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**Archaeological Recording at Halesowen Abbey,
Halesowen, West Midlands**

by
Malcolm Hislop and Steve Litherland

For further information please contact:
Simon Buteux or Iain Ferris (Directors)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

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Summary

Between July and September 2002 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) undertook archaeological building recording at the Premonstratensian house of Halesowen Abbey, Halesowen, West Midlands (NGR SO97678283). The work was carried out in advance of repairs to the historic fabric of the Frater West Wall and the roof of a barn immediately adjacent to the South Transept West Wall. During the removal of fallen building materials from the vicinity of the Frater West Wall, a number of dressed stones were recovered, several of which were evidently reused pieces. The wall itself revealed evidence for the former existence of an attached two-storey building to the west. At ground level there were two mural recesses, and a doorway communicated with the frater undercroft, and at first-floor level there was a serving hatch. The upper room was interpreted as a servery, and the lower room as a chamber associated with the preparation of liquid comestibles for serving in the Frater. It was also confirmed that the stonework of the sills of the lancet windows in the South Transept Wall was original to the structure.

1.0 Introduction

Between July and September 2002 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) undertook a programme of archaeological building recording at Halesowen Abbey, Halesowen, West Midlands, in advance of repairs to the historic fabric by English Heritage. In the case of the Frater West Wall the work was occasioned by the collapse of medieval stonework from the Frater West Wall brought about by failure of the roof of a later farm building into which it had been incorporated, and by the urgent need to repair the roof of the barn immediately adjacent to the west face of the South Transept West Wall.

The scheme of the archaeological work was based upon a brief prepared by English Heritage (2002, Appendix 1). This was modified following discussion with Anthony Fleming, the English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments, when the scope of the project was scaled down (Appendix 2). The work also adhered to the guidelines set down by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2002A and IFA 2002B), and to the standards of the RCHME (1996).

2.0 Site location

Halesowen Abbey, a Premonstratensian foundation, lies 1km to the south east of Halesowen in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, on the western outskirts of Birmingham (NGR SO 97678283, Fig. 1). The abbey is one of the best-preserved monastic sites in the West Midlands, with important archaeological remains surviving both above and below ground. These remains now form part of Manor Farm, and are situated on a spur of south-facing land drained by tributaries of the River Stour. The surface geology consists of sandstone and grey clays with thin seams of coal and Spirorbis limestone, while there are areas of alluvial deposits along the stream courses to the south and west of the abbey (Geology Survey 1" Sheet 168). An area which includes almost all the earthworks connected with the abbey has been designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument Number 21568), and portions of the standing remains of the abbey are Guardianship monuments (Fig. 2).

3.0 Historical and archaeological background

Halesowen Abbey has been the focus of documented archaeological work for over one hundred and thirty five years. In common with the traditional approach of earlier monastic archaeology the main abbey structures including the Church, Chapter House, and Frater have been most intensively studied. However, the loss of material from previous excavations has resulted in only a small archive surviving, and finds are limited to a large collection of tile stored or on display in local and national museums. It is, then, of great importance to understand and preserve what archaeological deposits remain on the site. More recent research has been concentrated upon conservation-based research and analysis of the upstanding monastic remains, including the putative Infirmary structure to the east of the site. This work, which has been carried out in order to inform the on-going conservation process around the monument for English Heritage, has been supplemented by the use of non-intrusive survey techniques targeted towards understanding of the associated earthworks.

3.1 *Documentary evidence*

Apart from scattered references in Crown documents, the main documentary sources for the abbey are the Court Rolls of the manor of Hales, 1270-1307 (Amphlett 1930; Wilson 1933), the register of Richard Redmant, Abbot of Shap, 1459-1505 (Gasquet 1904-6) and various charters and other documents which survived in the Hagley Muniments and are now mainly to be found in Birmingham Reference Library. The abbey's cartulary, however, has been lost (Colvin 1951, 380). In addition, more generalised historical sources have been utilised within the format of desk-top type assessments accompanying landscape research into the post-dissolution history of the abbey site (e.g. Litherland and Moscrop, forthcoming).

3.2 *Topographic and archaeological survey*

The plan of the abbey has been principally recovered by excavation. Holliday conducted the first recorded excavations at Halesowen Abbey in 1870 (Holliday 1871). Although most of the records of his work have since been lost, a manuscript plan of the abbey, including the positions of the foundations traced from excavation and two *in situ* portions of tile floor, is in Birmingham Reference Library (BRL 353137). Holliday's plan of the abbey church and main claustral buildings was enhanced by further work on the site by Brakspear in 1906 (Clapham 1923, pl. facing p. 252), and by Somers from 1928 to 1930 (Somers and Somers 1932, 4-10). Further excavation by Somers in 1938, during the widening of Manor Lane to the west of the church, found wall foundations and a cobbled track which may have been part of the Outer Gatehouse of the abbey (Somers 1938, 82). The Duke of Rutland conducted minor excavations on the site between 1925-28 and 1934-40 in search of medieval floor tiles. The exact location of this work is unknown, apart from a reference and photograph of his 1938 excavation of the Chapter House (Somers 1938, 82). A short note on a watching brief on the supposed site of the Guest House is also not accurately located (Wilson and Hurst 1971, 141). An historical and archaeological assessment of the abbey was commissioned by Dudley Borough Council in 1986 (Marsden 1986a). Illustrations of Halesowen Abbey since the 18th century are also listed by Marsden (1986b, 89).

3.3 *Building survey*

There are two early descriptions of the abbey ruins (Holliday 1871a; VCH 1906, ii, 137-9). In recent years a programme of targeted building recording has been undertaken by BUFAU on behalf of English Heritage. In the late 1980s the putative Infirmary building was recorded in detail by BUFAU and consolidated by English Heritage. Following on from this Beric Morley, then the English Heritage Inspector of the monument, commissioned a number of rapid stone-by-stone records to be made of the South Frater Wall, the cart shed that incorporated the West Wall of the Frater and readily accessible areas of exposed stonework in the long barn adjacent to the South Transept West Wall. These surveys generated an archive of drawings, photographs and summary reports (Ferris 1987 and 1990). The later farm buildings, with the exception of the Victorian farmhouse, were also studied by students of the Field Archaeology Unit's Diploma in Practical Archaeology in 1990 and 1995 (Learmonth and Heath 1995). Recording of these structures consisted of a photographic record and descriptive text.

4.0 Objectives and methods

The objective of this project was to provide an analytical structural record of the parts of the monument within its scope, in order to improve our understanding of the abbey and its archaeological and historic context, and to inform and provide a record of the repair programme. The location of the Frater West Wall and South Transept West Wall are given on Figure 3, together with the other upstanding remains of the abbey. Specific objectives of this programme of work were as follows:-

Frater West Wall

- To record fallen materials prior to the commencement of the repair programme.
- To identify the fallen fabric, including the former positions of the dressed stones in the wall in order to inform reinstatement.
- To assess existing records of the wall, and to add additional information to them.

South Transept West Wall

- To record a limited area of the west elevation accessible from scaffolding erected in order to repair the roof of the adjacent barn.

The sequence of work was as follows. The fallen fabric from the Frater West Wall and its associated building was recorded photographically before being removed under archaeological supervision and assessed for its archaeological/historic significance. The medieval dressed stones were recovered, and as far as possible their former positions in the wall identified to inform the reinstatement work. The relevant plans and elevations of the structures were recorded at a scale of 1:20, the elevations of the Frater West Wall being an enhancement of BUFAU drawings made in 1989 (Fig. 4). Tooling marks were drawn at a scale of 1:1. The drawings were supplemented by a photographic record using monochrome and colour 35mm format film for negatives and transparencies. Selective clearance and excavation of five small test pits was also undertaken by hand in order to expose more of the lower courses of

the Frater West Wall that had become obscured by rubbish and trampled hay over the years in order to aid interpretation of the historic structure. In addition, a large format photographic record was made of the Frater West Wall upon the completion of the repair work.

5.0 Results

The results are presented as follows. Firstly, there is a forensic analysis of the material fallen from the Frater West Wall, including detailed descriptions of the dressed masonry. Secondly, there is a detailed description and analysis of the Frater West Wall arising from the programme of building recording and, finally, there is a description and analysis of that part of the South Transept West Wall that was surveyed.

5.1 *Forensic analysis of the collapse of the Frater West Wall*

Unfortunately, because of the nature of the collapse, it was not possible to undertake a straightforward forensic reconstruction of the Frater West Wall. Most of the damage was caused by the twisting and dragging action of the pair of purlins set into the wall that had failed under the combined weight of the tile roof they were supporting and the westward lateral movement of the supporting walls of the cart shed built against the West Frater Wall. In particular, the effect of the collapse of the southern purlin on the section of medieval masonry into which it was set threw this masonry upwards and mixed it up in contrast to a normal lateral slump, where the stones generally retain their structural integrity. Additionally, some of the stone from the east side of the wall that had spilled into the main farmyard was later placed with the bulk of the material that had fallen on the west side of the wall (Plate 1). Nevertheless, it proved possible to reconstruct the position of nearly all of the main section of dressed masonry situated to the upper right-hand, or southern, side of the west-facing elevation of the Frater West Wall. This was achieved through a combination of measurement, verification with previous drawings and photographs, and comparison of the bedding depths of each stone.

The Timbers

None of the fallen roof timbers proved to be of monastic or early post-dissolution date. Most of the timbers dated from the second half of the 19th century when the roof of the cart shed was extended southward and repairs were made to the rest of the roof, including the strengthening of various rafters and the use of 'Dreadnought' tiles. Three other timbers were very roughly and summarily hewn, retaining much of the shape of the raw material. These comprised both purlins and a joist, from which tack equipment had been hung. Each of these timbers had the appearance of being either 18th- or 19th-century in date.

The Worked Stone

Thirty-eight pieces of dressed masonry were recovered. Ten of these retained tooling marks, or were recognizable as architectural fragments. These items, which are described below, fell into three main groups based on the character of the treatment they had received from the masons.

Group A (Nos. 2, 3, 7 & 8)

The stones are smoothed faced but retain coarse diagonal striated tooling marks (Plate 2), probably executed with chisels, on the concealed faces. Group A masonry can be seen in situ within the Frater West Wall and seems to be contemporary with the construction of the building, which, judging from the architectural details that survive in the South Wall, probably dates from the second half of the 13th century.

Group B (5, & 9)

The masonry of Group B has fine diagonal striations on the exposed faces (Plate 3), whereas the concealed faces are only roughly dressed. As these items were incorporated into the Frater West Wall, and as they include at least two architectural fragments that are unrelated to the structure, they must be re-used material. As they come from the upper part, that is to say the least altered part of the wall, they presumably date from an earlier period than the frater.

Group C (6 & 10)

Only two small fragments make up Group C. They both have two sets of diagonal striated tooling marks that have been applied at right angles to one another to produce a chequer pattern (Fig. 3, Plate 4). These too must be re-used material.

Stone No.1 (Plate 5)

A large stone, measuring approximately 67cm long by 36cm wide by 20cm tall, with a triangular point at one end, giving it a pentagonal plan. The orientation of the block is clear from a 6cm chamfer along the upper edge of one of the long sides continuing around one of the sides of the pointed end. This stone may have formed part of a plinth or offset, whereas the angled end suggests that it was at the corner of a structure. It is either a re-used piece or was one of the plinth stones from the frater. No tooling marks are visible.

Stone No.2 (Group A; Plate 6)

A block with a lower bedding face approximately 40cm long by 35cm wide. The outer face of the stone is angled so that it slopes back from the base to an upper bedding face that is only 25cm wide. It can be identified with the southernmost stone of the first-floor offset that was recorded in 1989. The upper bedding face and the sides of the block have diagonal striated tooling marks, but the angled front is smooth.

Stone No.3 (Group A)

Part of a block measuring approximately 42cm long by 37cm at its widest point by 26cm tall. Similar in character to Stone No.2, with a smooth, angled, outer face. There are also striated tooling marks on the upper plane approximately 0.5cm wide, and a wider, 2.5cm, chisel mark.

Stone No.4

A roughly hewn block with a wide, 9 inch or 23cm, chamfered edge.

Stone No.5 (Group B; Plate 7)

Like Stone No.1 this is a re-used architectural fragment. It is about 46cm long and towards one end is the corner formed by the meeting of two chamfers at a 90° angle. This is evidently the vestige of a chamfered window surround, and the stone itself represents either a sill or a flat lintel. The outer face of the stone retains diagonal

striated tooling marks between 3mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch) and 7mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) wide, but there are no marks on the bedding faces.

Stone No.6 (Group C; (Fig. 3, Plate 4)

This is only a fragment, apparently the angle of a squared stone. It has an unusual and interesting tooling pattern which comprises two series of diagonal striations that cross to form a chequer design. The marks are between 3mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch) and 10mm ($\frac{3}{8}$ inch) apart.

Stone No.7 (Group A)

A squared block with rather coarse and irregular diagonal striations between 10mm ($\frac{3}{8}$ inch) and 19mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch) to the sides, though the outer face is plain.

Stone No.8 (Group A)

Another rectangular block dressed in a similar manner to Stone No.7. A nail in the smooth outer face identified it as one of the course of stones immediately above the off-set which had had a horizontal piece of timber nailed to them at some point.

Stone No.9 (Group B; Fig. 4, Plate 3)

The outer face of this stone has diagonal striations, varying in width from 3mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch) to 7mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch), as does one of the sides, suggesting that it might be a corner piece such as a quoin or the jamb of a window embrasure. There are no tooling marks on the bedding faces.

Stone No.10 (Group C)

Another fragment, with traces only of a tooling pattern similar to that of No.6.

5.2 *Frater West Wall*

5.2.1 General (Fig. 5)

The assorted masonry that forms what today we call the West Frater Wall measures approximately 7m in length, is 4.5m high at its tallest point and varies between 0.9m and 1.2m (or 4ft) in thickness, parts of its western face sitting upon a chamfered plinth (Plate 8). This wall is now set apart from the main Frater South Wall and has clearly been much repaired and altered throughout its post-dissolution history. The extent of these alterations has made interpretation extremely difficult and we are probably left with more questions than answers at the end of this recording exercise. Nevertheless, our knowledge of the Frater in particular has been significantly enhanced, as set out in the following section.

Of the lithology of Halesowen Abbey Dr R. Ixer of Goodprovenance, Birmingham writes 'Halesowen Abbey is built on faulted sandstone units of the Halesowen Beds within the Upper Carboniferous Coal Measures as shown on the 1 inch to 1 mile British Geological Survey Sheet 168 (Birmingham). The Halesowen Beds comprise 80 – 170m (250 – 500 feet) of olive and buff sandstones and grey clays enclosing thin coal seams and limestone beds. South of the Abbey, the geology comprises more mixed Coal Measure sandstones and marls/clay whilst to the north lie the Etruria Marls. The nearest Permo-Triassic sandstones are 1.5 to 2 km to the east.

Although the local/regional geology includes limestones, basalts/dolerites and breccias/conglomerates (all of which have been used as building stone in the West Midlands), the builders of the Abbey have exclusively used sandstones alongside trivial amounts of siltstone. Four lithologies can be distinguished, primarily based on their weathering colour.

1. Purple-red, thickly-bedded sandstone with some cross-bedding and pale reduction spots/streaks. The sandstone is homogeneous, well-cemented and is mica-free with rounded, even-sized quartz grains. This lithology has been used to make large, well-dressed building blocks and has been used for much of the carved stone. This sandstone is probably Permo-Triassic rather than Upper Carboniferous and if so has been transported a minimum of 2 kilometres to the Abbey.
2. A green- to buff-coloured sandstone, showing variations in hue and local cross-bedding. The rock is well-cemented, some very well-cemented and carries noticeable amounts of white mica. This sandstone is Upper Coal Measures and is local, maybe very local.
3. An orange-yellow, coarse-bedded sandstone mainly used for large masonry blocks, not as well-dressed as the purple sandstone. Some sandstone has been carved but most has not. The sandstone is feldspathic and micaceous and is Upper Coal Measures in origin, so could be local.
4. Very minor amounts of a green-grey siltstone are present, often in the later phases of building/?restoration. The lithology has a strong, planar fabric, fine-scale bedding and has been used as thin slabs, often inserted at angles to the main masonry courses. The siltstone is Upper Carboniferous in age and local,' (Ixer 2002).

The stone used in the West Frater Wall mainly consists of Groups 2 and 3. One of these was a green sandstone rubble, used mainly in the lower levels and as core material, the other a red dressed sandstone which was used for the dressings and better quality facing work, particularly in the upper levels.

5.2.2 Description of the external (west) elevation (Fig. 7)

The chamfered plinth along the base of this wall is interrupted in the centre by a vertical scar of rubble core, approximately 0.6m (2ft) wide. The scar extends to the full height of the stonework and clearly indicates the former presence of a wall here. Also of note is the fact that above head height the dressed stones on either side of the scar were once keyed into this wall, whereas it is much less clear if this was the case in the lower courses.

At ground-floor level the extreme northern end of the elevation incorporates the remains of an opening, probably a doorway, now approximately 0.40m wide and retaining one chamfered jamb on its south side. The wall immediately above this door appears to have been largely rebuilt, but to the right-hand, or south, side of the rebuilt area remnants of the core bear the suggestion of the beginning of a north-inclining arch over the doorway. To the right, or south, side of this opening are two blocked rectangular recesses (Plate 9), each with a single large stone block forming the lintel. The northernmost (Plate 10) measures 0.54m wide by 0.28m high, and the southernmost 0.40m wide by 0.18m high. Neither is rebated to take a door or cover. One of these must be the 'small recess lined with thin tiles' recorded by Holiday in

1871 as being 'at a height of about 2ft from the ground' (Holiday 1871, 63). Holiday thought that this recess was originally an oven, but gave no supporting evidence. Immediately to the south, and also cutting the second recess, is an area of irregularly-shaped blocking incorporating reused masonry, approximately 1.5m high by 1m wide. The cutting of this opening also involved the removal of the base plinth to the wall. Behind this blocking was a deep irregularly-shaped cavity loosely filled with core stones. To the right, or south side, of the east/west wall scar noted above an area of original mainly green sandstone masonry continues for c.1m as does a short continuation of the base plinth.

The level of the first floor is indicated by a change in the stonework from green stone rubble to dressed red sandstone blocks. This change occurs at approximately 130m above the Ordnance Survey Datum (A.O.D.). To the south of the east/west wall-scar there is a chamfered offset at first-floor level, an indication that this was an external face, while to the north the walling appears to have been an internal partition between the Frater and a building to the south. Given the width of this wall, that essentially consists of a single depth of well-dressed rectangular blocks, it was probably not load bearing. At first-floor level there are two possible beam slots at centres 1.45m apart. Otherwise the main feature in this internal wall is a long thin stone which seems to have been a sill for an opening. The upper face of this stone is 1.2m above the level of the first floor.

5.2.3 Description of the internal (east) elevation (Fig. 8)

The east elevation was in a much poorer state of preservation than the west elevation, there are large expanses of core exposed and several areas of later blocking and repair. In terms of clearly monastic masonry, at ground level the other side of the doorway at the north end of the wall can be seen, its surviving jamb being rebated. Here too, the ghost of a former arch can be discerned in the curving character of the adjacent core to the south and above. One of the stones at the head of the present opening is chamfered on two sides, and has two deep keying grooves on its one exposed bedding plain (Plate 11). It is clearly a reused stone from a vaulting rib and must belong to a relatively late set of repairs. The exposed wall core immediately to the south of the door jamb represents the ghost of an angled opening that is identical to those seen on either side of the openings in the ground floor of the South Frater Wall.

The other area of clearly monastic masonry, as opposed to wall core, is situated at first-floor level. Here the wall is recessed, the stone work is dressed into regular rectangular blocks, and the wall is only one block thick. Between the ground-storey infill and the dressed stone blocks that form the back of this recess is an area of exposed core. Set into this exposed core is a large flat stone that juts out from the wall face at roughly 130m A.O.D. This is probably the only fragment of the springing of the first floor to remain *in situ*. Within the recess, 1.1m above this stone, is the stone sill already mentioned in the description of the west elevation (Plate 12). On this side of the wall the sill projects and is chamfered. There is little doubt that this stone is *in situ* because the corresponding stone of the left-hand (south) return is cut to accommodate the chamfered lip. This opening, within its recess, would have formed a distinctive architectural feature within the frater.

The rest of the stonework comprises a mixture of later rebuilding, blocking and exposed areas of wall core that is very difficult to unravel. At ground-floor level there is a distinct vertical break that is 1.76m to the south of the southern jamb of the doorway. The blocking to the right is the later, and is probably of 20th-century date, being bonded with hard Portland cement. The recording of a mason's mark on one of the stones confirms that it constitutes reused material from elsewhere around the abbey. To the left, or south of the vertical break, is an area of dressed stone that is similar in character to other areas of post-medieval building seen in the cart shed and elsewhere around the abbey, incorporating tile and the occasional brick to infill gaps between stones and level courses of masonry. Behind this dressed stone is a void. It is interesting to note that this void corresponds with the cavity behind the west-facing elevation – and, if so, it may represent the remains of a flue, or even part of an oven, of some sort. Only excavation may be able to clarify this point. The rest of the wall is mainly exposed core, which can clearly be seen from the differing width of the wall (Fig. 9).

5.2.4 Test Pits (Fig. 9)

All five test pits were dug through recently made up or disturbed ground around the Frater West Wall in order to try to answer various questions about its development. Numbers 1-3 are situated on the west side, Number 4 is at the south end, and Number 5 is situated at the northern end of the east side of the wall.

Test Pit 1 (Plate 13)

Situated immediately in front of the door jamb at the north end of the wall, Test Pit 1 revealed two small flags of a red sandstone floor to the south of the doorway, approximately 30cm (1ft) beneath the top of the plinth. No dating evidence was obtained, but it is tempting to interpret these flags as a remnant of monastic flooring given their apparent structural association with both the door jamb and the base plinth.

Test Pit 2 (Plate 14)

Test Pit 2 was situated at the junction of the medieval fabric and the blocking to the south of the two recesses. A compacted ashy-floor surface was uncovered approximately 25cm (10") below the top of the plinth, which did not continue into the area of blocking. This floor surface may be post-medieval in date because it is higher.

Test Pit 3 (Plate 15)

Excavation of a test pit at the foot of the east-west wall scar revealed a thin floor surface of compacted ash and plaster. This was clearly post-medieval in date because where it was cleaned in half section compacted clay and rubble, presumably associated with the foundation of the former east-west wall, was found immediately underneath.

Test Pit 4 (Plate 16)

Test Pit 4 revealed further footings beyond the current south end of the wall. The uppermost stones were laid loosely, but the underlying masonry was set in mortar and was four feet, or 1.2m, wide. On the south side of the trench was a large flat-topped stone, with a chamfered edge towards the north, and a square rebate in its southwest corner. This was reset, and was probably a plinth stone. It is similar in character to Stone 1, and has three straight sides, suggesting that it formed a corner stone, possibly for a buttress.

Test Pit 5 (Plate 17)

Test Pit 5 was dug into a large 20th-century rubble-filled pit containing tarmac, Dreadnought tile and a fragment of a Robinson's Barley Water bottle. Within the former door opening itself were several courses of rough dry-stone walling, presumably installed to act as a foundation for blocking work above. On the south side of the trench, stratified beneath a patch of masonry infill on the east face of the wall, was some modern-looking concrete.

5.2.5 Interpretation (Figs. 7b & 8b)

Analysis of the information outlined above indicates that there was once a two-storey building attached to the northern end of the Frater West Wall, which communicated with the Frater at both levels. This is traditionally the area devoted to kitchen and storage facilities and even guest accommodation. At ground-storey level there was access, via the doorway at the north end of the range, to what appears to have been a cellar, possibly for the storage of liquid comestibles.¹ The hatch between the two buildings at first-floor level was very probably a serving hatch. The upper room, then, was probably a servery, which must have communicated with the monastic kitchen, so far unlocated, but which probably lay a little further to the west. It also seems probable that the ground-floor room was associated with the serving of meals in the frater, perhaps as a buttery or decanting chamber for the liquid refreshment. The fortunate survival of this doorway also implies that the Frater was somewhat wider than the building depicted on Figure 3, which is based upon Brakspear's drawing of 1906. The articulation of the bays of vaulted undercroft seen in the South Wall of the Frater is twelve feet. The distance from the southern end of the doorway jamb to the inferred position of the junction of the West and South Frater Walls also fits this order, being 24 feet. Therefore, it is feasible that the Frater was either three or four bays wide. Perhaps the three bay scenario is the more likely of the two, because if it were wider it would severely distort the shape of the Cloister. Also, the Frater appears to be nine bays in length, which is more in proportion with a three bay width. The employment of reused material within the southern end of the Frater West Wall may also imply that this end of the building was remodelled later in the life of the abbey. Again, this may reflect a broader change within the regime of food and guest accommodation at the abbey.

5.3 The South Transept West Wall (Fig.10)

The South and West Walls of the South Transept constitute the most substantial surviving element of the Abbey Church. These remains are 13th-century in date and are constructed of good quality dressed sandstone blocks. In its original state, the South Transept was a single-bay structure that adjoined the Dorter range to the south. The west elevation is dominated by a large paired lancet window (Plate 18). This window is plain in character having simple openings of two chamfered orders. There is also a chamfered hood-mould which springs from corbelled keel- or fillet-moulded wall shafts, the central and right-hand (southern) ones of which survive. The central shaft carries a moulded and corbelled impost, which, in addition to the hood-mould,

¹ At the early 13th-century Premonstratensian house at Easby, Yorkshire part of the frater undercroft was used for cellaring.

supported a square-sectioned shaft, standing proud of the hood mould, of which only the lower two stones survive. On the north side of the window a number of putlog holes are visible, one above another (Plate 19).

Inside, the window lights also comprise two chamfered orders and immediately beneath them is a scroll-moulded string course (Plate 20). Two stone courses above the string course was a series of square blockings, the southernmost of which was filled with a carved stone. They denote former openings, possibly sockets for a timber gallery. Higher up are the remains of ribbed-vaulting springing from corbelled, moulded imposts. The south wall of the transept retains, at its west end, the doorway from the dormer to the former night stair (Plate 21).

The recording work (Fig. 10) was confined to the west face of the west wall, where there was a limited area of stonework accessible from a scaffold erected within the roof space of the adjoining farm building. Almost the whole of this area was occupied by the lower portion of the paired lancet window. The course of stone immediately below the window sill is very roughly hewn, and appears to represent the remains of a window sill string that has been cut away, perhaps when the farm building was built against the elevation. The window sill itself had been badly treated and only partially survived. Its profile matches that of the window on the north side of the Presbytery (Plate 22), and from comparison with the exterior profile of this feature it is clear that the narrow base of the window sill here is entirely original and external to the South Transept.

The window was probably blocked at some point after the dissolution when the long barn was built here, although further study of this building is necessary to ascertain a possible date for this event, it is probably 18th century or earlier. On the east side of the South Transept West Wall, the right-hand, or northern, light had been filled with 8¼ inch by 4 inch by 2½ inch red bricks set in dirty white lime mortar and the left-hand, or southern side with sandstone blocks. Inside of the long barn on the west side of the South Transept West Wall both lights were infilled in brick of various builds. One metre above the sill of the lancet window there was a step in the brickwork, and approximately 30cm above the step an unglazed, wooden framed window, formerly with a central mullion. The left-hand (northern) light was filled with 9 inch by 4¼ inch by 2½ inch bricks set in white lime mortar. In front of these, and beneath the north purlin of the farm building was a column of 19th-century purple machine made bricks, of dimensions 9½ inch by 4½ inch by 3 inches, carried on a reused stone corbel, standing proud of the main blocking.

6.0 Conclusions

The current campaign of detailed recording has brought new information to light concerning the development of both the Frater and the South Transept. It is clear that there is evidence for phases of modification, repair and alteration that can be read from the surviving fabric of the monument. In addition to this conservation-based analysis, a detailed archive now exists of this phase of repair work. Clearly, there is much further research that can be done at Halesowen Abbey, particularly in light of doubt being cast on the veracity of the Brakspear plan of the abbey made in 1906. In view of the above, there is an overwhelming case for the preparation of as full a

conservation plan for the monument to be devised as is possible within the limits of current research and funding.

7.0 Acknowledgements

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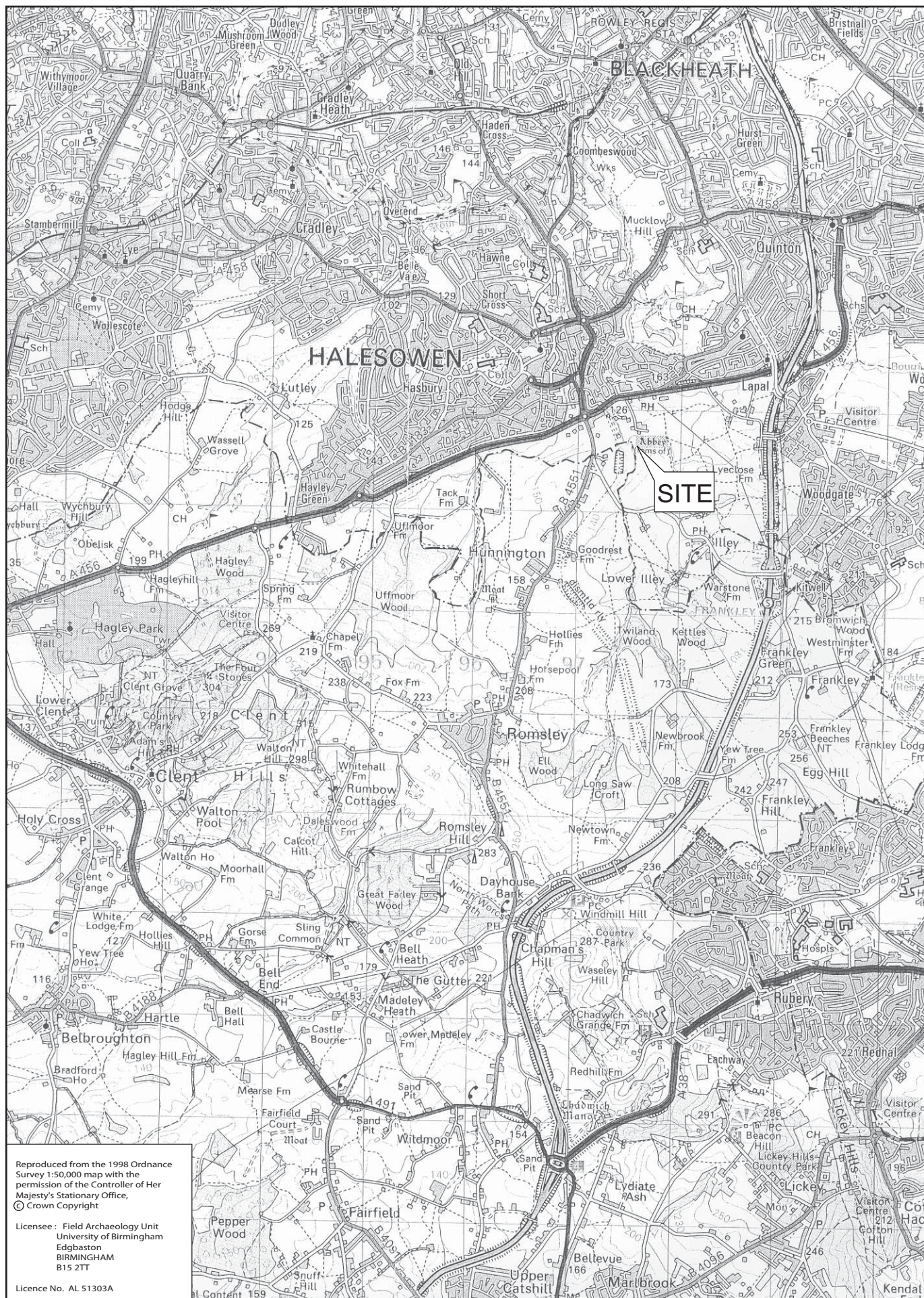


Fig.1



Fig.2

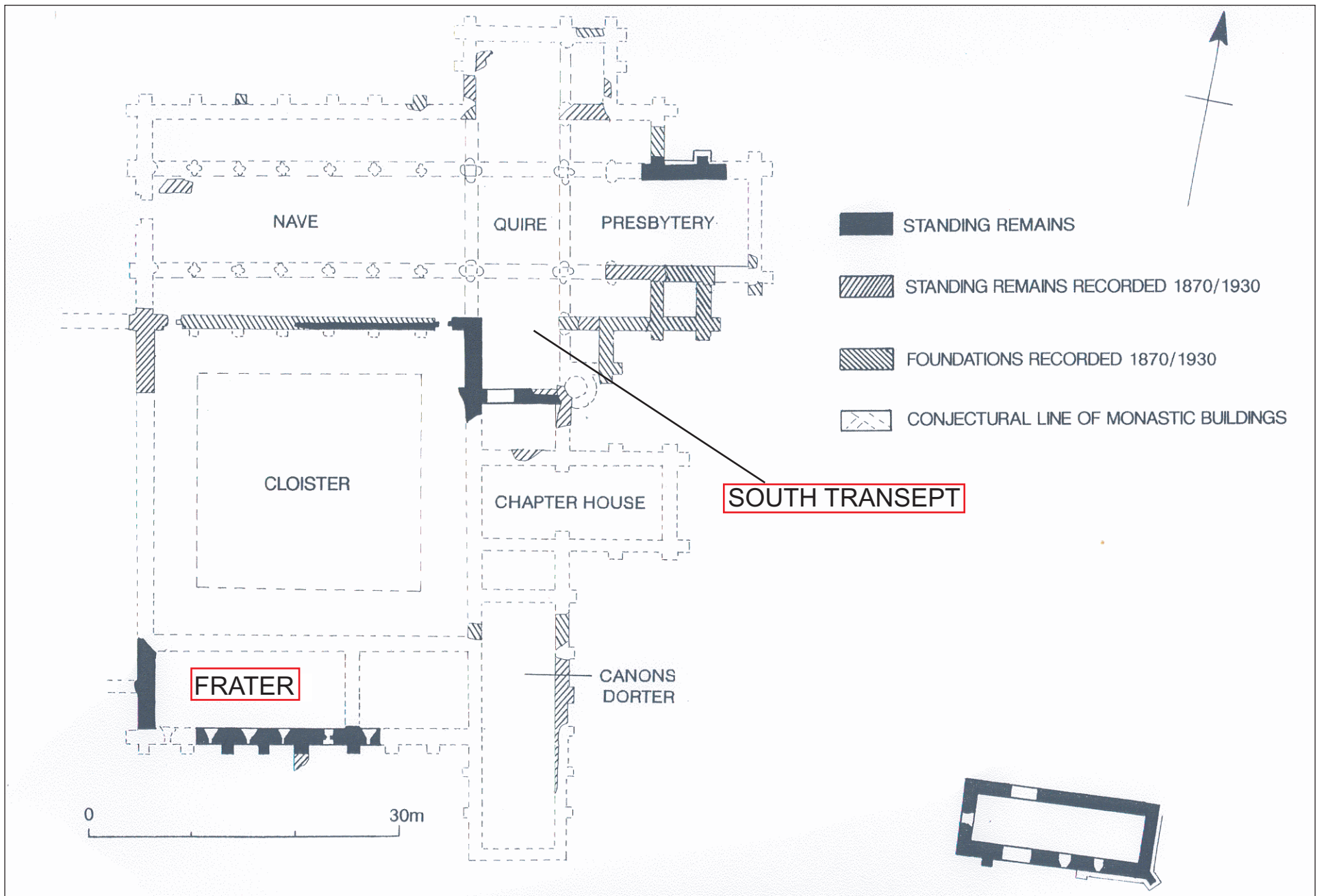
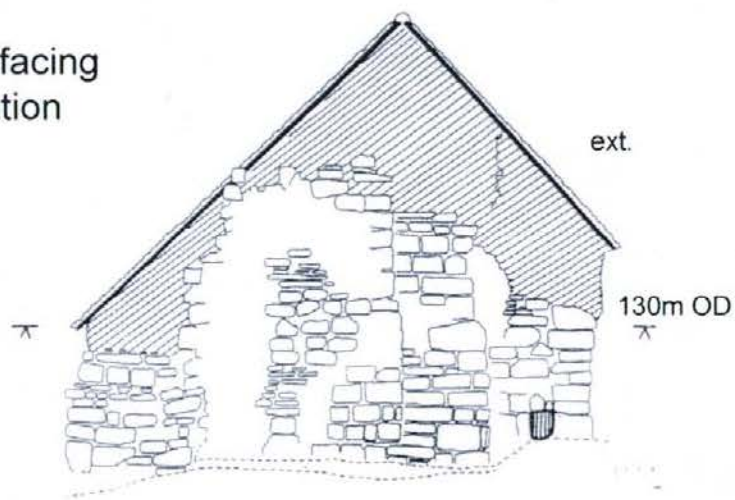


FIG.3

Frater West Wall Recorded in 1989

East-facing elevation



West-facing elevation

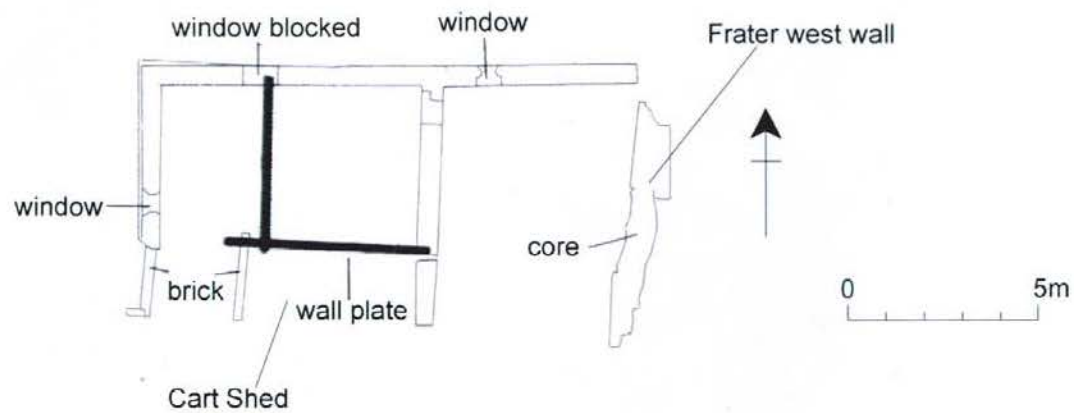
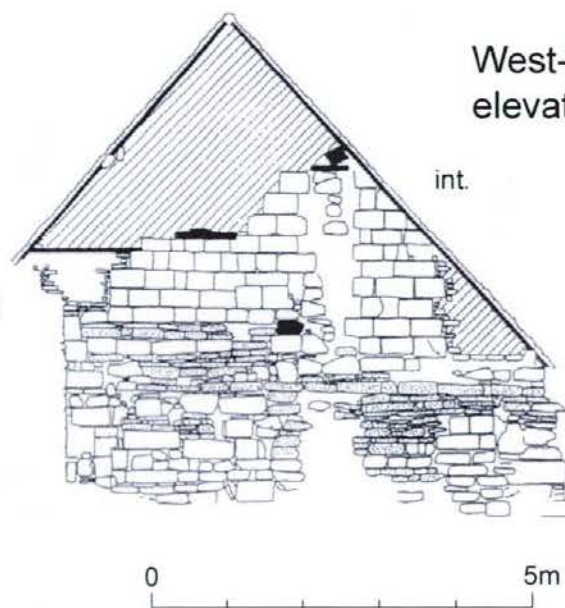


Fig.4

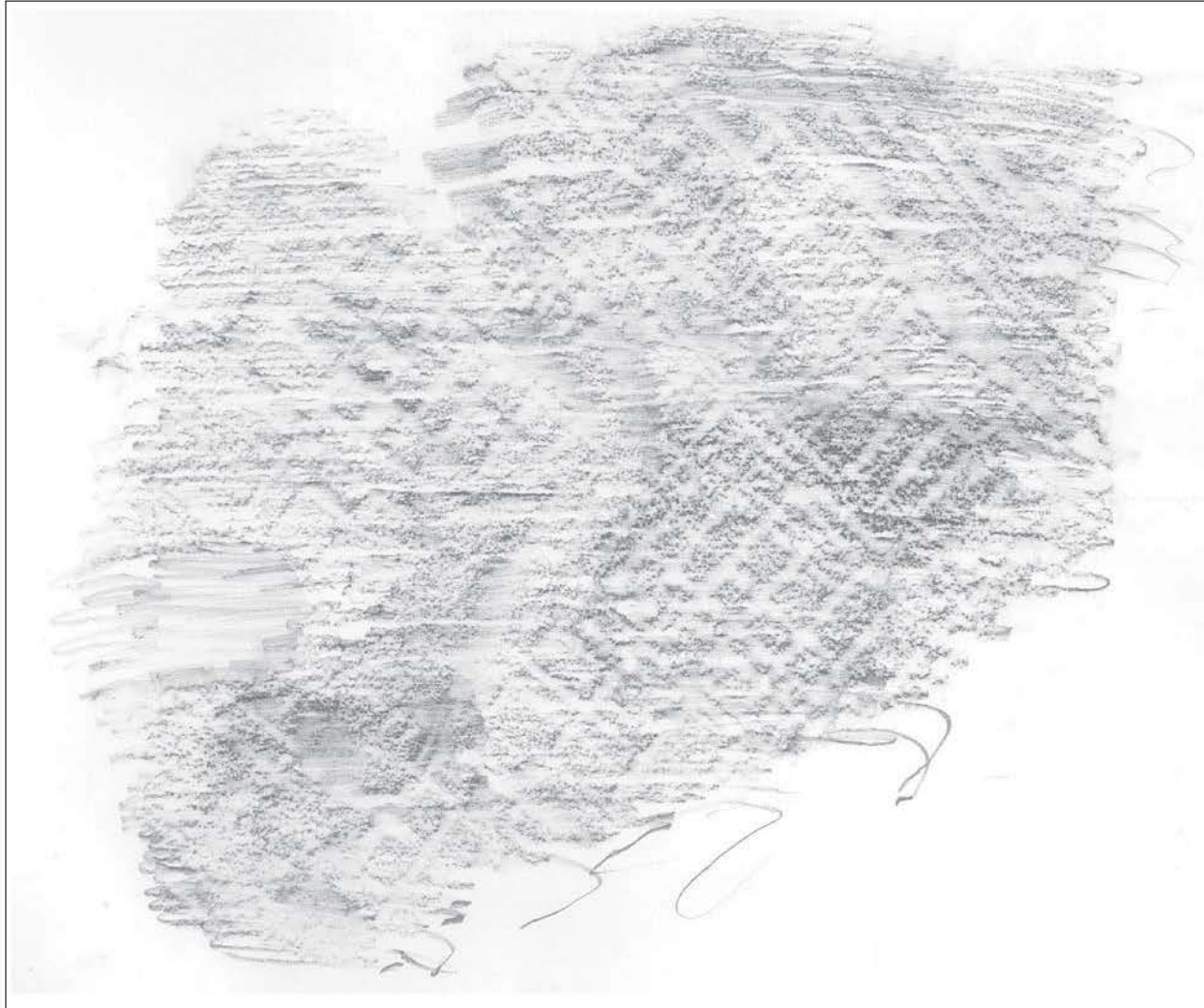


Fig.5

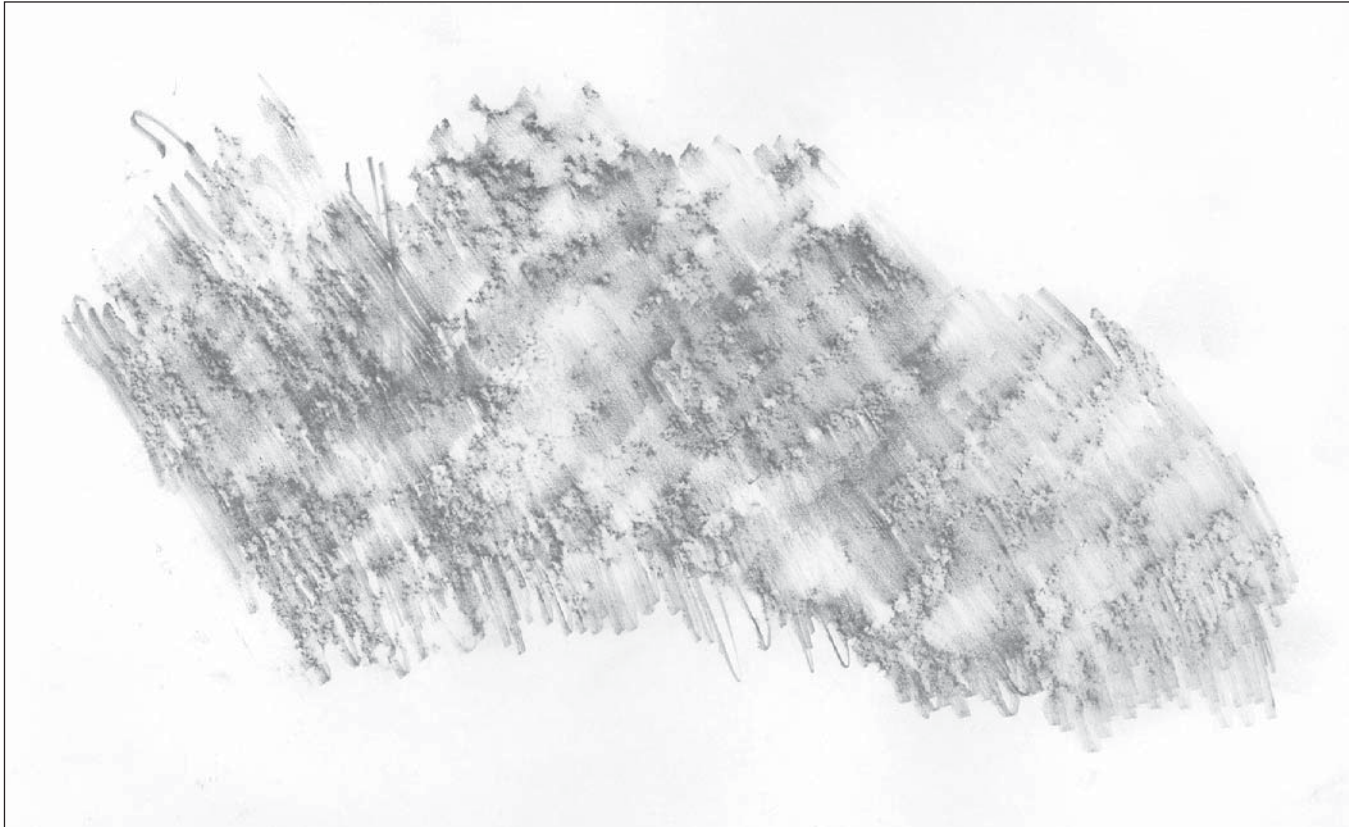


Fig.6

The Frater West Wall: West Facing Elevation



Fig.7

The Frater West Wall: East Facing Elevation

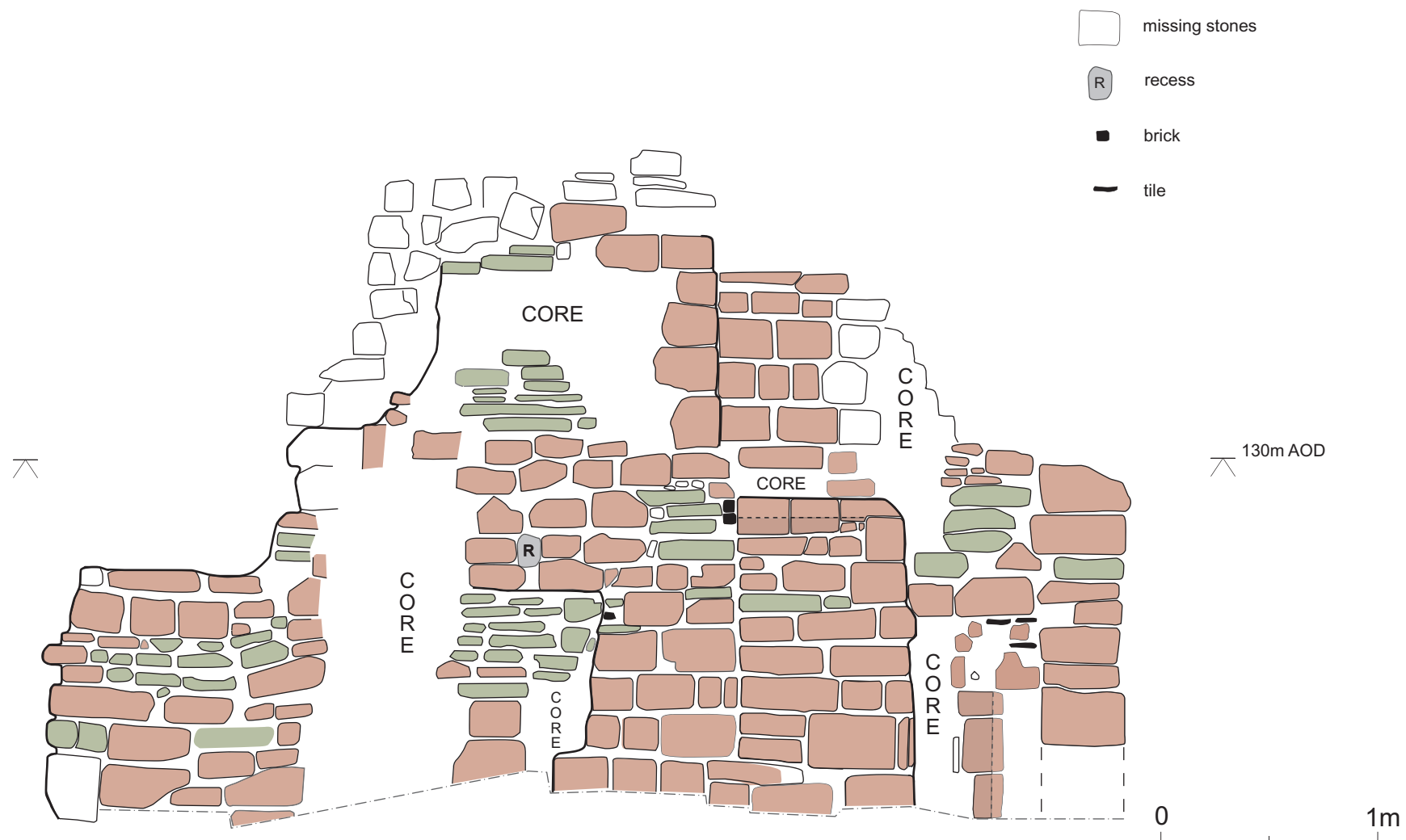


Fig.6

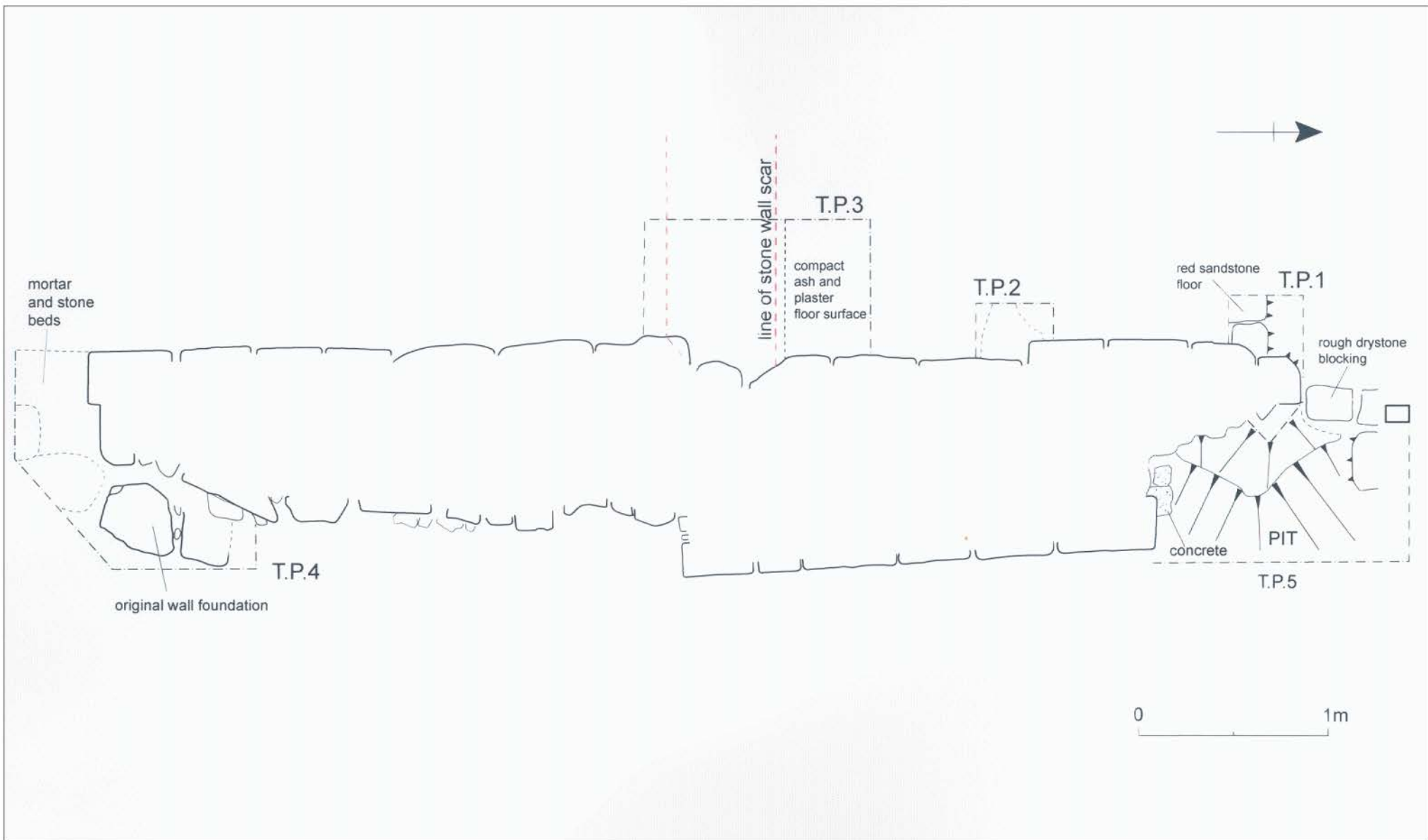


Fig.9

Sketch of external (west-facing) elevation of
South Transept

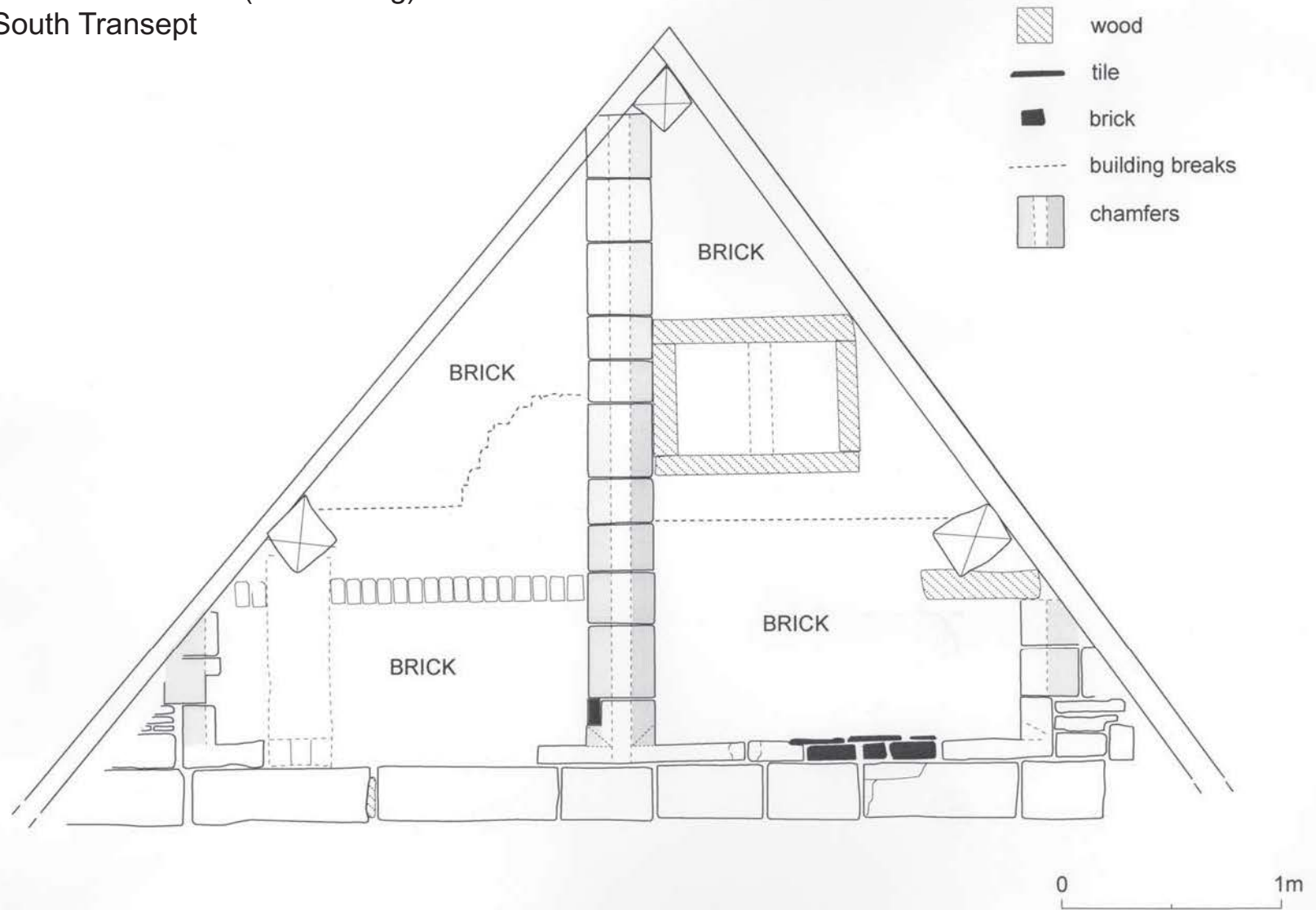


Fig 10



Plate 1. General view of outer (west) face of frater west wall showing spread of fallen building materials.



Plate 2. Stone No.7, Group A tooling marks.



Plate 3. Stone No.9, Group B tooling marks.



Plate 4. Stone No.6, Group C tooling marks.



Plate 5. Stone No.1.



Plate 6. Stone No.2.



Plate 7. Stone No.5.



Plate 8. Frater west wall plinth.



Plate 9. Recesses in the west elevation of the frater west wall.



Plate 10. Northernmost recess in the west elevation of the frater west wall.



Plate 11. Reused stone in the frater west wall doorway showing keying grooves.



Plate 12. Serving hatch sill in the east elevation of the frater west wall.



Plate 13. Test Pit 1 from the southwest.



Plate 14. Test Pit 2 from the west.



Plate 15. Test Pit 3 from the west.



Plate 16. Test Pit 4 from the south.



Plate 17. Test Pit 5 from the east.



Plate 18. South transept west window from the west.



Plate 19. Putlog holes in the west elevation of the south transept.



Plate 20. String course on the interior of the south transept west wall.



Plate 21. Interior of the south transept from the northeast.



Plate 22. Profile of window sill on north side of presbytery.



Plate 23



Plate 24