

HAMPTON POYLE - CHURCH OF MARY THE VIRGIN

HPMV92

The Oxford Archaeological Unit was commissioned to undertake a watching brief at the Church of Mary the Virgin, Hampton Poyle, Oxon (SP 4985 1555), during the construction of drains around the W, E and S sides of the building.

The church is of early 13th-century foundation, with N and S Aisles added in the mid 14th-century.

The site was visited on 14 April 1992 at which time the contractors trench 0.5 m wide x 0.5 m deep was completed on the W and E sides of the church. No archaeological features were noted in plan or in section.

The site was visited again on 29 April, by which time the trench along the S side of the church had been completed. The trench was bounded by the Aisle wall to the N, and a gravel path (lined on its N side by limestone blocks) to the S except where the trench deviated round a buttress, [10].

The fill of the trench was a dark brown silty loam, [2], with inclusions of limestone chips and 10% gravel.

This overlaid, to the W and E of the present South Door, two light wall foundations, [3] and [4], oriented N-S, abutting the Aisle wall, [17], and continuing S beyond the trench. The foundations were of small to medium rough limestone blocks, unmortared.

Underneath the present South door step [6] and its bedding layer of gravel and soil [12] were two uneven layers of rough limestone slabs, [5] and [14], separated by a make-up layer of orange-brown sandy silt, [13]. Layer [14] appeared to continue in the S section of the trench.

Underneath [14] was a layer of orange-brown sandy silt, which continued below the bottom of the trench, and extended W to [3], and E to [4].

The existing buttress, [10], rested on a pad of large, roughly worked limestone slabs, [9], which in turn was set onto a wall foundation, [7], 0.75 m wide, of medium to large roughly worked limestone slabs. The wall foundation [7] was oriented N-S, and bonded to the Aisle wall, [17]. A construction trench, [11], was visible in plan, on either side of [7], backfilled with dark brown sandy silt and decayed mortar.

Immediately to the E of [10] could be seen the infilling Aisle wall [18], abutting, in its lower courses, [7].

At the E end of the Aisle a wall foundation, [8], was revealed in the bottom of the trench, oriented N-S, and overlaid by [18]. The foundation was of medium to large rough limestone blocks, and between 0.75 m and 1.0 m wide.

Interpretation

Documentary sources suggest the existence of a porch and a chapel on the S side of the church, as late as the mid 18th-century. The two foundations, [3] and [4], abutting the Aisle wall confirm that a light porch, possibly half timbered, was constructed against the doorway, sometime after the Aisle was built in the 14th-century. The two layers of limestone slabs, [5] and [14], under the present doorstep may be the remains of the porch floor surface and an earlier doorstep. No dating evidence was recovered from the make-up layers [13] and [15] to confirm or refute this possibility.

The two substantial foundations, [7] and [8], confirm the existence of the chapel, and the evidence of the bonding of [7] and the Aisle wall [17] indicate that the chapel and the Aisle were built together. The increased width of [8] over part of the revealed section suggests that there was an internal buttress at this point.

Between 1762 and 1767 the chapel was demolished to provide materials for the repair of the rest of the church and as early 19th-century sketches of the church do not show a porch on the S side it is reasonable to assume that the porch was demolished at the same time. The foundation [7] was later used as a base for a 19th-century buttress, [10].

No trace of a floor surface was in evidence with the chapel. Presumably it was removed for use elsewhere at the time of the chapel's demolition. A few late medieval/modern tile sherds were recovered from [2] along with four small finds, including one piece of window lead and two fragments of 15th-century window glass, suggesting that [2] represents the backfilling over the demolished chapel.



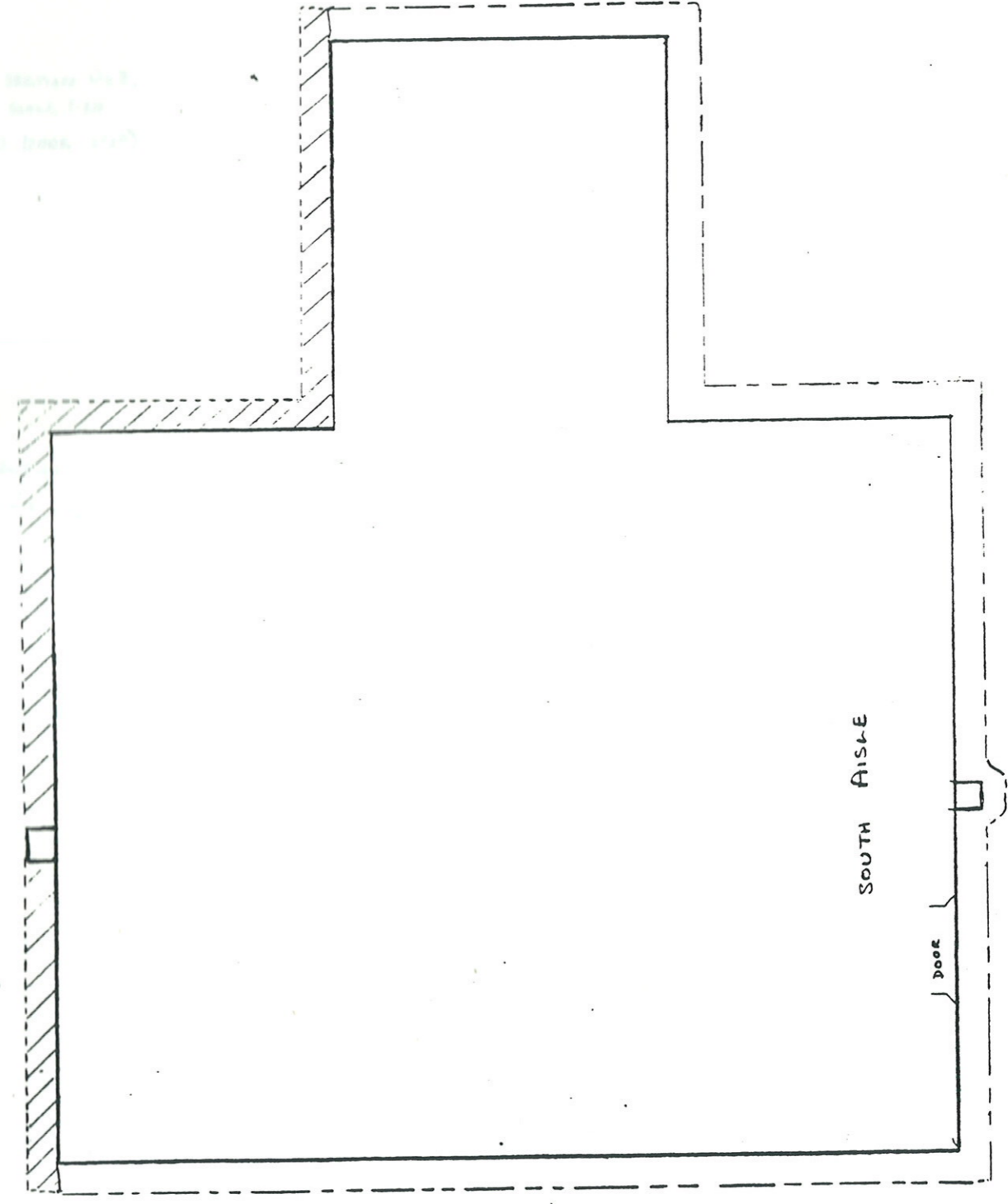
Plan No. ②
SECTION PLAN.

2

SCALE 1:100

PREVIOUSLY BUS
DEANS

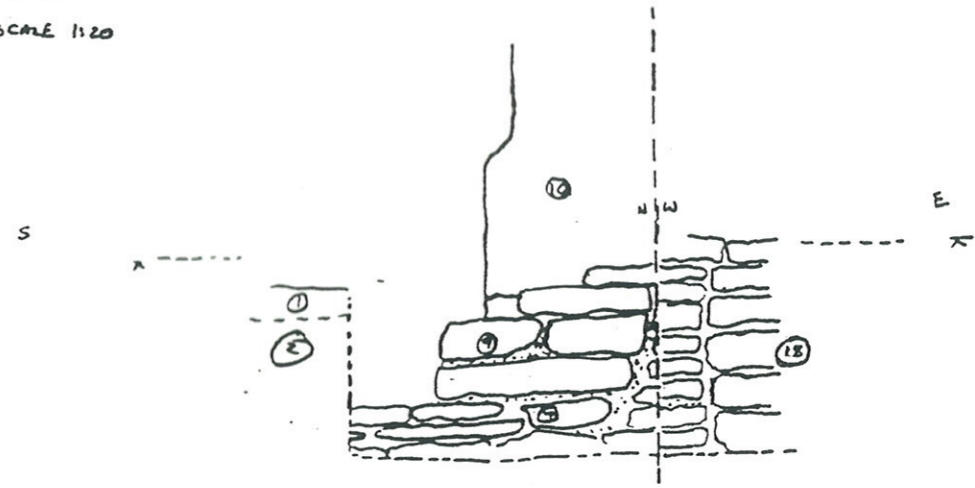
PRESENT
BUS DEANS (1992)



HPMV 92

SECTION NO. 1

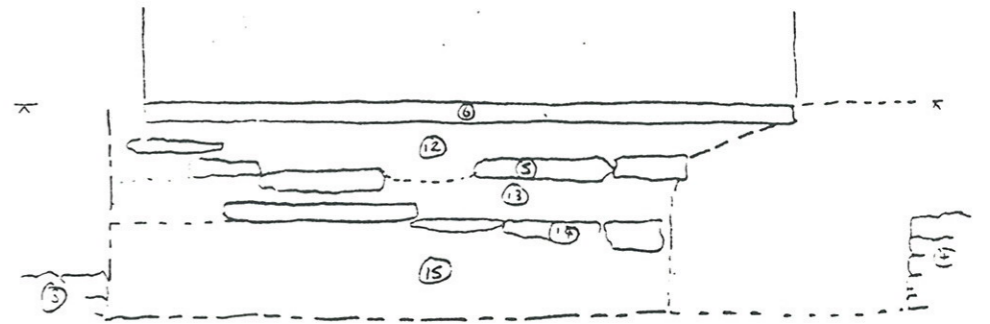
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SECTION No 2.

SCALE 1:20

(S. DOOR STEP)



SECTION No 3

SCALE 1:20

