
EXCAVATION WITHIN THE ABBEY CHURCH 1990

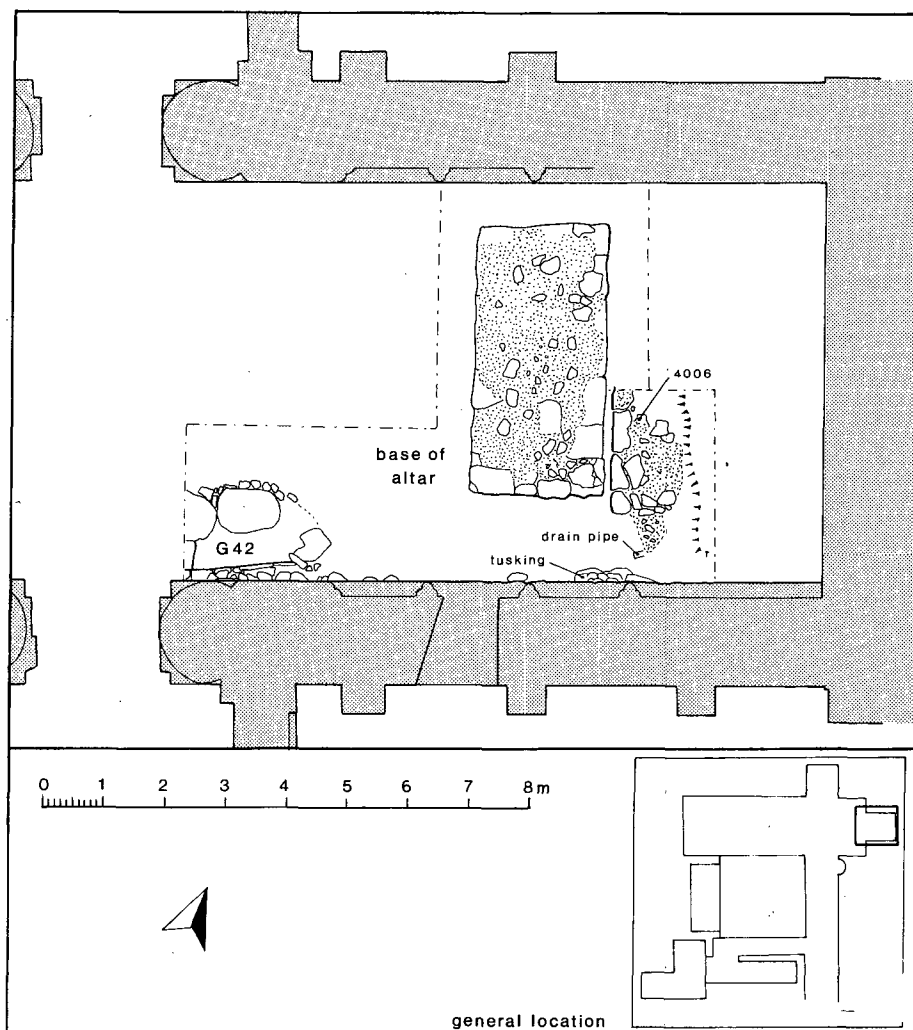
In 1990 there was limited excavation to determine whether the E end of the 12th-century church was shorter than the surviving one (RCAHMS 1956, 200 & 203). Simultaneously, a trench was opened between the sixth and seventh piers of the nave to establish whether the church had had a temporary W gable.

DETAILS OF THE EXCAVATION

THE PRESBYTERY (illus 75; 76)

There had been so much disruption below the floor of the presbytery that it was difficult to distinguish between those levels

disturbed in recent years and those that were contemporary with the monastic occupation. There was a profusion of disarticulated human bones throughout the relatively small, L-shaped trench and, as deep as 0.7m, there were numerous 19th- and 20th-



Illus 75
Plan of the principal features
excavated within the abbey
church in 1990.



Illus 76
Base of altar in the presbytery of the church; from the S.

century artefacts among the disturbed rubble, soils and boulder clay.

Within an E extension of the trench were found the mortar-bonded, rubble foundations (4006) (illus 75) of a wall, truncated on its S side by a modern iron drain pipe. Although its relationships with the side walls of the presbytery were not established, it is conceivable that wall 4006 had spanned the width of the church. However, this wall could have been no wider than the 1.2m of its foundations and hence it is unlikely to have been the original E wall of the church, the surviving E wall being twice its width. It is not clear whether the tussing projecting from the S wall of the presbytery was associated with masonry 4006 or, perhaps more likely, belonged to another phase of the abbey's development.

To the immediate W of masonry 4006 was a rectangular plinth of mortar-bonded masonry (illus 76), 4.4 × 2.3m, that was separated from the N and S presbytery walls by gaps of 0.7m and

1.4m respectively. The location and dimensions of this plinth have led to its interpretation as the base of an altar although its relationships with other structures have yet to be established.

At the extreme SW corner of the trench, adjacent to the SE pier of the tower, was a coffin burial (Grave 43) of probable 18th/19th century date, below which were the fragmentary remains of a sarcophagus burial (Grave 42). These graves are described in more detail in the chapter (5) on burials below.

THE NAVE

A trench, 5.0 × 2.2m, was opened midway across the nave, between the sixth and seventh piers. Numerous 20th-century artefacts were retrieved more than 0.7m below the level of the pier bases, making it obvious that, if there had been a temporary W gable in this area, it is unlikely to have survived into modern times.

