

Chapter 2: Historic buildings recording of the crypt and archaeological investigations within the churchyard

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the historic building investigation within the crypt, and the evidence recorded in the four test pits and four small area excavations (Fig. 2.3). The test pits formed part of the restoration works, and were excavated to ascertain the underlying geology and below-ground structures within the church and churchyard.

RECORDING THE CRYPT

Background

St George's in Bloomsbury is a Grade I listed building and is therefore by definition of national significance for its architecture and history. Although the archaeological works undertaken at St George's principally centred on recording the burials, which were cleared from the crypt, they included an investigation of the fabric of parts of the church itself.

The proposed construction works largely comprised repairs and minor alterations to the church rather than substantial changes, particularly to the primary fabric. The works included the reinstatement of a set of steps at the south end of the building, which had been part of the church's primary layout but which had been removed subsequently, the insertion of a wheelchair platform adjacent to the south steps, and the demolition of a Sacristy dating from the 1870s to the north-east of the site.

Aims, objectives and methodology

The principal aim of the work was to produce a record of the Church's crypt, (together with several other smaller areas) after the clearance of the vaults, but before the start of the principal conversion works. This work was intended both to record the structure and to enhance understanding of the building through investigating its construction, use and alteration. The other principal aim of the work was to make the results of the investigation and the archive publicly accessible.

The historic building investigation was limited in scope and was not intended to provide a fully comprehensive record of the entire church. The recording was entirely internal and did not include the main body of the church. A comprehensive

architectural survey had previously been undertaken by Michael Gallie and Partners, Chartered Measured Building Surveyors, but much of the crypt had been inaccessible because of the sealed vaults. OA was only required to investigate the crypt. The results of this survey are presented below. It concentrated on the main areas directly affected by the development works and, in particular, the church's crypt and the individual vaults which were cleared and exposed during the works. Interred coffins were cleared from seven previously sealed vaults in the crypt and, although the structural recording centred around these areas it was also extended to the rest of the crypt and the other vaults which were not sealed with coffins.

The main recording was undertaken after the burials had been removed from the vaults and comprised drawn, photographic and descriptive elements. The drawn survey was partly based on an existing architect's survey plan of the crypt with descriptive annotation added to explain and interpret the construction, phasing and use of the crypt.

In addition to the plan, a cross section through several of the vaults was produced to further record the structure. The photographic survey of the church was undertaken using 35 mm film (black and white prints and colour slides) and each film was given a unique number to correspond with the wider archaeological project at St George's. The written survey provided further analytical and descriptive detail.

In addition to the record of the crypt and vaults a series of structural recording works were also undertaken within the churchyard where excavations revealed features. Each of these were planned, photographed and described (see Archaeological watching briefs, below).

Summary history of the building

St George's is an architectural masterpiece built to the designs of Nicholas Hawksmoor under the Fifty New Churches Act of 1711. Construction began in 1716 (Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 257-58) and the church was consecrated in January 1730 although it was only fully completed in 1731. The site of the church was already hemmed in by houses when it was originally constructed and Hawksmoor's design was therefore dictated by the restrictions of the space. A grand Corinthian portico faces south

onto Bloomsbury Way although the main entrances to the building are to the west side, on the north and south faces of St Georges' famous west tower. The tower has a stepped spire which was inspired by antiquity, and in particular by Pliny the Elder's description of the mausoleum of Halicarnassus (*Natural History*, 36, iv, 30-31), and at its top is a statue of George I.

In 1781 the church underwent alterations, which included the removal of the altar from the east to the north side and the replacement of a north gallery with one to the east. Due to the expanding population of the parish and the limited space available in the churchyard it was decided in 1803 to allow bodies in lead coffins to be interred in the previously unused crypt and vaults of the church. Due to the poor condition of many of the coffins it was decided in 1844 to seal them into a side vault with brickwork. This was taken further in 1856 when further burials in the crypt were prohibited and the entrances to the vaults with coffins were sealed. The crypt has since been used for a variety of purposes including a boys' club meeting place and more recently for storage.

The Church underwent a further restoration in 1870-1 by George Edmund Street, one of the giants of the Victorian Gothic movement. These works included the removal of the east gallery which had been added in 1781 as well as a primary west gallery and also the removal of statues of lions and unicorns from the base of the stepped west tower. These statues have been reinstated during the current works to the church.

Description of the vaults

(Figs 2.1-2.2; Plates 2.1-2.)

Introduction

The main body of the crypt comprises a long, vaulted north to south room along the spine of the building with five smaller vaults to each side (Plate 2.1). In addition there is a further, separate east to west vault at the south end of the crypt (Plate 2.2), which incorporated a staircase at either end. These stairs form the main entrance to the crypt. There is a short passageway between this east-west vault and the main body of the crypt (Plate 2.1). At the north end of the crypt there is also a single set of concrete steps at which was inserted in the 20th century (Plate 2.3) together with a further contemporary vault (7). Vault 7 was immediately to the west the new stairs.

Prior to the restoration works six of the ten side vaults were sealed and contained coffins interred in the 19th century. Vault 7, was created in the 20th century, apparently to house coffins moved from elsewhere in the crypt. The vault numbering system used in the building recording follows that of the rest of the project so that Vaults 1-7 are those which contained interments. A further five vaults, numbered Vaults 8-12 (context numbers 9001-9005),

have also been recorded as part of the project.

The main structure of the vaults and crypt is primary and generally comprises yellow stock bricks with some pink elements (Fig. 2.1). Most of the primary brickwork has a stone skirting or plinth, and a string course (15 cm high, 2.03 m above ground) at the height of the arch springs or imposts (Fig. 2.2). The side walls of each vault are supported by full length fillets or buttresses built of brick constructed in front of the arch springs where the vaults are supported (see Plates 2.3 and 2.14). The skirting and string courses do not continue around these fillets giving the impression that they are secondary additions to strengthen the structure, but, on close inspection it is clear that they are keyed into the rest of the primary structure and are original features. The 19th-century brick walls, which had sealed the vaults, had been almost entirely removed prior to recording.

The floor of the crypt and the individual vaults was largely covered with stone flags of various sizes (e.g. 40 cm x 70 cm) in an irregular, but not totally random, pattern. In a few small areas these stones had been removed and towards the south-east corner (adjacent to Vaults 2 and 3) they had been replaced by brick pavers.

Vault 1 (Plates 2.4-2.6)

Vault 1 is at the centre of the east side of the crypt and other than the central room is the largest vault (c. 6 m wide x 9 m deep x 4 m tall). It has a shallow basket-arch vault and a semi-circular east end, in the form of an apse, within which are two blocked former windows (Plate 2.4). These have moulded stone sills, semi-circular heads and primary ashlar quoins although the quoins are partially obscured by plaster (probably primary) which covers much of the walls and vault. The windows were almost certainly blocked in the first half of the 19th century when the coffins were interred and the vault was sealed. The plaster has come away from parts of the walls but it remains largely intact to the ceiling. This plaster was abutted by the mid 19th-century wall which sealed the vault and therefore clearly pre-dates the blocking. Vault 1 would originally have been linked to the adjacent vaults to the north and south by tall semi-circular arched passages but each of these has been blocked. The passage to Vault 2 to the south was blocked with 19th-century stock bricks which probably date to when the vault was sealed. The passage to the north has older, probably 18th-century, red bricks, which abutted the plastered jambs of the passage. Unlike the passage to the south this infill wall is plastered.

Despite the fact that the coffins had been entirely removed from the vault when the building recording was undertaken some evidence of the former shelves and racking which supported the coffins did survive. This included six tapering, full-height, circular section cast-iron posts (8 cm diameter at the base, 5 cm diameter at mid point) on



Plate 2.1 Main central vault looking S. The doorway leads through to the E-W vault and the main stairs.



Plate 2.2 E-W Vault to the S of the main central vault of the crypt, showing one of the main stairways at the E end of the vault



Plate 2.3 Central vault, N end, showing inserted modern stairs with Vault 7 to the left. To either side of the main vault, the fillets or buttresses in front of the main arch springs can be seen clearly.

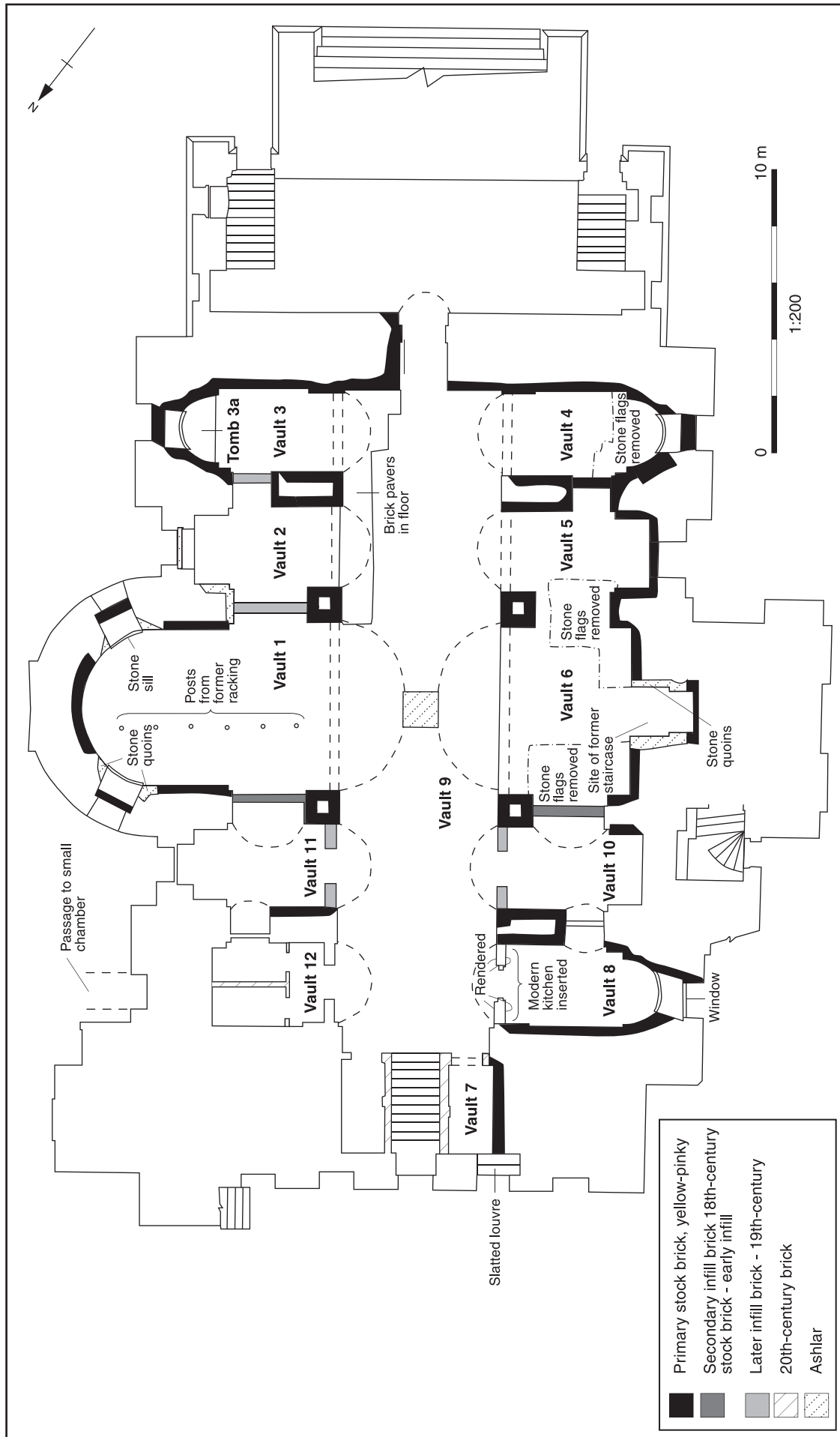


Fig. 2.1 Plan of crypt showing brickwork and ashlar work

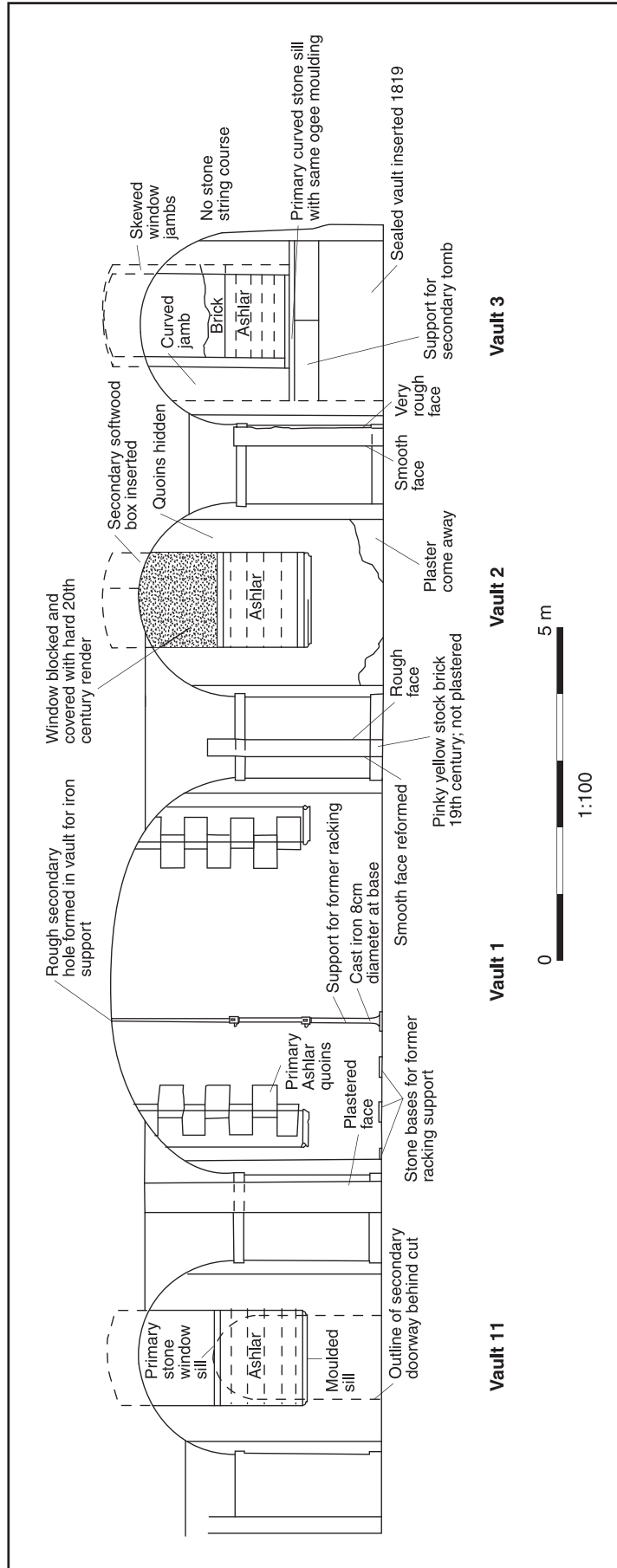


Fig. 2.2 Cross-section through east side of vaults in crypt

'In the vaults beneath'



Plate 2.4 Vault 1 looking E. Note the two cast iron uprights originally designed to support the racking for coffins.

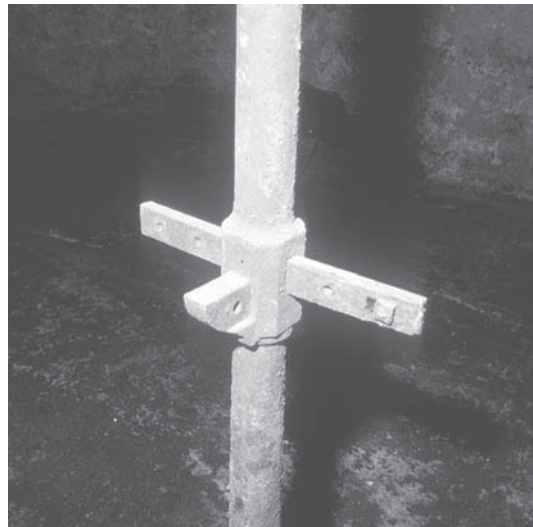


Plate 2.5 Detail of iron strut from former shelving in Vault 1



Plate 2.6 Stone post bases and extant cast iron posts for shelving in Vault 1

the north side of the central line of the vault (Plate 2.4). Each post has two brackets (at 1.17 m and 2.3 m above the floor) that would have supported shelves to hold the coffins (Plate 2.5). The posts are set on inserted, shallow stone bases, and their tops continued vertically through small holes cut into the ceiling of the vault. In the northern half of the room are 15 further similar stone bases on which further cast iron posts would presumably have sat (Plate 2.6). Each base has a square hole for the former post but there are no corresponding holes in the vault ceiling above each base. It may be that the main structural supports were those posts that survive and the shelving was additionally supported by lesser struts that did not continue to the ceiling.

Vault 2 (Plates 2.7-2.9)

Vault 2 immediately to the south of Vault 1, is substantially smaller (2.4 m wide x 5.1 m long x 3.6 m tall) and, unlike Vault 1, has a semi-circular vaulted ceiling. The vault has a rectangular plan and at its east end it has a recess with a deep stone sill at the base with a moulded lip and a higher stone sill indicating the base of a former window which was blocked with bricks almost certainly when the vault was sealed in the mid 19th century (Plate 2.7). The vault again has a stone plinth and

string course around the primary walls but these did not extend around the infill walls blocking the archways to the two adjacent vaults to the north and south (Plate 2.8). The northern archway is smaller than that to the south, and reflects the relative size of the adjacent vaults. The blocking is 19th-century brickwork. The blocking wall to the south has smooth faced brickwork in Vault 2, but the opposite face in Vault 3 was rough suggesting that Vault 3 was sealed before Vault 2. The west wall, which sealed the vault from the main crypt, was formed of similar 19th-century bricks and the removal of this in the current works has shown that the historic plaster continued beneath it.

Among the minor features of interest in Vault 2 include two secondary alterations in the vault ceiling towards the south-east corner (Plate 2.9). The first alteration is located at the intersection of the wall and the barrel vault and appears to comprise a wrought iron bar below an area of brick infill 45 cm wide. This brickwork does not appear to be rebuilding or patching due to a structural fault, but rather the filling of a hole. Presumably the hole was formed after the vault was sealed to give access into the vault. The second feature is in the vault ceiling itself and appears to be a sheet-iron lining around a former opening or feature (e.g. vent or shaft). The lining is bolted to the ceiling and forms a square with a large square hole (now blocked) in the centre.



Plate 2.7 Vault 2 looking E, showing recess with raised sill and blocked window



Plate 2.8 Vault 2 looking N, showing to the left the brick blocking of the opening through to Vault 1



Plate 2.9 Vault 2, later features: to the left an iron bar supporting inserted brickwork, and to the right is a blocked rectilinear opening with an iron lining

Another feature is a small iron candle holder in-situ on the primary wall adjacent to the blocked archway to the north.

Vault 3 (Plates 2.10-2.11)

This vault, which is at the south-east corner of the crypt, has a semi-circular vaulted ceiling and is 3 m wide by 5.75 m long by 3.6 m tall. It has a semi-circular, apse-like east end with a curved, ogee-moulded sill and a former window that would have



Plate 2.10 Vault 3 looking E, showing slightly skewed window recess with private tomb 3500 beneath. The semi-circular lid of the tomb is lying on the floor

been blocked when the vault was sealed (Plate 2.10). The jambs of the window are skewed slightly southwards so that the window fits into the building's external, architectural composition and the base of the window itself is 90 cm above the main deep sill (reflecting the external ground level). Between the deep sill with the moulded lip and the window sill itself is primary ashlar. The former window continues up in a light well and there is a somewhat awkward intersection created by the semi-circular apse, the vault and the skewed window. There are curved ashlar quoins to the window jambs but these have been plastered over and are largely hidden. The former base of the window is indicated by a plain sill and above this are 19th-century yellow/pink bricks with chalky mortar. This brick is contemporary with the blocked passage to Vault 2 (detailed above) (Plate 2.11).

The vault is largely covered with probable primary plaster and this continues beneath the now removed wall, which sealed the west end of the vault.

Within the semi-circular apse at the east end of the vault are the remains of an early 19th-century family tomb (Plate 2.10) and the walls within the tomb are plastered, unlike the brick insertions associated with the tomb (for example for the lintel). The fact that the plastered walls continued into the



Plate 2.11 Vault 3 looking N, showing brick blocking between Vault 3 and Vault 2

tomb confirmed that the plaster pre-dated the tomb. The three interments in this tomb were dated 1806, 1811 and 1819.

Vault 4 (Plate 2.12)

Vault 4 is at the south-west corner of the crypt and is opposite Vault 3. The two vaults are similar. It is 3 m wide by 5.6 m long and it has a semi-circular apse-



Plate 2.12 Vault 4 looking W. The skewed window recess in the apse at the end of the vault is clear

like west end with a blocked window the jambs of which is again skewed slightly to link with the external opening (Plate 2.12). The window again has stone quoins, a low sill with moulded lip, a higher sill, which indicated the former base of the window, and 19th-century brick infill above this. Beneath the brick infill and the window sill is primary ashlar. The stone flags have been largely removed from the west end of the floor and replaced with brick pavers. The primary passage to Vault 5 to the north had been blocked with rough 19th-century pinky yellow stock bricks. At the former location of the mid 19th-century wall which sealed the east side of the vault there are only faint traces of the former plaster pre-dating the sealing of the vault and much less than in the other vaults.

Vault 5 (Plates 2.13-2.14)

Vault 5 is immediately to the north of Vault 4, on the west side of the crypt and has similar detailing – stone-flag floor, stone plinth and string course – to the other vaults. The walls and ceiling of the vault are plastered but as in Vault 4 there is relatively little plaster on the walls and ceiling where the sealing wall has been removed (Plate 2.13). The west end of Vault 5 is squared and has a blocked window, as in the other vaults, but unlike elsewhere, the brick infill is flush with the wall and there is no recess or sill (Plate 2.14). Furthermore, the former window has no stone quoins. There are two surviving iron candle holders in Vault 5, one on the north wall and one on the south. These comprise an L-shaped bar strapped to the wall with a loop at the furthest point from the wall in which the candle would have sat.

Vault 6 (Plates 2.15-2.16)

Vault 6 is the large vault at the centre of the west side of the crypt. It has a similar profile to Vault 1 with a tall, flattened basket arch (6 m wide by 4 m tall) but it is less deep (4.75 m) and its west end is



Plate 2.13 Vault 5 showing exposed brickwork where the 19th-century sealing wall has been removed



Plate 2.14 Vault 5 looking W, showing square end of vault and blocked window. To the left is the block archway to Vault 4. To the right the fillet or buttress in front of the arch spring can be seen clearly



Plate 2.15 Vault 6 looking W. The block doorway to the base of the tower is clear

squared rather than semi-circular (Plate 2.15). At the centre of the west wall is an opening and a 2.3 m long vaulted passage which is blocked at its west end (Plate 2.15). There is a large patch of render towards the top of this blocking and this passage led to the base of the tower and to the curved staircase giving access to ground level. The passage has stone quoins and stone voussoirs to the arch (Plate 2.16). At the west end of Vault 6 is a 25 cm² hole in the crest of the main, tall vault with a hard cement surround which clearly must have linked to something on the floor above (possibly a vent). As with the other vaults, there were originally two open passages linking with the adjacent vaults but only that to the south remained open. The northern passage has been blocked with a relatively early, probably 18th-century, infill brick. As elsewhere, much of the floor is covered with stone flags but these have been removed from around the two former passages to the adjacent vaults. On the north side of the vault is a small looped candle holder, similar to that in Vault 5.



Plate 2.16 Vault 6, details of the stone quoins of the archway to the tower

Vault 7 (Plates 2.17-2.18)

Vault 7 is a small vault located at the northern end of the crypt immediately to the west of the central staircase at this end of the building (see Plate 2.3). Both the staircase and vault are of mid 20th-century date and subdivide the northern 3.5 m of the main vaulted crypt. The ceiling and west wall of Vault 7 are primary and plastered (Plate 2.17). The east wall is formed with mid 20th-century bricks but the south wall is formed with reused 19th-century bricks (Plate 2.18). It may be that the vault was originally open at its south end and that it was later blocked with the reused bricks. Regular holes in the west and east walls may be evidence of a former racking system for supporting coffins.

The northern end of the western wall of Vault 7 awkwardly abuts a window despite these both apparently being primary features (Plate 2.17). This must reflect the conflict between the internal layout, based on the practical needs and use of the crypt, and the desired external aesthetics or architectural composition. The window in the west part of the north wall continues to the west behind the primary west wall of the vault. This window has a primary moulded stone sill but it is only the width of the opening in Vault 7. The east jamb of the window has stone quoins and the window has a set of louvre

slats fixed shut, rather than being sealed with brick infill.

The fact that the window is blocked with slats rather than being permanently sealed with bricks is clearly a reflection of the fact that this vault is a 20th-century alteration, constructed long after the end of interments in the crypt. Presumably the vault was created to accommodate coffins moved here from elsewhere in the crypt; the most likely place being the adjacent vault 8 (context 9001) to the south-west.

Vault 8 (context 9001) (Plates 2.19-2.23)

Vault 8 is the northernmost vault on the west side of the crypt. Unlike Vaults 1-7 it did not house coffins prior to the current works and was not sealed. It had been converted into a small kitchen in recent decades. It appears likely that coffins were removed from this area to Vault 7 when the kitchen was installed.

In plan Vault 8 is similar to Vaults 3 and 4 at the south-west and south-east corners of the crypt and has a semi-circular apse-like west end. Unlike the other vaults previously described, the window at the west end was not blocked but was of later 20th-century date with a grill over it and is probably



Plate 2.17 Vault 7 looking N. The original wall and vault to the left are primary, the wall to the right is a 20th-century insertion. The awkward positioning of the window at the north end of the vault is clear



Plate 2.18 Vault 7 looking S. The S wall is built of 19th-century bricks, the E wall to the left is built of 20th-century bricks

contemporary with the kitchen (Plate 2.19). It may be that the window was blocked in the 19th century when coffins were interred, but that it was unblocked in the mid to later 20th century when the kitchen was installed.

The two primary stone window sills, which were similar to those in the other vaults, survived: the lower one was deeper and had a moulded lip while the higher one, which formed the base of the window was plain. Immediately beneath the window were ashlar blocks above the deep sill. The plaster had been removed from the main walls and vaulted ceiling although the east wall which flanked the main central vault was covered with hard cement render. This wall appears to be of 20th-century brick and was presumably contemporary with the conversion of the vault to a kitchen.

The removal of plaster had exposed the structure of the walls and confirmed several common details less visible in other vaults (Plates 2.19-2.20). Among these details were the edges of the intersecting vaults at right angles to each other, which were formed with special, fine bricks clearly distinct from the stock bricks that form the main walls and vaults. The other feature revealed was that the long buttresses which flank the walls supporting the vault were keyed into the rest of the structure and were clearly primary despite the fact that the string course and skirting did not continue around them.

In the other vaults the lack of string course or skirting suggested that these buttresses could have been secondary additions. In the northern side of the apse was a small blocked opening 25 cm by 50 cm and 75 cm above the floor, which had a rough brick arch over it. The feature looked primary.

Vault 9 (context 9002)

Vault 9 is the main central vault, which extends north to south for the main length of the crypt. Interments were not made in this area and it was not sealed prior to the current development. It has a wide, flattened basket-arch profile, with intersecting groin vaults to each of the side bays, and at its centre is a square plan ashlar pillar (1.3 m²) which supports the vault. The southern half of the crypt has plaster in the vault, but below the string course the walls are just painted. Any plaster and paint had been removed from the northern half of the crypt prior to the current works. The removal of this plaster was probably undertaken relatively recently, perhaps when the kitchen was inserted into Vault 8.

Vault 10 (context 9003)

Vault 10 is towards the northern end of the west side of vaults; it had not contained interments and was not sealed at the start of the current investiga-



Plate 2.19 Vault 8 containing kitchen. View looking W. Note the apsidal end and skewed window opening



Plate 2.20 Vault 8 looking E.

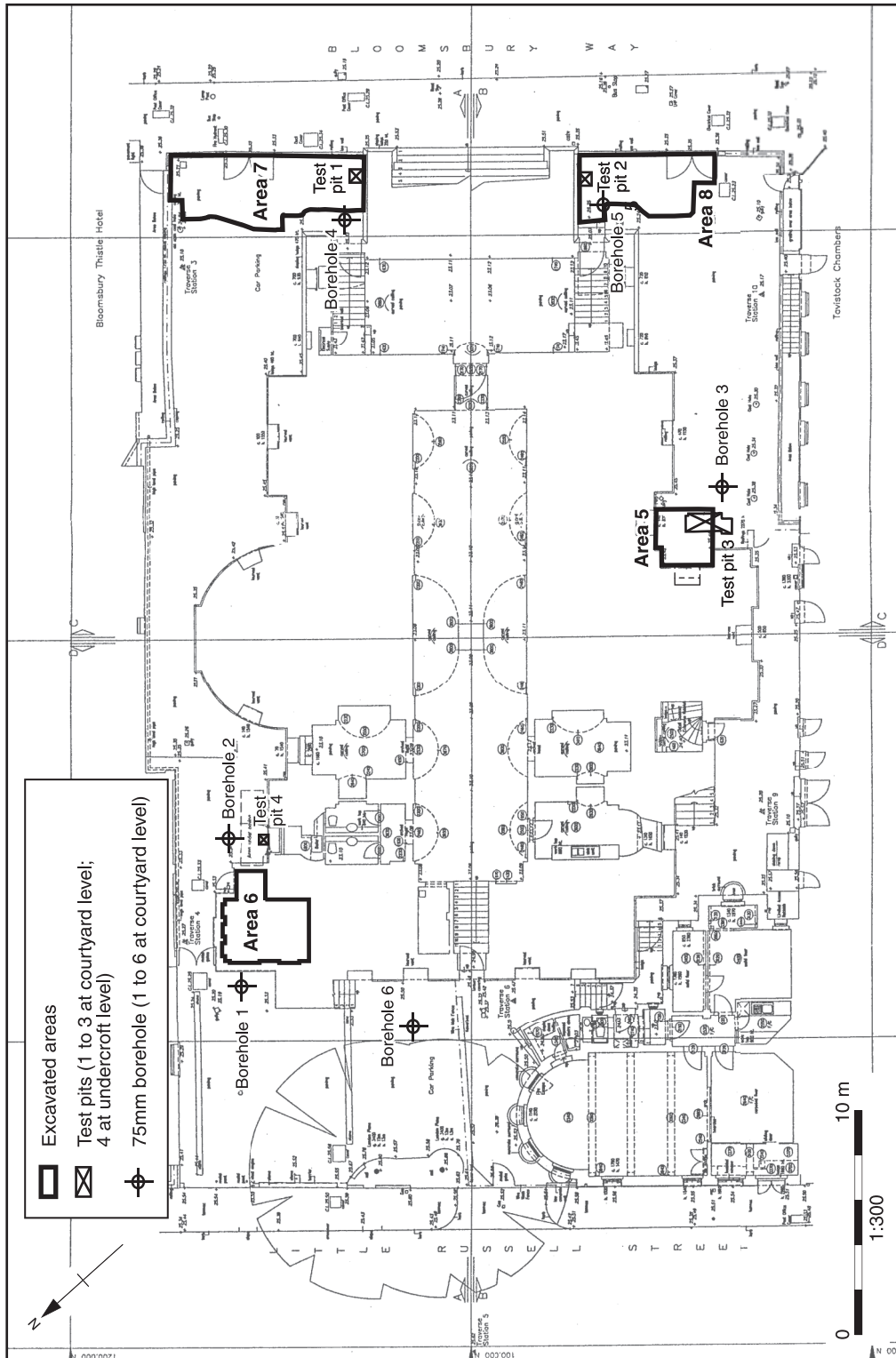


Fig. 2.3 Plan of church and churchyard showing location of test pits, boreholes and excavations areas. Survey drawing of supplied by Michael Gallie and Partners

tion. The vault has a squared west end but there is no window here due to the location of a staircase on the outside of the building in this area. The wall, which closes the vault on its east side is of relatively old brick, possibly of 18th-century date, with a soft chalky mortar but the arch formed over the doorway has later 20th-century mortar. The doorway itself appears to be primary to the wall as the jambs have not been reformed. The internal primary walls are still plastered although the wall which blocks the former passage to the adjacent vault is painted.

Vault 11 (context 9004)

Vault 11 is immediately north of Vault 1 on the eastern side of the crypt and it was open at the start of the current investigation. It has a squared east end and originally had a window but this was covered with black plastic. (Possibly the window had been removed). The stone window sills survive and have a similar form to those in the other vaults together with the ashlar immediately below. The walls and ceiling of the vault were formerly plastered but this had been removed prior to the current works. The west wall of the vault is of old brick (18th century), probably contemporary with the east wall of Vault 10, but the jambs of the doorway have been roughly reformed confirming that this door is a secondary insertion. The passages to the two adjacent vaults are both blocked and the infill brickwork rendered.

Vault 12 (context 9005)

Vault 12 is located immediately north of Vault 11 at the north-eastern corner of the crypt and it had been subdivided into two small WC cubicles by the insertion of modern partitions. The older arrangement partially survives at the east end of the vault beyond the WCs where there is a curved apse-like alcove, similar to the other corners of the crypt, with curved ashlar quoins and a louvred opening. However, below the louvre is an arched passage which projects to a small chamber or cavity beyond the footprint of the church. The cavity and the arched passage appear to be primary, although a concrete slab has been added above the arch and a 20th-century boiler and flue has been inserted into the chamber.

Conclusion

St George's in Bloomsbury is a nationally significant building designed by one of the country's most important architects and having been on the official list of the world's 100 most endangered sites as recently as 2002, it is now being rescued and restored. The clearance works within the crypt have enabled a programme of building recording in this area, which has enhanced our understanding of the building and of the alterations undertaken since the church's construction in the early 18th century.

The main alteration was clearly the use of several of the vaults of the crypt for interments in the first half of the 19th century and the subsequent sealing of these vaults in the mid 19th century. The present record has detailed the vaults that were sealed, as well as the other main vaults, and various minor, earlier, probably 18th-century, changes to the primary arrangement of the building.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEFS IN THE CHURCHYARD AND CRYPT

Test pits 1 and 2 were located to the west and east of the main steps, and were then extended and a number of brick-built structures were recorded (Areas 7 and 8) (Fig. 2.3). Test pit 3 was located south of the tower on the west side of the church, and the trench was extended to investigate the stairs that originally led down to the base of the tower (Area 5). Test pit 4 was on the east side. In addition, OA was requested to undertake archaeological recording of a well and associated structures discovered during ground reduction works within a later extension to the church in the north-eastern churchyard (Area 6).

Test pits 1 and 2 (Fig. 2.4)

Test pits 1 and 2 were located respectively immediately to the east and west of the main entrance to the church (Fig. 2.3). The deposits and stratigraphic sequence in the two test pits were the same. The layer 3 = 6 was a backfill against the brick foundations (4 = 7) for the front steps leading up to the main

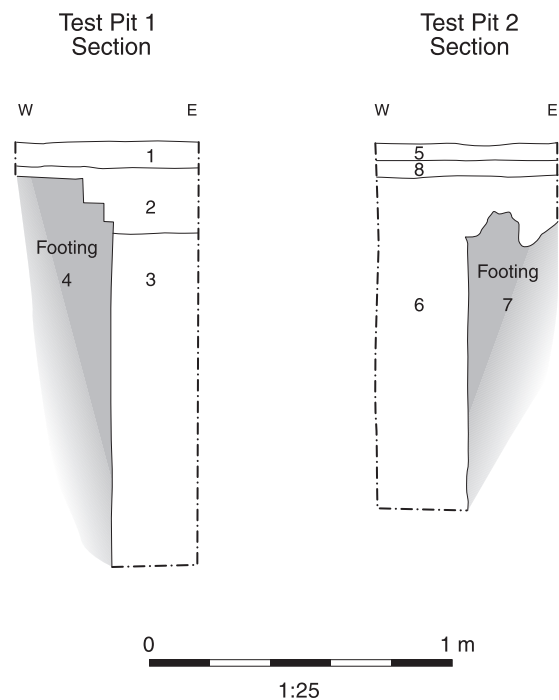


Fig. 2.4 Test pit 1: S-facing section; Test pit 2: S-facing section

entrance of the church. This fill comprised compact reddish light- brown sandy clay with brick, mortar and charcoal fragments. It was excavated to a depth of 1.10-1.30 m in the test pits, and borehole data indicated that it continued for a further 0.40-0.60 m. It was overlaid by a levelling layer 2 = 8, which comprised dark brown friable clay sand with brick, mortar and charcoal fragments up to 0.22 m deep. This in turn was overlaid by paving slabs (1 = 5).

Areas 7 and 8 (Fig. 2.5)

Areas 7 and 8 were located immediately to the south of the principal south façade, at the east and west of the broad flight of steps respectively (Fig. 2.3). Several brick piers were exposed and these are described below. These structures are thought to date from the 19th century and are evidence of the foundation piers of structures that are no longer extant.

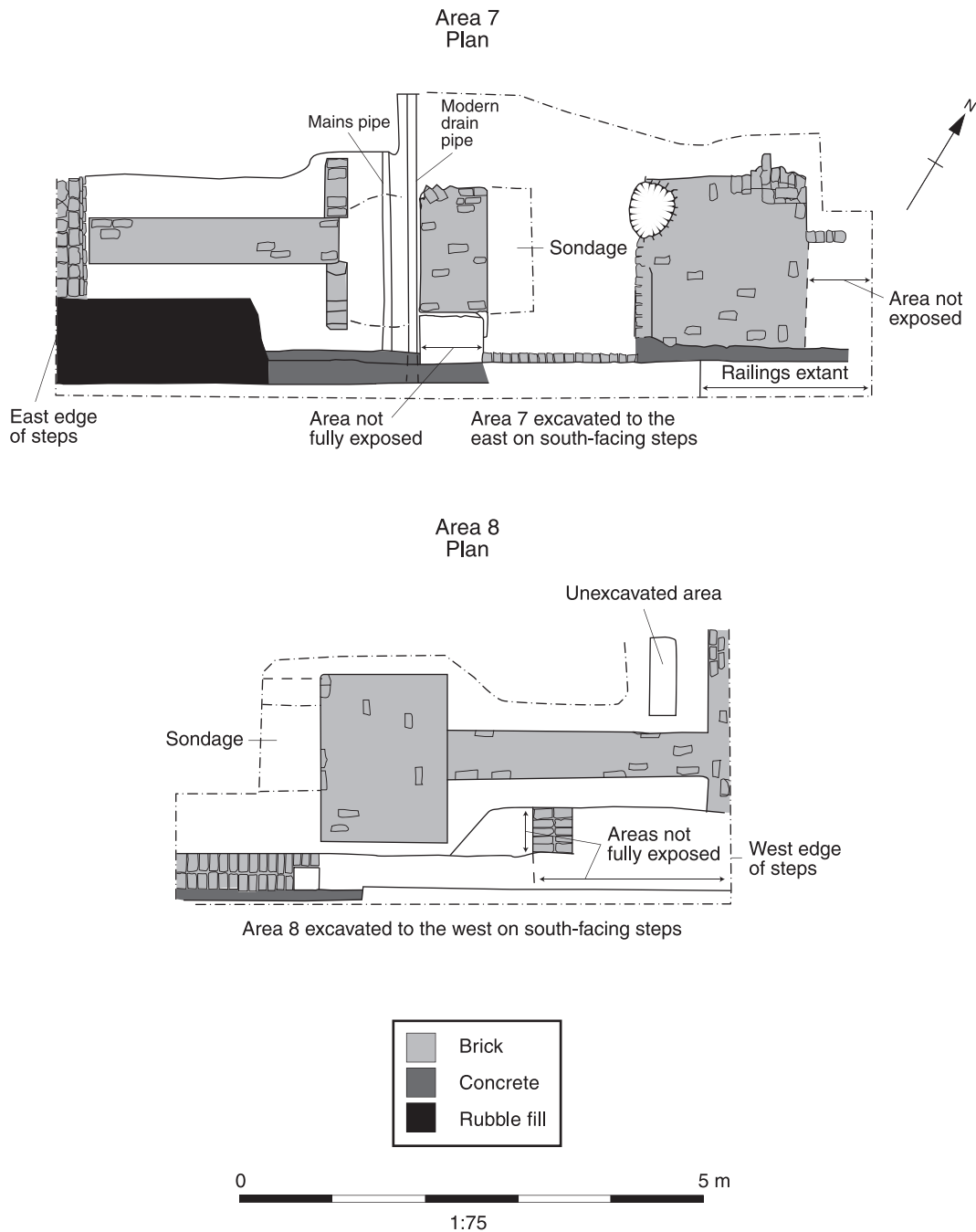


Fig. 2.5 Areas 7 and 8: plans of excavation

Area 7

The Area 7 to the east of the steps revealed a number of brick features. Test pit 1 had been excavated previously against the E side of the steps (see above, Fig. 2.4). At the west end of the trench were the brick-built footings of the steps. Running east from just west of the steps was a long rectangular brick pier just 0.30 m below the present ground level. The red bricks measured 0.23 by 0.07 m, which were excavated to a depth of four courses (c. 0.31 m). The bricks were bonded with a white chalky mortar with small inclusions and a further layer was also extant on the surface of the pier.

At the east end of this long brick feature were two smaller red brick structures which extended to the north and south respectively, which were excavated to a depth of 0.23 m. Modern pipes running north to south separate these features from a N-S orientated rectangular brick pier again 0.30 m below ground level. This is of a similar red brick construction to the rectangular E-W pier described above. Two course were revealed. A test pit was dug to a depth of 0.88 m to the east side of this pier. The pit revealed that the red brick extends to a depth of 0.51 m and sits on a concrete raft. These bricks were similar to those of the elongated rectangular structure described above.

At the east end of the excavated area a large red brick pier was revealed which was also covered in a thin layer of mortar and situated 0.30 m below present ground level. A shallow pit roughly lined in brick lies at the north-west corner of this area.

Area 8

The area to the west of the main entrance steps also revealed substantial brick piers. Previously Test pit 2 had been excavated against the W side of the steps (see above, Fig. 2.3). At the east end of the trench were the footings of the steps. These were excavated to a depth of 0.42 m or c. 5 courses. Running west from these footings was a long brick-built pier or footing. This was revealed to a depth of 0.45 m or c. 4 courses. It was constructed of red bricks similar to those already described in Area 7.

At the W end of the elongated pier was a large rectangular pier which was revealed to a depth of 0.34 m (c. 4 courses) which was constructed from the same bricks and mortar as previously described. There was a layer of mortar on the surface of the pier. A test pit was dug at the west side of this pier, which revealed further courses of red brick extending to a depth of 1.08 m and built on a concrete raft. Along the south edge of the trench part of a platform built of red brick overlaid by concrete was exposed. It is likely to have extended further to the south.

Stairwell on the south side of the tower (Test Pit 3 and Area 5) (Fig. 2.6)

On the north side of the tower there is an extant flight of stairs rising up to give access to the tower. Through the wall supporting these steps is a door which gives onto a curved flight of steps leading down into the base of the tower. Originally on the south side of the tower there was a similar arrangement, which was later demolished. Test pit 3 was excavated to establish whether there were any surviving steps leading down to the base of the tower mirroring those to the north. The small rectangular trench was excavated in the angle between the west wall of the church and the south wall of the tower. The trench, which measured 2.6 m x 1 m, was excavated from pavement level, and revealed part of the remains of the original stairs leading down to the basement of the tower and the wall supporting the stair up to the tower. Area 5 was later opened to fully investigate the stairwell leading to the basement.

The stone paving (11) revealed in Test pit 3, consisted of a single course of square and rectangular slabs of varying dimensions, the depth of which did not exceed 0.14 m. This layer rested on a 0.08 m deep levelling layer of loose grey-brown silty sand (12) that included a small proportion (5%) of ceramic building material (CMB), stone and mortar. These contexts were removed to reveal two parallel brick and mortar walls (structures 13 and 16), at a right angle to the south wall of the west transept. Only the uppermost courses of the two walls were revealed. Wall 13 was the more substantial of the two, being 0.5 m wide. It consisted of an inner and outer facing of bricks, with a core of less regularly laid bricks and brick fragments set in cream-coloured mortar. This wall would appear to have been the main foundation wall for the demolished stair to the south side of the tower. The thinner outer wall 16 was located approximately 0.1 m to the south-west of wall 13, and was constructed of an inner and an outer facing of brick with a mortar and rubble core. The wall was 0.25 m wide. Further investigation during the excavation of Area 5 revealed a substantial wall footing 9002 which formed the north side of the stairwell and was constructed of brick (brick dimensions 0.06 m x 0.11 m x 0.20 m). Wall 9002 was 0.54 m wide. Walls 13 and 16 appear to have been built on footing 9002.

Three dressed stone slabs that formed the second, third and fourth steps of the staircase (structure 10 = Area 5 structure 9000) to the crypt were revealed in Test Pit 3. Each of the steps had two square hollows in its upper surface at its outer edge, and these are interpreted as evidence for a cast iron banister rail. Further investigation which revealed the complete curving stair which comprised steps of machine-tooled limestone ashlar (9000), and was set on a brick base (9001). Structure 9001 was built of dark orange bricks – measuring 0.11 m x 0.06 m x 0.20 m – in English bond with bright white lime-rich

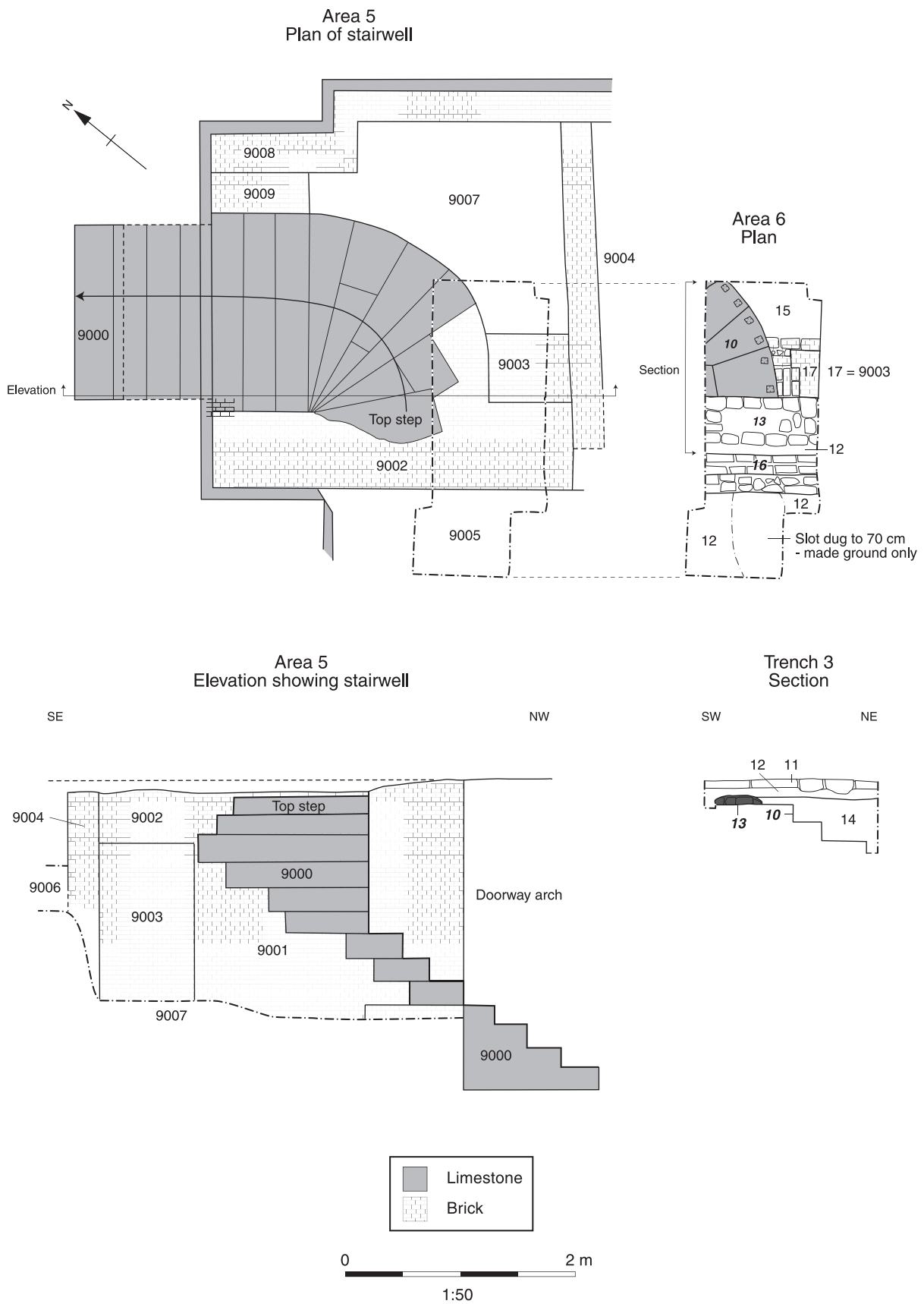


Fig. 2.6 Area 5 and Test Pit 3: excavation of the stairwell 9000 S of the tower: Plans and sections

mortar. The upper steps were supported by an additional brick and mortar structure 17 = 9003, which abutted wall 9002.

The limestone of the steps was very similar to that used in the rest of the church structure and was presumably part of the original construction of c. 1730s. The first six extant steps curved from the SW to NW as they descended. There were three further steps to the archway through the wall of the tower. The base of the entrance arch measured 0.61 m deep through the wall. Four further steps, each measuring 1.22 m long x 0.22 m deep x 0.16 m tall, descended through this archway into the base of the tower. Inserted between the NW side of the steps and supporting structure 9000/9001 and the plinth (9008) of the nave wall of the was a platform of orange brick (9009), which presumably provided additional support.

The S wall of the stairwell was probably formed by the NE-SW wall 9004 built of orange bricks (0.06 m x 0.11 m x 0.22 m) in English bond with lime mortar. The wall was 0.22 m wide and >2.5 m long. It was revealed to a height of 1.78 m. Its north end butted against the nave wall plinth (9008), but its south end was overlaid by rubble (9005).

The space between the steps and brick support 9000/9001, the southern brick wall 9004, and structure 17=9003, was filled with a fairly compact medium to dark brown silty sand containing small to medium sized fragments of CBM and mortar (10%) (context 15). This deposit, which was at least 1.8 m deep, appears to constitute the original fill dating from the construction of the stairwell in the 18th century. It colour and composition contrasted with the later material (14) used to backfill after the demolition and levelling of the southern tower stair superstructure. Fill 14 was a loose pink-orange deposit of large and medium sized CBM fragments and mortar, probably derived from the demolished superstructure. It sealed the stone steps and had a maximum depth of 0.36 m.

Test pit 4 (Fig. 2.7)

Test pit 4 was located immediately against the eastern foundation wall of the church outside Vault 8. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.38 m from the level of the crypt floor and measured 0.4 m by 0.5 m. The natural gravel on which the foundations of the church rest was a grey-yellow layer composed of small to medium sized gravel (70%) within a matrix of yellow clay (context 21). Overlying the gravel was a 1.15m deep compact layer of yellow sandy clay containing minimal inclusions (context 20). The latter layer was natural clay. It was in turn sealed by a compact brown-grey sandy clay deposit containing charcoal flecks and small fragments of CBM and mortar (5%) (context 19). This deposit was 0.15 m deep, and seems to be an intermediate layer between the natural clay (20) and the levelling layer (context 18), which was the uppermost deposit in this trench. Context 18 was a

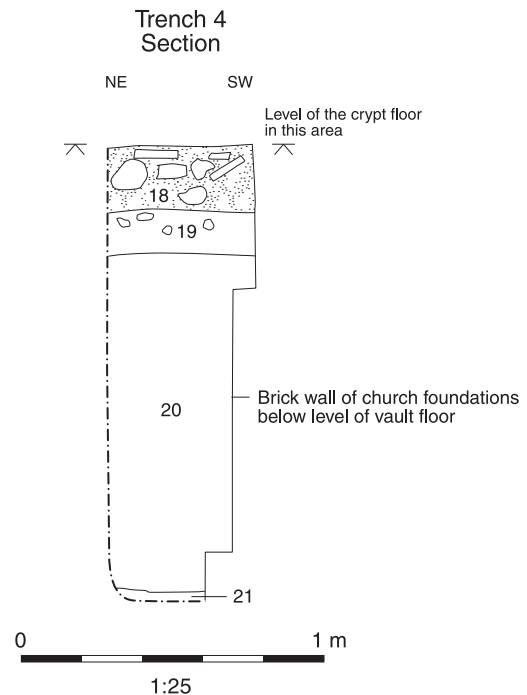


Fig. 2.7 Test pit 4: NW-facing section

very compact deposit of dark grey to black silty sand containing mortar and fragments of CBM of varying sizes (10%). The dark colour was probably derived from the presence of charcoal within this fill. Context 18 formed the surface of the crypt floor in this area, but it may originally have been sealed by the stone flooring that was found in other parts of the crypt.

Area 6 (Figs 2.8-2.9)

In March 2004, OA undertook an archaeological watching brief during ground reduction in the eastern churchyard within a 19th-century brick built extension (10016), which abuts the eastern wall (10015) of the church near its north corner. Earlier structures revealed during excavation included an 18th-century well (10007), three brick and mortar walls (10003, 10004 and 10005) and two blocked arches (10016 and 10017) (Fig. 2.8).

The earliest of the three brick-built walls was wall 10004. This abutted the stone plinth of the church wall 10015, and was orientated north-south. The wall had been cut short at its north, to make room for wall 10016 of the later extension. Wall 1004 was built of red bricks (0.215 m x 0.104 m x 0.75 m) in stretcher bond and bonded by lime mortar. The east face was pointed and the west face was roughly finished. Reduction of the ground level revealed a blocked archway (10017) through the wall (Fig. 2.9). The archway was keyed into the church wall (10015), and the span of the arch extended beyond wall 10003 to the north, and clearly predated the building of wall 10003. The archway had been

blocked up by brickwork 10018, which was pointed on the eastern face and rough on the west. This brickwork rested on an original floor surface of blackened York paving (10010). A short length of brick wall (10005) orientated E-W was inserted to the W of wall 10004 between it and the church wall 10005. Precisely when this occurred is unclear.

Following the blocking of archway 10017, wall 10003 was built of red bricks (0.22 m x 0.104 m x 0.075 m) in stretcher bond and bonded with lime mortar. This wall was an L-shaped insertion abutting the E side wall 10004 and the blocking 10018 of arch 10017. The wall measured approximately 2.8 m from wall 1004 to the corner at its east end. Here it turned south and ran for 3.1 m to a second return, where it turned back towards the church wall. The wall formed an L-shaped room. The internal southern and western faces were pointed and whitewashed.

Ground reduction revealed a blocked arch 10016 located beneath the modern doorway of the later extension. This east-west orientated arch spanned between wall 10003 and church wall 10015 (Fig. 2.9). The arch had been blocked by red brick (0.215 m x 0.104 m x 0.075 m) and lime mortar brickwork in stretcher bond (context 10006). The north-face wall

was smooth pointed, and the southern face was rough. The doorway is thought to have been blocked up when the footings for the 1870s extension were laid. The base of this brickwork 10006 had been pierced (cut 10011) for a large metal pipe (10012) to pass through.

Wall 10003 was clearly earlier than the upstanding Victorian extension, and has been interpreted as an external access to a cellar or the undercroft. A stone step (10014) was found cut into the southern-most visible part of wall 10003. It may have been part of a stairway leading down to a cellar through archway 10016.

To the north of the room formed by wall 10003, a roughly built brick-lined well (10007) was discovered when the wooden boards supporting made ground 10000 collapsed. The well was constructed of red brick (0.21-0.22 m x 0.10 m x 0.65 m) in stretcher bond. The cylindrical, vertically faced brickwork had originally been capped by square York stone slabs (0.6 m x 0.06 m), which were flush with floor slabs 10010. The well had an internal diameter of 1.39 m and an estimated depth of at least 1.20 m. The well appears to have predated the extension, the brickwork suggesting an 18th-century date. A gully was observed leading off

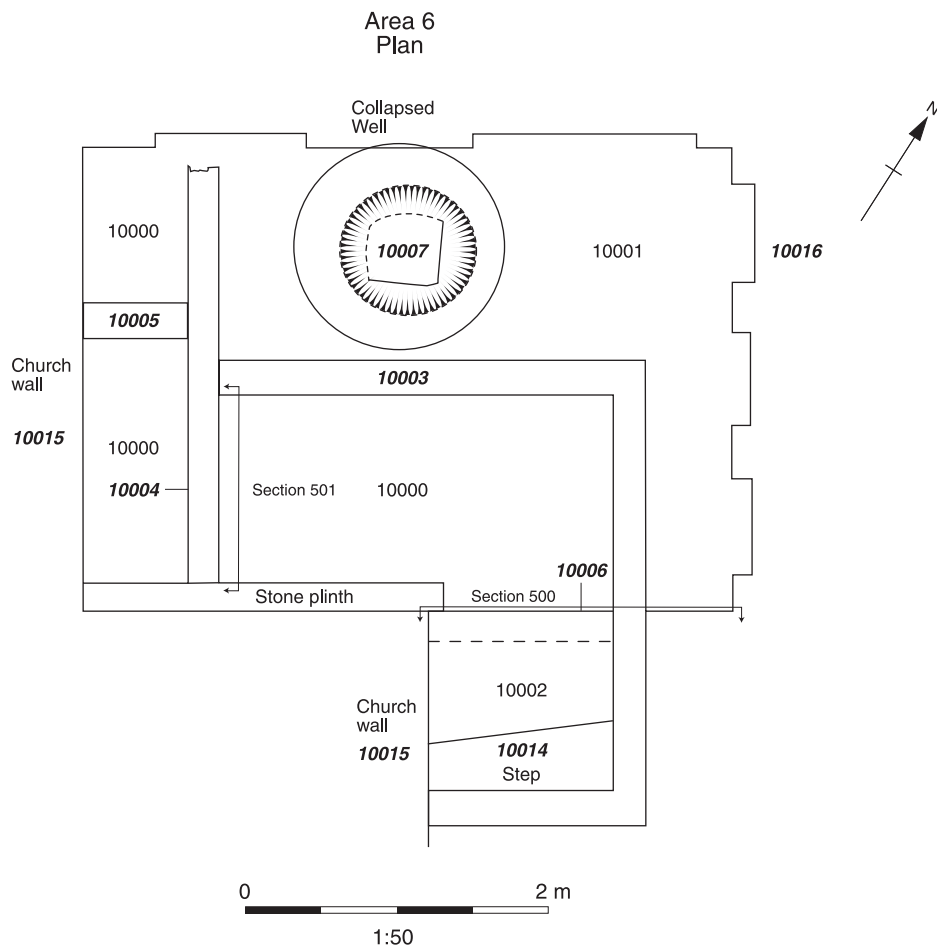


Fig. 2.8 Area 6: Plan of north-eastern extension showing location of well 10007

'In the vaults beneath'

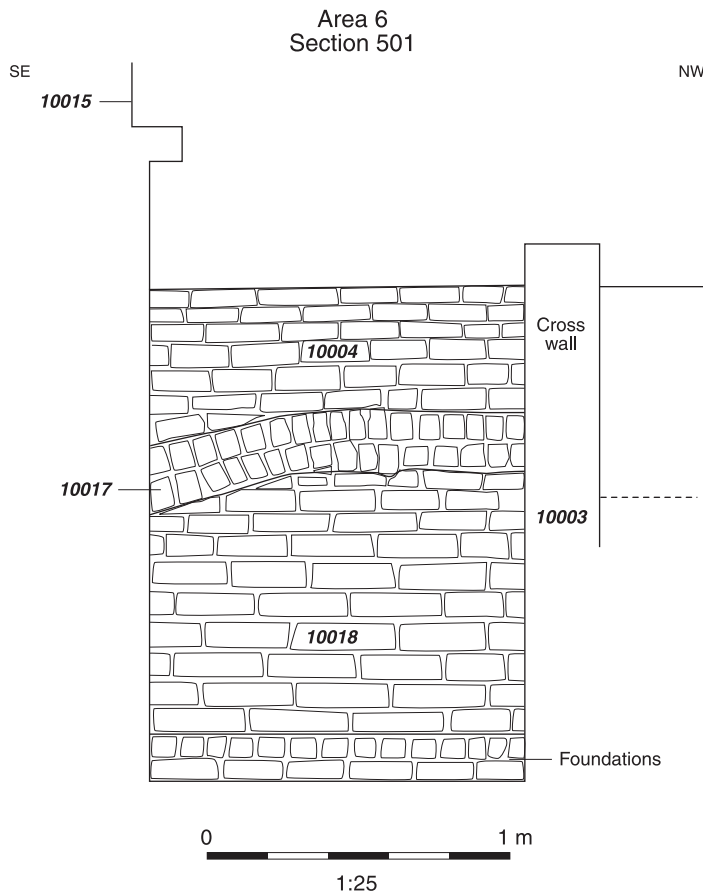
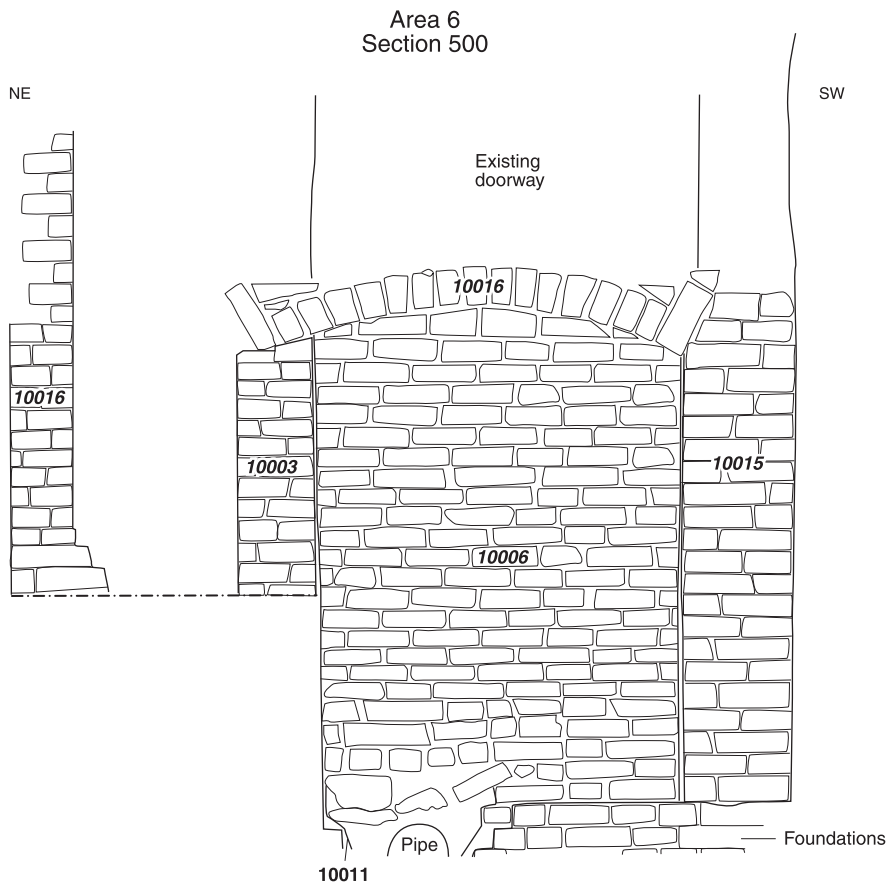


Fig. 2.9 Area 6: Section 500: Elevation showing blocked arch 10016; Section 501: Elevation showing blocked arch 10017

towards the church. The well and floor had been sealed with rubble fill 10001. This layer appeared to be deliberate infilling layer of the cellar, probably laid down in preparation for the construction of the extension in the 1870s. This is probably contempo-

rary with made ground 10002, located in the vicinity of the modern doorway to the extension. The well was enclosed within the later extension (dating to the 1870s), the walls (10016) of which were upstanding at the time of recording.

Listed building descriptions

IoE number:	476747		
Location:	CHURCH OF ST GEORGE AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, GATES AND LAMPS, BLOOMSBURY WAY (north side) CAMDEN TOWN, CAMDEN, GREATER LONDON		
Photographer:	N/A		
Date Photographed:	N/A		
Date listed:	24 October 1951		
Date of last amendment:	24 October 1951		
Grade	I		
			CAMDEN
		TQ3081NW	BLOOMSBURY WAY
		798-1/100/113	(North side)
