AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT ST AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY, CANTERBURY, KENT

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An archaeological watching brief at St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, Kent

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit were invited by HBMC to submit an archaeological tender for an archaeological project in the precinct of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, Kent. The site was located to the south of the monastic church and adjacent to the historic boundary wall of the abbey on the north side of Longport. The work took the form of an archaeological watching brief carried out over a period of approximately three months. Part of the medieval lay cemetery as well as a section of the abbey wall were uncovered. Virtually all other layers or features encountered were related to post-medieval landscaping and dumping or construction of the Kent and Canterbury Hospital.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook a watching brief in the southern precinct of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury (OS 179 TR 158 579) in advance of the construction of an interpretation centre along the Longport boundary of the site (Fig. 1). The funding has been provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the building was designed to minimise the impact on potentially significant archaeological deposits, as detected by the evaluation trenches dug by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT 1995, 1996). The planned building comprises a single storey resting on a slab foundation with a projected maximum general disturbance to a depth of no more than 0.67 m below the surface Ordinance Datum of 15.87 m. It was anticipated that a slightly greater depth of disturbance would be caused by the construction of the access ramp and any further work necessary on the service run (the latter had already been evaluated by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust).

2 Archaeological and historical background

The Abbey was founded in AD 598 by St Augustine on a site outside the Roman city walls, alongside the road leading east to Richborough, in the vicinity of a Roman cemetery. In the following century the original church was complemented by further churches to the east. Of the Saxon buildings, only the chapel of St Pancras, situated at the eastern end of the precinct, still stands. The abbey became the burial place of the early kings and archbishops of Canterbury. The abbey buildings were completely reconstructed in the early 12th century when the southern part of the precinct became the lay cemetery. Further changes, including, in the late 12th century, the expansion of the southern precinct by the diversion of Longport to the south, took place until the Abbey's dissolution in 1538. After the dissolution part of the site was converted into a royal lodging but eventually it was leased to a succession of noblemen, with a formal garden being laid out by John Tradescant in the early 17th century. For the following three centuries the site was sub-divided and used as orchards, gardens and nurseries with a brewery and tavern being established in the area of the Fyndon Gate. In 1791 three acres to the south of the monastic church were sold for the erection of a hospital.

During the construction of the hospital in 1791 'great quantities of human bone of all different sizes and at different depths were dug up' (Hasted 1801). The hospital was located to the north of the proposed interpretation centre. Following the foundation of the Missionary College of St Augustine in 1840, interest was rekindled in the ruins of the Abbey, and between 1900 and 1931 the foundations of the abbey church and main claustral area were uncovered.

Since the demolition of the hospital buildings in 1971, a series of small excavations have taken place in the southern part of the precinct, primarily to establish the pre-dissolution topography of the area, and to assess the degree of disturbance caused to archaeological deposits by the hospital foundations.

Trenches in 1972 established that the depth of modern deposits over monastic levels varied between 0.5 and 1.5 m, generally deeper towards Longport. Evidence was also found of post-medieval buildings against the boundary wall, a monastic structure (possibly the 13th-century charnel house) and a possible Roman road surface (see Sherlock and Woods 1988 for collation of all excavations).

A small excavation by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) in 1985 produced further evidence for the original Roman road, a continuation of Burgat/Church Street (Anderson 1985, 238-9). This would have been the original line of Longport and the southern boundary of the precinct, until the diversion to the south to accommodate the enlarged monastic and lay cemeteries.

An initial evaluation in December 1995 on the site of the proposed interpretation centre against the Longport boundary wall found significant archaeological deposits at a depth of 0.67 m, in the form of the foundations of possible medieval structures built against the boundary wall (CAT 1995). A subsequent trench in January 1996 revealed over 2 m of stratified deposits and the footings of the boundary wall alongside Longport, approximately 0.47 m below modern ground level (CAT 1996).

The development site comprised part open grassed area, part municipal garden and lies between the Longport boundary wall, most of which survives, and the exposed monastic ruins to the north.

3 Methodology

The project entailed the provision of a full survey and record of significant archaeological deposits affected by the proposed groundworks. The building was designed to minimise the impact on potentially significant archaeological deposits as detected by CAT during evaluation (1995, 1996). Four soakaways were located c. 5 m to the north of the proposed interpretation centre and these were also monitored. In addition the area immediately south of the Longport boundary was affected by the work and therefore the layers below the modern pavement were also monitored.

An archaeological watching brief was requested to take place during the excavation by the main contractor of the foundation slab which would expose the north face of the foundation of the boundary wall along the entire length of the proposed building. The exposed wall was fully surveyed, recorded and photographed. A small portion of the wall was removed under archaeological supervision.

The evaluations had indicated that significant archaeological deposits did not survive above a depth of c. 15.20 m OD. Thus the discovery of a number of skeletons within the footprint of the proposed building was unexpected. A Home Office licence (Licence No. 23620) for the removal of the skeletons was granted as an emergency measure and excavation was

carried out according to the terms outlined therein. The strategy outlined for the watching brief was modified to allow for the detailed planning, recording and removal of skeletons where possible. A summary analysis of the skeletal material was subsequently carried out (see below).

4 Archaeological description

4.1 The abbey wall and related deposits (Figs 2-4)

The cut (110) for the foundation of the abbey wall was aligned west-east and ran parallel to Longport. It was identified only discontinuously in the trench. Its northern edge was vertical and it measured 1.44 m in width and at least 0.44 m in depth. It was filled by alternate layers of compacted gravel and chalk. One of the sections revealed had already been excavated by CAT (Fig 3, section 3). The first of these layers to be numbered 118 comprised flint gravel in a compact mid brown brickearth and measured 0.18 m in thickness. It was overlain by 106, a compact white chalk with occasional flint which measured 0.17 m in thickness. This fill was exposed along the whole length of Longport and represented the rammed foundation for the wall composed of alternate layers of chalk and gravel. In the eastern half of the site the surface was smooth suggested that it had been trampled either during the construction of the wall or during its demolition. This is in contrast to the western half of the site where the top of this layer has been truncated during landscaping. Both the layers described above were removed during the construction of a foundation for the front wall of the new building. At the eastern end of the site layer 106 was overlain by a loose light brown mortar with occasional flint (169) which measured up to 0.18 m in thickness, below a brick pillar relating to the construction of the hospital. Layer 169 is probably the same as 103 and 117, both of which had suffered root disturbance. Deposit 216 (Fig. 2) was a chalk deposit revealed in top of thickenings with a maximum thickness of 0.20 m. It is likely to relate to the demolition of the abbey wall and is probably the same as 169. Layer 103 was a compact light brown mortar with gravel and flint inclusions measuring up to 0.14 m in thickness. It overlay 106 and was cut by later walls 101 and 105. It survived only as a short stretch between these walls and as an additional patch on the north side of 101. The northern edge of 103 was irregular where it merged into the later garden soil which abutted it. It was also disturbed by tree roots. Layer 117 was a friable light brown mortar with a maximum thickness of 0.05 m.

Layer 119=124?=126 was a deposit which was located immediately to the south of the abbey wall at the same depth as fill 106 (Fig. 3, section 1). It was a friable mid to dark brown sandy silt with a thickness of at least 0.24 m. It lay almost directly below the modern pavement and had been much disturbed by modern services.

Layer 219 was a friable mid brown grey silt with flecks of charcoal, brick flint and chalk which was first seen at a depth of 15.28 m OD. Layer 219 was overlaid by layer 220 which was a compact mid greyish brown clay silt with chalk, flint and charcoal inclusion measuring at least 0.22 m in thickness. It was partially overlaid by layer 214 and was cut by west-east aligned linear feature 221 which measured 0.5 m in width and at least 0.22 m in depth. It was filled by 222, a compact mid greyish brown clay silt. Layer 214 was a tenacious mid brown yellow silt measuring 0.21 m. It is probably the same as layer 170. Layer 214 was also cut by 221 as well as being overlaid by layer 213 which was a compact mid greyish

brown clay silt with chalk, sandstone and limestone fragments and building material measured 0.28 m in thickness. It was cut by culvert 171 the fill of which (172) contained a token dated to 1788. A second culvert 173 was filled by 174

4.2 The graves

The graves form part of the lay cemetery which was located in the southern precinct. It was consecrated in 1185 and continued in use for a short time after the Dissolution. However, by 1620 the area had been formally landscaped by John Tradescant. The exposed graves were confined almost entirely to the north-east corner of the trench. In addition, a number of skeletons as well as a quantity of disarticulated bone were recovered from soakaways 2 and 3.

Graves were first seen at a depth of 15.53 m OD and continued down to 15.18 m OD. Many of them cut layer 149 which comprised a well compacted light yellow brown silty clay. It was not fully excavated as only the upper 0.10 m was exposed. This has been interpreted as redeposited natural clay and brickearth with occasional flint nodules and some silt. It appeared to merge into deposit 204 which was a friable mid brown sandy clay. A single fragment of Roman brick was recovered from layer 149 while 204 contained Roman tile and pottery and medieval pottery of 13th-14th century date.

Deposits 149 and 204 were both overlain by 205 which was a compact mid-brownish grey clay silt containing medieval roof tile. It was cut by four graves (150, 158, 185, 192).

An assemblage comprising 24 skeletons and a quantity of charnel from a variety of contexts was recovered. All the skeletons were oriented west-east and buried in a supine extended position. In the majority of cases the presence of iron nails indicated that burial had been in a wooden coffin. A small quantity of pottery from certain graves indicated a date range of 11th-15th century. There were three multiple graves: grave 136 contained three skeletons while graves 129 and 185=192 contained two skeletons

4.3 Post-medieval activity

The majority of deposits recorded are likely to date to the post-medieval period and relate either to landscaping or hospital construction. Details of these appear in appendix 1 below. A number of features may represent garden slots (125, fill 128) and these are indicated on figure 2.

Two linear features, 171 and 173, located at the easternmost end of the excavated area, which were the foundation trenches for a pair of culverts, were aligned north-south and ran the full width of the trench. They were filled by 172, 174, 175 and 176. A token dating to 1778 as well as a small quantity of 19th-20th century pottery was recovered from the 172.

Feature 147 located on the southern side of the site, was the cut for a wall, probably contemporary with the culverts described above. The wall 105 had been removed by machine. This feature cut both 103 and 106.

Feature 104 was the stone edging for an earlier pavement located at a depth of 15.33 m OD.

It was cut by 120 and 147 and truncated by 101 and 105. It was abutted by 115 and butted 113. Layer 115 lay immediately below the modern pavement just outside the monastic boundary. It overlaid 102 and butted 104.

Layer 116 was a compact dark grey clay silt with a maximum thickness of 0.10 m. It was largely removed by machine during the initial reduction for the foundation slab. It overlaid 117.

Layer 155 was the most recent deposit seen on the site and was overlaid by modern building debris. It was a compact dark greyish brown silty clay with inclusions of chalk, building material, human and animal bone and charcoal flecks. It measured 0.12 m in thickness and overlay 153, 164, 170, 172, 174, 178, 193, 198, 213. Most of this layer was removed by machine prior to excavation. This layer directly overlaid skeleton (151) which had been truncated.

Deposit 127 was a layer on the south side of the abbey wall located at 14.97 m OD. It contained pottery of 19th-20th century date.

4.4 The soakaways

Four soakaways were located c. 5 m to the north of the interpretation centre. A watching brief was carried out during their excavation and three skeletons were identified. Where possible these were recovered. Quantities of charnel were also present. Each of the soakaways measured 2 m². A single north-south aligned section was recorded in each of the soakaways. The soakaways had been dug to a depth of c. 0.50 m under the archaeological supervision of OAU. There was some dispute regarding the depth to which the soakaways were to be excavated and this was still unresolved on the last visit by OAU staff on 8.11.96. The subsequent watching brief was carried out by K Booth. His information is included in the descriptions which appear below.

4.4.1 Soakaway 1

The earliest layer seen, 308 was only excavated to a depth of 0.09 m. It comprised a dark grey brown slightly sandy silt with occasional chalk and human bone. This layer probably represents the old ground surface prior to the digging of the hospital. It was overlaid by 307. a dark grey brown slightly sandy silt with stone and chalk fragments throughout. This layer measured 0.20 m in thickness and was more compact than 308. It has been interpreted as a possible dump layer used to level the ground prior to the construction of the hospital. It was overlaid by 306, a very compact mix of red-brick and dark brown silt with a maximum thickness of 0.13 m. It has been interpreted as a hardcore layer and is markedly similar to layer 155 recorded in the main excavation area. A single architectural fragment was recovered from this layer (15) (see below). Layer 306 was overlaid by layer 305 which was a compact dark grey brown slightly sandy silt measuring 0.18 m in thickness. This layer probably post-dates the demolition of the hospital and represents the topsoil of the former garden or park area. Both 305 and 306 were cut by the trench 304 for a modern ceramic drainage pipe with concrete capping. This trench was filled by 303, a mix of red brick and gravel (redeposited 306). The trench was on the same alignment as the old pathway through the gardens which were landscaped after the demolition of the hospital. Both 305 and 304

were overlaid by 302, a compact light-mid brown sandy silt with a maximum thickness of 0.16 m. This has been interpreted as a dumped layer and as it is aligned with the former path through the old gardens it may well represent the make-up below the path. Layers 302 and 305 were overlaid by 301 a light to mid green sand with a maximum thickness of 0.22 m. This modern deposit was dumped by the contractors during the construction of the new building.

4.4.2 Soakaway 2

Two skeletons were uncovered at a depth of 0.50 m in the western half of the soakaway. Both were excavated and the material surrounding them was a dark brown clay loam with flint and stone inclusion. A considerable quantity of disarticulated bone was present. This layer was overlain by 412, a compact light reddish brown silt. It was overlain by 408, a compact mid grey brown slightly sandy silt with fragments of ?Caen stone, chalk, flint nodules and buff sand mortar measuring 0.17 m in thickness. The mixed nature of the deposit suggests that it is a demolition layer, perhaps redeposited in order to level off the ground prior to the construction of the hospital. It was overlain by 407, a compact reddish brown to light brown brickearth with chalk flecks measuring 0.11 m in thickness. This lens of redeposited brickearth is probably part of 408. It was cut by 406, a linear feature which may be a grave (not excavated). This linear feature was filled by 405, a compact mid-dark grey brown silt containing some tile fragments and measuring at least 0.12 m in thickness. All the preceding deposits were overlaid by 404, a layer of very compact dark grey brown gravel and tarmac with tile and silt measuring 0.06 m in thickness. This layer of tarmac and hardcore was probably associated with a path or driveway of the former hospital. Layer 404 was cut by the trench 409 for a soakaway pipe, probably constructed when the area was landscaped after the demolition of the hospital. It was filled by a ceramic pipe and 410, a mid grey brown silt with chalk and mortar flecks. The succeeding layer 403 was a friable mid grey brown slightly sandy silt with a maximum thickness of 0.15 m. This has been interpreted as a possible landscaping layer which postdates the demolition of the hospital. Layer 402 was the old turf layer of the former gardens measuring 0.12 m in thickness and underlying the building material 401 dumped by the contractors. Context 411 was a finds reference for unstratified bone from the soakaway.

4.4.3 Soakaway 3

A single skeleton was uncovered at 0.70 m below OD. The presence of a second skeleton was suspected in the south-eastern corner of the soakaway and therefore it was not excavated. The skeleton was overlaid by 504, a dark grey slightly sandy silt with chalk flecks, brick and tile fragments. Layers 503 and 504 were very similar and were distinguishable only by the presence of more brick and tile in 503. Layer 503 measured 0.24 m in thickness and is though to have been associated with the general landscaping of the gardens associated with the hospital. It was overlaid by 502, a dark to mid grey brown sandy silt with chalk flecks measuring 0.23 m in thickness. There was much tree-root disturbance. The uppermost layer 501 was the present-day turf and topsoil comprising a dark brown slightly sandy silt with a maximum thickness of 0.10 m. Context 505 was the number assigned to unstratified finds from soakaway 3.

4.4.4 Soakaway 4

Soakaway 4 was excavated to a depth of 0.50 m. It had been much disturbed by machine. The edge of a former kiosk foundation was visible in one corner. Old pipe trenches were also present but there were no archaeological features and the section was not drawn. Context 601 was the finds reference for bone recovered from the machine spoil. Much of this deposit comprised spoil removed from the area of ground which was reduced for the slab foundation. It was redeposited in the void left after the removal of the concrete foundation for the kiosk.

5 The environmental evidence

5.1 The human bone by A Boyle

A total of 24 skeletons was recovered and these were examined in some detail. Charnel from a variety of contexts has not been recorded. Previous excavations have uncovered a number of burials of various dates associated with the abbey church although only a selection have been examined osteologically (Bayley 1977, 1979 a and b; Powell 1979). A summary of the combined reports is published in tabular form (Bayley 1988).

In common with the earlier assemblage, this sample is in no way representative of the population as it is only a very small and non-random sub-sample. The group comprises males, females and children whose details are summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1 Summary of skeletal details

Skeleton	Preservation and completeness	Age	Sex	Stature	Pathology	Non-metric traits
131	virtually complete, skull damaged by roots, condition fair	30s	F	154 cm	slight alveolar resorption,	rotation on 2nd mandibular left premolar
135	poor, missing skull	adult	М			
140	virtually complete, missing skull, condition fair	adult	F	158.8 cm	schmorl's nodes, occlusal caries	rotation of right mandibular canine
141	no complete bones, preservation very poor,	adult	?	?		
142	c 60%, preservation fair	adult	М	?		
143	upper body only, preservation poor	less than 6 y	-	•		
148	skull fragment only	adult	М	?		
151	virtually complete, preservation fair		M??	167.8 m		
154	missing skull, preservation poor, subadult and infant charnel also present	20-25 y	М	?		
156	poor, missing most of upper body	?7-10 y	-	•		

Skeleton	Preservation and completeness	Age	Sex	Stature	Pathology	Non-metric traits
157	missing most of skull, preservation poor	ageing adult	М	?	vertebral degeneration	lambdoid wormian
160	missing most of skull, preservation fair	17-25 y	F	155.78 cm		
167	missing most of lower body, preservation fair, two younger infants represented by disarticulated long bones	8-9 y		-	caries, ?very mild cribra orbitalia affecting right orbit, periostitis affects left fibula and right calcaneus	lambdoid wormians, bone a lambda, metopic suture
179	upper body only	adult (mild attrition though other indicators suggested more advanced age)	F?	163 cm	caries, calculus, abscess, ante-mortem loss, enamel hypoplasia, medium alveolar resorption	crowding and rotation of incisors
181	70% complete, preservation fair except for skull which is very fragmented	20-25 y	F	157.98 cm	caries	rotation and crowding of mandibular incisors
195	virtually complete, condition fair	14-16 y	-		caries, slight impaction, possible sinus in posterior surface of left femur	
196	skull only, condition fair subadult mandible also present	25-35 y 3-5 y	M -		carious cavities, moderate periodontal disease	
199	upper body only, condition fair	18-25 y	F	158.8 cm		lambdoid wormian, left and right septal aperture
202	skull only, condition excellent	middle aged adult	М	?	marked ante-mortem tooth loss, possible abscess, considerable alveolar resorption	palatine torus, ossicle at asterion
210	skull, mandible, two cervical vertebrae, condition fair	adult 45+	M		marked ante-mortem tooth loss, considerable alveolar resorption, degenerative change affecting left and right tempero-mandibular joint, vertebral degeneration	bones at lambda
211	skull and torso, condition fair	adult	М		calculus	metopism, palatine torus
Soakaway 2, sk l	preservation fair	infant	-	-		
Soakaway 2, sk 3	poor condition, skull and vertebrae only	? 2y	м	-		

Skeleton	Preservation and completeness	Age	Sex	Stature	Pathology	Non-metric traits
Soakaway 3, sk 2	good condition, missing most of skull and lower body	5-6 y	-	_		

5.2 The animal bone

A small assemblage of animal bone comprising 134 fragments was recovered from a variety of contexts (127, 132, 138, 149, 155, 163, 164, 170, 181, 189, 204, 205, 208, 219, 307, 505, 601). It has not been analyzed.

6 The artefacts

6.1 The pottery by P Blinkhorn

Only a very small assemblage of pottery has been recovered. All the Roman and Saxon material has been redeposited in later contexts.

Table 2 Pottery identifications by context listing number of sherds and weight in grammes

Context No.	Context Type	Romano -British	Early/ Middle Saxon	Ipswich Ware	Early Medieval Coarseware	Medieval Glazed Wares	?Late Medieval/ Transitional Reduced Wares	Rhenish Stone- ware	19th/ 20thC Wares	Assemblage Date
109	finds reference	2 (76)		I (13)	1 (28)	3 (34)	3 (29)	I (5)		M16th- E17thC
127	layer				7 (55)				1 (2)	19th/20thC?
130	grave fill	1 (8)			1 (5)					11th/12thC?
132	coffin	3 (21)			3 (24)					12th/13thC?
133	grave fill				4 (38)		4 (14)			14th/15thC?
135	skeleton					1 (7)				13th/14thC?
138	grave fill	3 (30)	3 (42)		1 52)					12th/13thC?
153	grave fill	1 (12)								RB??
155	layer	7 (36)			1 (5)		1 (3)			14th/15thC? ?
161	grave fill	2 (16)								RB??
163	collapse	2 (46)	2 (35)							E/MS?
164	grave fill				2 (13)	1 (3)				13th/14thC?
166	grave fill	1 (1)								RB??
170	deposit	4 (30)	1 (5)							E/MS??
174	fill of culvert								1 (8)	19th/20thC?
201	skeleton	1 (3)								RB??

204	layer	4 (37)	1 (24)	1 (108)		13th- 14THC?
208	layer			1 5)		13th-14thC?
219	layer		1 (2)		I (3)	19th-20thC?
225	layer		3 (27)			11th-12thC?
505	layer	1 (5)				RB??
709	??	I (10)	1 (3)			11th- 12thC??

6.2 The silver objects

Context 132 (coffin in grave 129)

1 Irregular fragment (sf 22). Circular disc, folded over on itself. Possibly a coin although no image or legend visible.

Context 138 (fill of grave 137)

- 1 Fragment (sf 63). Solid with a d-shaped section.
- 6.3 The copper alloy objects

Context 108 (finds reference)

1 Nuremberg token (sf 1)

Context 130 (fill of grave 129)

- 1 ?Slag, 1 irregular fragment (sf 5)
- 2 1 irregular fragment; 2 flat fragments (sf 8)
- 3 1 irregular fragment (sf 17)

Context 133 (fill of grave 136)

1 Irregular fragment (sf 55). Heavy, possibly copper alloy with a high lead content.

Context 141 (skeleton in grave 136)

1 Annular buckle frame (sf 66). With pin which is slightly concave so that it rests slightly over the buckle frame.

Context 164 (fill of grave 185)

Annular fitting (sf 105): single small perforation for attachment, incised decoration on one side.

Context 172 (fill of culvert 171)

Token or coin (sf 116): dated 1778.

Context 174 (fill of culvert 173)

- Roman coin (sf 163): very corroded, traces of a figure wearing a diadem on obverse, reverse not decipherable.
- 6.3 The iron objects

The coffin nails are very similar in appearance to examples recovered from previous excavations at St Augustine's (Sherlock and Woods 1988, fig. 72).

Context 132 (coffin in grave 129)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 2-4, 6-7, 9-33, 57)

Context 133 (fill of grave 136)

1 Fragments (sfs 55-56): probable coffin brackets.

Context 134 (coffin in grave 136)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 35-54, 67-70)

Context 139 (coffin in grave 137)

- 1 Coffin nails (sfs 58, 60-62, 64-65, 71-74, 160)
- 2 Possible coffin bracket (sf 59)

Context 152 (fill of grave 150)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 75-83)

Context 154 (skeleton in coffin 186)

1 Coffin nail (sf 113)

Context 159 (coffin in grave 158)

1 Coffin nail (sf 117-132)

Context 168 (coffin in grave 165)

- 1 Coffin nail (sfs 91-99, 101-103)
- 2 Irregular fragment (sf 100)

Context 180 (coffin in grave 177)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 137-141)

Context 182 (fill of grave 185)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 107-111, 146)

Context 186 (coffin - no grave cut)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 84-86)

Context 187 (coffin - no grave cut)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 87-90)

Context 188 (coffin - no grave cut)

1 Coffin nail (sf 106)

Context 189 (charnel within layer 205)

1 Coffin nail (sf 112)

Context 194 (fill of grave 192)

Coffin nails (sfs 114-115)

Context 200 (fill of grave 157)

1 Coffin nail (sf 142-145)

Context 205 (layer)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 147-148)

Context 206 (?coffin within layer 204)

Coffin nails (sfs 133-136)

Context 209 (coffin in grave 207)

1 Coffin nails (sfs 149-159, 161-162)

6.4 The worked stone and mortar samples

A single architectural fragment (sf 15) was recovered from layer (306) within soakaway 1. It has been identified as non-oolitic possible Caen stone. The fragment is an irregular octagonal shape with horizontal tooling marks visible over much of its surface. It may derive from a circular column which has been cut down and is likely to represent a stone mason's waste (J Mumbo pers comm). Architectural fragments were also recovered from contexts (104) (sf 1) and (122) (sfs 2-14).

Six mortar samples were taken. Details appear in the following table

Table 3 Location of mortar samples

Sample No.	Context No.	Context description
1	103	deposit relating to ?demolition of abbey wall
2	103	11
3	111	facing on south side of monastic foundation
4	122	re-used fragments of abbey wall
5	122	n e
6	169	wall above abbey wall

6.5 The tile by N Mitchell

A small assemblage of tile comprising 72 fragments was recovered. Three types of 'tile' and five fabrics were noted.

6.5.1 Roman tile and brick

Two Roman tiles, (250 mm thick), were found, one being a tegula with the flange broken off.

The other also has a broken 'corner' but has combed keying with mortar on one side and a rough surface on the other, indicating that it is a box-flue tile. Five brick fragments, 350-400 mm thick, are represented in two fabrics. Judging by their dimensions these are very likely to be Roman.

6.5.2 Medieval roof tile

The majority of fragments (58) are medieval roof-tile which occurs in two fabrics. The dominant fabric is very sandy with frequent calcareous inclusions. Three fragments of this fabric show peg-holes for suspension of the tile. Most are plain and flat but four tiles show glazing, varying from thick or thin brown, to thin patchy purple. The other fabric is much finer and has only seven fragments, only one with a peg-hole.

Table 2 Summary of the tile assemblage

Fabric	Туре	No. of fragments	Weight	Contexts
1	med roof tile	58	2500 g	109 finds ref 138 grave fill 155 layer 164 grave fill 205 layer
2	Roman tile med roof tile	1 7	900 g 200 g	183 fill of sewer pipe 138 grave fill 155 layer 224 fill
3	Roman brick	2	1100 g	170 layer 224 fill
4	Roman brick	3	1750 g	106 abbey wall 149 layer 224 fill
5	Roman tile	1	320 g	204 deposit

6.5.3 Fabric descriptions

- Fabric 1: sandy: large, clear, angular, well-sorted quartz, with sparse calcareous inclusions.
- Fabric 2: fine with sparse, clear, very ill-sorted quartz, and no other inclusions.
- Fabric 3: sparse angular quartz of medium-size, with frequent large iron stone, up to 1 mm, characterised by considerable white marling.
- Fabric 4: very fine, quartz grains less than 0.1 mm, with frequent, small iron-stone, up to 0.5 mm.
- Fabric 5: fine, with small sparse quartz, and much mica, frequent grog-tempering.

6.5.4 Discussion

The mortar covering the broken parts of the Roman tile and brick shows that these fragments were re-used in a broken form. They may have been used as rubble make-up, but the bricks are still in large usable pieces and the 'flanges' of the tile fragments may have been deliberately broken off for re-use in buildings of medieval date.

The medieval tile is solely ordinary roof-tile, well-fired with some evidence of glazing. Without ridge-tile or other features no date can be accurately estimated.

6.6 The flint by T Durden

A total of 11 pieces of struck flint were recovered from this site, consisting of one struck nodule fragment and 10 flakes. The raw material is of reasonable flaking quality, ranging through translucent brown and grey shades. The cortex remaining on some of the flakes suggests a chalk flint origin for some pieces (white chalky cortex) and a derived origin for others (thin, worn, greyish cortex).

The only piece of interest is a blade-like flake of translucent brown flint with retouch on the proximal edge (context 307). On purely morphological and technological grounds this flake is possibly of Mesolithic or earlier Neolithic date. The other pieces are undiagnostic.

Table 5 Summary of flint by context

Context	Context type	Description
140	grave	struck nodule fragment
154	grave	2 flakes
179	grave	3 flakes
181	grave	1 flake
195	grave	1 flake
196	finds ref	1 flake
202	grave	1 flake
307	soakaway 1: layer	1 retouched blade-like flake

7 Discussion and conclusions

The depth at which the skeletons recovered in the soakaways were found is broadly the same as those located within the footprint of the interpretation centre. It seems likely that any excavation in this area at this depth would disturb a burial.

The removal of ground levels to provide the correct gradient for disabled access disturbed nothing of archaeological interest. The majority of the material removed was either topsoil or an ash deposit on the line of the existing pathway.

There was a great deal of build-up of material immediately north of the southern boundary wall with a modern ground level at 15.87 m OD. In contrast immediately south of the boundary wall the modern pavement was 15.47 m OD.

The discovery of the cemetery is of some significance. In spite of the high level of disturbance and the considerable depth to which some modern features have been cut it is clear that many more burials may well survive in the southern precinct to a depth as high as 15.50 m OD in some places. Furthermore, the burials are almost certainly medieval in date. The layers into which the burials are cut contain only pottery of medieval date while the graves themselves contain redeposited Roman and Saxon material as well as medieval.

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Appendix 1 Context details

Context No.	Context Type	Depth	Level	Date	Relationships
101	wall	0.38 m	15.08 m OD	?part of hospital construction	fill of 120
102	wall offset	0.24 m	15.17 m OD	?part of hospital construction	same as 101
103	flint and mortar deposit	0.14 m	15.38 m OD	?demolition of monastic wall	?same as 117, cut by 120 and 147, overlies 106
104	stone edging, for earlier pavement	0.14 m	15.33 m OD	late feature	abutted by 115, cut by 120 and 147, overlies 119, butts 113, truncated by 101 and 105
105	wall	0.45 m		?hospital wall	fill of 147
106	fill	0.17 m	15.30 m OD	medieval, monastic boundary wall	overlain by 103, 117 and 169, cut by 125, 147, 171, 173, 184, overlies 118, fill of 110
107	finds ref.	0.30 m below modern ground level	-		
108	finds ref.	0.50 m below pavement level	•		recovered during machining below pavement level
109	finds ref.	u/s	-		machining prior to excavation of deeper thickening
110	cut for foundation of abbey wall	0.44 m	15.30 m OD	medieval	filled by 106, 118, 169
111	mortar and flint facing on south side of monastic foundation	0.38 m	15.22 m OD	medieval	cut by 114, fill of 112
112	cut	0.38 m	15.17 m OD	recut for monastic wall	filled by 111, cuts 106
113	mortar and flint facing	0.44 m+	15.17 m OD	render for repair of wall 111/112	abutted by 104, 119, cut by 120, 147, same as 122, fill of 114
114	cut	0.44 m+	15.17 m OD	cut for repair 113	filled by 113, same as 121?, cuts 111
115	layer	0.12 m	15.22 m OD	layer lying directly below modern pavement outside of monastic boundary, ?bed for earlier pavement	overlies 102, butts 104
116	layer	0.10 m	15.27 m OD	deposited during hospital phase	overlies 117, largely excavated by machine during initial reduction for foundation slab
117	layer	0.05 m	15.17 m OD	mortar deposit	overlain by 116, ?same as 103 and 169, overlies 106

Context No.	Context Type	Depth	Level	Date	Relationships
118	grave layer in foundation for monastic wall	0.08 m+	14.95 m OD	medieval	overlain by 106, fill of 110 (CAT 1996)
119	layer	0.24 m+	15.11 m OD	below modern pavement, outside of monastic boundary	overlain by 104, 115, cut by 120, 147, butts 113
120	cut	0.38 m	15.21 m OD	cut for foundation of wall 101	filled by 101 and 102, cuts 103, 104, 106 and 119
121	cut	0.49 m	15.14 m OD	cut for repair/rebuild of wall south of monastic boundary	filled by 122, ?same as 114, cuts 106 and 111
122	part of wall	0.48 m	15.14 m OD	re-used fragments of abbey stone	abutted by 124, same as 113, fill of 121
123	cut		15.20 m OD	cut for wall, of slate, brick and flint, removed by machine, related to hospital	cuts 122
124	layer	0.55 m	15.20 m OD		?same as 119, overlies 126, butts 122
125	garden slot?	0.12 m		post-medieval	filled by 128, cuts 106 (CAT 1995)
126	layer	0.20 m	14.67 m OD		overlain by 122 and 124, cut by 121, ?same as 124, overlies 127
127	deposit	0.10 m+	14.46 m OD	19-20th	overlain by 126
128	fill of garden slot	0.12 m		post-medieval	fill of 125
129	grave cut		15.41 m OD	medieval	same as 137, filled by 130-132, cuts 149
130	grave fill	0.12	15.41 m OD	medieval	overlies 132, fill of 129
131	skeleton		15.41 m OD	medieval	fill of 132
132	coffin		15.41 m OD	medieval	fill of 129, filled by 131
133	grave fill		15.38 m OD	medieval	same as 144-6, overlies 134-5, fill of 136
134	coffin		15.38 m OD	medieval	filled by 135, overlies 141
135	skeleton		15.38 m OD	medieval	fill of 134, overlain by 133
136	grave cut		15.38 m OD	medieval	filled by 133-5, 141-6
137	grave cut		15.38 m OD	medieval	filled by 138-40, same as 129, cuts 149
138	grave fill		15.38 m OD	medieval	overlies 139
139	coffin		15.38 m OD	medieval	overlain by 138, fill of 137
140	skeleton		15.38 m OD	medieval	fill of 139, overlain by 138
141	skeleton		15.35 m OD	medieval	fill of 136, overlain by 134
142	skeleton		15.38 m OD	medieval	overlain by 143
143	skeleton		15.40 m OD	medieval	overlies 142, overlain by 146

Context No.	Context Type	Depth	Level	Date	Relationships
144	grave fill		15.38 m OD	medieval	fill of 136, overlies 141
145	grave fill		15.38 m OD	medieval	same as 133, 144, 146, overlies 142
146	grave fill		15.38 m OD	medieval	same as 145, overlies 143, fill of 136
147	cut			cut for wall, probably contemporary with culverts	filled by 105, cuts 103, 106
148	finds ref.		-		
149	deposit	0.10 m		medieval, redeposited natural	overlain by 154, 156, 157, 205, 215, cut by 129, 136-7, 190
150	grave cut	0.13 m	15.18 m OD	medieval	filled by 151-3, cuts 205
151	skeleton		15.18 m OD	medieval	overlies 152, overlain by 153, fill of 150
152	coffin		15.18 m OD	medieval	overlain by 151, fill of 150
153	grave fill		15.18 m OD	medieval	overlain by 155, cut by 158, overlies 152, fill of 150
154	skeleton		15.38 m OD	medieval	overlies 149, fill of 186
155	layer	0.16 m	15.95 m OD	late phase of hospital construction	overlain by modern building debris, overlie 153, 164, 170, 172, 174, 178, 193, 198, 21
156	skeleton		15.30 m OD	medieval	cut by 190, overlies 149, fill of 187
157	skeleton		15.41 m OD	medieval	cut by 190, overlies 149
158	grave cut		15.26 m Od	medieval	filled by 159, 160, 161, cuts 153
159	coffin		15.26 m OD	medieval	overlain by 160-1, fill of 158
160	skeleton		15.26 m OD	medieval	overlies 159, overlain by 161, fill of 158
161	grave fill	0.22 m	15.26 m OD	medieval	overlain by 155, overlies 159, fill of 158
162	cut			modern, ??collapse event	filled by 163
163	fill	1.60 m+		modem	fill of 162
164	fill		15.38 m OD	grave fill	fill of 185
165	grave cut	0.12 m	15.43 m OD	medieval	filled by 166-8, cuts 204
166	grave fill		15.43 m OD	medieval	overlain by 155, overlies 168, fill of 165
167	skeleton		15.43 m OD	medieval	overlain by 166, fill of 165
168	coffin		15.43 m OD	medieval	overlain by 166, fill of 165
169	wail	0.18 m	15.49 m OD	?medieval wall above 106	overlies 106, prob same as 103 and 117, overlain by brick pillar relating to hospital
170	layer	0.14 m		?lens within dumped layer 213	overlain by 155, overlies 204
171	foundation trench for culvert		15.19 m OD	19-20th	filled by 172, 175, cuts 211, 213
172	fill of culvert			19-20th	overlain by 155, overlies 175, fill of 171

Context No.	Context Type	Depth	Level	Date	Relationships
173	foundation trench for culvert			19-20th	filled by 174, 176, cuts 210, 213
174	fill of culvert			19-20th	overlain by 155, overlies 176, fill of 173
175	culvert		15.37 m OD	19-20th	overlain by 172, fill of 171
176	culvert			19-20th	overlain by 174, fill of 173
177	grave cut		15.53 m OD	medieval	filled by 178, cuts 204
178	grave fill		15.53 m OD	medieval	overlain by 155, overlies 179, fill of 177
179	skeleton		15.53 m OD	medieval	fill of 177
180	coffin		15.53 m OD	medieval	overlain by 179, overlies 177
181	skeleton		15.53 m OD	medieval	within 182
182	coffin		15.38 m OD	medieval	overlain by 181, fill of 185
183	fill			fill of sewer pipe (CAT 1996)	fill of 184
184	cut			cut for sewer pipe	filled by 183, cuts 106, 128
185	grave cut		15.38 m OD	medieval	filled by 164, 181-2, cuts 205
186	coffin		15.38 m OD	medieval	filled by 154, overlies 149
187	coffin		15.38 m OD	medieval	filled by 156, overlies 149
188	coffin		15.38 m OD	medieval	filled by 157, overlies 149
189	charnel deposit			medieval	overlies 205
190	cut		15.39 m OD	linear feature, disturbance caused by laying of hospital services	filled by 191, cuts 149
191	fill	0.15 m+	15.39 m OD	fill of linear feature	fill of 190
192	grave cut		15.28 m OD	medieval	filled by 193-5
193	grave fill		15.28 m OD	medieval	overlain by 155, overlies 194-5, fill of 192
194	coffin		15.28 m OD	medieval	fill of 192, filled by 195
195	skeleton		15.28 m OD	medieval	fill of 192
196	finds ref.		-		
197	grave cut		15.49 m OD	medieval	filled by 198, cuts 204
198	grave fill		15.49 m OD	medieval	overlain by 155, fill of 197
199	skeleton		15,49 m OD	medieval	fill of 197
200	coffin		15.49 m OD	medieval	fill of 197
201	skeleton		15.20 m OD	medieval	?within 204
202	skull		15.25 m OD	medieval	?within 204
203	charnel deposit		15.25 m OD	medieval	?within 204

Context No.	Context Type	Depth	Level	Date	Relationships
204	deposit		15.32 m OD	medieval	cut by 165, 177
205	layer	0.10 m+		medieval	overlain by 155, cut by 185, 192, overlies 149 and 204
206	coffin		15.20 m OD	medieval	filled by 201
207	grave cut		15.30 m OD	medieval	filled by 208-10
208	grave fill		15.30 m OD	medieval	fill of 207
209	coffin		15.30 m OD	medieval	fill of 207
210	coffin		15.30 m OD	medieval	fill of 209
211	skeleton		15.36 m OD	medieval	
212	deposit			dump deposit	part of 124
213	layer		15.81 m OD	build up relating to ?hospital construction	overlain by 155, cut by 171, 173, 221, overlies 170, 204, 214
214	layer		15.56 m OD		?same as 170, overlain by 213, cut by 221, overlies 220
215	skeleton			medieval	overlies 149
216	deposit			probably related to demolition of monastic wall	similar to 169
217	grave cut			medieval	filled by 215, 218, cuts 149
218	grave fill			medieval	fill of 217
219	layer		15.28 m OD	19-20th	overlaid by 220
220	layer		15.70 m OD	dumping layer	overlies 219, cut by 221, overlain by 214
221	cut	0.22 m÷	15.86 m OD	cut for linear feature	filled by 222, cuts 171, 214, 220
222	fill		15.86 m OD		fill of 221
223	cut		15.71 m OD	cut for wall foundation	cut by pipe trench, filled by 224, cuts 204, 213
224	fill		15.71 m OD	fill of foundation trench	fill of 223, cut by pipe trench, overlain by 155
225	layer			south of 219	
301	layer				overlies 302
302	layer				overlies 303
303	fill				fill of 304
304	cut for pipe				cuts 305
305	layer				overlies 306
306	layer				overlies 307
307	layer				overlies 308
308	layer				overlain by 307

Context No.	Context Type	Depth	Level	Date	Relationships
401	layer				overlies 402
402	layer				overlies 403
403	layer				overlies 404
404	layer				overlies 405
405	fill				fill of 406
407	layer				overlies 408
408	layer				
409	cut				
410	fill				fill of 409
411	finds ref				w/s
412	layer		15.51 m OD		overlain by 408
501	layer				overlies 502
502	layer				overlies 503
503	layer				overlies 504
504	layer		15.71 m OD		
505	finds ref				
601	finds ref				

Appendix 2 Summary of historical and topographical evidence

(After Roebuck unpublished)

I Topographical evidence

* Longport has been diverted to go around the outside of the monastic precinct. Date unknown but probably 13th century.

* Earlier route through cemetery gate to blocked gate in south corner of precinct existed in use up to Dissolution.

- * Wall running south from cemetery gate pre-dates it. Possibly part of original precinct boundary.
- * c. 1560 chapel shown to south of monastic church on map by Braun and Hoggenburg.

* 1620 Map showing royal residence and formal gardens.

- * 1640 Daniel King's engraving of ruins of abbey shows 'runia aliquot siue quadam coenobii reliquie' to south of church.
- * 1663 No structures apparent to south of church on Hollar and Johnson groundplot.
- * 1752 In plan by W and H Doidge, area is shown as garden with beds and possible orchard.
- * 1791-3 Building of Kent and Canterbury Hospital
- * Engraving by Thornton shows formal beds inside cemetery gate while rest of area is blank.

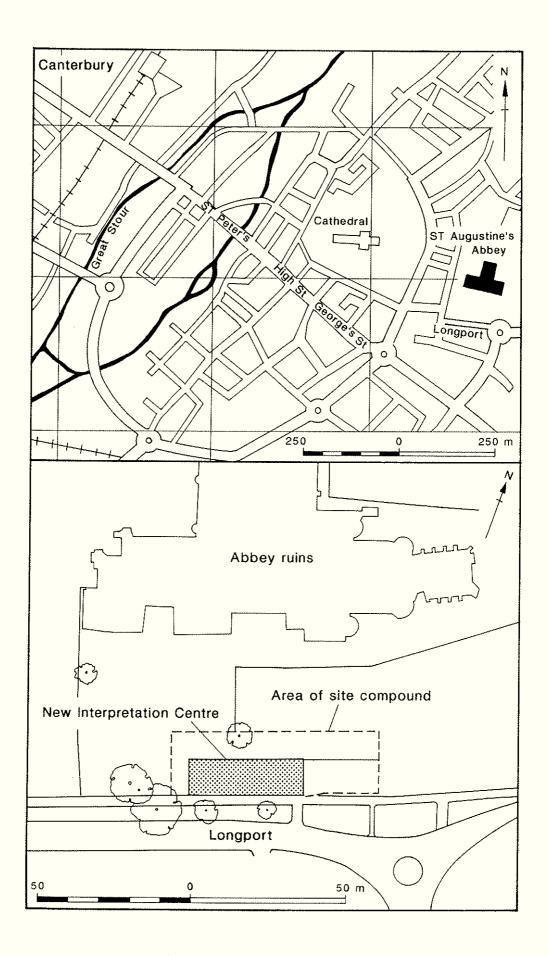
2 Documentary evidence

- * In 1185 two cemeteries were consecrated by Archbishop Baldwin, one for monks and the other for laity. It seems likely that the monks' cemetery was to the north-east of the choir and the lay cemetery against the south wall of the church divided by a wall from the Lady Chapel to St Pancras. Part of the lay cemetery continued in use after the Dissolution.
- * 1287/8 Construction of Charnel House consecrated in 1299
- * 1342-52 Clement IV suggests that monks could 'reconcile church and cemetery by blessed water'. This may refer to the monks' failed attempt to close public right of way across south of precinct.
- * 1390 Construction of cemetery gate.

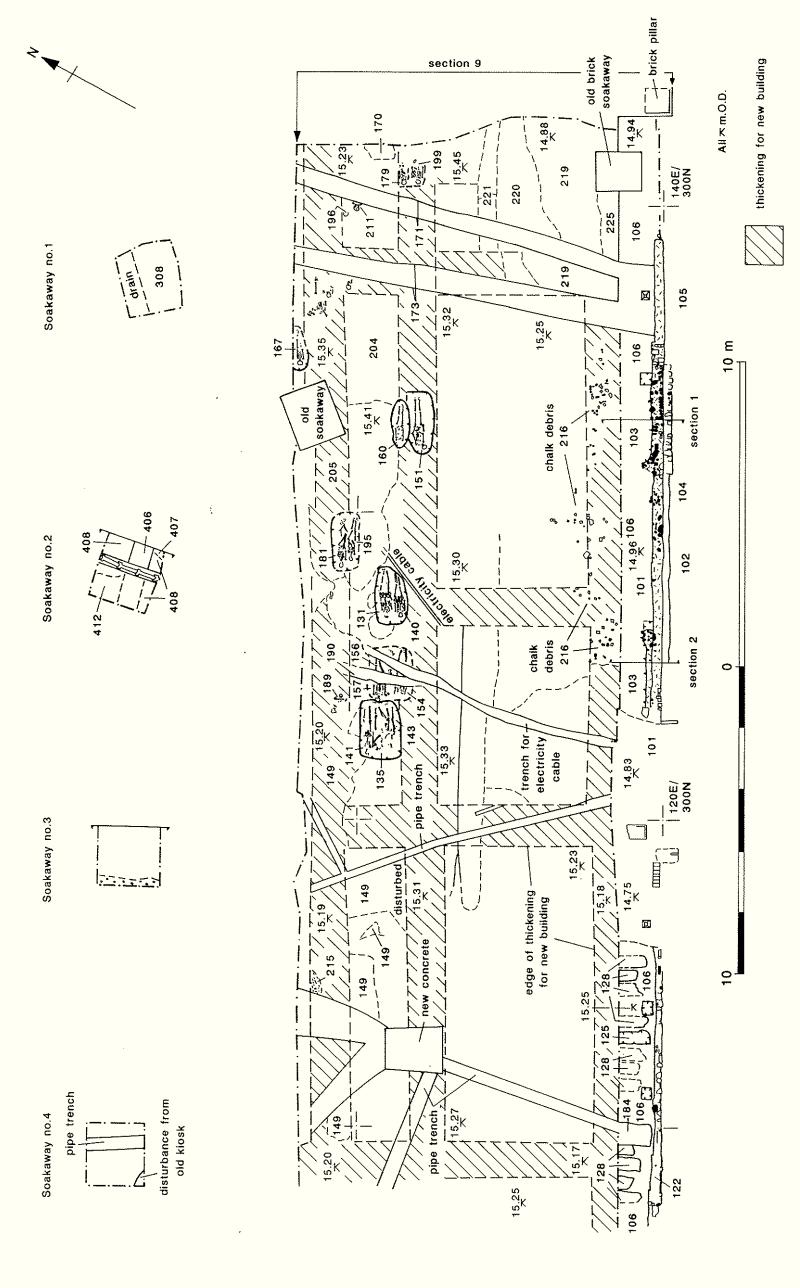
3 The southern boundary of the monastic precinct (after Sherlock and Woods 1988, 3-4)

"It is obvious from the map (Fig. 6) that the length of road out of Canterbury to Sandwich known as Longport has been diverted at Cemetery Gate to pass round the southern boundary of the abbey precinct, though an earlier way through Cemetery Gate to St Martin's Hill via a gateway (now blocked) in the south-east corner of the precinct wall existed at least until the Dissolution. Although Burgate Street, Church Street and the original Longport route are only roughly on the same alignment they probably originated as a Roman road. This is supported by excavations in Burgate Street in 1946 (Jenkins 1950, 90-91). Probable Roman burials in the area of the

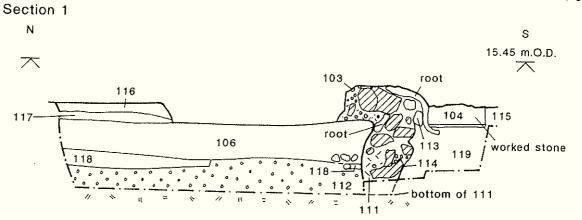
original road have been recorded by Leland (1774, 9). The 1972 excavations confirmed the existence of pagan Roman burials and of a Roman track (though on a slightly different alignment again). The date when Longport was diverted is not known. Cemetery Gate was built c. 1390, but running east from its north-east corner, and ante-dating it constructionally, is a 300 m length of wall, originally about 3.80 m high, faced on its southern side with Roman bricks of an identical build to those reused in St Pancras' Chapel. It has been suggested (Cotton 1915) that this may have been part of the original precinct wall of St Augustine's, which would agree with the spurious charter of 605, quoted in 1181, which gives the original southern boundary of the precinct as 'the Burgate Way'. One possible date for the diversion of Longport is 1185 when Archbishop Baldwin consecrated two cemeteries, one for monks and one for the laity. Even after Longport was diverted, the old way (the via media) continued to be mentioned in the wills of those wishing to be buried in the lay cemetery (Hussey 1915, 50) and was the basis for the famous jurisdictional agreement between the abbot and the citizens of Canterbury (Davis 1934, 250). It remained the boundary of jurisdiction between the city and the later county borough of Longport up until at least 1800 (Hasted 1801, 158)."

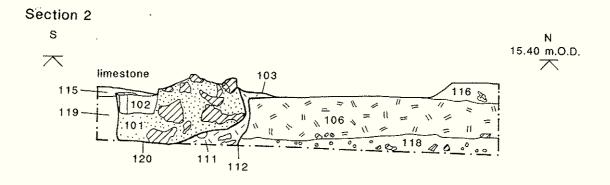


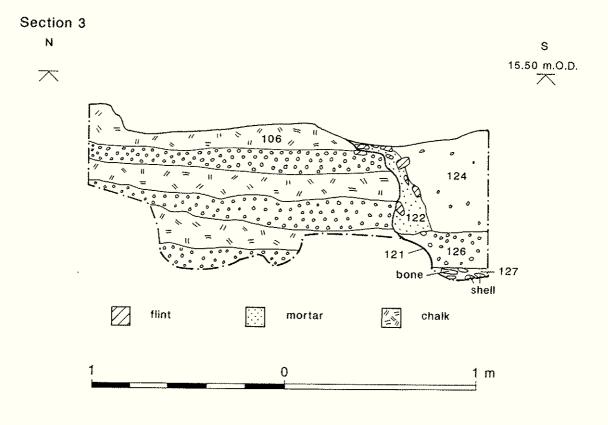
Location of excavated area



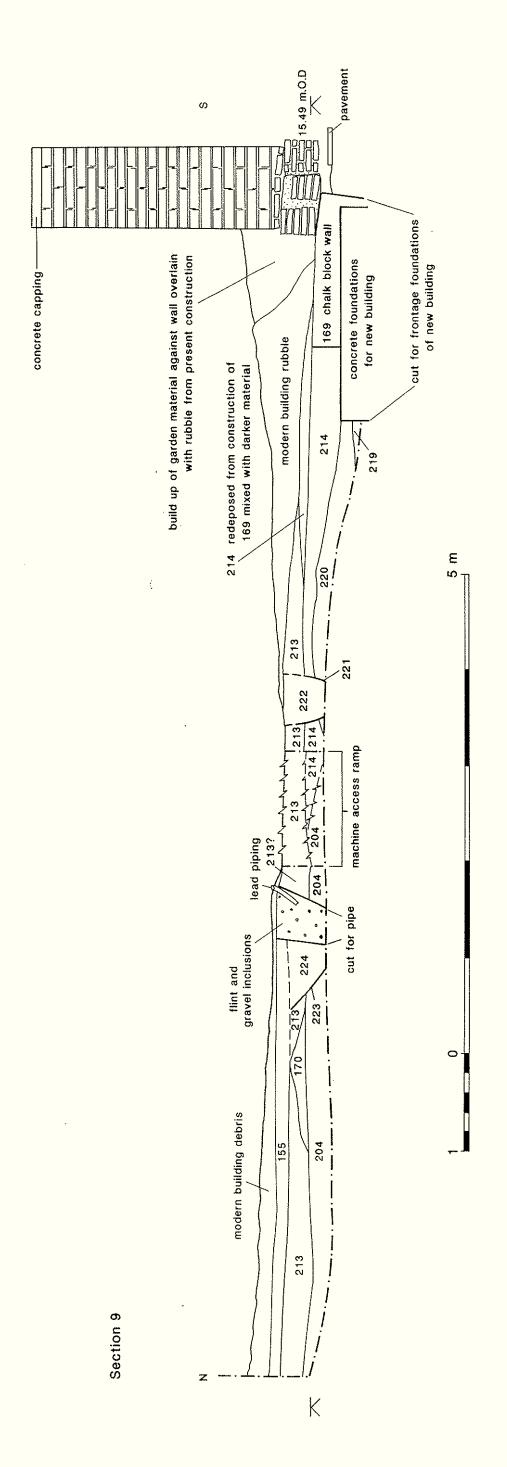
Plan of excavated features

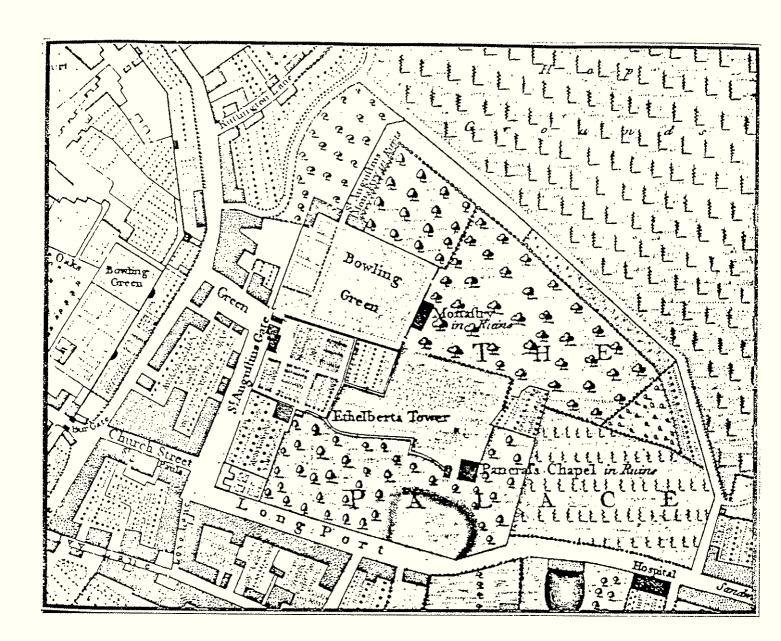


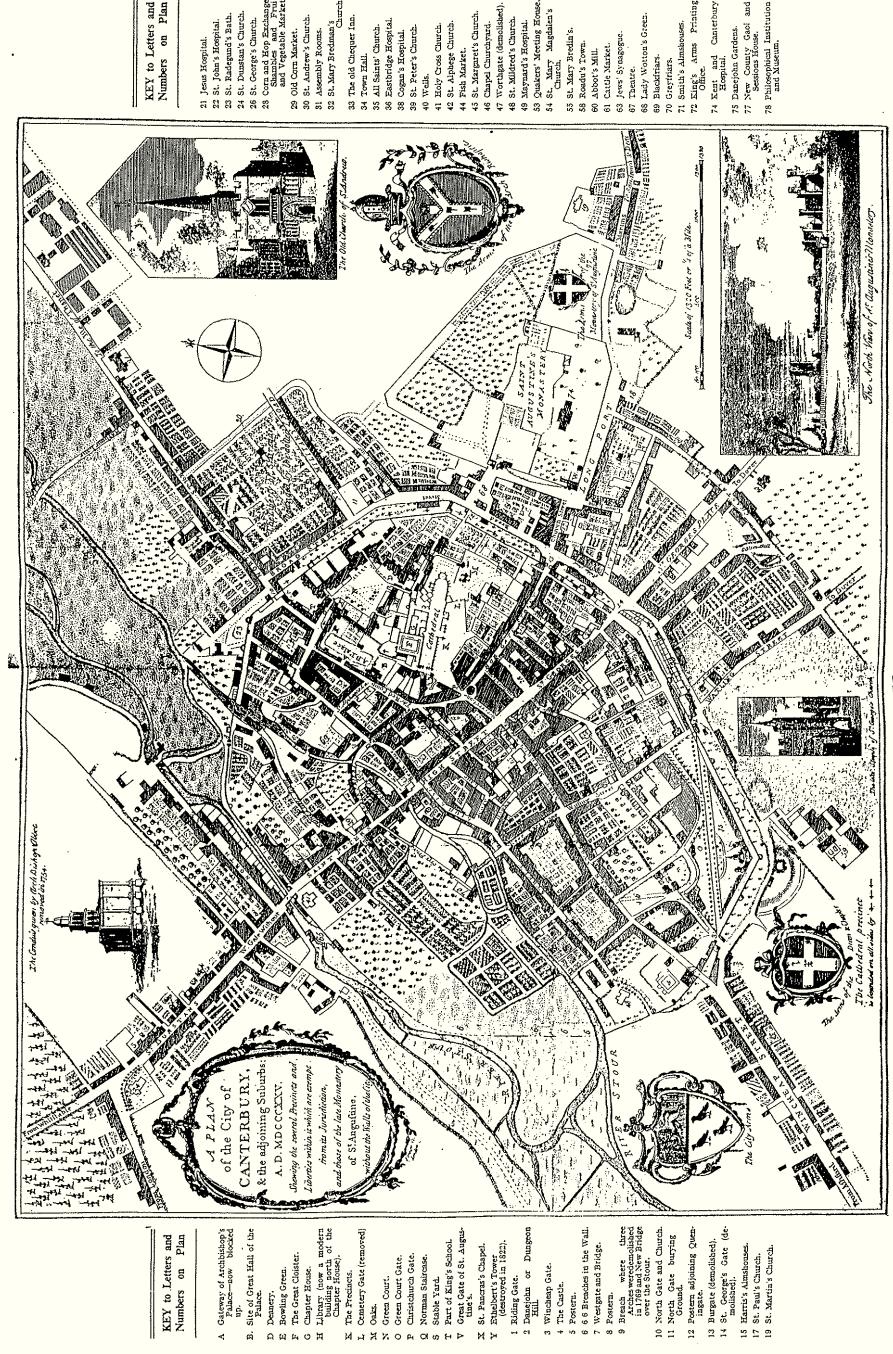




The Abbey Wall

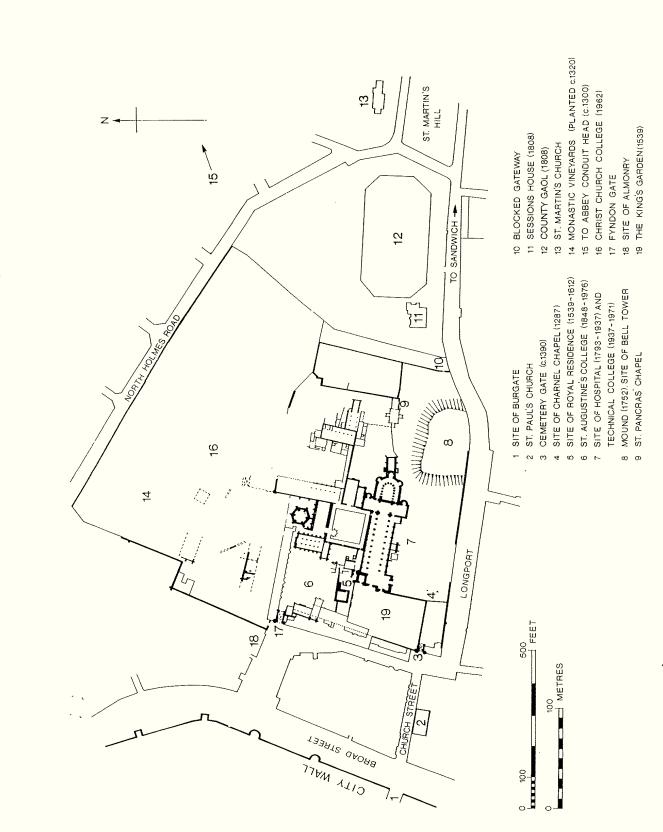






5 Postern.

A PLAN OF CANTERBURY IN 1825 SHOWING HOW LITTLE THE CITY HAS CHANGED IN THE COURSE OF A CENTURY



ST. AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY, CANTERBURY



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