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Bradenstoke Priory, Wiltshire

Archaeological investigations

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Summary

Bradenstoke Priory in Wiltshire is a site of considerable historical significance, comprising the scheduled remains of an Augustinian monastery originally established in the 12th century, but surrendered in 1539 as part of the dissolution. Some of the monastic buildings were pulled down in the post-medieval period but others, including the 14th-century west range of the cloisters and the medieval tithe barn, survived into the 20th century before being demolished (or dismantled) in 1929 when the site was acquired by the American tycoon William Randolph Hearst. Hearst was intending to re-erect the buildings at his other estates, or at least to reuse significant elements of the buildings, and although some elements were reused at St Donat's in Glamorgan, the roof timbers from the tithe barn remain unused, packed in shipping crates in California.

The main west range (the former Guest House or Kings Lodgings) was pulled down in 1929, but the vaulted undercroft partially survives, and although its condition has deteriorated, a series of separate programmes of conservation work have been undertaken over the last 15 years to stabilise and consolidate the structure. The structure is included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register and parts of the work have been funded by grants from Historic England (HE). This work has allowed a series of temporary props that had been inserted to support the vaulting to be removed.

The most recent element of the conservation work has included some limited archaeological and building recording works, undertaken as a condition of the HE grant. This has comprised an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a shallow drainage trench to the west of the undercroft. An unstable pier or section of wall that required rebuilding was recorded, while a heap of spoil which had previously been removed from the top of the vaults was rapidly assessed.

The main part of the drainage trench went through previously disturbed ground where an earlier drain (probably 20th century in date) had been laid. Possible foundations for the range were exposed where the trench adjoined the building immediately adjacent to a buttress. A broadly east-to-west line of stones, which probably formed part of a drainage channel to carry water away from the building, was also recorded. Owing to their small size and character, it is unlikely that this line of stones formed part of a foundation from a former structure.

The section of wall that has been recorded prior to dismantling formed part of the projection at the southern end of the west range. This was the location of the Prior's Lodgings in the monastic complex although it is believed that the wall formed part of an early 19th-century reconstruction of the structure. One feature of interest is a small bread oven (post-medieval) on the east side of the wall.

The assessment of the spoil comprised spreading the heap and rapidly inspecting it for archaeological remains such as moulded stones. A number of oyster shells and minor features were noted.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Ferguson Mann Architects on behalf of Mark Thomas to undertake a programme of archaeological investigations at Bradenstoke Priory in Wiltshire during conservation work to the 14th-century Guest House or Kings Lodgings, formerly the west range of the priory.

1.1.2 The site is a scheduled monument and the work was requested by Historic England (HE), which part-funding the conservation work. The remains are listed on HE's Heritage at Risk Register and the conservation works have been intended to address this.

1.1.3 A brief was set by Hugh Beamish, Inspector of Ancient Monuments (HE), detailing the requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process and discharge the planning condition.

1.1.4 The current conservation work, comprising the consolidation of the vaulted undercroft and the establishment of a green roof over, is the latest in a number of phases of work undertaken by Mark Thomas and part-funded by HE. The undercroft was initially propped in 1998 with grant aid from HE to prevent collapse, and then in 2012 scrub was cleared and the structure repointed. In November 2017, a further project development grant was offered by HE and this was completed in March 2019. The recent work has allowed part of the 1998 propping to be removed.

1.1.5 Consolidation works since 2007 have included the raising of the west elevation walls to *c* 2m in height.

1.1.6 There is also a grade II listed building within the scheduled monument, the Abbey Farmhouse, although this post-dates the abbey, having been constructed in the late 18th century.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site lies in the northern part of Wiltshire, *c* 15km southwest of Swindon and north of Lyneham Airfield (Fig. 1). The priory is situated west of the village of Bradenstoke and the area now consists of farm buildings with associated park areas.

1.2.2 The geology of the area is mapped as Oxford Clay Formation – Mudstone, Sedimentary Bedrock, formed approximately 157 to 166 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow seas (BGS 2019).

1.2.3 The priory is located on the northern edge of a prominent plateau, which falls away to the south and north-west towards the Marlborough Downs and Avon Vale respectively. The site lies at an elevation of *c* 150m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

1.3 Aims and objectives

1.3.1 The overall aims of the project were to enhance understanding of Bradenstoke Priory through investigation of its surviving remains and to record for posterity structural elements that would be lost or temporarily exposed during the works.

1.3.2 Specific objectives were:

i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present in the drainage excavation;
ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;
iii. To retrieve and record finds and worked stones from the deposits above the vaults;
iv. To record the masonry that was being dismantled;
v. To make available the results of the investigation.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 The investigation involved three distinct elements:

i. An archaeological watching brief to monitor the excavation of a 10m-long drainage trench from the west side of the priory building to a soakaway;
ii. Recording of an unstable section of wall prior to its dismantling;
iii. Sorting through a heap of spoil that was previously removed from on top of the undercroft and deposited in a field.

1.4.2 The drainage trench was dug by hand by other contractors and the archaeological watching brief recorded all archaeological features exposed (Fig. 2).

1.4.3 The unstable section of wall was recorded by photography, measured sketches and analytical description. Sufficient photographs were also taken to allow the images to be stitched together by photogrammetry to form a scaled photographic elevation.

1.4.4 The deposited fill from on top of the undercroft was spread using a mechanical excavator and a fork to help expose moulded stones and archaeological finds. The heap was also scanned with a metal detector.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeological and historical background

2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background information derives from previous archaeological investigations in the area (Brown 1998; Egging-Dinwiddy 2015), Wiltshire Council community history platform (Wiltshire Council 2019), and historic maps and extracts from the Wiltshire Historic Environment Records available at the digital platform, Know Your Place (2019). The following summary provides a context for the works.

Prehistoric Period (500,000 BP – AD 43)

2.1.2 The earliest known archaeological remains in the vicinity of the priory include possible Bronze Age burial mounds, seen as cropmarks, and suggested by place and field names. One barrow mound is recorded as being levelled during World War II, when the airfield was constructed, and another, more distant example was found to contain 16 skeletons when it was excavated in 1863. Various undated cropmarks may well relate to prehistoric activity. An Iron Age carving was found in a cottage garden in Bradenstoke.

2.1.3 Prehistoric evidence includes a few sherds of probable Bronze Age pottery and a minor Iron Age settlement uncovered at the airfield site.

Romano-British Period (AD 43 – 410)

2.1.4 At the airfield excavation, there is evidence for early Romano-British formalisation of the landscape and associated features. A well-shaft probably had its origins in the early part of the period. Comprehensive re-apportionment of the landscape represented by a rectilinear field system was probably undertaken and re-established during the mid-Roman phase. A shift towards metalworking in the middle and late phases was apparent, although two grain-dryers indicate that farming was still a major occupation into the late Roman phase. Late Romano-British discoveries include a number of coins, at least one grave, and a pair of elongated pits, one containing a cache of pewter plates. Large spreads reminiscent of 'dark earth' were also recorded. Quarrying probably continued throughout the period, whilst the (possible mid-late) Romano-British community chose to bury their dead in graves dispersed across the landscape.

Early-Medieval Period (AD 410 – 1065)

2.1.5 Bradenstoke was originally the main area of settlement. It was then known as 'Stoche', (Old English meaning 'settlement'; Mills 2011). The area was well wooded, having lain within the boundaries of Braydon Forest, a pre-English forest name of obscure origin. The settlement was called Bradenstoke from the 12th century onwards, and this was applied to the area surrounding Bradenstoke Priory.

2.1.6 In the Domesday Survey of 1086, the village had a recorded population of 42 households listed under three owners, whereas only one is known in 1066 (Palmer and Powell-Smith 2019).

Later Medieval Period (1066 – 1550)

2.1.7 The heritage significance of the scheduled site lies in its extensive earthworks, fishponds and other surviving remains from the later medieval period. This includes the remains of Bradenstoke Augustinian Priory, together with the remains of an associated motte and bailey castle known as Clack Mount. In addition, cropmarks and geophysical survey results show remnants of medieval ridge-and-furrow across the site of Lyneham Airfield.

2.1.8 Clack Mount represents the site of a motte and bailey castle, a medieval fortification introduced by the Normans, comprising a mound surmounted by a tower of stone or timber. An embanked enclosure, or bailey, containing subsidiary buildings, appears to have been linked to the motte. The name 'Clack' (which means hill) first appears in this parish in 1310 and refers to a mound lying to the north-east of Bradenstoke Farm. Until the later 19th century, this name was applied to the hamlet. The name Bradenstoke was revived in the 20th century and by 1968 the whole village was known by this name.

2.1.9 Bradenstoke Priory, which was dedicated to St Mary, was founded as a house of Augustinian canons in 1142 and remained in Augustinian hands until its dissolution in 1539. The site of the priory on a high ridge is unusually exposed, but it may have been chosen for the nearby holy well and springs which provided fresh water. The priory was founded as a daughter house by St Mary's in Cirencester and it only became fully autonomous in 1189. In 1194 the newly independent priory at Bradenstoke established its own new foundation at Cartmel in Lancashire.

2.1.10 The priory held various estates, mainly in Wiltshire and neighbouring counties but also some further afield in South Yorkshire and Normandy. The economy of the estates principally lay in sheep farming and grazing cattle, and by the mid-16th century, spiritual income (tithes) also formed an important source of income.

2.1.11 During the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-41), Bradenstoke avoided suppression in the initial phase following the act of 1536, but was surrendered by the prior in January 1539 and the estates divided up.

2.1.12 Excavations in the 1920s by Harold Brakspear indicate that the surviving undercroft would have formed part of the west range of the cloister (the Guest House or Kings Lodgings) and the 12th-century church would have been located to the south. The kitchen would have been to the north. Brakspear's work suggests that the ranges around the cloister were probably constructed soon after the priory's foundation in the mid-12th century, but the west range was then rebuilt in the early 14th century. In 1490, Prior Thomas Walshe added a projection at the south end of the west range to form the Prior's Lodgings (Brakspear, 1923). Finds from the site have included numerous medieval burials, some with stone coffins and several tiled pavements. Nearby was a tithe barn of 15th century date and a holy well.

2.1.13 The footprint of a medieval post-mill was found on an area of higher ground at the airfield site, immediately to the north of the priory. The discovery fits well with the medieval setting, surrounded by strip farming, and situated close to the priory and small village.

2.1.14 The remains of a medieval cross are situated in Bradenstoke village. The site of a moated manor was situated to the south-east of the priory. (No sign of it was found during archaeological investigations in the vicinity.)

Post-Medieval Period (1550-1900)

2.1.15 In 1546, after the dissolution in 1546, the priory and certain specified lands were granted to Sir Richard Pexsall and these became known as Bradenstoke cum [with] Clack, until the 17th century. It continued in the Pexhall family until 1640 when it was sold to Henry Danvers of nearby Dauntsey, who, as Lord Danby, held a number of estates in the south of England. The priory and its small estate continued in the Danvers family, principally through the female line, until 1700 when it was held by James, Earl of Abingdon. From the mid-18th century the estate was in the possession of the Selfe family of Beanacre near Melksham, and thereafter it was in the hands of the Methuen family of Corsham Court. The surviving west range was used as a farmhouse.

2.1.16 An engraving showing the west range was produced in 1732 by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, which shows various features of interest, including a large two-storey porch projecting from the centre of the west elevation and the Prior's Lodgings at the southern end of the range.

2.1.17 Harold Brakspear reports that the northern bay of the west range was pulled down in 17th century, leaving the west wall free-standing, and that the Prior's Lodgings were demolished in the early 19th century, being replaced by a new two storied projection.

2.1.18 The porch shown on the Bucks' 1732 view was demolished at some point prior to the 20th century, although Brakspear comments on the visible weathering from the former structure.

Modern

2.1.19 The 20th-century history of the site is also of some interest in terms of the conservation movement, and it helps illustrate different attitudes to the preservation of historic buildings in this period.

2.1.20 In 1928 the estate at Bradenstoke was put up for sale and it was purchased by the famous American newspaper tycoon, William Randolph Hearst (on whom Orson Welles' Citizen Kane was based), in order to dismantle the surviving medieval priory structures and either reuse elements or fully rebuild them elsewhere. The west range was largely demolished, together with the late 14th-century tithe barn. Parts of these structures were reused at St Donat's Castle in South Glamorgan, which Hearst had purchased in 1923, while other elements were shipped to America to be reused on Hearst's estates there. Some mystery surrounded the fate of the roof timbers of the great barn and it was only in the 1990s that it became known that they were still held in shipping crates in California, having been acquired from the Hearst estate in 1959 by a construction magnate Mr Alex Madonna.

2.1.21 With a modern eye, the fate of Bradenstoke at this time seems appalling and it should be noted that even in 1929 the demolition of the structures at Bradenstoke was deeply controversial and something of a *cause celebre* for the Society for the Preservation of

Ancient Buildings (SPAB), who ran an unsuccessful campaign to save Bradenstoke including a poster campaign on the London Underground.[1]

2.1.22 Fortunately, the sales brochure from 1928 survives with a good set of photographs taken at this time showing the exterior of the west range, so we do have some record of its form. One of these images includes a section of wall that has been dismantled in the current project. It is also worth noting a drawing of Bradwell Abbey by W Haywood from 1897 was included in the Architectural Association sketch book (third series, volume 4, published by CP Kell & Son). This includes architectural details, a sketched view from the east and a scaled west elevation. Another historic engraving is of the fireplace in the Prior's Lodgings, included in an 1849 edition of *The Builder*, and reproduced by Brakspear in 1923.

2.1.23 The area immediately to the south of Bradenstoke is now dominated by MOD Lyneham and associated airfield. RAF Lyneham was originally designed as an aircraft storage unit, originating in 1937, but mostly developed 1938–1940. The RAF station's arrival in 1940 and its housing developments have obscured parts of the village of Lyneham. After being a transport base for the RAF, the airfield closed in 2012.

[1] Concern for the preservation of historic sites and buildings had grown greatly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the formation of the Society of Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877 and then of the National Trust in 1895. In 1911 there had been an important case when a consortium of American businessmen acquired Tattershall Castle with the intention of shipping historic features (and perhaps the entire structure) back to the United States. Following a campaign for its preservation the castle was reprieved at the last moment when it was purchased by Lord Curzon. The 1920s saw a surge in interest in conservation, partly sparked by fears of suburbanization.

3 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

3.1 Introduction and general site description

3.1.1 Bradenstoke Priory is a large site that comprises extensive medieval earthworks and fishponds from the Augustinian monastic complex, together with the remains of a motte and bailey castle. The main surviving structural remains from the priory are the southern half of the undercroft from the west range of the cloister, along with perimeter walls from the rest of the range and the garderobe tower at the north-west corner of this range. The west range was largely of 14th-century date and it formed the Guest House (Kings Lodgings). At its southern end there also survives the fragmentary remains of a structure that appears to have been an early 19th-century projection that replaced the late 15th-century Prior's Lodgings.

3.1.2 The west elevation of the undercroft includes substantial above-ground remains, including the bases of several buttresses, although it should be noted that a significant portion of this wall has been raised in recent conservation works in order to support the undercroft vaulting and allow the removal of temporary props.

3.1.3 The surviving part of the undercroft is an impressive structure with intact stone vaulting, comprising semi-octagonal ribs supported by a central line of octagonal columns and moulded corbels to the walls (Plates 30-32). Brakspear reports that the undercroft was 92ft (*c* 28m) in length by 23.5ft (*c* 7.2m) in width and that it had a spine of seven octagonal columns. He adds that the four southern bays were separated from those to the north by east-to-west piers that supported a wall above. At the upper level the southern four bays housed the Prior's Hall where high-status guests would have been entertained, while the northern bays accommodated two storeys above the undercroft with common sleeping spaces among the rooms.

3.1.4 The northern part of the undercroft had already been destroyed when Brakspear investigated the building in the 1920s and thus it was not removed as part of Randolph Hearst's operations.

3.1.5 The wider site also includes a post-medieval farmstead, the buildings of which incorporate some windows and possibly other features reclaimed from the priory, and it is also worth noting that the site contains numerous *ex-situ* moulded stones scattered around or in piles.

3.2 Archaeological watching brief

Introduction

3.2.1 As part of the current remedial works, a drainage trench was dug to the west of the undercroft (west range), extending parallel to the building (approx. N-S) and then at its southern end it returned eastwards into the building.

Historical background

3.2.2 Nathaniel and Samuel Buck's 1732 view of Bradenstoke Priory (Fig. 3) shows a large two-storey structure projecting from the west side of the building, close to where the trench has been dug in the current work and immediately to the north of the centre

of the elevation. The lower half of this structure was constructed of stone, but the upper half appears to have been timber framed and it is shown on the engraving with a set of external steps on its south side. The projecting structure is shown on the plan from the 1923 article in *Archaeologia* (together with the steps), although they are hatched to indicate it was no longer extant; the projection is labelled on the plan as a porch (Fig. 6). Clearly the steps and projecting porch provided access into the guest rooms on the main upper floor of the building. It is useful to note that although the porch had been lost before the 1922 investigations, Brakspear does note weathering from the former apex of the structure so its position in the location shown by the Bucks can be confirmed.

3.2.3 The exact dimensions of the porch and steps are not known, but the indicative plan in the 1923 article suggests that they might have both been just inside the trench in the current project (that is, to the north and west of it).

3.2.4 The 1923 plan also shows a pentise roofed structure to the north of the porch and against the main elevation of the range; this is also hatched to show that it no longer survived and again it appears to have been just outside the location of the trench in the current project. Again, Brakspear notes weathering from this structure.

Results

3.2.5 The main north-to-south drainage trench was c. 10m long, with an existing soakaway and manhole at its north end, and it was dug parallel to the north half of the building, *c* 2m from it (Fig. 2). At its southern end it returned eastwards to adjoin the building immediately north of the third buttress from the south (*c* 14m from SW corner of main building).

3.2.6 The trench, which was dug by hand, measured *c* 0.4m deep by 0.4m wide and an existing land drain was found following the line of the excavation which fed into the soakaway at the north end. This channel was left *in situ* and reused for the current drainage works (Plates 1-4). The main material removed was backfill, including ceramic, glass, nails and rubble, largely dating from the 19th century (see Appendix A, context 2). The topsoil here was friable, dark greyish brown, loam. Towards the priory, the topsoil was drier and looser.

3.2.7 The most significant features revealed were in the east-to-west trench close to the building (see Fig 7). A line of stones orientated broadly east-to-west was partially exposed in the northern part of the excavation, although its alignment differed slightly from the trench, so that towards the west it diverged away from (just to the north of) the excavation (Plates 7-8). The top of this line of stones was *c* 20cm below the ground surface and formed from relatively small sized blocks (eg 10 x 10 cm - 20 x 20 cm). Although the stones were roughly aligned, they were not bonded or laid tightly together.

3.2.8 At the base of the east-to-west trench, a rough light grey/yellow mortar layer was found which extended beyond the limits of the trench and which abutted the line of stones. This layer was truncated at its western end where it adjoined the north-to-south trench.

3.2.9 At the eastern end of the trench, a number of stones were exposed around the buttress forming a 'surface' at a depth of 30cm below the ground (lower than the other line of stones). Two main irregularly shaped stones were exposed (*c* 30cm x 20cm), with smaller ones between and they extended beyond the line of excavation (Plates 5-8). It is likely that the stones wrapped around the buttress, although this could not be confirmed, as this area was not exposed.

3.2.10 A possible ring handle for a door and 18th to 19th-century pottery were retrieved from the trench (Appendix A).

Interpretation

3.2.11 Positively interpreting the features uncovered in the current work is difficult due the small extent of the excavation and the limited amount exposed, as well as by the scaffolding over part of the trench and inclement weather conditions. However, the features exposed in the east-to-west branch of the trench are clearly of interest.

3.2.12 The most likely interpretation of the east-to-west line of bricks and the rough mortar layer that abuts it may well be a drainage channel to carry water away from the building.

3.2.13 It is of course worth noting that there was a porch that projected from the west side of the building, together with a set of stairs that related to this, and it is possible that the line of stones was part of a foundation for this or another small structure. Nathaniel and Samuel Buck's 1732 view shows the porch projection as being a bay further to the north, and although it is possible that it was inaccurate, it seems unlikely; the view has the character of being an accurate representation. In addition, the small size of the stones and the way they are loosely laid makes it unlikely that they could have been foundations for structure of any size.

3.2.14 It is most likely that the stones around the buttress form part of a foundation for the current building.

3.3 Recording of wall

Introduction and historical background

3.3.1 Another main element of the project comprised the recording of a section of wall or pier at the south-western corner of the west range which had become unstable and required rebuilding (Plate 10). Prior to its dismantling in the current project, this section of wall was covered in ivy and other vegetation which had penetrated the joints and forced stones apart. Indeed, some of the ivy remained during the recording, as this was helping to hold the masonry together, together with some modern ratcheted straps and temporary timber pops.

3.3.2 The section of wall would have formed part of the west wall of a two storeyed projection at the southern end of the range and recessed slightly behind the elevation of the main building. This projection would originally have formed the Prior's Lodgings which are believed to have dated from 1490, although Brakspear reports that the structure was pulled down and replaced in the early 19th century.

3.3.3 The west side of the Prior's Lodgings are shown on the Bucks' 1732 view of Bradenstoke with a large traceried eight-light window extending across the width of the upper part of this projection and an arched doorway below. Brakspear reports that the doorway led to an outer parlour on the bottom storey and entry to the cloister. Nathaniel and Samuel Buck's view also suggests that the Prior's Lodgings was three storied, with the uppermost floor recessed behind the lower two.

3.3.4 The west wall of the projection is also shown on a useful photograph in the 1928 sales brochure (Fig. 5), after the early 19th-century reconstruction of the structure but before the demolition of the range (then a farmhouse) by Randolph Hearst. This shows the projection as a two-storey rubble structure with a hipped roof and a pair of large windows (one above the other) in the west elevation. The windows are very different to that shown in 1732 and there is no reason to doubt that the projection was rebuilt as Brakspear suggests.

Description

3.3.5 The section of wall recorded prior to its dismantling was *c* 1.5m wide by 1.6m tall by *c* 0.5m wide and it was located broadly at the same height as the top of the vaults over the undercroft. The point where the pier would have adjoined the main southern wall of the range had been robbed away, possibly for the larger blocks used in the quoins, and thus the pier was freestanding, extending southwards by a maximum of 2.5m from the main end wall of the range (see Figs 8, 9).

3.3.6 The wall was largely constructed from uncoursed rubble, with parts of the face lost and bonded with lime mortar. The southern edge of the pier was formed from larger squared blocks and had a clear return suggesting that this was probably the location of the northern jamb of the lower window shown on the 1928 photograph. The uppermost stone in the southern edge had been dressed with a sloping southern face (Plate 14), which could be indicative of a former lintel at this point over the window, although alternatively it could indicate that the stone has been reused from elsewhere.

3.3.7 One feature of interest in the eastern side of this section of wall were the remains of a small brick lined recess that was presumably a bread oven serving a room within the former Abbot's Lodgings projection (or the 19th-century building that replaced it). This bread oven was built into the east face of the pier and it measured 60 x 50cm (Plates 18-19). The stone facing immediately above the opening had been partially lost, but this exposed a crudely constructed brick arch behind, above the recess. The base, sides and vault are constructed from bricks measuring 23 x 6.5 x 11cm, bonded with lime mortar and suggestive of a possible 18th or 19th-century date. The rear is also formed from brickwork, although this appears to be a later blocking, possibly even early 20th century in date. The loss of the stone facing from the west side of this wall exposed the western edge of the brick arch over the oven (Plate 13).

3.3.8 An engraving in an 1849 edition of *The Builder* (reproduced in Brakspear's 1923 article) shows a large fireplace in this wall of the Prior's Lodgings (The Prior's Room), with a highly decorative overmantle. Presumably the bread oven was built into the side of

this (Fig. 4).[2] It is interesting to note that the engraving shows what appears to be a bread oven in the side of the fireplace, although this would have been the opposite side to the oven found in the current work. It also shows a doorway adjacent to the fireplace which presumably led to the stairs down into the undercroft.

3.3.9 The location of the former large fireplace has been reconstructed and there is only fragmentary evidence from it, but there is a recess to the rear which is suggestive of having formed part of a flue (Plate 16). There is also a short wall stub immediately to the south of the bread oven, which may have formed the west jamb of a fireplace, thus enclosing the oven. It is also worth noting that a fireplace survives on the opposite side of this wall within the undercroft.

3.4 Monitoring during sorting of spoil

3.4.1 Prior to the most recent phase of consolidation works, the vaulting was covered by vegetation, earth and building detritus covered over by a tarpaulin added since 2007. Prior to OA visiting site, this detritus was removed and deposited in a nearby field (Plate 33). As part of OA's work, it was agreed with HE that an inspection would be made to assess for any moulded stonework or other archaeological remains.

3.4.2 The detritus was spread using a mechanical excavator, sifted with a fork and then scanned with a metal detector.

3.4.3 Some examples of building material were extracted and recorded. Two sherds of pottery, oyster shell, a fragment of a possible moulded window mullion, several stone tiles and minor pieces of worked stone were also seen (Plate 34). All carved building stones were recorded and photographed, but not removed from site.

3.4.4 A few of the finds were sampled for further analysis (Appendix A), where fragments of medieval floor tiles were the most interesting find.

3.4.5 In addition to the spoil that was spread on the nearby field, a number of finds were put to one side by the builders clearing the top of the vaults and this was briefly assessed and photographed on site (Plates 35-38). These finds included a lot of oyster shells, part of what appeared to be a bell-pull system from a house (presumably this house), fragments of animal bone, glass and pottery. Several small pieces of moulded stone were also included and recorded in outline although there are other more significant piles of moulded *ex-situ* stones at the site.

[2] Brakspear reports that this fireplace was removed to Corsham Court for a period but that it was returned to Bradenstoke at some point shortly before his investigations.

4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 Bradenstoke in Wiltshire was the site of an important Augustinian Priory originally established in the 12th century, but from which only fragmentary remains survive. The site is now listed as a scheduled monument. The main surviving above-ground elements comprise the southern half of the undercroft of the west range, which formed the Guest House, together with a tower towards the north-west. Other significant parts of the complex, including a medieval tithe barn and the west range from above the undercroft were demolished by William Randolph Hearst after he had acquired Bradenstoke in 1929 in order to reuse elements elsewhere.

4.1.2 The condition of the undercroft has been poor and the site has been on the Heritage at Risk Register, but in the last 15 years a number of programmes of conservation work have been undertaken and recently it has been possible to remove a number of supporting props that had been added within the undercroft.

4.1.3 A programme of archaeological investigations accompanied the most recent conservation works: recording prior to the rebuilding of an unstable stonework pier, watching brief monitoring during the excavation of a drainage trench to the west of the undercroft, and assessment of a spoil heap recently removed from the top of the vaults. The section of wall recorded was in an area where a structure was built in 1490 (the Prior's Lodgings) but which appears to have been rebuilt in the early 19th century. The main feature noted here was a bread oven which it appears would have been within a large fireplace in the former Prior's Room. A line of stones were exposed in the watching brief which probably formed a drainage channel, as well as further stones which would probably formed part of a foundation around a buttress.

APPENDIX A FINDS REPORTS

A.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
2	4 sherds of transfer printed ware (TPW) dishes – 16g	1830-1900
2	1 sherd of yellow ware (YELL) – 4g	1820-1900
2	1 sherd of English porcelain (ENPO) – 3g	1830-1900
2	35 sherds of cream ware (CREA DEV) – 135g	1780-1830

A.2 Ceramic building material

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
U/s (spoil heap)	2 joining fragments of medieval floor with brown glaze on the upper surface - 68g	Medieval possibly Late Medieval

A.3 Glass

By Ian Scott

Context	Description	Date
U/S (spoil heap)	Fragment from the bottom of a small machine made bottle, clear glass - 16g	Modern

A.4 Animal bone

By Lee Broderick

Context	Description	Date
U/S (spoil heap)	Fragment from a horse metatarsal - 226g	

A.5 Shell

By Lee Broderick

Context	Description	Date
U/S (spoil heap)	A single oyster shell – 8g	

A.6 Iron

By Leigh Allen

Context	Description	Date
1	Large circular iron ring, diameter 147mm. Possible ring handle from door or furnishings	

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX C SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Bradenstoke Priory, Wiltshire
Site code:	LYBBP19
Grid Reference	ST 99559 79098
Type:	Watching Brief
Date and duration:	The main on-site investigation (WB and building recording) was undertaken on 26 November 2019 and the work to sort through the spoil heap was undertaken on 29 January 2020.
Area of Site	n/a
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with North Wiltshire Heritage Services in due course, under the following accession number: DZSWS: 19-2019.
Summary of Results:	Bradenstoke Priory in Wiltshire comprises the scheduled remains of a 12th century Augustinian monastery. The main structure to survive today is the vaulted undercroft from the former west range of the cloister. Various conservation works have been undertaken to the undercroft over the last 15 years and the most recent element has included some limited archaeological and building recording works. This has comprised an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a shallow drainage trench to the west of the undercroft, the recording of an unstable section of wall that required rebuilding and the rapid assessment of a heap of spoil which had previously been removed from the top of the vaults. The main part of the drainage trench was through previously disturbed ground where a previous drain had been laid (probably 20th-century in date). Possible foundations for the range were also exposed where the trench adjoined the building immediately as well as a broadly east-to-west line of stones which probably formed part of a drainage channel to carry water away from the building. The section of wall that has been recorded prior to dismantling formed part of the projection at the southern end of the West Range. This was the location of the Prior's Lodgings in the monastic complex although it is believed that the wall formed part of an early 19th-century reconstruction of the structure. One feature of interest is a small bread oven (post-medieval) on the east side of the wall. The assessment of the spoil identified a small number of fragments of moulded stonework, oyster shells and other minor features.

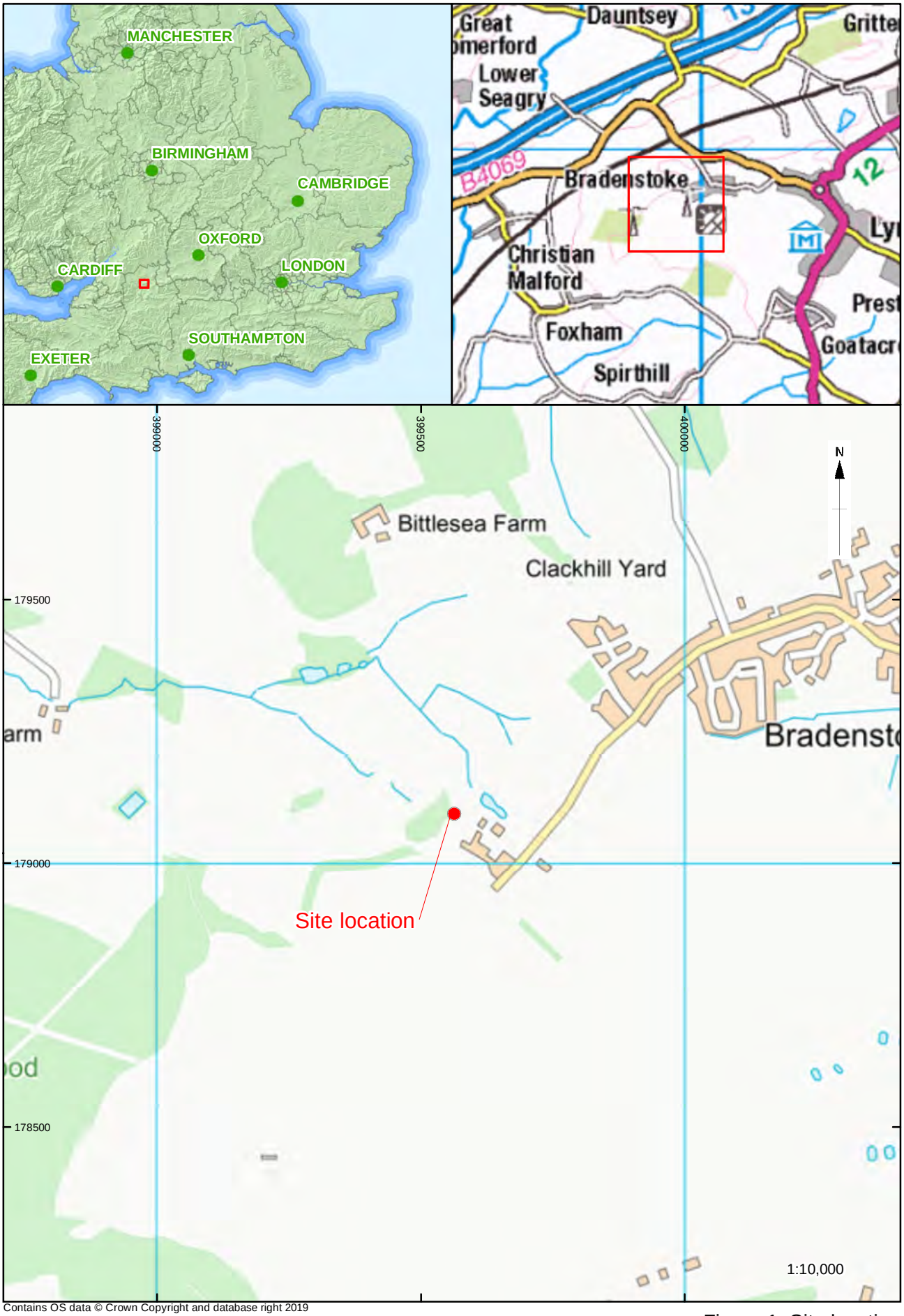

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Figure 1: Site location

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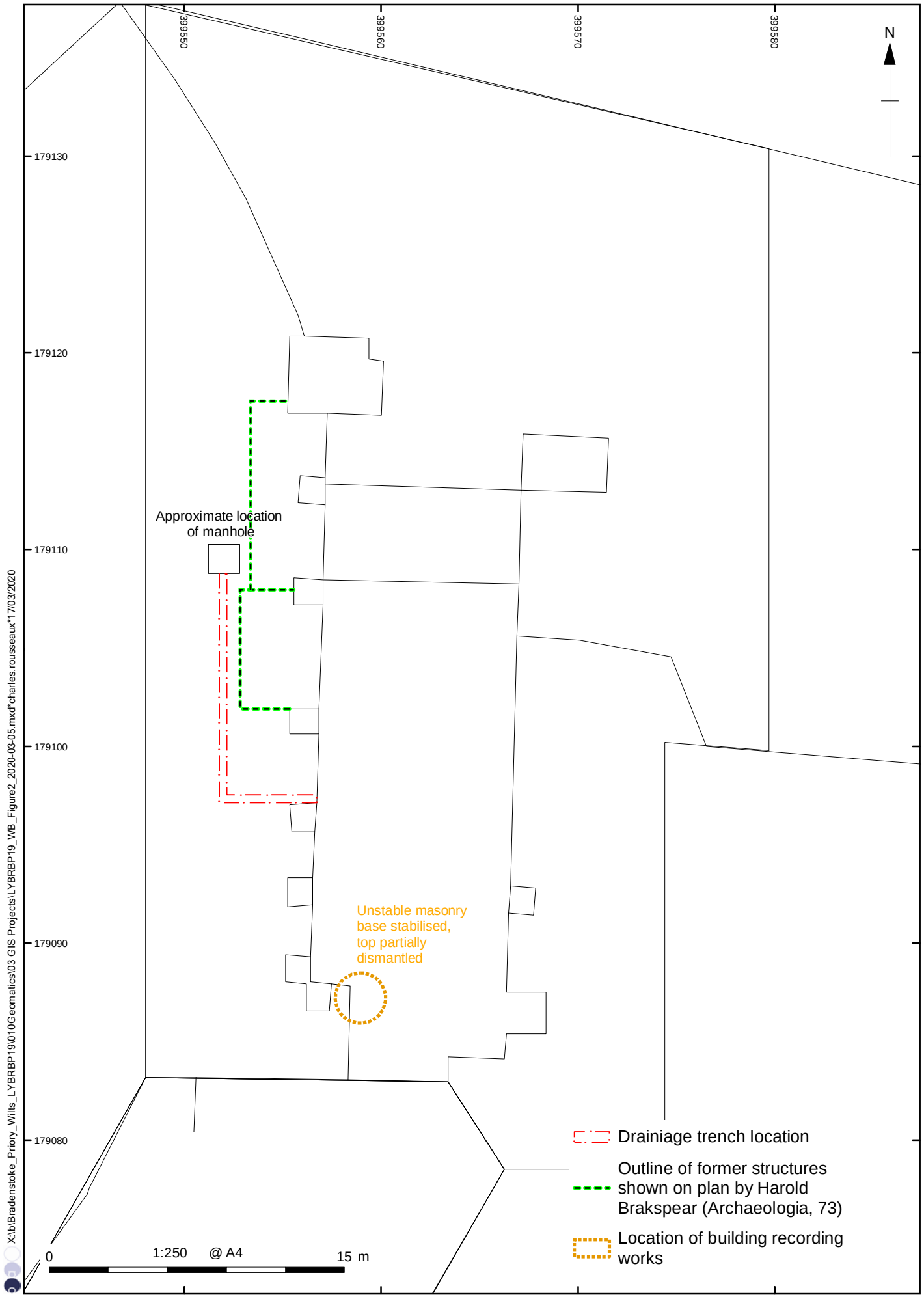

Figure 2: Outline plan of building showing location of works

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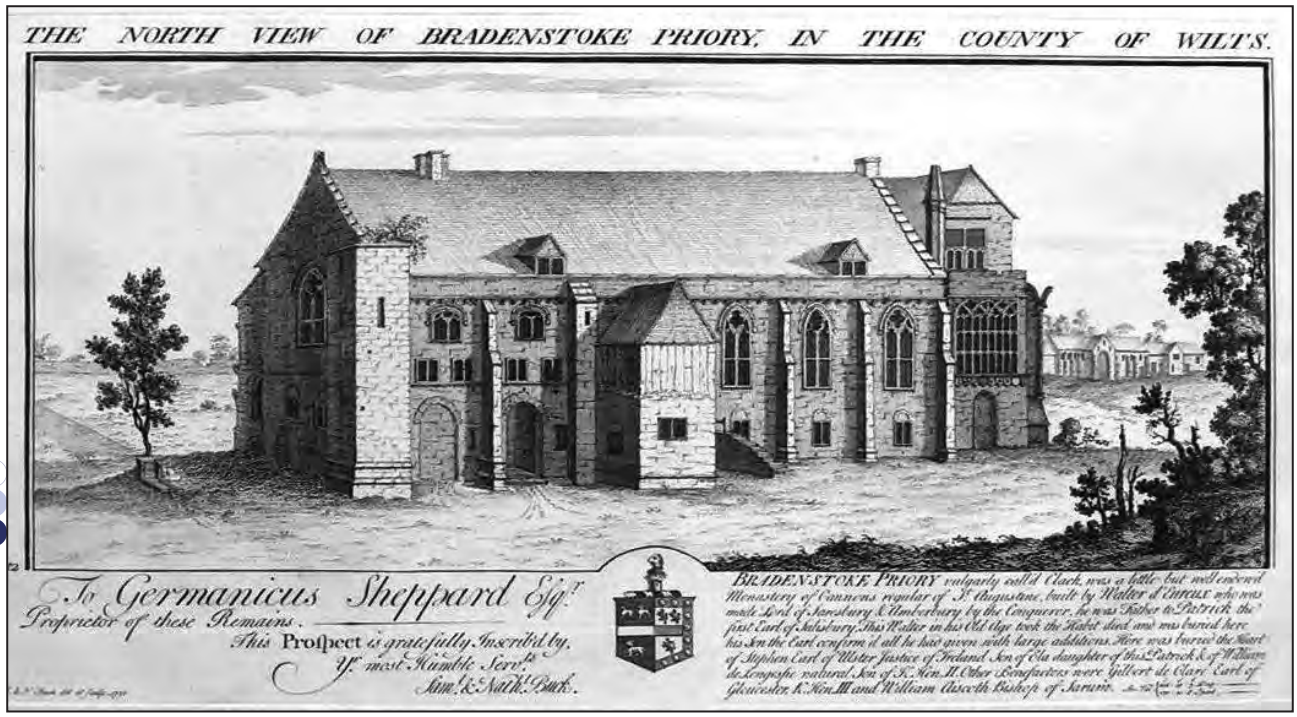

Figure 3: 1732 view of Bradwell Abbey by Nathaniel and Samuel Buck

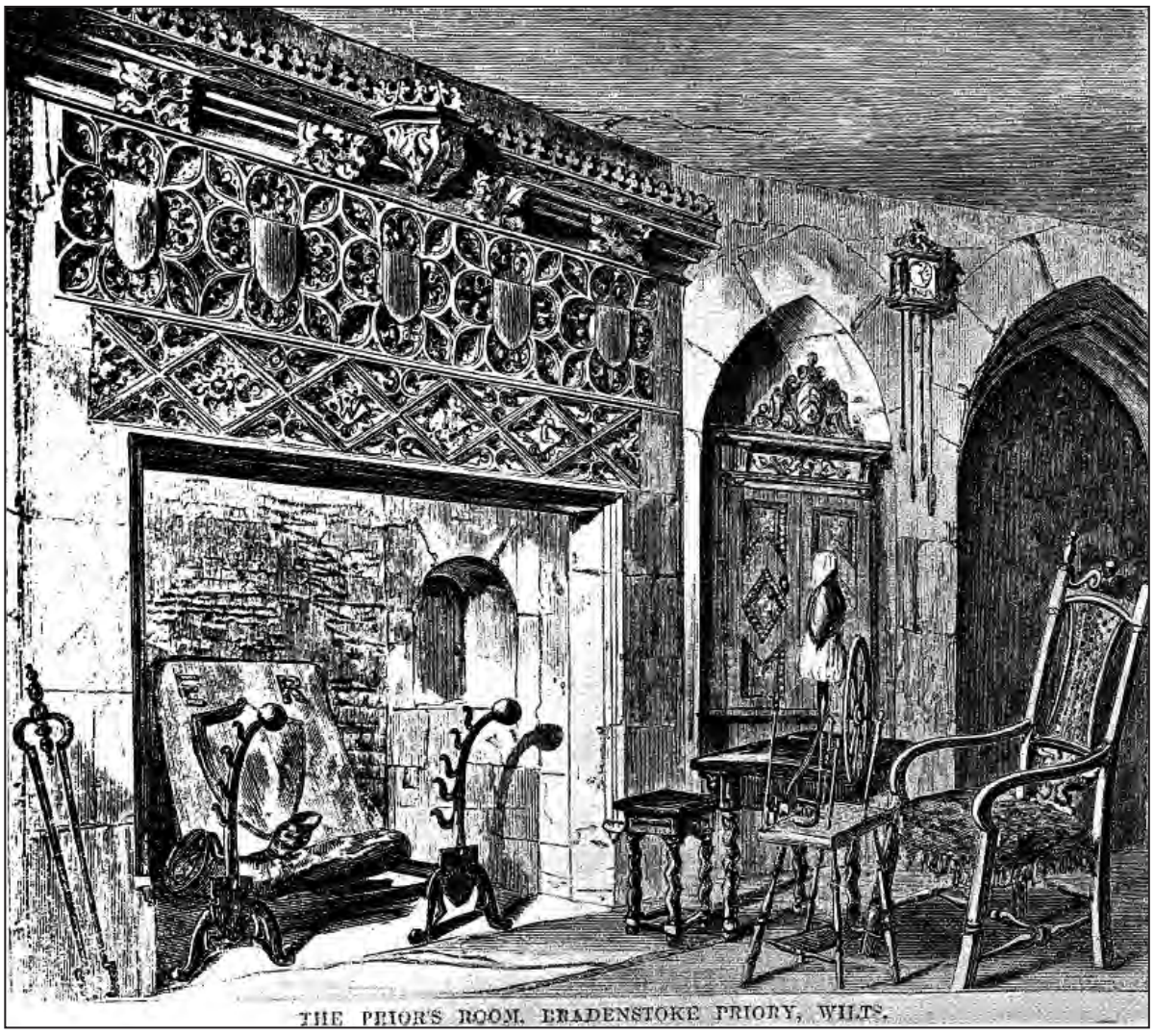

Figure 4: The Prior's Room (from The Builder, Aug 1849)

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Figure 5: West elevation of the west range (from 1928 sale brochure)

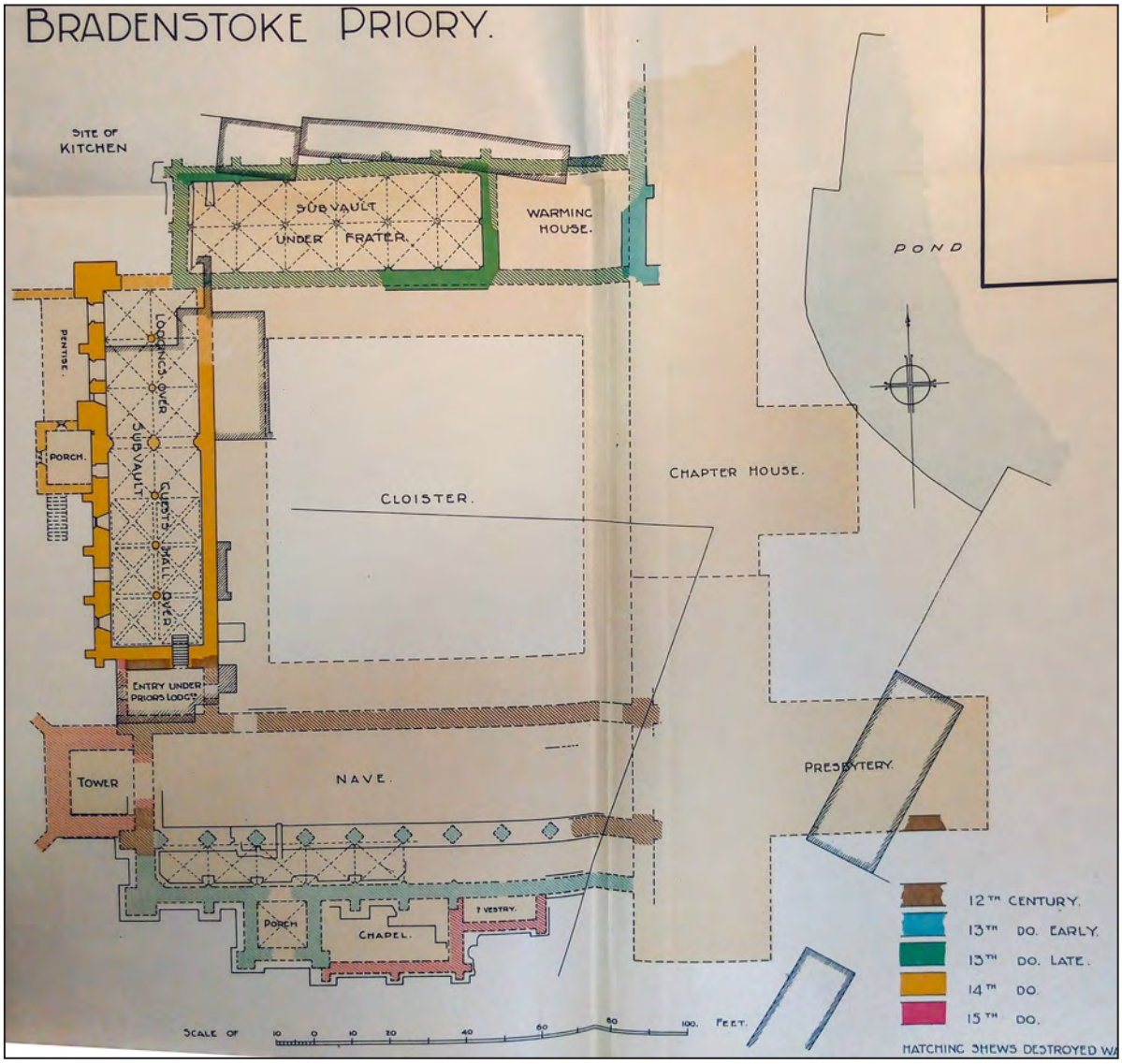

Figure 6: Plan of West Range from Archaeologia, Vol.73: 'Excavation at some Wiltshire Monasteries by Harold Brakspear

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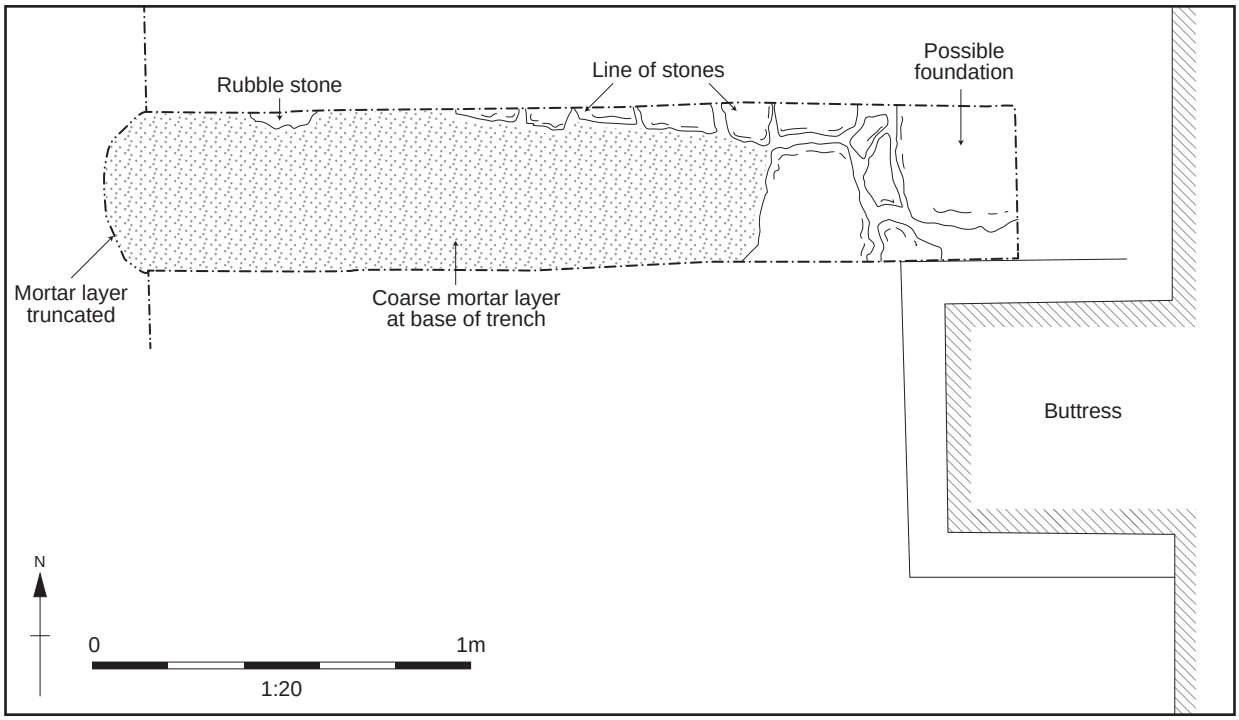

Figure 7: Plan of east-west section of drainage trench

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Figure 8: Orthophotograph of west side of wall from Prior's Lodgings

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Figure 9: Surviving stone wall from west side of Prior's Lodgings

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Plate 1: General view of trench to west side of building, looking south

Plate 2: General view from above of main north-to-south section of drainage trench

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Plate 3: General view from above of main north-to-south section of drainage trench

Plate 4: Junction at southern end of drainage trench

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Plate 5: Point where E-W section of trench meets building

Plate 6: Foundations exposed at point where trench adjoins building

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Plate 7: Eastern part of drainage trench looking west

Plate 8: Drainage trench around buttress

Plate 9: Third buttress from south; with adjoining trench

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Plate 10: West side of section of wall before dismantling with straps in-situ

Plate 11: West side of section of wall before dismantling with straps removed

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Plate 12: General view of section of wall before dismantling

Plate 13: West side of wall during dismantling with rear of brick arch from oven visible

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Plate 14: Southern end of west side of wall during before dismantling

Plate 15: South face of pier (former window jamb) before dismantling

Plate 16: East side of wall and location of former fireplace adjacent

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Plate 17: Stonework at top of east side of wall prior to dismantling

Plate 18: Remains of bread oven in east side of wall

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Plate 19: Remains of bread oven in east side of wall

Plate 20: Location of former fireplace (not in section of wall to be dismantled)

Plate 21: View looking SW towards wall to be dismantled

Plate 22: View looking SW within former Prior's Room

Plate 23: Collapsed stonework within former Prior's Lodgings (looking east)

Plate 24: View looking NE towards former Prior's Lodgings

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Plate 25: South wall of former Prior's Lodgings

Plate 26: General view towards north during works

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Plate 27: General view towards SE during works

Plate 28: General view above undercroft looking east during conservation works

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Plate 29: Northern end of range

Plate 30: Southern end of undercroft

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Plate 31: Vaulting within undercroft

Plate 32: Western wall within undercroft

Plate 33: Pile of spoil nearby formed from material removed from on top of undercroft

Plate 34: Minor features identified during sorting through spoil

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Plate 35: Moulded stone from spoil put to one side by contractors

Plate 36: Moulded stone from spoil put to one side by contractors

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Plate 37: Moulded stone from spoil put to one side by contractors

Plate 38: Moulded stone from spoil put to one side by contractors

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