Priory Wall
Ham Lane
Lewes
East Sussex

Archaeological Recording

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PRIORY WALL, HAM LANE, LEWES, EAST SUSSEX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) has carried out an archaeological and historical investigation of a section of boundary wall adjacent to Ham Lane in Lewes, East Sussex. The wall is believed to be along the alignment of the former precinct wall of the Cluniac Priory of St Pancras, the ruins of which survive to the west, and the principal objective of the work was to determine the age and significance of the wall. The work involved a physical assessment of the visible parts of the wall, intended to identify different constructional phases of the wall, and the digging of three test pits in different locations along the length of the wall to assess the foundations. It also included an historical assessment of cartographic and other documentary sources to provide further evidence relating to the wall.

The physical assessment identified a large number of distinct constructional phases along the length of the wall clearly indicating that many sections of the wall have been patched up and rebuilt a number of times. All of these appeared to be of relatively recent date (probably largely 19th century with sections of 20th-century date and some probably of 18th-century date).

Historical evidence supports the belief that this is the location of the Priory precinct wall and that there has therefore been a wall along this alignment for substantially longer than the existing structure. It may well be that some small elements of the wall are older than the 18th-century (possibly towards the base or parts of the core of the wall) and almost certainly the flint and stones themselves have been reused from the previous wall but no substantial sections of significantly old wall survive. However, although the actual fabric is not particularly old or intrinsically significant, the wall is important as an historical topographical feature which defines part of the former Priory precinct It is also of significant as the local flint construction adds to the character of this part of Lewes.

There is a relatively good collection of historical maps and views of the area and although they cannot conclusively determine the age of the section of wall they include a number of clues suggesting phases of rebuild. Several plans show part of the wall as a wooden fence and a view of 1724 shows the area of the Dripping Pan without any banks surrounding it. Later plans which do show the banked enclosure appear to show it different to that surviving today suggesting that alterations have been undertaken and the Ordnance Survey maps also include suggestions that at least the northern corner of the wall was rebuilt in the later 19th century.

One of the interesting side issues that the study has raised has been what the purpose was of the adjacent enclosure ('The Dripping Pan') which the wall adjoins, and the associated mound. It has been suggested that the wide shallow enclosure may have been a medieval salt pan but although there are salt pans such as this in some parts of the country (eg Essex) the form of this would have been against the tradition of salt mounds found widely in Sussex. It is also unlikely that a large part of the Priory precinct would have been used as a salt pan and it is more likely that it was simply a place for events or gatherings. The first and second editions of the Ordnance Survey suggest that the mound immediately west of the Dripping Pan was a calvary (a representation of the mound where Christ was crucified) and it may be the mound and Dripping Pan was some sort of a place of pilgrimage such as this.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology has been commissioned by Lewes District Council to undertake an historical and archaeological assessment of a section of wall flanking Ham Lane in Lewes, East Sussex. The wall is in a generally poor condition and parts are in urgent need of stabilisation, dismantling or rebuilding and the current project is intended to establish the historical significance of the wall in order to inform and guide the works. The wall is neither scheduled nor listed but it is believed to follow the course of one of the outer walls of the Cluniac Priory of St Pancras the main remains of which are located c.300 m to the west.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 The main aim of the project was to establish the age and overall historical significance of the wall to inform possible restoration works. It aimed to distinguish the different constructional phases of the wall and to gain an indication of the construction of the foundations of the wall. The other main aim was to identify (in liaison with the consulting structural engineers) a set of options for the future repair and restoration of the wall.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 The assessment was based on several distinct elements. These included a desk-based historical study of the main primary and secondary sources to gain a background understanding of the site and any firm documentary evidence of the age of the wall. This was undertaken at the East Sussex Record Office and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. A physical assessment of the above ground wall was made to identify constructional breaks and changes in mortar in the wall indicative of the phased development of the wall. The wall was heavily covered with ivy and other vegetation and it was necessary to clear as much as practically possible to undertake the main assessment. Three 1 x 1 m test pits were also opened against the wall to assess its foundations and other buried remains. The site work was undertaken on 20 and 21 July 2004.

1.3.2 An labelled and ordered archive will be prepared and deposited with the Museum of Sussex Archaeology. This will consist of all the project material produced (photographs, slides, negatives, site notes) as well as a copy of this report and copies of relevant historical material consulted.

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.4.1 Oxford Archaeology would like to acknowledge John Mills (Archaeologist at West Sussex County Council) for sharing his knowledge on salt-

working sites in Sussex and for discussing the possibility that the Dripping Pan was a medieval salt pan.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 The wall that is the subject of the current study is located on the west side of the northern half of Ham Lane. It is outside the historic town of Lewes (c.500 m to the south of it) and is within the suburb of Southover. The original town of Lewes was built on a spur of the Downs that descends to the west bank of the River Ouse. Southover is first mentioned at the end of the 11th century and was previously the parish served by the church of St. Pancras. Originally the borough was independent of the town and located outside the gates of the Priory of St. Pancras and occupying the slightly rising ground south of the Winterbourne Stream. It was in 1881 that its boundaries were enlarged and it was at this time that it became part of the parish of Lewes (VCH, vol. vii).

2.2 PRIORY OF ST PANCRAS

2.2.1 Although the remains of the Priory are not directly the subject of this study some historical background is clearly relevant as the wall which does form the subject of the study is on the line of the precinct wall of the Priory. This section on the Priory is based almost entirely on *Lewes Priory: The Site and its History* by Helen Poole.

2.2.2 The Priory was established by William de Warenne and his wife Gundrada in the last quarter of the 11th century as the first Cluniac Priory in England after the couple had visited the parent Abbey of Cluny in Burgundy. The church and Priory buildings were laid out on land given to the monks by de Warrene in 1077 and it became a site of some importance as the most important Priory of this order in the country with authority over the other 'daughter' Cluniac houses.

2.2.3 The small Saxon church, which had been retained and reused from the pre-monastic period, was replaced in the 12th century with a much larger structure which formed part of a major phase of rebuilding of many monastic buildings in this period. The expansion was reflected in the number of monks which had grown from the original four (in the 11th century) to 100 in the 1170s.

2.2.4 In 1537 the Priory surrendered to Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's minister, as part of the dissolution of the monasteries and the Priory was substantially destroyed apart from the prior's lodging. The survey at the time of the dissolution confirmed the Priory's importance and status as comfortably the richest monastery of the 17 in Sussex and the wealthiest Cluniac house in England. An impression of the scale of the Priory can also be gained by the fact that the church is believed to have been larger than Chichester Cathedral.

2.2.5 1540 Thomas Cromwell was executed and the Priory lands were granted to Anne of Cleves. The new tenant was Nicholas Jenney whose lease granted him 'all houses, buildings, garden crofts, meadows and marshes within the precinct of the Priory wall'. The site with surviving house which became known as Lords Place passed to the Sackville family and in the hearth tax of 1662 it was shown to be the largest house in Lewes. However it appears to have been at least partially ruinous and was gradually pulled down in the late 17th century.

2.2.6 Subsequent to this ownership of the site changed several times but the house does not appear to have been replaced and the surviving elements of the Priory remained as ruins. One area of the Priory precinct which is known to have been put to later uses is a large flat, sunken area in the north-eastern corner of the precinct known as the 'Dripping Pan'. This area (which is adjoined by the wall which forms the current study and is detailed further elsewhere) is rectangular in shape with earth banks enclosing it and it appears to have been formed by extracting earth for an adjacent mound. In the later 19th and 20th centuries the Dripping Pan has been used as cricket and football pitches (and is currently the home of Lewes FC) and in 1838 it was used to host celebrations in honour of Queen Victoria's coronation. This consisted of a dinner given for 3900 poor people of the town with 612 gentlemen officiating as carvers and attendants. An illustration of this event, showing the flat Dripping Pan, the mound and banked enclosures, is included in this study as Figure 3.

2.2.7 The Priory site is now bisected by the railway which passes through in a south-west to north-east direction and the construction of this in 1845 uncovered the remains of the founders of the Priory William de Warenne and his wife Gundrada.

2.2.8 In 1926 a new bowling green was cut into the base of the mound and the construction of the mound was seen to be wholly of chalk and soil. The lack of stone or building rubble within the mound has been suggested as evidence that the mound probably pre-dates the dissolution (Poole 48).

2.3 THE PRIORY WALL AND PRECINCT

2.3.1 The walls studied form the east boundary (Ham Lane) and the eastern half of the southern boundary of the Dripping Pan. It is widely assumed that Ham Lane forms the eastern edge of the monastic precinct and that the Dripping Pan is at the north-east corner of the precinct and all the available historical evidence consulted in this study supports this. Although all the historic maps available are from the post-monastic period the outline of the precinct survives in the later landscape extending north as far as Priory Street (and Mountfield Road), east as far as Ham Lane, west as far as Cockshut Road and south as far as The Cockshut stream (See Figs. 6-8). The ruined remains of the Priory are in the west half of the former precinct.

2.4 CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES AND VIEWS

2.4.1 Historic map coverage of the area of the former Priory is moderately good and provides some evidence of the form of the site in the post-monastic period.

2.4.2 The earliest map consulted was **Randall's map of 1620** which is principally of Lewes and unfortunately does not extend fully across the former Priory site. It shows the northern edge of the Priory precinct (including the north-east corner which is now the Dripping Pan) and labels the *The Pryorye* but shows no detail on the layout of the site.

2.4.3 The next available source is a particularly useful view of **The South Prospect of Lewes by Budgen dated 1724** (Fig 2). This view clearly shows the ruins of the Priory, the mound to the east of it, a series of walls and fences within the Priory precinct and the town of Lewes on the raised ground in the background. Although there is doubtless a degree of artistic licence employed in the view and it should not be assumed that every detail is fully accurate it does provide very useful evidence on the form of the area in the early 18th century. Neither the flat, shallow Dripping Pan nor the earth banks which enclose it are shown but the mound, which has been assumed to have been constructed from the earth excavated from the Dripping Pan, is shown. The northern wall of the precinct is clearly shown as a masonry structure together with a wall on the alignment of the current wall flanking Ham Lane and the east side of the Dripping Pan. A further wall is also shown on the current alignment of the southern boundary of the Dripping Pan (passing in front of the mound) although this wall is shown partly masonry (with buttresses) and partly as a fence. The fact that fences are shown along this alignment suggests that the earth bank which is now retained by the wall in this location may not have been constructed at this date and must be an argument against the common theory that the Dripping Pan was a medieval salt pan (discussed further below). As stated above too much reliance should not be placed on the details of the view but the lack of any earth banks in the current area of the Dripping Pan and the undulating nature of the site (which is now very flat) is clearly a suggestion that the Dripping Pan in its current form may post-date this view. If this was true it would mean that the wall flanking Ham Lane, which now retains the bank, must have been rebuilt since 1724 but this cannot be viewed as definitive and the view does confirm that there was a wall along this alignment from at least the early 18th century.

2.4.4 The next available map is **Durant's *Survey and Map of the Dissolved Priory or Monastery of St Pancras*, 1762.** This plan (which was not available for copying) shows the ruins of the Priory and in the north-eastern corner of the precinct (the current location of the Dripping Pan) is labelled *Mount Field*. Immediately to the south of this is a further field labelled *paddock*. This primitive map includes a key for walls although it fails to identify those surrounding the Priory. Presumably they are simply not shown by the cartographer rather than this indicating that there were no walls at this date.

2.4.5 **James Edwards' Map of Lewes, 1799** (Fig. 4) shows much of the Priory precinct and the area that is the subject of the current study. This is the first plan to show the Dripping Pan (and labelled as such on the plan) with what appears to be a rectangular sunken area surrounded by four earth banks. The area to the west of the sunken enclosure is labelled *Mount Field* and shows the mound with spiral pathway to the top. A short distance to the south of the Dripping Pan is a wooden fence clearly constructed with regularly spaced posts supporting horizontal slats. This appears to be on the alignment of the current retaining wall which encloses the Dripping Pan and the eastern part of which is the subject of the current study. Although, as with any historical map such as this, one should be cautious of assuming that the detail of what is shown is accurate the fact that a fence is so clearly indicated, when walls are shown elsewhere, strongly suggests that there was indeed a fence in this location at the turn of the 19th century, rather than the current wall. Ham Lane is shown (although not labelled) although the map is inconclusive on the form of the wall which flanks it to the west immediately adjacent to the Dripping Pan (ie the subject of the current study). There is a line of trees shown to the east of Ham Lane and a single line shown to the west of it. Elsewhere on the map, such as along the northern boundary of the former precinct, walls are shown as a double line which suggests that along the single line there may not have been a substantial wall. Again however, this evidence is merely suggestive rather than conclusive.

2.4.6 **William Figg's map of Lewes, 1824** (Fig 5) is broadly similar to the 1799 map in the area under consideration except that the sunken area of the Dripping Pan is labelled *Mount Field.* The boundary immediately to the south of Mount Field and the mount itself (which was shown as a fence on the 1799 map) appears to be shown on the 1824 map as a hedge, possibly a fence with a hedge alongside it, and clearly not a masonry wall. The east side of the Dripping Pan flanking Ham Lane is again shown as a single line but it is impossible to surmise from this what type of boundary structure this indicates.

2.4.7 The next map is the **first edition Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1873** (25 inch: 1 mile. Fig 6) which is the first map to show the railway cutting through the precinct just to the north-west of the mound. The sunken area is once again labelled as *The Dripping Pan* and there is a single line shown to the south and east sides on the line of the current walls. On this map (unlike the 1799 map and to a lesser extent the 1824 one) the line of the wall is immediately adjacent to the bank and this strongly suggests that the line was a retaining wall for the bank. It is significant to note that there is a broad arrow shown at the north-east corner of the Dripping Pan (at the junction between Ham Lane and Priory Street) indicating that there was a survey bench mark in this location and clearly showing that the structure on which the bench mark was located must have been permanent (eg a flint stone wall). It is a safe assumption that the walls shown on this plan (both the south and east walls) are essentially the same as the structures

surviving today (albeit with later repairs/rebuild). The line of the wall to the east side of the Dripping Pan continues south along the same alignment but the southern part of this (ie the southern half of the east boundary of the former precinct) is shown with a broken line and it is labelled *Priory Wall* (site of). The Priory Wall is labelled in a Gothic font to indicate that it is an ancient feature and suggesting that although there was probably some trace left it was ruinous.

2.4.8 It is also interesting to note that on the first edition map the mound is labelled *The Mount (Calvary)*. This must have been the cartographers speculating, presumably in consultation with local historians and antiquarians, on the former use of the mound and concluding it may have been constructed as a calvary (a place of pilgrimage representing the mound on which Christ was crucified).

2.4.9 The **second edition OS map, 1899** (Fig. 7) is very similar to the first edition in terms of the evidence it provides relating to the current study. The two sections of wall in the current study (to east and south of the Dripping Pan) are again shown as solid lines immediately behind the banks of the Dripping Pan. The north - south line to the south of Ham Lane is again shown dotted and labelled *Priory Wall* (site of) and the mound is again labelled The *Mount (Calvary)*. A label shows that by this date the Dripping Pan was being used as a *Cricket and Football Ground*. One possibly significant difference with the first edition map is the fact that on the second edition map the bench-mark arrow is no longer shown at the junction between Ham Lane and Priory Street although there are many others shown elsewhere on the map. One possible reason for this is that the section of wall on which the bench mark was situated (part of the current study) was taken down and rebuilt between 1873 and 1899 thus removing this bench mark. No surviving bench mark was seen in this location in the current study although part of this section of wall was heavily overgrown and it is possible that a bench was obscured.

2.4.10 The **1910 edition OS map** (Fig. 8) is again similar to the previous two OS maps. The two sections of wall in the current study are solid lines behind the Dripping Pan banks, The sunken area is again labelled *Dripping Pan (Cricket and Football Ground)*, The Mound is again *The Mount (Calvary)* and the southern section of the former east wall of the precinct is *Priory Wall (site of)*. One minor difference is that an embankment is now shown on the south face of the south wall of The Dripping Pan as well as on its north side. It is likely that this simply indicates that the large area to the south, which on this map is first labelled *Cricket and Football Ground* was levelled off and the earth spread to the sides.

2.4.11 Further maps (as listed in the bibliography) relating to the wall were consulted although none identified the section of wall that is the focus of this study.

2.5 POSSIBLE ORIGINS OF THE DRIPPING PAN AND MOUNT

2.5.1 As detailed above the walls in the current study form the east side and the eastern part of the south side of a landscape feature called The Dripping Pan. This is a large rectangular area (130 m x 90 m) enclosed by banks (up to c.3.5 m tall) on each side (See Pl. 1, 2). At its west end is a large mound (c.14 m high) which has a pathway up to the top. The origins of the Dripping Pan are somewhat obscure and as the feature is immediately adjacent to the walls in the current study some discussion of these origins is clearly of relevance here.

2.5.2 No intrusive archaeological investigations or detailed historical studies into the origins of the Dripping Pan are known to have been undertaken and most previous studies of the Priory repeat the conjecture that the area may have been a medieval salt pan. Allied to this is the possibility that the mound may have been the base for a windmill pump. Arrangements such as this are common in Essex but the Sussex tradition of salt making is different. Shallow salt pans such as this have been identified at coastal sites in Sussex but not at inland sites such as Lewes. At sites away from the coast medieval salt extraction involved 'sand washing' which involved scraping brine-impregnated tidal river silt. The silt was then sieved in troughs and washed repeatedly before being boiled dry in wide flat lead (and later cast-iron) pans. The silt was then dumped and gradually saltern mounds of dumped silt developed which are characteristic of medieval salt making sites in Sussex.

2.5.3 The Ouse is a broad estuarine river which is known to have been the location of several salt working sites at the time of Domesday and the site is likely to be close to the flood plain. It is therefore possible that the Dripping Pan survives from a salt-working site but, as detailed above, the form of the feature does not follow the pattern of sites such as this in Sussex. In addition, it seems unlikely that a large section of the Priory Precinct would have been given over to a saltworks.

2.5.4 As detailed above the earliest map to definitively show the Dripping Pan is Edwards' map of 1799 while Budgen's 1724 view of Lewes appears not to show it. The evidence is far from conclusive but it is possible that rather than being a monastic feature the Dripping Pan was in fact constructed much later than previously thought, possibly in the 18th century.

3 DESCRIPTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WALL

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF WALL

3.1.1 The current study covers two walls which form the east side of the Dripping Pan football ground and the eastern third of the south side of the ground. Both sections form parts of a larger framework of walls, continuing to the south and west, but only these two areas are specifically included in the study. The adjacent sections of wall have also been looked at to gain a wider understanding of the context of the walls. The wall to the east flanks Ham Lane while that to the south divides the Dripping Pan

from a set of tennis courts. Both structures act as retaining walls holding back large banks of earth which enclose the football pitch and which create a distinctive shallow, sunken, feature which gives the Dripping Pan its name.

3.1.2 The main (east) wall (flanking Ham Lane) is c.98 m long and the westward spur which also forms part of the study is c.36 m long. The top of the east wall is c.3.25 m above the adjacent road level and c.2.5 m above the height of the road-side bank at the base of the wall. The westward wall appears to be in a reasonable structural condition but the larger north-south wall is in a generally poor condition and before the current study much of it was covered in thick ivy and other vegetation. As much of this was cleared as possible but in some areas it would have been impractical to fully clear it and to do so may also have had a destabilising effect on the wall. One section (J: see below) has collapsed in recent years and a wire mesh fence was erected for safety reasons along the length of wall after this occurrence (believed to have been in 1999). The fence presents some problems when assessing the wall as it prevents more distant photographs of larger sections of wall. As both sections are retaining walls the descriptions below only relate to the east face (of the wall flanking Ham Lane) and the south face (of the wall adjacent to the tennis courts).

3.1.3 The walls are each largely of flint-faced construction but with each they show clear evidence of many phases of rebuild and patching along their length.

3.1.4 Some parts have squared stones incorporated (presumably old stones reused) and some have bricks mixed in. The flints are largely cut to form a rough face. To aid the understanding of the structure the description section below divides the walls into each distinct constructional phase or context. In addition to these main phases there are also many smaller areas of patching or repair within the larger distinct sections. Those parts of the wall that the descriptions relate to are shown on Figure 9.

3.1.5 ***Section A***: northern 4.5 m of wall. Very rough construction with flint and a relatively high number of bricks (probably 19th-century) mixed in. Well constructed stone quoin at north corner. Several areas of patching and later render (heavy cement render) over parts of A. At its southern end Section A steps down and section B is constructed over it. Clearly Section A has partially collapsed in the past and then the wall has been rebuilt with Section B on top of the collapsed part. Section A is likely to be of 19th-century date. The condition of A is moderately good and it does not appear to be close to collapse (Pl. 10).

3.1.6 ***Section B***: c.2.9 m long. Roughly coursed, regular knapped flint with occasional rubble stone mixed in but no squared or dressed stone. Thick cementitious mortar joints suggestive of a 20th-century date. The north end is constructed over the stepped down (and earlier) Section A. Half

moon brick coping. Section B is of relatively recent date (20th century) and its condition is moderately good (Pl. 10).

3.1.7 ***Section C:*** c.3 m long. Bottom 2 courses (c.35 cm) of coursed squared stone. Various sizes but average 25 cm x 20 cm. The stones are old but they are almost certainly reused and have been coursed at the base to form a solid foundation for the flint above. Below these courses, and immediately below the top of the bank the wall steps out slightly to form a wider foundation. The fact that this step is immediately below the top of the bank suggests that the current construction is probably contemporary with the bank which is believed to be 19th-century in date (suggested by large quantities of 19th-century pot waste found within the bank in Test Pit 3 (detailed below). Above the stone base the face of the wall is constructed of regular coursed knapped flint with occasional stone blocks some of which are squared. The mortar is cementitious and 20th-century in date and has a thick decorative groove to highlight the coursing and convey a superficial appearance of stone. This section again has a half moon brick coping and at the south end there is a large patch of flint rebuild. As with the rest of the northern part of the wall the condition of C is reasonable and it does not appear to be in danger of imminent collapse. Section C is believed to be substantially of 19th or 20th-century date, although as with all the sections there may be older surviving elements hidden behind the later face of the wall.

3.1.8 ***Section D:*** c.9.5 m. This is of very similar construction to section C but the coursing is at a different height and the flint continues down to the top of the bank rather than it being set on a stone base. The mortar is again hard and apparently 20th century and with the same thick groove to highlight the coursing. In several parts of the wall there are sections of single stone courses (squared stone), presumably to tie the wall together and the mortar around the stone is again cementitious. This section strongly appears to be of 20th-century date and it is of reasonable condition.

3.1.9 ***Section E:*** c.8.25 m. Coursed flint construction with occasional stone blocks mixed in and chalky clunch blocks. Parts of wall obscured by 20th-century render but the original mortar is visible. It is a light grey colour with speckly inclusions (some quite large) and is softer than the mortar bonding the rest of wall to the north although still moderately hard. This part of the wall is older than the main parts of the wall to the north but is still likely to be no earlier than the 18th or even early 19th-century in date. However as with much of the wall it could potentially retain small fragments of an older wall incorporated within it. Lowest course (immediately above ground) at least partly of squared stones but likely to be old stones reused to form a solid base for the flint above rather than being a partially surviving foundation from the original Priory wall. The condition of E is very poor and part of it is seriously bowing out. This area appears to be approaching the point of collapse and partly held together by thick vertical ivy stems (Pl. 9).

3.1.10 ***Section F***: c.5 m. Largely of flint slightly more regularly shaped and coursed than other sections with some stones mixed in. Speckly stoney mortar similar to E but with a single line pointing groove. At south end of section there is a slight change in mortar type c.0.9 m above top of bank: above this line the mortar is a mid grey colour while below it the mortar is a white colour. Both mortars are coarse with similar inclusions and the change in colour may simply represent a change in the mix during a single constructional phase. At north end, where it is abutted by E there is a clear quoin of at least 11 squared stone blocks (each c. 25 cm x 20 cm). This appears contemporary with the rest of the flint and mortar in F (probably 18th or 19th century). Single groove pointing continues into stone quoin. South end of F is also of some interest as it has a pier of coursed limestone blocks (Pl. 7, 8). The pier is c.1.5 m tall by c.50 cm wide and it has similar relatively hard mortar to the rest of F with single groove pointing. The pier sits on a small ledge at the current height of the bank suggesting that the wall is of the same date as the bank which (as detailed below in section on Test Pit 3) has revealed much 19th-century waste. Thus although this pier is one of the largest section of continuous stonework in the wall it does not appear to be a fragmentary surviving section from the original Priory wall. The pier (and the one at the north end) are more likely to have been constructed at either end of a single section to improve stability of this part of the wall. The condition of F poor with a large crack towards the top but probably not on point of possible imminent collapse like E.

3.1.11 ***Section G:*** large section (c.18.5 m) which is essentially a single context but with various bits of patching up. Generally of coursed flint with some stones mixed in and with groove pointing to speckly mortar. At c.0.5 m above the top of the bank, at the north end of this section, there is a slight change in mortar types: below it the mortar is a white colour while above it the mortar is a mid grey colour. both mortars were of similar consistency and type (coarse with gravel inclusions) and are probably of broadly similar date (probably 19th century). It may simply represent a change in the mortar mix used in a single constructional phase or a raising of the wall/rebuilding sometime relatively soon after the construction of the lower section. The mortar does not appear to be simply a repointing. Also several large squared stones mixed in and some in small courses presumably laid to tie the wall together. The condition of G is better than the sections immediately to the north and is not on the point of collapse. (See also Appendix 1: description of Test Pit 3).

3.1.12 ***Section H:*** c.14 m. Vegetation too thick to closely inspect and too securely fixed to wall to allow its removal as part of current exercise.

3.1.13 ***Section I***: c.8.5 m. Regular coursed flint construction. Hard mortar with no groove or pointing mark. The wall stands on a C20th-century concrete strip foundation (or ledge) just above the current ground level which ends at the north end of I. The whole of this section of wall must have been taken down and rebuilt when the 20th-century foundation was laid. Apparently not in imminent danger of collapse.

3.1.14 ***Section J***: c.11 m. The flint facing of this section has substantially collapsed (other than small sections towards the base) thus exposing the core of the wall. The core is constructed of small pieces of chalky clunch with hard cementitious mortar. The small section of surviving facing is of flint construction with stones mixed in. Section J is older than I but from the mortar in the core it is still probably no older than the 19th century.

3.1.15 ***Section K:*** c12.25 m at southern end of the north-south wall facing Ham Lane (Pl. 11). Regular, coursed flint construction with double-groove pointing in hard stoney mortar. Occasional 19th-century bricks mixed in and several larger stone blocks also incorporated into the construction. Test Pit 1 located at north end of this section immediately adjacent to collapsed wall (described below, see Pl. 3).

3.1.16 ***Section L***: Easternmost 4 m of east-west wall flanking tennis courts. Flint-faced. Coursed, very regular with hard thick mortar, of 19th or early 20th-century date (Pl. 5, 6). Clear straight joint at west end with dressed stone quoin of old reused stone. This section of wall apparently shown as a fence on both 1799 and 1824 maps.

3.1.17 ***Section M***: c.24 m. Flint faced with regular coursed construction. Hard cementitious mortar with decorative double groove between each course. There is a large crack running along the upper section of the wall, probably indicating the top of the bank on the north side of the wall. Three evenly spaced buttresses support the wall with rounded southern faces (Pl.12, 13). Each buttress is c. 2 m tall, of flint construction and with distinct vertical line of stones at central line of southern face. Two buttresses are shown in this general location on Budgen's view of Lewes (1724) but two later plans (1799, 1824) show a fence in this location so the buttresses are unlikely to be those on the 1724 view. However, there is evidence to suggest that the previous buttress foundations may have been reused for new buttresses when the wall was rebuilt (detailed below in Appendix 2).

3.1.18 ***Section N***: c.3 m. Area of 20th-century rebuild within M (and O). Again of flint construction, regular coursing, hard cement mortar but without grooves.

3.1.19 ***Section O***: c.8 m. Forms a continuation of O into which the repair (N) was inserted.

3.1.20 ***Section P***: Flint faced. Speckly white mortar which is applied very heavily in places and spread widely. Some stone blocks mixed in. (This section, together with Q, R and S is outside the main study but general description included to gain wider understanding of wall).

3.1.21 ***Section Q***: c. 14 m. Flint construction, uncoursed. Brick lacing course at two thirds height. Probably 19th century. (NB see note in P above)

3.1.22 ***Section R***: Flint construction with render applied over parts. Clear quoin of c.5 squared stone blocks at south end of section. These stones probably reused. (NB see note in P above)

3.1.23 ***Section S***: Clear patch of rebuilt flint. Lower part apparently earlier than upper but neither earlier than 19th century (NB, see note in P above).

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF TEST PITS

3.2.1 ***Introduction:*** three test pits were dug immediately adjacent to the wall to assess the foundations of the wall and to inspect for historic fabric. The results of the test pits have been written up in Appendix 2 but a short summary is included here.

3.2.2 ***Test Pit 1***: Located towards the south end of the main wall flanking Ham Lane, immediately to south of area of collapsed wall (in Section K). This showed that the wall in this location was built directly onto a clay deposit c.76 cm below the current surface of the bank and there was no trench cut for a foundation. Above the top of the current bank the flints are cut to form a face while below the surface they are un-faced.

3.2.3 ***Test Pit 2***: Located against buttress in western 'spur' wall (in Section M). Evidence revealed in the test pit suggested that the buttress pre-dates the adjacent wall. This corresponds with historical evidence (detailed above) which suggests that there was a wall with buttresses in the early 18th century (shown on Budgen's 1724 view) but that the wall had been replaced by a fence by 1799. It may be that the current buttresses were rebuilt in the 19th century, when the wall was rebuilt, on the base of the older buttresses shown in the view.

3.2.4 ***Test Pit 3***: Located against north-south wall facing Ham Lane, c.33 m from north end (In section G/F). Intended to investigate the buried section of a stone 'pier' within the largely flint wall which extends c.1.2 m above ground at this point. The test pit revealed that the stonework of the 'pier' only extended for a single course below the top of the bank and then sat on a coursed flint foundation. Although the pit straddled Sections G and F no clear distinction was noted in the construction of the foundations. The bank contained a high content of dumped 19th and 20th-century waste suggesting that the bank is of relatively recent origin and the fact that the bottom of the 'pier' and foundations only extended just below this height suggests that this part of the wall is probably no older than the bank.

4 OPTIONS FOR REPAIR

4.1.1 Part of the wall has collapsed in recent years and at least one other section appears in serious danger of further collapse in the near future. Lewes District Council structural engineers have determined that the wall is in need of a programme of works to ensure public safety.

4.1.2 There are four principal options for this programme of works which have been proposed in liaison with Lewes District Council:

4.1.3 ***Option 1***: the first option is a complete rebuild of the wall along Ham Lane where it acts as a retaining wall for the Dripping Pan. Due to the structural demands of the wall to retain the embanked Dripping Pan the most

practical solution to a rebuild would be to dismantle the current wall and rebuild it using a reinforced concrete structure faced in flint. Among the benefits of this solution would be that it should provide a long term structural solution to the wall which has clearly needed many phases of patching and rebuild but that the 'traditional' face would blend in with the historic townscape of Lewes. Rebuilding would also ensure historical continuity of the wall as a townscape feature (even though the actual fabric is modern) and as a feature which defines this part of the former Priory precinct. The rebuild would also allow a programme of archaeological investigation during the works into the construction of the wall behind the outer face.

4.1.4 Among the main disadvantages of this option would be that it would be expensive and it would necessitate the closure of Ham Lane for some months. Although Ham Lane is relatively narrow and is technically a private street it is heavily used, particularly for access to the Southern Water treatment plant and the Household Waste Amenity Site. Closing this road would cause major disruption. It would also result in the loss of a wall which, although post-medieval, retains moderately old sections (18th and 19th century). Another possible disadvantage of this option would be that although the new wall would be entirely faced in flint it would lose the patchwork of phases which currently gives it an historical quality and character.

4.1.5 ***Option 2***: the second option would be to remove that section of wall which is in the poorest state of repair and to lower and landscape the embankment immediately behind. In consultation with Lewes District Council structural engineers the section which would be removed in this option has been defined as Sections E to J inclusive. The truncated ends of the remaining wall, either side of the opening, would be secured by stone piers reusing the best pieces of stone from the demolished wall. This option would be substantially cheaper than the first option and a major advantage would be that it should be possible to undertake the majority of the work from the west side (Dripping Pan) therefore removing (or minimising) the need to close Ham Lane. This option would also mean that the works to dismantle the wall and landscape this part of the Dripping Pan bank could be monitored or investigated archaeologically and a greater understanding of these features could be gained. Another advantage of this scheme over the complete rebuild would be that at least those parts of the wall which are currently in a reasonable condition would remain untouched. Thus something of the current historical patchwork effect which has developed over many phases of rebuild and which is an attractive feature of the wall would remain.

4.1.6 The main disadvantage would be that the historical integrity of the wall would be partially lost and the historical significance of the wall would be diminished. Although the existing fabric of the wall is not believed to be ancient there is believed to have been a wall in this location since monastic times and the section flanking Ham Lane is one of the longer surviving

sections which indicates the edge of the former Priory precinct. Although the surviving sections of wall would still provide a good indication of the outline of the former Priory precinct there is the danger that when the condition of the next section of wall also deteriorates seriously then that would also be removed and ultimately the entire wall adjacent to the Dripping Pan would disappear.

4.1.7 ***Option 3:*** the third option is the repair of the wall. This would involve leaving untouched those sections which are structurally sound and then carefully dismantling and rebuilding in a traditional manner those parts in danger of collapse. This would most urgently include Section E. This is clearly what has happened to the wall many times over the century and would have the advantage of being the most historically sensitive option. However due to the particular forces applied to the wall by the adjoining bank and due to the inherent weakness of the flint wall this would presumably not form a permanent solution.

4.1.8 ***Option 4***: complete demolition of the retaining wall adjoining the Dripping Pan along Ham Lane (Sections A to K) and landscaping (removing) the earth bank immediately behind. Advantages would be that it would be relatively cheap and it could presumably be done almost entirely from the Dripping Pan side (west) thus removing (or minimising the need to close Ham Lane. However this would be the least historically sensitive of the options and it would not only destroy the moderately historic fabric of the wall but it would also remove the wall as a townscape feature and as a historic reminder of this part of the Priory precinct.

4.2 COST ESTIMATES

4.2.1 The following figures are very broad estimates of the costs of each option which have been reached in consultation with Gordon Stevenson, a structural engineer at Lewes District Council.

Option	Estimated cost
Option 1: complete rebuild	£450,000
Option 2: removal of localised area	£90,000
Option 3: repair of localised area	Not a sustainable option*
Option 3: demolition and landscaping	Not a historically sensitive option*

* Lewes District Council has been consulted and it has been agreed that providing costs for these options would not be worthwhile as there is no realistic chance of either being undertaken (due to reasons given).

5 CONCLUSION

5.1.1 The ruined remains of the Cluniac Priory of St Pancras at Lewes are of great local significance in providing an understanding of the history and development of the town and its environs. Although the Priory was substantially destroyed at the time of the dissolution and it is now hard to gain a sense of the scale of the monastic complex it was once the most important Cluniac Priory in England and had authority over the other

priories of the order in the country. The church is reported to have been larger than Chichester Cathedral.

5.1.2 The subject of the current study has been two sections of flint and stone wall flanking the embanked sides of the Dripping Pan football ground (to the east and south of it) and it has been able to provide a general indication of the age and significance of the walls. From the physical assessment it is clearly apparent that the sections of wall have undergone many phases of patching, repointing or rebuilding as different sections became unstable or collapsed and the wall now comprises a patchwork of sections built or rebuilt at different times. Both sections of wall act as retaining walls holding back large banks of earth and it appears from the many distinct constructional phases that the structural forces and stresses applied to the wall are too great for the wall to survive very long periods without collapse. The uncoursed flint and rubble construction is inherently less stable than a coursed stone or brick wall would be. This trend has continued in recent decades so that one section has recently collapsed and another appears to be on the point of collapse. This is what has prompted the current study.

5.1.3 Although the sections of wall comprise many constructional phases from the physical assessment they appear to be almost entirely of relatively recent date (probably largely 19th and earlier 20th century with some small sections surviving from the 18th century). This is based partly on various structural features such as the cement mortar used in most of the phases (although in parts this could just be repointing of an older wall), a concrete raft foundation below at least one section of the wall and relatively recent bricks mixed in with some sections.

5.1.4 It is possible that some of the constructional phases represent refacings rather than complete rebuildings of sections of the wall and that behind parts of the face there may survive the core of an older wall. Due to the loose rubble fill which is likely to form much of the core it is likely that when sections of the wall collapsed they would have been substantially rebuilt (rather than just refaced) and even if some old sections of core survive they would be so fragmentary that they would not be of great significance. Thus from the physical assessment the sections of wall are not particularly old and are not intrinsically of great historical significance. This is reflected in the fact that they are neither scheduled nor listed.

5.1.5 However, the walls are of importance as a topographical or historic townscape feature. The wall to the east side of the Dripping Pan is on the alignment of part of the outer wall of the Priory Precinct and it can be assumed that there would have been a wall in this location in the monastic period. Although it is somewhat schematic the 1620 plan of Lewes appears to confirm the outline of the northern part of the precinct and that Ham Lane formed the north-east corner. Budgen's 1724 view of Lewes also clearly shows a masonry wall along what became Ham Lane as well

as an east - west wall (and fence) on what is now the westward spur wall in the current study.

5.1.6 This view (as well as other cartographic or documentary material) tentatively supports the theory that the sections of wall have undergone phases of rebuilding. In Budgen's view the westward spur is clearly shown partially as a fence whereas it is now entirely masonry. In the view there is no sign of the embanked enclosure of the Dripping Pan and the fact that there was a fence to the south side also suggests that it might not have been constructed yet. The 1799 map does show the Dripping Pan but it clearly shows a fence to the south side and appears to show the four sides of the Dripping Pan as double banks rather than single banks with retaining walls as now. Clearly if this is accurate then the walls must have been substantially rebuilt since.

5.1.7 One interesting feature that Budgen's 1724 view does show is a pair of buttresses against the south side of the western spur wall (which as referred to above was partly shown as a fence). These buttresses are broadly in the same location as several buttresses which survive today. The 1799 and 1824 maps both suggest that at that time the whole of this section of wall was a wooden fence (or even just a hedge) and without any buttresses so presumably the partially masonry wall shown in 1724 was demolished. The test pit opened in the current works suggested that the buttress foundations pre-date the current wall so it may be that the buttresses were rebuilt, when the wall was reconstructed, on pre-existing foundations.

5.1.8 Clearly from the poor condition of the wall a programme of works to ensure structural stability and safety is necessary, particularly in certain localised sections. As the fabric of the wall is neither particularly old nor intrinsically significant the repair (or rebuilding) of the wall should not result in the unacceptable loss of important historic fabric but the removal of the wall (or even a section of the wall) would affect the character of this part of Lewes. It would also diminish the significance of the wall as a feature defining the outline of this part of the Priory precinct. The outline of the precinct can be traced in the street pattern on modern maps but it is only defined by walls (albeit post-monastic) in a few areas including that in the current study flanking Ham Lane.

5.1.9 In terms of conservation or sensitivity towards historic fabric or features the best option for ensuring the safety of the wall would probably be to repair in a traditional manner those sections of the wall which have either collapsed or which are clearly structurally unstable. However this would not be a permanent solution and the significance of the wall would not justify this approach. The wall is neither scheduled nor listed, it is not particularly old or intrinsically significant and it is not in a prominent location on a main public route through Lewes. Lewes District Council has made it clear that the need for a more permanent solution renders this option unsustainable. Rebuilding the wall with a reinforced concrete core and flint facing would form a permanent solution and would be a good

option as it would retain the wall as a townscape feature. However, it would be very expensive and would cause major disruption through the closure of Ham Lane. A compromise would be to take down those sections of the wall which have collapsed or are in imminent danger and remove the Dripping Pan bank immediately behind. This would be relatively cheap and cause less disruption than other options but it would compromise the integrity of the wall as feature defining this part of the Priory precinct.

Oxford Archaeology
October 2004

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APPENDIX II RESULTS OF TEST PITS

TEST PIT 1

Located on east side of north-south stretch of wall flanking Ham Lane, c. 12 m from south corner of the wall and c.82 m from south corner. c.1m x 1 m. The pit was located immediately to the south of the area of collapsed wall (Section J) which will have to be rebuilt. Location chosen partly to allow structural engineers to assess the depth of the foundations in this area.

There is a bank towards the base of the wall, at the side of the road, which is shallower (c. 0.46 m tall) than the bank towards the northern end of the wall (see Test Pit 3). The bank was made up of soil and debris containing 19th and 20th century glass, plastic and pot.

Below the upper layer (soil and debris) was a 0.3 m deep layer which extended down as far as the base of the wall. This was a mid-brown sandy silt deposit and was rich in large flint nodules.

Below this was a mid-brown silty clay deposit (0.2 m thick) which extended under the base of the wall. This was very sterile, quite compact with no sign of a wall trench cut. The wall therefore appears to have been built directly onto this layer.

Below this was an orange-brown sandy silt deposit which was seen to 0.1 m depth. It was full of small flint fragments and was probably close to the natural level (ie below any archaeology).

The wall in this area is c.2.76 m above top of bank (which itself is at c.6.44 m od). The wall has been repointed and scored to shown 'courses'. Flints have been cut with faces. Below the top of the bank (ie within test pit) the wall is of random-shaped flint nodules in a lime mortar matrix. The wall steps out by c.0.06 m and flints are not faced. There is no back-filled wall cut so wall must have been built directly onto compact silty deposit.

TEST PIT 2

Located on the south face of the 'spur' wall, projecting westward from Ham Lane. It was 9.5 m from the east end of the wall and was situated immediately to the east of one of three buttresses which support this section of wall. The location of the pit was particularly chosen to investigate the relationship between the buttress and the wall and it was dug through a small earth bank which is probably contemporary with the levelling and laying out of the tennis courts which are immediately to the south of the wall. This bank is believed to date to the first decade of the 20th century as it is not shown on the 2nd edition OS plan (1899) but is shown on the 1910 edition.

The pit was c. 1 m x 1 m excavated to a depth of 0.85 m and it exposed four distinct sections of the wall.

1. Stonework: 0.3 m in depth. There are two stones positioned at right angles to the buttress. The remainder of this section consists of pieces of rubble and some flint.
2. Rubble fill: the stonework sits on a layer of earth/pebble mortar fill which has large flint inclusions (up to 0.15 m in length). These are roughly bonded with mortar and this forms the foundation for the wall (0.26 m in depth)

3. Below the rubble is a thin layer (0.1 m) of unbonded flint which are considerably smaller in size (0.05 m). This layer also includes pea gravel and earth although it contains no mortar.
4. Earth fill below the foundation level. This is a pea gravel and earth fill with small flint inclusions (0.02 m). It forms the fill of the foundations trench and does not act as a foundation for the wall.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the buttress is keyed into the wall as it has been repaired at the join and thick cement covers this area. The foundations to the buttress are deeper and the stone coursing continues to the depth of the pit. The foundations are very solid, square with the rounded buttresses sitting on top of the foundation. The pit shows coursed flint foundations that are bonded with mortar. It appears that the buttress was built first and that the wall was constructed against it. There are large worked blocks of stone at the base. The fill of the wall cut butts the buttress foundations also showing it is probable that the buttress pre-dates the wall. This corresponds with historical evidence (detailed above) which suggests that there was a wall with buttresses in the early 18th century (shown on Budgen's 1724 view) but that the wall had been replaced by a fence by 1799. It may be that the current buttresses were rebuilt in the 19th century, when the wall was rebuilt, on the base of the older buttresses shown in the view.

The square foundation is 0.34 m in depth with the rounded buttress sitting on top of this to a height of 0.58 m.

TEST PIT 3
Located 33m from the northern end of the N - S section of wall on the east facing elevation. Base of the wall was approx. 1m or so above the level of the road to the east due to sloping bank built up on this side.
Test pit dug was 1m x 1m x 0.64m deep and located to investigate the possible continuation beneath the surface of the substantial stone 'pillar' observable in the wall, butted either side by the flint faced construction, characteristic of most of the length of the wall (probably largely 19th C).

Above ground

Wall height at this point possibly 2.90m but not possible to measure accurately. After 1.60m above ground surface wall covered by ivy and remains of beige render restricting observation. Wall either side of the 'pillar' constructed of faced flint (19th C ?), but notably there was a horizontal line at approx. .90m above ground level north of the pillar and at 0.50m above ground level south of the pillar that marked quite different mortar types. Both mortars were coarse with gravel inclusions but above this line the mortar was a mid to dark grey and below the line it was white.
Stone 'pillar' constructed of blocks ranging in size from .18m x .08m - .18m x 0.30m (latter size being the most common) and bonded with a coarse white mortar with gravel inclusions of 2mm+ in size. Large stone construction extended to a height of 1.20m , then with a single course of three bricks above it and a variety of smaller blocks of a similar material (a total of 8 courses visible above ground),

Below ground
In section a further course of substantial stone blocks was identified partially above ground level and partially below (to a depth of about 0.10m). Below this was a poorly preserved layer of medium to fine white mortar with some small gravel inclusions and a singular piece of flint at the northern end. Thickness varied from 0.03m - 0.08m.

Underneath this layer were 3 very horizontally bedded courses of flint, not faced, set in what looked like a crushed chalk matrix (again with some gravel inclusions). The bottom 0.16m of the test pit consisted in section of a small numbers of flints (no real bedding) in what was predominantly compacted chalk. Test pit not excavated below this level so cannot ascertain whether this compacted chalk layer was the base of the foundation or just another element but with a lower flint content. Note: the test pit further south did appear to show the foundations reaching considerably deeper.

Layers

From ground level to approx. 0.15m - .20m below ground made up of very rooty top / sub-soil that has either been built up or dumped against wall to form a bank. Very high content of dumped 19th and 20thC glass and occasional pieces of pottery. Below this level there appeared to be one continuous deposit of a slightly clayey silt, mid - orange brown in colour with small chalk and crushed chalk inclusions, increasing in number with depth. Up against the wall there did appear to be deposits of 'pea' shingle (5mm diameter) possible associated with infilling of foundation construction?

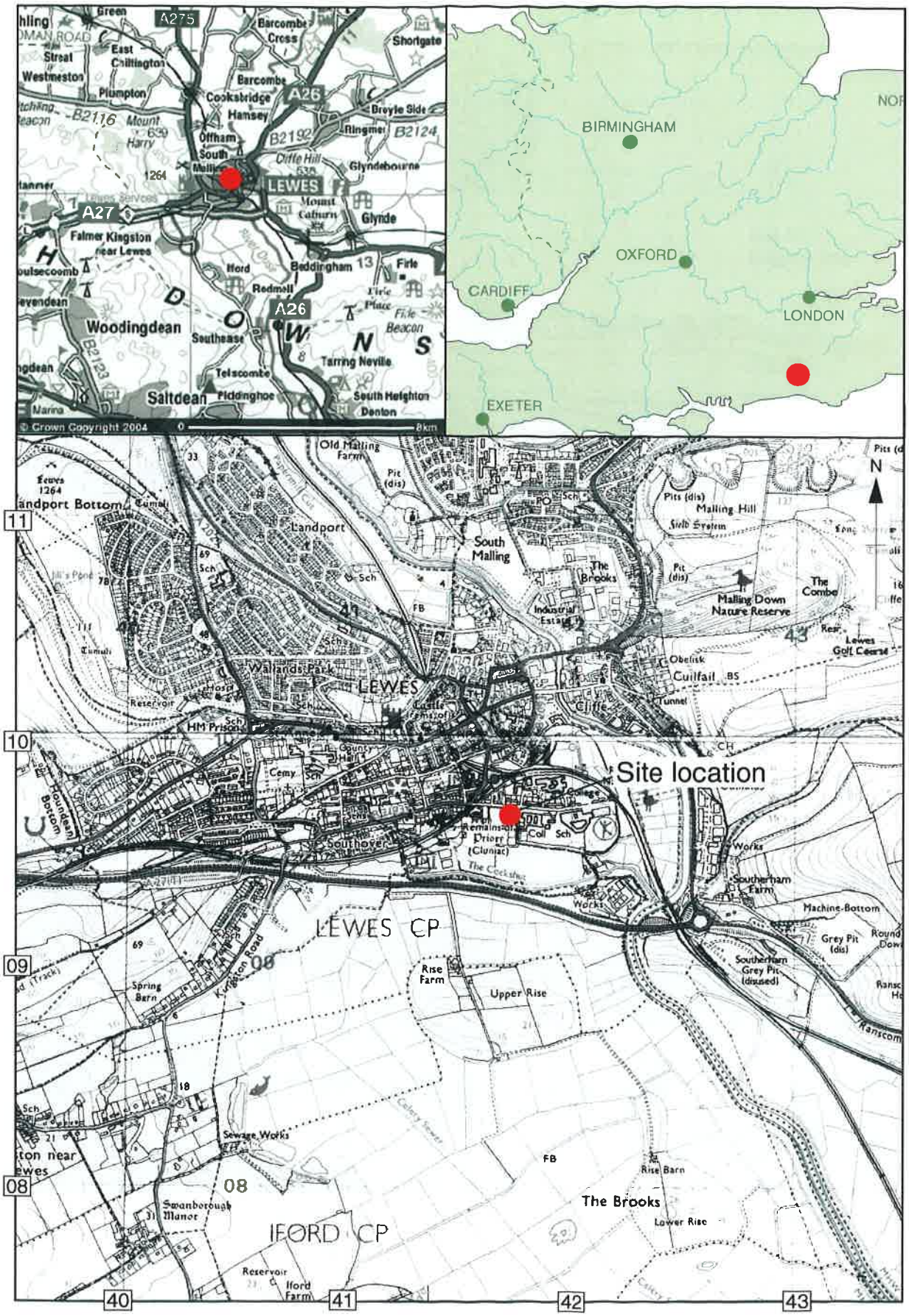

Figure 1: Site location

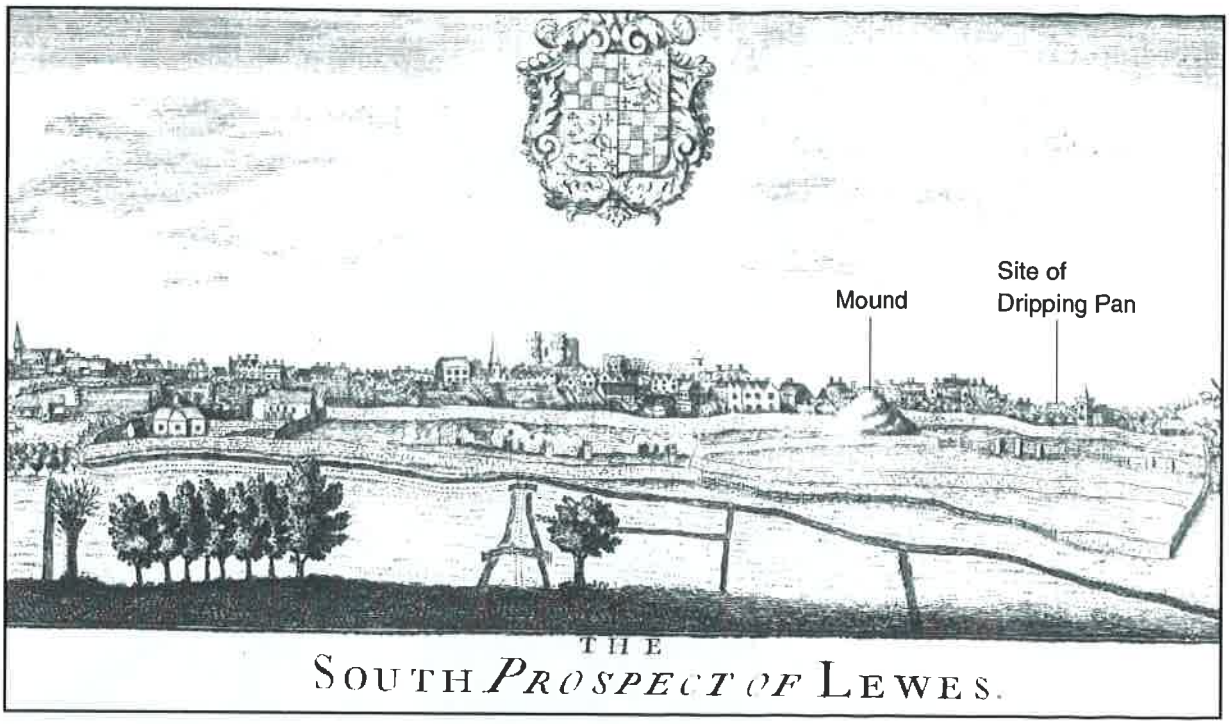

Figure 2: South Prospect of Lewes by R. Budgen (1724)

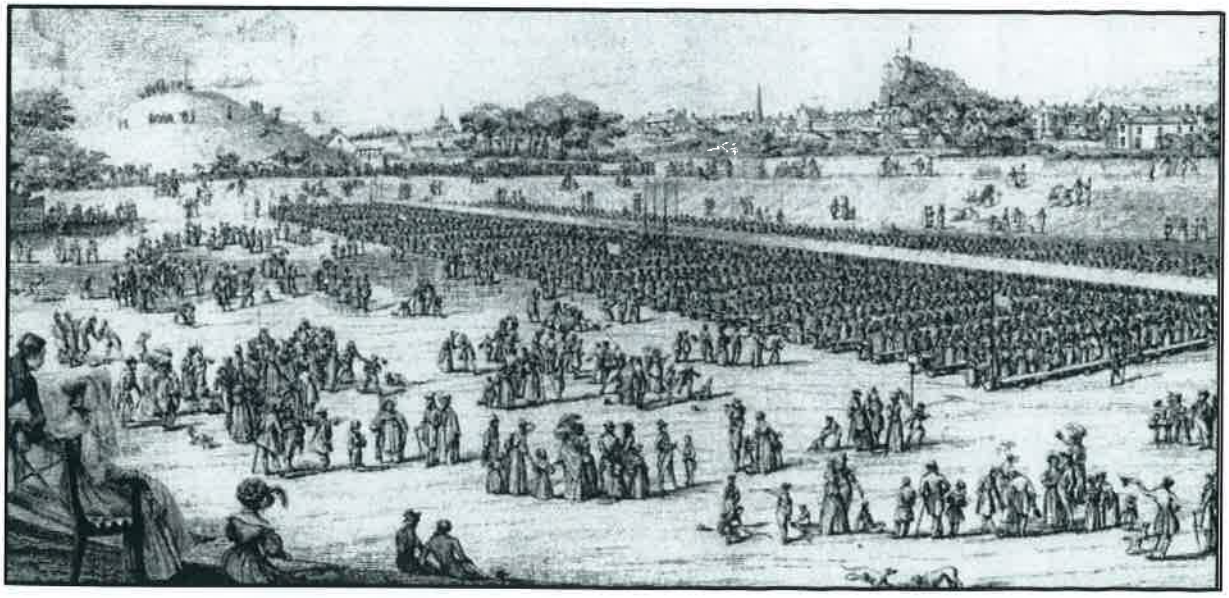

Figure 3: Banquet in the Dripping Pan in Honour of Queen Victoria's Coronation (1838)

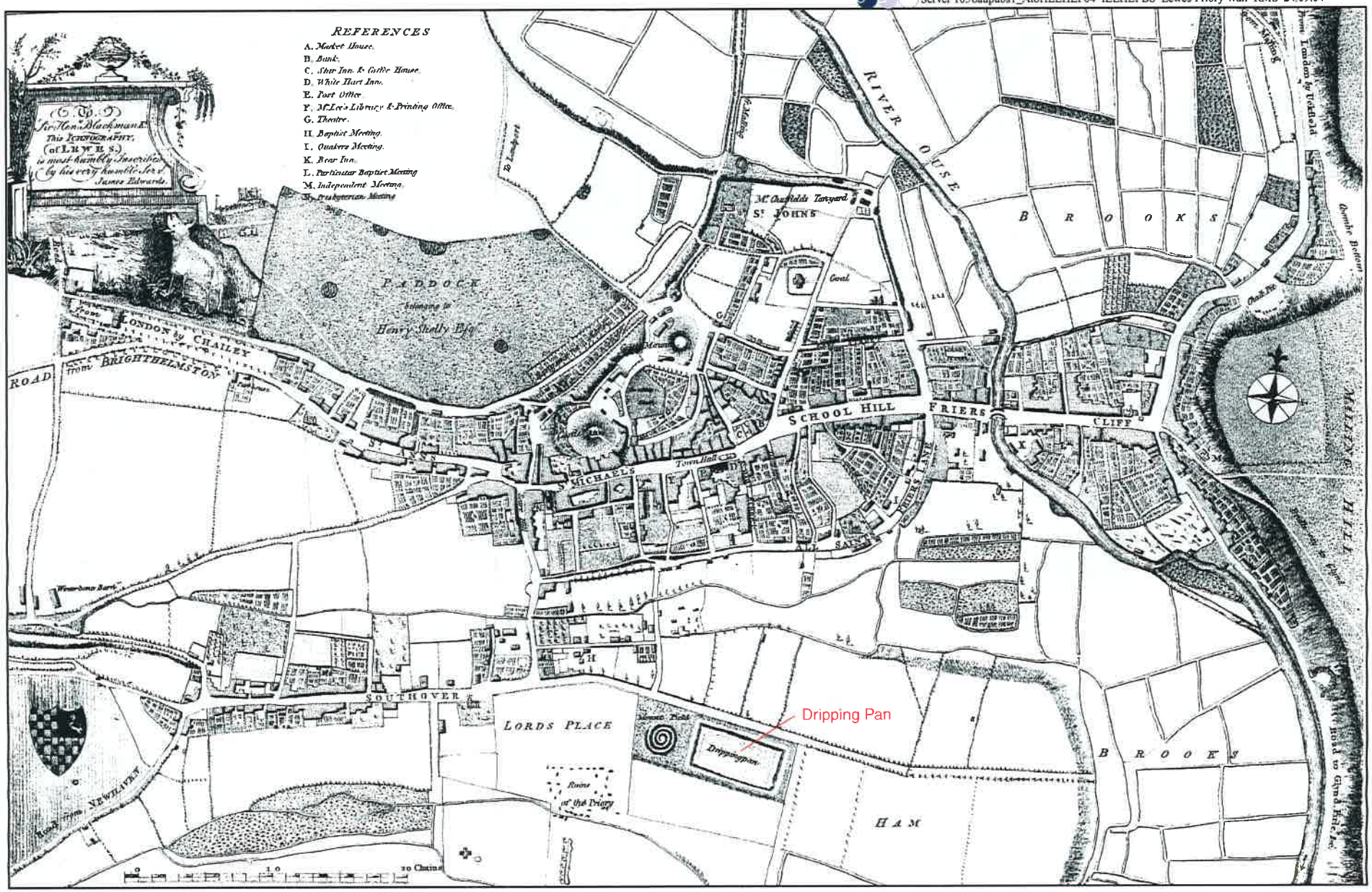

Figure 4: James Edward's Map of Lewes (1799)

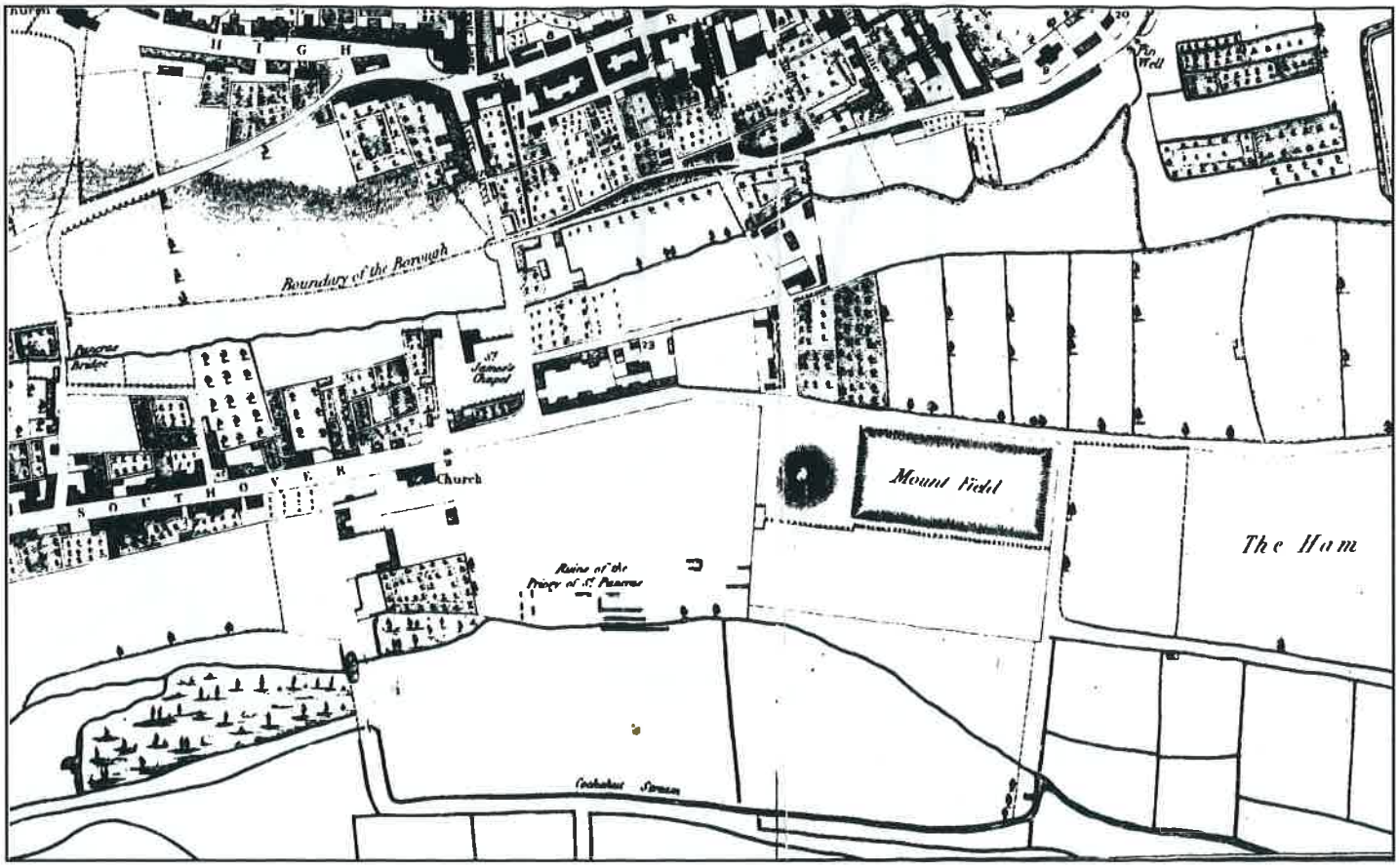

Figure 5: William Figg's map of Lewes (1824)

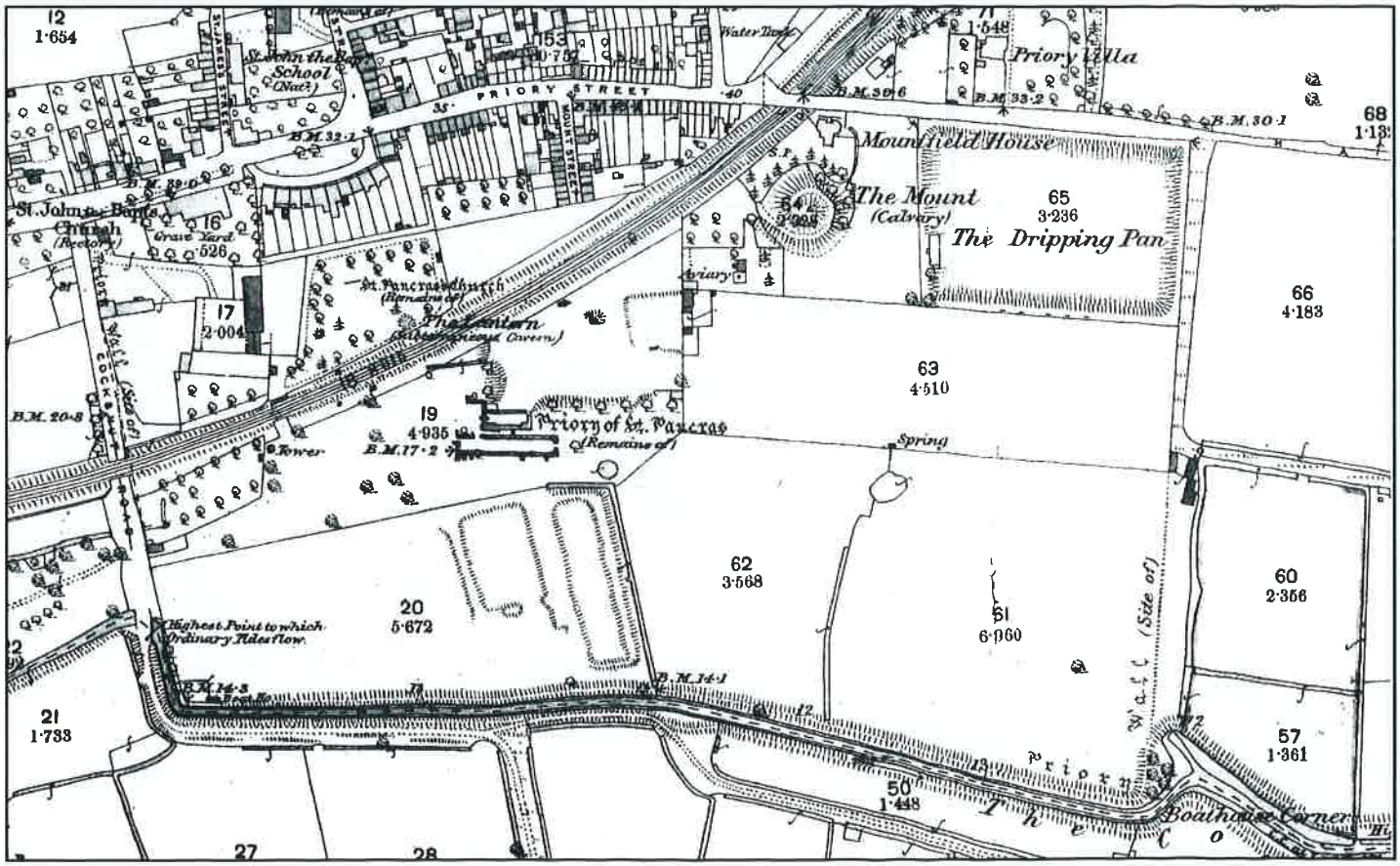

Figure 6: First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1873)

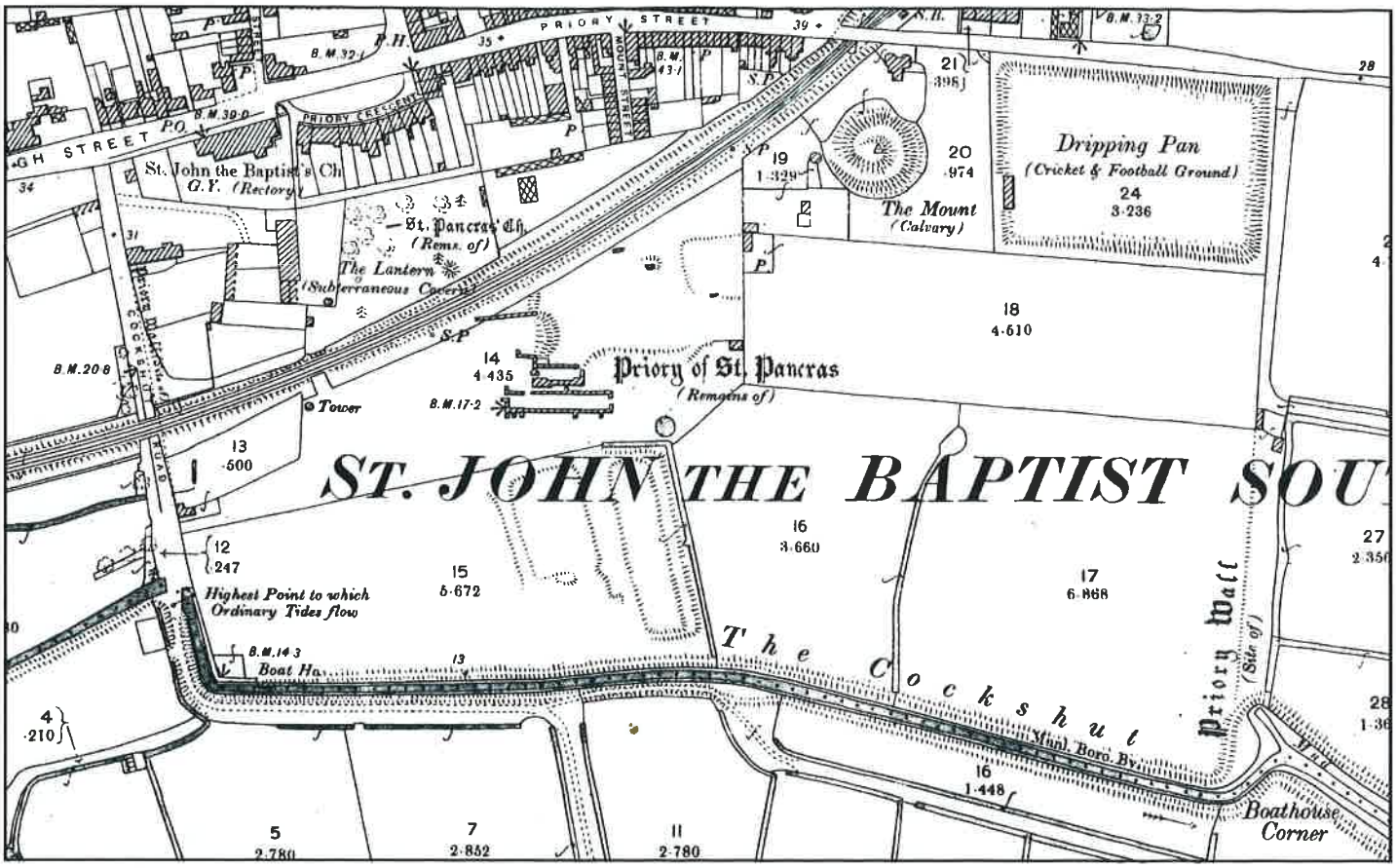

Figure 7: Second Edition Ordnance Survey map (1899)

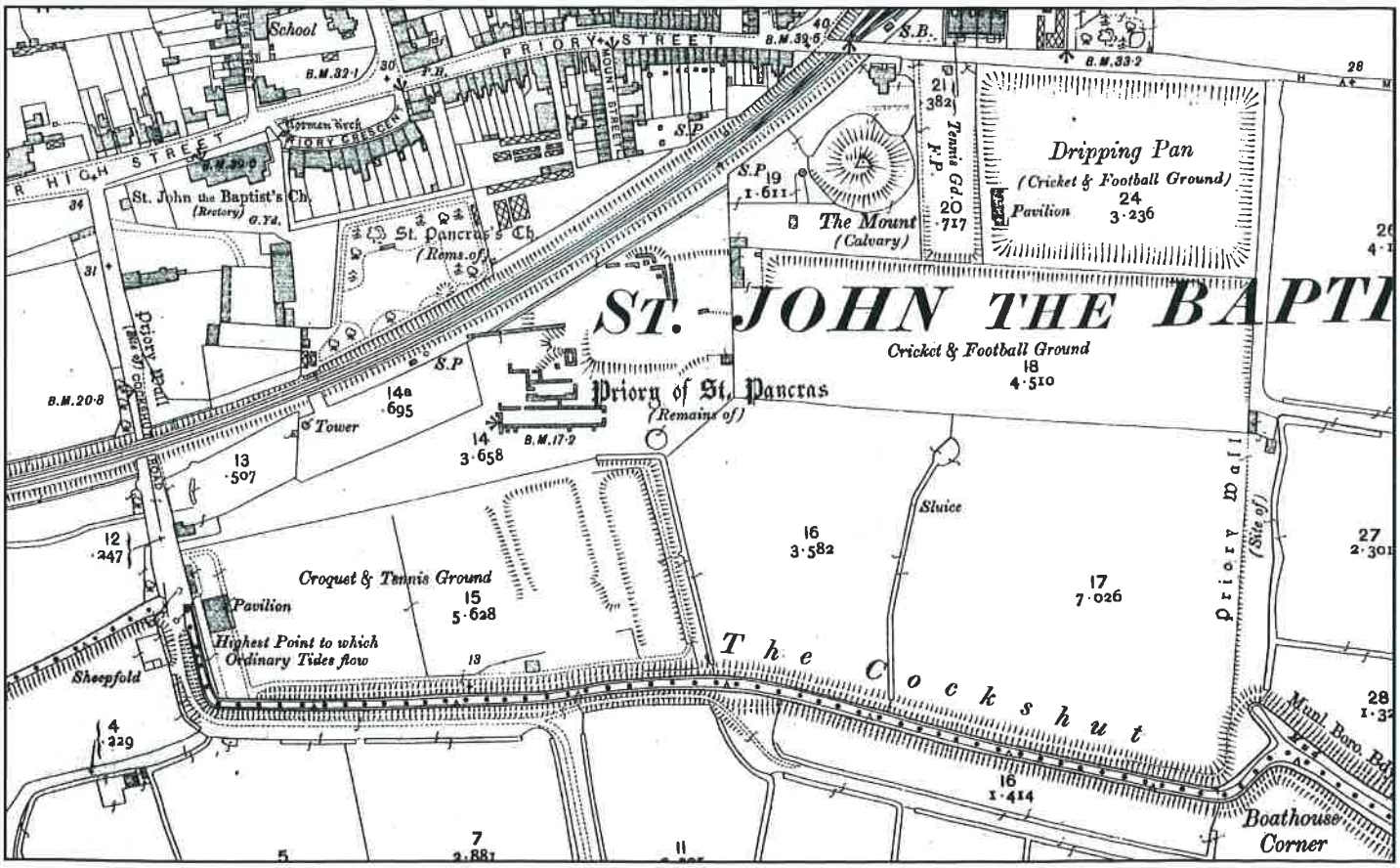

Figure 8: 1910 Edition Ordnance Survey map

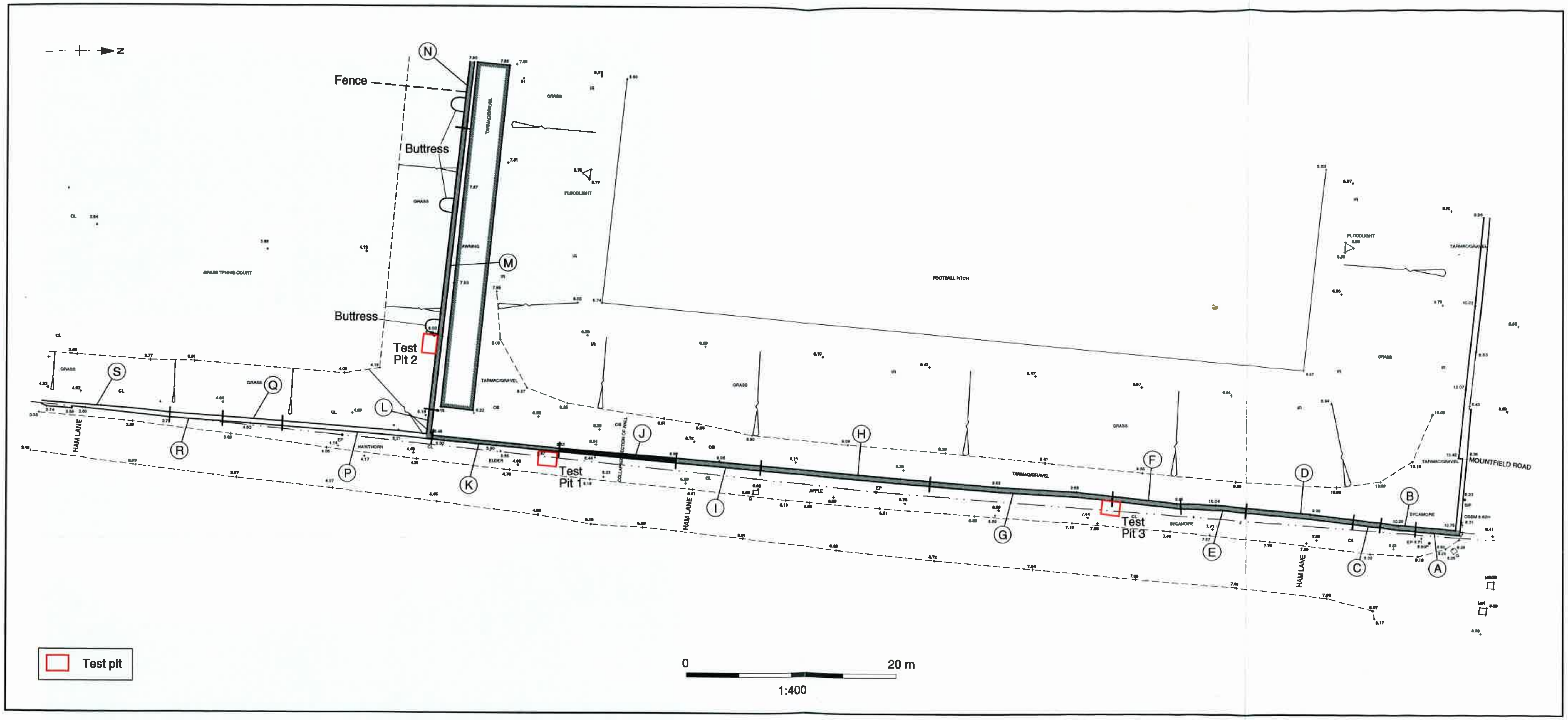

Figure 9: Plan of wall included in assessment showing constuctional phases

Plate 1: The Dripping Pan

Plate 2: East end of the Dripping Pan

Plate 3: Test Pit1

Plate 4: Sections Q and R

Plate 5: Sections L and M

Plate 6: Sections L and M

Plate 7: Pier of stones directly above Test Pit 3

Plate 8: Pier of stones Directly above Test Pit 3

Plate 9: Bowed section in E

Plate 10: Sections A and B

Plate 11: Section K behind wire fence

Plate 12: Test Pit 2 adjacent to buttress

Plate 13: Test Pit 2 adjacent to buttress

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