

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF AT ST. LEONARD'S
CHURCH, COTHERIDGE,
WORCESTERSHIRE

Chris Patrick

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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Project 2274
Report 1008
Fieldwork SMR no 31938

Archaeological watching brief at St. Leonard's church, Cotheridge, Worcestershire

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Background information

<i>Client</i>	Stainburn Taylor Architects
<i>Site address</i>	St. Leonard's church, Cotheridge (Fig 1)
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	SO 786 548
<i>Sites and Monuments Record reference</i>	WSM 31938
<i>Project design</i>	AS 2002
<i>Project parameters</i>	IFA 1999
<i>Previous archaeological work on the site</i>	

The nave and chancel of church of St. Leonard at Cotheridge date from the Norman period with a later chapel added on the northern side. The church is of particular note due to its wooden tower, which is also thought to date from the medieval period. The church fell into disrepair in the early 20th century and the roof of the nave collapsed in 1947. The roof was replaced and the church was restored in the 1960's. No previous archaeological work had taken place at the church.

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible.

Methods

General specification for watching brief	CAS 1995,
Sources consulted	SMR
Date(s) of fieldwork	31 st July 2002
Area of deposits observed	c 1.2m ² . Indicated on Fig 2
Dimensions of excavated area observed	Foundation length 1.2m Width 1m Depth 0.65m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated area was undertaken after the initial machine excavation and during the hand excavation by contractors, which followed.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Discussion

The watching brief was undertaken during the underpinning of a buttress on the southeast corner of the nave to prevent subsidence (Fig 2). A rectangular pit measuring 1.2m by 1m was excavated to a

depth of 0.65m below the buttress, into which concrete was to be poured. The material that was removed was a very mixed, loose sandy silt with stone fragments. The buttress had been the subject of many repairs and the earlier stone work was encased in additional layers of brick and stone. The foundations were shallow and consisted of large blocks of stone approximately 0.5m square sitting upon the bedrock 0.65m beneath the present ground surface. At a depth of 0.65m a skeleton of a short adult was found aligned east to west close to the foundation of the buttress. The skeleton had been buried in a coffin and traces of lead and corroded iron coffin furniture were still present. A licence was obtained from the Home Office (Licence number A4097) to remove the bones but this proved not to be necessary and the remains were left *in situ* and covered over.

Conclusions

The watching brief showed that the buttress had been heavily modified over the years but that the original masonry survived lower down sitting on the bedrock. The presence of the burial shows that the graveyard on the southern side of the church is likely to have a high density of burials. This is not unusual as graveyards on the southern side of churches tend to be more heavily used, as traditionally people preferred not to be buried in the shade on the northern side of a church. The coffin material that was observed showed traces of a thin lead lining and would date the coffin and burial to the later 18th to early 19th centuries. The body appeared to have been buried under the buttress but it was probably buried against the original structure and the burial was then covered as later additions to strengthen the buttress extended over the location of the grave.

Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

A watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Stainburn Taylor Architects at St. Leonard's church, Cotharidge, Worcestershire (NGR ref SO 7867 5473; SMR ref 02401). The watching brief was undertaken during the underpinning of a buttress on the southeast corner of the nave to prevent subsidence. A rectangular pit measuring 1.2m by 1m was excavated to a depth of 0.65m below the buttress. The watching brief showed that the buttress had been heavily modified over the years but that the original masonry survived lower down sitting on the bedrock. A skeleton of a small adult was found adjacent to the buttress foundations. The remains had been buried in a coffin with a thin lead lining and this would date the burial to date to the 18th or earlier 19th centuries.

Archive

Fieldwork progress records AS2	1
Colour transparency photographs	12
Black and white photographs	12
Drawings	1
Computer disks	1

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Hartlebury Castle, Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
01299 250416

telephone

Acknowledgements

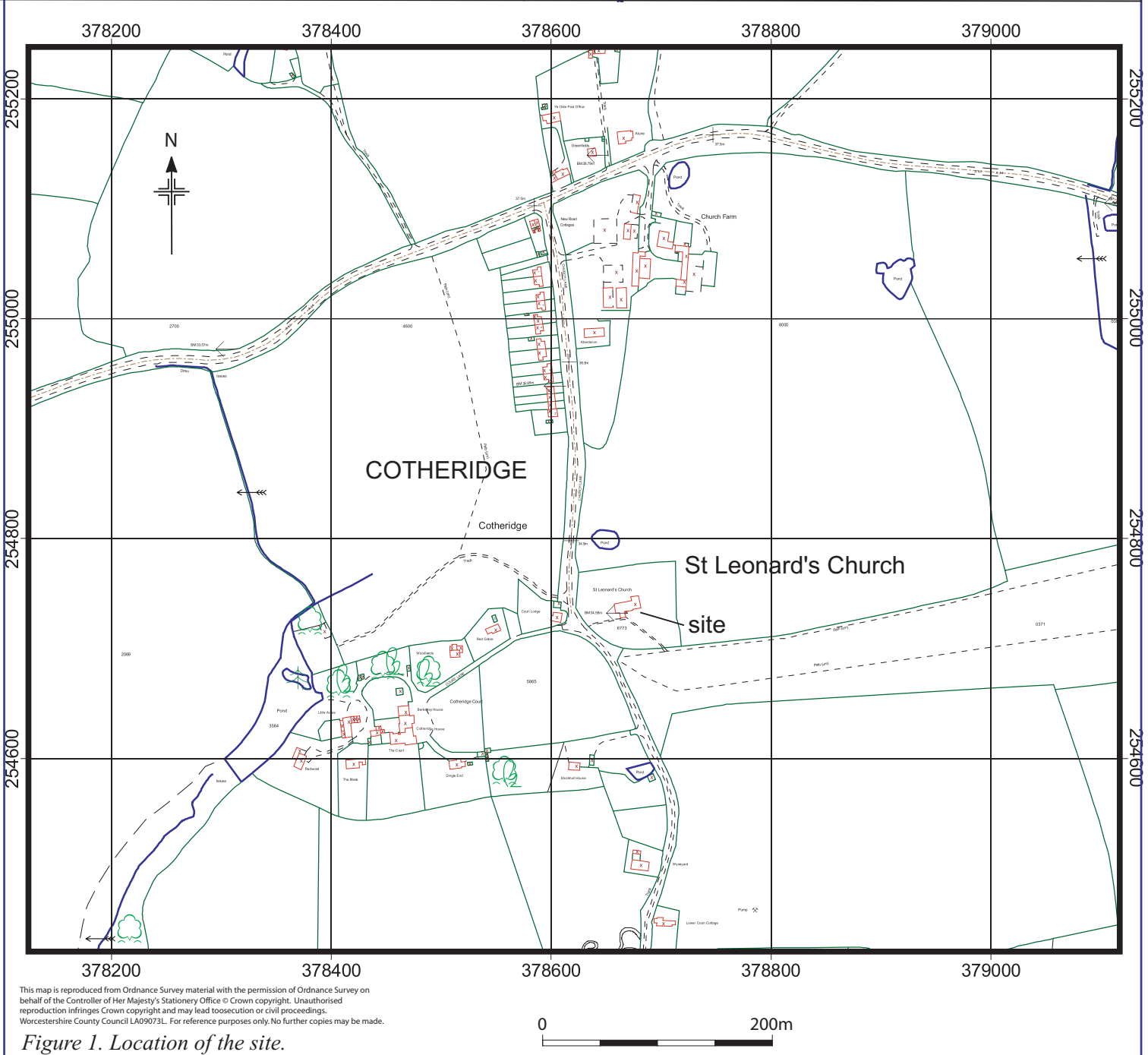
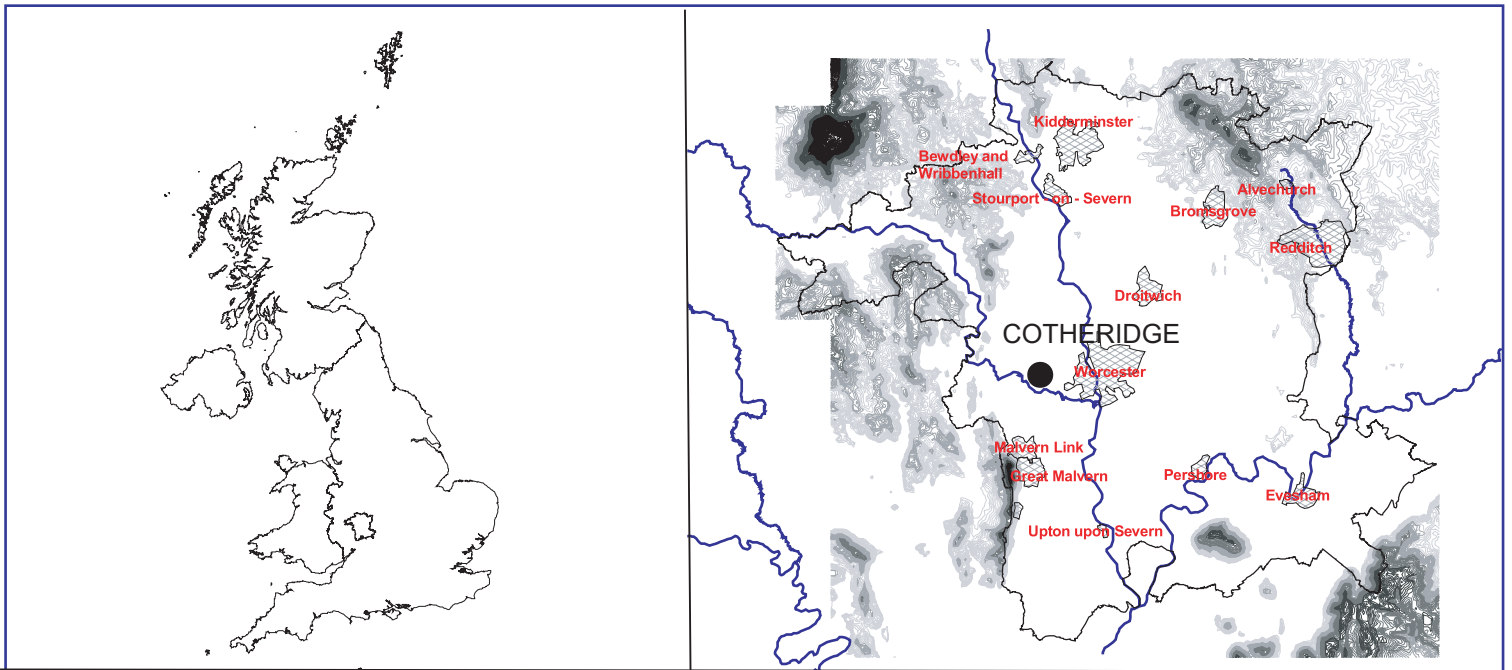
The Service would like to thank Malcolm Jones of Stainburn Taylor Architects for his kind assistance in the conclusion of this project.

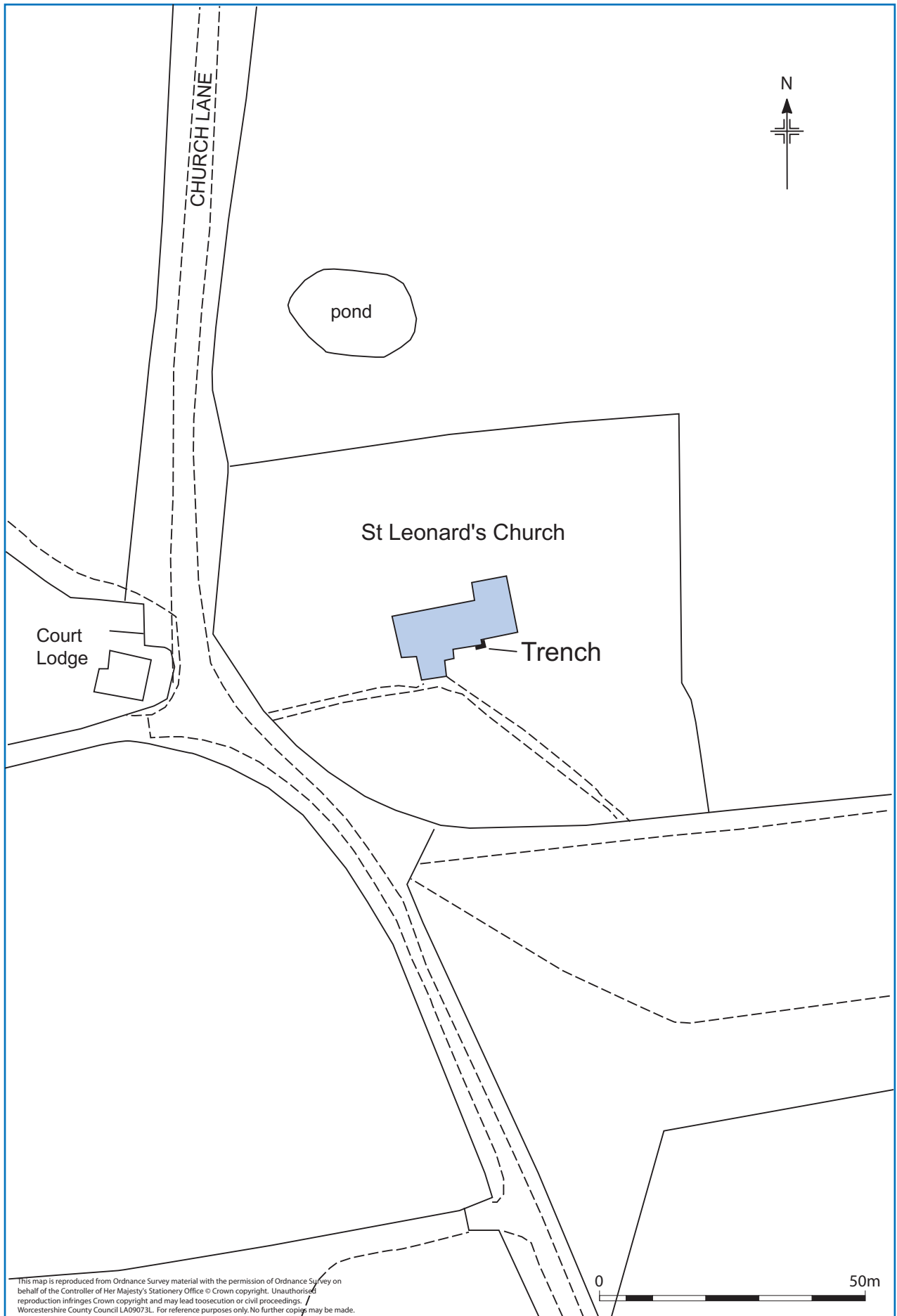
Bibliography

AS 2002 *Proposal for an archaeological watching brief at St. Leonard's church, Cotheridge, Worcestershire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 30th July 2002, **P2274**

CAS 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report, **399**

IFA, 1999 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists





Trench location plan.

Figure 2