysis shows that at least four phases of building have taken place in the tower. The analysis was unable to date any of the timber that survives in situ, but fabric analysis suggests that the timber framing and brick infilling were part of a late 16th century construction phase.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 In July 1996 Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT) was commissioned by Andrews Kent and Stone to undertake a Building Recording survey of St Marys Church in the grounds of Cokethorpe School, Nr Witney, Oxon. The survey was commissioned at the request of West Oxfordshire District Council in advance of repair work.

1.1.2 The work was carried out in accordance with a brief prepared by Carol Rosier, Deputy County Archaeologist (Historic Buildings) Oxfordshire County Council; and in accordance with the Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures (IFA).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The study area is sited on the Upper Jurassic Oxford Clay with Quaternary 4th Terrace Gravel Deposits.

1.2.2 Cokethorpe School is within the grounds of Cokethorpe Park (SP 374063). St Marys church stands on the eastern side of the school with a road (A415) to the east of the church building. The park is generally flat with well spaced mature trees.

1.3 Historical Background

1.3.1 St Mary's Church is listed grade II*. It comprises a pair of 13th century lancet windows as well as late 15th and 16th century work in the tower. The majority of the building is Victorian but some of the fabric has been identified as reset medieval, notably the 12th century tympanum and font. Pevsner describes the building as being in the perpendicular.
style with a chancel, nave, and northwest tower. The tower had a timber bell stage and bell frame which housed a pair of 18th century bells. The roof was pyramidal in form and had been clad in 6" x 10" concrete tiles.

1.3.2 The church is said to have Saxon origins as it is mentioned in a charter of AD957 (Oxon Sites and Monuments Record PRN 11268). The village of Cokethorpe seems to have been abandoned during a period between the 12th and 14th centuries leaving only the church surviving (The Deserted Villages of Oxfordshire, p.36). Earthworks, suggesting the only visible remains of the village, can be seen in the playing field on the northern side of the church. It has been suggested that the chapel which served the village of Cokethorpe was demolished in 1550.

1.3.3 Until recently the church has served as the chapel to Cokethorpe School. A fire in the bell tower has destroyed the upper roof timbers and caused some damage to the nave of the church.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 A project design, issued by Cotwold Archaeological Trust, to draw and photograph the fire damaged timber section of the tower, was approved by Carol Rosier, Oxfordshire County Council.

1.4.2 The primary objective of the project was to draw and photograph the damaged timber section of the tower prior to temporary conservation work.

1.4.3 The drawn record comprises detailed sections and a plan at a scale of 1:20. Measured sketch drawings were made of details and interesting features. The drawn survey showed the construction and arrangement of the timber frame in relation to the lower stone stages of the tower.
1.4.4 The photographic record consists of:

(i) All external elevations. All internal surfaces where practicable.

(ii) All constructional details showing timber jointing techniques and brickwork bonding patterns. Details of openings and surrounds.

(iii) The tower within the context of its surroundings.

1.4.5 The photographic record was compiled in both monochrome prints and colour transparencies. Photographs are cross referenced to location plans.

1.4.6 All architectural recording was conducted in accordance with the standards expressed in CAT Technical Manual 1 Site Recording Manual (1996).

1.4.7 A Dendrochronological report was commissioned to establish dating evidence for the exposed and damaged timberwork. The report is presented in appendix 1 and forms part of the discussion and conclusions to this document.
2. BUILDING RECORDING RESULTS

2.1 Description of the tower structure

2.1.1 The tower is located on the north western corner of the building and measures 11m x 8.8m, the long axis being east-west orientated (Plate 1).

2.1.2 The upper third of the tower has been covered in hard cement render. The top 600mm of the tower flairs out into an ornamental cornice (Plate 2; Fig 2). Fire damage had removed most of the wooden sub-structure of the cornice leaving only a section on the northern elevation intact.

2.1.3 The area of tower exposed by the removal of the cornice shows that the structure has a primary timber frame with brick infilling in the panels (Plate 3; Fig 2).

2.1.4 The timber frame comprises horizontal rails (300 x 160mm) and vertical posts (200mm x 200mm) (Plates 4 and 5). The posts are tenoned into the rails which are continuous for the length of a side of the tower. The rails at the top edge of the tower are clasped with a pegged mortice and tenon joint which is in turn dropped on to a tenon in the vertical corner post (Fig 3). Between the corners are three vertical posts. The central post is slightly thicker than the top rail and has a lapped tenon at the top edge (Fig 3; Plate 4). The other two timbers are simple noggins which are joined to the top rail with a mortice and tenon joint. The jointing arrangements at the base of the wooden frame are obscured by the render and brick work, however, it seems reasonable to suppose that the bottom rail joints are similar to the top rail.

2.1.5 The top rail is chamfered on the base of the outside edge allowing the top edge to protrude from the line of the face of the building.

2.1.6 The bricks within the infill panels have a soft red fabric and measure 220 x 107 x 55mm. They are set in a lime mortar and have fairly fine joints. Close examination of the mortar
was difficult due to the width of the joints and residual scorching, what could be examined seemed well cured without much inclusion. No evidence of animal hair was observed.

2.1.7 All four elevations of the rendered section of the tower had openings. The North, South and West face openings were thought to be sound holes for the bells. These comprise two vertical slits with angled tiles set in the opening (Fig 2). On the south face is a larger opening which has been very badly damaged by fire. The purpose of this opening is unclear.

2.1.8 The decorative cornice is formed on light wooden sectional profiles which are fixed to the main timbers of the frame. Laths are fixed to the profiles and the render applied (Plate 2).

2.1.9 Two T-shaped frames survive on the north-east and south-east corners. These frames were secured to the main timber sections with iron nails. Both T-frames were partially trenched into the main frame (Plates 6 and 7; Fig 3).

2.1.10 Cut into the top edge of the horizontal beam were a series of notches regularly spaced along all four sides. The corner T frames were laid on top of the notches which were filled with debris (Plate 10).

2.1.11 The remains of a blocked window could be seen in the stonework below the brickwork on the northern internal elevation (Plate 8).

2.1.12 Four floor timbers were still *insitu* within the stonework of the tower (Plate 9).
3. PHASING

3.1 General

3.1.1 The history of the tower can be divided into four major construction phases.

3.2 Phases

3.2.1 The stone tower is the primary phase of building. Lancet windows on the western side would suggest a 13th century date for the tower. The wooden platform set within the stonework of the tower is almost certainly part of the same phase of building as the tower itself.

3.2.2 The blocked window in the northern elevation of the tower may be attributed to the 15th century and belongs to the second phase of construction.

3.2.3 The third phase of building is the wooden frame supporting the final roof timbers. This phase also includes the infill brickwork between the main timbers of the frame. The notches cut into the main ring beam may suggest a roof structure which predates the roof destroyed by the recent fire.

3.2.4 The fourth phase comprises a different roof structure and the addition of the decorative cornice at the top of the tower (Fig 4).

4. DISCUSSION
4.1 Evidence for the first phase of construction relies on the lancet windows in the stone section of the tower.

4.2 The second phase of construction rests on blocked windows in the northern elevation. The internal view of the blocked windows show that the tower was truncated below window head level. This suggests that the truncation was not part of a design but more likely the result of some form of catastrophe. If the truncation of the tower had been intended it seems likely that the cut would have been made above the window heads leaving the intact window as a feature.

4.3 The wooden frame and brick infilling is the third phase of construction and appears to be of one build which has not been substantially altered. The notches cut in the main timber cills suggest that they had been the original location for the rafters and are the third phase of building. These notches appear to predate the burnt out roof as the T-frames on the corners cover the notches. There is evidence of a regular series of nails suggesting rafters that have been nailed into position behind the notches and consequently making the notches redundant. Accumulated debris in the notches suggest they had not been used to carry timber in the recent past.

4.4 The fourth phase of building is identified by the vestigial remains of the T-frames. These frames suggest a second roof was built to replace the original. The fact that the overhang projection at the corner matches the depth of the cornice further suggests that the cornice was constructed at the same date as the new roof.
5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The evidence of the blocked windows seems to indicate that the tower was originally all stone. The tower may have suffered a major catastrophe at some point. This incident may be related to the desertion of the medieval village and the subsequent demolition of the chapel in 1550.

5.2 The timber and brick structure resting on the stonework appears to be a cheap or quick method of adding height to the tower. The bricks within the panels conform to the statute brick size (9" x 4½" x 2¼") which became a standard size in 1571 (Brunskill,1990,37). This suggests a date towards the end of the 16th century.

5.3 The notches indicate a different style of roof to the fourth phase (burnt by the recent fire). The change of roof may have been for two reasons. Either the original roof failed or the inclusion of a deep cornice necessitated the change in the depth of the overhang.

5.4 The tree ring analysis suggests four phases of timberwork which is broadly similar to the fabric analysis. Although the timbers in the main frame could not be dated the general date range of timber samples fits into the known history of the church and does not contradict the findings of the fabric analysis.
6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cotswold Archaeological Trust would like to express their gratitude to: The staff of Cokethorpe School; Carol Rosier; Robert Howard; and Michael Holford, Andrews, Kent and Stone Ltd.

The fieldwork was carried out by Peter Moore and Nick Turner. The text was written by Nick Turner, with illustrations by Peter Moore.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brunskill, R, W, 1990, Brick Building in Britain, Gollancz

Pevsner, N, The Buildings of England, Oxfordshire
APPENDIX 1
APPENDIX 2
APPENDIX 2

Photographic register (monochrome)

1 View > northwest elevation
2 View > Northeast elevation
3 View > Southwest elevation
4 Blocked window west wall
5 Blocked window north wall
6 Internal view showing central post, west wall
7 South-east corner, internal
8 Top of east wall internal
9 Central post
10 Central post west elevation
11 Floor beams
12 South-east corner
13 Top of wall east side
14 Top of wall west side
15 North elevation > East
16 North elevation > West
17 North-east corner > North
18 South-west corner > North

19 View of top rail and cornice

20 As 19

21 Profile for cornice

22 Decorative rail at base of cornice

23 Corner post southwest corner

24 Debris filled notch

25 As 24

26 T-frame southeast corner

27 Base of corner post showing reused bead

29 Cornice north elevation

30 Bell sound holes

31 Western elevation of tower
Fig. 2 Elevation drawings

East elevation

West elevation

North elevation

South elevation

Render

Brickwork

Timber
Plan view (showing location of plates)

Fig. 3  Plan view and connective details
Fig. 4  Axonometric projection
Plate 1  Bell tower and church

Plate 2  Cornice on North elevation
Plate 3  Exposed brickwork and timber frame (West elevation)

Plate 4  Horizontal rails (wall plates)
Plate 5  Vertical corner post

Plate 6  Frame, south-east corner
Plate 7  T-frame trenched into beam

Plate 8  Blocked window, North elevation (interior)