

St Matthew's Church Nechells Birmingham

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1875
SEPTEMBER 2018



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: Watching Brief at St Matthew's Church, Nechells
Commissioned by: Ian Jeavons on behalf of St Matthew's Church
Site Code: BMC18
Faculty Jurisdiction: Diocese of Birmingham
National Grid Reference: SP 0843 8810
Project Manager: Dr Cathy Coutts
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CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| | Summary | 2 |
| 1 | Introduction | 3 |
| 2 | Site Location | 4 |
| 3 | Archaeological and Historical Background | 5 |
| 4 | Aims and Methods | 6 |
| 5 | Results | 7 |
| 6 | Conclusions | 9 |
| | Acknowledgements | 10 |
| | References | 11 |

APPENDICES

| | | |
|---|------------------|----|
| A | List of Contexts | 12 |
| B | Oasis Form | 13 |

PHOTOGRAPHS

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Area north of the church where drain was blocked | 14 |
| 2 | Sondage excavated to the north of the church | 15 |
| 3 | Preparation of patch-liner material | 15 |

FIGURES

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Location of application area and Historic Environment information |
| 2 | Location of area observed |

SUMMARY

A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during work associated with the repair of existing drains within the churchyard of St Matthew's Church, Nechells, Birmingham. The area of damaged drain was repaired using a patch liner, therefore ground disturbance was kept to a minimum and no human remains were disturbed.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Faculty has been granted by Birmingham Diocese for the replacement of two sections of drain in the churchyard of St Matthews Church, Nechells, Birmingham. The drains had been backing up and a survey carried out by Auger, using CCTV survey of the below-ground drainage system, revealed a 1.5m dipped section of pipework, joint displacement and root ingress all of which prevented the system from being free flowing. The site lies within an area of archaeological potential within a 19th-century graveyard and it was considered that there was potential for unmarked burials to be disturbed by the excavations.
- 1.2 A condition of Faculty required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Planning Authority.
- 1.3 This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code BMC18, until deposition with Birmingham Museums. The work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidelines (2014).

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The application area is centred on National Grid Reference SP 0843 8810 on the north side of St Matthew's Church, 63 Wardlow Road, Nechells, Birmingham, B7 4JH. The church is located on the western side of the northern leg of Wardlow Road.

- 2.2 The underlying bedrock geology of the site is Helsby Sandstone Formation – Sandstone, overlaid by superficial Glaciofluvial Deposits (British Geological Survey 2018).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The church of St Matthew (Birmingham Historic Environment Record no MBM 184) was founded in 1839 and opened in 1840, dedicated to St Matthew the Apostle. It was one of a large number of churches erected in the Birmingham area in the mid-19th century, in response to the rapidly increasing urban population. The architect was William Thomas of Leamington Spa and the architect's preference for a classical tradition can be seen in the Georgian preaching box which 'has a very thin veneer of E. E. Gothic' (Pevsner 1966, 131). It was built as a daughter church to St Peter and St Paul Church, in Aston, and is one of the first five churches built by Birmingham Church Building Society (The Ten Churches Fund). In 1866 J A Chatwin added galleries to increase the seating capacity. In 1994 a rebuilding scheme converted the church into a multi-purpose building with a worship area for 250 people at the east end. It is a Grade II Listed Building (List entry No. 1211418), see below:

GREAT LISTER STREET 1. 5104 Nechells Green B7 Parish Church of St Matthew (formerly listed under Saltley) SP 08 NE 7/40 25.4.52 II 2. 1839-40 by William Thomas of Leamington and the first of 5 churches to be built by the Birmingham Church Building Society. Brick. Nave and aisles with shallow chancel and projecting west tower in 3 stages. Lancet windows in the nave with iron glazing bars with geometrical tracery. East window evidently later; of 3 lights surmounted by 2 cinquefoils and a quatrefoil in the apex. Also evidently later the west portal and the tracery in the tower windows. Interior with galleries on 3 sides supported on iron columns, a set of box pews now without their doors and the original pulpit. Open trussed roof with cusping to the braces. Stained glass of the 1880s though mostly in a style reminiscent rather of the 1840s. Altered choir arrangement with early C20 stalls and reredos.

- 3.2 The church is shown on the 1889 1:500 First Edition map of Birmingham, surrounded by terraced houses and with a graveyard largely on its southern side (old-maps.co.uk). Mapping shows little change through the first half of the 20th century, though by the late 20th century the majority of the terraced housing had been replaced around the church and a new church hall had been erected on its south side, between the church and vicarage.

3.3 Palaeoenvironmental lake deposits were revealed in boreholes dating back to the Midel/Riss interglacial, 250,000 BP (MBM 2859, MBM 2860, MBM 2861). The boreholes contained oak and alder pollen, and beetles, suggesting a climate little different to that of today. Other boreholes produced evidence of the second interglacial with alder dominating, mixed oak forest and conifers and a relatively high level of non-arboreal pollen, suggesting incomplete forest cover at this time (MBM 2862).

3.4 In the post-medieval period the area was dominated by enclosed fields. In the 18th century the area became more populous and terraces of houses began to be constructed. St James the Less church and graveyard was founded in 1789, when Dr John Ash's house was converted into a chapel (MBM 2486). Union gasworks were in existence by 1818 (MBM 2147). The Dog and Partridge public house was mentioned in 1825 (MBM 2856). Windsor Street gasworks were opened in 1848 by the Birmingham Gas, Light and Coke Company (MBM 2088). The gasworks expanded in the 1880s and production ceased in 1974. Cromwell Street Junior and Infant School was built in 1888 (MBM 2819). The Bloomsbury Branch Library was built in 1893 and is a Grade II Listed Building built in striking pink terracotta with a tall entrance tower (MBM 1263, MBM 2829). Windsor Street glassworks were in existence in the 19th century (MBM 2151).

3.5 Twentieth-century monuments in the search area include:

| MONUMENT | DESCRIPTION | DATE |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------|
| MBM 2836 | Ashcroft Estate maisonettes | 1930s |
| MBM 2839 | Former railway goods office | 1900 |
| MBM 2848 | Church of St Vincent | 1968 |
| MBM 2849 | South Tower, tower block | 1954 |
| MBM 2851 | High, Queens and Home Towers | 1954 |
| MBM 2855 | Co-op Depot | 1913 |

3.6 Several archaeological interventions are recorded in the area:

| EVENT | DESCRIPTION |
|----------------|---|
| EBM 411 | Barrack Street watching brief |
| EBM 443 | Windsor Street Gas Works watching brief |
| EBM 552 | Windsor Street Gas Works watching brief phase 2 |

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological deposits revealed or disturbed by the excavations, to collate the fieldwork records into an archaeological archive and present the results of the fieldwork in this report for dissemination.
- 4.2 This report will describe and discuss the extent, character and dates of all archaeological remains exposed and place the results in their local and regional contexts.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 An experienced archaeologist was present during ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with WSI.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The main drain run taking stormwater away from the north side of the church runs parallel to the north wall of the church (Photo 1). The plan had original been to open up two small lengths of trench in order to replace areas of drain that had been partly blocked by the ingress of roots.

- 5.2 A small rectangular sondage was excavated over the line of the pipe (Photo 2). The sondage was excavated to a depth of 0.18m in an attempt to expose the pipe but the ground proved to be too compacted and a different repair technique was therefore utilised. Instead of excavating to fully expose the damaged sections of pipe and replace them, the contractor repaired the damaged sections by re-lining the damaged drain using a patch liner, after using a hose to wash the drain clear of debris. In order to line the drain a long inflatable 'bladder' was wrapped in cling film before being wrapped with resin-soaked fibreglass. This was then being inserted into the drain pipe via the inspection chamber (Photo 3). Once the device was in the correct place air was introduced to make the bladder expand to the diameter of the drain and when the resin had hardened the bladder was removed leaving an inner sleeve patch, thus repairing the pipe.

- 5.3 The sondage was subsequently backfilled. No finds were recovered and no human remains were disturbed during the work

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The damaged section of pipe was repaired using a resin-covered fibreglass patch liner, thus obviating the need for excavating and removing the damaged sections of pipe. Only a small area of ground was disturbed and no human bone or other finds were recovered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Mr Ian Jeavons for commissioning the work on behalf of St Matthew's Church.

REFERENCES

BGS British Geological Survey Geology of Britain Viewer
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed July 2018.

Ordnance Survey First Edition 1889 *First Edition 1:500 map, Birmingham Town Plan.*

Pevsner, N. and Wedgwood, A. 1966 *The Buildings of England, Warwickshire.*
Harmondsworth.

VCH 1964 *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7, The City of Birmingham,*
London.

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

| Context | Description | Thickness (m) | Comment |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | Brown clay loam topsoil | 0.10 | Contained occasional roof tile and glass fragments (none retained) |
| 2 | Layer of reddish brown clay loam | 0.08+ | Frequent small pebbles |

B Oasis Form

| | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| PROJECT DETAILS | | OASIS No | archaeol27-327991 |
| Project name | Drainage repair at St Matthew's Church, Nechells, Birmingham | | |
| Short description (250 words max) | A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during the work associated with the repair of existing drains within the churchyard of St Matthew's Church, Nechells, Birmingham. The area of damaged drain was repaired using a patch liner, therefore ground disturbance was kept to a minimum and no human remains were disturbed. | | |
| Project type (Eg DBA, Eval etc) | Watching Brief | | |
| Site status (None, NT, SAM etc) | Grade II Listed Building | | |
| Previous work | None | | |
| Current land use | Churchyard | | |
| Future work (yes, no, unknown) | None | | |
| Monument type / period | Church, 19th century | | |
| Significant finds (artefact, type, period) | None | | |
| Methods & techniques | Sondage excavated | | |
| Development Type | Drain repair | | |
| Prompt | Faculty | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | | | |
| County | Birmingham | | |
| Site address (inc postcode) | St Matthew's Church, 63 Wardlow Road, Nechells, Birmingham, B7 4JH | | |
| Study area (sq.m or ha) | 200 square metres | | |
| OS Easting & Northing | SP 0843 8810 | | |
| Height OD | unknown | | |
| PROJECT CREATORS | | | |
| Organisation | Archaeology Warwickshire | | |
| Project brief originator | N/A | | |
| Project design originator | Dr Cathy Coutts | | |
| Director/supervisor | | | |
| Manager | Dr Cathy Coutts | | |
| Sponsor or funding body | St Matthew's Church | | |
| PROJECT DATE | | | |
| Start date /end date | 23-08-2018 | | |
| ARCHIVES | Location (Accession no) | Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc) | |
| Physical | none | | |
| Paper | Birmingham Museums | Report | |
| Digital | Birmingham Museums | Report, photos | |



1: Area north of the church where drain was blocked



2: Sondage excavated to the north of church



3: Preparation of patch-liner material

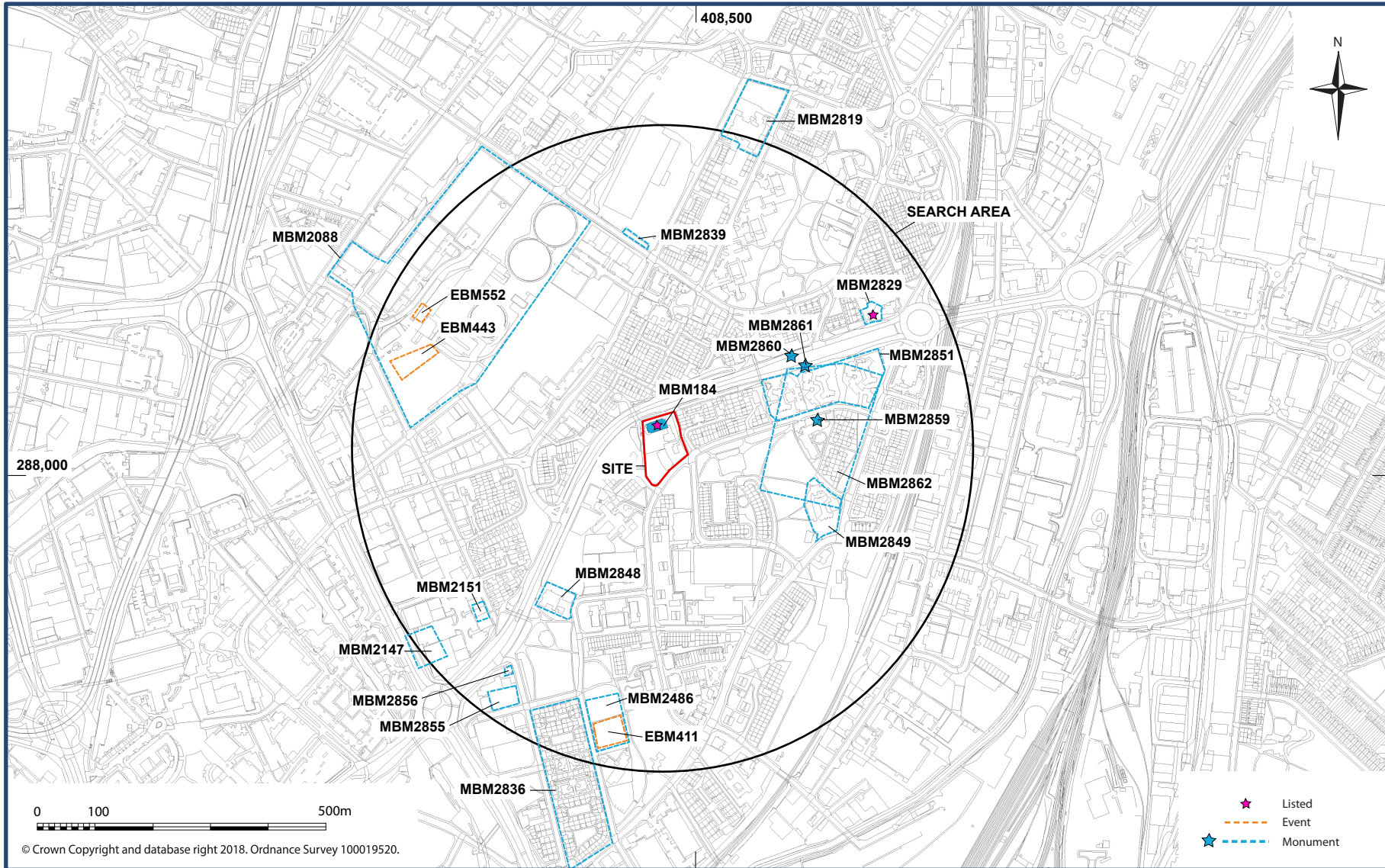


Fig 1: Location of site and Historic Environment information

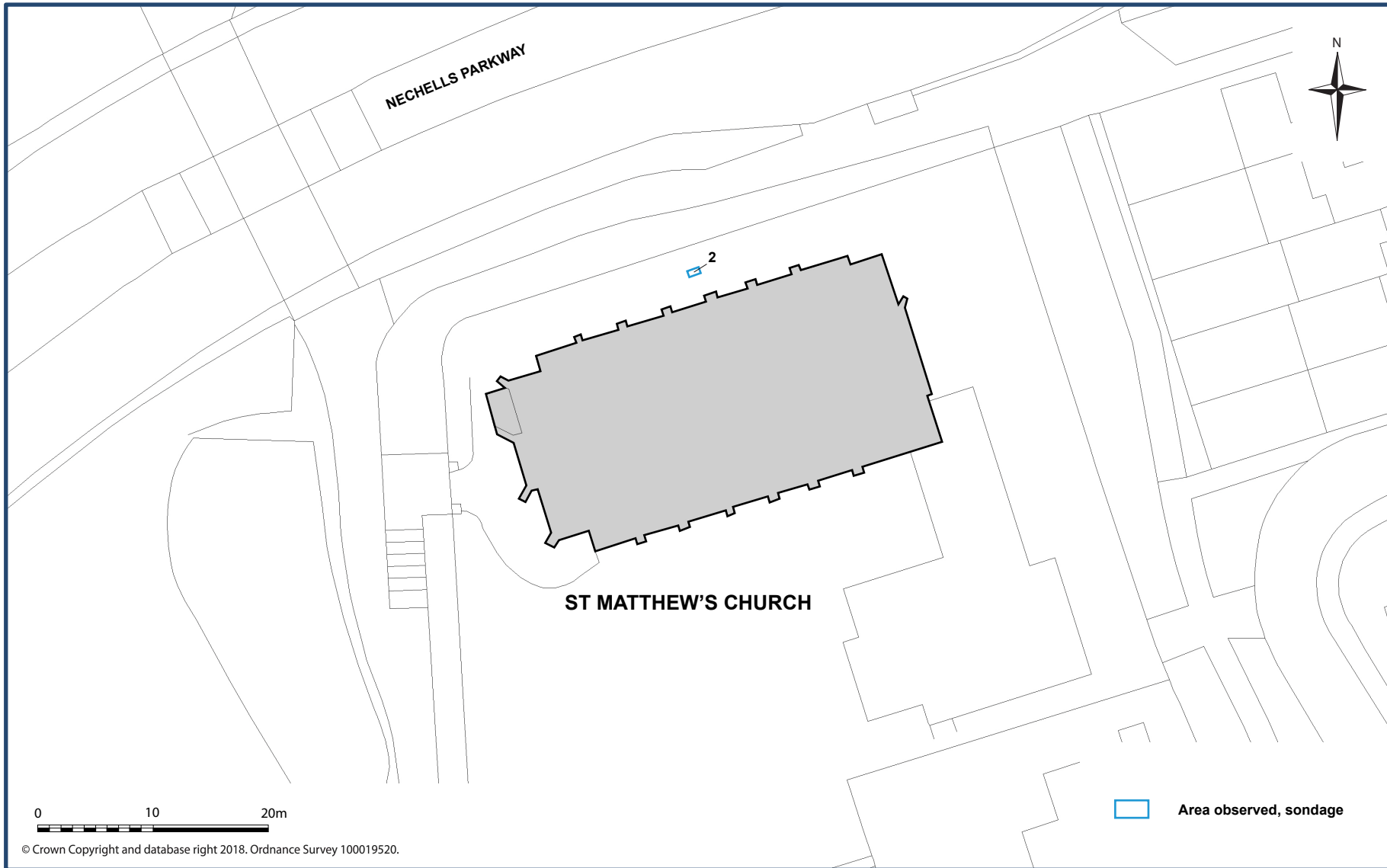


Fig 2: Location of area observed