



HALESOWEN ABBNEY

Building Survey
1987

Birmingham University Field Archæology Unit

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Introduction

A detailed survey of a single building, the so-called Infirmary, but hereafter referred to as Structure 1, within the old Abbey complex at Halesowen was carried out in February and March 1987. The brief of the survey was as follows; to check, and alter where necessary, a photogrammetric survey of the building; to enhance that survey with details of projections and differences in building medium; to draw to the same scale those areas of walling not included in the survey; to record the fabric and form of the structure and of architectural features on specifically designed pro-forma sheets; to make detailed drawings of each window and to take template mouldings where necessary; to draw three decorated stones built into the fabric; to note and record mason's marks and tool marks; to record individually all the beams in the roof and to subsequently prepare projections of the total roof structure; and to present the above survey as an archive accompanied by interpretative drawings of the fabric alongside a written interpretative commentary.

STRUCTURE 1

The Present Groundplan

The building, of stone, as it now exists, is aligned roughly east-west and is 18 metres long by 7 metres wide (58 feet 6 inches by 22 feet 9 inches). Three stone buttresses survive

externally with scars for two others being clearly visible. Internally the structure is divided into two parts, separated by a brick wall up to the level of the wall plates. The eastern part, 13 metres by 5.5 metres (42 feet 3 inches by c.18 feet) is open to the roof and has no surviving floor save of trampled earth. The western part, 3.15 metres by 5.5 metres (c. 10 feet 6 inches by c. 18 feet) is divided into two storeys by a timber floor, access to the lower level being only through a door in the western wall, and to the upper by a staircase from the ground floor room. There is no direct access between the two parts of the building.

Internally there are a number of brick buttresses to the level of the wall plates. Light is/was provided by a number of windows of different styles and periods, there being a noticeable difference between those at the western end of the building and those at the eastern end, and both the northern and southern walls have large opposing cart doors to provide access to the eastern part of the building. The roof is of corrugated-iron sheeting.

This plan reflects the final usage of the building, the evolution of which will now be considered in detail.

The Fabric (see interpretative drawings [Drawing Nos. 1-9] for location of SE (Structural Element) and AE (Architectural Element) numbers).

Phase 1

From an examination of the groundplan, of the building fabric, and of the roof, there can be little doubt that, leaving aside all the building in brick, the structure is of two major

and distinct builds. Not only does the design and form of the roof structure change to the east but the carpenters' numerical marks on the timbers also change sequence quite noticeably at this point. Correspondingly at more or less the same point in the external fabric below there can be seen a discontinuity in the horizontal coursing of the stones and more especially, towards the base of the wall, of a projecting chamfered coursing (SE 1000). This feature runs the full length of the eastern wall and for about 7 metres (22 feet 9 inches) in a westward direction along both the northern and southern walls. This discontinuity is marked by a jagged break rather than a vertical break and, as if to emphasise the presence of a point of weakness, caused by the bonding of two walls, stone buttresses were built here both against the northern and southern walls. The buttress (AE 524) against the southern wall still survives while that against the northern wall is now represented only by a scar infilled with brick (SE 1013). Internally, the horizontal infilled scar (SE 1097) that marks the position of a former floor level in the western part of the building once more is truncated at a point in the north and south walls corresponding with the aforementioned breaks. Again, buttresses, this time of brick (AE 533, AE 535) have been constructed against the north and south wall at this point of weakness, potential and actual. It is the part of the structure to the west of this demonstrated discontinuity that seems to be earliest and this will be considered as the remnant of the Phase 1 building.

The complete groundplan of the Phase 1 structure cannot be reconstructed from an analysis of the present remains. While it

is almost certain that the lower, stone, fabric of the western wall is original, the eastern limit of the building cannot be determined though it is likely to be in the area where the change in build is seen to occur, the eastern wall simply being demolished to facilitate the extension to the building. If the footings for this eastern wall were of any depth, despite the fact that the inside floor level of the building has been lowered, they may be traceable by archaeological excavation.

At the western end of the south wall there is evidence for a narrow extension having projected out to the south, and now represented only by a truncated wall to the west and a scar to the east. The line of the west wall quite clearly continues, as SE 1037, out beyond the line of the southern wall where it has been roughly finished off after demolition of its southwards extension. Just above the top of buttress AE 511, against the southern face, can be seen a small infilled scar SE 1039A which marks the point of return of a former wall; unfortunately, the rest of this area is obscured by the later buttress. These two walls would enclose an area c.1.5 metres (c.5 feet) wide, the height of the extension being that of the full height of the building; thus, it seems to have been a tower of some sort. The purpose of such a tower can be suggested rather than positively identified. It is certainly not merely a porch but rather, and perhaps the term turret would be more appropriate than tower, a turret, either octagonal or square in plan, accommodating stairs, garderobes or closets. In favour of the first of these alternatives is the fact that at ground floor

level there is evidence for a doorway through the southern wall either out-of or into the turret; two stones (SE 1110) forming the base of the arched head of this door (AE 518) can be seen, the rest of the arch having been destroyed by the later insertion of the window AE 517, while the line of the jamb to the east is just detectable alongside the edge of the buttress AE 511, and to the west it is very clear and likely to be contemporary with the wall AE 512. The lower part of this Phase 1 doorway has been infilled with stone (SE 1105), as is best seen on the interior face. On the upper floor the insertion of the window AE 516 has also involved considerable disturbance and infill over an unusually large surface area which, though there is no direct evidence as there is at ground level, could suggest a door opening here at an earlier period. Such an arrangement would favour a stairwell. As to the possibility of the turret housing a garderobe, there is no direct evidence, for though access to a privy chamber on the first floor could be argued for, with a shaft passing down to a drain which would in turn discharge itself down the considerable slope to the south of the building, the presence of a drain is pure conjecture. Certainly, the doorway at ground floor level might have provided access to a lower chamber with privy and certainly in terms of being near a useful slope for rapid quasi-hygienic disposal the turret would have been well sited; but without excavation here the thesis is not proven.

As to the rest of the Phase 1 structure it will be best understood by examining the wall fabric face by face. The western wall is much altered, only the lowest eight or nine

courses of stone survive, with the upper gable end inset and reconstructed in brick. Of the stone the ledge AE 513 is contemporary with the brick above and serves as a topping-off course for the now-demolished wall. Thus, only stonework below AE 513 is considered as belonging to Phase 1, and though the doorway (AE 510) in this face has almost certainly been inserted at a later date, as the substantial area of disturbance (SE 1035) around the doorway indicates, this does not preclude here the one time existence of an earlier, smaller, entrance. The great problem with windows and doors, their style so prone to fashion and whim, is that when a change in style or size of the feature is desired the most obvious areas for attention are those where such a feature already exists and where rebuilding will be at a minimum, so that earlier features can thus be easily obliterated. On the interior face of the west wall the disturbance for door AE 510 does not appear so extensive and this may argue in favour for an earlier entrance, in more or less the same position, in Phase 1. Whatever the case, on either side of the disturbance created by the later doorway can be seen two horizontal builds in the stonework (SE 1029/SE 1037, almost certainly the same but given separate numbers since they are truncated and thus cannot be directly linked) and above that SE 1038. These builds are broadly contemporary and simply represent rises or raises within the initial construction. Curiously, one or two stones of build SE 1037 project beyond the line of the southern wall where they once contrived to form the western wall of the demolished turret, and no attempt has been made to neaten this somewhat ragged edge

to the wall.

On the north face interpretation is made difficult by a number of major later disturbances, associated mainly with the insertion of the cart door AE 500 and the disturbance to the east of this now infilled with brick (SE 1018). However, much of the original fabric survives, to allow a better understanding of the Phase 1 building. To the west of the cart door a number of horizontal constructional rises can be clearly seen (SE 1024, SE 1025, SE 1026, SE 1017, SE 1015, SE 1027) and these are easily picked up to the east of the door. Of course, east of the buttress scar infill SE 1013 horizontal discontinuities, that is between Phases 1 and 2, are glaringly apparent. A number of windows in this face belong to Phase 1, the only one surviving to any great extent being the large window AE 503. This was evidently damaged even before its blocking. It takes the form of a double window, the two lights being subdivided by a stone transom bar but that one across the western light is now missing, as is the sill stone in the west. The transom and mullion are both chamfered and the frame also. Internally, though partially obscured by the buttress AE 534, the window opening, now blocked with stone, is framed by unchamfered stones with a stone arched head. To the west, also at first floor level, is window AE 502, partly truncated by doorway AE 500. Only part of the western, now blocked, light survives but by its general size, the fact that again there is evidence for a snapped-off transom here, and by the fact that a small portion of a plain stone arched head can be seen internally, it is presumably a remnant of a double, four-light, window identical to AE 503. For the upper storey, light

was provided by two or more windows (see below) AE 504 and AE 501 surviving. AE 504 to the east is fragmentary but it can be seen that it is formed by chamfered stones and divided into two lights by a chamfered transom; it is possible and, when the size of the area of blocking viewed internally is considered, quite likely that this was originally a double window which has been largely destroyed by the activity associated with the brick infilling SE 1013. To the west the window AE 501 survives somewhat better. Again, it is a double window divided by a chamfered mullion and a transom, broken off in the east, into four lights and with heads formed externally by arches which are cusped to form a trefoil head to each upper light. Internally, the opening is roughly rectangular with splayed reveal and a horizontal timber as the window head. Externally, it is worth noting, is a simple carved human head or face on the spandrel between the two arches (see Drawing No. 26).

On the southern face the situation is much easier to understand. Once more, horizontal rises can be easily identified (SE 1070, SE 1068, SE 1072, SE 1084), all broadly part of the initial Phase I construction work. Three windows provide light to the upper floor, these being AE 519, AE 520 and AE 521. Each has a chamfered stone mullion and transom to create four lights, has chamfered sides, and stone arched heads. The westernmost, AE 519, has a simple arch above each upper light, while AE 520 and AE 521 each have the cusped trefoil heads similar to that of AE 501 in the northern face. Internally each is identical with the other, and with the inside of AE 501. On

the ground floor there are, at first sight, no Phase 1 windows; however, the following arrangement can be plausibly reconstructed. The lower windows in the northern face each had internal plain arched heads and internally in the south face two such stone arches can be seen (SE 1071, SE 1086). In style and size, the lower part of the window being obviously blocked, the easternmost (SE 1071) is similar to SE 1091 in the north face and I would suggest that the original Phase 1 style window in this position has been externally destroyed by the insertion of the later window AE 523 though the internal arrangement has not been greatly changed. Similarly, it can be argued that the arch SE 1086 to the west is the head of a Phase 1 window AE 530 almost totally destroyed by the insertion of the cart door AE 522. If this argument is accepted, that the south wall had two windows at ground floor level, as does the north wall, then it is likely that the three upper windows of the south wall would be repeated in the north where there is now only evidence for two definitely having existed; unfortunately, the crucial area where the third window would have been was completely destroyed by the insertion of the huge cart door AE 500.

Since the full groundplan of the Phase 1 building is unknown it is difficult to be certain of the internal arrangements of the building. The one time position of a floor can be seen in the south wall (SE 1097), where a horizontal scar is infilled with mortar and stone, mainly thin slabs of a green-grey sandstone and a darker gray siltstone, above the present floor level, and in the north wall (SE 1108). The west wall is truncated below floor level. Access between floors may have been provided by

the postulated stairwell turret to the south west or, if this were not a stair turret, by a staircase in a similar position to the one in situ. Such a staircase would leave little trace on the wall face but in this area a number of blocked-in dowel holes can be seen in the north wall.

There is no evidence for fireplaces or for centrally placed hearth settings, that is no smoke blackening on the beams, and it must therefore be assumed that heating was provided by free standing braziers.

The roof over the Phase 1 building, since its extent corresponds so well with the postulated Phase 1 wall plan, is that still in situ over the western end of the building and this will be considered in detail below. The date of the Phase 1 building must be determined by the style of the windows and by the carpentry in the roof.

Phase 2

Phase 2 of the building's life involved the partial demolition of the Phase 1 building, certainly of its eastern wall and of an unknown length (probably not very great a length) of its northern and southern walls, and the incorporation of the remaining part of that building into an extended structure. No change was made to the basic roof structure over the older western end of the new building, a new length of roof, in a noticeably different style, was simply constructed over the eastern end and the two joined together.

As in Phase 1 the construction medium was mainly sandstone,

the most noticeable constructional detail being the already mentioned stepped out basal build with chamfered ledge (SE 1000) which can be traced around the whole of the Phase 2 extension. Since this chamfer can also be seen around two, out of originally four, buttresses then these are probably also part of the initial Phase 2 build. The buttress at the south east corner (AE 515) of the building is constructed in two vertical but offset stages each separated by a sloping face, the upper stage carried into the main wall face by a similar sloping stage. A second buttress at the north east corner has at some stage collapsed or been demolished and it is now represented only by a scar (SE 1007). This now missing buttress still existed when a drawing was made of the building in 1785. Another two stepped buttress (AE 524) is built against the south wall at the joining of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 structures while at the corresponding point on the north wall there is a scar, infilled with brick and stone (SE 1053), that shows the position of another buttress.

Though all broadly contemporary a number of horizontal building rises can be traced in the walls of the Phase 2 extension. In all three faces the chamfered build (SE 1000) and coursing above it (SE 1001, SE 1002) can be seen while above this each face has its own builds (north face, SE 1003, SE 1004, SE 1005, SE 1011; east face SE 1045, SE 1046, SE 1047, SE 1048, SE 1051, SE 1052, SE 1049, SE 1053; and south face SE 1063, SE 1064, SE 1065). Also noteworthy, in terms of constructional analysis, are the numbers of putlog holes associated with this Phase, especially in the north wall where on the outer face can

be seen numerous holes, including a vertical line of eight (AE 508), now blocked, though these may represent a different activity to constructional scaffolding.

There is great difficulty in deciding which features belong to this phase, especially windows, but certainly it seems that the fireplace (AE 537) and its external projection out beyond the face of the south wall (AE 526) are original. This fireplace takes the form of an inset into the inner face of the eastern part of the south wall at first floor level, floored with stone slabs and backed with bricks (SE 1109). It has splayed sides, up against the eastern of which is set and mortared a decorated grave slab (SE 1092) but this is quite clearly a curious later addition (see below) while to the west side is a mortar scar of the same size and shape perhaps suggesting that a second slab had been set here and removed. The recording of the first took place in 1871 (Holliday 1871, Pl.5 no.6) when it was still positioned in the 'refectory' wall. Its move to the present position may have been part of an attempt to gather unusual stone fragments into one building (see below). The brick fireplace backing (SE 1109) is much blackened by smoke and flame and the bricks cracked and crazed; this backing ends with a flat upper surface c.75 centimetres (2 feet 6 inches) below the line of the wall plate. Externally a rectangular stone projection juts out c.30 centimetres (c.1 foot) from the southern wall face and is underpinned by four chamfered stone corbels. The flat top of this projection (AE 526) corresponds to the top of the internal bricking, the bricking above each now in situ (SE 1056) being a later blocking, and this suggests that here was attached a smoke

hood to carry the smoke from the fireplace out beyond the line of the wall plate and out through some sort of plaster or wicker chimney arrangement. A number of such hoods and external chimneys/stacks of what might be thought somewhat flimsy materials are known; in Shrewsbury a hood of wood or plaster survived in Bennett's Hall (Wood 1965, p.262), and another of plaster at Stokesay Castle, Shropshire (Wood 1965, p.262; Lloyd 1931, Fig. 763). Plaster and wicker chimneys are also well attested (Wood 1965, p.289) and some survived remarkably as at Darwen, Lancashire (Lloyd 1931, Fig. 558).

It is possible, with the building of the Phase 2 extension, that the internal arrangements of the new composite structure made the Phase 1 south western turret, whether stairwell or garderobe, redundant and that it was demolished at this time. Whenever demolition did take place it was then that the two windows AE 516 and AE 517 were inserted, the latter, at ground floor level, certainly involving the alteration and partial blocking of the then existing doorway AE 518, now represented only by its truncated arched head. The upper window too has an arched, quasi-lancet head but is divided into two lights by a transom bar. No other windows in this style occur within the building and it is most difficult to see these windows, though linked in their simplicity and unpretentiousness of style, as contemporary with a second group, these being the large rectangular two light window AE 523 with its chamfered mullion and AE 525 a single rectangular window, both at ground level and both in the south face. A third distinct group of windows is

found exclusively at the eastern end of the building. In the south face AE 529 at ground floor level and AE 528 at first floor level, both identical in being large, rectangular and divided into two lights by a chamfered mullion and with a jamb with two orders of chamfer. In the north face AE 506 at first floor level is identical though disturbance below shows that this may once have been a two tier window or more likely, for reasons of symmetry, that a ground level window of the same type as AE 528, AE 529, AE 506 has been removed completely. In the east face is a single window, a large two storey rectangular window AE 514 framed by three orders of chamfer at the jambs and head, the bottom part of which is now blocked with stone though the face of this blocking is inset from the wall face itself. The surviving window at the top of the opening is rectangular, of the same size as AE 528, AE 529 and AE 506, divided into two lights by a mullion. Unfortunately though the almost pointed heads of AE 516 and AE 517 would suggest them to be the earliest of those windows under consideration there is no reason why they could not represent a deliberate archaicism to blend in with the other arched windows at the western end of the building but they could, on the other hand, even represent a late alteration to the Phase 1 structure. The rectangular windows in their three stylistic groups, simple with chamfer (A 523, A 525), with double chamfer (AE 528, A 529, A 506) and with triple chamfer (AF 514) all broadly fall into a sixteenth or seventeenth century date.

As to the internal arrangements of the Phase 2 building there was no doubt that the large composite structure was further subdivided. Logically the floor level between the ground and

first floor would be the same as had formed this division in the Phase 1 structure but there is no evidence, like the scar seen in the western end of the building marking this level, for this in the eastern end of the structure. This may suggest that the joists were laid in a different direction in the east and these may have been jointed into posts of an internal screen. The underside of the tie beam at the bonding of the structures exhibits a number of dowel/joint holes that would have taken timbers forming the vertical posts of a timber and plaster screen or internal dividing wall that may not only have divided the first floor into two but also have extended down to ground floor level. Only archaeological investigation along the line mooted for the partition could confirm or deny the presence of post holes here. Whatever the case, doorways through this screen/partition, whether at one level or two, can be assumed.

At the western end of the building it was probably now that the door in the gable end was reset and it seems likely, with the Phase 1 stairwell demolished, that access to the first floor at this end of the building was by a staircase roughly where the existing one now stands. As for stairs at the eastern end there is even more confusing evidence. Towards the base of the internal eastern wall can be seen four stone corbels (AE 536), in two pairs, the upper pair very close together and centred c.70 centimetres (c.2 feet 6 inches) above a lower pair 1 metre apart. These perhaps are supports for beams of a staircase. But, the upper pair of corbels are set within the stone blocking and infill of the lower part of the two storey window AE 514..pa

One of the more curious features associated with Phase 2 is seen in the north wall face, at first floor level, this being the now-blocked opening AE 505. The horizontal coursing around this feature does not suggest it to be an insertion but rather that it is an original feature. It is not a window but is large enough to be a doorway. If this were so then it presupposes no direct access into the upper eastern end of the building from the ground floor and a set of steps up against the outside of the building. Indeed, it could be argued that the vertical line of blocked putlog holes (AE 508) to the east of this opening, and those to either side of the line at ground floor level, could mark the position of such an external staircase.

Phase 3

Phase 3 incorporates numerous alterations to the Phase 2 building. This involves the demolition of the north-east buttress AE507, this occurring post-1785 according to the evidence of the drawing made at that time, the demolition of the buttress at the junction bonding of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 structures on the north wall and the subsequent repair of the scar with an infilling of brick, the building of buttress AE 511 towards the south west corner (this again can be seen to be post 1785 and indeed the tooling/finish on the stones employed in the build SE 1040 is identical to that on the stones used in the lower build of the Victorian farmhouse which according to Holliday was built 'some years' before 1871), and the major works associated with all the building in brick.

All the areas of brickwork were examined and recorded in the same detail as the stonework, and from the brick size, particularly the thickness, and nature some attempt will be made to group the activities represented by each type into rough chronological areas. It must be recalled that

'many different sizes of fabric brick were used up to the Elizabethan period when a rough standardisation seems to have occurred at about 9 x 4 1/2 x 2 inches! (Wright 1972, 43)

and that

'the standard brick in the 15th century was 2 inches in thickness but this was not always so, From the middle of the reign of Henry VIII there was a general tendency to increase the thickness to 2 1/4". This thickness (established by the Charter of 1571) persisted until towards the end of the 17th century when bricks of 2 1/2" became general' (Lloyd 1925, 11).

Bricks in the following sizes of thickness occur in Structure 1 at Halesowen, 1 1/2", 1 3/4", 2", 2 1/4", 2 1/2", 2 3/4", 3", 3 1/4", 4", 5 1/2". Differences can be noted in the blockings of different lights in some windows and more widely in the generally piecemeal approach to the changing of the lighting arrangement of the building in the later stages of its life. Perhaps firstly something should be said of the brick used to back the fireplace AE 537 of Phase 2, the bricks of this build (SE 1109) being generally 2" in thickness with a few of 2 1/4" used as an occasional variant. The authorities quoted above would place such bricks perhaps in the fifteenth or earlier

sixteenth century but they could of course be reused though uniformity of type throughout the build argues against this.

The appearance of the 2 1/2" thick brick can probably be suitably assigned to the late seventeenth century onwards, and this includes the majority of the bricks used in the window blockings, and in the smoke outlet in the south wall. The western gable end is built almost exclusively of 2 1/2" bricks. The two cart doors AE 500 and AE 522, though of different sizes are likely to be contemporary, and since the infilling SE 1018 in the outer face of the northern wall is of 2 1/2" bricks, as are those in the fabric of the four centred splayed arch AE 531 above door AE 522, then all these features are probably broadly contemporary with each other, with the building of the western gable end and the blocking of the majority of the windows infilled with brick in a 'gapped' pattern (to allow in light and air), but pre-date the brick trusses etc. Indeed the most consistent grouping is of features that are using 3" bricks and these occur in the builds of the internal buttresses AE 540 where the bricks are different in nature. These represent one action, similar to brick trussing as used in agricultural structures elsewhere (Peters 1980).

It has already been mentioned how certain building actions can be confidently dated as post 1785, and these include the removal of the buttress AE 511. Interior alterations cannot be so confidently dated but it would seem that the shambolic stepped brick buttressing (SE 1088) to the east of the cart door on the north interior face is very late both from the nature and size,

4" and 5" in thickness, of the bricks employed.

The Roof

The roof has previously received a detailed examination (Molyneux 1984) and in general terms this analysis still stands well.

This account will ignore all repairs to the old roof structure and the adjustments that have been made for the seating of the present roof covering of corrugated iron; all this is recorded on the archive survey drawings of the timbers.

As has already been briefly mentioned the roof structure, though of a uniform pitch throughout, is of two different and distinct builds and thus of two different dates. This duality of construction has already been seen in the stone fabric below and there it has been demonstrated that the western build is the earliest; the same can be assumed in the roof. This is in direct contradiction to the relative dating suggested by Molyneux who, though he stated quite correctly that the two roofs 'are of a fundamentally different design' (Molyneux 1984, 45) also says that the western part of the roof 'is typologically later in date' (Molyneux 1984, 47). Even an analysis of the carpenter's marks disagree with this statement.

The western roof has four crown-post trusses, two moulded and with dog-tooth decoration, linked by a collar purlin and so spaced as to create three uneven bays. The rafter couples, supported by straight braces, are identical the whole length of the roof, though of course those at each end of the 'bays' have crown post and tie beam. The carpenters marks, from west to

east run IA (also A, and III on crown post), I, II, III (on crown post), A, AI, III, IIA, AI (also A), AII, IIIA, II (X on crown post), AIII, no mark, AIII, X, III, I (crown post). It should be noted that the beam with no marks has no bracing at all.

The eastern roof has ten identical common rafter couples supported by curved braces, with a pair of wall plates to act as support to the whole structure. The rafters, from west to east begin the number sequence again, running as I, II, III, IIII, A, AII (also IIIA), IIIA, IIIIA, no mark locatable, A.

The dating of these roof forms will be considered below within the general framework of the dating of the whole building.

The Function of the Building

The function of Structure 1 has been a matter previously for dogmatism rather than debate and Molyneux has listed chronologically the views of adherents to its identification as an Infirmary, the Abbot's Lodging or part of the Guest Lodgings (Molyneux 1984, 52 note 14). Molyneux himself favoured Abbot's Lodging.

However, all this ignores the multiphase nature of the stone structure. Attributions can be based on a number of factors; on documentary references; on a study of the plan and form of the building as a clue to its function; on a study of the plan of the overall abbey complex plan and the building's position within; and on a comparative study with the plans of other Premonstratensian abbeys.

The documentary sources are few and have been recently summarised (Marsden 1986, 6-7) and name only within the whole

Abbey complex the Chapter House, Guest House and in 1505 'the Abbott's Chambre', the 'Napre', the 'New Chambre', the 'Calys', the 'Tresor House', 'The Ostre', 'Medyll Chamber' and 'botulphos chambyr' and later the 'Prison of the lord abbot'.

In comparison with the overall groundplans of other Premonstratensian abbey complexes the Phase 1 building by its position, some distance away from the other buildings (see plans in Clapham 1923), could be an Infirmary. There is nothing in the surviving or reconstructable ground plans of the Phase 1 building to argue against this function but there is also nothing to argue for it. The enlargement of this building, a major change of plan, must reflect a change in the function of the building and it would seem that this change was to a domestic structure; the dating of this Phase 2 activity is uncertain, if it took place towards the end of the abbey's life then it could be a change to a lodging of some sort or it may have taken place only after the Dissolution.

Previous arguments on the subject of function have tended to view abbey communities as fossilised entities and only when sufficient excavation has elucidated the evolution of abbey complex plans will arguments about building function be set on a firmer footing.

At the time of the Dissolution much of the Halesowen Abbey complex was demolished and building materials carted away (Holliday 1871, 59). What happened to Structure 1 at that time is uncertain; certainly the western part of the Phase 1 building, with its roof, remained more or less intact and this,

perhaps, is the best time to think of the Phase 2 structure being built.

Whatever the case, as the provision of three sets of new windows indicates, the building continued as a dwelling house for some time into the post-Dissolution period.

The change in function to an agricultural building probably took place after a period of abandonment and decay, and of the demolition of the major part of the west wall, presumably because it was in a parlous state. The creation and alteration of 'the barn' or storehouse can be traced by an analysis of the brick and, indeed, takes the building almost down to the present day, for it had continued in use for the storage of agricultural produce until recently.

Dating

The dating of the building can rely on three things; the jointing and style of the carpentry in the roof, the style of the various windows, and the size of the bricks used in the later builds; and in the provision of dated parallels to these three. Documentary sources are not helpful, those concerning building works at the abbey being few (Marsden 1986, 6) and no attempt having been made to locate any post-Dissolution sources in the Hagley Papers in Birmingham City Reference Library).

The western roof, the Phase 1 roof, with its crown-post arrangement can be fitted within the second phase of the development of the crown-post roof in general and this phase has been approximately dated 1280-1310 (Fletcher and Spoked 1964) but this phasing relates to structures in the south eastern half of the country. The decoration and form of the two crown-posts

with dog's tooth markings, perhaps, help to show that this period is broadly correct also for midland England. A detail similar to this has been dated to 1290-1310 at West Bromwich hall (Wood 1965, 306) and another at Manor Farm, Wasperton to 'the end of the thirteenth and the early years of the fourteenth centuries' (Jones and Smith 1958, 26). This all appears quite consistent but Hewett, in citing the variable crown-post mouldings at Bushmead Priory, Bedfordshire, has stated that such an example means that 'caution is always necessary when dating even with well-developed mouldings' (Hewett 1985, 232).

The stone fabric of the Phase 1 building can only be dated by the style of the windows contemporary with that fabric. The trefoil heads are of a thirteenth century type (Wood 1965, 347-352; Lloyd 1931, 330) though such a style can occur at a later date and is anyway long-lived.

The eastern roof, the Phase 2 roof, does not have features diagnostically individual enough to allow a date to be put on it; perhaps the carpentry and jointing may repay closer study but it is unlikely that any useful information could be gained. The general style of the roof, with no attempt to copy the crown-posts, is dictated by the need for it to be compatible with the style of the earlier roof, though the braces are arched rather than straight. The stone fabric below also offers few clues. The quasi-lancet headed windows inserted into the Phase 1 wall at the south west corner are simply of an intermediate period between the Phase 1 trefoil headed windows and the three styles of rectangular windows all three of which could be from any

period in the sixteenth or earlier seventeenth century (Lloyd 1931, 335-336). The Phase 2 fireplace and arrangement is of a style which could easily fit into a medieval context (Wood 1965, 262) but the brick lining (see above) may be of the fifteenth or earlier sixteenth century.

The building of the gable end to the west in bricks of 2 1/2" and the blocking of many windows probably dates from some period after the end of the seventeenth century both when such sized bricks became common and when they became cheaper. The cart doors also date from this period. The 3" bricks are later still, and indeed the brick trusses built from these are part of a general phenomenon of wall-as-truss in agricultural buildings in the eighteenth century (Peters 1980).

Later building work can be described as pre- or post-1785, from study of a drawing made at the time. However, though generally reliable there are one or two oddities on the drawing that deserve mention. The view is from the south east and thus shows only the southern and part of the eastern walls. In the eastern wall there appears to be a large open shutter at the side of an opening (most of this is hidden by a bush) while the buttress at the north east corner still stands. In the south face the buttress towards the western end has not yet been built and the two rectangular windows AE 523 and AE 525 are not shown though they must have existed. Window AE 528 at first floor level at the eastern end of the south wall is shown with three lights with arched heads but there is no evidence for these having existed to be gauged from an examination of the windows themselves.

Mason's Marks

A total of sixteen possible mason's marks were recorded in the building (Drawing No. 21). Little can be said about these within a single building but should the recording of such marks be extended to other buildings within the complex then worthwhile conclusions might emerge.

Tool Marks

In line with the policy recommended by Rodwell the areas of tooling were closely examined (Rodwell 1981) but only a few general conclusions can be reached. Few stones exhibiting tool marks are found in the external faces with the noteworthy exception of the late buttress AE 511 all of whose stones display the pockmarked tooling found nowhere else within Structure 1. Virtually every stone in the interior was unfinished/unfaced - apart from reused stones in blockings - the toolmarks possibly having been left to facilitate the keying of plaster or rendering. The upper surfaces of stone exposed to view beneath the wall plate were again unfinished and this too suggests a deliberate aid to the keying of mortar. Apart from demonstrating the obvious - that the medieval mason used tools - a recording of each tool mark seemed futile and, given the problems in assigning a mark to a particular tool in use (Hill 1981, 7-11), it was decided to record only marks in the fabric of windows and to record a sample of each major type, of which there are only four, though there are slight variations and combinations.

No specific areas of a unique tooling were identified, nor a

difference between the builds of Phases 1 and 2, and seldom did tool marks run in the same direction over more than two or three stones; this suggests some dressing/tooling in situ but generally that this was done before stones were set into the wall.

Decorated Stones

Three decorated stones are now in situ in Structure 1. Of these only a small mask or human face on a window of Phase 1 is original to the structure. Both the small knight, perhaps once marking a heart burial, and the grave slab at one side of the fireplace have been reset. In 1871, the latter was built into the refectory wall (Halliday 1871, 65).

A weathered stone head (see photo) had been placed inside this building until quite recently but this has now been removed.

Geology

Two basic types of stone have been used in the building, New Red Sandstone and a Siltstone of the same geological period. The sandstone colour varies tremendously, from purple-red, to red, red-orange, green-orange, grey-green and grey but it is likely to be all from the same geological bed (pers. comm. L. Way). Indeed a number of stones of purple hue have grey veining, orange ones red veining etc. However, all these colour variations were recorded on the enhanced survey though they show little meaningful difference between phases. The siltstone, however, is used almost exclusively for blockings and infillings.

A brief comparison with stone in the other surviving remnants of the complex showed that there is a much higher percentage of purple-red stones in Structure 1 than in the others.

However, this may merely reflect the preference of stone robbers for this obviously more aesthetically pleasing hue of stone. Should the building survey extend to cover other parts of the abbey then an attempt should be made to locate the precise bed and quarry source of the building stone but this has not been possible within the timescale of the present study.

Summary

A detailed survey of Structure 1 at Halesowen Abbey has produced an archive, of pro forma sheets, drawings, and photographs, recording both the fabric and roof of that building. An interpretation is also offered for discussion; the building of stone is clearly of two phases, this being reflected in the roof. The Phase 1 building would appear to be late thirteenth or early fourteenth century in date. A turret associated with this Phase may have been demolished shortly before, or at the time of, the extension of the building in Phase 2. This extension could have taken place towards the end of the abbey's life, or soon after the Dissolution. The provision of windows of different styles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggests it continued in use as a dwelling house. After a period of abandonment it became a cart shed in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century and a barn, with trusses and a new internal wall, in the eighteenth century. It was used for agricultural storage until a few years ago.

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