

St Laurence's Church Bidford-on-Avon Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING



EXPERTISE WHERE YOU NEED IT

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1908
JANUARY 2019



*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project: St Laurence's Church, Bidford-on-Avon,
Warwickshire, watching brief

Commissioned by: Rev Peter Walker

Site Code: BL18

Diocese: Coventry

Diocese Archaeologist: Chris Patrick

HER Search Ref: N/A

National Grid Reference: SP 1007 5183

Project Manager: Dr Cathy Coutts

Fieldwork Jade Franklin MA PCIfA,
Edwin Pearson BSc

Author: Jade Franklin MA PCIfA

Illustrations: Candy Stevens

Checked by: Dr Cathy Coutts

Approved by: Stuart Palmer MCI fA

Date: January 2019

Report reference: Franklin, J, 2018 *St Laurence's Church, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire: Archaeological Watching Brief*, Archaeology Warwickshire Report 1908.

Please note that this document has been prepared for the commissioning client or agent for a specific purpose and is time limited. It should not be relied upon by any other party for any other purpose at any other time.

Please address enquiries to: **Stuart C Palmer MCI fA**

Principal Archaeologist & Business Manager

Archaeology Warwickshire

UNIT 9

Montague Road

Warwick

CV34 5LW

01926 412278

stuartpalmer@warwickshire.gov.uk

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/archaeology



CONTENTS

	Summary	2
1	Introduction	3
2	Site Location	4
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	5
4	Aims and Methods	7
5	Results	8
6	Conclusions	10
	Acknowledgements	11
	References	12

APPENDICES

A	List of Contexts	13
B	List of Finds	14
C	Oasis Form	15

PHOTOGRAPHS

1	Service trench for waste water excavated from the river to the south side of the choir vestry	16
2	Service trench for water main around the church tower	16
3	Service trench for water main leading towards the church entrance of the north side of the church yard	17
4	Area in front of north door, where slabs 105, were lifted, exposing the reddish brown layer 104, and the concrete casing for soakaway 107	17
5	Articulated remains 109 found north of the church	18
6	South aisle wall layer of degraded building material 102	18
7	Finds from context 101	19

FIGURES

1	Location of proposed works with relevant Historical Environment information
2	Location of groundworks observed

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at St Laurence's Church, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, during groundworks within the graveyard for service trenches to facilitate the installation of a servery and WCs.

One articulated burial was partially exposed in a trench north of the church, and was left undisturbed, however numerous whole and fragmentary disarticulated bones were discovered, and reburied within the service trench, as agreed with Rev. Walker.

Finds recovered during the works included a large fragment of a post-medieval coarseware vessel, and two metal objects.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Faculty has been granted by Coventry Diocese for the installation of a servery and WCs in St Laurence's Church, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire (Faculty Ref. 2018-020425). The groundworks had the potential to impact on significant archaeological deposits including human remains, with a service trench being excavated through the medieval churchyard.
- 1.2 A condition of the faculty required the Church to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor.
- 1.3 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of archaeological observation of the excavation and recording of a service trench for a foul drain, was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out in November and December 2018. In addition to the foul drain, a trench for a new water main was excavated and recorded. This report presents the results of that work.
- 1.4 The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code BL18. The work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidelines for an Archaeological Watching Brief (2014).

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference SP 1007 5183, on the south-west, west and north sides of the church of St Laurence, in the village of Bidford-on-Avon, in the parish of the same name.
- 2.2 The underlying geology of the site is 2nd River Terrace Gravels (British Geological Survey 2018).
- 2.3 The church is positioned on the highest point within the local landscape, and the graveyard slopes down to the south-west towards the River Avon.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The original settlement at Bidford grew up around a river crossing. A major Roman road, Ryknild Street (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA 445), crossed the Avon at this point, although the precise location of the crossing is uncertain. The direct line between the known lengths of Ryknild Street to the north and south of the river would be along the present Icknield Street, immediately east of the churchyard, down to the river where paving was still visible in the north bank until recently (MWA 591). More definite evidence for a crossing was found in 1970, half way between Ryknild Street and the medieval bridge, when a submerged causeway or ford (MWA 603), with timber piles dating to the 4th century, was discovered. By the medieval period the crossing point seems to have moved further downstream (MWA 604) to the position occupied by the medieval bridge (MWA 588, SAM 27). It is possible that the location of the crossing has moved in reaction to changes in the course of the river, being originally laid out on the line of the Roman road and shifting downstream to the medieval and modern crossing point.
- 3.2 Roman remains have been found just north-east of the church and a large Anglo-Saxon cemetery (MWA 605) has been excavated just to the north-east of the bridge.
- 3.3 The parish church of St Laurence (MWA 586) dates from at least the mid-13th century. There was an enclosure award for this land, although it does not appear on any surviving map. The church was heavily altered in the 19th century with the nave being widened and new aisles added in 1835 and the chancel being restored in 1886-9. The church is a Grade II Listed Building; the Listing Citation is as follows:

Parish Church. c.1250 Nave and aisles rebuilt by Joseph Lattimore; restored 1886-7. North vestry 1914. Coursed limestone chancel and tower, lias ashlar nave and aisles cement parapets. Chancel and vestry roofs of tile, nave and aisles of slate. Aisled nave, chancel and west tower, north porch and south-west and north-east vestries. Chancel has moulded plinth to east wall and angle buttresses. Trefoiled lancets throughout: 3 to the south, 2 to the north. Late C19 east window of 3 stepped lancets and foils, with detached shafts inside. Aisles have limestone plinths, and buttresses, and 4 straight-headed windows of 3 arched lights. North porch has double-leaf round-arched door with hood mould. Tower in 2 stages: lower stage with heavily battered plinth

and massive south- east buttress. Renewed round-headed west window. Second storey south window of 2 very small round-headed lights. Bell stage has single-trefoiled straight- headed openings. Crenellated parapet on moulded cornice. Interior: Chancel has C19 panelled wagon roof and early English style chancel arch of 1886. Nave has 3-bay arcades with round piers and arches, and simple king post roof. Nave and aisle walls of whitewashed plaster. 2-centred tower arch, with former roof- line visible above. Fittings: Reredos of 1865, C19 altar rails and encaustic paving, C19 stained glass. Monuments: Lady Stepwith 1655, chancel south wall: bust with coat of arms. Several C18 wall monuments in aisles. (Buildings of England : Warwickshire p.92., V.C.H. Warwickshire III p.55).

- 3.4 Archaeological recording (EWA 7612) has previously been undertaken at the church during dismantling and rebuilding of two sections of the churchyard wall, in 2000 (Coutts 2000) and 2005 (Gethin 2005). During the latter work a sherd of later prehistoric or Roman pottery was recovered, along with a fragment of hand-made roof tile of medieval or post-medieval date. Occasional fragments of human bone were recovered and reburied, showing that burials had been interred right up to the churchyard boundary.

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any significant archaeological deposits revealed or disturbed by the development, 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.
- 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 for each period of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with WSI. Where potential archaeological deposits were encountered, the supervising archaeologist assessed and recorded them before they were disturbed.
- 4.5 The service trenches were excavated by a small 360° excavator fitted with a 0.4 wide toothless ditching bucket. Upon commencement of the works, it was advised that as well as watching the works on the south side of the church, the area under archaeological supervision was to be extended to the north side of the churchyard during the excavation of a new water main. The southern side of the graveyard contained older gravestones and monuments dating to the 17th and 18th centuries.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 A trench was excavated for waste water which extended from the terrace on the bank of the River Avon and divided into two trenches leading to the west choir vestry wall, and the south choir vestry wall (Photo 1). Initial work at the boundary wall was 1m deep and 1m wide as the original intention had been to run the waste pipe below the boundary wall. The main service trench was 0.35m deep and 0.40m wide and cut 0.15m into the graveyard soil (101), overlain by 0.20m of dark grey brown topsoil (100). The trench was 23m long and produced fragments of disarticulated human bone which were reburied within the trench, and occasional fragments of modern glass.
- 5.2 A second trench was excavated for the water supply, which connected to the existing water main near the entrance of the church on the north side of the graveyard. This trench was excavated from the south vestry wall, utilising the same cut through the wall as the waste pipe, around the bell tower to the west of the church to the north side of the church (Photos 2-6).
- 5.3 Geological natural (103) was a reddish brown gravelly layer that could only be seen when the water main service trench was cut deeper on the northern side of the church. However, the loose dark brown silty layer of graveyard soil (101) which the service trench cut through had clearly been subject to much disturbance during the 19th century, and it contained glass bottles and jars dating to this period (not retained), and multiple fragmentary and complete disarticulated bones. Within this layer the rim of a large post-medieval coarseware vessel with internal black glaze and lumps of mortar attached was recovered, and two iron objects (Appendix B, Photo 7). This layer continued around to the northern side of the church, and was at least 0.70m thick, and was overlain by topsoil (100).
- 5.4 Immediately adjacent to the south side of the church was a layer of light brown material containing degraded building material and mortar (102, Photo 6). This could be seen adjacent to the south choir vestry wall, and stretched 0.80m south of the wall. Layer 102 was 0.22m thick at its deepest. This layer contained occasional fragments of ceramic roof tiles similar to those covering the chancel roof. The nave was widened and new aisles were added in 1835 and this deposit may well be associated with this rebuilding. Layer 102 was also overlain by topsoil (100).

- 5.5 A trial trench measuring 3m x 1.6m with a depth of 0.8m was excavated to locate the existing water main immediately to the east of the tarmac path, on the north side of the church, butting the north aisle wall. The water main was ultimately found 1.5m to the north of this area. Within the south-facing section of the trial trench a partial, articulated, skeleton (109) was uncovered at a depth of 0.53m, within graveyard soil 101 (Photo 5). The remains were recorded but left undisturbed and the area was backfilled. The skull and ribcage were visible within the section, and the body was aligned west-east. An electricity cable was found above these remains. A gravestone was found at a depth of 0.45m, immediately above the skeletal remains, broken in two with the inscription weathered away. However, it is not clear whether this monument was associated the skeletal remains found below it.
- 5.6 A 0.12m thick reddish brown silty soil (104) was recorded under the large paving slabs (105) at the entrance to the church on the north side of the grave yard. This contained occasional disarticulated human remains and sub-rounded pebbles. The concrete casing (107) for the soakaway drain that lies to the north of the entrance of the church was cut into layer 104. The service trench (108) for the drain and casing was excavated in 1978 (Chris Horn pers. comm.) It is not known when the paving slabs were laid.
- 5.7 The 0.20m deep topsoil (100), contained fragments of human bones and building materials, and was seen throughout the trenching. A number of services (gas, electric, BT, both old and modern) were recorded to the west and north of the church.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Nothing structural was recorded during the works. Many disarticulated fragments of human bone were recorded and reburied within the trenches. These would probably have derived from pre-19th century burials cut through by later burials and redeposited.

- 6.2 Of interest is the relatively shallow depth (0.53m) of the partial articulated burial in the trial trench north of the church. The majority of burials in this area date from the 19th century onwards, during which time stricter practices concerning the depth of burials were put in place due to public health reforms. This shallow burial could indicate an episode of truncation within this part of the graveyard or perhaps an earlier grave.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Rev Peter Walker for commissioning the work and for the contractors for their help on site.

REFERENCES

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

Coutts, C M, 2000 Bidford-on-Avon, St Laurence's Church (SP 1001 5179), *West Midlands Archaeology* 42, 91.

Gethin, B, 2006 *Archaeological Recording at St Laurence's Churchyard, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire*, Warwickshire Museum Archaeology Projects Group Report 0621, Warwick.

Ordnance Survey 1886 First Edition 1:2500 map, Warwickshire Sheet 43.14.

VCH 1945 *Victoria County History of Warwickshire, Vol III, Barlichway Hundred*, London.

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

Context	Description	Width (m)	Thickness (m)	Comment
100	Layer of dark brown silty topsoil		0.20	Topsoil containing occasional human bone and modern ceramic building material (CBM)
101	Layer of mid-dark brown silt		0.15-70	Graveyard soil, containing 19th/20thC glass bottles and jam jars. Contained numerous disarticulated fragments of bone and one partial articulated burial
102	Layer of light brown degraded stone material		0.60	Degraded building material containing occasional roof tile fragments
103	Layer of loose reddish brown gravel		0.70	Geological natural
104	Layer of friable reddish brown silt, north of the church			Contained occasional human bone
105	Stone slabs	0.88	0.08	Stone paving slabs by doorway
106	Tarmac		0.06	Modern tarmac path surface
107	Concrete casing for soakaway drain	0.80	0.40	Casing for soakaway excavated in 1978
108	Cut for soakaway drain			
109	Articulated burial			Skeleton recorded north of the church

B List of Finds

Context	Material	Quantity	Date/Comments
101	Pottery	1	Post-medieval coarseware rim with internal black glaze from large straight-sided vessel, lumps of mortar attached
101	Iron	2	1 x square-sectioned iron rod with one terminal at 90° angle, other 45° angle, 1 x iron hook with tapering end

C Oasis Form

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No	archaeol27-340260
Project name	St Laurence's Church, Bidford-on-Avon		
Short description (250 words max)	<p>An archaeological watching brief was carried out at St Laurence's Church, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, during groundworks within the graveyard for service trenches to facilitate the installation of a servery and WCs.</p> <p>One articulated burial was partially exposed in a trench north of the church, and was left undisturbed, however numerous whole and fragmentary disarticulated bones were discovered, and reburied within the service trench, as agreed with Rev. Walker.</p> <p>Finds recovered during the works included a large fragment of a post-medieval coarseware vessel, and two metal objects.</p>		
Project type (Eg DBA, Eval etc)	Watching Brief		
Site status (None, NT, SAM etc)	Grade II Listed Building		
Previous work	Yes		
Current land use	Churchyard		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	unknown		
Monument type / period	Church, medieval		
Significant finds (artefact, type, period)	None		
Methods & techniques	Watching brief on service trenches		
Development Type	New water main and drainage		
Prompt	Faculty		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Warwickshire		
Site address (inc postcode)	St Laurence's Church, Bidford-on-Avon, B50 4DA		
Study area	c.6200 sq m		
OS Easting & Northing	SP 1007 5183		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Archaeology Warwickshire		
Project brief originator	N/A		
Project design originator	Dr Cathy Coutts		
Director/supervisor	Jade Franklin		
Manager	Dr Cathy Coutts		
Sponsor or funding body	St Laurence's Church PCC		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date /end date	27/11/18 to 5/12/18		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	Warwickshire Museum	Pottery and iron	
Paper	Warwickshire Museum	Report	
Digital	Warwickshire Museum	Report, photos	



1: Service trench for waste water excavated from the river to the south side of the choir vestry



2: Service trench for water main around the church tower



3: Service trench for water main on the north side of the church



4: Area in front of north door, where slabs 105, were lifted, exposing the reddish brown layer 104, and the concrete casing for soakaway 107



5: Articulated remains of skeleton 109 found north of the church



6: South aisle wall with layer of degraded building material 102



7: Finds from context 101

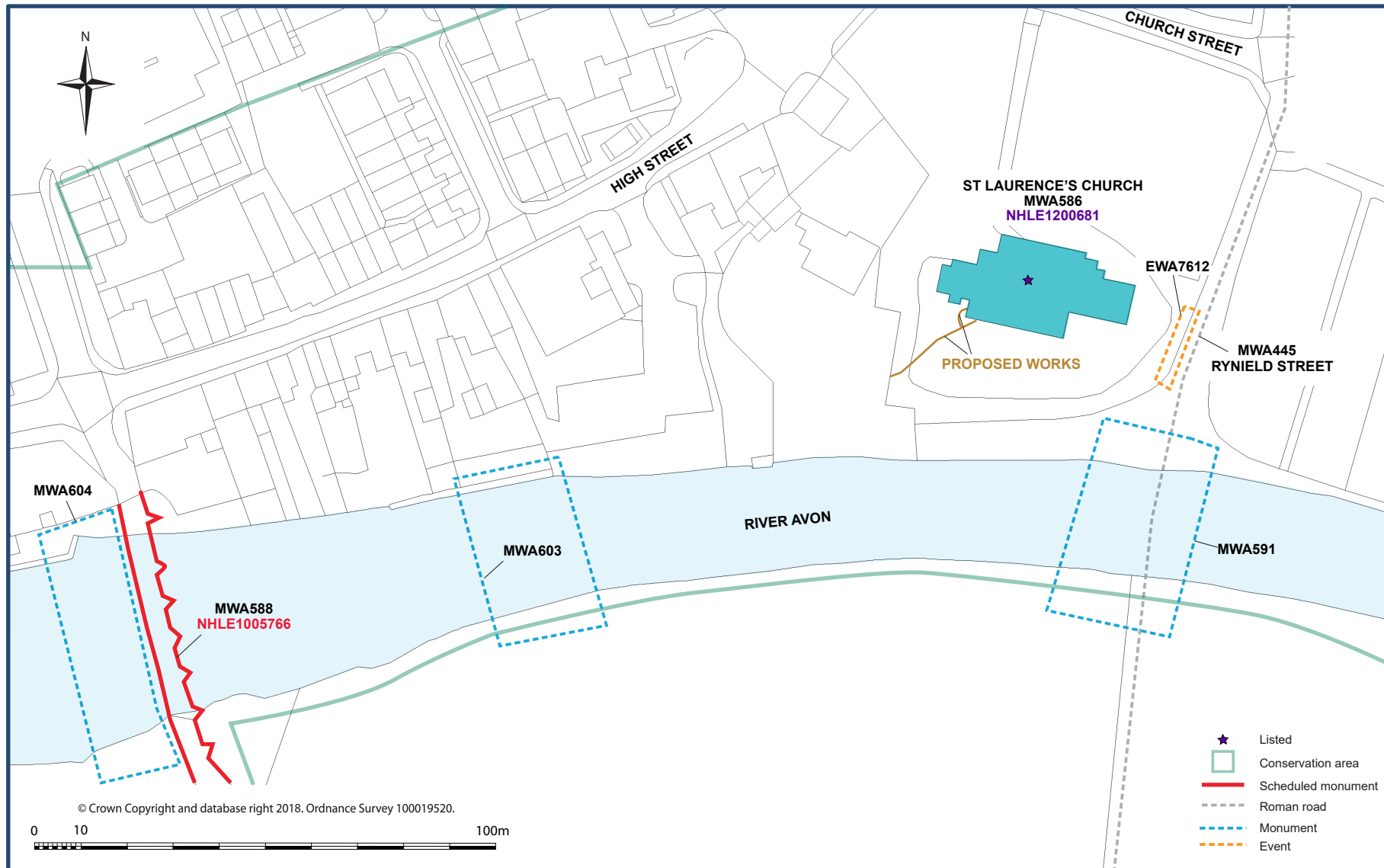


Fig 1: Location of proposed works with relevant Historical Environment information

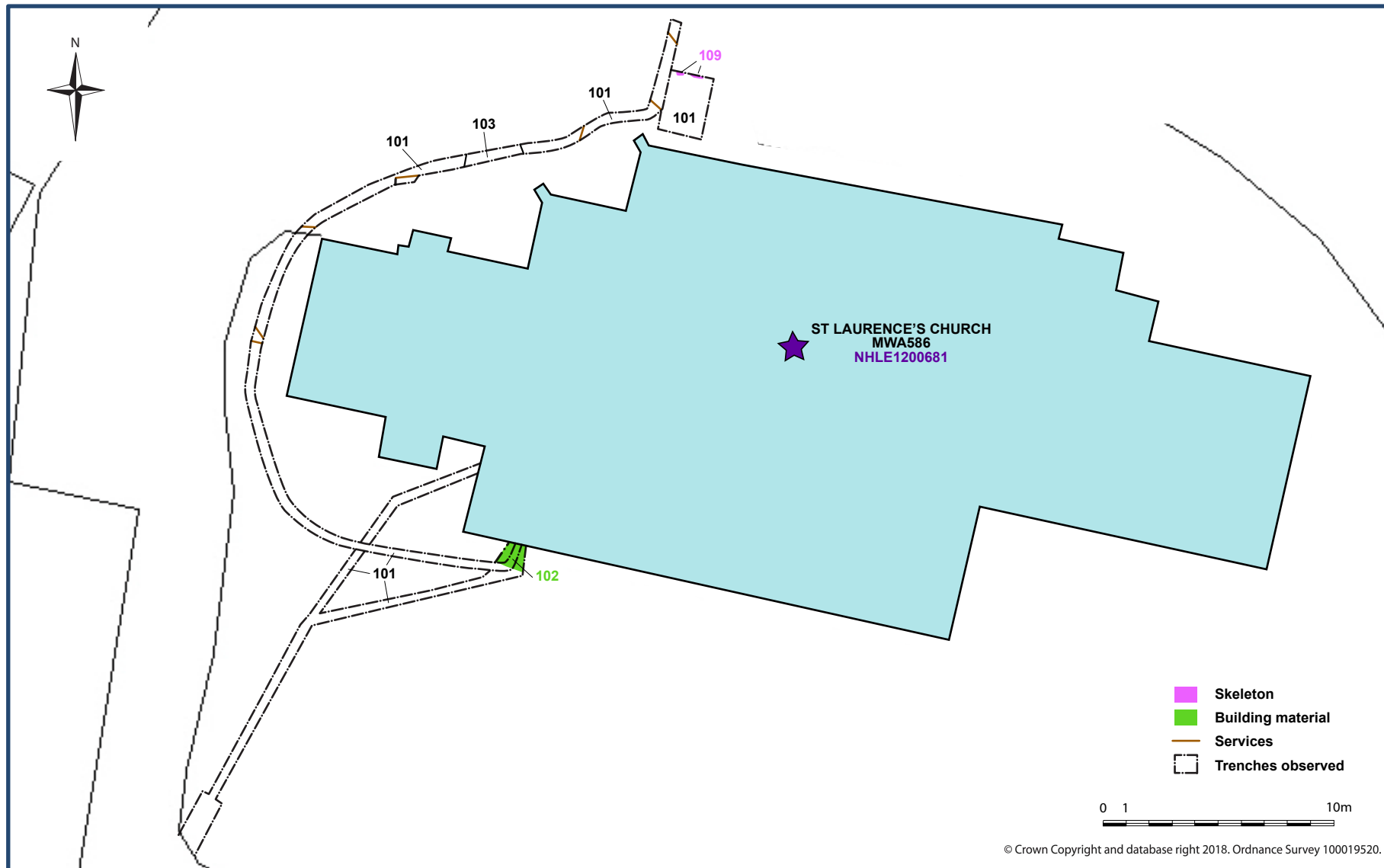


Fig 2: Location of groundworks observed