

THE CONDUIT, MARKET PLACE, SHERBORNE, DORSET
Observations and Recording



Report No. 53115.1

November 2004

The Conduit, Market Place, Sherborne, Dorset

Observations and Recording, Sept–Oct 2004

CONTENTS

Summary	1
Introduction	1
Archaeological and Historical background	1
Description of the Monument	2
Aims and Objectives	2
Repair and Conservation works.....	2
Methods.....	3
Results	3
Conclusions	3
References	4
Appendix 1: Written Scheme of Investigation	
Figures	
1 Location map	5
2 Sketch plan of The Conduit	6
3 E–W sketch section across the parapet and roof	7
Plates	
1 Detail of north face of NE buttress showing differences in mortar and slate packing	8
2 Detail of south face of NE buttress showing differences in mortar	8
3 Detail of parapet on west face, showing differences in mortar	8
4 Detail of tracery in NW face during removal of stone, showing remnants of lead came.....	9
5 Detail of tracery in NW front after repair of stonework	9
6 Lead roof, looking east	9
7 Lead roof after repair work completed, looking west	10
8 Repointing the structure	10
9 Cleaning the interior.....	11
10 West front, after repointing.....	11
11 Southwest front, after repointing.....	11
12 Southeast front, after repointing.....	11
13 East front, after repointing.....	12
14 Northeast front, after repointing.....	12
15 Northwest front, after repointing.....	12

Report written by:

Peter Bellamy

Prepared on behalf of:

Sherborne Town Council
The Manor House
Newland
Sherborne
DT9 3JL

The Conduit, Market Place, Sherborne, Dorset

Observations and Recording, Sept–Oct 2004

SUMMARY

In September–October 2004, Terrain Archaeology carried out an observations and recording during repair and conservation works on the Conduit, Market Place, Sherborne (ST63891652). The repair works disturbed very little of the structure and very few additional details of the structure were revealed. The major discovery was that the area above the vaulted ceiling had been filled with concrete and the lead roof lowered about 0.3 m, at some time during the second half of the 20th century.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Sherborne Town Council to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during conservation works on The Conduit in Sherborne, Dorset.

The Conduit is situated on the Market Place, which is in the centre of Sherborne at the junction of Cheap Street, South Street and Long Street (NGR ST63891652).

The Conduit is a Scheduled Monument (Dorset SM7). Scheduled Monuments have Statutory Protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended. The archaeological observations and recording were undertaken as part of the conditions for Scheduled Monument Consent. It is also a Grade I listed building.

The fieldwork was carried out between 15th September and 15th October 2004 by Peter Bellamy.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge Peter Hill (Sherborne Town Council), Gary Sayer and Ziggy Searchfield (Corinthian Building Services Ltd), and Steven Wallis (Dorset County Council) for their help and cooperation during this project.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following brief summary of the Conduit is based largely on information displayed in Sherborne Town Museum and in a pamphlet produced by the museum (Gibb 2003).

The Conduit was built c. 1520 as the *lavatorium* (washhouse) of the Benedictine Monastery, in Sherborne. It originally stood against the north side of the cloisters, opposite the refectory. It was fed by water from a spring called New Well, or Newell, (now in the garden of Newell Grange to the north of the town). The water flowed down to the cloisters in an open stone channel, which was probably constructed in the 12th century to supply the kitchens. John Leland visited the monastery in 1540 and recorded that the ‘fair Castle over the conduit in the Cloister’ was built by Abbott Meare (1504–35).

After the dissolution of the monastery in 1539, the Conduit house and its water were leased by the Almshouse. In 1559, the lease passed to the Governors of the recently founded Edwards VI’s Grammar School. In 1553, the school moved the Conduit house to its present position in the Market Place for the use of the townspeople, charging users a water rate. In 1629, ownership of the Conduit house passed to the school and substantial repairs were undertaken. In 1691, the Conduit

house was decorated with plaques on the upper parts of the walls and the date written in gold on two of its pillars.

By the early 19th century, the building had fallen into disrepair through weathering and vandalism. In 1834, it was partially bricked up and glazed at a cost of £140. It was rented by a stationer and used as a reading room and small public library.

In 1844, the ornamental parts of the Conduit were painted and a number of security measures were put in place, including iron railings, gates, a lock, and wire window reinforcements. Then in 1847, it was lent to the local Constabulary rent free for use as a lock-up or shelter for the constables on the beat. It was let to the Reverend Hanton for use as a penny bank in 1861. In 1870, the Conduit served as a depot for donated items to be sent to the sick and wounded of the Franco-Prussian war.

The building was opened up again and the railings were removed in 1872. A drinking trough was added in 1882. This same year, an epidemic of typhoid in the town was attributed to the conduit water source. This prompted the authorities to organise a town water supply.

In 1928, the building was scheduled as an Ancient Monument. In 1933, it was given to the town by Sherborne School. It was repaired at some time post-war, possibly during the 1950s or 1960s.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The structure is hexagonal in plan (Figure 2) with five open and one closed side and is built in local Sherborne and Ham Hill stone. The angles have buttresses with weathered tops. There is a moulded plinth and a parapet with moulded string and coping.

The entrance is in the west front, which sets forward a little. It has a two-centred arch with panelled jambs and soffit. The plinth on either side of the opening is carried up above the arch to the level of the parapet string course.

The east side is closed and has a two-centred window with four lights and perpendicular tracery, with continuous casement-moulded jambs. The outer lights are deeper than the inner, which stop at an enriched panel containing the water tap of a large trough. The trough is semi-circular in plan with a shaped underside.

The NW, NE, SW, and SE faces have 2-centred openings containing only the vertical tracery and the heads of the lights.

Internally there is a fine vaulted ceiling, with moulded cross, diagonal and lierne ribs springing from shafts with foliage caps and moulded bases. The intersections have carved foliage bosses and the main intersection has a much larger boss carved with a shield-of-arms of Sherborne Abbey and supported by angels. The floor is blue Lias flags.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological recording is to establish and make available information about the structure, which is exposed during the conservation and repair works.

REPAIR AND CONSERVATION WORKS

In brief, the scope of the repair and conservation works was as follows:

1. Repair of the Ham Hill stonework, specifically the replacement of part of the tracery in the NW face, the resetting of some stones in the west front and the NW, W and SW parapet.
2. Raking out old mortar and repointing the whole structure with lime mortar.
3. Repair of lead roof covering.
4. Repair of lead and cast iron rainwater goods.
5. Cleaning of the interior stonework.

METHODS

The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with Written Scheme of Investigation (Document No. 3115) prepared by Terrain Archaeology in March 2003 (Appendix 1) and with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*.

The recording of the works was done on an intermittent basis during the period of the repair and conservation works. The recording of the works was done photographically. Any measurements taken were by hand tape.

Access to the structure was via the scaffolding, which enabled all parts of the structure to be reached.

RESULTS

The raking out of the mortar joints revealed a number of small patches of grey mortar and some packing with slate in the NE buttress (Plates 2 & 3) and patches of similar grey mortar in the parapet on the west front (Plate 4). Elsewhere the mortar was pale yellow lime mortar.

During the removal of part of the tracery in the NW face, a small fragment of lead came from the former glazing was revealed *in situ* (Plate 5). A number of cement repairs to this tracery were also noted.

The removal of stones prior to resetting revealed no additional information on the details of construction of the structure.

The investigation of the roof revealed that beneath the flat lead roof, the structure had been filled with concrete. There was also a chamfered band course of concrete round the interior of the parapet extending to the lead roof, rendered up to the bottom of the internal string (Figure 3; Plate 6). The present lead roof appears to be about 0.3 m lower than the lead roof depicted on a measured plan of the Conduit, dated 1905 (held by the NMR (Drawing MD49/00697)). The lead roof was not removed and the concrete was left intact. New lead flashing was added below the internal parapet string course (Plate 7).

CONCLUSIONS

The repair and conservation works revealed very little additional detail about the structure. The main discovery was that the lead roof had been lowered and the area above the vaulted ceiling had been filled with concrete. This probably dates to the 1950s or 1960s.

The history of the Conduit, with its removal from its original site and the large number of subsequent alterations and repairs, mean that there are probably very few additional surviving details of the medieval structure hidden within its fabric.

REFERENCES

Gibb, J. H. P., 2003
NMR

The Sherborne Conduit. Pamphlet, Sherborne Museum.
National Monuments Record

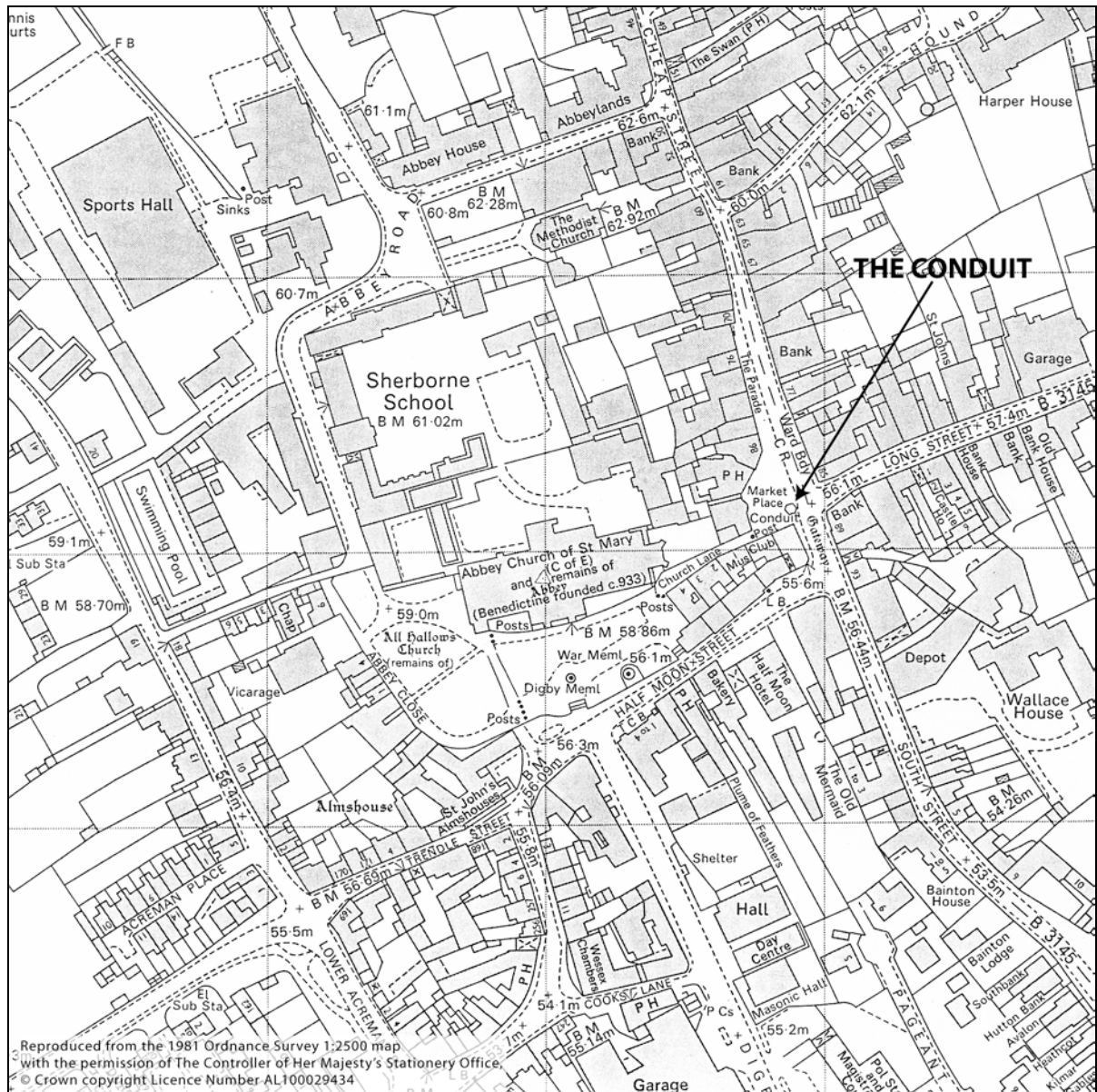


Figure 1: Location Map

THE CONDUIT, SHERBORNE Sketch Plan

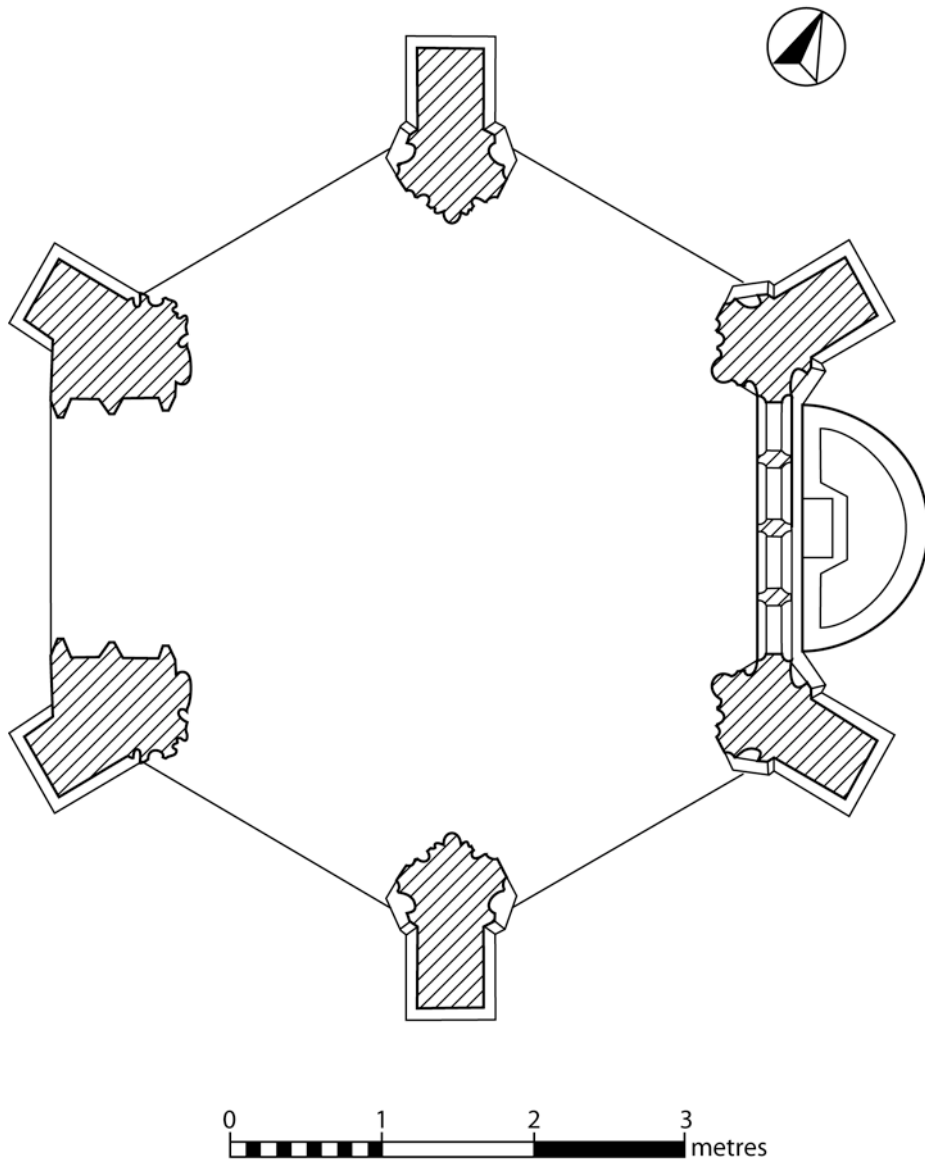


Figure 2: Sketch plan of The Conduit.

THE CONDUIT, SHERBORNE

Sketch section across parapet and roof

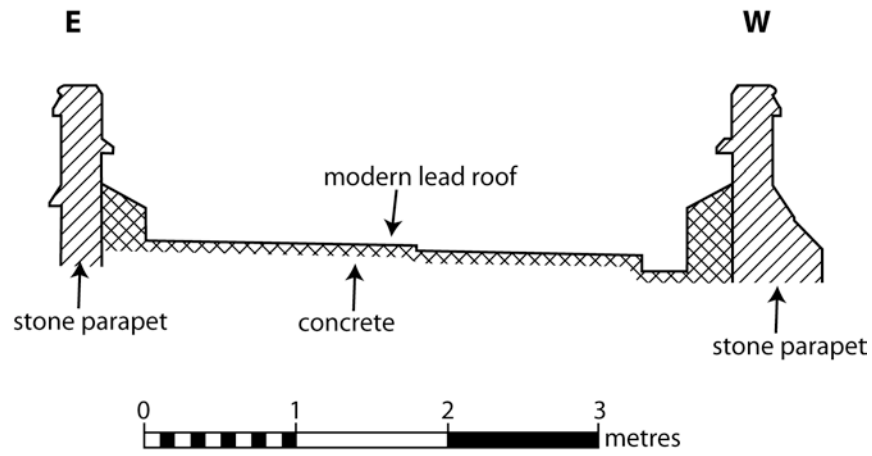


Figure 3: E-W sketch section across parapet and roof



Plate 1: Detail of north face of NE buttress showing differences in mortar and slate packing.



Plate 2: Detail of south face of NE buttress showing differences in mortar.



Plate 3: Detail of parapet on west face, showing differences in mortar.



Plate 4: Detail of tracery in NW face during removal of stone, showing remnants of lead came.



Plate 5: Detail of tracery in NW front after repair of stonework.



Plate 6: Lead roof, looking east.



Plate 7: Lead roof after repair work completed, looking west.



Plate 8: Repointing the structure.



Plate 9: Cleaning the interior.



Plate 10: West front, after repointing.



Plate 11: Southwest front, after repointing.



Plate 12: Southeast front, after repointing.



Plate 13: East front, after repointing.

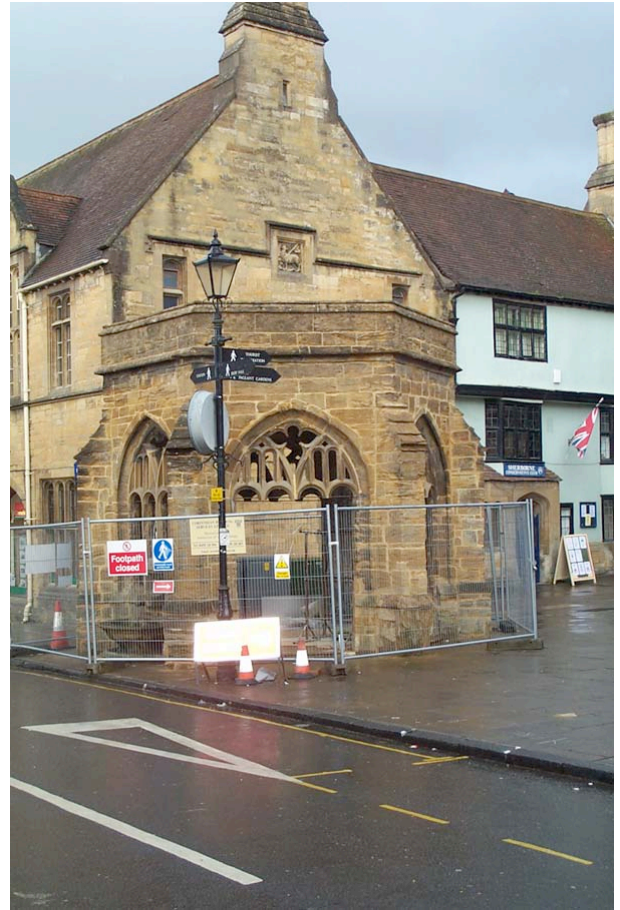


Plate 14: Northeast front, after repointing.



Plate 15: Northwest front, after repointing.

APPENDIX 1: WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION