

GLASTONBURY 1957

Trench CH 1

Datum of 98.96. 0.D

Turf level above 9ins above section

Length 99ft by 4ft wide. The N side, laid out to provide a section ran along the median line of the Chapter House.

Measurements from the riser to the step of the CH door in E walk of cloister.

Face of bench on E side of cloister from which Bond took measurements, 1ft.

Face of wall (from Bond's calculations 2ft 3ins).

The E part of CH had been levelled to approximate late medieval pavement level after excavations of 1935. This level has now been extended to whole of CH and is referred to as modern turf for all depths.

Between 14ft and 53ft was a bank, now removed, consisting of stones, soil and debris, forming destruction layer of medieval building. Much disturbed in modern times, including trenches probably by Bond, and penetrated in places below level of turf.

The W wall of Chapter House lay at 2ft 3ins by Bond's measurements. A small fragment of facing of E side was found at 10ft at contemporary ground level. The robbed foundation trench of the E wall was cut between 79ft and 86ft with a few lias stones still in-situ on E side, not rising above 1ft below turf level. This gives an internal measurement of about 70ft against the 75ft (25 virgas) recorded by William of Worcester.

The extension of CH1 for 12ft beyond the E wall of the Chapter House brought to light no trace of any further building. The natural clay, generally with the darker surface layer still in position sloped gradually upwards. It was covered with a deposit of various lumps of clay, on which the modern turf rested. All trace of a destruction layer had gone, probably when the area was levelled down for the modern layout. At 27ft 3ins was evidence of a step with the mortar bedding to the west having a base at 2ft 9ins below the modern turf. Two steps should be postulated to fill the difference in height. The lower mortar bedding could be traced in part as far as 14ft, beyond which it was cut through by the later foundation trench of the W wall. It shows continuously on the section where the layer was exceptionally well preserved. On the south side of the trench at 23ft a further step related to the original pavement remained in position. It ran east to link up with the step crossing the trench at 27ft 3ins. It lay parallel to the trench with its face 6ins out from the south side. The

foundation of rubble on which this step was laid continued westward for another 6ft, giving a total length of 10ft 6ins. An extension of the main trench 2ft wide between 15ft 6ins and 27ft 6ins showed that the foundation was at least 2ft 6ins wide, implying two steps.

Trench CH 1 was continued west across the east alley of the cloister as CLE 1. The foundation trench of the W wall of the Chapter House of Abbot Henry de Blois was found on the line of the section with its E face 1ft west of the later step (= 0ft of CH 1). The foundation trench of the E wall of the same date crossed CH1 between 70ft and 76ft 6ins. Stone in position was found across the whole width of the foundation trench. The edges both of the trench and of the stonework were irregular near the surface and no attempt was made to clear it in depth. The length of the Chapter House of Henry de Blois was approximately 72ft. From about 30ft (32ft on section) the mortar bedding of the destroyed pavement could be traced with few gaps as far as the E wall where it overlapped the edge of the foundation by 1ft., indicating the extent of the offset at floor level. The base of the mortar bedding was irregular; it had sagged in places. But a general level of 1ft below the modern turf may be restored.

The main feature below the C12th mortar bedding was the vallum monasterii. The bank rested directly on the undisturbed surface of the natural clay. The tail at the rear of the bank crossed CH1 at 32ft 6ins. The continuous slope forming the front of the bank and the side of the ditch cut the natural surface at 51ft. The outer lip of the ditch was at 70ft. For some 10ft west of the bank the stratum below the mortar bedding was disturbed clay with a few stones and some soil, representing the degradation of the bank during a period when there was little activity in the area. Beyond this is a disturbance filled with clay, soil and debris extended as far as the later foundation trench, but did not appear in CLE 1 beyond this foundation. A sondage between 11ft and 13ft disclosed a flat bottom cut into the undisturbed clay at a depth of 4ft 6ins below the turf.

N.B. Except in cases where wall faces or other features in-situ, eg steps are recorded the measurement of features such as foundation trenches is everywhere liable to a small margin of error. These features belonging to the Great Church were not cleared in depth and experience at Glastonbury shows that the edges of trenches and foundations at a high level were liable to distortion by crumbling of the sides.

GLASTONBURY 1957

Trench CH II

7ft 6ins – 11ft 6ins from outer wall face of East Range

11ft 6ins – 32ft 6ins N of median line.

The eastern edge of the foundation trench of the W wall of range ran along the trench 9ft from the outer wall face. The edge of the trench was regular, but the masonry had been entirely robbed, leaving a loose fill of rubble clay and soil. At 32ft 3ins an ashlar quoin in-situ marked the SE corner of the angle buttress of the transept at a depth of 1ft 9ins below the level of the paving of the cloister walk. The modern facing of the transept wall, which was not disturbed, crossed the trench at 32ft 6ins. The foundation trench of the north wall of the Chapter House was found between 14ft 6ins and 23ft. It was badly robbed with a loose fill of stones clay and soil.

From 26ft 3ins to 27ft 9ins a rough stone paved and stone lined drain ran from east to west; it had been removed above the foundation trench for the doorway. There was no evidence for the floor level of the slype, but the drain was at too high a level to be medieval.

No evidence for the floor level of the Chapter House.

Superficial strata forming a destruction layer, had been disturbed in modern times and have now been removed.

GLASTONBURY 1957

Trench CH III

Between 30ft and 34ft from outer wall face of East Range.

From 6ft to 28ft south of median line.

Between 18ft and 22ft east extension 6ft long and west extension 19ft 9ins long.

Between 14ft 6ins and 23ft 3ins foundation for south wall of Chapter House formed of Tor burrs set in fine orange yellow rather soft mortar. On top of inner face was a former foundation of mixed stones set in a harder creamy white mortar. This survived for a width of 7ft 6ins with the south side disturbed.

Toe of early bank at 31ft with top of inner slope showing on section at north end of trench.

Chapter House pavement level disturbed by earlier excavations over most of trench and level nowhere measurable.

GLASTONBURY 1957

Trench CH IV

48ft -52ft from outer wall face of East Range.

10ft 6ins – 27ft 6ins north of median line.

Trench lay entirely over fill of early ditch and probably the strata had been disturbed by subsidence.

Dark clay of natural surface found at base covered with re-deposited dark clay with iron flecks – probably from foundation trench of transept wall.

Foundation trench for Chapter House wall from 12ft 8ins to 20ft 4ins dug through re-deposited clay, which was already consolidated. Foundations, where remaining, largely of Tor burrs.

Irregular buttress added on northwest corner – roughly 5ft projection by 3ft wide, but extends further west. Masonry of buttress set in yellow mortar.

No clear indication of floor of Chapter House at south end. From 11ft 5ins to 13ft 7ins floor had been raised with slight outer retaining wall of Tor burrs to form a dais of which surface had been entirely destroyed.

GLASTONBURY 1957

Trench CH VII

65ft - 69ft from outer wall face of West Range.

9ft 6ins – 29ft 6ins south of median line.

No remains of paving or mortar bedding on either C12th or C13th found.

Foundation trench extending about 1ft into CH VII runs along east side of trench as far as 16ft 4ins, where it is cut through by later foundation trench. Later trench crosses CH VII between 16ft 4ins and 24ft 10ins.

Early foundation is largely of Tor burrs set in yellow mortar. Where robbed fill is of soil with small amount of mortar. Later foundation, where preserved, has same lias and is set in whiter mortar. Where robbed fill is of loose mortar, rubble and soil.

Darker surface of natural clay reached on both side of later foundation, but bottom of trench not reached.

No attempt made to define edge of early ditch which should be about 2ft east of west edge of CH VII.

GLASTONBURY 1957

Trench CH V

55ft 6ins – 59ft 6ins from outer wall face of East Range

8ft 6ins – 25ft 8ins north of median line

West extension 4ft 2ins wide from 17ft 9ins – 25ft 9ins

Trench strata much disturbed but west edge of east walk of Chapter shows. Seen running along trench at 57ft. Foundation robbed and unstable. Ends at 22ft 7ins. Further west single facing stone of lias ashlar in position at 23ft 4ins. Within but separate 2ft away remains of foundation of Tor burrs. High level found a stone wall drain runs west from NE corner of trench.

Apart from ashlar facing stone in-situ ?? distorted.

GLASTONBURY 1957

CH VI

47ft 6ins – 55ft 6ins from outer wall face of East Range

20ft 3ins – 26ft 3ins south of median line

South-east extension from 44ft – 47ft 6ins by 24ft-28ft

In main trench disturbed east face of east wall of east range at 51ft 8ins. Mainly Tor burr in white mortar. Clay to east is covered with redeposited surface clay with iron flecks – probably from foundation trench. From 48ft 9ins to 52ft 6ins at 20ft 3ins foundation is overlaid by remains of buttress largely Tor burrs in yellow mortar.

Late drain crosses trench NNE – SSW.

GLASTONBURY 1957

Section CH I North face

Length (E end beyond 'not known as no stratification). Measurement from riser of step from Cloister. Along central axis of Chapter House.

Natural soil is stiff yellow clay. Upper layers were flecked with small brown spots; these became less frequent and were not visible below 1ft 6ins-2ft. The surface was weathered and carried a thick turf, the rootlets of which penetrated to a maximum of 6in. No major disturbance, indicating trees or large bushes on line of section. Fall of natural measured over 89ft = 2ft.

The earliest remains to be seen on the section consist of a bank, piled on the natural surface and a ditch on the east side. The bank ran from 33ft -53ft 6ins. It was truncated at the level of about -3ins with a layer of mortar for the bedding of a pavement lying directly on the levelled surface. The

material was largely clay with the iron flecked material piled near the centre and tailing off towards the front; this was overlaid by the lighter clay from below. The back rose at an angle of about 45 degrees with a substantial revetment of turf, occasional inclusions of turf occurred sporadically. The front slope had slid forward into the ditch. This extended from 53ft 6ins to 67ft 6ins. The pointed base at 58ft 6ins lay at a depth of -8ft 8ins. The inner slope was regular at about 45 degrees; the outer slope was distorted by slips. The ditch was filled with a dark, soft, clayey silt with occasional lines of yellow clay and a few small stones. There were no tip lines and no intermediate surface. This filled the ditch about level with the outer lip leaving the shallow hollow with no turf line. As there is no erosion of the outer lip and very little loss from the remaining front of the bank, it must represent a gradual accumulation over a long period. To the west of the bank was a layer, largely of clay with occasional stones. The layer, though cut by many later disturbances appeared to be homogenous with no evidence of occupation within the area of this section.

The next occupation was represented by the inner of the two eastern walls of the Chapter House, measured and planned in 1935 and a contemporary layer of soft yellow mortar which had formed the bedding for a pavement. The foundation of the E wall extended from 70ft 6ins to 77ft 6ins. The mortar bedding overlapped this foundation as far as 71ft 9ins establishing the line of the inner wall face; no evidence was available for the external face. The stones regularly laid in a yellow mortar now no more than dust, included lias flecks. The wall was not further explored.

From 33ft to 71ft 9ins a band of soft, fine yellow mortar about 3ins thick ran without a break. The surface was normally about datum but it sagged to a maximum of 3ins between 60ft and 62ft. Between 25ft 9ins and 27ft 3ins a flat stone firmly bedded; its surface lay at -1ft 2ins and a band of similar mortar ran up to the W face. To the East as far as 33ft only the mortar bedding with the top layer – a few inches deep – had been removed when the step, or more probably two steps – had been removed. The slab was not lifted, but on either side the trench was carried down to undisturbed clay, showing that there had been no substantial sleeper wall at this line. To the west a mortar line, similar to that described was visible in places as far as 12ft. It was fugitive and entirely missing between about 21ft and 24ft 9ins.

The surface lay at -1ft 3ins.

From 79ft 9ins to 86ft 6ins the foundation trench of the eastern of the two east wall uncovered in 1935 was entirely filled with stones, mortar rubbish and soil, a modern fill. On the outer face a large lias block with its surface at -1ft remained in-situ. This wall could not be dated on the basis of this section. (East of this wall the natural surface ran uphill covered by a thin layer of ?, not drawn, but measurements taken).

From 53ft to 80ft a thin layer of soil was covered by the modern levelling of 1935 with its turf; the floor level of any later building had been removed with trace. From 11ft 4ins to 24ft 6ins a bed of

soft yellow mortar about 3ins thick was followed with a few gaps. It had a surface at about -5ins and was associated with a step and a paving slab with a surface at -2ins, extending from 11ft 4ins to 14ft 4ins. Further west the same mortar bedding had its surface at -10ins. A paving slab, extending from 8ft to 10ft 6ins, with a surface at -7ins remained above a rubble foundation, probably late medieval. This was not examined. Elsewhere the foundation trench had been robbed. It extended as far as 10ft 3ins and was followed down to -4ft 3ins against this face. At this level it was cut into the undisturbed clay the surface of which was here at -4ft with no trace of disturbance or of the ground level.

Between 21ft and 24ft 6ins was a short stretch of soft yellow mortar bedding with a surface at 2ins supported from the lower bedding by 2ins-3ins of clay. This did not appear elsewhere on the section but patches of the double layer were found elsewhere in the trench.

Between 18ft 6ins and 24ft 9ins a pit with sloping sides sealed by the lower mortar bedding with a surface at -5ft cut through the mortar bedding with its surface at -1ft 3ins. It was not excavated to the bottom and continued below -3ft 4ins into the disturbed clay. The filling, of stones, including some discarded building stones, mortar and debris, clay and soil, was tightly packed.

The foundation of the west wall of the Chapter House was not explored to avoid moving the stones remaining in-situ. Some of these have been reset in recent times.

From 14ft to 53ft a layer of soil about 2ft high covered the vestibule of the C13th Chapter House. It was shown to be a very recent deposit, probably of the present century, consisting of rubble, mortar, soil etc. (It was agreed that this would be removed to lay out the whole Chapter House and Vestibule on the same level as that already opened at the E end).

GLASTONBURY 1957

CH VIII

10ft 2ins – 13ft 10ins from outer wall face of East Range

11ft 8ins – 15ft 8ins south of median line

Irregular much spread face of foundation of south wall of Chapter House occurs at 13ft 2ins. Foundation robbed loose fill. Not explored.

GLASTONBURY

East Range

CH I

CH II

CH III

CH VII

CH IV Trenches and Section

1957 Section of N face

1957

1957

1957

1957

