

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Catalogue of materials in Surrey Archaeological Society's research collections relating to the 19th century excavations of Chertsey Abbey by Rob Poulton

MATERIALS IN BOX 55/1

Photographs

* = poor print; ** = fair print; *** = good print

A The 1855 Excavations (see Pocock 1858).

***1 Stone coffins under excavation, looking north-west and showing Mr Grumbridge's house in the background. The view is that copied and engraved for the illustration in Pocock 1858, between 106 and 107, where it says the photographer was Captain Oakes. This is part of the chapter house (not the south transept as Pocock supposed) Labelled on the reverse 'Excavation, (made in April 1855) on the site of the Abbey at Chertsey, Surrey. The gift of Mr Shurlock.' Stamped 'G W Oakes'.

***2 Similar view to 1, but no background and at an earlier stage of excavation with the skeletons still in the coffins. The coffins shown are nos 1, 2 and 3 of Pocock's drawing (between 114 and 115). Labelled and stamped as 1 (except 'The gift of Mr Shurlock' omitted). Plate 3.

***3 As 2, another print. Pencilled 'Excavation at Chertsey' on the front, stamped but not labelled on the reverse.

B The 1861 excavations (see Angell 1862).

Many of these photographs have printed captions, the content of some of which suggests they were prepared while excavation was in progress, and before it was realised that the work was taking place in the church, not the cloister, of the Abbey.

***4 Shows, left to right, 'Bob Mason Jack. Excavators employed on the site of Chertsey Abbey 1861' Handwritten, in a different hand to 5,

where the writing is that of most of the handwritten labels (I suspect that of Mr M Shurlock). The excavators are shown in a very fine photograph, with picks and shovel and a number of stone mouldings etc from the Abbey site.

***5 As 4, but left to right Jack Mason Bob.

***6 Printed caption 'Capitals and fragments in Purbeck marble, found in the excavations of the Chapter House, Chertsey Abbey, September 1861'. They are shown arranged on a wood planking and include stiff-leaf capitals of the 1250s or 1260s (Williamson 1988; cf Pl 17). Correctly this is a probable lady chapel on the south side of the abbey church. Plate 16.

**7 Two copies, mounted together, of 6 @t a much smaller size, and with the label on the reverse.

***8 Printed caption 'This Coffin containing the remains of a Benedictine Monk, probably one of the Superiors, was found when excavating on the site of Chertsey Abbey, 1861. It was formed of a solid block of Purbeck-marble hollowed out to receive the body, and placed east and west - the head facing the east:

Its length was 7ft 8in

Width at head 2ft 10in

at foot 1ft 9in

The whole was covered with plain tiles bedded in concrete. Below the tiles the Coffin was filled with debris of dry rubbish and broken tiles some of which were enriched with pattern. The body was enveloped in sheet lead. The skeleton was perfect. The bones of the lower arm were crossed over the chest. At the left shoulder outside the lead was placed a metal chalice and paten. No inscription of any kind.'

This caption is on the reverse. All the details as described can be clearly seen on this fine photograph. The reverse is initialled 'MS' and a handwritten piece says '8ft 6 to the west of this coffin

was found formed of tiles. One the Queen's canopy covered with Reigate blocks. Nails in square.' Some of the pieces visible to the north of the coffin appear to be floor tiles, others mortared roofing tile (perhaps the 'plain tiles bedded in concrete'). The coffin is described by Angell (1862, 15-18) who, with more boldness than Shurlock, identifies it as that of Abbot John de Rutherwyk (1307-46), placed at the centre of the presbytery of the Abbey Church. The chalice is however of 13th century date (see the printed text). Pl 35.

***9 As 8, but no handwritten comments.

**10 As 9.

**11 Printed caption 'Coffin found while excavating on the site of Chertsey Abbey, 1861, formed of masses of chalk, laid in blocks four inches thick, and about one foot square. It contained a skeleton perfect, about two feet below its covering, but no other remains.

Its length inside was 6ft 10in

Width at head 2ft 6in

at foot 2ft 2in

Its floor was formed of rubble. From fragments found should consider it was covered with plain tiles - coffin was filled with the debris of building. To the east of coffin appears a floor of plain tiles approached by three steps possibly floor of cloister judging from the foundation walls on the side.

At the extremity of cloister and at the east end is an apsidal termination probably forming a small chapel or oratory.'

Correctly, this is looking east along the south aisle of the presbytery towards the apsidal chapel at its east end. Plate 18.

**12 As 11.

***13 Two copies of a photograph nearly identical to 11, but definitely a different exposure. They are mounted together and printed at a

much smaller scale. Printed caption on the reverse as 11, but omits text after 'three steps'.

**14 Printed caption 'View of north-east angle of supposed Cloister [crossed through and 'Chapter House' substituted] of Chertsey Abbey. Discovered during excavations made in August 1861.'

Correctly, this is the probable lady chapel attached to the south side of the church, and shows a corner wall bench, various mouldings and two of the excavators (l to r, Jack and Bob) working on exposing the outside of the east wall of the chapel. Pl 13.

*15 As 14, but 'cloister' not crossed through.

*16 Two small photographs mounted together, caption on reverse as 15, identical to 14 except for a figure on the left (male, formally dressed, holding a book) looking at the wall bench.

*17 As 16.

*18 As 16.

***19 Printed caption on reverse 'View of SOUTH WEST END OF AN APARTMENT supposed to be THE CHAPTER HOUSE. Abutting on a Wall nine feet wide, forming part of the South Aisle of the Chertsey Abbey Church - showing a line of Stone Seat - having at the back the Bases of Columns of Purbeck Marble. In front of the Seat is a Coffin formed of a Solid Block of Stone. Discovered during the Excavations made in August 1861.'

Front, handwritten (in Shurlock's writing) 'Printed this morning Oct 5th', presumably a celebration of this magnificent photograph in which every detail is clear, including patterns of tiles.

Captions to 20-22 correctly say this is the north-west end of what is, probably, a lady chapel attached to the south side of the church. Angell (1862, 25-7) describes the visible features fully. Mason and Jack can be seen working to the right of the picture. Pl 14.

***20 As 19 except, briefer typed caption on front.

***21 As 19 but printed caption on front. Also marked on the front as if for reduction in reproduction, and the outline of the tiles and column base at the west end has been emphasised by pencil lines. The reverse is stamped 'PE6470' and has 'Surrey Archaeological' pencilled on it. This is the copy reproduced in SyAC, 53 (1954), plate XXXVII.

***22 As 19 but printed caption in front.

***23 As 22, but a different photograph, although the only noticeable distinction is that Mason and Jack are not present, and some pieces of stonework have been moved.

***24 As 23.

**25 As 23.

***26 As 19; but a pair of photographs mounted together which differ from 19 in having a man, formally dressed, seated and apparently drawing in a book the printed tiles in front of him, and to the rear a woman in full white dress and shawl gazing admiringly at his work. The photograph covers a smaller area than 19, mainly by excluding most of the coffin to the south. On front cover.

***27 Printed caption 'View of SOUTH SIDE OF THE BACK WALL of a supposed CLOISTER, abutting on a Wall nine feet wide, probably forming part of the CHERTSEY Abbey Church—Showing a line of Stone Seat, having at the back the bases of columns of Purbeck Marble. Discovered during the excavations made in August 1861.'

Correctly this is the lady chapel as 19 etc on the south, and the south presbytery aisle on the north (left), but this is obviously an earlier stage of excavation, perhaps the point at which Angell's (1862, 25) 'patience was put to a severe test' awaiting the harvest before he could complete the work. In the background two women can just be seen, probably peeping at the photographer; in the centre a woman dressed in black; and seated next to the stone

seat a man with a (?) measuring rod in hand, perhaps Sam Angell himself. In front of the seat printed tiles can be seen clearly. On the reverse is drawn a spiders web! Pl 19.

- **28** Two small photographs, mounted together, with a printed caption on the reverse 'view of north-east angle of a supposed cloister of Chertsey Abbey. Discovered during excavations made in August 1861.' It does not, however, seem that this is correct as, though the photographs are not of a very high quality, they are certainly not of the same subject as 14. They show three men grouped around a large basket filled with (?) stones. The man on the left is the same as in 27, the seated figure on the right the same as in 26 (Manwaring Shurlock). In the background two women sit by a gate to a large house clearly shown. It might be possible to identify this from early maps as it appears likely to be close to the Abbey site.

Drawings

These are probably all by Shurlock, except for D1 by Randall Druce.

- D1 Pencil drawings of 'Chertsey Abbey fragment found in foundations. Norman' (a) the whole showing relief cable work to 1/4 size, (b) a portion at full size. Pl 4. This is no 4 of the series otherwise mounted together as 55/2/4 (see below).
- D2 Watercolour drawing 'from photograph [not amongst those listed above] showing remains of kiln for making lime, and stone seat in Chapter House [ie the probable lady chapel] and apse at east of south aisle of Abbey Church.' Pl 15.
- D3 Watercolour drawing of 'a Stone Seat with bases of Columns of Purbeck Marble, having at the back a wall (9 feet wide) of the South Aisle of Chertsey Abbey Church. Discovered 1861.' This is on the north side of the lady chapel.
- D4 Watercolour 'Drawing of the remains of the apsidal termination of the choir of Chertsey Abbey Church, showing a brick coffin

inside and six coffins formed of blocks of chalk outside the wall. Discovered 1861.' This is the central apse at the east end of the church. Interesting details of the coffin construction are shown. Pl 22.

- D5 Pencil and watercolour 'drawing of a chalice and paten found deposited in a coffin near the left shoulder of a body enveloped in sheet lead, when excavating on the site of Chertsey Abbey, July 1861.' The body is shown on photograph 8. The chalice (of 13th century date, see the printed text) is shown front and back view, and is broken and twisted. Only about 60% of the paten seems to survive. Pl 36.
- D6 Watercolour 'drawing of Chalice found in Purbeck Marble Coffin.' The description is on the back, the drawing is closely similar to that on the right side of illustration 5.
- D7 As 6, but no description and corresponds to left side view on illustration 5.

MATERIAL IN BOX 55/2

- 1 'Drawings of design on Encaustic tiles found on the site of Chertsey Abbey 1855 (exact size)' in pen, and adjacent to larger example (Eames 596) in pencil 'Border to ----?----- and sign of Zodiac' The smaller example is an Eames 2765.
- 2 Two drawings pinned together: The upper is a printer's draft for the plan reproduced Pocock 1855 app 107, with only minor differences from that published. The lower one may represent the author's draft for the same. Interestingly it shows in outline the wall omitted by Pocock from his published text (see above M14/Chy/4). Someone (?Shurlock) has pencilled 'North transept' over Pocock's speculative site for the Chapter House, evidently at some time after the 1861 excavations had taken place. Otherwise this larger scale plan (1:250) is identical to that published.

- 3 Large linen backed sheet with two plans mounted on it.

1 A plan with scale of the 1861 excavations at 1:96 (1in to 8ft).

Foundations shaded and some nice details drawn (note foundations discovered at west end too wide for wall usually depicted). Headed (Print). 'Chertsey Abbey Plan of the foundation of the church'. Signed 'S A [Samuel Angell] Oct 1861'

2 Plan labelled in Shurlock's handwriting 'Plan of the foundations discovered 1855'. It gives the impression of being placed so as to align with the 1861 plan. But it presents a considerable problem, as everything about it is too small for 1:96 except the coffins (and the skeletons which are shown here), and the widths of the walls. The internal width of the chapter house is 27 ft at 1:96 and it looks as if this is another example of Shurlock attempting to resolve the problems noted under M14/Chy/4. The skeletons shown in the chapter house are valuable additional information about those noted by Pocock (1858,120) as having had wooden coffins.

- 4 Single large sheet with a number of drawings upon it. Nos 1-3 and 6 (as numbered on the original) are signed 'Randall Druce, dated Nov 18, 1861, and say 'Chertsey Abbey' while no 5 is evidently by the same hand. No 4 is the drawing catalogued as 55/1/D1. The rest of the sheet is covered by 'drawing (full size) showing the bases of columns with the seat and riser north side of Chapter House [south transept overwritten, this is actually the lady chapel] at the west end. Discovered August 1861'. It is a coloured section.

1 'Spandril Full size Early English' Pl 5.

2 'Purbeck marble bases found in Chapter House. Early English'
Plan and sections at 1:6.

3 'Part of Crocket. Full size. Early English'. Pl 6.

4 See 55/1/DI.

- 5 'Chevron Moulding. $\frac{1}{2}$ Full size.'
- 6 'Corbel head. $\frac{1}{2}$ Full size. Norman' Pl 7.
- 5 'M Sherlock del. Drawing exact size of pavement forming half the floor of a supposed shrine in a recess of the wall of the Chapter House [lady chapel] of Chertsey Abbey, found 1861'. Yellow on Green. Designs appear to be early inlaid tile mosaic. Frontispiece.

MATERIAL OTHER THAN THAT IN 55/1 AND 55/2

- PF/Chy/11 Photograph identical to 55/1/11 (see above for description)
- PDL/Cher/36 Watercolour drawing labelled 'two recesses in the wall of supposed Ch [apter] house.' This is undoubtedly one of the series of drawings by M Shurlock of the 1861 excavations and shows two recesses in the north wall of the lady chapel.
- M14/Chy/4 Plan of the coffins discovered in the chapter house (not the south transept as Pocock supposed) in 1855. It is superficially similar to, but differs considerably in detail from, the plan published by Pocock (1858, between 114 and 115). Comparison of the two throws up a number of problems for interpretation of the structures discovered in 1855 in this area. It seems most likely that M14/Chy/4 represents a plan prepared by Shurlock soon after the excavations were conducted. The walls shown compare closely with those depicted by Pocock (1858, opp 107), except that the northern wall (wall 33 on fig 2) is omitted from Pocock's plan, although his text implies its discovery (1858, 108; see also 55/2/2 above), no doubt because it conflicted with his interpretation of this area as the south transept of the conventual church. The comparison suggests that the scale of Shurlock's plan is 1 in to 10 ft (1:120). If so, however, the coffins are drawn too large, as they would be about 13 ft (4 m long) at this scale. There is a

further problem with the way the coffins are shown, in that distances north-south between them are much larger (compared to either the size of the coffins themselves or in terms of a 1:120 scale) than those suggested by 55/1/1 or 55/1/2 (pl 3), or those given by Pocock (1858, 113-4). Those criticisms do not apply to Pocock's plan (1858, between 114 and 115) which is more or less consistent with his text and with the photographs. That said, a further problem arises with Pocock's plan in that the wall shown on the north side does not appear either on his own main plan or on Shurlock's drawing. It would, however, be in exactly the right place for the north wall of the chapter house (fig 2), giving that room closely similar dimensions to those of, to take a local example, the chapter house at Waverley Abbey (Brakspear 1908), where the cloister garth is also of similar dimensions to Chertsey. A possible explanation of the oddities of Shurlock's plan would be that he failed to realise the existence of this north wall of the chapter house, and therefore attempted to distribute the coffins within the larger area in drawing up his plan. The difficulty with such an explanation is that Pocock specifically says (1858, 120) that detailed knowledge of the coffins is owed to the work of Shurlock. This, of course, makes the difference of detail in the depiction of the coffins between the two plans of considerable interest, as it rather suggests a degree of artistic licence was involved in writing-up notes or sketches.

M14/Chy/6

'Plan of freehold property made May 1861 [original copy = M14/Chy/3] also plan of the foundation walls of the Chertsey Abbey church discovered 1861.' I think this very probably

represents the results of the original site survey for Angell's excavations or an early copy. See 55/2/3.1 for the original plan of the church itself.

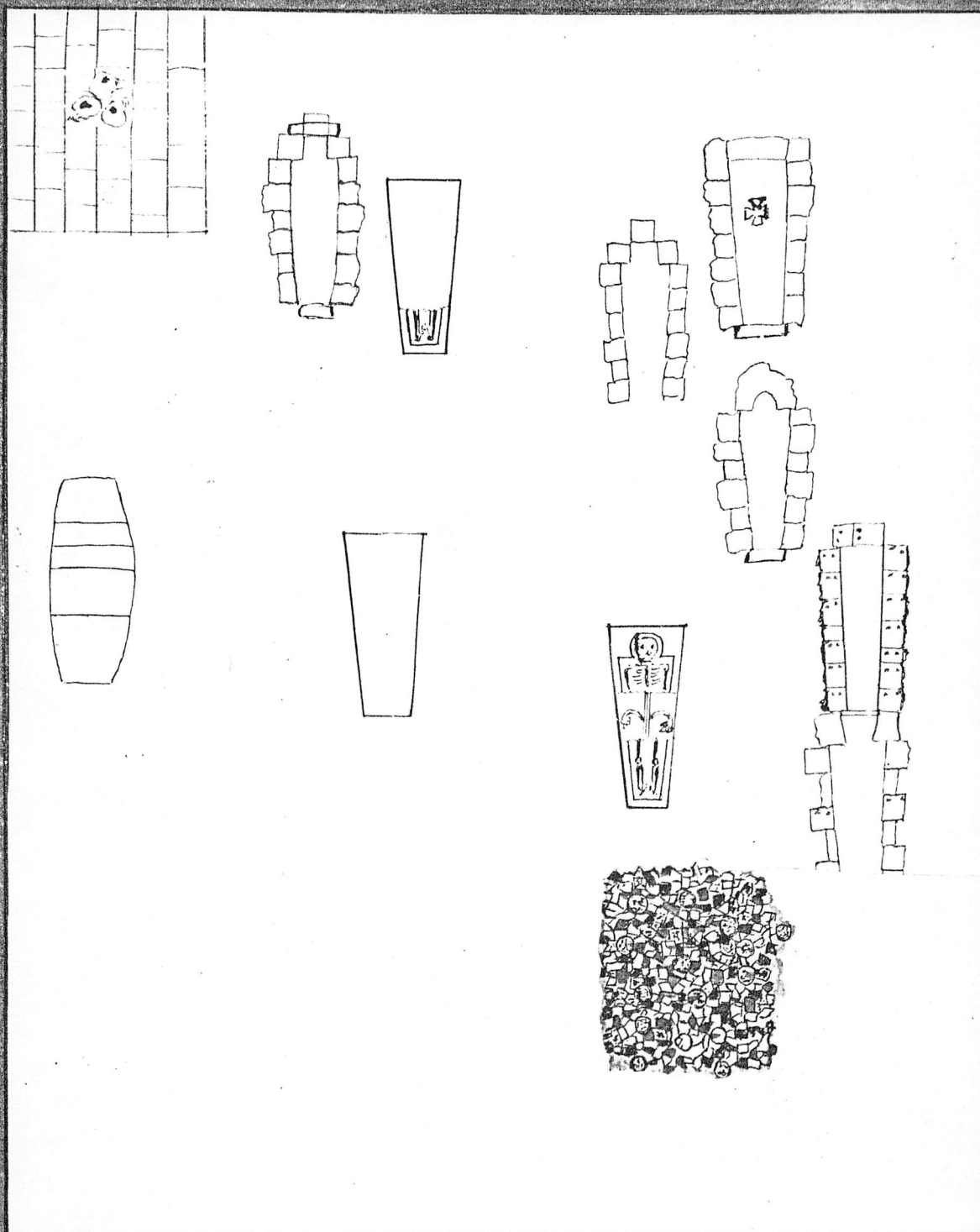


Fig 52. REPRODUCTION OF DRAWING M14/CHY/4

CHARTSEU ABBAY.
 Plan of South Transept,
 Shewing position of Coffins and Encaustic Tiles.

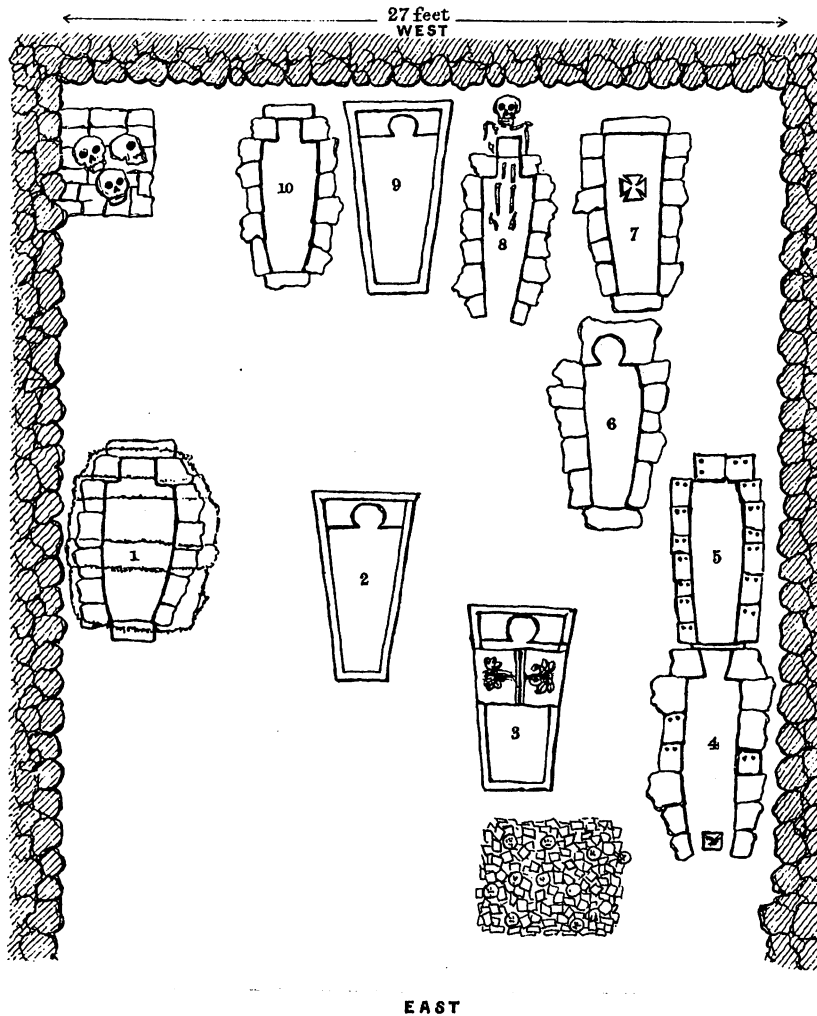


Fig 53. REPRODUCTION OF THE PLAN OF THE 'SOUTH TRANSEPT' (CORRECTLY, CHAPTER HOUSE)

ILLUSTRATED BY POCOCK (1858)

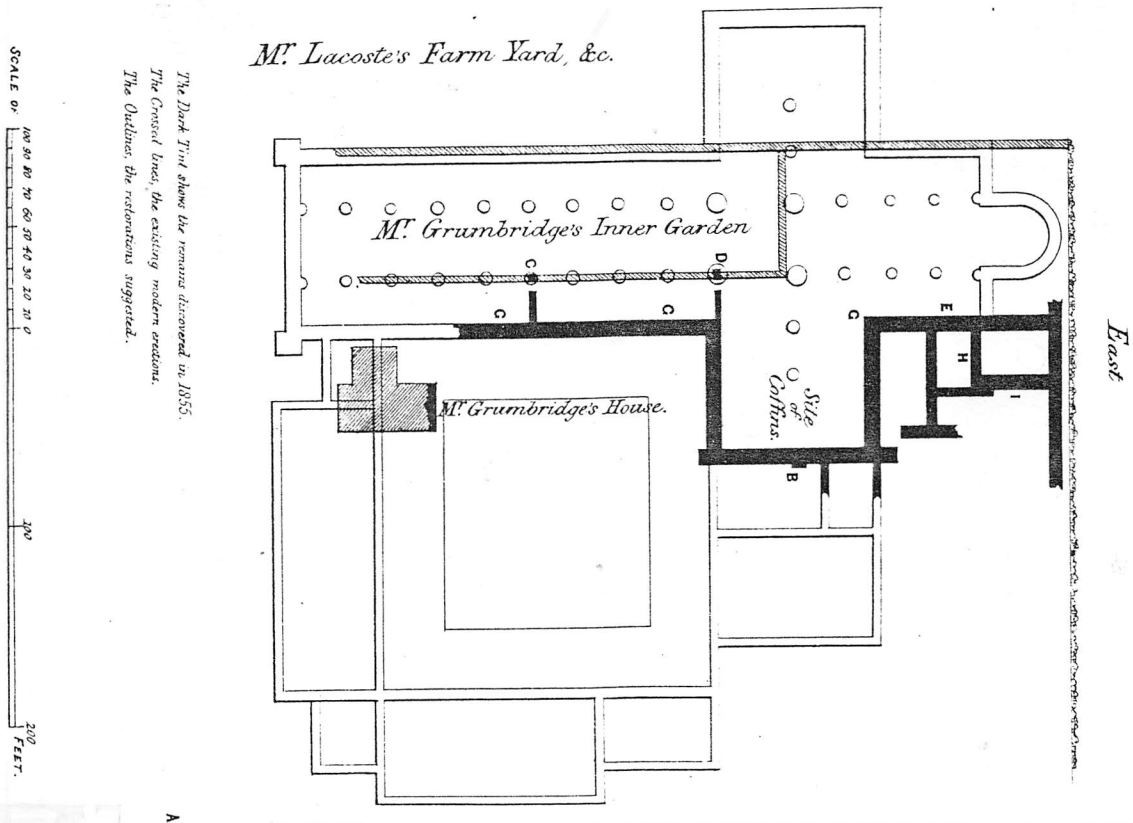


Fig 54. REPRODUCTION OF POCOCK'S PLAN (1858, opp 107) OF THE 1855 EXCAVATIONS

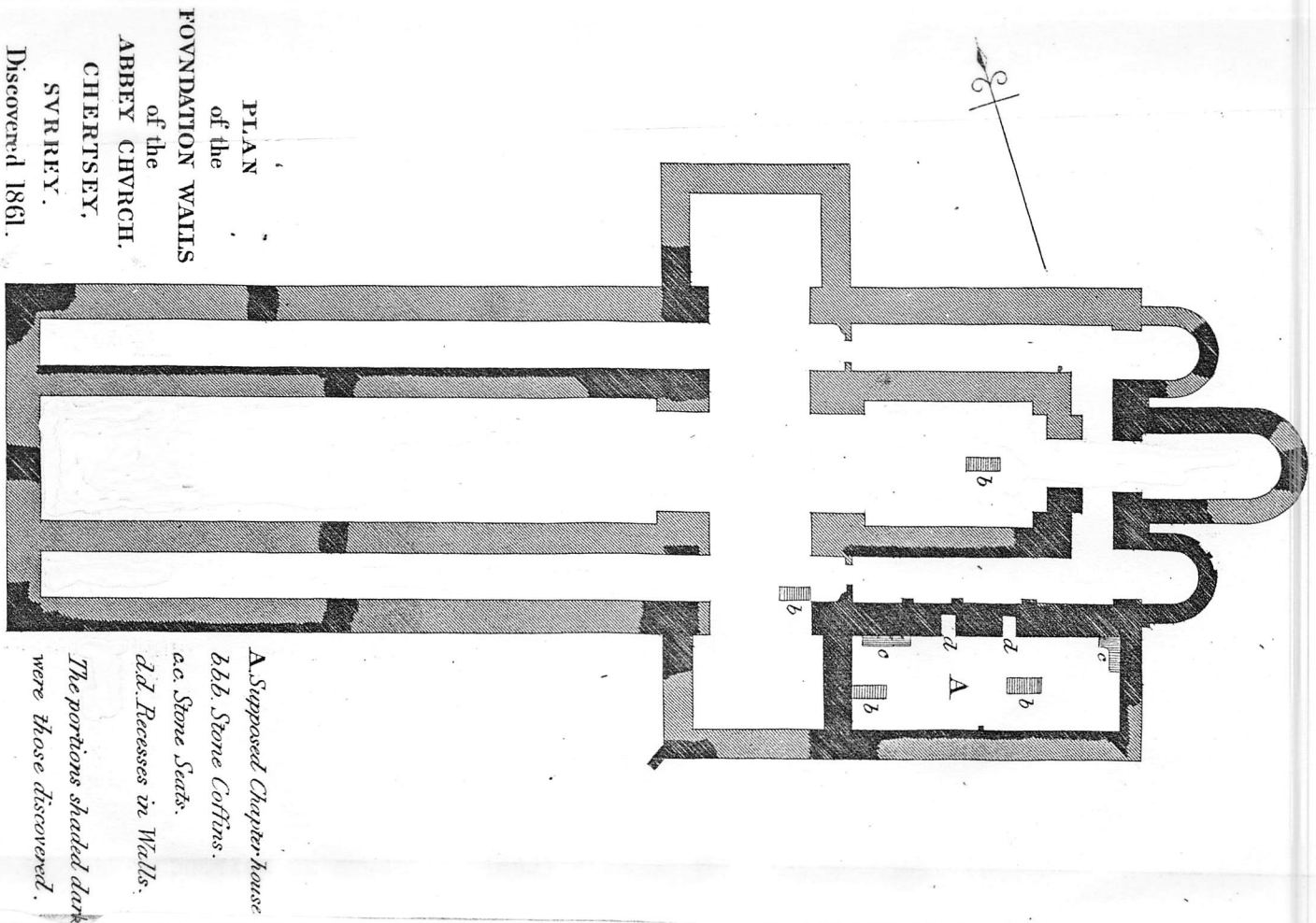


Fig 55. REPRODUCTION OF ANGELL'S (1862) PLAN OF THE 1861 EXCAVATIONS