

## THE ABBOT'S HOUSE, GLASTONBURY

When I started work in 1951, the main objectives of the campaign were agreed as, a) The identification of Herlewin's Church, and b) The layout of Dunstan's day, together with all earlier periods. I should not therefore have been interested particularly in the Abbot's House. But the Trustees and I were confronted with a considerable area between the Refectory and the Abbot's House, including the east end of the House, which had been left open since the beginning of the war and was overgrown and deteriorating. For this area I was given only a plan, which made little attempt to distinguish the various periods. I was already convinced that the walls first discovered by Bond in the southeast of the cloister were those of Dunstan's cloister and that I might need to explore further in the open area. It was agreed that *alongside* the work in the cloister I would undertake that work was needed in the open area and that this should then be filled in and turfed. This work was carried out in 1951 and 1952. By the end of this work, when the levelling was already carried out I found that the plan was not accurate.

The solution was found by a careful plot of the cloister, which showed that the west walk was some 2ft shorter than the east and that the Refectory was slightly askew. This is clear from both Bond's plan and that of 1930, which show the inner face at the east end of the Refectory slightly askew to the east range. Rather than waste money on re-excavating the whole area between the Refectory and the Abbot's House, I decided to try to correct the plan by re-plotting the Refectory and using this as a base, an undertaking that involved re-plotting the Abbot's House, which had clearly served as a base for much of the survey.

The Abbot's House posed a further difficulty. The walls survived only in the southwest corner and the inner faces were too short to serve as a base. Elsewhere there were either stone foundations in situ or robbed foundation trenches. There appeared to be an offset of about 6ins at ground level and this could be allowed for; in any case the foundations in situ would give an accurate alignment if taken over a sufficient distance. I therefore opened an area north of the east end of the House in 1954 and got an accurate plot, which together with those provided by sections further east gave the alignment of this part of the House. These were all tied into the church and the cloister and entirely independent of the plan of 1939.

The Abbot's House now emerged as a building with internal dimensions of some 110ft east to west and some 45ft north to south. The second measurement emerged from the 1939 plan. This showed that the House included not only a hall, but other chambers. The most likely solution was a transverse wing of two or three stories at the east end, i.e. an arrangement rather like the Bishop's House at Acton Burnell, which dates from c. 1280. But the hall at the west end was still very wide. Its early C14 date was before the emergence of the hammer beam. It must either have been aisled and it was narrow for this. Or there must have been a longitudinal division as in the block at Wells dating from Bishop Jocelyn. This planning is not unusual in Abbots' Houses, e.g. Gloucester and Chester.

At this point a further snag arose. The alignment from the south east interior angle on the 1939 plan and the Almonry did not correspond either on that plan or as re-plotted. I, therefore, dug a cross trench across the hall part in 1962. I got a robbed foundation trench on the north side and a modern disturbance on the south, though I eventually got the south wall further east. But both these were badly robbed foundation trenches, the sides of which might be as much as 2ft out of line. It was for this reason that I was so anxious to get the northwest corner. This you have now done and as you will see the main lines fall into place. There is a hall some 85ft x 36ft. This is large compared with the late C14 Abbot's Hall at Westminster, which measures 52½x 27ft, but is not impossible. It may even be that the hall itself was smaller. It could be that there is a further division west of my main 1962 trench, which runs about 55ft away from the west end.