

The Cemetery Excavations of Glastonbury Abbey

BACKGROUND

Early burials are purported to have been found both to the north and south of the Lady Chapel and to the south of the medieval church, along with fragments of decorated stone cross-shafts (associated with grave markers) including 8th-10th century specimens (Cramp 2006, 153-158). According to Adam of Domerham, the 13th century abbey historian, the Lady Chapel (also known as St Mary's Chapel and St Joseph's Chapel) replaced the Old Church (*vetusta ecclesia*) following the 1184 fire; presumed to have been the original foci of the early monastery, the Saxon and medieval churches were both situated to the east. The extent of the earliest cemetery is unknown, although burials found to the east of the eastern boundary of Abbot Dunstan's (c 940-957+) cemetery indicates that it extended into the 13th century cloister.

The 'hypogeum' (a partially subterranean structure containing sarcophagi), later incorporated into the eastern end of the stone Saxon church, may have fallen within the bounds of the early cemetery. Evidence for a number of small buildings associated with funerary activity and a further possible 'hypogeum' were identified on the south side of the Lady Chapel and church (Radford 1981, 115). In addition, two memorials known as the 'pyramids' were thought to have been positioned within the early cemetery, although there is conflicting evidence regarding whether these were to the north or south of the Lady Chapel (Rahtz & Watts 2003, 115). The mythical grave of Arthur and Guinevere was believed to have been located to the south of the Lady Chapel, possibly flanked by the 'pyramids'. A further memorial known as St David's Pillar carried an engraved brass plate dating to the late 14th or 15th century (Rahtz & Watts 2003, 43) marking the original east end of the Lady Chapel, although there is some ambiguity as to whether this was located to the north or south of the building (*ibid*, 91-2).

During the mid 10th century, Abbot Dunstan undertook significant re-modelling of the cemetery, as described by William of Malmesbury in c 1120:

'...he (Dunstan) enclosed the cemetery of the monks on the south side of the church with a stone wall many feet high. The same space was raised as a mound with squared stones and became like a pleasant meadow isolated from the noise of the passers by, so that it might be said of the saints resting therein, their bodies are buried in peace' (Malmesbury, *Vita S. Dunstani*, 272).

Sealing the earlier graves, the newly-raised platform to the south of the Lady Chapel (later known as the monks' cemetery) measured c 70m by 20m and appears to have been enclosed by a high wall, although the northern edge sloped downwards to meet the original ground level (Rahtz & Watts 2003, 110). Dunstan provided a gatehouse chapel, St John the Baptist (known as Dunstan's Chapel) to the west of the Lady Chapel, providing access to the cemetery and the churches to the east (*ibid*, 100). A further chapel dedicated to St Michael was inserted into the south cemetery wall and although the excavated remains were dated to the 13th and 14th century, earlier origins are a possibility (*ibid*, 110). Many of the graves and tomb-shrines would have been marked by memorials, fragments from which include a socketed base found during excavation, a number of fragments of decorated stone cross-shafts and possible grave-markers including crosses spanning the pre-Conquest period (Cramp 2006, 153-158) up to the 12th century. A further burial area known as the lay cemetery was located on the north side of the Lady Chapel.

The later medieval cemeteries overlay the earlier burial areas; although it has not been possible to establish whether they extended beyond the earlier cemetery boundaries, excavation has revealed that the eastern boundary of the monks' cemetery was re-positioned westwards during Dunstan's alterations and moved further west again during the 11th or 12th century. Following the Dissolution, the lay cemetery was used as a kitchen garden for the White Hart (as recorded by the antiquary Revd J. Whitaker in 1777), while late 19th century photographs of the monks' cemetery show an orchard.

This report covers the scope of the historic excavations within the cemeteries, including research objectives where specified. The archaeological evidence for burials and cemetery structures associated with the pre-Dunstan cemetery will be re-evaluated, including Radford's supposed discovery of the site of exhumation in 1191 of the grave of Arthur and Guinevere and the two stone 'pyramids'. The purported evidence for Dunstan's re-modelling of the cemetery will be assessed and the longevity of the late Saxon cemetery boundaries will be considered including evidence for medieval alterations and additions. Specific information on burial practice throughout the late Saxon and medieval period at Glastonbury will be extrapolated from the records concluding with evidence of post-Dissolution activity within the cemeteries.

Historic Excavations

To the north of the Lady Chapel, burials were excavated in 1825 by John Fry Reeves, a lawyer who in the same year had purchased most of the abbey complex and transformed it into 'pleasure grounds' for his new home, Abbey House. Bond discovered some structural remains between 1911 and 1913 and explored St David's Pillar and adjacent area in 1921. In 1954, Radford excavated a trench north-westwards from this pillar. The south side of the cemetery was more thoroughly explored with explorations undertaken by Bond in 1908, 1913 and 1921. However, it was Radford who conducted the most extensive excavations across the monks' cemetery and St Michael's Chapel comprising ten trenches excavated in 1952, 1954, 1962 and 1963.

Reeves

North of Lady Chapel

In 1825 Reeves excavated eighteen oak coffin burials on the northern side of the Lady Chapel, immediately west of the elaborately carved north doorway, details of which were published by Richard Warner in 1826. The burials were discovered during the construction of a stairway replacing the medieval stairs providing external access to the Lady Chapel crypt constructed by Abbot Bere (1493-1524). Three of the burials were beneath the medieval steps indicating that this group of burials pre-dated the construction of the crypt. The head and shoulders of each skeleton rested on a bundle of wood shavings and a rod of thorn or hazel was beneath and to the right side of each skeleton (Rahtz 2003, 111 after Warner 1826).

Bond

St Dunstan's Chapel

Bond's identification of St Dunstan's Chapel to the west of the Lady Chapel resulted from an incidental mention in the Diary of John Cannon (Meare Schoolmaster, b. 1684). Bond identified the

remains of this building in 1911 and most of the plan was exposed and recorded in subsequent years (Bond 1913, pl 2). Although much of the masonry had been robbed, Bond's detailed, stone-by-stone plan of the chapel was considerably ahead of its time in terms of archaeological recording (Rahtz 2003, 101). The chapel shared the same alignment as the *vetusta ecclesia* and the walls projected to the east and west by c 1.3m. In the centre of the western wall were two stones with c 0.1m grooves aligned east-west which are presumed to have held slabs forming the side stones of an entrance (*ibid*). A wall was found extending northwards by 3-4m from the approximate centre of the chapel and although this was included on a published plan (Bond 1913, pl 2) no mention appears in the accompanying text.

North of Lady Chapel

Bond's 1913 plan depicts the southern end of a large c 12m wide building situated to the north of St Dunstan's Chapel (*ibid*) (see A on the cemetery excavations plan). The south-west corner of this structure is extant, comprising the interior of a 14th century vaulted undercroft with a wall stub to the north and a door jamb rebated for a wooden door to the south. Between the doorway and the north-west stair turret of the Lady Chapel the outline of a wall is indicated by a broken line captioned 'Site of boundary wall removed' (*ibid*). John Carter's map of 1784 shows a boundary captioned 'Common Stone Wall' running from the north-west corner of the Lady Chapel to the south-east corner of St Patrick's Chapel (serving the almshouses) incorporating the upstanding undercroft fragment. The northern end of this building was excavated between 1987 and 1993 and interpreted as the living quarters of the chaplains of the Galilee (Woods 1994, 7). It is argued that this 14th century building provides a *terminus post quem* for the reduction of the 10th century terrace of the lay cemetery (*ibid*, 12). This range was thought to have been demolished by 1475 and replaced by new buildings for secular priests and clarks (*ibid*, 7).

In 1921, Bond set out to discover the location of St David's pillar which purportedly marked the eastern end of the *vetusta ecclesia*. Using the measurements and directions detailed on the late 14th or 15th century brass plate which was attached to the pillar, Bond discovered a circular platform north of the eastern end of the Lady Chapel and beneath a deep bank (Bond 1926, 15 & pl 5) (see photographs PID:18979 & PID:18980); see B on the cemetery excavations plan. Constructed of small rough stones set in a poor mortar and measuring 2.29m in diameter, the soft material in the centre of the platform was excavated to a depth of c 1.22m and contained moulding fragments of 14th century character (these were mostly returned to the hole) while an octagonal shaft of 'shell-marble' was removed from the superstructure (*ibid*, 16). On this basis, Bond suggested that the platform was a late reconstruction of an earlier monument which it was assumed had replaced the original sixth century work (*ibid*). The base of the structure was not reached at a depth of 1.52m, but excavations were discontinued due to the many interments encountered within close proximity to the masonry (*ibid*).

A deep layer of charred material rested on the clay beneath the deep bank to the north of the Lady Chapel (*ibid*,17); this appears to be visible in the walls of the trench surrounding St David's Pillar, although this was not commented upon by the excavator. It was suggested that the charred material may have derived from the 1184 fire, perhaps representing the burnt remains of the *vetusta ecclesia* and redeposited during the excavations for the late medieval crypt (constructed by Abbot Bere around 1500.) However, the stratigraphic details contained in the next paragraph of the report are

contradictory. The 'old ground surface' was covered by a 0.46m layer of stone and clay, covered by a thin layer of 'freestone dust' underlying the burnt layer of cinders, dirt and charcoal (*ibid*). Bond noted the presence of 17th century finds within the burnt deposit which perhaps points towards a post-Dissolution date as opposed to 1184; the published recommendation for further exploration perhaps reflects this uncertainty.

During soil removal in 1921 to the north of the Lady Chapel, a substantial foundation was found running westwards from the north-east corner of the building, the eastern end resting on a series of projecting footings resembling a buttress (*ibid*, 18) (see photograph PID:18978; see C on the cemetery excavations plan). The 1.52m wide foundation was traced for 9.14m to the west with only one short break and was truncated by the 19th century steps for the crypt (*ibid*). The orientation differed from the Lady Chapel by c 2 degrees and therefore shared the same alignment as the Great Church; however, Bond thought it was most likely a protective stone enclosure for the vetusta ecclesia and therefore dated it to Abbots Herlewin or Henry de Blois (*ibid*). In a letter to Woods dated 1991, Radford clearly identifies this as the retaining wall for the lay cemetery (Woods 1994, 11-12) and the alignment suggests a post-1184 date.

South of Lady Chapel

In 1908, during exploratory work at the western end of the nave, a burial was found alongside the south side of the nave foundations and in the angle between the southern projection of the west tower and an earlier wall initially identified as the 'old' (ie 12th century) west cloister wall (Bond 1908, 128). At a depth of 0.91m below the turf, the undisturbed skeleton was of an elderly male with the head placed in a circular recess within a rectangular stone and the feet covered by a stone slab laid slightly obliquely (see D on the cemetery excavations plan; after Bond 1908, fig 7). An additional skull lay between the legs, presumably from an earlier, disturbed burial. A stone placed on edge was thought to mark the end of the grave, with two or three leg bones and a pelvis or skull placed on the western side of the end stone. The grave post-dated the construction of the nave and therefore was deduced to be no earlier than the late 13th century (*ibid*, 130). In 1913, two fragments of an Anglo-Saxon stone cross head were found during the excavation of 'the extreme south-west corner of the Nave', within the area of the monks' cemetery (Bond 1913, 62).

In 1921 a search was made for one of the documented 'pyramids' 9.75m from the south door of the Lady Chapel (see photographs PID:18878 & PID:18879). At this point Bond discovered traces of what appeared to be 'an old construction of apparently rectangular shape' which he thought were of the correct dimensions of a 'pyramid' or large stone cross (Bond 1926, 17). A slightly curved rough stone projection was recorded below and to the west of the rectangular feature (*ibid*). The corresponding 'pyramid' was presumed to have been located to the east; however, Bond's search failed to disclose any remains although this was partly blamed on the presence of the builder's shed.

Also in 1921, work started between the south-east corner of the Galilee and the foundations of the south-west tower of the nave (*ibid*, 19). The face of a low modern wall was discovered along the line of the tower foundations, shown on old drawings as a pastoral enclosure, and a 'very old' square foundation of Tor burrs projecting westwards below the 12th century foundation (*ibid*) (see E on the cemetery excavations plan). St Michael's Chapel was located by Bond and although only the eastern side was recorded in plan the report provides some details (Bond 1915, 135-137). The foundations of the south wall were constructed of Tor burrs and the return of the west wall established; however,

the presence of extensive tree-roots prevented further exploration (*ibid*, 136). Some upstanding walling was noted at the south-east corner (see F on the cemetery excavations plan) and a lead pipe protected by stone capping ran approximately east from this point (*ibid*). Also a number of oyster shells pallettes were recovered near the south-east corner of St Michael's chapel (*ibid*).

Bond mentions that in 1911 during the removal of overburden from the monks' cemetery, a bulla or seal of Calixtus III (1455-58) was found (Bond 1914, 41) (see [L:1820]). A detailed description is provided in his report (*ibid*, pl. 2). A later report states that the bulla was found together with a considerable number of glazed tiles, to the east of St Michael's Chapel in the location of a large building to the west of the cloister (Bond 1915, 136) (see Abbots' Range report).

Peers, Clapham and Horne

In 1928 a rectangular subterranean burial chamber was found c 1m east of the presbytery attributed to the earliest stone church supposedly constructed around c 720 during the reign of King Ine of Wessex (see Radford 1981, Fig 2; see nave report plan). The chamber was thought to have been incorporated within the later eastern extension approximately dated c 760 (Peers et al 1928, pl 1). The structure was later covered by a central tower attributed to Abbot Dunstan (see Radford 1981, Fig 3). Radford based his phased plans upon the drawings made in 1928, which were more accurate than the 1929 revision, although the most detailed plan was published elsewhere (Clapham 1930, 157-8). The 1928 excavation report describes the walls as thin with both sides dressed and the eastern halves of the walls cut away (perhaps for burials?) (Peers et al 1928, 2). The east end of the chamber had been paved while the west end sloped up towards a doorway where one base stone (threshold?) remained with two iron dowels (*ibid*). Between the exterior walls of the chamber and Dunstan's later enclosing building was a rubble fill which was thought to have formed the bed of a pavement at ground level (*ibid*).

A large stone coffin was later placed at the western end of the chamber, where a flight of steps was envisaged as originally providing access (*ibid*) (see photographs PID:18906, PID:18945, PID:18905 & PID:18948). The coffin had been filled with bones of up to seventeen individuals which had been cleaned and carefully arranged. It was suggested that these were collected at the time of Dunstan's alterations (*ibid*, 3-4). The report states that the skulls were positioned at the west end, long bones at the east end and small bones in the middle; however, an additional note on the remains describes the skulls at the west end, the long bones at both ends and the smaller bones in the middle (Fawcett & Dobson in Peers et al 1928, 8). The latter arrangement is confirmed by the excavation photographs which document the sequence of excavation.

In 1930 an attempt was made to locate a cloister for the Saxon church. The first trench was excavated southwards from the south-east corner of the nave and the second trench extended westwards from the same position. This crossed the monks' cemetery as far as the south door of the Lady Chapel with 3.05m extensions both to the north and south of the western end (Peers et al 1931, 83). No walls were encountered within either trench and although both trenches were substantial (measuring 1.83m wide and between 1.52m and 2.13m deep) there is no mention of any other archaeological remains having been found (*ibid*).

Radford

In 1954 Radford excavated a trench 'North of Lady Chapel' in the lay cemetery in order to explore the relationship between the supposed location of St David's Pillar, as identified by Bond in 1914, and the adjacent medieval levels. Aligned south-east to north-west, the trench extended from the centre of the platform which allegedly carried St David's Pillar and terminated opposite the north doorway to the Lady Chapel. Intriguingly, the location of the trench corresponds exactly to one of three trenches proposed for excavation in 1939 by Mrs George van Dusen and Major Marston, as shown in a plan sent to the abbey (GLSGA 1988/1442 E3/5a). There were grave reservations about carrying out the proposals and the outbreak of the Second World War put an end to the matter. However, the offer of sponsorship for new excavations was repeated in 1953 by Mrs van Dusen and by the daughters of Major Marston (Mrs van Harten and Miss Marston). A letter dated 10th August 1954 from Radford to Mrs van Harten (NMR GLA Admin/1/2/8) reveals that he had the original plan re-drawn and that two of these trenches were excavated in 1954.

As part of Radford's early consolidation and investigative work, three trenches were extended across the monks' cemetery in 1952 to explore any early remains (A508). The 'Cloister Trench nearest Church' was excavated across the south-east corner of the cemetery from east-west extending into the west cloister walk; the northern end of the 'North-East Corner of Abbot's Hall' trench and the western end of the 'St Michael's Chapel to Cloister' trench extended across St Michael's Chapel. Subsequently, the objectives of the monks' cemetery explorations were: 1) to locate cemetery features such as the boundaries including St Michael's Chapel; 2) to discover evidence for any hypogea and oratories; and 3) to identify the deposits associated with Dunstan's alterations (c 940-957) as recorded by William of Malmesbury. Generally, the exposure of graves was avoided and only a few graves were sufficiently excavated to facilitate basic recording. In 1954, a long diagonal exploratory trench 'South of Lady Chapel' was opened across the cemetery, the south-east end terminating within the east end of St Michael's Chapel, which was excavated in the same year. Two short trenches were opened across the south wall of the cemetery - a short trench was excavated northwards from the north-east corner of the St Michael's Chapel trench ('South Wall of Cemetery, West Side') with a further short trench to the east ('South Wall of Cemetery, East Side').

In 1962 Radford made a concerted attempt to locate the 1191 exhumation site of Arthur and Guinevere, together with the two stone 'pyramids'. The location of the 'Lady Chapel South' trench was based on the statement by a 12th century 'contemporary witness', Giraldus Cambrensis, who located the grave between the two stone pyramids, and on an account by William of Worcester placing the remains southwards from the second window from the east end of the Lady Chapel (Radford 1968, 114). The second bay from the west was discounted due to the presence of the Lady Chapel south door. At the southern end of the 1962 trench were eastern and western extensions ('Lady Chapel South Extension') and in 1963 the south-west corner of this extension was extended a further 1.21m westwards ('1963 Lady Chapel South'). Although the 1962 extension in part facilitated greater exposure of the supposed hypogea structure, both the 1962 and 1963 extensions are likely to represent an attempt to discover evidence for the second stone cross. Indeed, the objectives of the 1963 excavations were to further explore the site of Arthur's burial, to discover more about the shape of the pyramids and possibly to find fragments of a tombstone (A508).

METHODOLOGY

The Results section of this report provides a technical stratigraphic account based on the sections, plans, photographs, sketches and notes for each trench. All contexts have been included on a stratigraphic matrix [M:472] however it was not possible to deduce relationships for all contexts. The individual sections, plans and the overall site plan (see pdf) should be referred to particularly during the Discussion section where the evidence from the trenches is synthesized. Stratified finds are included per context and unstratified finds are summarised per trench, although finds numbers are only provided where there is no context (finds with contexts can be accessed through the context record).

The official photographic record for these trenches consists of nine images; these are incorporated within the Discussion. All ten trenches were recorded both in section and as single multi-context plans. Details of these trenches appear in both Radford's and the volunteer site notebooks with sketches and in detailed trench write-ups. Some of the results of these excavations were summarised in Radford's 1955 and two 1968 published reports while the 1981 interim report added further descriptions and interpretation. However, there is no mention of the 1954 trench to the north of the Lady Chapel in the 1955 report nor within the 1981 interim.

Locating the excavations trenches for the monks' cemetery was complicated by 'considerable discrepancies' which can be traced back to the generally accepted plan of 1930 and continue through subsequent surveys (A624). A request for a new survey by Radford dated 9th May 1955 explains that this was partly due to an assumption that the cloister was rectangular, whereas the south-west angle is about 3 degrees less than a right angle. In 1955, Radford stated that 'at present the measurements are under control but this is not going to be the case much longer for I am advancing into the cloister this summer'. Despite this optimism, placing the 1954 cemetery trenches onto the new site plan has revealed considerable problems with the setting-out, causing difficulties in correlating those trenches that were measured from the Lady Chapel and Nave with those that were measured from the cloister. Where possible excavation photographs have been used to check trench alignments with upstanding remains. For example, photographs of the 1954 'South of Lady Chapel' trench showed the south doorway of the Lady Chapel in the background. Also, the recent geophysical survey has been crucial in providing some ground truth for locating features and excavation trenches. Again, the 1954 'South of Lady Chapel' trench was visible on the geophysical survey along with a cist grave within the same trench. Only the 1954 'South Wall of Cemetery East' trench could not be secured and is approximately positioned.

As far as possible, the interpretative element of these records have been removed, although original labels have been left on the drawings primarily to retain terms of reference between the drawings and the notes. The phased Discussion section provides a critical appraisal of the archaeology from a modern perspective incorporating new dating and spatial evidence from specialist finds reports, the recent geophysical survey (GSB Prospection) and the parchmark survey (Hollinrake & Hollinrake 1989). Together with a re-evaluation of both the original recorded and published interpretations, features have been attributed to the earliest possible phase. The Conclusion provides an overview of the archaeology, an assessment of the success of the historic excavations and suggestions for future areas of research.

RESULTS

North of Lady Chapel

1954, North of Lady Chapel

[L:1629] [E:25]. The topsoil [C:1000] overlay a thin lens of gravel [C:1001], with both contexts overlying a deep layer [C:1002] of mixed soil and stones measuring 1.2m deep. The section shows a concentration of stones measuring up to 0.2m in diameter in the lower part of the context, with a possible in-situ freestone at the base between 1.37m and 1.98m from the north-west end of the trench. This mixed layer covered an intact Blue lias pavement [C:1003] at a depth of 1.37m from the turf, overlain by pottery [F:BF1004] dated 1620-1680. Although the pavement was broken between 3.66m and 7.62m from the north-west end of the trench it still formed an even layer of broken stones. Beneath the pavement was a soil layer [C:1004] containing demolition material including fragments of 'yellowish decayed freestone' and mortar. Five fragments of clay roof tile and one Blue lias roof tile were retained from this layer.

The demolition layer [C:1004] covered a poorly constructed wall [C:1005] of Blue lias stones, the plan showed four stones crossing the trench from east-west, and a dark clayey soil [C:1006] [C:1008] exposed in two sondages in the base of the trench. Bore holes in each sondage revealed that this layer overlay disturbed clay with some soil although Radford noted that there was no clear demarcation between the upper soil and the lower clay.

In the centre of the trench, beneath the dark clayey soil [C:1006], two courses of large lias blocks with hard mortar were exposed forming the northern edge of a rough, trench-built foundation [C:1007] which crossed the trench from east-west approximately parallel to the axis of the Lady Chapel. The wall was only brought to light by the collapse of the side of the sondage at the end of the excavation and could not be fully explored.

The structure identified as St David's Pillar by Bond was not recorded in the section, however Radford's notes detail that the surface of the 'pillar' platform was located 0.61m below the datum, about 0.31m below the top of the dark clayey soil layer [C:1008]. Above this was the modern disturbance associated with Bond's excavations and filled with soil, stones and debris. In plan, Bond's excavation was seen as a curve across the trench on a line roughly concentric with the platform, although the sides had apparently caved in.

Unstratified finds comprised two fragments of clay pipe bowl and five fragments of clay pipe stem [F:BF1000] dated 1610-1850; one sherd of Somerset ware (1500-1650); one sherd of Bristol/Staffordshire slipware (1675-1725) [F:BF1001]; and one fragment of a glass wine bottle [F:SF1000] dated 1760-1800. In addition, fragments of a rib bone of a large mammal [F:BF1002] were found in association with charcoal [F:BF1003] on a hearth, however no hearth feature was drawn.

South of Lady Chapel

1952, Cloister Trench nearest Church

[L:1640] [E:34]. Immediately west of the west cloister walk was an excavation trench [C:550] [C:551] seemingly aligned north-south. To the west, this cut through a feature [C:555] measuring 3.69m long visible at the top of the section with a vertical western edge and the lower part of the eastern edge surviving as a vertical cut. At the base of this feature, and covered by a fill of earth and small stones [C:554], the section shows a thin line of bone fragments [C:558] measuring 2.57m long from a skeleton [F:SK16] which had been largely disturbed, although the large bones were distinguishable. The skeleton was recorded within a cist grave [C:560] comprising three stones forming the north side with a combined length of 1.26m and a max height of 0.34m, and two stones forming the south side with a combined length of 1.18m in plan. The foot stone had collapsed and overlay the skeleton [F:SK16]. Radford noted the high level of the slabs, the skeletal remains and the grave cut.

The western edge of the feature [C:555] above the cist grave cut through a layer of earth and small stones [C:556] at the surface of the trench. This covered an undulating, thin layer of mortar and small stones [C:557] which directly overlay a deep layer of clay and small stones [C:559]. In section, this clay underlay the line of bone [C:558] while the stones from the cist grave [C:560] were apparently inserted into the clay. The clay layer appears to have continued to the east [C:563] of the cist grave.

The plan shows a further grave to the south-west of the cist grave [C:560], bisected longitudinally by the south side of the excavation trench. The grave [C:579] was rectangular in plan, with traces of a wooden coffin in the grave fill [C:578] of redeposited clay with abundant small bone fragments. At the base of the grave was an undisturbed skeleton [F:SK15] which lay half under the south section and was not explored.

1954, South of Lady Chapel

[L:1638] [E:29]. The modern topsoil [C:1400] increased in depth towards the centre of the trench creating a slightly humped profile. At the south-eastern end of the trench this covered a layer of mortar with small stones and soil [C:1401] which was deeper towards the south and tapered off towards the north. This directly covered a layer of 'humus' [C:1452] which extended slightly further north than the mortar layer, approximately to the centre of the trench, before also tapering out. At the south-eastern end of the trench this sealed the loose mortar fill [C:1453] of a robber trench [C:1454]. This cut an extensive mixed soil layer [C:1455] which continued north-westwards throughout the trench, firstly beneath humus layer [C:1452] and, once this had petered out, directly beneath the topsoil [C:1400]. This layer was described as having a loose consistency with fragments of broken building stone, stones and debris. The surface of this mixed layer [C:1455] was undulating, filling two features [C:1470] [C:1471] cut into the medieval cemetery soil [C:1459] which it overlay in the south-eastern half of the trench.

Towards the north-western area of the trench the mixed layer [C:1455] filled an irregular cut [C:1472] into a grave horizon [C:1464] and a later grave [C:1461], covering a layer of clayey soil [C:1456]. The latter sealed the edge of the grave horizon [C:1464] and two further graves at the north-western end of the trench. The later grave had a vertical edge [C:1458] and was filled with clayey soil [C:1457] containing one sherd of pottery dated 1250-1500. To the south this cut a further grave with a straight, sloping south edge [C:1474] backfilled with fine soil and traces of daub [C:1465], although Radford noted that the grave fill was almost indistinguishable from the overlying clayey soil [C:1456]. The section shows skeletons, probably two, and traces of wooden coffins at the

base of the trench, with the earlier grave [C:1465] having a rough stone setting [C:1475] along the base. The southern edge of this grave [C:1474] cut through a deep stone, soil and mortar layer [C:1466] which appeared to be cut to the south by a wide feature [C:1473]. This was filled with the clayey soil [C:1464] identified as a grave horizon and containing both a skeleton (although no coffin was visible) and, further south, a single upright stone. A hollow in this grave was filled with clayey soil [C:1463], possibly the lower fill of a later grave. To the south of the grave horizon [C:1464] was another grave [C:1462] cutting through the medieval soil horizon [C:1459] to the south, the fill [C:1461] containing one skeleton again with no visible coffin.

The 'medieval cemetery soil' [C:1459] that extended throughout the lower part of the south-eastern half of the trench comprised stiff redeposited clay with some soil, very few stones and fragmented bones. Radford noted that burials were at a constant depth of 0.91m below the turf although the grave lines were seldom visible. The excavations did not continue to the natural clay, although in one place the soil covered a layer of clayey soil [C:1460] which appears to have been cut by a cist grave [C:1469]. This was the southernmost amongst a row of four cist graves which are shown cutting through and being covered by the soil layer [C:1459]. The southernmost grave [C:1469] contained the most complete skeleton [F:SK19], although the lower legs (beneath the knee) were beneath the section. The photographic record shows articulated bones, with the lower left arm placed across the abdomen and the lower right arm placed slightly lower with the hand at the top of the pelvis. The left elbow rested against one of the slabs forming the side of the cist. There is a large triangular hole in the right side of the skull above the ear. The south side of this cist grave appeared to form the northern side of another grave, although the south side of this additional grave was not recorded/exposed and only one articulated leg bone was exposed.

A further cist grave was recorded c. 1.8m to the north-west; although the partial remains of a skeleton were found to the south of the cist and a skull to the north, no skeleton was exposed/recorded within the cist grave. Approximately 0.9m to the north-east was a further cist grave [C:1467], the humped area in the centre indicating the presence of a skeleton. The same distance again to the north was the south side of another cist grave [C:1478], with the stone against the section comprising two stones flanking a thin stone. All the cist graves comprised upright side stones, however no traces of the cover stones were found. All were roughly parallel except the northernmost grave [C:1478], which was aligned more precisely east-west.

A skeleton [F:SK14] was exposed immediately north of the northernmost cist grave [C:1478] and was described in detail, including mention of an ashy layer under the skull, fragments of planking from a fallen-in coffin lid under the left radius and ulna, and two small pieces of brick (not retained) lying on the pelvis. The broken skull was imbedded in the south-west section and the femurs were presumed to be beneath the north-east section. The top 0.1m of the spine and cranium were inclined further to the north than the remainder of the spine, the pelvis was not properly aligned with the spine (left side tilted down) however the ilium and femur (if they belonged to the same skeleton) lay outwards next to the cist grave.

Unstratified finds from this trench comprised two fragments of painted Saxon plaster [F:BF1451] [F:BF1452]. A silver penny, of Aethelred II of 'First hand' type (979-c.985) from the Ilchester mint, was also found in this trench (see Small Finds report) and may have come from a disturbed grave (Metcalf and Minnitt 1981).

1954, South Wall of Cemetery (West and East Trenches)

[L:1789] [E:26] East trench; [L:1638] [E:27] West trench. The south end of both trenches were crossed by the 1952 St Michael's to Cloister trench [C:1350] [C:1351] which cut through the modern topsoil [C:1359] in the eastern trench. This sealed an extensive layer of soil and clay [C:1352] recorded in both trenches and which also filled the robber trench [C:1353] thought to represent the cemetery south wall. In the western trench the south side of the robber trench [C:1353] cut a clayey soil deposit [C:1355], the base of which was only 0.05m higher than the base of the robber trench. Similarly, in the eastern trench the robber trench [C:1353] cut a clayey soil deposit [C:1360]. In the western trench, the clay [C:1355] appeared to be cut by a stone slab which was exposed at the base of the 1952 excavation trench [C:1351] and labelled in section as 'chapel plinth'. Beneath the soil and clay layer [C:1352] and cut by the robber trench [C:1353] was a deep layer of disturbed clay [C:1356].

The eastern trench showed three sets of skeletal remains at a depth of 0.9m with a further set of skeletal remains at a depth of 1.12m below the top of the trench. The western trench showed two sets of skeletal remains at a depth of 1.06m and a further set at a depth of 1.62m below the top of the trench. The remains of two cist graves were embedded in the clay [C:1356]. In the western trench this comprised two upright slabs probably representing the north side [C:1358] and the south side [C:1357]. In the eastern trench, the cist grave [C:1361] comprised a single upright slab recorded in section and two slabs aligned east-west in plan. Five carved Blue lias stones [F:AF123] Romanesque in character were recovered from the western trench in the centre of the cist grave. Although these are likely to have been from the redeposited clay [C:1356] no depth is given therefore they may have been recovered from the overlying demolition layer [C:1352].

The eastern trench had a sequence of layers cut by the robber trench [C:1353]; these comprised a sandy soil forming the top layer [C:1362], a clay layer [C:1363], a light sandy layer [C:1364] and the 'old turf' [C:1365] which probably indicates the level of the original ground surface. To the north, these layers appear to have been cut [C:1366] by a wide feature containing the four skeletons marked on the section and therefore implying that this was a grave cut. Although no further possible grave cuts are shown on the section, it has been assumed that the graves cut through the clay layer [C:1356].

1962, Lady Chapel South

[L:1681] [E:72] [E:73]. A modern gravel path [C:5900] crossed the centre of the trench from east-west cutting through the topsoil [C:5902], which was disturbed near the south end of the trench by a tree [C:5901] (removed). The topsoil [C:5902] sloped down from south-north and covered a layer of mortar debris [C:5903] which tapered off towards the north. The mortar debris sealed a modern excavation trench [C:5904] [C:5905]; this trench, most probably from the 1930 interventions, dominated the west section which according to Radford rendered it useless, rising-up to the surface towards the north and only stopping 2.74m from the southern end of the trench. A few features were exposed beneath this trench, although towards the north the trench deepened and excavations were not continued beneath the fill. The eastern section showed a 1.39m wide trench representing the eastern projection of the 1930's trench. The pottery from this excavation trench [C:5904] comprised one prehistoric sherd, one sherd dated after 1250 and two 18th century sherds providing a terminus ante quem of 1700. The trench also included an undated white china marmalade pot (not retained), a fragment of glass vessel and a piece of copper alloy waste.

The eastern side of the trench was predominantly undisturbed by the modern excavation activity. The mortar debris [C:5903] sealed an irregular feature [C:5907] on the northern side of the 1930'S excavation trench [C:5905] filled with loose earth and rubble [C:5906]. To the north, this cut through an extensive soil and debris layer [C:5916], and to the south it cut a deep, dark clay and rubble fill [C:5915] of a large trench [C:5927] which was also cut by the modern excavation trench [C:5905]. The soil and debris layer [C:5916] contained one sherd of pottery dated to after 1250 and five further sherds dated to after 1500; these are described as coming from the first layer of the cemetery below the post-Dissolution destruction layer and therefore must relate to this layer. The dark clay and rubble [C:5915] appeared to contain two fragments of coarse plaster. Radford noted that the feature showed-up against the undisturbed clay [C:5924], however the east section shows the feature cutting into a cist grave [C:5923] and disturbed clay with bones [C:5908] [C:5921] at the base of the trench.

Beneath the deep soil and debris layer [C:5916] was the 'loose and yellowish' redeposited clay [C:5917] labelled 'Dunstan' in section. Radford states that the clay had been dug out and redeposited with very little soil, and that it sloped down towards the church. Indeed, the redeposited clay discontinues towards the northern end of the trench, while the underlying disturbed clay with bone [C:5921] rises to a higher level and continues northwards for c. 4m. A humus layer [C:5920] extended northwards from the disturbed clay with bone [C:5921] above a disturbed clay layer [C:5926] which in turn covered the undisturbed clay [C:5924]. Both the humus [C:5920] and the disturbed clay [C:5926] appear to have been cut [C:5942] by a small feature filled with disturbed clay [C:5918]; this contained pottery, iron nails and a fragment of clay tobacco pipe providing a terminus ante quem of 1670. The finds indicates this was a 'late' scaffold hole located in the centre of the trench, therefore the feature must have been annotated onto the section as supported by the use of a dotted line on the original section drawing.

At the base of the irregular feature [C:5907] was a small pit [C:5909] containing disturbed clay with bone [C:5908], which appeared to cut into the more extensive layer of disturbed clay with bones [C:5921] which in turn seemed to cut [C:5938] the natural clay [C:5924]. Although the disturbed clay [C:5921] contained a sherd of pottery dated to after 1250 the dating is not reliable due to the number of later burials; it also contained a fragment of a cross-base of oolitic limestone, which is presumably of Saxon date.

Towards the southern end of the trench was a further layer of redeposited clay [C:5910]; this had been thoroughly disturbed by the insertion of numerous graves and contained a large number of coffin nails. Only two graves were recorded in section; these were of similar dimensions and at the same approximate depth. The grave [C:5911] [C:5912] in the east section contained an articulated skeleton [F:SK10] which was fully exposed in the southern extension, while the grave [C:5919] [C:5941] in the west section contained a skull and miscellaneous bones [F:SK11] mixed with a large number of coffin nails. The pottery recovered from the redeposited clay layer [C:5910] comprised a post-1500 pottery sherd (no source), pottery dated 1250-1450; and a further sherd dated after 1250. In addition, a fragment of tile [F:BF5914] and twenty-nine sherds of 15th to 16th century pottery were recorded as coming from 'Dunstan's level' and the depth measurements place these finds in the redeposited clay [C:5910] or [C:5917].

The redeposited clay [C:5910] covered a layer [C:5913] described as mortar in the west section and mortar flecked clay in the east section, from which one fragment of wall plaster was retained. In the east section, the mortar [C:5913] overlay the disturbed clay [C:5914] which was recorded as containing pinkish stone, wood and largish pieces of blue lias. One sherd of pottery dated after 950 was also recovered from this layer [C:5914], and probably relates to the sherd of 'incised Saxon pot' noted as being sealed by the mortar floor. In the west section, the mortar layer [C:5913] was not as extensive and directly overlay the natural clay [C:5924], with the redeposited clay directly overlying both the mortar [C:5913] and the disturbed clay [C:5914] which contained an 'old' skeleton (only one bone is shown in section). The mortar layer was located on the western edge and to the west of the north-west corner of a building [C:5939] recorded in the south-east corner of the south extension. The building [C:5939] comprised a north and west wall both measuring c. 0.85m wide and was constructed of a mix of small and large stones. A rectangular layer of mortar [C:5940] was recorded in plan on the inside of this structure in the south-east corner of the south extension trench.

Unstratified finds include plaster/ mortar [F:BF5911] found in a disturbance, possibly the irregular disturbance [C:5907]; seven nails and one iron band [F:SF5902] from a grave extension within the south extension; two sherds of medieval glazed pottery [F:BF5923] [F:BF5924] also from the south extension; and a fragment of ridge tile [F:BF5922].

The graves

Two cist graves (both unexcavated) were recorded in section at the base of the trench, 1.68-1.83m below the surface of the trench. The southernmost cist grave [C:5923] comprised an upright slab in each section plus one fallen stone in the east face. This was recorded as cutting into the natural clay [C:5924] (not seen in section) and the section indicates that it was probably backfilled with clay [C:5922]. The latter contained a sherd of pottery dated after 1250, although the context description states it was found lying in the clay make-up below the 'hypogeum' (see above). It also contained a fragment of yellow plaster, the context details of which state it was found in the yellow clay (i.e. redeposited natural). Further north, cist graves comprising three upright slabs [C:5925] in both the east and west sections were recorded at a depth of 1.22-1.37m. A sketch plan of these stones has been transferred to the trench plan; the slabs were aligned east-west and the arrangement of the slabs suggests they may have belonged to two or three graves.

The sections recorded two distinct graves with other grave cuts indicated by dotted lines, while the trench plan shows the graves and skeletons in more detail. In the east section, a late grave [C:5911] [C:5912] containing coffin nails cut through the re-deposited clay [C:5910]. The skull of the skeleton [F:SK10] was exposed in the east section and the remainder of the skeleton was exposed in the south extension to the trench, overlying the outer walls [C:5939] of the possible hypogeum. The skeleton [F:SK10] appears to have been complete, although the smaller bones were recorded as having gone and the lower part of the legs were beneath the eastern section. The plan shows articulated remains with the head tilted onto the left side and the neck curved towards the head; the lower left arm was placed across the lower abdomen and the lower right arm placed slightly lower at the top of the pelvis. The context information for pottery [F:BF5913] found in the disturbed clay [C:5914] beneath the grave indicates that the burial was medieval - a further note states that the post-950 pottery was either disturbed by or was in the base of the burial. In the west section, and directly opposite the grave [C:5912] in the east section, was a further grave [C:5919] [C:5941] of

similar dimensions and at a similar depth. The skeletal remains [F:SK11] within this grave comprised a skull and miscellaneous bones with coffin nails. Three further skeletons were indicated on the same section at approximately the same level.

A further five graves and seven sets of skeletal remains were recorded in plan within the south extension. At the north end of the extension, to the west of the 1930's excavation trench [C:5905], was the western end of a grave [C:5928] with a slightly rounded, irregular edge [C:5929]. The southern edge was overlapped by a larger grave [C:5930] set 0.55m to the west and with a precise, rectangular shape [C:5931]. The breadth and length of this grave suggests multiple burials. After a narrow gap to the south was a smaller grave [C:5932] set 0.2m to the east, with rounded corners and an approximately rectangular shape [C:5933] containing a partial, articulated skeleton [F:SK3]; the plan shows articulated leg bones, the outline of a pelvis, some vertebrae, six rib bones and one skull fragment. Two further leg bones overlapped the eastern end of the grave (together with some foot bones to the east of the grave) and therefore belonged to another individual. Following a further gap of 0.22m to the south was a grave [C:5934] set 0.55m further east of a similar size and shape and with a slightly irregular edge [C:5935]. The partial remains of a skeleton [F:SK6] are shown overlapping the eastern side of this grave, comprising an articulated left leg, pelvis and right hand crossed above the pelvis. The articulated left leg of a further skeleton [F:SK7] overlap the southern edge of the grave, however the positions of both these skeletons show they were not associated with the grave. The southern edge of this grave was overlapped by another slightly smaller grave [C:5936] set 0.65m further west with a slightly irregular edge [C:5937]; the right femur of skeleton 7 is within this grave showing that the skeleton [F:SK7] straddled the adjacent graves, and two further leg bones [F:SK8] extended from the east end of the grave. To the south of this were the partial remains of a further skeleton [F:SK4], the plan showing an articulated right leg, disturbed left leg and a few other disturbed bones, although no grave was recorded. Finally, a skull was recorded in both the northern balk and in the southern balk of the south extension.

1963, Lady Chapel South

[L:1682] [E:74]. Below the modern path [C:6000] and topsoil [C:6001] was a soil layer with a few stones [C:6002] extending into a 'robbed socket' [C:6003]. The layer and fill [C:6002], which could not be differentiated from each other, contained a 'limestone shaft' [F:SF6000], one sherd of pottery providing a terminus ante quem of 1250, and a fragment of glazed roof tile. This feature [C:6003] cut through a deep layer of clay [C:6004] containing one sherd of Roman pottery (not reassessed) which overlay a further layer of clay [C:6007] above the base of the trench labelled in section as the 'old ground surface'. The 'robbed socket' [C:6003] extended to the level of the 'old ground surface'; beneath this level it appeared to cut a grave fill [C:6005] comprising mixed clay with soil and containing one fragment of pink plaster with a white limewash finish. The truncated grave [C:6008] was therefore 0.23m below the level of the 'original ground surface' and contained a skeleton [F:SK5], the section showing two long bones. The plan shows part of two articulated legs, the lower legs crossed by the eastern end of the grave. This either suggests that the skeleton and grave are unrelated or that the eastern end of the grave terminated further east.

St Michael's Chapel

1952, St Michael's Chapel to Cloister

[L:1686] [E:35]. An extensive layer of soil, rubble and debris [C:656] at the surface of the trench overlay a series of tip-line deposits comprising soil [C:657], mortar [C:658], soil [C:659], mortar and soil [C:660] and debris with much mortar and stones [C:661]. Both the latter and the overlying soil, rubble and debris layer [C:656] were cut to the east by an earlier excavation trench [C:651] filled with loose earth [C:650]. Beneath the lowest tipped deposit [C:661] was a thin layer of soil [C:662] overlying the clay [C:681]; two test pits had been excavated into this clay but the results of this exploration are unknown.

The western end of the uppermost tipped deposit [C:657] overlapped the thick mortar, stone and debris layer [C:663] at the western end of the trench. This overlay a ?floor layer [C:664] at the west end of the trench with a single stone/ slab [C:690] possibly forming the eastern extent. The debris layer [C:663] probably sealed a grave [C:682] [C:683], although as the grave was located on the south side of the trench the relationships are not shown in section. The line of a further skeleton is, however, shown in section beneath the base of the trench and the debris layer [C:663] but this is too far west to be an extrapolation of the grave on the south side of the trench.

Several finds were recovered from this trench in the south-east corner of the cemetery, although no context details were recorded. These comprised a stone moulding [F:AF650] and three miscellaneous objects ([F:BF650], [F:BF651] & [F:BF652]).

1952, North-East Corner of Abbot's Hall

[L:1686] [E:32]. A layer of loose fill and rubbish with mortar and debris [C:452] extended northwards from the north-east corner of the Abbot's Hall to St Michael's Chapel. This layer measured c. 0.91m deep, gradually sloping-up so that the deposit was only c. 0.2m thick above the remains of St Michael's Chapel, where it covered a 'relic turf' [C:453]. This turf sealed a deep layer of soil [C:457] containing some stones and mortar spalls. This overlay a hard, mortar layer [C:460] which covered two drains labelled as 'late' [C:466] and 'early' [C:461]. The mortar layer appeared to abutt the foundations [C:465], where it was covered by a small deposit of clay [C:459]. The section also shows the mortar layer covering a clay layer [C:464] at the base of the trench, which was probably cut by the construction cut for the foundation [C:465].

The foundation [C:465] measured 0.53m wide and >0.91m deep and was aligned east-west. In plan the outline of the wall is shown extending eastwards from the western side of the trench before returning northwards, although the only stones shown in plan are three blocks in the northern return. The foundation was constructed of roughly squared or 'undressed Tor burr and lias with yellowish mortar'. A note adds that only two courses of the north side were in-situ while the south face had gone. A further note adds that the foundation was set in the early ground level and had been cut through by a late drain. The foundation was abutted on the north side by an unexcavated layer of mortar.

1954, St Michael's Chapel

[L:1638] [E:28]. Below the modern topsoil was a layer [C:1300] of stones, mortar and soil in the area above St Michael's Chapel. This directly overlay a 'relic turf' [C:1301], c. 0.15m below the modern turf, which was continuous throughout the section and contained one sherd of pottery dated 950-1100. This covered both a layer [C:1302] at the northern end of the trench and an extensive soil and

rubbish layer [C:1303] which continued southwards as far as the Abbot's Hall. This sealed the upper fill [C:1304] of the robber trench [C:1306] for St Michael's Chapel crypt, which cut through an extensive demolition layer [C:1307] comprising rubble, soil and stones to the south of St Michael's Chapel. It was noted that the upper fill [C:1304] of this robber trench [C:1306] contained mortar which was softer, finer and browner than that from the Abbot's Hall robber trenches. The lower fill [C:1305] of clay and stones was contained within the in-situ stones from the crypt foundation [C:1321].

The crypt [C:1321] of St Michael's Chapel comprised an inner face of vaulting stones set in mortar and wall foundations comprising stones set in clay which had been almost entirely robbed. The southern side of the crypt was recorded in section while the eastern side was recorded in plan measuring 1.6m wide. The inner vaulting, the foundation and a robber trench [C:1325] [C:1326] are clearly visible in the photographic record. The crypt enclosed a substantial pile of stacked bones [C:1320] measuring >3.81m wide and a maximum of 0.91m deep, although the pile had been truncated by later robbery. In plan, the eastern extent of the bones was 0.33m eastwards of the west section with a curved eastern edge. A note states that a skull from this 'bone pit' was removed to Taunton and the photographic record shows that the long bones were stacked neatly in the centre of the pile with smaller bones and skulls on either side. The bones overlay a small stretch of paving shown in section at the base of the trench and on the north side of foundation [C:1321].

The plan also recorded a line of five discontinuous upright slabs [C:1322] aligned north-south across the eastern side of the trench. The skeleton located to the east of the northernmost slab may relate to the skeleton [F:SK1] found in the 1952 St Michael's Chapel to Cloister trench. The slabs were at a depth of c. 1m and at the same level as a further row of five discontinuous stones [C:1323] located c. 0.5m to the east and also aligned north-south. The western side formed a straight edge while the eastern side was uneven, suggesting this side had undergone weathering and was therefore external.