

Diocese of Oxford

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Hurley, Berkshire.

Watching Brief during Construction Work Interim Report

Oxford Archaeological Unit
March 1996

**The Church of St Mary the Virgin
Hurley, Berkshire.**

(NGR: SU 8258 8410)

Watching Brief during Construction Work

Interim Report

NMR DATA	
Site Name	Church of St Mary the Virgin
Address	Hurley High Street
Town	Hurley
Parish	Hurley
County	Berkshire
NGR	SU 8258 8410
Status	SAM No. 19020
Visit/Survey Date	11th - 15th January 1996
OAU Site Code	HUMA 95

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Hurley, Berkshire.
Watching Brief During Construction Work: Interim Report

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Watching Brief during Construction Work, Interim Report

Summary

A watching brief maintained during construction work within the priory church at Hurley, Berks, revealed the location of the former west end of the church, a blocked twelfth century north door and substantial areas of later restoration.

1 Introduction

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by the Diocese of Oxford to undertake a watching brief at the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Hurley as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent for construction work involving the removal of an internal hard cement render mistakenly applied in 1972. Recording work was carried out between the 11th and 15th January 1996 by Rob Kinchin-Smith following monitoring of the removal of the render on the 24th October 1995 by Ric Tyler.

2 Background

- 2.1 St Mary's Church, Hurley, stands within the well preserved precinct of Hurley Priory, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM 19020). The priory was founded between 1085 and 1087¹ is a Benedictine house by Geoffrey de Mandeville in memory of his first wife Athelais. It was subject to the abbey of Westminster.² Though the present building, essentially only the oddly long and narrow nave of the priory church, is ascribed to the 12th Century by the V.C.H.,³ Pevsner notes its proportions as being decidedly Anglo-Saxon.⁴ Though no church is mentioned on this site in the Domesday Survey,⁵ excavation of the site of the crossing of the medieval church revealed the foundations apparently of the crossing of an important Saxon Church with two towers or turrets to its east.⁶
 - 2.2 It would appear that the church, as it stood at the end of the 12th Century, consisted of the present aisleless nave with an apse at the east. The east end was lengthened to form a choir with a straight east gable in the 13th century. The east end was extended once more in the 14th century when new chapels were added. All that remains of this 13th and 14th century work is the decorated south window (c.1330) and the niche below it.⁷
 - 2.3 The priory was dissolved in 1536 and after passing through several hands was acquired in 1550 by Sir John Lovelace. He demolished all but the nave of the church and incorporated the land, and probably some of the materials, into his new mansion, the Ladye Place, (dem. 1837).⁸ In 1852 Hakewill embarked on an ambitious programme of restoration. As well as the erection of the pseudo Norman reredos, Hakewill also replaced the majority of the outer stonework of the doors and windows, unblocked the Norman windows in the north wall and apparently pierced a new two centred gothic priests door at the east end of the south wall.⁹
 - 2.4 In 1972, as a result of rising damp, the walls of the church were internally rendered with a hard impervious cement-based plaster and part of the outside tanked below ground level. This treatment was ineffective and injurious to the building fabric and in 1995 work was commenced to replace these impermeable repairs with traditional lime-based materials. As a result the render was stripped from the walls to a height of 3 metres above floor level and excavations were carried out to expose and reverse the tanking. It was also decided to extend the churchyard southward to a point coinciding with the projected line of the priory moat.
-

3 Observations

3.1 *The North Wall*

- 3.1.1 The north wall would appear to reflect two main phases of construction, the first being from the east end up to, and including, the line of quoins **11**. The second phase continues from this point westward. Both phases one primarily constructed of flint rubblework with very few clunch inclusions. The blocked Romanesque door would appear to be contemporary with this second phase. Contexts **11, 13, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, 32** and **34** and quite probably **26** belong to the first phase. Contexts **1, 2, 5, 6, 8** and **10** belong to the second phase. Unfortunately monuments and later rebuilding have obscured the exact sequence of events, but it would appear possible that the new west end was completed before the old was removed.
- 3.1.2 Areas of squared, coursed blocks of clunch with prominent tool marks were noted , principally **22, 23, 29**. The purpose of these could not be identified due to the in-situ monuments and choir stalls, but they would appear to be early in origin. There were similar, though less well coursed patches, principally of tooled clunch notably **26, 28, 30** and **33**. Apart from **30**, which appeared contemporary with the later restorations, the rest also appeared to be reasonably early.
- 3.1.3 Underlying the Lovelace monument at the extreme east end of the north wall were two patches of handmade clay roof tiles, **31** and **36** mortared, edge to edge. Each had two peg holes and would appear to be contemporary with the monument.
- 3.1.4 The final phase is represented by the areas of red, handmade bricks shown hatched in fig.1 and the areas of hard mortared, small uncoursed clunch which appear to be associated with them (**3, 4, 7, 12** and **14-19**, with the brick reveals of **101** and the cills of **102 -105**). These are no doubt associated with the 19th-century restoration.

3.2 *The South Wall*

- 3.2.1 The South Wall reflects the phasing of the north, **58** representing the break between the phases. Of the flint rubble walls of the eastern half, those portions represented by **38, 44, 49, 50** and perhaps **53** and **57** remain intact. Contexts **61, 65, 67** and **70** again of flint rubble though with more clunch fragments would appear to date from the 12th century eastward extension of the church. Context **57** may also date from this time. **65**, on area of rubble walling containing a very high proportion of clunch and a low proportion of flint, may also be contemporary.
- 3.2.2 At the west end an area of squared tooled coursed clunch blocks (**40**) was noted corresponding to **22, 23, 29** on the north wall. Other older repairs of uncoursed clunch rubble were also noted, principally **54, 55**, and **66**.
- 3.2.3 Beneath the decorated window **107**, the rear of a small niche (**46**) in the exterior of the wall could be seen. Though only a small part was visible it was clear that it was originally pierced, if not glazed, and had only been blocked at a later date.

3.2.4 As with the north wall, there were many areas of hard mortared, small, uncoursed clunch, principally **39, 42, 43, 47, 48, 51, 56, 62-64** and **69**. These were again intimately associated with the red brick and would appear to date to the 19th century restoration.

3.3 Few of the window splays were cleared of render. The western reveals of **104** and **105** in the north wall were exposed and appear to be early, being of clunch and flint rubble. Both reveal the larger window in the north wall (**101**) were exclusively brick. All the windows had brick sills. **107**, the decorated window on the south wall had pieces of brick in its exposed northern reveal. Though much restored on the outside there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of their positions and proportions or their inner quoins and voussoirs.

3.4 *External Excavations*

3.4.1. During the winter of 1972-3, the western half of the north wall was tanked on the outside in an effort to reduce damp. This work consisted of excavating a trench c.50-75 cm deep, the bottom of which was filled with concrete. Upon this was laid a DPC. A concrete block wall was erected from this, c.10cm from the flint rubble of the church wall. The void was filled with concrete and the whole tanked with bitumen and capped with tiles and lead flashing (see appendix C). Between the 15th and 29th November 1995 the trench was partially re-opened to enable the concrete blocks and concrete infill to be removed. The decision had been taken to leave the concrete pad in situ together with the lowest course of blocks and indeed in the area of the blocked north door the work was removed only to ground level. Where the flint rubblework of the wall was exposed it was repointed prior to backfilling. Due to the fact that no archaeological deposits were expected to be disturbed and that no significant features were discernable to the architect, the work was not monitored by OAU.

3.4.2. No work on the churchyard extension has been carried out to date and therefore no observations can be included in this interim report.

4 **Limitations of Survey**

4.1 The survey was unfortunately not complete due to the render only being broken away to 3 metres above floor level. Furthermore all the monuments were left in situ, and certain areas of render were left in place, notably between and around those monuments. The interesting area of squared coursed clunch towards the east end of the north wall could not be fully interpreted due to the choir stalls being screwed back into position as soon as the stripping had been completed.

5 **Conclusion**

5.1 In plan, the main body of the church as existing is of two phases, that part east of the quoins **11** and **58-60** apparently pre-dating the remainder to the west. Both parts are constructed of a very similar flint rubble. Dating the earlier phase is impossible at this stage but the presence of the round headed doors and windows, dated to later 12th Century by RCHME, west of this point gives a *post terminum quem*. A Saxon attribution could be possible, though a Norman origin is more likely. The round headed windows in both phases are identical and this would imply that either the two halves are of very close date, or that the eastern half was

re-fenestrated when the western half was built. The 19th Century restoration makes this impossible to judge now, though evidence could be concealed above the three metre line. The squared coursed stonework behind the choir stalls on the north wall cannot be explained and any corresponding work to the south has been obliterated by the decorated south window. It may pertain to the eastward extensions of the church in the 13th and 14th centuries. The niche beneath the decorated south window has been proved to have originally been a window, though when it was blocked could not be determined as not enough of the infill material was exposed. The priests door in the south wall has been prove to be 19th century in its entirety.

Rob Kinchin-Smith

Oxford Archaeological Unit

March 1995

NOTES

1. VCH Berks iii (1923) p74
2. Ibid. p73
3. Ibid. p157
4. Pevsner (1966) p157
5. VCH Berks iii (1923) p74 cit. Weathered, Rev.F.T. Berks Archaeol Journal, Vols ii and iii
6. Pevsner (1966) p157
7. Ibid and VCH Berks iii (1923) p157
8. Scheduled Monument File AA 60131/1
9. VCH Berks iii (1923) p157 and Pevsner (1966) p157

Appendix A

Context Inventory. The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Hurley-on-Thames, BERKS.

North wall.

1. Rubble work of flint and mortar with clunch fragments.
2. As 1.
3. Roughly coursed smaller pieces of clunch with tool marks. (poss. extn. of 4.)
4. Roughly coursed larger pieces of clunch with tool marks.
5. Rubble work of flint and mortar with clunch fragments.
6. Rubble work of flint and mortar to west changing to rough clunch and mortar to east.
7. Roughly coursed smaller pieces of clunch. (poss. extn. of 4.)
8. Rubble work of rough clunch, flint and mortar. (prob. extn. of 6.)
9. Large uncoursed clunch blocks and a few pieces of flint. (Infills 10.)
10. Romanesque doorway with dressed clunch quoins and voussoirs with chamfered arris. Also large clunch blocks with tool marks.
11. Large squared dressed clunch quoins with straight joint.
12. Roughly coursed smaller pieces of clunch.
13. Rubble work of flint and mortar with a few pieces of clunch.
14. Roughly coursed smaller pieces of clunch.
15. As 14.
16. As 14.
17. As 14.
18. As 14.
19. As 14.
20. Rubble work of flint and mortar.
21. As 20.
22. Large squared dressed clunch blocks with tool marks.
23. As 23.
24. Rubble work of flint, mortar with clunch fragments.
25. Rubble work of flint and mortar.
26. Uncoursed smaller clunch with some flint showing signs of reconstruction.
27. Rubble work of flint and mortar.
28. Uncoursed smaller pieces of clunch.
29. Coursed large squared dressed clunch blocks with tool marks.
30. Roughly coursed large clunch with tool marks.
31. Hand made red clay roof tiles, with peg holes, mortared to wall.
32. Rubble work of flint, mortar and clunch fragments.
33. Roughly coursed large clunch with tool marks.
34. Rubble work of flint and mortar.
35. Chase filled with hard mortar.
36. As 31.
37. Hard mortar. (extn. of 35.)
101. Large round-headed window. Brick reveals.
102. Round-headed window. Reveals not exposed.
103. As 102.
104. Round-headed window. E. reveal exposed. Mostly random clunch with some flint.
105. As 104.

Context Inventory. (contd.)

South wall.

38. Rubble work of flint and mortar.
39. Roughly coursed smaller pieces of clunch with tool marks.
40. Roughly coursed larger pieces of clunch with tool marks. Old.
41. As 35. & 37.
42. Crude oak lintel and roughly squared clunch blocks with tool marks.
43. Three roughly squared clunch blocks.
44. Rubble work of flint and mortar.
45. Rubble work of flint, mortar and clunch fragments.
46. Back of low side window.
47. Small roughly squared clunch.
48. Small roughly squared clunch.
49. Rubble work of flint and mortar with a few pieces of clunch.
50. Rubble work of flint and mortar with some clunch.
51. Small roughly squared clunch.
52. Larger blocks of uncoursed clunch with a little flint. Few tool marks. Probably old.
53. Rubble work of mortar and flint.
54. Larger blocks of uncoursed clunch. Few tool marks. Probably old.
55. Smaller pieces of uncoursed clunch with a little flint. Probably old.
56. Roughly coursed smaller clunch with tool marks.
57. Rubble work of flint and mortar.
58. Large squared dressed clunch quoins with straight joint.
59. As 58.
60. As 58.
61. Rubble work of flint, mortar and clunch fragments.
62. Very roughly coursed smaller pieces of clunch.
63. Flint, thick mortar and some random clunch. (prob. part of 65.)
64. Flint, thick mortar and some random clunch. (prob. part of 65.)
65. Mostly random uncoursed clunch and thick mortar with a little flint.
66. Roughly coursed smaller pieces of clunch.
67. Rubble work of flint and mortar.
68. Clunch quoins of pre-restoration south door.
69. Uncoursed random clunch blocks.
70. Rubble work of flint and mortar with some small pieces of clunch.
106. Round-headed window. Reveals not exposed.
107. Decorated two-centered window. E. reveal exposed. Brick, flint and clunch.
108. Round-headed window. Reveals not exposed.
109. As 108.
110. As 108.
111. As 108.
112. As 108.
113. Two-centred S.E. door. Reveals not exposed.
114. Round-headed S. door. Stonework very heavily restored.

Appendix B

Inventory of Photographic Record.

Black & White Print Film (HUMA 1)

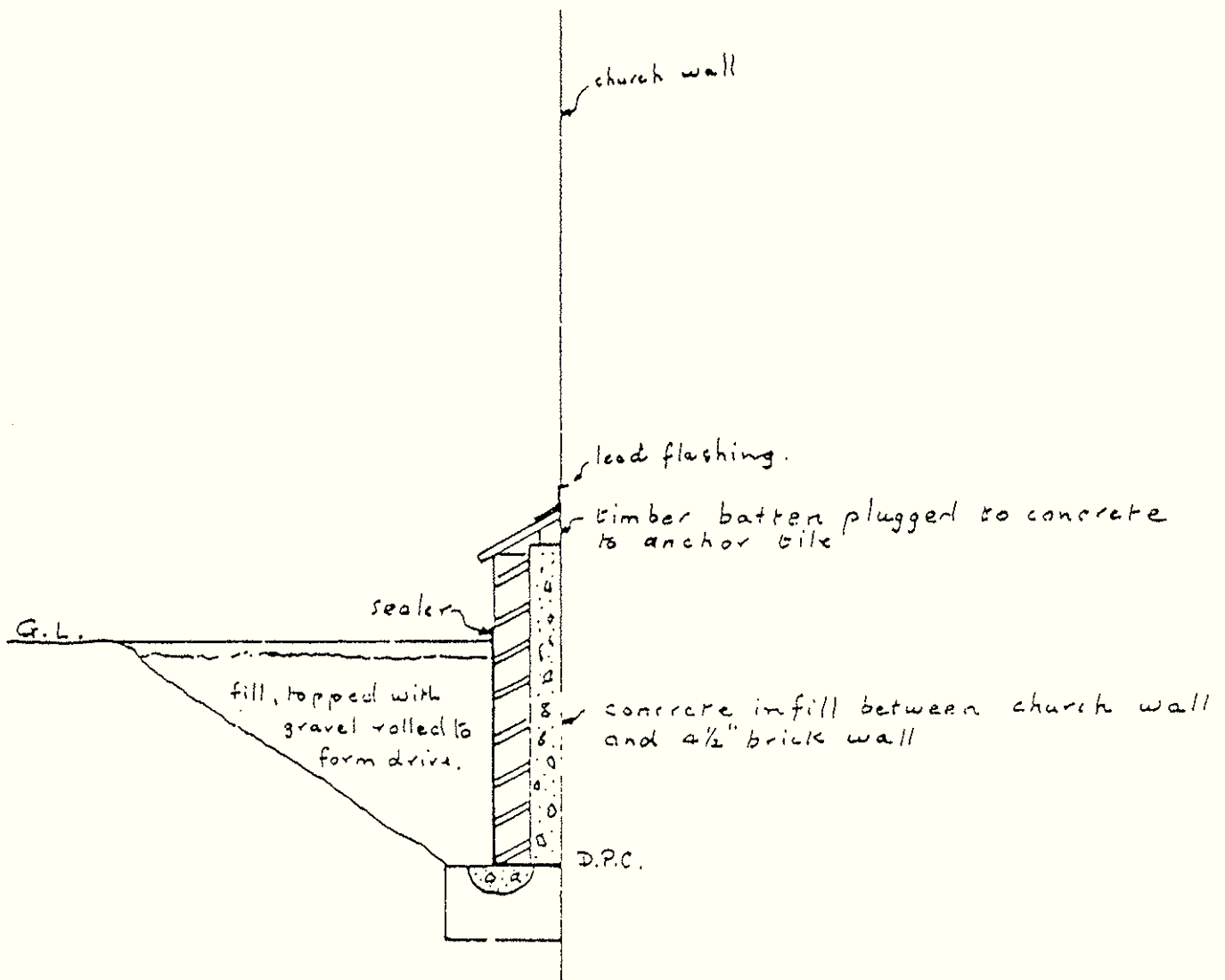
Neg. No.	Context Nos.
1.1.	1-5, 101.
1.2.	2, 4-6, 101.
1.3.	5-13, 102.
1.4.	11-13, 102.
1.5.	13-16, 102, 103.
1.6.	13-24, 102, 103.
1.7.	18-31, 104, 105.
1.8.	20-37, 104, 105.
1.9.	27-37, 105.
1.10.	38-43, 106, 113.
1.11.	38-45, 106, 107, 113.
1.12.	38-49, 106, 107, 113.
1.13.	42-49, 107, 108, 113.
1.14.	45-55, 107, 108.
1.15.	47-57, 107-109.
1.16.	50-57, 109, 110.
1.17.	56-65, 109-111, 114.
1.18.	62-70, 111, 112, 114.
1.19.	69, 70, 112.
1.20.	47, 49-57, 108, 109.
1.21.	5-11, 13.
1.22.	6-8, 10, 11, 13.
1.23.	6-8, 11, 13.
1.24.	56-62, 66, 67, 110.
1.25.	13, 22-25, 104.
1.26.	27-31, 105.

Colour Slide Film (HUMA 2)

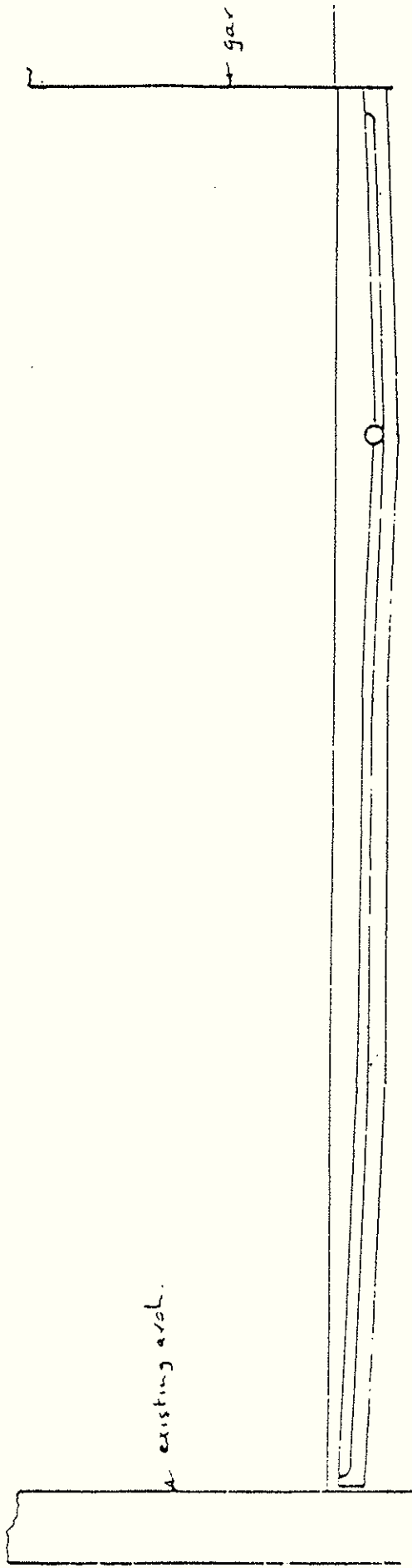
Slide No.	Context Nos.
2.1.	1-5, 101.
2.2.	2-6, 101.
2.3.	4-6, 101.
2.4.	4-11.
2.5.	5-11, 13.
2.6.	8-10.
2.7.	5-13, 102.
2.8.	11.
2.9.	7-13, 102.

2.10.	12-16, 102, 103.
2.11.	13-26, 103, 104.
2.12.	13, 17-28, 104.
2.13.	13, 19-25, 104.
2.14.	24-31, 104, 105.
2.15.	26-31.
2.16.	32-37.
2.17.	32-37.
2.18.	38-41, 106.
2.19.	38-44, 106, 113.
2.20.	38-40, 42-46, 106, 107, 113.
2.21.	42-49, 52, 107, 108, 113.
2.22.	45-52, 107, 108.
2.23.	47, 49-57, 108, 109.
2.24.	49-57, 108, 109.
2.25.	55-63, 66, 67, 109, 110.
2.26.	56-62, 66, 67, 110.
2.27.	58-68, 110, 114.
2.28.	62-70, 111, 112, 114.
2.29.	69, 70, 112.
2.30.	69, 70, 112.
2.31.	62, 65, 67, 68, 111, 114.
2.32.	56-68, 110, 114.

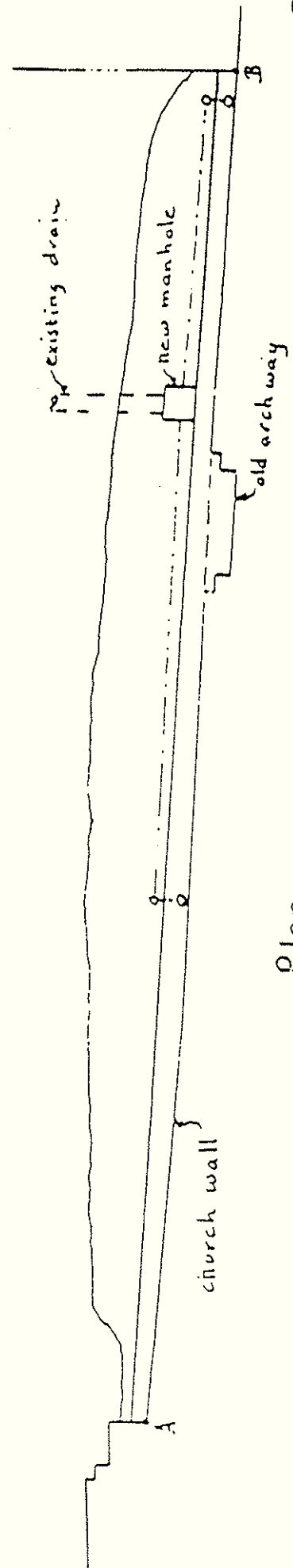
Appendix C



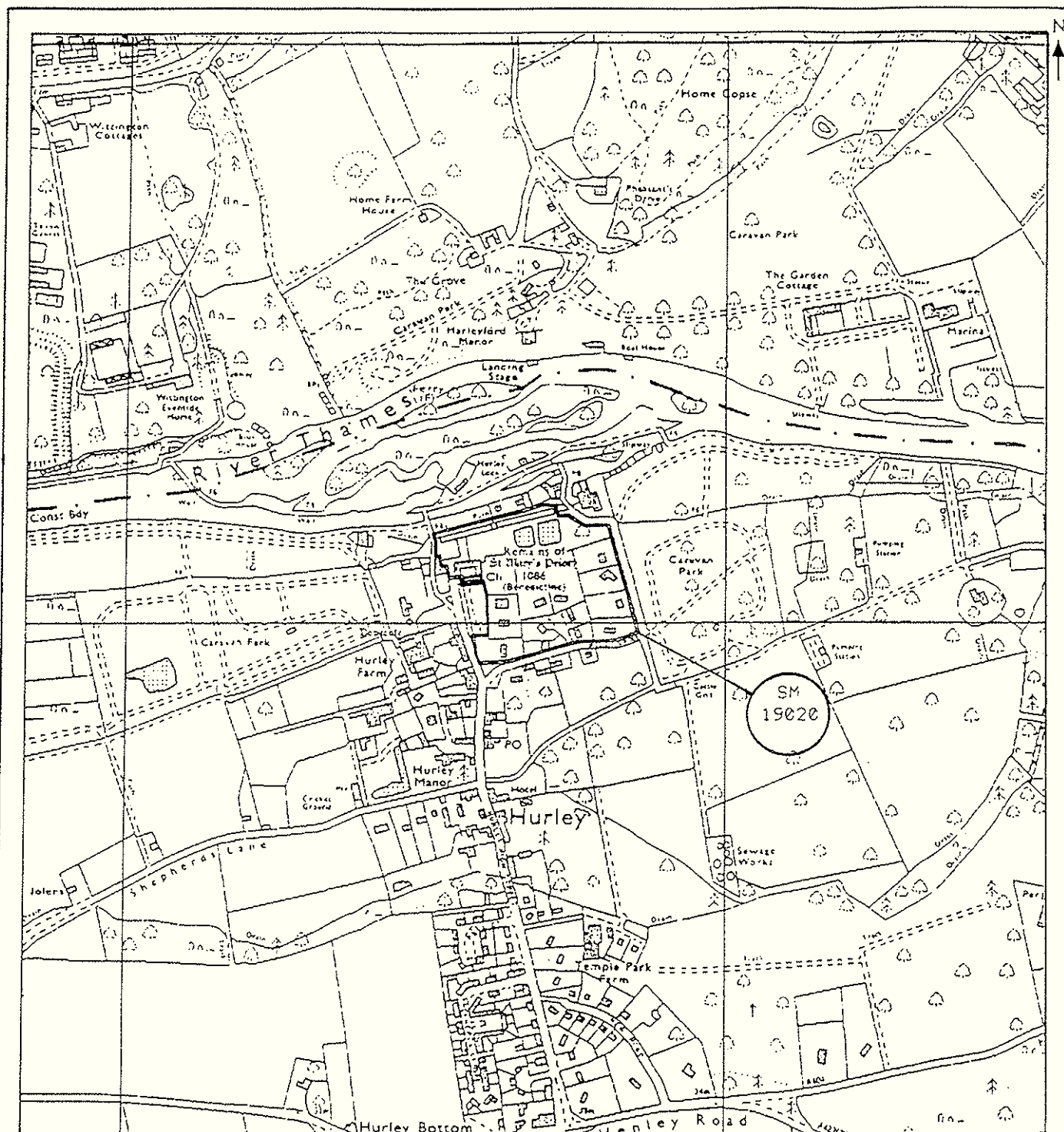
Typical Cross-Section
(1/2" = 1ft.)



Longitudinal Section (existing)
 ($\frac{1}{8}" = 1 \text{ ft.}$)



Plan
 ($\frac{1}{8}" = 1 \text{ ft.}$)



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For identification purposes only

Site Name: Hurley Priory: a moated Benedictine priory & fishponds & the remains of Ladye Place Mansion

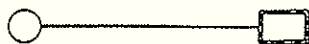
County: Berkshire

District: Windsor & Maidenhead

Parish: Hurley

Notes: Site contains listed buildings grade 1 & 2
For exclusions - see text record

Key: Monument No. Location/extent of site



Scale: 1:10000

Derived from: 1:10000

Centred on NGR: SU82698407

Extract from OS sheet: SU88SW

Date: 4.1.93

Monument No: SM19020

English Heritage

Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 1AB Telephone 071 973 3000 Fax 071 973 3001

FILE REFERENCE: AA 60131/1

ENTRY IN THE SCHEDULE OF MONUMENTS COMPILED AND MAINTAINED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER SECTION 1 OF THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS ACT 1979 AS AMENDED.

MONUMENT:

Hurley Priory: a moated Benedictine priory and fishponds and the remains of Ladye Place Mansion

PARISH: HURLEY

COUNTY: BERKSHIRE

DISTRICT: WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 19020

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE (S): SU 82698407

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes all that is known to survive of Hurley Priory, a moated monastic complex on the south bank of the River Thames. Today all that is visible of the monument are the remains of a rectangular moat, fishponds and various buildings, though much more will survive as buried features. The moat is best preserved in the north where it survives as a steep sided, water-filled linear pond up to 10m wide. It can be traced along its eastern side as a series of partly infilled hollows, while the south and west sides of the enclosure are now no longer recognisable as earthwork features although Mill Lane and Hurley High Street are considered to follow the line of the ditch. In the north eastern corner of the island are two water-filled fishponds; the eastern one has dimensions of 38m north to south by 30m east to west, the western correspondingly 43m by 37m. Standing remains within the monument consist of the refectory, a part of the northern cloister range dating to c. 1300 AD, and the priory wall. To the south-east of the church are the remains of a brick built crypt. The site represents a Benedictine monastery founded as a cell of Westminster by Geoffery de Mandeville and dedicated to the memory of his first wife, Athelais. It remained in Benedictine hands until 1536 when the monastery was dissolved, the land then passing into secular ownership. Several families subsequently held Hurley until 1550 when John Lovelace had a house built, Ladye Place Mansion, in the area south of the church. The crypt is all that survives of this house following its demolition in 1837.

(Continued...)

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On behalf of The Secretary of State for National Heritage.

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Excluded from the scheduling are St Mary's Church (listed Grade II*), the refectory (listed Grade II*), the priory wall (listed Grade II), the gatehouse and archway (listed Grade II*), the cloisters (listed Grade II*) and all modern buildings, fences and metalled surfaces but the ground beneath all of these is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

From the time of St Augustine's mission to re-establish Christianity in AD 597 to the reign of Henry VIII, monasticism formed an important facet of both religious and secular life in the British Isles. Settlements of religious communities, including monasteries, were built to house communities of monks, canons (priests), and sometimes lay-brothers, living a common life of religious observance under some form of systematic discipline. It is estimated from documentary evidence that over 700 monasteries were founded in England. These ranged in size from major communities with several hundred members to tiny establishments with a handful of brethren. They belonged to a wide variety of different religious orders, each with its own philosophy. As a result, they vary considerably in the detail of their appearance and layout, although all possess the basic elements of church, domestic accommodation for the community, and work buildings.

Monasteries were inextricably woven into the fabric of medieval society, acting not only as centres of worship, learning, and charity, but also, because of the vast landholdings of some orders, as centres of immense wealth and political influence. They were established in all parts of England, some in towns and others in the remotest of areas. Many monasteries acted as the foci of wide networks including parish churches, almshouses, hospitals, farming estates and tenant villages.

Benedictine monasticism had its roots in the rule written about 530 AD by St Benedict of Nursia for his own abbey at Monte Cassino. Benedict had not intended to establish an order of monasteries and wider adoption of his rule came only gradually. The first real attempt to form a Benedictine Order came only in 1216. The Benedictine monks, who wore dark robes, came to be known as 'black monks'. These dark robes distinguished them from Cistercian monks who became known as 'white monks' on account of their light coloured robes. Over 150 Benedictine monasteries were founded in England. As members of a highly successful order many Benedictine houses became extremely wealthy and influential.

(Continued...)

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On behalf of The Secretary of the State for National Heritage.

Continued from previous page...

Their wealth can frequently be seen in the scale and flamboyance of their buildings. Benedictine monasteries made a major contribution to many facets of medieval life and all examples exhibiting significant surviving archaeological remains are worthy of protection.

Hurley Priory is an excellent example of a moated monastic complex. The site has a well documented history and limited early excavations have demonstrated good survival of archaeological deposits. There is a high probability that environmental evidence is present, particularly in the ditch fills, while the survival of organic remains is possible in the waterlogged conditions of the wet moat and fishponds. Such evidence can provide a clear indication of the wealth and economy of the community and details of the landscape in which they lived.

MAP EXTRACT

The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract outlined in black and highlighted in red.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 12th January 1949 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Berkshire 63

NAME: Hurley Priory.

The reference of the monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 19020

NAME: Hurley Priory: a moated Benedictine priory and fishponds and the remains of Ladye Place Mansion.

SCHEDULING REVISED ON

8 June 1993

SIGNED

[Signature]

On behalf of The Secretary of State for National Heritage.

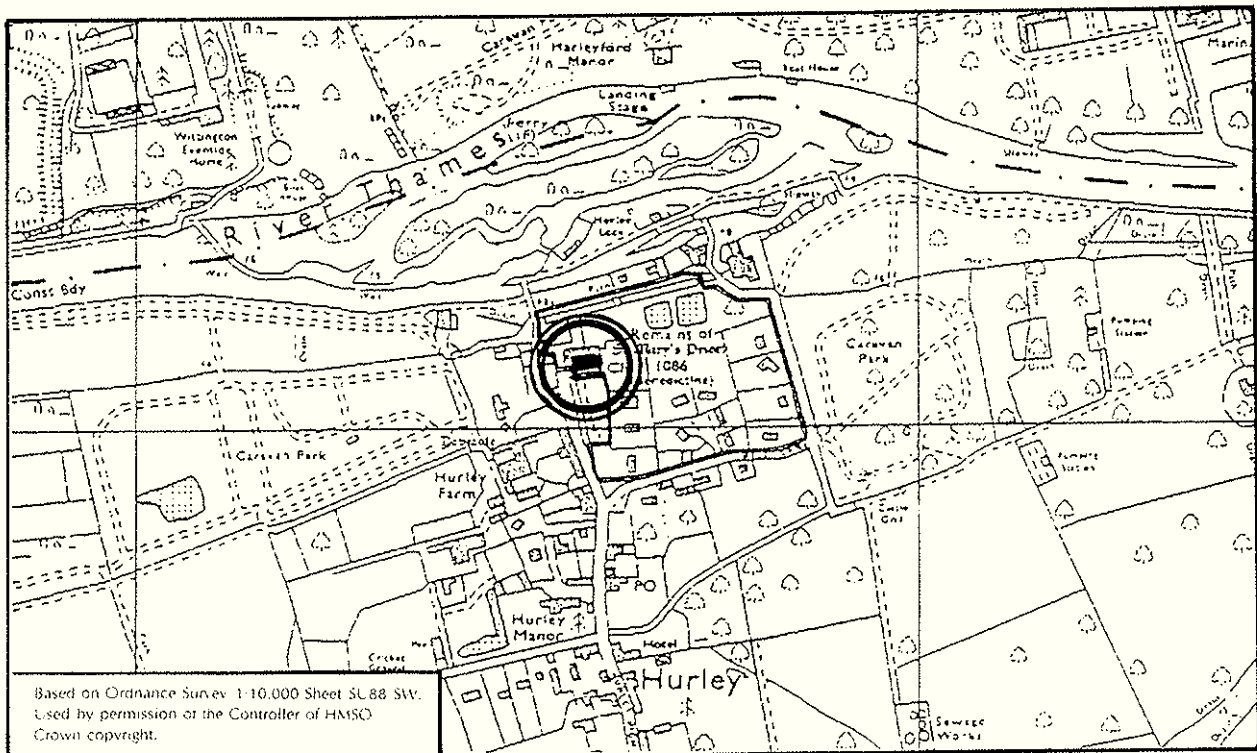
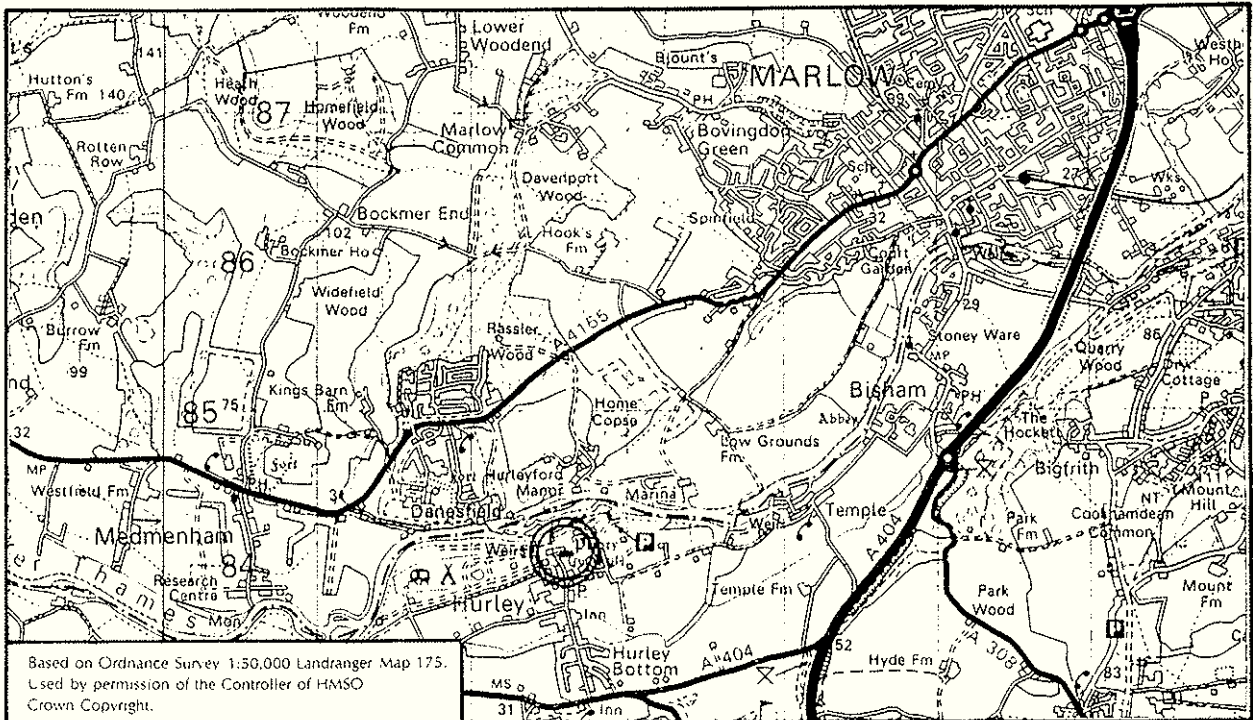
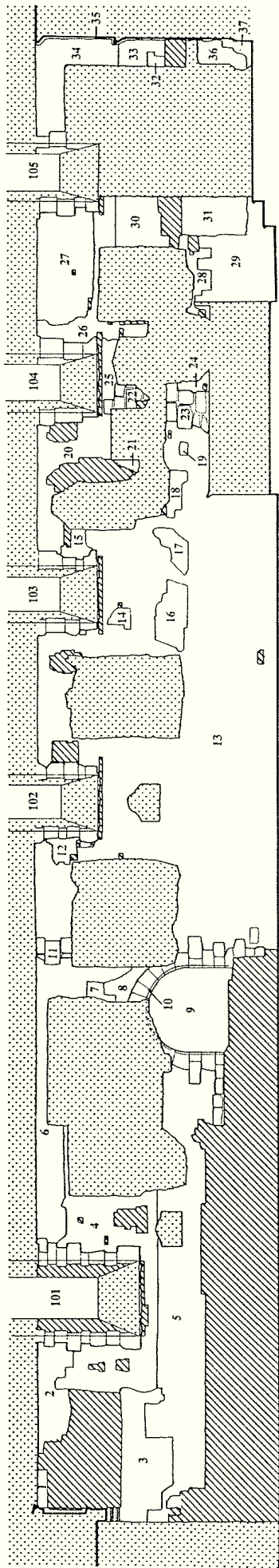


Figure 1: Location Plan

Internal Elevation: North Wall



Internal Elevation: South Wall

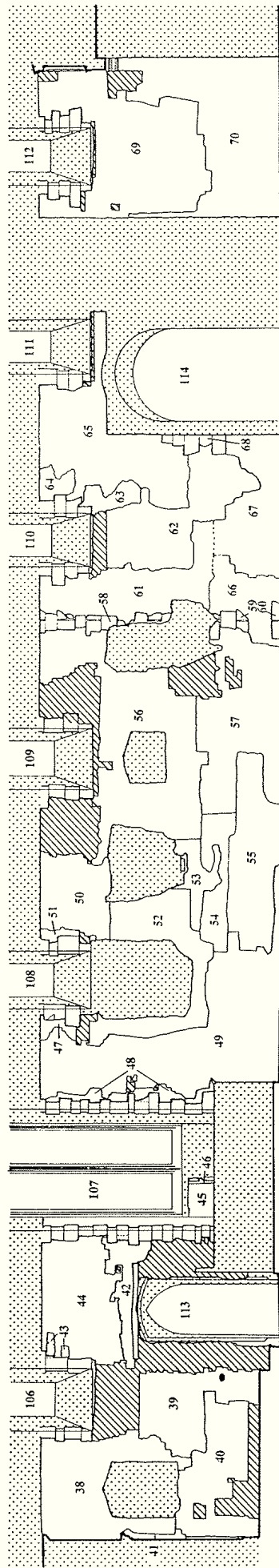


Figure 2: Elevations of North and South Walls

*The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Hurley, Berks.
Archaeological Watching Brief*

Oxford Archaeological Unit

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