

**THE OLD ST LAWRENCE'S CHURCH
LAWRENCE STREET- YORK**

**Report of the geophysical survey of the churchyard.
May 2015.**



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Contents

1. Introduction and Archaeological Background	3
2. Aims and Methodology	6
Methodology	6
3. Results and Interpretation.	7
Medieval	7
The church	7
The burials	10
Modern	10
19th C	11
20th C	12
4. Discussion & Conclusion.	13
Acknowledgments.	13
Bibliography and reference	14
Appendix 1: English Heritage Geophysical Survey Database Questionnaire	18

List of illustrations

Figure 1: General plan of York showing St Lawrence's location (in green).	3
Figure 2: Walmgate and St Lawrence's area (in red).	4
Figure 3: Scheduled area.	5
Figure 4: Comparison of the evidence showing the plan of the church with the resistivity survey.	8
Figure 5: North side of the old Saint Lawrence's church by E. Abbot (1776), reproduced in Wilson & Mee 2001: 95.....	9
Figure 6: Comparisons of the results processed with Geoplot and Snuffler.	15
Figure 7: Interpretation and phasing of the features.	16
Figure 8: Results on the OS map.	17

1. Introduction and Archaeological Background

1.1. The geophysical survey undertaken at the Old Saint Lawrence's church was conducted as part of a dissertation on the old Church. This MA thesis looks for an understanding of the place and the evolution of the Old Saint Lawrence's church in its environment from the origins to the end of the 19th C by a fine architectural, topographical and archival analysis.

1.2. The church is situated southeast of York (SE 6151 SW), along the southern side of Lawrence Street, the extension of Walmgate outside the walls (Fig. 1 and 2). Lawrence Street probably lies on the remains of the former Roman road leading to Hull and the coast, as suggested by some artefacts found since the 17th C. The church as given its name to the street, called St Lawrence St until the second half of the 19th C (see 1850 OS map).

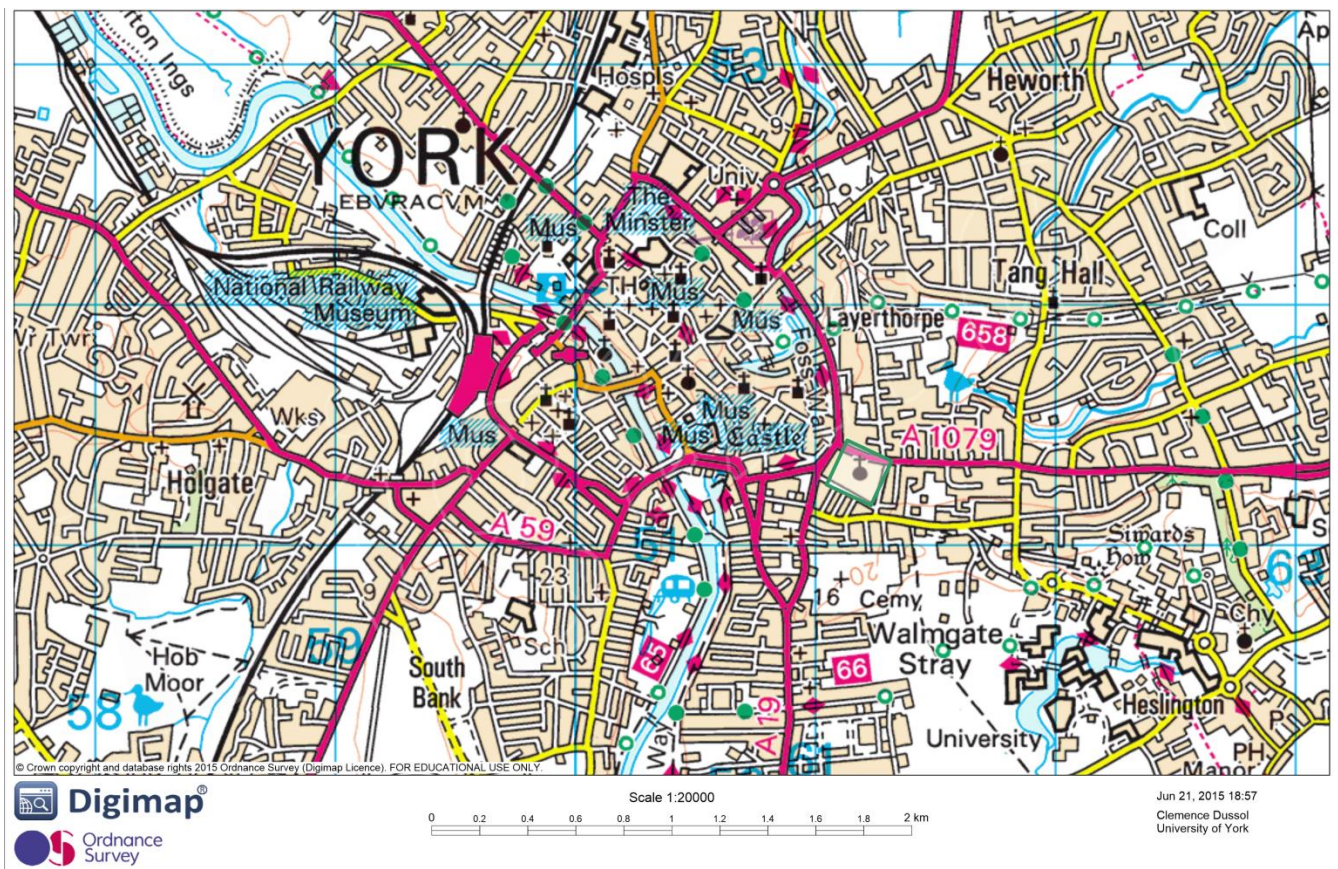


Figure 1: General plan of York showing St Lawrence's location (in green).



Figure 2: Walmgate and St Lawrence's area (in red).

1.3. The date of foundation of the church is unknown but the earliest mention of its existence dates back to 1194. Although the reasons for the foundation of the church and its patrons are unclear, St Lawrence's was the first one in this area with an extra-mural status. The establishment of many other religious structures within a century was one of the consequences of the growth of this suburban area in the second half of the 12th C. The church was in function from its foundation until 1882, when the building of a new church was chosen as the best way to accommodate the growing number of parishioners after a few neighbouring parishes had been annexed. The medieval church was at this point demolished, only the tower was kept and the Norman doorway, formerly the north entrance of the Church, rebuilt in the tower.

1.4. St Lawrence's falls within York's Central Area of Archaeological Importance and the Historic Core Conservation Area. Nearby excavations and watching briefs have revealed the presence of archaeological remains from the Prehistory to the Victorian Period. The Old St Lawrence's tower and two monuments in the churchyard are the only Grade 1 listed building in this area¹ (n° 125711) and so, any research must be justified. The tower and part of ancient graveyard are a scheduled area² since 2000 (n° 1020683) and a Section 42 licence allowing geophysical survey was applied for by and granted to the

¹ <http://list.historicengland.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1257511&searchtype=mapsearch>

² <http://list.historicengland.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1020683&searchtype=mapsearch>

author (Case Number SL00101258) by Historic England (Fig. 3). The new church is a grade II listed building.



Figure 3: Scheduled area.

Topography, geology and survey conditions.

1.5. The area surveyed corresponds to the complete scheduled area with some additions on the south. The site is enclosed on the north, south and east by a brick wall. The north-west angle is occupied by the Community hall, which is separated from the churchyard by a road leading from the gate in Lawrence Street to the new church. The only built elements are the tower itself and on the west side, a display of the shape of the chancel of the old church created by a low wall and the marking of the original nave by a line of four ledgerstones between the chancel and the tower. They stand in the middle of the graveyard. The churchyard is now entirely grassed; all the ledgerstones have been moved (in the early 1960s) against the walls of the plot to create an open land. Two funerary monuments are still standing: one on the south side of the chancel dedicated to Dr Allen Oswald and his wife, called the 'medicine pot' (1820), the other near the south side of the tower, the Riggs monument of 1830. The site is mostly flat with a slight slope rising from the north towards the south to the church. The only vegetation to be seen is a number of trees and flowerbeds.

Geology

1.6. The former church and the surrounding graveyard are on the southern limit of the Alne glaciolacustrine formation characterised by clays, silts and sands as a result of the lake Alne formed during the Devensian glacial sequence, about 16 000 years ago (British

Geological survey, No date A and B). Although the depth of the bedrock in the area is unknown, it does not appear that the geology had a major impact on the survey.

Survey condition

- 1.7. The survey was carried out in two sessions, the first one conducted by Clémence Dussol and Paul Durdin on April, 23, 2015, and the second one in May, 13, 2015 by the surveyors and joined by Tom Frane and Nick Wilson, all four archaeology students from the University of York. A risk assessment was made prior to any fieldwork. The weather conditions were good and each survey happened after a week of dry days so the response from the soil should not have been unduly skewed by moisture.

2. Aims and Methodology

- 2.1. The survey aimed at documenting and understanding the various land uses of the churchyard, the first one represented by the burials associated with the church but also the building itself, both studied in this dissertation.
- 2.2. Although the parish church built in the 12th C was pulled down in 1882, many drawings and old photographs were realised and they showed that the building has been modified at several stages of its history. The location and the general plan of the church are known thanks to the earliest Ordnance Survey Map (1852) but the most detailed plan was drawn by Bedford in 1843; it depicts St Lawrence church as a simple two-cells building with a western tower and a chancel narrower than the nave (Wilson & Mee 2001). The demolition left no trace of the building other than the standing tower and soon after, a reconstitution of the chancel was proposed (visible on the OS maps of 1890 and 1900). Based on those facts, the first aim of the survey was to confirm Bedford's plan. As St Lawrence is famous for its 12th C doorway, locating the exact position and the width of the original doorway would have been helpful.
- 2.3. Several extensions and reductions of the church plot were recorded in the archives, mostly without any maps or sketches illustrating the mapping of the boundaries and the extent of the changes. The survey was conducted in order to locate those features and add to the general comprehension of the evolution of the land. A better understanding of the access to the church was also sought by mapping the paths connecting the surrounding streets to the church. After the first survey and considering the numerous questions raised by the results, the decision was taken to extend the survey further south and west.

Methodology

- 2.4. After discussion, the choice was oriented towards resistance survey because masonry is more likely to respond to electrical current than to any other geophysical method.

Identifying burials with geophysical survey remains difficult unless of a considerable difference between the soil in which the grave is dug and the filling of the burial. This difference will create a change in the conductivity, and so, let the feature be visible on the survey (English Heritage 2008: 15). However, the landscaping undertaken at St Lawrence's and the constant re-use of the burial ground are likely to hide the expected density of the burials.

2.5. Both surveys were realised with the same equipment and methodology although the alignment of the grids was marginally different between the two sessions. Two Geoscan RM 15 were used for the survey, both with a twin probe configuration. Readings were taken every 0.5 m (two readings per metre) with a spacing of 0.5 m, on zigzag traverses starting in the southwest corner of each grid square, facing north. The grid size for the survey was 20 m by 20 m but because of the irregular shape of the plot, many dummy points were inserted and partial lines surveyed. The processing and filtering of the data were carried out using Geoplot 3© and Snuffler and following Gaffney & Gater (2003) guidance. As each software package offers different graphic possibilities, the processed results are all reproduced here and compared in order to give the broadest image of the survey possible (Fig. 6). Some technical issues with one frame used during the second session caused incorrect readings to be taken, resulting in dark spots in the central area of the survey and were only partially corrected during processing.

3. Results and Interpretation.

The survey has returned useful results, and when cross-referenced against archives and other historical accounts helps shed a new light on the occupation of the churchyard (Fig. 7).

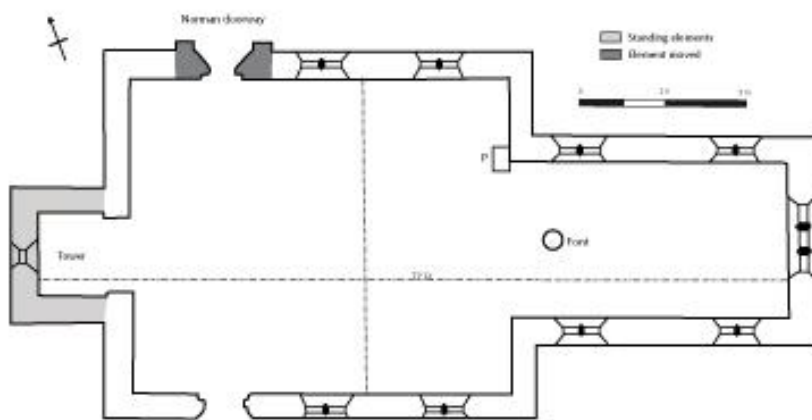
Medieval

The church

3.1. The main feature of the site to be revealed by the survey is the general organisation of the medieval church is the medieval church (Fig. 4 and 7). The extent of the demolition was displayed for the first time as no archival material records this event. This survey shows that the walls of the buildings have been completely dismantled. The only remains of the walls are their trenches although it is not possible without excavating to assess if those trenches correspond to the foundation trenches (contemporary with the building of the church) or are recovery trenches dug in 1882 for the robbing out of the stones.

The original chancel as shown on the geophysical results is wider than the current reconstitution on display and on a slightly different orientation.

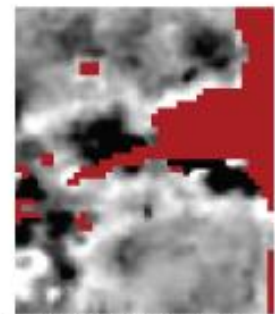
- 3.2. The measurements of the church are similar to those on Bradford's plan but the surroundings of the church are more complex than those represented on the 1850's map. The survey shows areas of high resistance around the chancel, especially on the southern side, perhaps a monument or a grave stone that was not moved in the 1960s. The darkest area might be related to the installation of the still standing monument to Dr Oswald Allen and his wife in 1820.
- 3.3. The church has a fairly typical plan with two one entrance on each side of the nave. The south doorway is clearly visible on the survey but the north doorway – although only the east jamb is clearly discernible- and its associated path have been identified by the old maps, the modern road partially retains the original route of this path. The last few meters appears as a zone of very high resistance on the survey and are now under the modern flowerbed between the churchyard and the road.



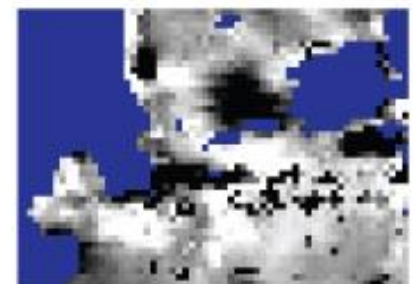
A- Original plan by F. Bedford (c. 1843), in Wilson & Mee 2001: 156.



B- The church on the 1852 map.



C- Plan of the church in the first survey



D- Plan of the church in the second survey

Figure 4: Comparison of the evidence showing the plan of the church with the resistivity survey.

- 3.4. The north side of the church is quite complex since some access routes and geometric shapes suggesting the former presence of a building have been identified. Because of the difference of intensity between the two surveys, the features were revealed separately.
- 3.5. As a consequence of a minor difference in the soil's moisture between the two surveys, some features appeared, a low resistance feature divided in two sets on this side. The accesses to the church near the north side of the chancel were made clearer on the

second survey. The two paths, one running from the main route to the north doorway and the other from the north-west part of the churchyard, connect near the middle of the chancel, between the two set of low resistance features.

3.6. Those features seem to be composed of three low resistance features, three lines forming a small rectangle of which the fourth side is the church (nave's wall for the feature west of the path, chancel's wall for the one on the east side); the eastern one encloses an area of high resistance. None of these buildings is explicitly recorded in the archives and pictorial evidence. They do not appear in the earliest representation of 1776 and therefore must have been demolished earlier. Abbot (1776) depicts a small door in between the two traceried windows (fig. 5). No paths are represented on this drawing but a comparison of the evidence allows us to infer that this door (maybe a priest door) was used in close relation with the paths serving the churchyard. The buildings revealed for the first time in the geophysical results raise the interesting question of their function and communication with the church. The smallest one on the east may have been a vestry communicating directly with the chancel by the door. The high resistance areas identified might be the remains of some floors. After the demolition of the building, the door would have given direct access to the churchyard via the paths revealed in the survey. As the door was blocked and the wall plastered at a later date – probably during the work of 1827 going by contemporary pictorial evidence – the paths were likely disused and covered by grass, and this explains why they are not visible in the ancient photographs of the church.

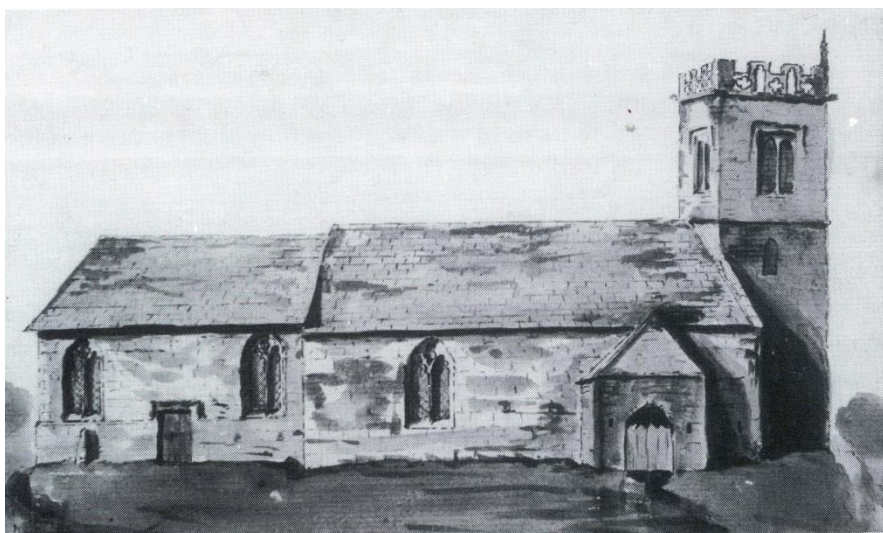


Figure 5: North side of the old Saint Lawrence's church by E. Abbot (1776), reproduced in Wilson & Mee 2001: 95.

3.7. The other possible building is more problematic as the nave wall is not known to have had openings other than the two traceried windows. A possible hypothetical use of it

could have been as a chantry or a private chapel. A chantry to the Virgin Mary has been ordained in 1336 but the VCH (1961: 365-404) reports that it was located in the church, without more details on its shape and location. The low resistance features suggest a similar fate to the previous building, leaving robber trenches where the stone was taken away.

- 3.8. As nothing is certain about their date and functions and the stratigraphic relationships between the paths, the buildings and the church are unclear, the interpretations made here must be carefully considered.
- 3.9. On the south side, a wide path dividing in two branches appears on the survey. The right branch leads to the former gate in the wall separating the churchyard from Lawrence Lane and corresponds to the original entrance used until the purchase of the new land, as the 1852's map corroborates it. The other branch of the path leads south and although it is no longer visible today, the path is shown on the map of 1890. When the new plot of land was added, the middle gate was disused in favour of the access the south-east corner, near the later Victorian church.
- 3.10. The high resistance linear feature running from the south-east corner of the chancel of the church towards the former gate is not very positively identifiable but its route and width suggest more a former boundary, undocumented so far. The extension between the proposed boundary and the current wall would have taken place before the first accurate map of 1852, probably to accommodate more burials. The modern brick wall and the currently disused gate are likely to be contemporaneous.

The burials

- 3.11. A faint difference of resistivity is visible in the churchyard where the northern part, between the north brick wall and the ancient church, has a higher resistivity. Although the land was surveyed at a fine resolution, no evidence of the former burials has been found. Some darker spots might however indicate the presence of ledgerstones unmoved in the 1960s. If the depth of the burials is unknown, a churchyard in use during seven centuries is likely to have a complex and dense stratigraphy, especially in the historic part, corresponding at the extent of the land before the extension of 1870. A possible explanation to the non-appearance of those burials is the addition of a layer of agricultural soil immediately following the removal of the ledgerstones and monuments, this layer interfering with the moisture of the soil and the diffusion of the electric current. However, as no record of this intervention is kept except an oral account, the thickness of this new layer and its impact on the geophysical survey remain impossible to determine.

Modern

3.12. About 20 m south of the old church, a set of features has been identified. The linear high resistance feature running from the disused gate for 20m towards west had already been identified as the original boundary before the extension of 1871 thanks to the Tucker's map of 1852.

3.13. Contiguous to this boundary, some areas of high resistance have been recorded. The connections between those areas and boundary are not clear although it seems that some perpendicular linear features connect them. The shapes apparent here may be the remnant of funerary monuments along the boundary, removed at a later date. No such monuments appear on even the earliest maps, however, so the age of the features remains unknown.

Another hypothesis could be that this feature corresponds to the ancient vicarage of the church, of which the location is unknown and which was demolished in 1649 (VCH 1961: 365-404). This suggestion is remains unlikely due to the very small measurements of the feature, about 9 m long for 4 m wide. This building, as well as those on the north side of the church, tentatively identified as a vestry and a chantry, may have been demolished as a consequence of the Siege of York in 1644, in which St Lawrence's is known to have housed a battery of artillery and been greatly damaged.

19th C

3.14. Several episodes of intense modification both on the church and in the graveyard have been revealed with the survey.

The beginning of the 19th C corresponds to a moment of change in the burial practices with the development of large funerary monuments. Up to this point, the burials were indicated by a headstone, variously ornamented. The monuments erected in the graveyard celebrate the memory of the dead in various ways. The 'medicine pot' monument honours a famous parishioner who won renown by running a dispensary: York's doctor Oswald Allen and his wife, buried in 1820. However, the other important monument of the beginning of the 19th C, the Riggs' Monument of 1830 commemorates a tragic event where six children died. Both monuments are still *in situ*.

The high resistance geometrical feature located on the south side of the chancel and at the bottom of the Allens' monument could also be a funerary monument. The fact that some monuments alike in shape and measurements are represented on the Tucker's map of 1852 corroborates the identification to this feature to a monument.

3.15. As mentioned previously, the rebuilding of the church in 1827 led to a modification of the access with the blocking of the chancel's door and the disuse of the associated path. The porch protecting the north doorway was also probably removed at this time although not recorded in the survey as it appears in Abbot's drawing but not in later documents or photographs.

3.16. The growth of York after the Industrial Revolution led to a new development of this area, now mainly populated by workers. Those new parishioners were dependent on Saint Lawrence's for the religious ceremonies and the churchyard fast became too small to hold all the burials. As the graveyard was fully used, a new plot of land was added (PR Y/L 122) for burial convenience. This archive is the only evidence which gives a date for the extension of the land but does not specify the extent of the new land. As no later archive mentions a land purchased before the consecration of the new church in 1883, it is possible that the land bought corresponds to the full extent of the actual plot. The south boundary previously used was removed, and is still partly visible in the survey results. The new land was enclosed by a brick wall and the historic access through the eastern gate was abandoned in favour of a new one in the south-east corner of the land. The path was also disused and a new one took over straight from the church to the boundary. When this later was dismantled, the path was extended further south to communicate with the new burial ground.

Recording the demolition

3.17. The extent of the demolition of 1882 as already been discussed above. This survey has shown that the fabric of the medieval church has been completely dug out and the material reused for the foundation of the new church.

3.18. In the aftermaths of the demolition of the church, the north doorway was retained and reset in the tower arch. The ground surrounding the tower must have been highly disturbed so on the east and south side of the tower and between the ledgerstones representing the former nave and the tower, some concrete was poured at an unknown date. The concrete partially creates a disturbance as the probes cannot always make a proper contact with the soil to record the intensity of the electric current and appears as dummy points. The rest of this area is a zone of very high resistance.

20th C

3.19. As the churchyard was no longer used in the 20th C and the ledgerstones were removed in the 1960s, an open grassed area was created and landscaped with the inclusion of four circular flowerbeds, one on the north side of the church, three on the south side with only two appearing clearly on the geophysical survey as circular low resistance features. Their diameter varies around 3 m and 4 m. Another flowerbed separates the grass from the path near the new church and is visible alongside the southwestern edge of the surveyed area.

The linear high resistance feature running north to south from the tower toward the former boundary of the churchyard cannot be clearly identified but might correspond to a former path.

3.20. Later after the removal of the ledgerstones, a garden of remembrance has been created around the cross. Despite the frequent burial of ashes in this area, no major disturbance has been recorded with the survey.

4. Discussion & Conclusion.

- 4.1. A small number of features are still unidentified. Most obviously, the high-resistance feature in the north-east corner of the plot cannot be definitely identified. Because of its location and width, around 4 meters, the anomaly is unlikely to be related to a service or pipe or any burial. Lawrence Street is known to follow the route of the Roman road outside the centre of the city. The exact route of the road is not sure and the excavation conducted in 2005 across Lawrence Lane at the 60 Lawrence Street (Evans 2005: 7) has not found its position in this area. It still remains possible that the high-resistance feature is related to an activity near the road, during the Roman times or after.
- 4.2. This survey has first confirmed the archaeological significance of the old St Lawrence's Church. Although the attempt to identify any burial has failed, the survey has added to the information already available about the history of the site and has permitted to precise the evolution of the land use across the centuries. The research question aimed at confirming the accuracy of Bedford's plan has found it to be correct but more details were revealed with the survey, especially about the crucial question of the access to and circulation around the church. Although many questions are still unanswered, the research directions for the future have been narrowed: investigating the buildings identified with the survey will shed a new light on the occupation of the site before the Siege of York, which is also the least-known phase of the church.
- 4.3. The research potential offered by St Lawrence's churchyard is considerable given how poorly the history of the church is known and the scarcity of the archival material. Excavating the scheduled area of the churchyard is, of course, beyond the scope of this study but would bring valuable knowledge on many levels: study of the burial practices in the *longue durée*, information about the population of York in this area between the 12th and the 19th century but most importantly more information on the buildings erected in the churchyard. Finally, carefully placed trenches inside the ancient church could ascertain whether the patterns identified in this survey are a consequence of the demolition or if they were part of the original church.

Acknowledgments.

I first would like to acknowledge Historic England for the granting of the licence for carrying out this research and to the Church council of St Lawrence and the Church Conservation

Trust, represented by both Alan Reed and Graham White for their support, enthusiasm in the project and help with the material considerations.

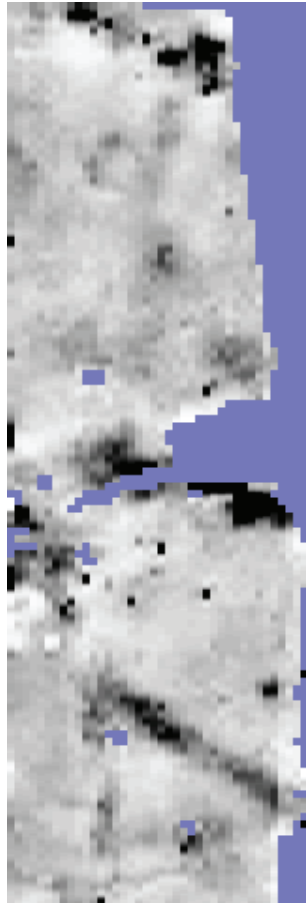
I also wish to address warm thanks to those without this survey could not have been conducted: Tom Frane, Nick Wilson, and especially to Paul Durdin, my fellow archaeology students for their help with the fieldwork, processing as well as their advice on this report.

Bibliography and reference

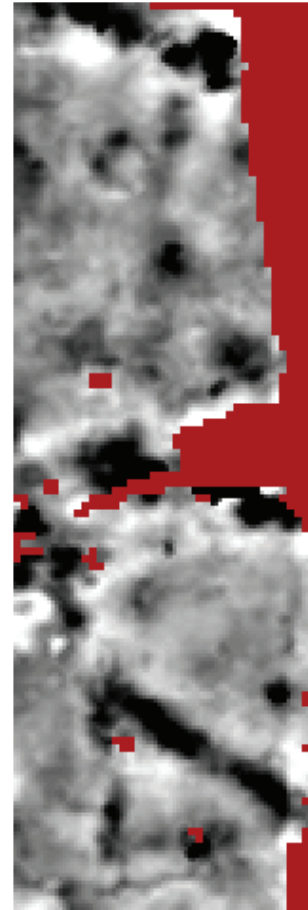
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Figure 6: Old St Lawrence's church - York
Geophysical survey of the churchyard (May 2015)
Comparisons of the difference while processing with Geoplot and Snuffler.

First survey -
23/04/15

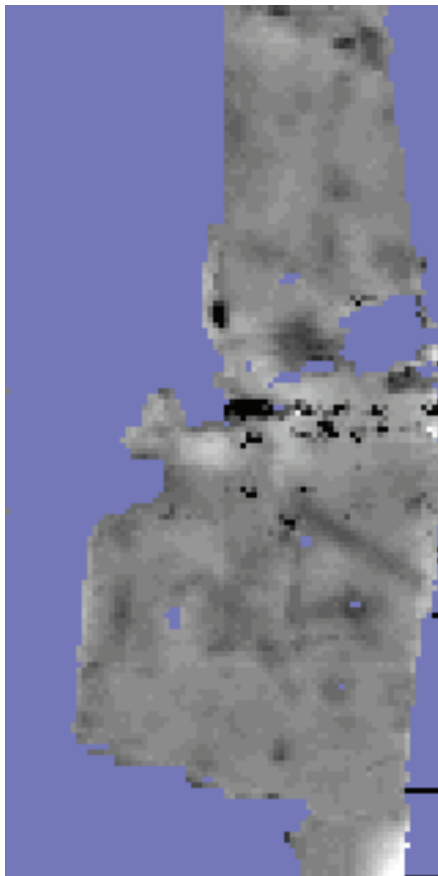


Geoplot- Processed

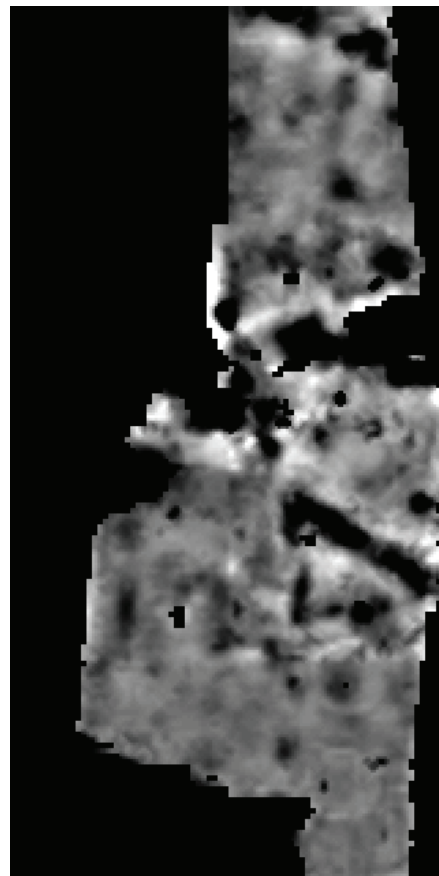


Snuffler- Fully processed

Second survey -
13/05/15

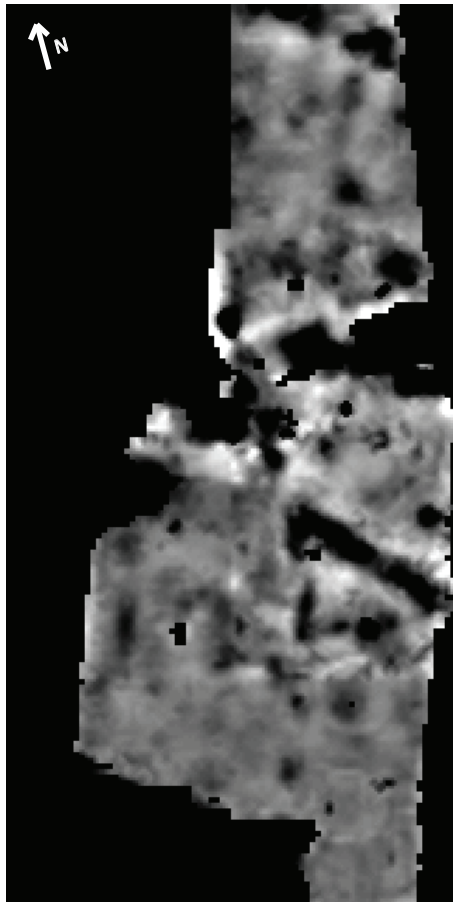


Geoplot- Processed

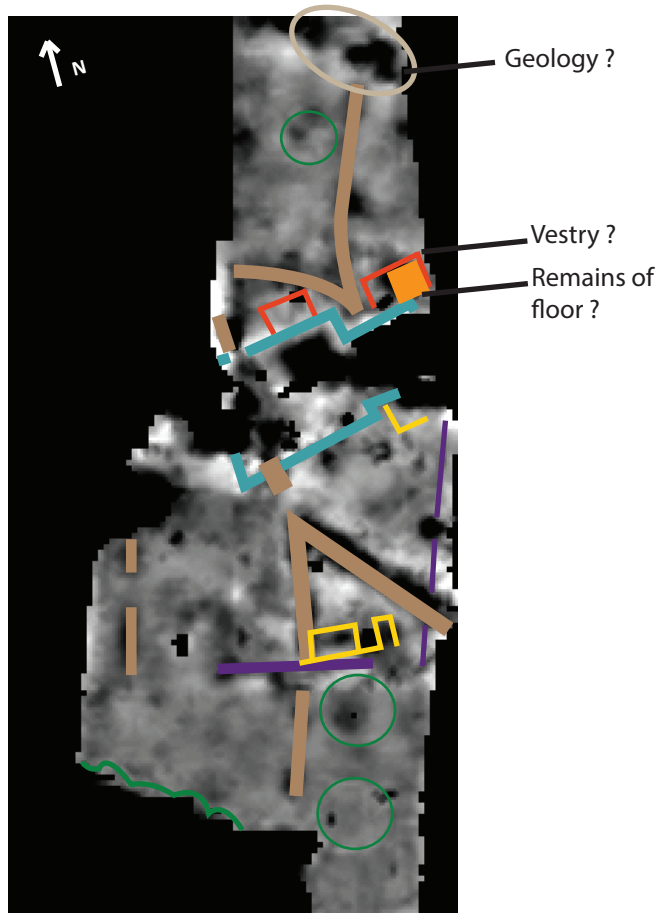


Snuffler- Processed

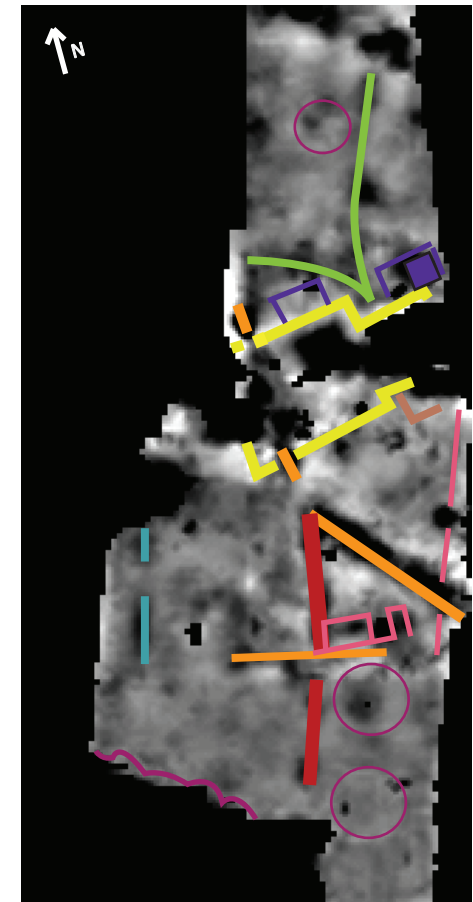
A - Processed results



B - Interpretation



C - Phasing

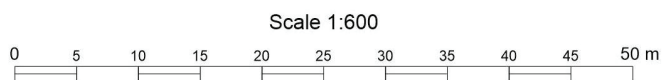
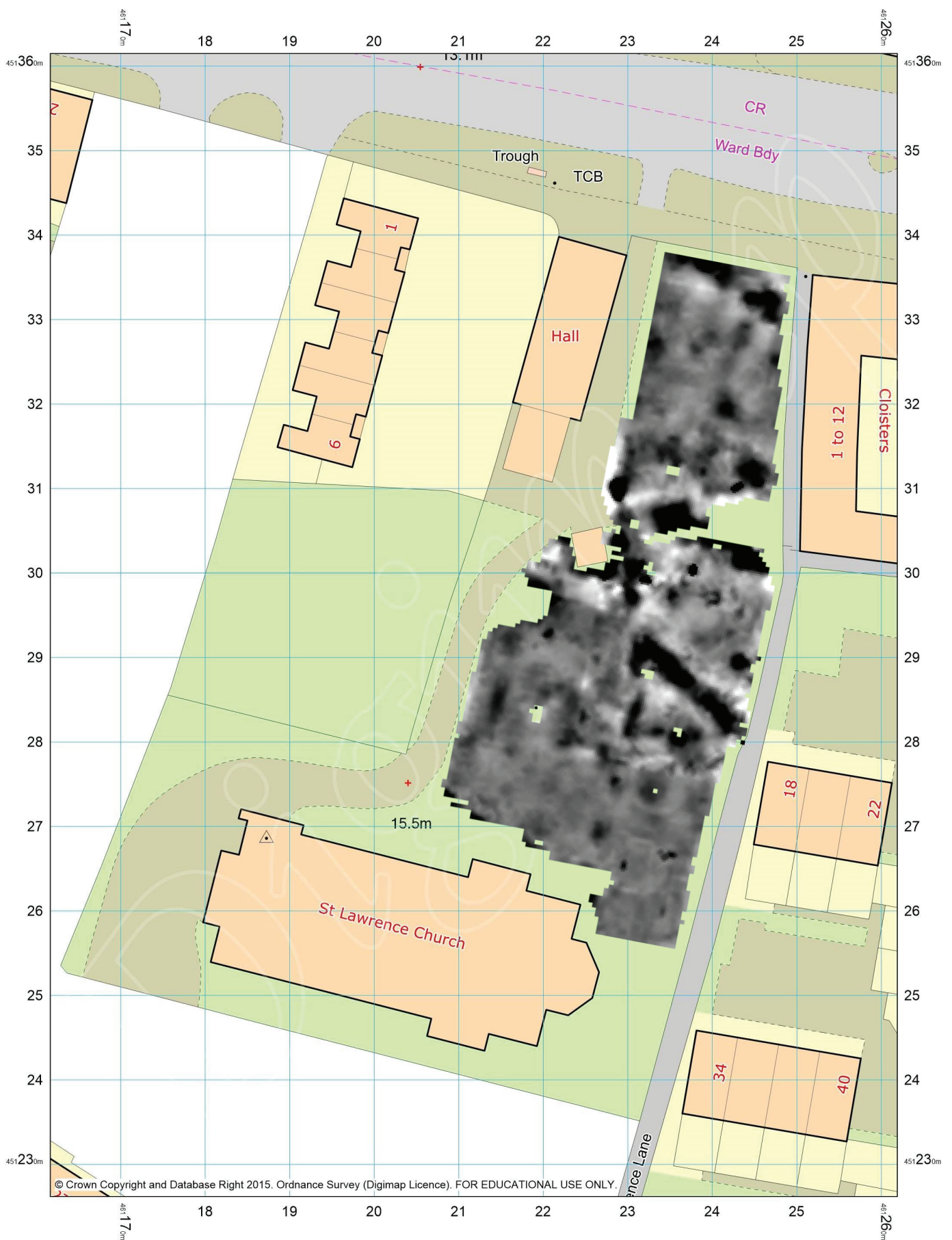


- Flowerbeds
- Paths
- Unidentified building
- Old church
- Funerary monuments
- Boundary

- 12th C
- Until 1871
- Until 1649
- After 1871
- Until 1776
- After 1882
- Until 1827
- 19th C
- Until 1850s
- After 1960



Old St Lawrence's Church
Lawrence Street, York
Fig. 7 : Interpretation and phasing of the features



Mar 09, 2015 18:11
Clemence Dussol
University of York

Old St Lawrence's Church
Lawrence Street, York
Fig. 8: Geophysical results on the OS map
C. Dussol - Universities of Tours & York - May 2015



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Appendix 1: English Heritage Geophysical Survey Database Questionnaire

Survey Details

Name of Site: Standing Tower and Below Ground remains of St Lawrence's church, and associated burial ground, York, North Yorkshire.

County: North Yorkshire

NGR Grid Reference (Centre of survey to nearest 100m): SE 6151SW

Start Date: Two dates (23/04/2015 and 13/05/2015) **End Date:**

Geology at site (Drift and Solid):

Drift: Fluvio-Glacial / Glacio-lacustrine clays, silts and sands.

Solid: Triassic / Sandstone mudstone and siltsone.

From Butlin R A (2003) *Historical Atlas of North Yorkshire*, p 10-11

Known archaeological Sites/Monuments covered by the survey

(Scheduled Monument No. or National Archaeological Record No. if known)

Scheduled area: 1020683

Tower of the old church: grade I listed building (125711)

Archaeological Sites/Monument types detected by survey

(Type and Period if known. "?" where any doubt).

Funerary monuments	Modern?
Remains of the old parish church	Medieval
Vestry ?	Medieval
Chantry?	Medieval
Boundaries	Medieval and modern (until 1852 and 1871)

Surveyor (Organisation, if applicable, otherwise individual responsible for the survey): Clémence Dussol (Visiting Master student in archaeology of buildings- University of York from the University of Tours (France)).

Name of Client, if any:



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Purpose of Survey:

As part of a dissertation on the evolution of the old St Lawrence's church from the 12th century to the 1900s, the survey aimed at:

- Documenting the possible remains of the old St Lawrence's church, demolished around 1882
- Documenting and locate the burials in the churchyard
- Assessing the evolution of the churchyard and the different uses of the land

Location of:

a) Primary archive, i.e. raw data, electronic archive etc:

Clémence Dussol (clemencedussol@gmail.com) and a copy given to St Lawrence's Church Council

b) Full Report:

A hard copy to Historic England- York

An electronic copy to:

Hannah Saxton (Assistant inspector of Ancient monuments, Historic England)

Paul Linford (Historic England)

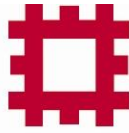
John Oxley (City of York archaeologist)

Graham White (Project officer for the north of England, Church Conservation Trust)

Alan Reed (St Lawrence's churchwarden)

Iain Mline (St Lawrence's churchwarden)

Full report available on OASIS



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Technical Details

(Please fill out a separate sheet for each survey technique used)

Type of Survey (Use term from attached list or specify other):
Resistance Survey

Area Surveyed, if applicable (In hectares to one decimal place):
0.1 hectare (1820m²)

Traverse Separation, if regular: 0.5 m

Reading/Sample Interval: 0.5 m

Type, Make and model of Instrumentation:
Geoscan RM 15

For Resistivity Survey:

Probe configuration: twin probe

Probe Spacing: 0.5 m

Land use at the time of the survey (Use term/terms from the attached list or specify other):

Lawn and churchyard (garden of remembrance) in the south part.



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Additional Remarks (Please mention any other technical aspects of the survey that have not been covered by the above questions such as sampling strategy, non standard technique, problems with equipment etc.):

Problems with equipment: One of the frame during the second day of survey caused incorrect readings to be taken, resulting in dark spots in the central area of the survey and were only partially corrected during processing.

List of terms for Survey Type

Magnetometer (includes gradiometer)

Resistivity

Resistivity Profile

Magnetic Susceptibility

Electro-Magnetic Survey

Ground Penetrating Radar

Other (please specify)



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List of terms for Land Use:

Arable
Grassland - Pasture
Grassland - Undifferentiated
Heathland
Moorland
Coastland - Inter-Tidal
Coastland - Above High Water
Allotment
Archaeological Excavation
Garden
Lawn
Orchard
Park
Playing Field
Built-Over
Churchyard
Waste Ground
Woodland
Other (please specify)