



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Historic Building Recording and Observation and Recording Report

St Mary's Old Church
Clophill
Bedfordshire

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Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)



Summary

Between September 2013 and June 2014 Historic Building Recording and Observation and Recording was undertaken at St Mary's Old Church, Clophill, Bedfordshire as a condition of Listed Building Consent for the restoration of building on the site. The church, which is Grade II listed and a Scheduled Monument, was replaced by a new church in the centre of the village in the 1840s and subsequently served as a mortuary chapel. It was declared redundant in 1972.

Recent archaeological investigations have revealed evidence for an earlier south wall, which appears to have been rebuilt in its entirety when the Perpendicular windows were installed in the 15th century. In contrast, the north wall was largely retained as is seen in the surviving window jambs. Previously obscured features were also revealed and include putlog holes in the nave and interior of the tower, a blocked slit window in the stair turret and the stairs themselves. Four Consecration Crosses were also rediscovered, although only three retain any meaningful definition; the fourth only surviving as faint lines on the south wall.

No evidence for a Saxon church was revealed and the hypothesis that the thickness of the walls indicates a Saxon date is contested. It is proposed here that the present church was probably built in the early 12th century as a 2-cell structure that was enhanced the 15th century with Perpendicular windows and a tower.

1 Introduction

1.1 Between September 2013 and June 2014 KDK Archaeology Ltd carried out Historic Building Recording and Observation and Recording of St Mary's Old Church, Clophill, Bedfordshire. The project was commissioned by Clophill Heritage Trust, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Simmelmann 2013), and approved by Central Bedfordshire Council, Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Central Bedfordshire Council. The relevant planning application reference is 040613 CB/12/02747/FUL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This Building Recording and Observation and Recording project has been required under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a condition of Listed Building Consent for the restoration of building on the site.

1.3 *The Site*

Location

St. Mary's Old church is located to the northeast of the centre of Clophill, which is within the administrative district of Central Bedfordshire. It is set within a churchyard that is bounded to the north and west by Church Lane and to the south and east by fields. The church is centred on National Grid Reference TL 0919 3885 (Fig. 1).

Description

St Mary's is a redundant and ruined church (HER 2476) that is Grade II* Listed (LB 9/32) and has Scheduled Monument Status (SM 83). It is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council and on a long term lease to the Clophill Heritage Trust. Despite local legend, St Mary's church (HER 2476) is orientated roughly east to west, with the now demolished chancel to the east (Fig. 2). The building is roofless as well as windowless and the interior is made up of thin soils with some grass and residual stone flooring.

The listed building description is as follows (English Heritage Building ID: 37586):



Church of St Mary the Virgin (formerly listed as Old Parish Church) - II Former parish church, now redundant and a ruin. C14 and C15. Coursed ironstone rubble with ashlar dressings. Remains consist of walls of nave and W tower. Nave: N and S elevations each have large 4-centred arched window, all tracery removed. S elevation has semi-octagonal embattled stair turret to E and 4-centred arched doorway to W. E elevation, rebuilt when chancel demolished mid C19 and reworked C20, has narrow 4-centred arch. Tower: 3 stages, retaining parts of embattled parapet, and semi-octagonal stair turret to SE. 4-centred trefoiled 3-light W window to lower stage. Top stage has trefoiled 2-light pointed-arched windows, one to each side. Niche to S elevation lower stage. Scheduled Ancient Monument.*

The Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) description differs in length of content and, more significantly, in the date for the east wall. It reads:

The tower and aisleless nave of a late medieval church of ironstone, with Totternhoe clunch dressings. The chancel arch is now represented by an 18th century wall with brick window surround. The surviving part forms a continuous rectangle with polygonal stair-turrets for tower and nave left to S, diagonal corner buttresses and 2 large perpendicular windows, N and S.

The churchyard (HER 8876) forms a rectangular enclosure which splays out to the north and south on the eastern side.

Geology & Topography

The church stands at an elevation of c.85mAOD on the edge of the Greensand Ridge. The ground falls relatively steeply immediately to the south and east of the church, and continues to rise to the north.

The sedimentary soils are described as being *fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging, associated with similar but wetter soils. Some calcareous and non-calcareous slowly permeable clayey soils over chalky till* (Soil Survey 1983, 572q). The underlying geology is Cretaceous Gault (BGS, Sheet 203).

Development

The works to the church and churchyard consist of repairs to the church and limited landscaping in the churchyard (Fig. 3).

Previous Archaeological Investigations

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the site in 2011 by Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd (Summerfield–Hill 2011) as a response to a proposed development to convert the church into a hostel. Four trenches were hand dug inside the church revealing masonry that may relate to an earlier phase of the church, a single burial and two disturbed burial vaults. The two test pits excavated immediately to the south and west of the building produced a number of artefacts, building material and an earlier ground surface.

A Watching Brief was undertaken of the geological test pits by David Kenny of English Heritage in December 2011 of a series of trial trenches on all four sides of the church (Kenny 2011). These were dug to investigate the depth of the foundations and investigate possible drainage solutions. These revealed a large foundation wall beneath the existing east wall, human remains close to the north and south walls and archaeological deposits in all the trial trenches.

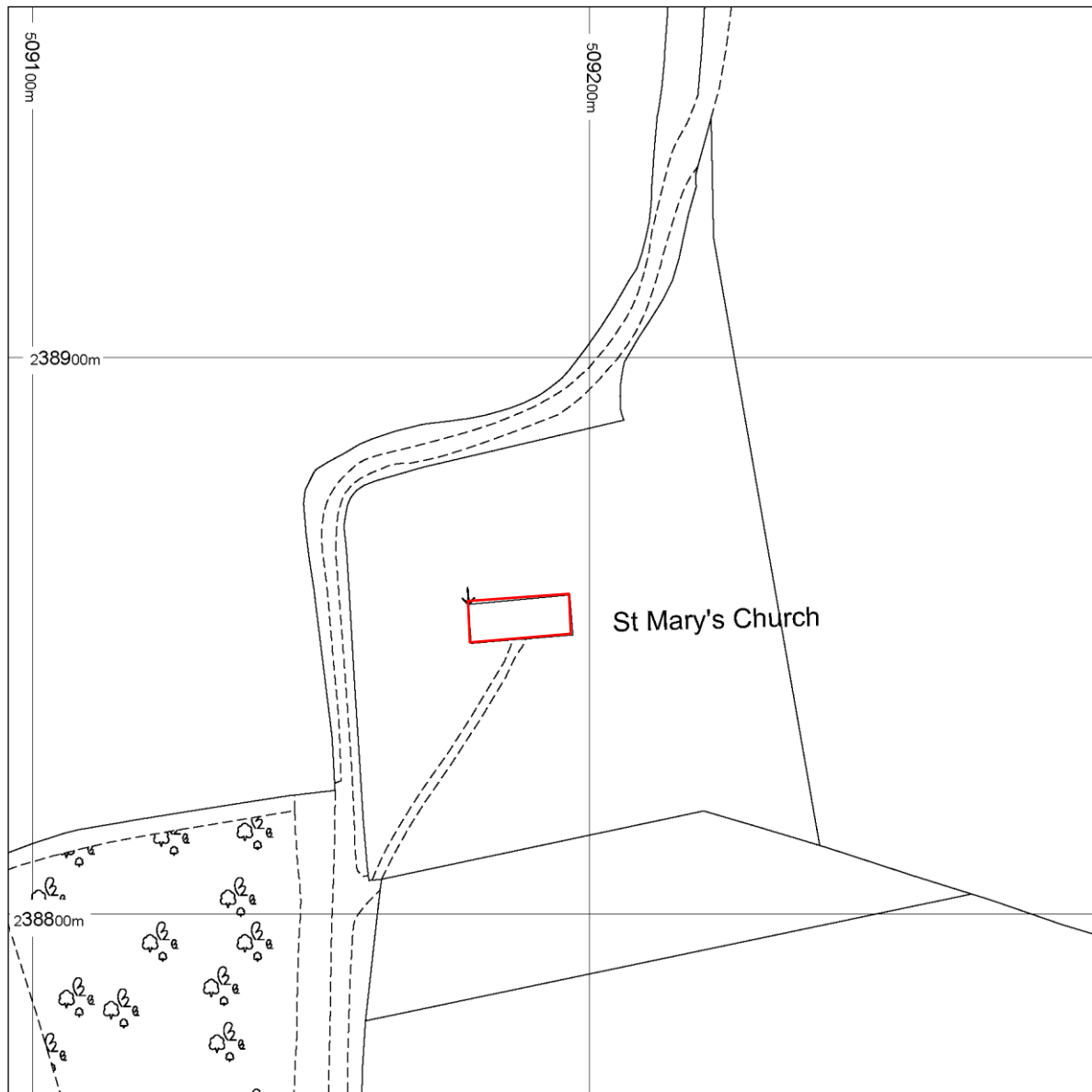


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1250)

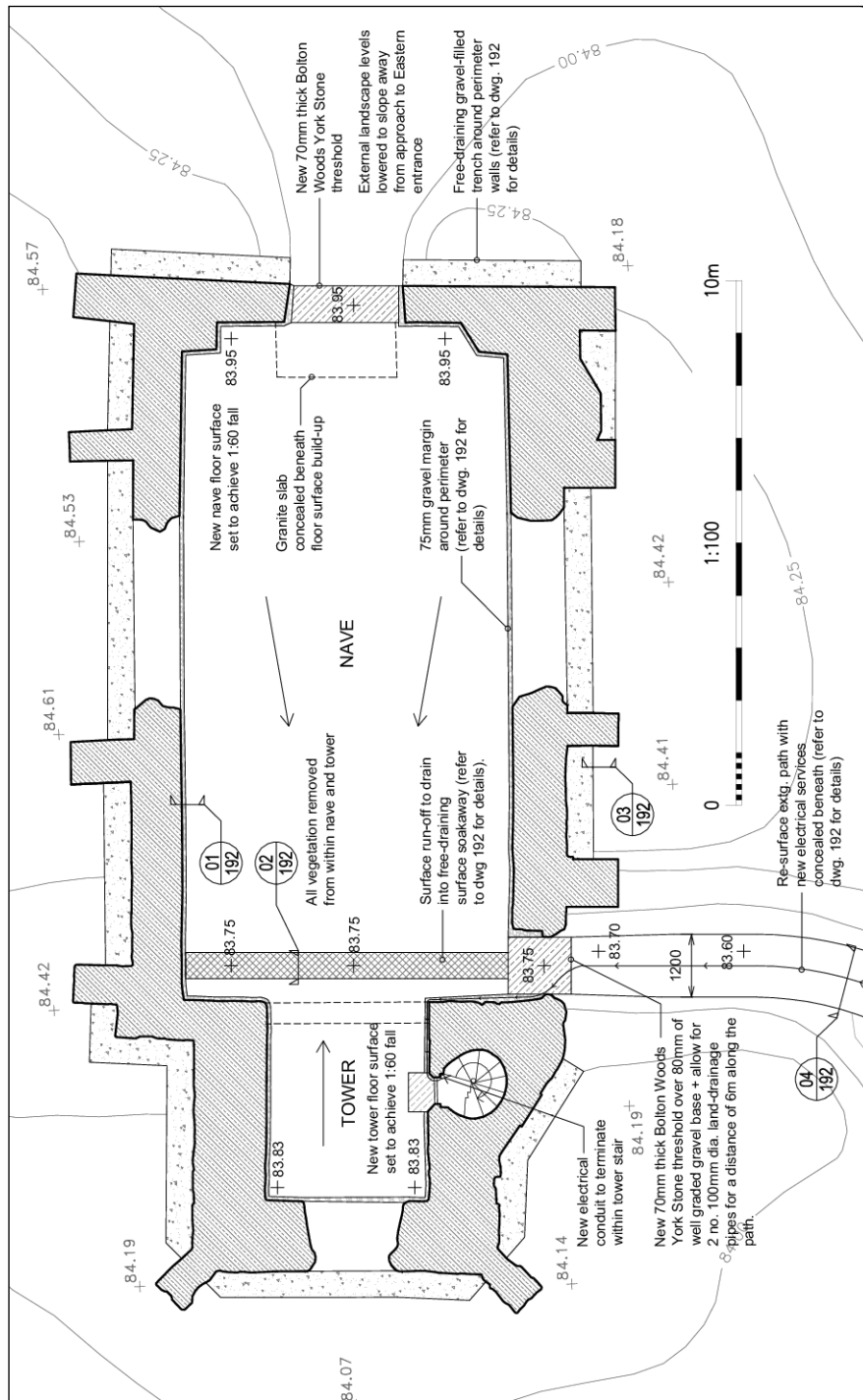


Figure 3: Development (scale 1:100)



2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Section 2.1), the aims of the Building Recording and Observation and Recording were:

- To primarily investigate the potential of confirming whether there was an earlier church on this site
- The gathering, analysing and interpreting data about the historic building so that its development can be better understood
- To provide an accessible and accurate record of the historic building prior to its modification
- To establish the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the development area
- To investigate the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding/contemporary landscapes
- To recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

Additional research aims outlined in local and regional research agendas (Glazebrook:1997; Brown & Glazebrook 2000; Oake et al 2007 and Medlycott: 2011) were to be incorporated into the project as appropriate.

2.2 Standards

The work conforms to the Written Scheme of Investigation, to the relevant sections of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (CIfA 2014), to current Historic England guidelines (HE 2015, EH 2006), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003).

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the Written Scheme of Investigation (Section 2.3), which required:

Building Recording:

- To record those elements of the structure that had previously been inaccessible (for example the tower staircase) and any hitherto significant and unknown structural elements that were uncovered as the restoration works progress.
- To write a description of the origins, development and use of the church, including details of the evidence based used
- To make an exterior and interior photographic record of the structure elevations and plans for the structure drawn to scale

Observation and Recording:

- All ground or other works that were likely to have an impact on archaeological deposits to be done under continuous and constant archaeological supervision. This was to include the excavation of services, the French drain and any underpinning.
- If significant archaeological deposits were encountered the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologists were to be notified and a timetable for the adequate



investigation and recording of these features was agreed. The Inspector for Ancient Monuments at English Heritage was also kept informed of the progress of the works.

2.4 *Constraints*

The service trench running alongside the path from the tower to the gate was excavated without notifying KDK Archaeology. However, it was possible to inspect some of the trench before it was backfilled. The trench was very shallow and no features were evident in the inspected area and no finds were recovered from the spoil heap other than a single finger bone.



3 Historical, Archaeological and Architectural Background

3.1 *Saxon Churches in Bedfordshire*

The dearth of documentary evidence for pre-Conquest churches in Bedfordshire continues to frustrate historians and archaeologists alike. Unlike some neighbouring areas, churches were not largely considered by the compilers of the Domesday Survey in Bedfordshire and only the four minster churches in Bedford, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard and Luton are recorded (Darby & Campbell, 2008:41). Earlier documentary sources are limited to Aethelgifu's will of between 980 and 990, which also mentions four churches (Morris 1989:141), but it must be assumed that at Clophill as elsewhere there were an increasing number of churches supplementing and finally supplanting the early minsters.

Whilst most Saxon buildings were timber built, some early churches were built of stone. Indeed, Wilfrid's twin foundation of St Paul, Jarrow and St Peter's, Monkwearmouth were built in stone as early as the late 7th century (Taylor & Taylor 2011). Stone building became more common in the later Saxon period when many new churches were constructed or earlier ones rebuilt. The survival of Saxon work is variable as later alterations and additions to churches often obscured or destroyed earlier work, but a considerable body of research since the 19th century has allowed a good understanding of Saxon, and indeed later, construction techniques.

Architectural evidence for Saxon stonework in Bedfordshire churches is not extensive and does not include any of the minster sites noted above, although a corbel in St Mary's Church, Luton has been considered as a possible Saxon relic (Smith 1966:7). The two major papers on Saxon churches in Bedfordshire written in the late 20th century demonstrate the difficulty in determining the date of undocumented building work. Whereas Smith claims that only St Peter's Bedford, St Mary's Bedford, St Thomas Clapham, St Mary's Stevington, and All Saints Turvey are undoubtedly Saxon (*ibid*:7), Hare maintains the churches in Charlton, Kempston, Riseley, Stevington, Harrold, Shelton and Biddenham should also be added to the list (1971:33-41). Both writers draw on the highly detailed research by Taylor and Taylor on Anglo-Saxon Architecture (first published in 1965) and describe the characteristic features of Saxon construction. These include splayed and double splayed windows, triangular headed doors and windows, long and short quoins, pilaster strips, imposts being through stones, the use of rubblestone and the fact that Saxon walls tended to be thin and tall (Taylor & Taylor 2011 Vol III). Whilst the churches listed by Smith and Hare display at least one if not several of these features, St Mary's Clophill displays none. This is discussed in more detail in Section 6.

3.2 *Clophill*

Little is known of the Saxon background of Clophill, the name of which has been variously described as meaning 'tree stump hill' (Bedford Borough Website), 'copse hill' (Hicks 2010:1) or derived from clopp (Old English) meaning a lump, a hillock, a hill and hyll (Anglian), a hill, a natural eminence or elevated piece of ground (<http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/map/place/>). It is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as being a 5 hide estate that had been held by two thegns of the Earl of Tosti before the Norman Conquest. It had since been awarded to Nigel d'Aubigny who also held other estates in the Flitton Hundred and beyond (Williams & Martin 2001: 575). At this time it was a small settlement with some 50 inhabitants.

Medieval Clophill was closely associated with neighbouring Cainhoe as both estates were held by the d'Aubigny family. Cainhoe became the baronial seat and a motte and bailey castle was built there some time before 1138. The geographical relationship of Saxon and medieval settlement in Cainhoe and Clophill remains to be clarified, but it is clear that both would have



been settlement foci for a number of different reasons. The medieval settlement close to the church (HER 9145) may be represented by the buildings depicted in early 18th century plans of the Wrest Park estate (Figure 4 BLARS: L33 286 F72). Whether this settlement comprised the village as a whole or just the manor house and its associated outbuildings along with the church is uncertain. The medieval population suffered greatly from the plague in the 14th century (Phillips 1960:75), which is popularly associated with settlement shift. Certainly by 1716 settlement was largely stretched along the main road with only a few dwellings left near the church (Figure 5). Nonetheless, the church served the villagers until the mid 19th century when the growing number of church goers as well as the poor condition of the church itself led to its demotion as a mortuary chapel as a new church was built in the new heart of the village.

3.3 *St Mary's Old Church*

The origins of the now ruined church of St Mary the Virgin (HER 2476) are unclear although a church must have been on the site in the early 12th century as the church of Clophill with two virgates of land was given to Beaulieu Priory by Robert d'Aubigny between 1140 and 1146 (VCH online). The present building is described as being a 14th or 15th century structure (English Heritage Building ID: 37586), yet Page described the western tiebeams in 1908 as being moulded and possibly as early as the 13th century (VCH online).

The presence of earlier window dressings in the north wall of the church indicate an earlier date than the Perpendicular windows would otherwise suggest. A date for the original construction, however, remains elusive. The discovery of masonry beneath the existing east and south walls (Kenny 2011) suggests that there may have been an earlier building on the site, but there is currently insufficient evidence to fully understand the nature and indeed possible age of this stonework (Plate 6 Plate 7). Certainly considerable rebuilding took place on more than one occasion and fragments of medieval glass with the coat of arms of the Pembroke family have been found, which could link the installation of the Perpendicular windows with either Roger de Grey, who purchased the manor of Cainhoe and Clophill in 1415, or by his son, who married into the Pembroke family.

Internal re-organisation took place in 1802 when new pews were installed in the chancel, which was subsequently partially rebuilt in 1819 (Pickford 1994: 200). A new pulpit and desk were installed in 1805 and a new gallery built at the west end of the church in 1814 (ibid). The increase in seating was clearly insufficient and an enlargement programme was considered in 1826 and again in 1839 when a transept was proposed for the north of the church. The interior and exterior of the church were drawn in the 19th century whilst the church was still in use (Figure 6 Figure 7). The chancel is shown as being a relatively large structure in relation to the nave, which appears to have a relatively low roof. This could well be due to the lack of a clerestorey which would inevitably make the nave appear much taller. Small windows are depicted high up in the nave walls that would have provided some natural light to the 19th century galleries.

In the notebook compiled by Archdeacon Bonney recording the recommendations for improvement he made to the various churches he visited in the early 19th century, it is noted that the belfry and first floor of the tower needed repairing in 1823, that boards needed to be placed in the bell chamber windows, the brickwork of the windows needed to be harmonised with the surrounding stone and the brick floor at the west end of the church needed to be relaid. This was duly done before his visit in 1826, when he observed that the north window should be restored unless the church was to be extended in that direction and that the tracery of the bell chamber windows should be restored with cement (Pickford 1994: 201-2).

Although Bonney was shown and approved the plans for an extension in 1839, nothing was done due to the Rector being gravely ill. Finally in 1845 it was agreed to build a new church in



the village. This was done between 1848-9 and the old church was no longer used for regular services. The gallery was dismantled, the chancel demolished.

The church was then used as a mortuary chapel, during which time the east window installed in the new east wall of the church, the coloured glass, wall tablets and woodwork were removed and installed in the present parish church (Allden 1978; Pickford 1994:200). The roof was removed in 1956 after lead had been stolen from it. The church was listed in 1961 and declared redundant in 1972 (www.bedfordshire.gov.uk; Hicks 2010: 2). The church and surrounding churchyard were acquired by Central Bedfordshire council in 1977.

A detailed plan for stabilising the building was produced by Bedfordshire County Council (BLARS A/C1/P1(a) in 1970 which noted:

- The tracery in the bell chamber windows had been covered in cement plaster in the 19th century; this needed replacing
- The parapets needed rebuilding and the east face of the battlements needed replacing
- The whole roof needed replacing including the wallplate
- The interior stonework need repointing and making good in the upper part of the bell chamber
- The bell chamber floor was rotten and needed replacing
- The newel stair was in good condition but some needed wooden treads dowelling into the existing stonework
- The tower arch was in good condition and there were no signs of settlement or distortion of the arch
- All the walls were to be capped off with a cement mortar
- A foundation trench measuring 600 x 450 x 1200mm was to be excavated inside the church beneath the east window to receive stone side and front wall of 3 steps
- Metal ties were to be added above the lintel of the north and south windows in the nave and the west window in the bell chamber
- Concrete ties were to be fitted at 3 points of the structure; 2 at the junction of the north and east wall, 2 at the junction of the south and east walls and 1 in the nave side of the tower over the tower arch
- The specifications note that there was a medieval mural, which was to be dealt with by a specialist contracted directly by the council
- The burial vaults inside the church were to be filled in and also those within 3m of the perimeter walls. The external area was then to be covered with 6 inches of topsoil
- The entrances to both turret stairs were to be built up and supply and fit a set of double gates for the tower arch

The churchyard continued in use as such and a plan of the burials within the churchyard shows a group of graves to the west of the church and a cluster to the northeast of the nave, with further groups of burials to the southeast. A line of burials to the east of the church path are clearly aligned with it and could therefore post-date it. Human remains have been found in recent archaeological investigations close to the church as well as within it (Summerfield Hill 2011; Kenny 2011).

The increasing decrepitude of the building is clearly illustrated in photographs taken between 1900 and 1976 (Plate 1-5).



Figure 4: Detail of the 1716 plan of Clophill & Cainhoe shown below

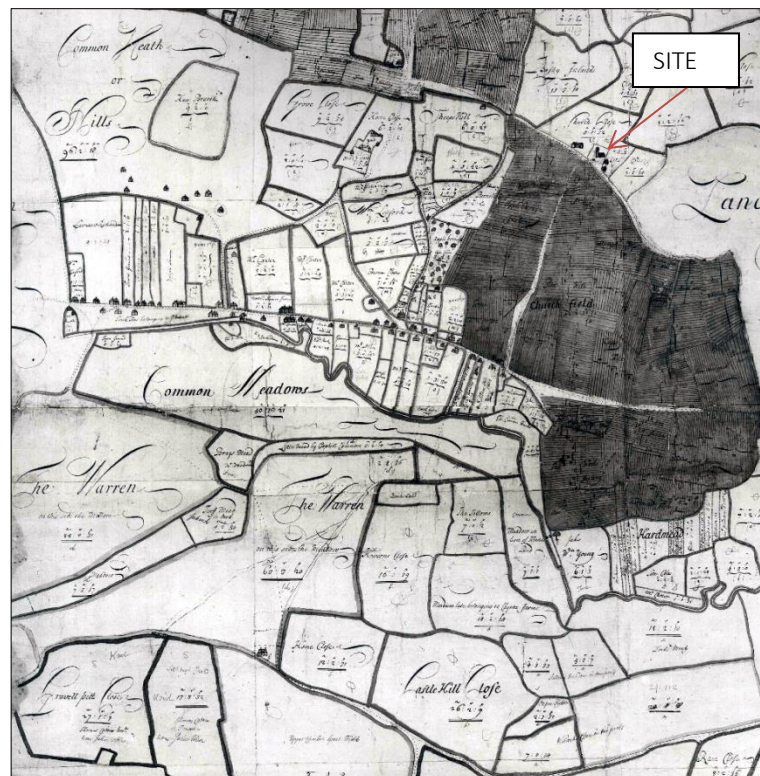


Figure 5: 1716 Plan of Clophill & Cainhoe (BLARS 33/10a)



Figure 6: View of the church from the southeast by Lewis Allen 1844



Figure 7: The interior of the church by Lewis Allen 1844



Plate 1: Old St Mary's from the south c. 1900



Plate 2: Old St Mary's from the southwest in the 1930s



Plate 3: Interior of the church looking east in 1976



Plate 4: Interior of the church looking west in 1976



Plate 5: Church exterior in 1976



Plate 6: Eastern test pit showing earlier masonry below the foundation (Kenny 2011)



Plate 7: Southern test pit (Kenny 2011)



4 Building Fabric

4.1 General

Just before it went out of commission the church comprised a chancel, nave, tower and south porch (Figure 18). The chancel has been depicted as being nearly as tall as the nave, and was approximately 8.66m long and 4.49m wide. The dimensions of the nave are similar in that it is roughly twice as long as it is wide (ie. 12.85m x 6.23m). The tower is 3.77m long and 3.13m wide. Figure 18 shows a staircase to the boys gallery in the northern part of the tower with the gallery straddling the tower arch. Another gallery was accessed by a staircase in the northwest corner of the nave, to the east of which was the font. The pulpit was in the southeast corner of the nave next to the reading desk and clerk's seat. There were no pews for a choir, instead the pews in the chancel faced the altar and were located on the north wall, whilst the south wall was taken up by the rectors seat to the west of the chancel door.

The chancel and south porch no longer survive, nor does the roof or the window tracery.

4.2 Exterior

The church walls are built of locally derived ironstone with Totternhoe clunch dressings (Figure 9-12). The east wall has been heavily rebuilt and has a much narrower arch than would have originally served the chancel (Figure 11). Four large stepped and plain capped, full height buttresses support the north and south walls of the nave and the tower has a pair of diagonal buttresses and a polygonal stair turret in the southeast corner (Figures 9 & 10). The lower stage of the tower has a window in the west wall and a niche of uncertain function in the south wall (Figure 10 Figure 12). A slit window in the north and west walls lights the central stage of the tower and a small slit window with clunch dressings lights the stair in the same stage. The bell chamber windows have lost most of their tracery, but some survives, albeit extremely badly eroded in the north window (Figure 16). Old photographs show that these were 2-light trefoiled windows (Plates 1-2 & 4 - 5). Little survives of the original parapet and the upper courses of the stair turret have also been lost.

The nave walls are also denuded of their parapets and the tracery in the large Perpendicular windows has also been lost. The rubble stone walls of the nave are approximately 90cm thick to the north and 100cm thick to the south. It has been proposed that this thickness could indicate a Saxon date for the church (Hicks 2013), which is further discussed in Section 6 below.

The ground has built up around the church with the result that the plinth is largely obscured and the south door is at a considerably lower level than the ground to either side. Excavations along the southern wall revealed modern cement repairs to the plinth, which was exposed to a depth of 350mm below the offset (Section 5 below). Post-medieval repairs to the buttresses were also revealed during the Watching Brief (Plate 8). The core of the buttress to the east of the south door was exposed, revealing hand-made red bricks with stone inclusions and Spanish. The bricks measure approximately 10-11cm wide by 6-7cm deep with a maximum length of 14cm. They are similar to those in the chancel arch, which have horizontal skintlings and measure 23 x 22 x 7cm and are likely to be 19th century. No bricks were present in the core of other buttresses, although not all were exposed.

4.3 Interior (Figures 13-18)

The internal walls are also predominantly built of ironstone rubble with the occasional piece of clunch. One such fragment has been used to block a putlog hole to the west of the north wall (Figure 9). Earlier fenestration is hinted at in the surviving jambs in the north wall (Plates



9-10). A now blocked narrow window survives to the east of the Perpendicular window, and to the west are two sections of Totternhoe Clunch dressings that are either the jambs of the same fairly wide window or of two narrower ones.

The walls were once rendered and painted although most of the render has been lost. Previous accounts of the interior record the remains of a mural of a castle above the door, which had been revealed when the whitewash had been washed away by rain (Plate 11). The murals could not be conserved in the 1970s as they were in very poor condition, and no trace of them could be found during this project. However, four consecration crosses were discovered during the cleaning process (Figure 17; Plate -15). These are described in detail in Section 4.5

Both Perpendicular windows had a 0.5-1cm thick cement render applied to them. Some moulding and holes for glazing bars were present in the north window and to a lesser extent in the south where the glazing bar holes were 3-3.5cm in diameter on 22cm centres (Plate 25). Two of the voussoirs on the eastern side had been replaced in what appears to be Portland stone.

Both the lower and the upper rood screen doors in the south wall, like the stair turret opening, have been blocked. However, a blocked recess is evident beneath the upper rood screen opening in the south wall (Figure 13). Whether this housed the rood screen itself is uncertain as there is no corresponding recess in the north wall.

The original floor level in the bellchamber was indicated by the large putlog holes in the north and south walls (Figure 16; Plate 23). Another putlog hole, measuring 20 x 26cm was located to the right of the window and opposing putlog holes some 29cm high were observed at the eastern end of the north and south walls of the bell chamber. The tracery to the 2-light trefoiled windows in the bell chamber had only survived in the north window. The Totternhoe clunch was badly eroded, but sufficient remained to enable some reconstruction to take place (Figure 16; Plate 25-25).

A recess below the west window in the silent chamber (the central stage of the tower), thought in 1854 perhaps to have housed a beacon light (Pickford 1994: 204) remain enigmatic (Figure 14).

4.4 **Stair Turret** (Figure 15)

The stair turret, which had been blocked in the 1970s to curb vandalism, is a semi-octagonal, 3-stage structure with a covered opening to the top of the tower (Figure 15; Plate). Like the rest of the church it is entirely built of local ironstone with Totternhoe clunch dressings. Each stage is defined by a simple string course.

The stairs are also of ironstone and most of the treads are original (Plate 19-20). They are not rebated, nor do they have nosings and are built using around a newel rather than a shaft. Between some of the treads is a smaller stone, in other instances they are simply separated by a 2-3cm bed of mortar. Some of the treads have been replaced or added to, but these later additions are very narrow and poorly built. A concrete coating has been applied to some of the steps and further 20th century work may be indicated in the loss of the door, the tiled roof over the stair and what appear to be dislodged stones. This is most evident in the diagonal stones at the top of the stair, which would appear to have been the threshold for the original tower door except for the fact that they are not flush with the tower wall and there are three more steps beyond.



The internal tower wall starts to slope inwards near the top of the turret, but there is no change in the stonework or mortar to indicate that this is later work. The mortar inside the tower is very strong stony lime mortar, and is perhaps indicative of 19th century repair.

Early photographs show a small slit window between the lower two stages of the stair turret as well as one higher up (Plate 5). This had been blocked some time after 1976, but was opened up again during the project. The window, which had been blocked with ironstone pieces and cement, measured approximately 45cm in width and 70cm in height (Plate 2121).

4.5 Consecration crosses (Figure 17)

Three consecration crosses were exposed during the cleaning of the north wall and the faint remains of another was found on the south wall next to the door. None are complete. Indeed, Cross 4, which is on the south wall, comprises only a few lines. Traces of paint survive on the other three and all four of them are within an incised circle, but there the resemblance ends. Cross 1, which is at the eastern end of the north wall would have been 43cm in diameter, but the eastern side is lost (Plate 3). The central arms of the cross are painted white and these fan out a little way from the central point of the cross where they are painted red within a white border. Traces of green pigment are also apparent in places, but these are probably not part of the cross.

Cross 2 is 2.73m west of Cross 1 and is c.42cm in diameter (Plate 4). The arms of the cross are splayed from the centre of the circle and unlike Cross 1 do not have a white border. All of the arms are incomplete, particularly the top. Some blue pigment survives to the right of the cross and on the cross itself, but only on the right hand side and is unlikely to have been part of the original feature.

Cross 3 is located 3.38m west of Cross 2 and is also 42cm in diameter (Plate 5). There are some traces of white on the border of the right arm, which could suggest that more may have been painted white. Some blue/black and yellow pigment survives in the outer edge of the right arm.

Cross 4 is on the south wall and is barely discernible (Figure 17). Some of the incised circle survives but nothing of the cross itself. A small drop of red paint may have been part of a painted arm.

Consecration crosses formed an integral part of a complex ritual by which a church was sanctified. The ritual was formalised by the late 13th century and revised in 1485. Nonetheless, variations of the ritual still occurred and in England the bishops had to anoint both the inside and the outside walls in twelve locations, not just the inside as was the norm on the continent (Spicer 2014: 38-9). This practice had already been established in a late 14th or early 15th century and included the painting of consecration crosses before this could take place. These were to be equally spaced and were to be painted red with an iron branch for a candle (*ibid*). A series of twelve internal crosses were discovered in Throcking, Hertfordshire in the early 20th century which were not evenly spaced nor at the same level (*ibid*: 39). These are no longer exposed.

The symbolism of the consecration cross was defined as early as 1286 when Durand stated in his pontifical that the crosses are painted to terrify demons and to declare the triumph of Christ whose battle standard it is. The cross also symbolises the passion of Christ ‘..by which He Himself consecrated His Church..’ (*ibid*: 40) and the twelve apostles (Churches Conservation Trust website). Scorch marks on one of the consecration crosses in Hessel in



Suffolk would suggest that the practise of lighting the candles attached to the crosses on certain feast days or the anniversary of the consecration itself took place here as well as on the continent (*ibid*: 42).

Although they took numerous forms, consecration crosses were, by the 15th century all were supposed to be enclosed in circles and painted red, although some earlier crosses were painted green or ochre. The most common form was that found in Old St Mary's – a cross pattée. The enclosing circles were not always simple incisions in the plaster but could also have garlanded borders (*ibid*: 45)

Consecration crosses fell into disfavour during the Reformation, and those that survived either succumbed to Cromwell's iconoclasm or Victorian restoration programmes (*ibid*).

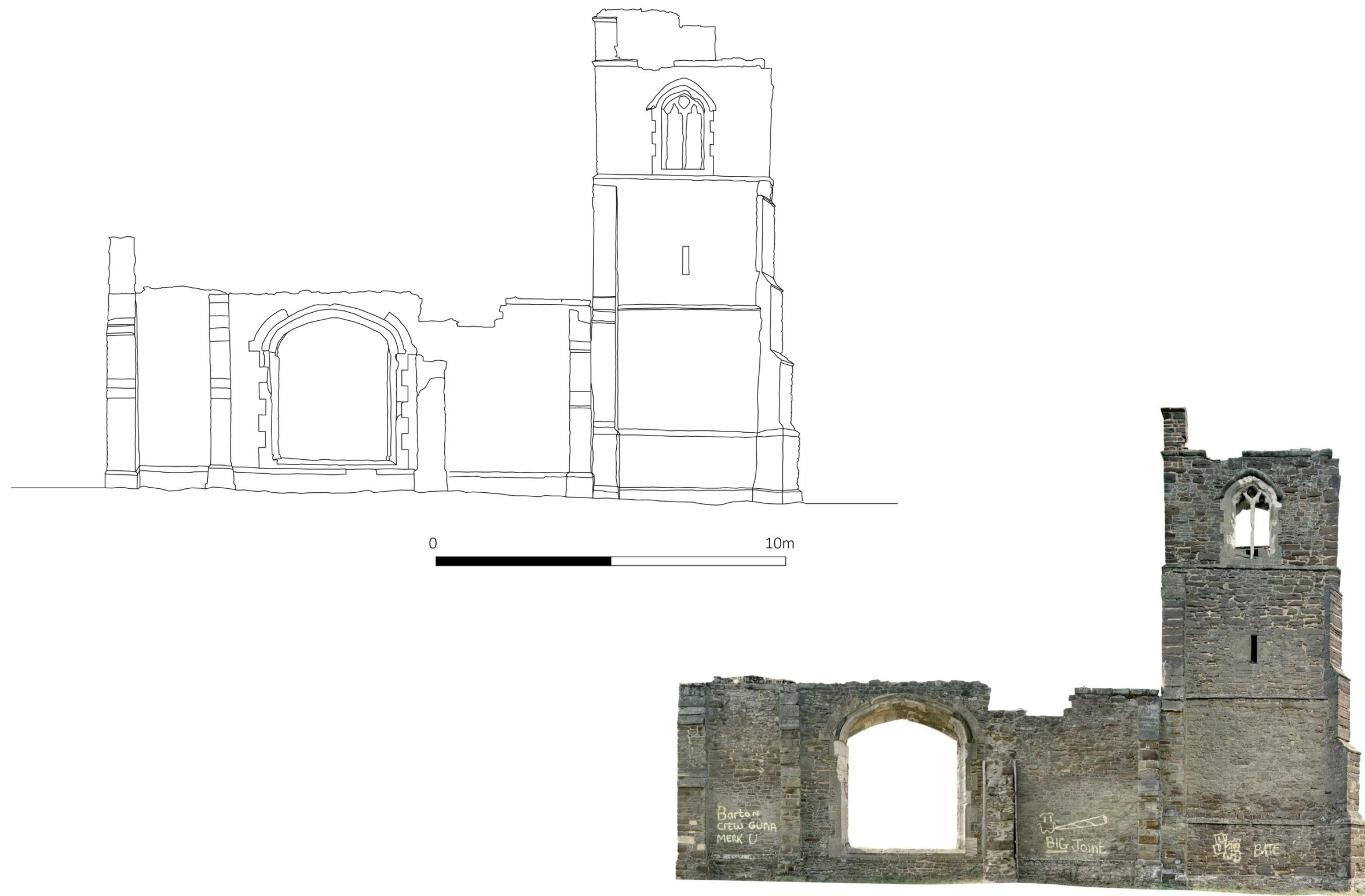


Figure 9: North external elevation (scale 1:125)



Figure 10: South external elevations (scale 1:125)



Figure 11: East external elevations (scale 1:125)

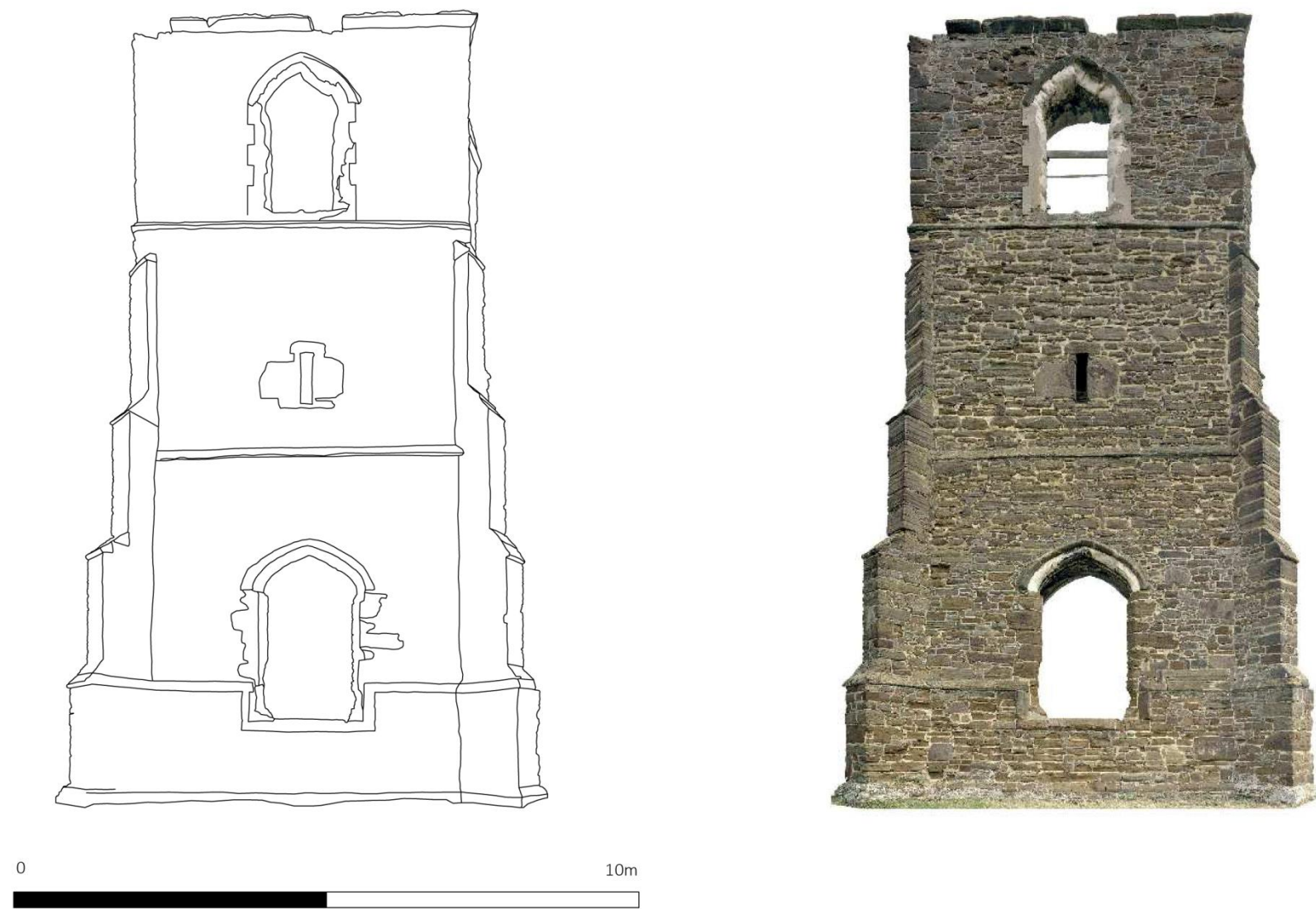
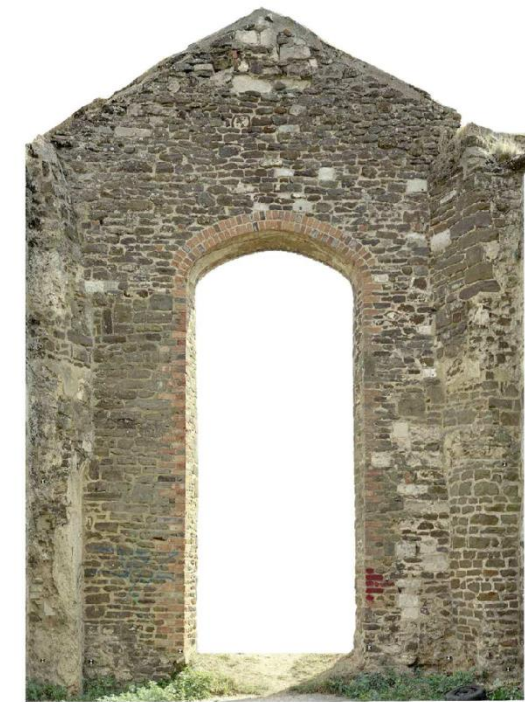


Figure 12: West external elevation (scale 1:100)

South elevation



East elevation



North elevation



Figure 13: South and north internal elevations (scale 1:100)

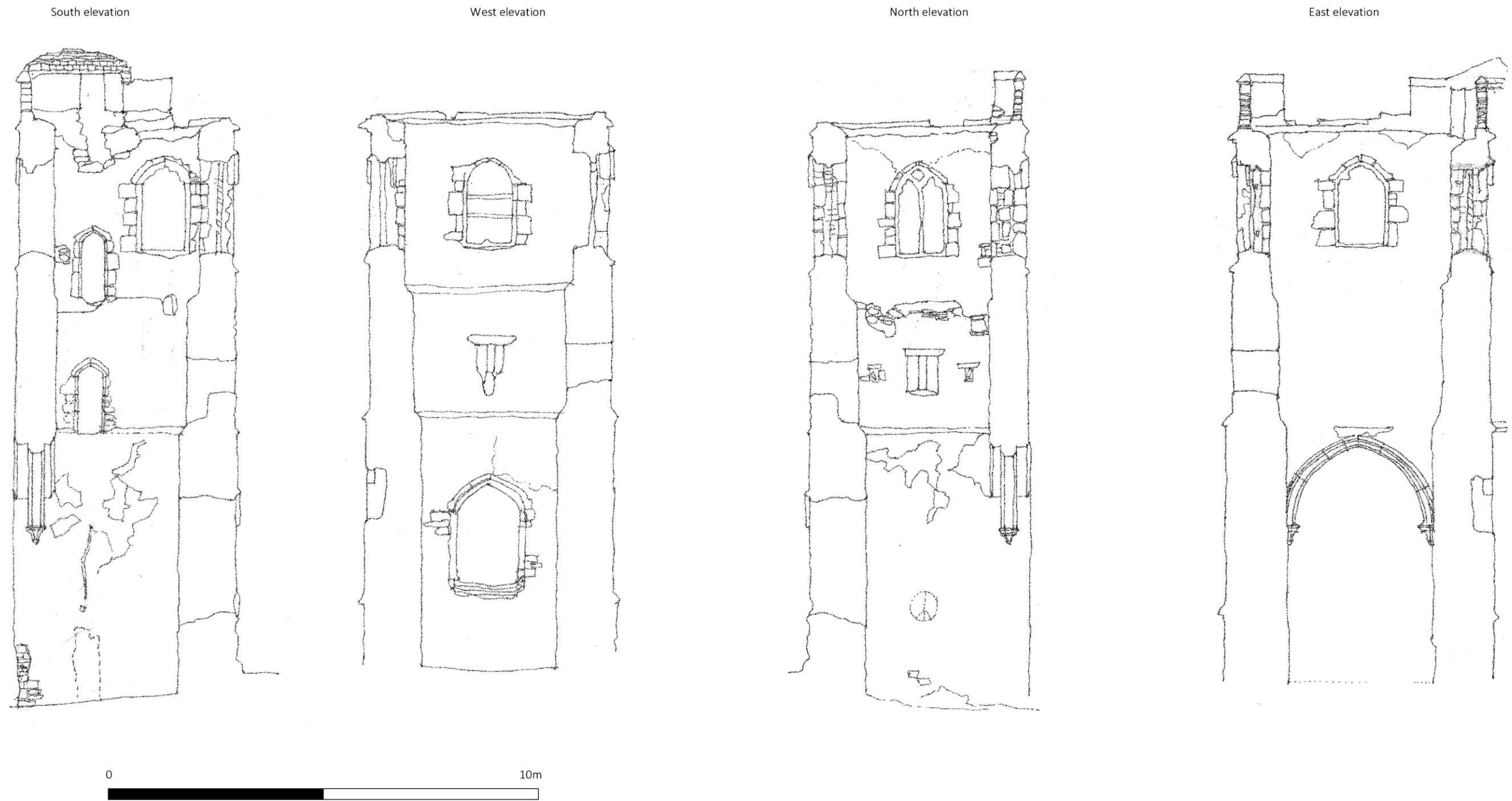


Figure 14: Tower interior elevations (scale 1:100)

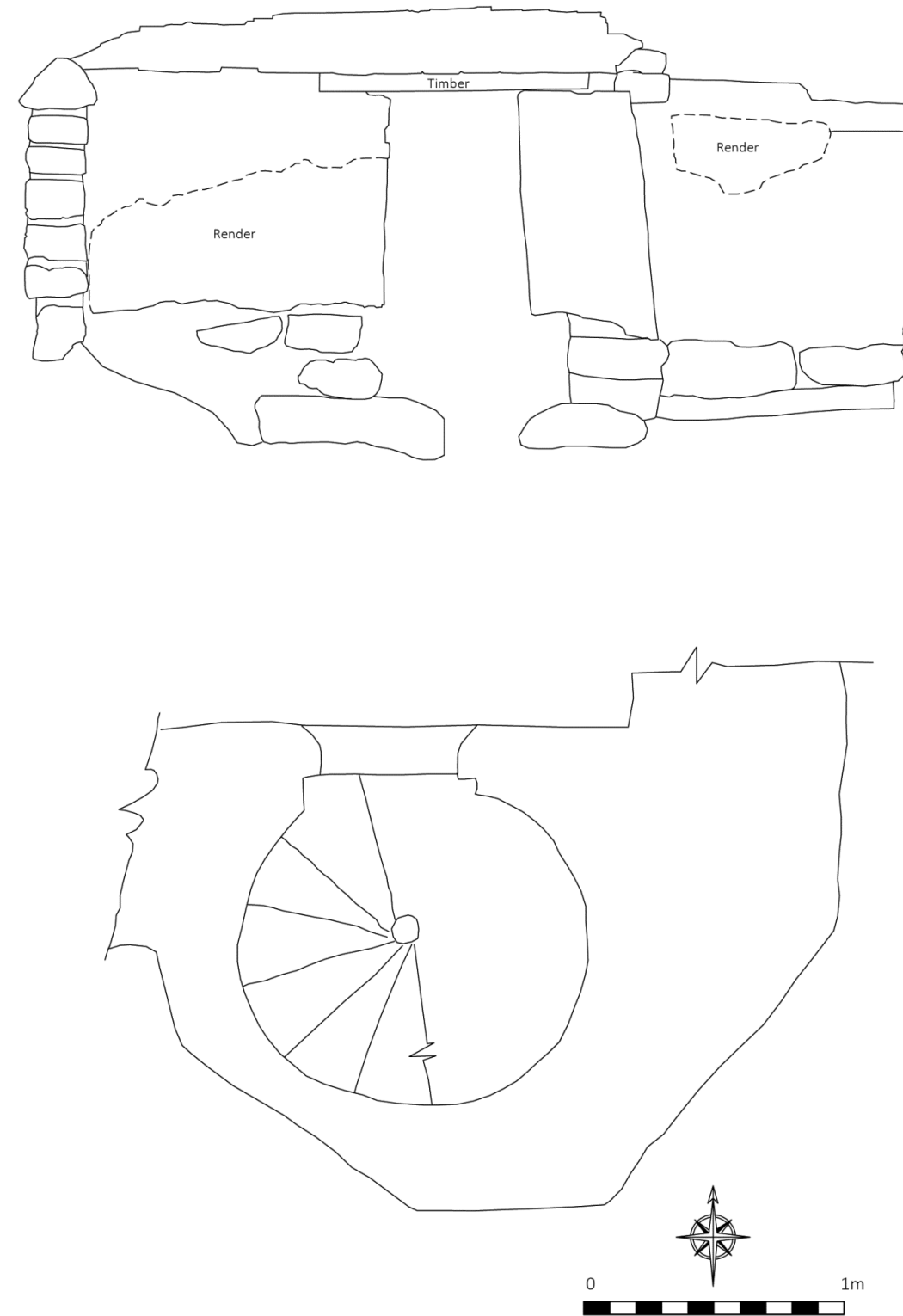


Figure 15: Stair Turret entrance and measured sketch plan (scale 1:25)

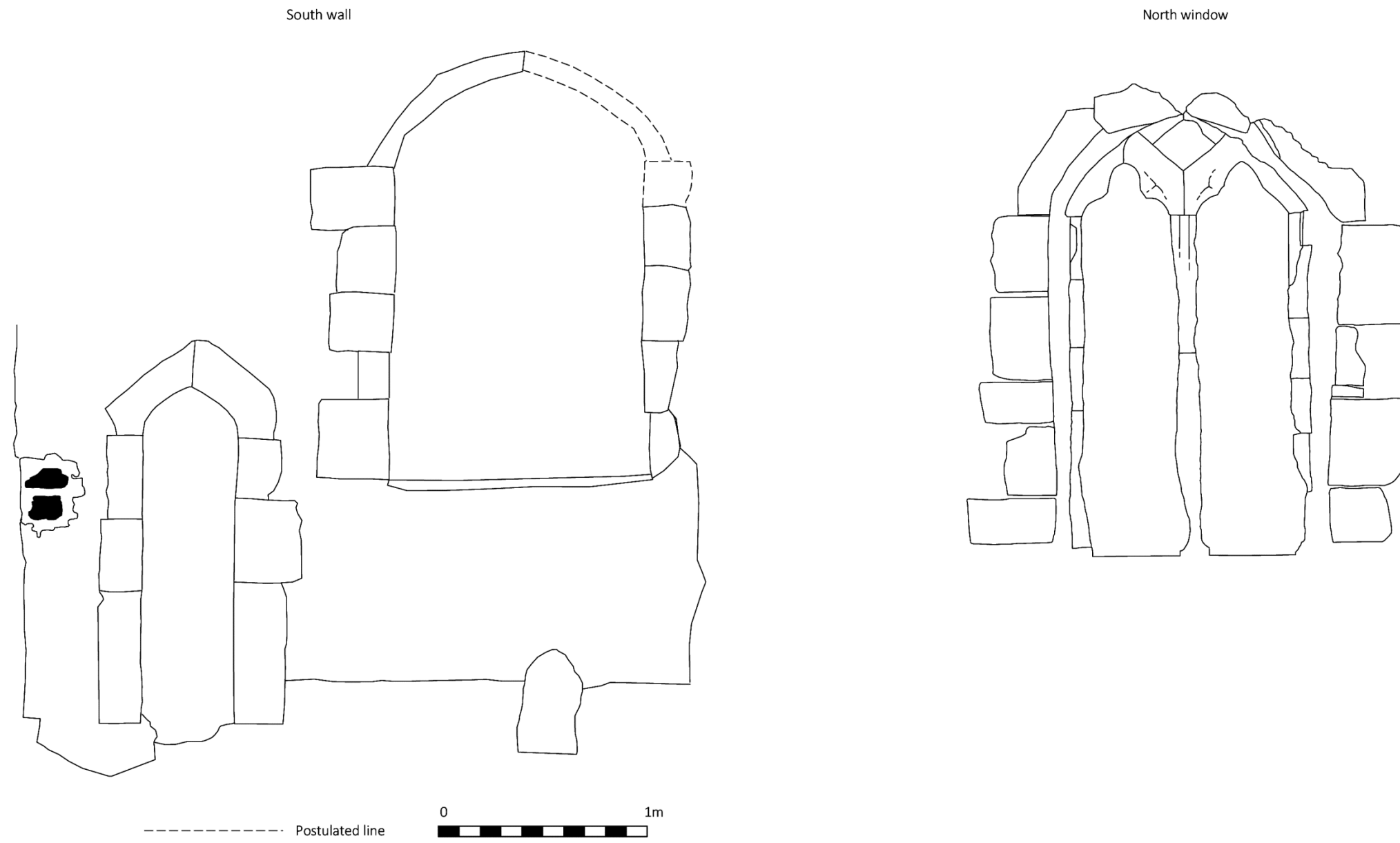


Figure 16: Bell chamber details (scale 1:25)

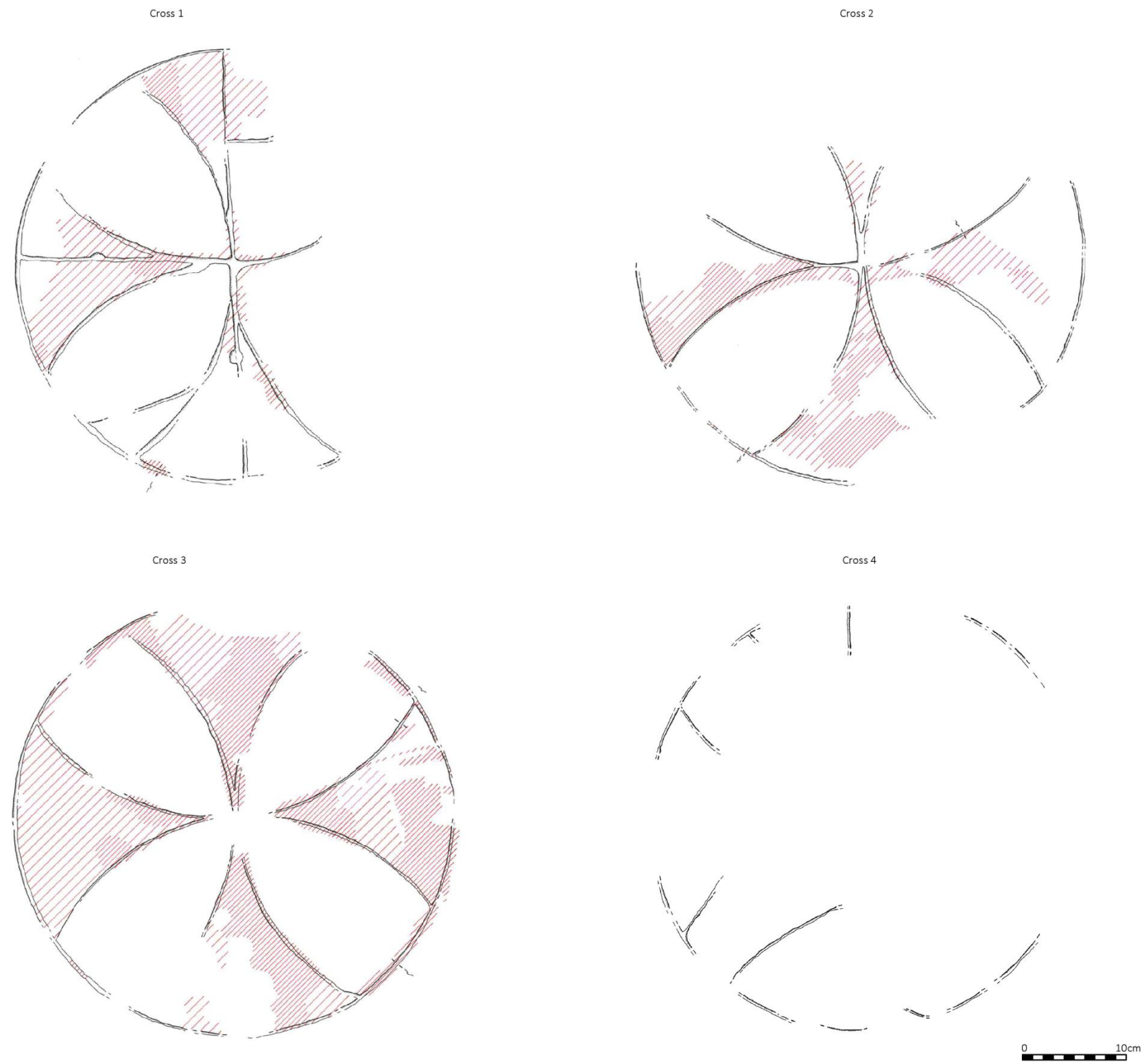


Figure 17: Consecration crosses (scale 1:5)

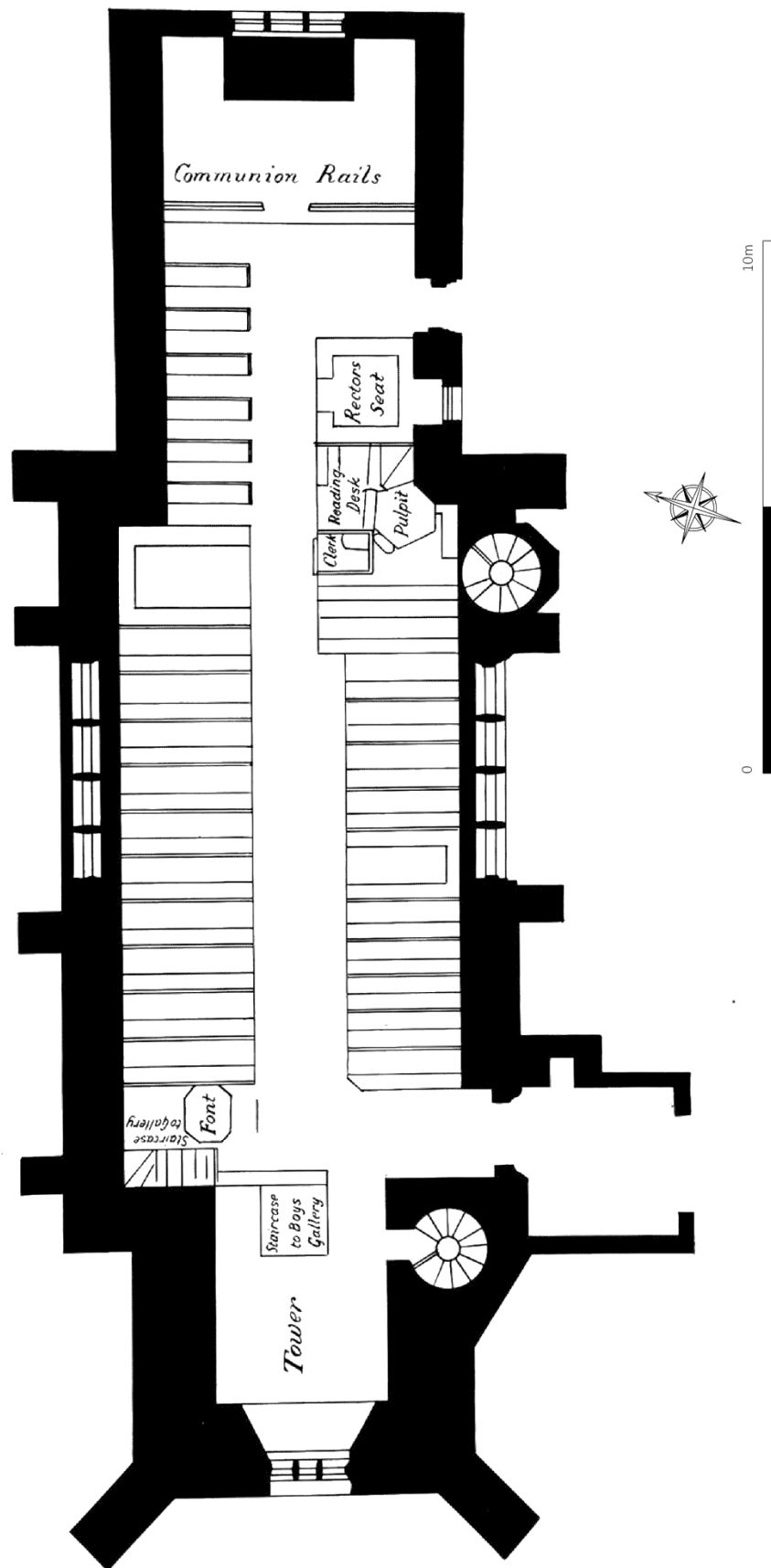


Figure 18: Plan of the church in 1845 (scale as shown)



Plate 8: Buttress detail showing brick pieces in the infill



Plate 9: Western end of the north wall



Plate 10: Eastern end of the north wall



Plate 11: The mural as surviving in the 1960s (Beds Magazine Vol 9)

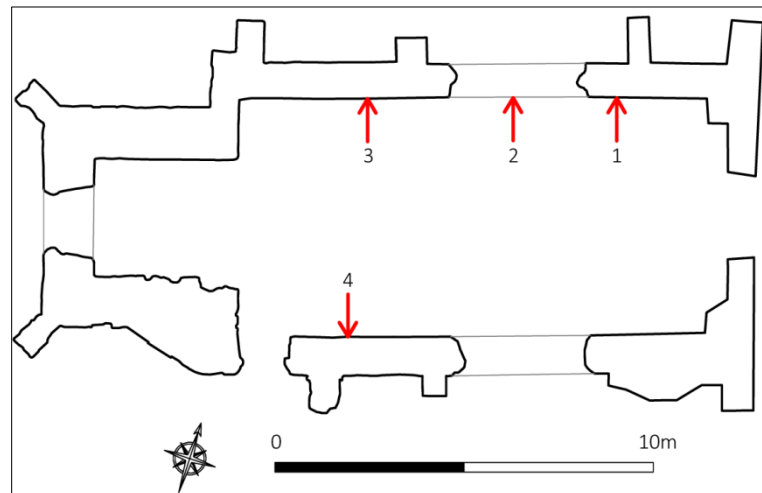


Plate 12: Location of the consecration crosses

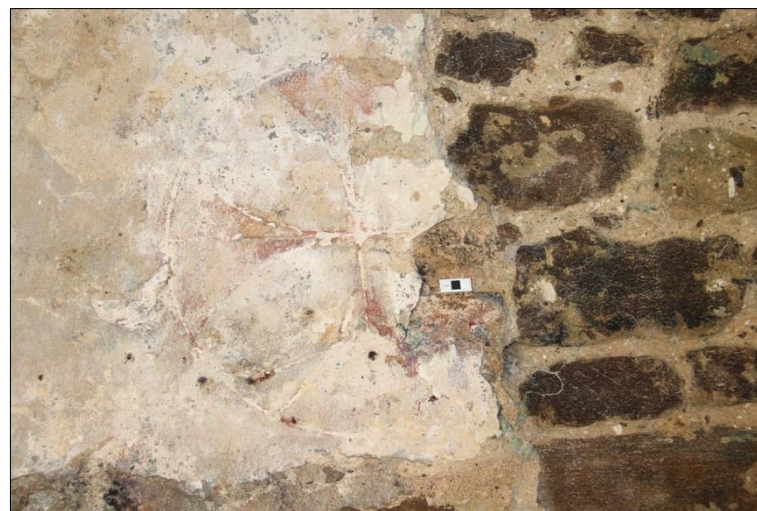


Plate 13: Cross 1(3cm scale)



Plate 14: Cross 2(3cm scale)



Plate 15: Cross 3



Plate 16: Detail of the western side of the southern Perpendicular window



Plate 17: Rood loft doors in the south wall



Plate 18: The top of the stair turret



Plate 19: Detail of the treads



Plate 20: View into the stairwell from above



Plate 21: Blocked stair turret window



Plate 22: Upper stair turret window and stairs



Plate 23: Bell chamber, south wall



Plate 24: Composite photograph of the north bell chamber window



Plate 25: North window tracery restored



5 Sub-surface Archaeological Remains

Introduction

A programme of Observation and Recording was carried during the building restoration of St Mary's Old Church, Clophill. The hand excavation of test pits around three of the outer buttresses and ground levelling inside the church was archaeologically monitored. The ground was also reduced for a pathway, in the centre of which a service trench was excavated. However, due to a lack of communication this was not monitored during excavation, but the spoil was inspected and metal detected.

Description

The following contexts were encountered during the groundworks:

Context Table

Context no.	Type	Dimensions (max)	Description
100	Layer	0.34m d	Topsoil: mid orangey brown, friable, silty matrix with moderate small sub-angular stones and frequent rooting
102	Deposit	0.3m d	Made-ground: mix of white chalk and mid brown silty matrix with frequent small-medium chalk nodules, and sub-angular stones and small fragments of brick
103	Layer	0.79m	Cemetery soil: mid-dark brown, friable, silty clay with occasional small sub-angular stones, small fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) and flecks of chalk
104	Structural	0.64m w 0.56m d	Church/buttress footings: three stepped ironstone slabs
105	Structural	1.45 x 3.08m area	Brick floor exposed in tower: red brick and bonded with lime mortar
106	Fill	0.51 x 0.36m >0.2m d	Fill of possible small pit/post-hole [107]: mix of yellowy and reddish brown, loose, silty clay with occasional flecks of chalk and dumped CBM, ironstone and chalk fragments
107	Cut	0.51 x 0.36m >0.2m d	Cut of possible small pit/post-hole: sub-circular in plan with a vertical and moderately sloping sides, base unknown
108	Fill	0.22 x 0.22m 0.2m d	Fill of post-hole: [109] mid beige brown, loose, silty clay with moderate small-sub-angular stones and flecks of charcoal
109	Cut	0.22m x 0.22m dia, 0.2m d	Cut of post-hole: circular in plan with steep sloping sides and a concave base

Test Pits (Figure 21)

Three test pits were hand excavated around three of the buttresses, in order to determine whether the buttresses themselves were in need of under-pinning.

Test Pit A was located at the eastern end of the south wall and measured 1.9m long, 1.6m wide and 1.18m deep. The trench exposed the buttress footings (104) made up of three stepped ironstone slabs, with a possible two or three further slabs below. These were, however, set back from the vertical plane and so difficult to fully determine. The upper buttress step was 0.09m high with cement based mortar applied to both the top and base face of the step. The second step was 0.22m high with tool marks on the south face and bedding planes visible on the west face, and the third step was 0.25m high with rough tool marks to the south and west face (Plate 6-27). A sandstone headstone, was partially exposed in the southern trench section. It was orientated E-W and may simply have been laid flat in its original position. No inscription could be seen.



Test Pit B was situated at the northern side of the church and measured 1.82m long, 2.02m wide and 0.8m deep (Plates 28-29). The nave plinth was exposed, which comprised three courses of stone offset from the main wall by 18cm and reaching a depth of 35cm. The upper course was very thin ironstone and the second and third courses appeared to be of limestone. The mortar beds were approximately 5cm thick and the mortar itself was extremely hard. The buttress footings stepped in the same way as that in Trench A, but it had finer tool marks.

Test Pit C was situated at the southern side of the church and measured 1.14m long, 0.86m wide and 0.2m deep, excavated into the topsoil. The shallow depth of the test pit only exposed part of the buttress footings in the form of a mortared ironstone slab, extending out from the buttress by 0.35m and 0.64m wide **(104)** (Plate30).

Ground levelling inside the Church (Figures 21-22)

During internal works to the church a brick floor [105] was exposed in the tower. Cutting through the floor was a possible pit/post-hole [107] and post-hole [109].

Brick floor [105] covered an area of approx. 1.45m x 3.08m. It was constructed of red bricks, bonded with lime mortar. The bricks, which measured 230 x 115 x 50mm thick (9 x 4 x 2 inches), were fairly well puddled and contained spanish (Plate -32).

Possible pit/post-hole [107] was a sub-circular cut located at the western side of the tower and had a single fill **(106)** containing CBM, limestone and chalk fragments. Its purpose was unclear but may represent Post-medieval activity on the site (Figure 22; Plate 333).

Post-hole [109] was a circular cut on the north side of the tower that contained single fill **(108)**. It is possible that this was part of the staircase to the boys gallery, but may equally represent Post-medieval activity on the site (Figure 22; Plate 344).

Ground reduction for pathway and service trench (Figure 21)

The ground was reduced by 0.05-0.06m to accommodate a new pathway, 1.20m wide, from the church entrance and to the gate on the southern boundary of the site. A 0.30m wide service trench was excavated in the centre of the pathway to a further depth of 0.3m. No features were observed in the area available for inspection. The spoil was inspected and one human finger bone was found. The spoil was also scanned with a metal detector but nothing was recovered.

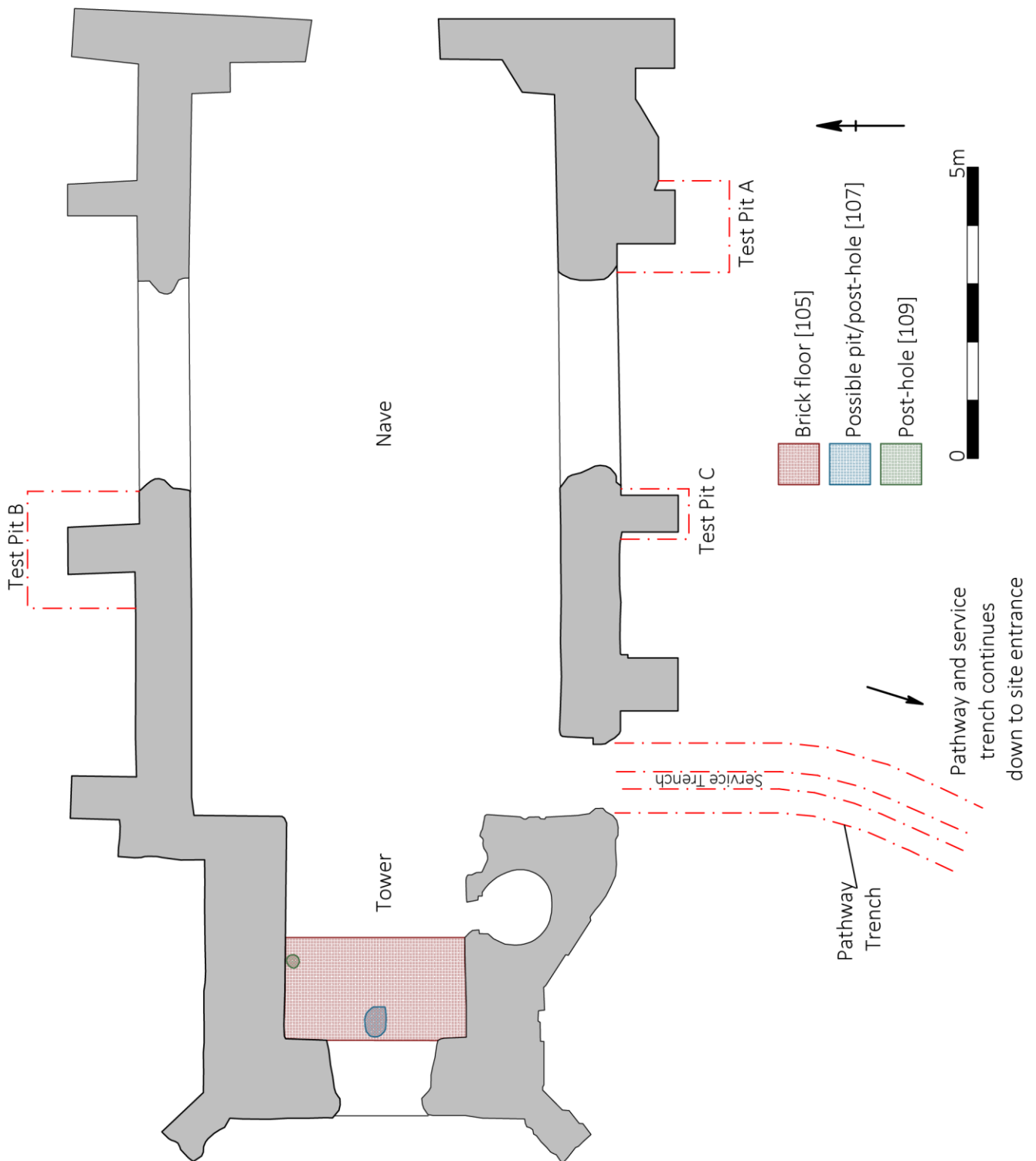


Figure 19: Archaeology Plan (scale 1:100)

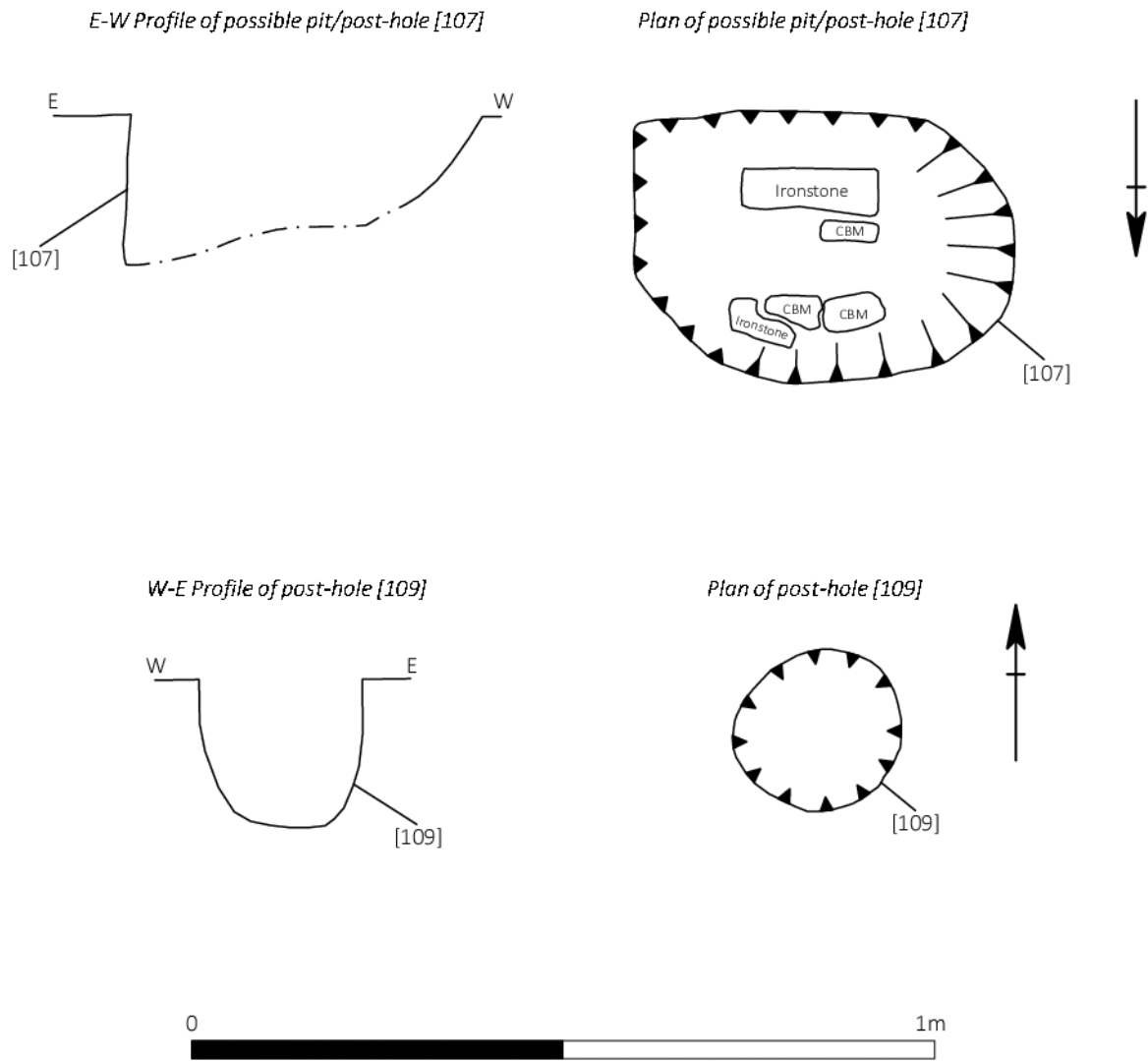


Figure 20: Sections and Plans (scale 1:10)



Plate 26: Test pit A: butters footings (104), looking N (1m scale)



Plate 27: Test pit A: stratigraphy and gravestone in section, looking W (1m scale)



Plate 28: Test pit B: butters footings (104), looking S (1m scale)



Plate 29: Test pit B: stratigraphy, looking E (1m scale)



Plate 30: Test pit C: butress footings (104), looking N (0.5m and 1m scale)



Plate 31: Brick floor [105] in tower, looking W (2x1m scale)



Plate 32: Brick floor [105] detail (200mm scale)



Plate 33: Possible small pit/post-hole [107], looking W (200mm scale)



Plate 34: Post-hole [109], looking N (200mm scale)



6 Discussion and Conclusions

One of the main aims of this investigation was to ascertain whether there was a Saxon church on the site, and to determine the nature of the site and its development. To this end it is necessary to consider the site in relation to the development of the parish system and the local settlement.

Early minster churches were generally established by kings in the 7th century and were responsible for the pastoral care of a large area often equal to that of the polity of the king in question. Early churches, many if not all of which were part of a religious community, were often built within existing enclosures as is witnessed by Aylesbury minster, which stands within an Iron Age hillfort. Roman baths, fora and forts were often re-used, possibly by foreign missionaries who were following the tradition in mainland Europe, and pagan religious sites were often incorporated within a Christian framework as part of the conversion process (Blair 1996:6-7).

From the time of the Scandinavian incursions onwards, secondary minster churches were established in response to changing religious and political needs (Bailey 2003: 74). The churches listed in the Domesday Survey for Bedfordshire are all part of the minster tradition and although they became part of the parish system that dominated medieval and later religious administration and pastoral care, the development of that system could not have been implemented without the foundation of a large number of proprietary or manorial churches in the 10th and 11th centuries. This is thought to have been brought about by the social changes in the later Saxon period that allowed greater social mobility and pursuit of income. Thus a ceorl, a low-ranking freeman, could take on the status of a thegn, a nobleman below the hereditary rank of ealdorman, by having 5 hides of land, a bell and burh-gate, a seat and special office in the kings hall, a kitchen and a church (Morris 1989:253; Reynolds 1999:60). The benefits of owning a church were immediate in that the founder or holder of the advowson could make some financial gain at the same time as having masses said for his soul both in his lifetime and beyond. The association of manorial residence and its proprietary church has been demonstrated archaeologically on many sites, such as Goltho, Lincs. Faccombe Netherton, Hamps. and Sulgrave and Raunds, both in Northants.

St Mary's, Clophill would almost certainly have been established as a manorial church, and, as there was a plethora of manorial churches constructed between 1050 and 1150, with possibly as many as 1-2000 being built between 1075 and 1125 (Morris 1989: 147; Blair 1996: 12), the question is whether a church was built on the site *before* the Norman Conquest of 1066. The dedication of the church to St Mary the Virgin was certainly one of the most common in the pre-Conquest period and the fact that there was a spring close by could suggest the Christianisation of a pagan focal centre. However, Morris points out the general benefit of having a spring close to a church (1989:239), and this can be applied to the wider community as a whole. The spring would also have been of great benefit to a settlement, and it is unclear whether the early settlement of Clophill was on the hill or in its present location along the river Flit. Indeed, the close association with Cainhoe in the medieval period, when both settlements were part of the Manor of Clophill and Cainoe, could have originated in polyfocal settlement in the valley as well as on higher ground on both sides of the river. The buildings shown on the 1716 plan could therefore either have represented the dwellings left behind when the settlement shifted downhill, or the medieval manorial site. To have a church some distance from the core of the settlement is not at all unusual, and a good example is that of Aller in Somerset where the church and manor were approximately 1 mile away from the village, which like Clophill, was originally only a single street (Morris 1989:240).

The construction of churches on higher ground is also common (*ibid*:267) and has religious overtones in that the church is closer to God, but also practical ones in terms of defences. Many churches were built in defensive locales; Brixworth Church, like the earlier Aylesbury



minster, was built within earthwork enclosures and that in Eaton Socon, which dates from the Anarchy period in the 12th century had a ringwork around it (*ibid*: 252). In summary, therefore, Saxon churches are not only placed northeast of a settlement as suggested by Hicks (1010:6); the location would have been determined by a number of factors such as the nature and extent of the founder's land holdings, the type of church (ie whether a minster serving a wide parochia or a proprietary church built by the local lord) whether urban or rural, and the socio-historical context within which it was built (Morris 1989:239). St Mary's Church, like so many other village churches, may well have been founded by a late Saxon thegn, close to or on the boundary of the manor on a site that was practical, perhaps because it could be easily defended if necessary and/or had a constant supply of fresh water. It could equally well have been established by his post-Conquest successor. A precise foundation date cannot be given to St Mary's Church, nor can it be ascertained whether this would have been a timber or stone structure as there no supporting historical or archaeological evidence.

It has been suggested that the thickness of the walls of the present church are indicative of Saxon work (Hicks 2010:6). However, the walls that can be fairly certainly ascribed to the Saxon period in Bedfordshire churches are all thinner than those here (Table 1), which combined with the dearth of other structural or architectural characteristics of Saxon stonework would suggest that the present building does not have Saxon origins. In addition, no Saxon features or artefacts have been found in any of the investigative trenches or subsequent groundworks, which would strongly suggest that St Mary's Church is entirely post-Conquest in construction. Indeed, the artefacts recovered during the initial investigations in 2011 onwards appear to be no earlier than the 15th century and are mostly 19th century (*cf* Summerfield-Hill 2011).

Table 1: Comparison table of wall dimensions in metres

Church	Nave	Chancel	Tower	Non specific
Clophill	90 to N 100 to S		1.35	
Carlton		0.81	1.09	
Kempston		0.86		
Riseley	0.69			
Harrold	0.74			
Shelton	0.76			
Biddenham	0.79			
Bedford: St Peters	0.84		0.84	0.84
Bedford: St Mary's				92
Clapham	0.81		1.22	
Stevington			0.76	
Turvey	0.76			

That a church existed by the early 12th century is clear as it is recorded that the church of Clophill with two virgates of land was given to Beaulieu Priory by Robert d'Aubigny between 1140 and 1146 (VCH online). That being the case it is likely that the traces of earlier fenestration in the north wall of the church are of this time and that the 12th century church consisted of two cells; a chancel and a nave. The tower may well have been added in the late 14th century as is suggested by the trefoil windows and diagonal buttresses. The Perpendicular windows and present buttresses are almost certainly co-eval as the walls would have needed additional shoring as they were weakened by the replacement of masonry with glass. Whereas the north wall was merely modified, the south wall may well have been rebuilt. Evidence for this can be seen in the masonry found against the inside of the south wall during trial trenching (Summerfield-Hill 2011: 14), the footings exposed beneath the present



foundations in a test pit outside the south wall (Kenny 2011) and the remains of an earlier footing beneath the eastern buttress supporting the south wall (Section 5 above). In addition, there is no indication of earlier fenestration in the south wall, which would be expected had the window been installed in an existing wall. Earlier foundations were also found in the test pit outside the east wall (Kenny 2011), which are undoubtedly the remains of the now demolished chancel. When these earlier foundations were constructed cannot be determined by either the fabric or construction technique. The construction of burial vaults inside the church to bury a select few and the need for galleries to accommodate an increasing congregation in the 19th century are themes rehearsed throughout the country. However, Clophill sought to resolve the overcrowding problem by introducing pews in the chancel in the early 19th century. This was a highly unusual move as the chancel would generally only provide seating for the clergy and the choir. Nonetheless, the interior alteration failed to overcome the overcrowding problem and the construction of a new, readily accessible church in the heart of the village whilst retaining old St Mary's as a mortuary chapel in the churchyard was the most pragmatic solution.



7 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Oliver Caroe for commissioning this report on behalf of Clophill Heritage Trust and for providing the rectified photographs and survey drawings included in this report. Thanks are also due to the staff of Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Services (BLARS) for their assistance in the historic research and to Hannah Firth of Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeology Team for monitoring the project. The very positive support from Simon Thurlborn and his team from Universal Stone; Richard Hudson and Ali Bradbury from the Clophill Heritage Trust and Jonathan Capek and Rena Pitsilli-Graham representing Caroe Architecture Ltd was also greatly appreciated.

The fieldwork was carried out by Karin Kaye MA MCIfA, Lydia Breeze-Chilcott, MSC, Rick Whyte and Frances Saxton. The report was written by Karin Kaye and Carina Summerfield- Hill MSc ACIfA, and edited by David Kaye BA ACIfA.

8 Archive

The project archive will comprise:

- Brief
- Written Scheme of Investigation
- Report
- Historical & Survey notes
- Architect's survey drawings
- List of photographs
- B/W prints
- B/W negatives
- CDROM with copies of all digital files.

The archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum BEDFM 2013.30.



9 References

Standards & Specifications

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<http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/CommunityAndLiving/ArchivesAndRecordOffice/CommunityArchives/Cainhoe/CainhoeIndexOfPages.aspx>

Churches Conservation Trust:

<http://www.visitchurches.org.uk/wallpaintings/Understandingschemes/Consecrationcrosses/>

Key to English Place Names: <http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/map/place/>



Appendix 1: Photos of the restored church



Plate 35: General view from the southwest



Plate 36: North nave wall



Plate 37: Stair turret



Plate 38: South nave wall



Plate 39: North nave wall



Plate 40: Bell chamber, south wall



Appendix 2: Selected Photographs taken by KDK Archaeology Ltd

SITE NO/CODE: 013/CSM			Site Name: St Mary's Old Church, Clophill
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		x	The church from the southwest
2		x	South window
3		x	View towards the chancel arch
4		x	South window from the nave
5		x	North window from the nave
6		x	West jamb of the south window
7		x	View towards the tower
8		x	View towards the tower
9		x	East nave wall
10		x	Church from the northeast
11		x	Path leading into the church from the lane
12		x	The church from the southwest
13		x	Tower from the west
14		x	Stair turret prior to works starting from the north
15		x	Stair turret prior to works starting from the northeast
16		x	External wall of the top of the stair turret
17		x	Stair turret prior to works starting from the northwest
18		x	North bell chamber window from the northwest
19		x	North bell chamber window from the northeast
20		x	Top of the north bell chamber window
21		x	Shaft of the north bell chamber window
22		x	Shaft base of the north bell chamber window
23		x	Stair turret minus render from the north
24		x	View into stairwell from the top of the tower
25		x	View into stairwell from the top of the tower
26		x	View into stairwell from the top of the tower
27		x	View into stairwell from the top of the tower
28		x	Uppermost treads from below
29		x	Detail of treads
30		x	Detail of treads
31		x	North wall of the bell chamber
32		x	South wall of the bell chamber
33		x	Detail of the door into the bell chamber
34		x	Plinth and putlog hole in the south wall of the bell chamber
35		x	Stone detail from the top of the stair turret
36		x	Top of the stair turret interior
37		x	North bell chamber tracery from the inside
38		x	View of the nave from the top of the tower
39		x	West jamb of the south nave window
40		x	South buttress
41		x	Detail of the west jamb of the south window
42		x	Northeast corner of the nave
43		x	West end of the north nave wall
44		x	Southeast corner of the nave
45		x	Detail of the blocked rood stair openings
46		x	East wall of the nave
47	x	x	Buttress A, view to north



Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
48	x	x	Buttress A, view to west
49	x	x	Buttress A, view to east
50	x	x	Buttress B, view to south
51	x	x	Buttress B, view to southwest
52	x	x	Buttress B, view to east
53	x	x	Buttress C, view to north
54	x	x	Floor exposed in the tower, view to west
55	x	x	Detail of floor
56	x	x	Posthole [107], view to west
57	x	x	Posthole [109] looking north
58	x	x	Consecration Cross 1
59	x	x	Consecration Cross 1
60	x	x	Consecration Cross 2
61	x	x	Consecration Cross 2
62	x	x	Consecration Cross 2
63	x	x	Consecration Cross 2
64	x	x	Consecration Cross 3
65	x	x	Consecration Cross 3
66	x	x	Location of Consecration Cross 4
67	x	x	Location of Consecration Cross 4
68		x	North nave wall showing Consecration Crosses
69		x	North nave wall showing Consecration Crosses
70		x	North nave wall showing Consecration Crosses
71		x	North nave wall showing Consecration Crosses
72		x	Blocked slit window in the stair turret from below
73		x	Blocked slit window in the stair turret from below
74		x	Blocked slit window in the stair turret from below
75		x	Upper slit window from the bell chamber
76	x	x	Lower slit window repaired
77	X	x	Upper slit window detail
78	x	x	Bell chamber south wall restored
79	x	x	Bell chamber tracery restored
80	X	x	Stair turret restored
81	x	x	South wall of nave restored
82	x	x	North wall of nave restored
83	x	x	Restored church from the southwest
84	x	x	Nave walls from the tower



Appendix 3: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name & Address	St Mary's Church, Clophill, Bedfordshire	Project Site Code	013/CSM
OASIS reference	Kdkarcha1-150766	Event/Accession no	BEDFM 2013.30
OS reference	TL 0919 3885	Study area size	6,070 sq. m
Project Type	Historic Building Recording and Observation and Recording	Height (mAOD)	85m AOD
Short Description	<p>Between September 2013 and June 2014 historic building recording and observation and recording was undertaken at St Mary's Old Church, Clophill, Bedfordshire as a condition of listed building consent for the restoration of building on the site. The church, which is Grade II listed and a Scheduled Monument, was replaced by a new church in the centre of the village in the 1840s and subsequently served as a mortuary chapel. It was declared redundant in 1972. Recent archaeological investigations have revealed evidence for an earlier south wall, which appears to have been rebuilt in its entirety when the Perpendicular windows were installed in the 15th century. In contrast, the north wall was largely retained as is seen in the surviving window jambs. Previously obscured features were also revealed and include putlog holes in the nave and interior of the tower, a blocked slit window in the stair turret and the stairs themselves. Four Consecration Crosses were also rediscovered, although only three retain any meaningful definition; the fourth only surviving as faint lines on the south wall.</p> <p>No evidence for a Saxon church was revealed and the hypothesis that the thickness of the walls indicates a Saxon date is contested. It is proposed here that the present church was probably built in the early 12th century as a 2-cell structure that was enhanced the 15th century with Perpendicular windows and a tower.</p>		
Previous work	Evaluation (Summerfield-Hill 2011) Watching Brief (Kenny 2011)	Site status	Listed
Planning proposal	Renovations	Current land use	Derelict Church
Local Planning Authority	Central Bedfordshire Council	Planning application ref.	040613 CB/12/02747/full
Monument type	Church	Monument period	Medieval
Significant finds	None	Future work	Unknown
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
Project Brief originator	Central Bedfordshire Council	Project Design originator	KDK Archaeology Ltd
Project Manager	Karin Kaye MA MCI(A)	Director/Supervisor	Karin Kaye MA MCI(A)
Sponsor/funding body	Clophill Heritage Trust		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	12/09/13	End date	11/06/14
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical	Bedford Museum BEDFM 2013.30	None	
Paper		Brief, WSI, report, site records, maps, plans, b& w photographs and negatives	
Digital		CD containing all digital photographs	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title	Historic Building Recording and Observation and Recording Report: St Mary's Old Church, Clophill, Bedfordshire		



Serial title & volume	013/CSM/2		
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