

St Michael's Cathedral Ruins, Coventry

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 16123
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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: St Michael's Cathedral Ruins, new drain
Commissioned by: Tony Auty, Director of Property and Fabric,
Coventry Cathedral
Project Report No. 16123
Site Code: CSM16
Planning Reference: N/A
National Grid Reference: SP 3360 7899
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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the replacement of a drain inside St Michael's Cathedral ruins. The old slot drain was removed and replaced by a u-shaped drain with removal grille over the top. All work took place within the channel of the old drain and no archaeology was disturbed.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An application has been made to the Fabric Advisory Committee for the replacement of an existing c.65m length of slot drain (surface water) on the south side of the Cathedral Ruins with an Acco channel drain. The work lies within an area of archaeological potential, within the cathedral ruins, although it was considered that all excavation work would be contained within an area previously excavated during the installation of the old drain.
- 1.2 Archaeology Warwickshire was commissioned to produce a Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief, to be carried out in conjunction with the groundworks phase of the development.
- 1.3 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the archaeological observation of the removal of sections of the existing drain, was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out in October and November 2016. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code CSM16, until deposition with the Cathedral.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is centred on national grid reference SP 3360 7899, in the city of Coventry.
- 2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Keresley Member Sandstone (British Geological Survey 2016).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The cathedral church sits in the centre of historic Coventry possibly partly on the site of an earlier Coventry Castle (HER MCT2047). The castle was probably a motte and bailey structure, or possibly a ring and bailey, built in the late 11th century and lay the

area between Bayley Lane, Earl Street, High Street and Broadgate (Soden , 2005, 43). The cathedral church of St Michael was one of the largest parish churches in England, and was made into a cathedral in 1918. It is possible it has its origins in the early 12th century, but much of the fabric dates to the 13th to 15th centuries with late 19th-century restoration. It was significantly damaged in the air raid of November 14th 1940, which left the body of the church roofless. Ground probing radar has identified the location of a possible crypt.

Monuments recorded in the search area are as follows (not indicated on Fig 1 – messuages, sites of medieval shops and sculptures/statues):

HER no	Description	Date
MCT473	Cathedral Church of St Michael	Medieval
MCT552	Drapers Hall, Bayley Lane, Grade II* Listed Building	1829
MCT557	St Mary's Hall, Bayley Lane, medieval guildhall, timber-framed building replaced in stone, Grade I Listed Building	Mid 14thC/15thC
MCT568	The Cottage, 22 Bayley Lane, Grade II Listed Building	15th/16thC
MCT572	20th-century cathedral of St Michael	1951-62
MCT576	23 Bayley Lane, Grade II Listed Building	19thC
MCT788	Council offices, St Mary St, Grade II Listed Building	1863
MCT2047	Possible site of Coventry castle	11th/12thC
MCT2370	Site of Bailey Lane timber-framed buildings	14thC
MCT2371	Site of medieval shops	1487
MCT2372	Site of medieval shops	1487
MCT2373	Site of medieval shops	1487
MCT2374	Site of medieval shops	1487
MCT2375	Site of medieval shops	1487
MCT2376	Site of medieval shops	1487
MCT2377	Site of medieval Drapery	1487
MCT3129	One of six messuages on the north side of Bayley Lane	1671
MCT3130	One of six messuages on the north side of Bayley Lane	1671
MCT3131	One of six messuages on the north side of Bayley Lane	1671
MCT3132	One of six messuages on the north side of Bayley Lane	1671
MCT3134	Site of 17th-century message	1671
MCT15359	The Minstrels Sculpture	2004

HER no	Description	Date
MCT16001	Reconciliation statue, Old cathedral of St Michaels	1995
MCT16047	Commemorative sculpture, Cathedral Ruins	19thC
MCT16312	Footpath from St Michaels church	Pre-1743
MCT16494	Medieval occupation found in Hay Lane excavation	13thC
MCT16495	Medieval smelting, right of way	13thC
MCT16621	Flagged stone pavement	14thC
MCT16893	Dr Yeatman Biggs bronze effigy	1925
MCT16900	Statue of Christ in ruins of old cathedral	1949
MCT16920	Cathedral door handles, made of bronze	1961
MCT16938	Ecce Homo, sculpture created by Jacob Epstein 1934-5	1969

Landscape Monuments

Landscape no	Description
MCT2446	A drapery is recorded in the 1581 survey of Corporation property
MCT2447	A drapery is recorded in the 1581 survey of Corporation property
MCT2712	Bayley Lane is a road thought to date back to the 13th century
MCT5900	Draper's Hall recorded on a survey of the Estate belonging to the Masters, Wardens and fellowship of Drapers in the City of Coventry 1759

The following events have taken place within the search area:

Event no	Description
ECT22	Photographic survey of St Michaels Baptist chapel, 1989
ECT100	Excavations behind Hay Lane, Trench 2 (1989)
ECT101	Excavations behind Hay Lane, Trench 3 (1989)
ECT102	Excavations behind Hay Lane, Trench 3a (1990)
ECT145	St Michael's Cathedral ruins, Test-pit 1 (2000)
ECT146	St Michael's Cathedral ruins, Test-pit 2 (2000)
ECT147	St Michael's Cathedral ruins, Test-pit 5 (2000)
ECT148	St Michael's Cathedral ruins, Test-pit 4 (2000)
ECT149	St Michael's Cathedral ruins, Test-pit 3 (2000)
ECT150	St Michael's Cathedral ruins, Core 3 (2000)
ECT151	St Michael's Cathedral ruins, Core 2 (2000)
ECT152	St Michael's Cathedral ruins, Core 1 (2000)

ECT173	St Michael's Trench 1 (1999)
ECT174	St Michael's Trench 2 (1999)
ECT177	St Michael's Baptist Chapel watching brief
ECT300	Tree-ting analysis at St Mary's Guildhall
ECT353	Watching brief for Cathedral lighting scheme
ECT364	Coventry Millennium Project Appraisal 1997
ECT555	Borehole survey at St Michael's Cathedral Ruins
ECT556	Test-pits at St Michael's Cathedral Ruins
ECT690	Photogrammetric survey of St Mary's guildhall
ECT701	High-resolution ground penetrating radar survey, Coventry Cathedral (2015)
ECT704	Coventry Cathedral strategic development plan

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 during the groundworks programme when notified by the client in accordance with WSI.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 Work began on removing the old drain at the east end of the cathedral. An initial morning of work was observed, followed by a series of visits when called out by the contractors, to examine work in progress and record open sections of the drain channel.

- 5.2 The material either side of the old metal slot drain was strong mortar with rows of decorative pebbles embedded onto the surface either side (Fig 1). This material was taken out using a *Kango Hammer* and its removal allowed the sections of metal slot drains (3) to be removed. The maximum depth excavated was 0.17m, revealing the 1m long sections of the old ceramic drain channel, which were laid in a 0.30m wide cut between the stone flagstones (1) that make up the present flooring of the cathedral ruins. This drain was bedded in a sandy mortar (2), the upper 70mm of which was removed.
- 5.3 The new drain channel was installed on top of the old channel and the void either side re-filled with concrete into which two rows of pebbles were bedded. The initial stretch of new concrete had to be removed and re-set with more frequent pebbles to be more in keeping with the new drain channel in the northern side of the church. This re-excavation was not observed.
- 5.4 No groundworks took place outside of the pre-existing drain channel and no finds were recovered.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 As had been anticipated, all work took place within the trench previously excavated for the old drain and no extra groundworks were required, meaning that no archaeology was disturbed during the work. No finds were recovered during the excavation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Tony Auty for commissioning the work on behalf of the cathedral and the contractors for their help on site.

REFERENCES

BGS British Geological Survey 2016 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed September 2016.

Landmark 2003 First Edition Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 of 1885, digital version.

APPENDIX

A List of contexts

Context	Description	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	Flagstones		0.06	Present floor of cathedral ruins
2	Mortar fill with pebbles		0.07	Either side of old ceramic drain and slot drain
3	Metal slot drain	0.07	0.09	Above ceramic drain 4
4	Ceramic drain	0.10	0.13	
5	Drain cut	0.30	0.23	Old drain channel



1: Slot drain prior to replacement



2: Old drain removed and new drain being installed



3: Detail of new drain, sitting over old drain channel

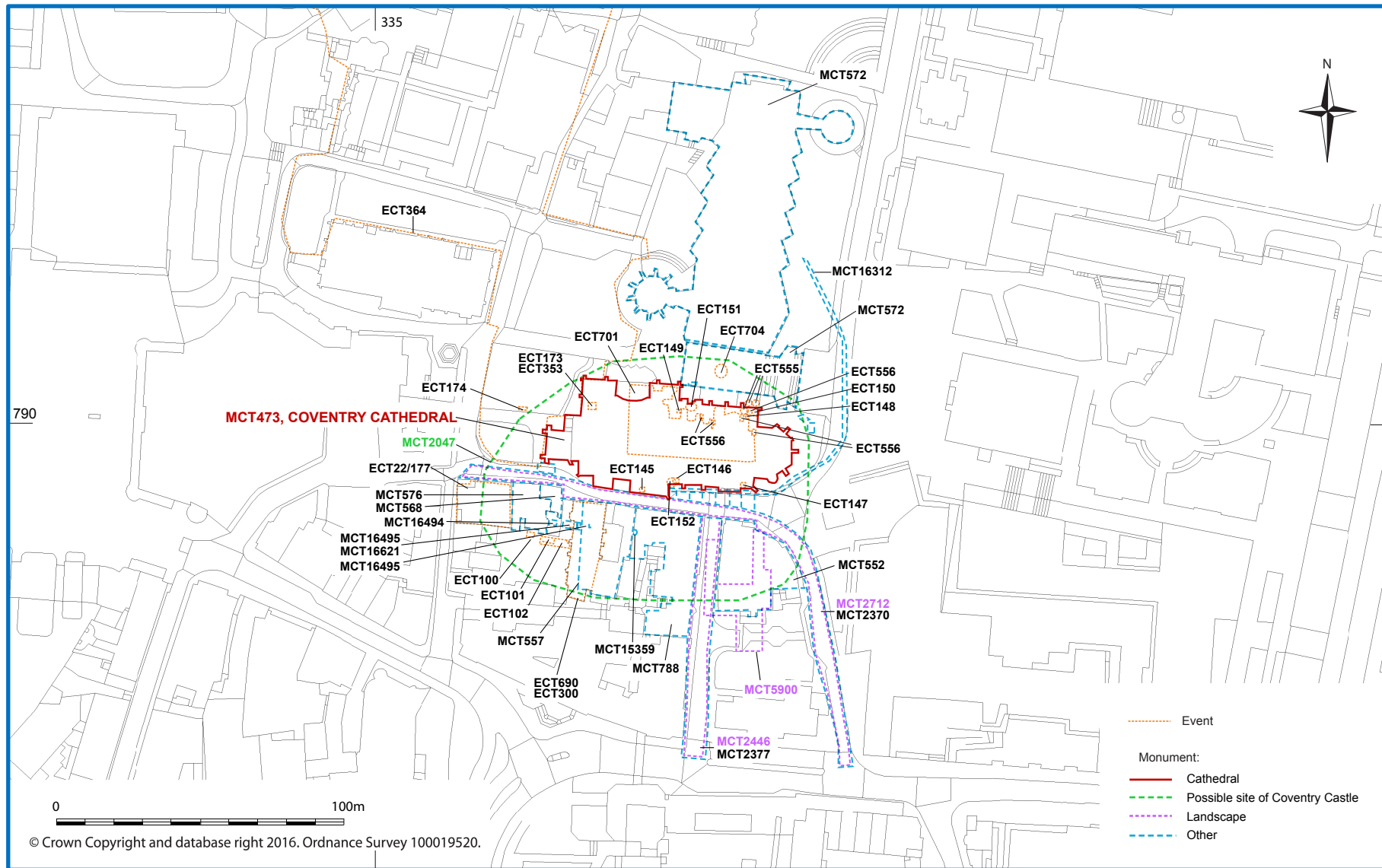


Fig 1: Location of Cathedral and Historic Environment information

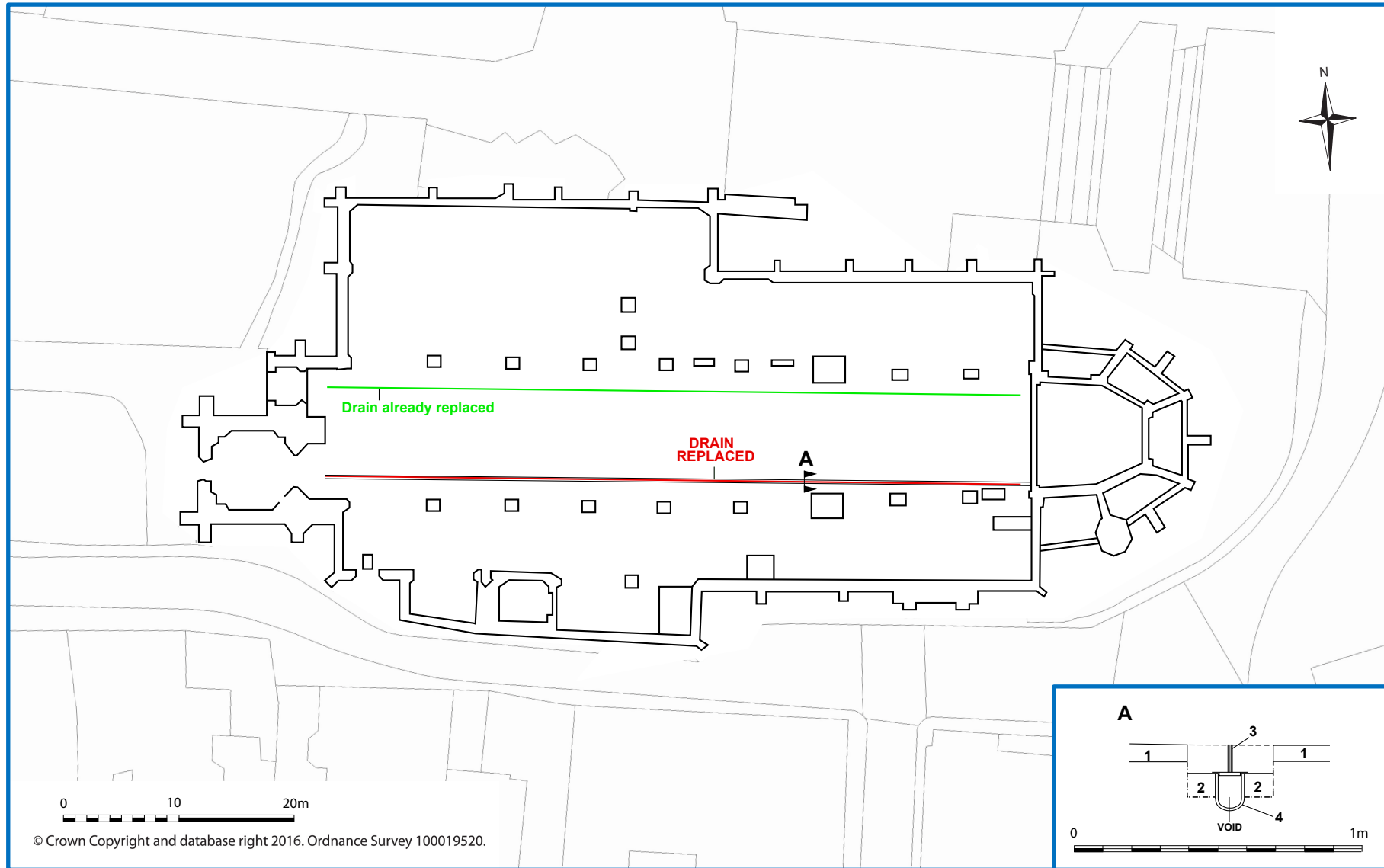


Fig 2: Location of drain at St Michael's Cathedral, with detail of section