

13 Stratford Road, Warwick

Archaeological Watching Brief



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1411
January 2014



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: 13 Stratford Road, Warwick
Commissioned by: Mr Ross Satchwell
Project Report No. 1411
Site Code: WR13
Planning Reference: 11/0131
National Grid Reference: SP 2781 6426
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Date: January 2014
Report reference: Rann,C, 2014 *13 Stratford Road, Warwick, Archaeological Watching Brief*,
Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1411

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was conducted during ground reductions and the excavation of ground beam trenches for a house extension inside the medieval graveyard of the Church of St Lawrence. The work was able to identify the top of the graveyard soil deposit and small fragments of disarticulated human bone.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission has been granted by Warwick District Council for a rear and side extension at 13 Stratford Road, Warwick (11/0131). The proposed development lies within an area of significant archaeological remains, adjacent to previously recorded Roman period features and within 30m of the site of the medieval St Lawrence's Church and its recently discovered graveyard (Archaeology Warwickshire forthcoming). A condition of planning permission required that a programme of archaeological fieldwork be undertaken. A field evaluation undertaken in 2012 established the presence of human burials (Thompson 2012).

1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire was subsequently commissioned to undertake a watching brief in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the planning authority on 23rd November 2013. This report presents the results of that programme. The site archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site code WR13.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site is located on the east side of Stratford Road and close to the western boundary of Warwick Castle Park and Foxes Study, centred on National Grid Reference SP 2781 6426. It is currently occupied by a domestic residential building and associated gardens. The site is generally flat, although higher than the level of Stratford Road and the front of the property slopes down to the level of the adjacent pavement.

2.2 The underlying geology of the site is 2nd river terrace deposits (British Geological Survey 1984).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site lies within the valley of the River Avon, an area extensively settled by a later prehistoric agricultural population, which by the Roman period had expanded to the point where there was precious little land not in agricultural production. At least one Roman ditch and a small amount of Roman pottery were found during recent excavations on the site of

the medieval church of St Lawrence (Archaeology Warwickshire 2010). Several Roman coins have also been found in the field immediately to the south of Foxes Study.

3.2 By the medieval period the site was part of the extra-mural suburb of West Street at the southern edge of the medieval town of Warwick. Historic mapping including John Speed's map of Warwick of 1610 (Speed 1610) shows that there were buildings along West Street to the south of the Goyssel Brook at this time.

3.3 The graveyard of St Lawrence's church was discovered when the road was widened in 1837 and a Norman capital (carved stone column head) was found. However, the exact location of the site of the church of St Lawrence (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 1956) was not established. The church was however recently revealed during investigations within the gardens of 5 Stratford Road, between 2009 and 2010 (Archaeology Warwickshire 2010). Investigations found the remains of two walls which were interpreted as belonging to the nave of the church, part of the chancel and at least 180 burials immediately to the north of the church (Archaeology Warwickshire forthcoming).

3.4 Further burials were recorded when underpinning work was carried out at 11 Stratford Road in 2005 (EWA 7723, Warwickshire Museum 2005). Walls which may have belonged to the south side of the Church and more of the graveyard were found during archaeological observation of construction work at the same site in 2008 (Rann and Thompson 2008).

Map evidence

3.5 John Speed's map of 1610 shows a building which may be the church of St Lawrence, but is not labelled as such. This is surprising as St Michael's, St Johns and St Helen's chapels, associated respectively with the former leper hospital, hospital and Knights Templar preceptory are all labelled. Fish and Bridgeman's map of 1711 also shows a property boundary between 13 Stratford Road and 5 Stratford Road (Fish and Bridgeman 1711) with a possible building where 3 Stratford Road is today. Baker's map of Warwick from 1788 (Fig 2, Baker 1788) shows this same property boundary.

3.6 The Fish and Bridgeman map shows buildings to the north of the site, but not the site. The map is not very accurate (e.g. the castle is marked as a rectangle) but does give a good impression of the town's street plan and general location of buildings. The church does not seem to be shown in the position where it has now been found, but the area is marked as a (nameless) chapel. It might seem odd that the 1711 map even mentions the church site if it had already gone by 1703, but Fish is recorded as surveying his map in 1695. It is plausible

that the remains of the church were demolished between it being surveyed in 1695 and the map being published.

3.7 By 1711 West Street, south of the Goyse Brook, was known as Stratford Road. To the north of the site was the junction of Stratford Road and two other streets going east and south, the latter of which is still used as a modern entrance to the castle grounds. Several other streets to the east of West Street, only Avon Lane (marked as number 19) is actually named, are also shown, none of which now exist. They seem to suggest that the western suburb of Warwick was formerly much more densely occupied. If so, then a likely medieval heyday might have been from the 13th to 14th century, probably finishing at the arrival of the Black Death in 1349. Warwickshire suffered from further outbreaks of plague in 1361, 1369 and from 1375-6.

3.8 Baker's map of Warwick of 1788 shows the site as part of land belonging to a Thomas Pestle. Shortly afterwards he must have sold the land as the Earl of Warwick is recorded as the owner in 1790. The building now forming 3 and 5 Stratford Road was originally a single late 17th-century house, later extended (listed Grade II; LBS 307656). The original stone house is most probably that shown on the 1788 map. The plot to the south was owned by Mrs Curtis and is shown as a small field.

3.9 A similar picture is shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1889 (Ordnance Survey 1889) and the Third Edition Ordnance Survey of 1926 (Ordnance Survey 1926).

History of St Lawrence's church

3.10 The church of St Lawrence (MWA 1956, Fig 1) appears to have lain at the outermost limit of the suburb, in the sort of location often occupied by medieval hospitals such as St John's and the leper hospital of St Michael, elsewhere in Warwick. St Lawrence's leper hospital is mentioned in 1255-56 (VCH 1969, 422) and whilst this might have been connected with the church of St Lawrence it is likely it may have been mistakenly attributed as there appears to be no other reference to it.

3.11 St Lawrence's was a relatively small church and its history is intimately linked with the main parish churches of Warwick. The original mother church of Warwick was probably All Saints' which was located somewhere within the castle grounds. In 1123 Roger de Beaumont, Earl of Warwick, founded the collegiate church of St Mary's and the church of All Saints' was united with it. The college was granted rights to seven other Warwick churches at the same time: St Nicholas's, St Michael's (the leper hospital chapel), St Sepulchre's (the

priory church), St Helen's (within the priory precinct), St John's (situated in the western part of the market square), St Peter's (situated on High Street near the corner of Castle Street) and St Lawrence's. The church of St James (the west gate chapel) was added to this grant shortly afterwards. Each church had its own rector and kept the tithes of the rectory, but had to give part of its income to St Mary's (VCH 1969, 522).

3.12 A licence to let of 1319 does mention a rectory house for St Lawrence's. The college strengthened its rights in 1367 when the bishop gave an order that the churches of St John, St Michael, St Peter, St James and St Lawrence, apparently mostly in a ruinous condition or lacking in churchyards, need no longer be repaired, their parishioners being instructed to attend St Mary's. The churches and any churchyards were to be shut. This was not necessarily entirely popular with the local clergy and perhaps the parishioners as by 1398 the profits of both St Peter's and St Lawrence's were being withheld on the grounds that the order of 1367 did not extend to the successors of the then dean and canons of the college (a rector of St Lawrence's being recorded in Dugdale in 1380). It seems likely that out of all of the small churches which were ordered to be shut that both St Peter's and St Lawrence's were the largest. The order was confirmed by the crown and the churches were finally appropriated when either surrendered or on the death of the resident rector. At St Peter's this happened when the rector resigned in 1400 whilst in the case of St Lawrence's it appears to have been on the death of the last rector in 1410.

3.13 The church building was still standing in 1632 (VCH 1969, 533). The site was sold in 1669 to Jonathan Faires when the church was described as "decayed" and no longer used as a chapel but functioning as barn. By 1703 the site was sold again and the new messuage is described as "where stood decayed St Lawrence Chapell" (English Heritage 1973).

Other recorded archaeological remains in the immediate vicinity

3.14 A Dominican house of Blackfriars stood on the opposite side of West Street, probably at the north end in the angle formed by West Street and Friars Street (MWA 1959). The friary was established by 1263 and was surrendered to the crown in 1538, when the church is described as having a steeple (and therefore a tower). Surprisingly the dedication of the church is not known. It was demolished by 1551. Burials associated with the friary have been found during excavations for building works in the locality, but no remains of its buildings have ever been recorded.

3.15 Foxes Study and Warwick Castle Park (MWA 6956) lie immediately to the north-east of the garden of number 13. Between the 1740s and the 1780s the park was steadily

increased in size, gradually swallowing up land to the east of West Street and the rear of Stratford Road.

3.16 A medieval jetton (a coin-like counting piece) dating to the reign of Edward II (1307-1327) was found to the west of the site (MWA 9841, Fig 1). Several sherds of pottery dating from the 13th/14th century to the 19th century were recovered during an archaeological watching brief at 93 West Street (EWA 7094, Warwickshire Museum 2001). A medallion commemorating the 1832 Reform Act was found to the northeast of the site (MWA 9855).

3.17 The site of a tannery is noted on the 1851 Board of Health map located to the north of the site (MWA 8223). Archaeological observations (EWA 7557) that took place here in 1998 found remains of a wood lined trough and a culverted stream that were most likely associated with the tanning industry (Jones 1998).

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.

4.2 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.3 The objective of the work was a programme of controlled excavation to development formation levels, or the geological natural, whichever the higher.

4.4 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications.

4.5 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with WSI/Brief and planning condition.

4.6 The scheme of development works agreed between the Planning Archaeologist and the developer, was designed to minimise the impact of the new extension on the medieval burials identified during the archaeological evaluation. A license authorising the removal or disturbance of human remains was sought by Archaeology Warwickshire and was obtained

from the Ministry of Justice (072/106; 13-0195) under section 25 of the Burial Act 1857. An archaeologist was present to record any archaeological finds or features uncovered by the groundworks.

5 WATCHING BRIEF

Deposit sequence

5.1 The area of the new extension was reduced by 0.25m using a mini-excavator. Two ground beam trenches, 0.6m wide, were then excavated to a depth of up to 0.45m.

5.2 A layer of greyish-brown silty sandy loam (2) was recorded at a depth of 0.45m below the previous ground level. The few small fragments of human bone that were noted within this layer, were reburied within the trenches. It is likely that layer 2 was the upper horizon of the graveyard soil.

5.3 Very dark greyish-brown silty sandy loam topsoil (1) covered the area to a depth of 0.45m. A number of sherds of post-medieval pottery and fragments of clay pipes were recorded in this layer and were retained by the land owners.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The small fragments of human bone that were encountered during the excavations came from previously disturbed inhumations. No further disturbance to any burials took place during the groundworks. As previously recorded in an evaluation of the site the watching brief confirmed the presence of a graveyard soil and that the medieval churchyard of St Lawrence church extended across this site.

6.2 No Roman or medieval artefacts were found during the works, which was largely due to the limited depth of the excavations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology (Projects) Warwickshire would like to thank Mr Ross Satchwell for commissioning the work and to Anna Stocks, the Planning Archaeologist (AIA WCC) for preparing the Brief.

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APPENDICES

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Very dark greyish brown silty sandy loam	Topsoil
2	Greyish brown silty sandy loam	Graveyard soil

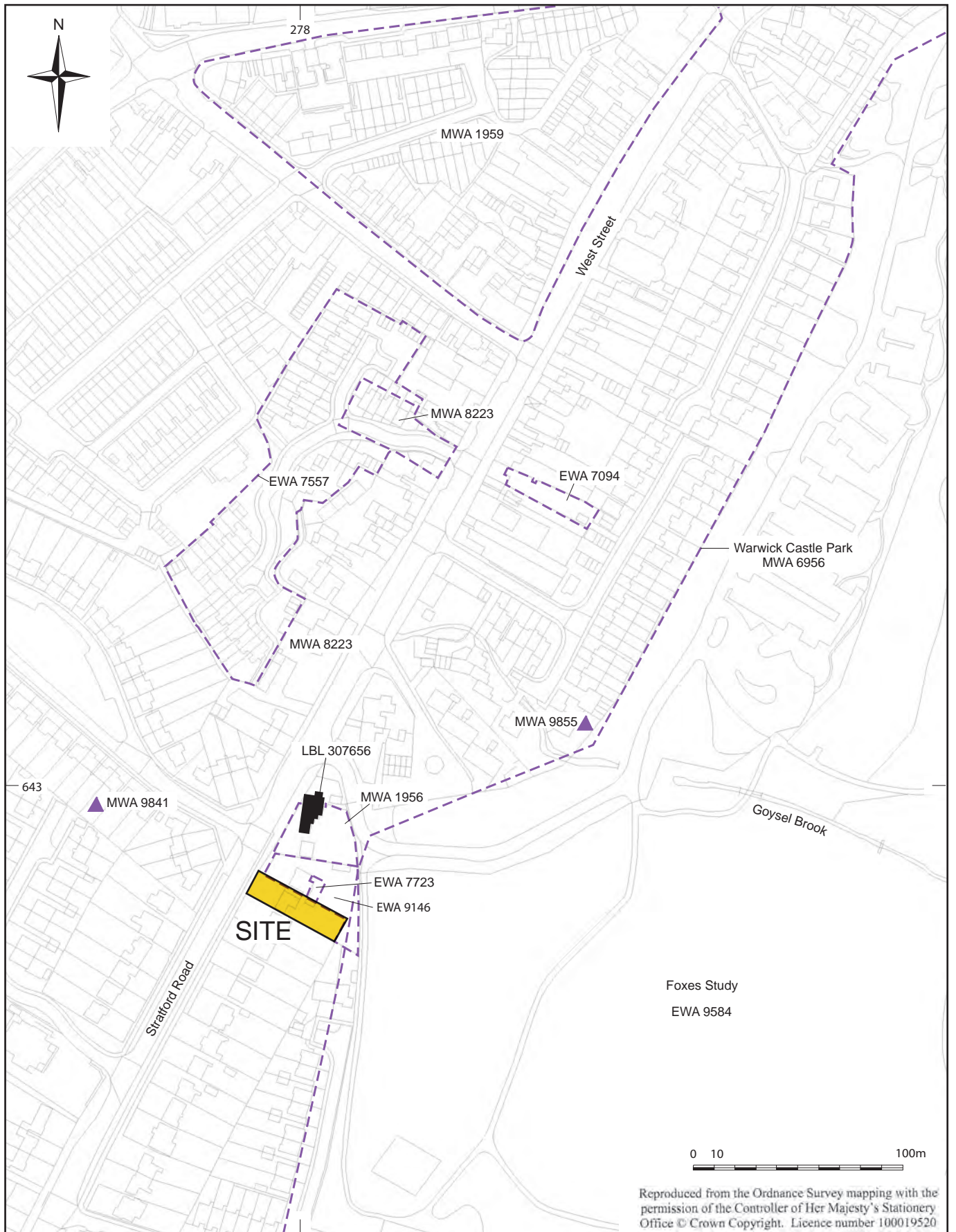


Fig 1: Site location



Fig 2: Detail from Baker's map of Warwick 1788

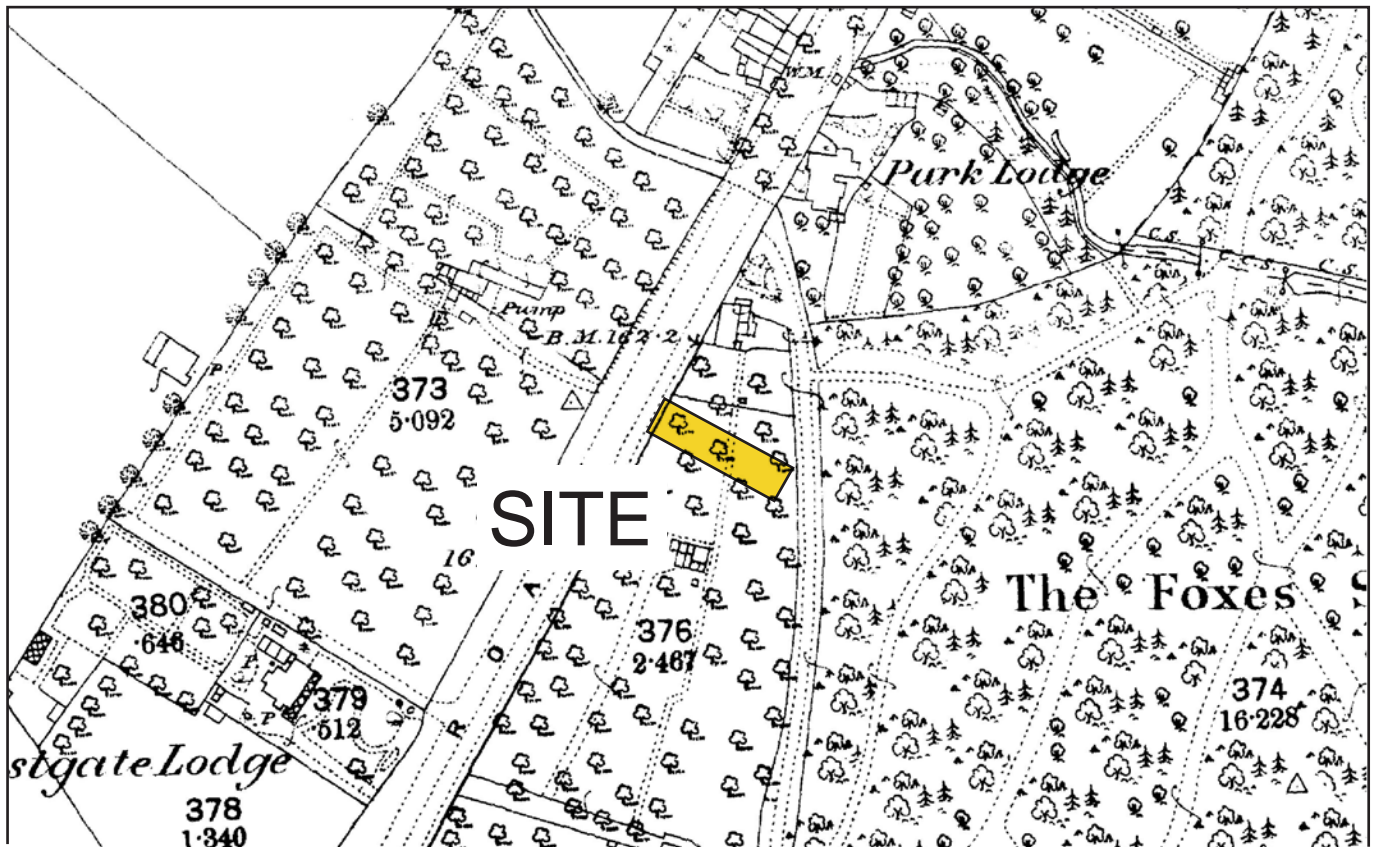


Fig 3: Detail from 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889



Fig 4: Detail from 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1905



Fig 5: Area and trenches observed



Fig 6: Composite plan of Church of St Lawrence and its cemetery



Fig 7: The site reduced and trenches excavated