



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Archaeological monitoring, excavation, building
recording and analysis at Delapré Abbey,
Northampton 2014-19**



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Archaeological monitoring, excavation, building recording and analysis at Delapré Abbey, Northampton 2014-19

Iain Soden and Joe Prentice

With a contribution by Ian Meadows

Illustrations by Andy Isham

Summary

Targeted archaeological fieldwork, including excavations, with widespread building recording and analysis, largely between 2014 and 2019, has given new life to Delapré Abbey. The work has uncovered new elements in the immediate Roman landscape, excavated medieval monastic structures and post-medieval elements of the post-Dissolution country house, and monitored works in the surrounding heritage-rich landscape. Some has verified that medieval deposits, levels or features lie undisturbed, while other work in discrete episodes has recorded standing fabric prior to removal or re-covering. It has added to some extent to understanding of the site in the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods, while beginning to scope questions for future enquiry when time, finance and opportunity allow.

Acknowledgements

The rejuvenation of Delapré Abbey as a visitor-destination between 2014 and 2019 has taken a great deal of planning by large numbers of professional town planners, regeneration specialists, project managers and heritage specialists. It has involved a small army of builders (Woodhead Construction) and their many sub-contractors, with contributory and supportive contracts such as a new car park (MMK Civils) and statutory undertakers for new services (Western Power and British Gas). Their contributions have been considerable and we owe them all considerable thanks.

However, Iain Soden Heritage Services would particularly like to thank Lesley-Anne Mather, Principal Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council and Jane Jennings, Senior Conservation Team Leader at Northampton Borough Council, both for their sensitive care and understanding of the Abbey buildings and their historic setting in putting together an archaeological brief as part of the Conservation programme, and for their enthusiasm for our work as it altered course to meet the needs of the emerging historic fabric. Their support, advice and approval throughout have been paramount. We extend our gratitude to Joe Player, (formerly of Purcell, Architects) for his grasp of the Abbey buildings and spatial awareness. Many thanks too to Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Advisor at Northamptonshire County Council, for her input at key moments and to Helen Woodhouse and Andy Hammon, East Midlands Inspectors of Ancient Monuments for Historic England (formerly English Heritage until 2014) for their oversight regarding the historic battlefield.

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We extend our gratitude to Lisa Chaney, Darowen Jones, Edmund Calnan and Stuart Docker, successive Project Managers for Northampton Borough Council, whose focus and tenacity always ensured the best outcomes. As representatives of our clients, Northampton Borough Council, their roles were pivotal. To Cllr Tim Hadland and to Craig Forsyth go our thanks for their interest during the fieldwork.

Our thanks to Rachel Boyd and Vikki Pearson with their staff at Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust (DAPT), with whom we shared a workplace for much of the time, together with the volunteers who ran their tea-room during our early works; never have we known such tea- and cake-fuelled site meetings!

Particular contractors made our work so much more straightforward – we particularly mention Crawford Brooke of Hawkes Civil Engineers, Marta Sledz of Chroma Conservation and Mark and Kieran Reilly of MMK Civils. Their mental grasp of the site, its needs and the mutual tasks before us made life so much more straightforward.

For Iain Soden Heritage Services the staff, students and freelancers involved were as follows (in alphabetical order): Steve Critchley (metal-detecting), Danny McAree, Joe Prentice, Barbara Evans Rees, Iain Soden, Tom Soden, Will Soden and Charlotte Walker. Martin Marix Evans, military historian and sometime trustee of the Battlefields Trust, ensured by his considered input that fieldwork took appropriate recognisance of the registered battlefield throughout.

Many thanks to all for your time and hard work, your expertise and your unfailingly good company.

This report follows on from an approved Archive Assessment and Updated Project Design (Soden 2016a) and has been written by Iain Soden and Joe Prentice, with a contribution by Ian Meadows and illustrations by Andy Isham.

The work of Iain Soden Heritage Services was commissioned and funded by Northampton Borough Council, aided by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Introduction

Delapré Abbey was a Cluniac Nunnery founded in the first half of the 12th century which, from its 1538 demise in The Dissolution of the Monasteries, quickly became a country house, owned first by the Tate and then the Bouverie families. The house was requisitioned by the War Office during the Second World War, after which it was taken over by the local Authority, Northampton Borough Council. For many years it was tenanted by the Northamptonshire County Record Office. Since the 1990s the house had languished without apparent purpose.

Delapré Abbey is Listed (Grade II*) and lies in historic parkland just east of the London Road in the inner suburbs of modern Northampton which has grown and swept well beyond its historic walled confines. It is also south of the River Nene which separates it from the historic town on the north bank (NGR: SP 7594 5908; Fig 1). It lies in the parish of Hardingstone, formerly a discrete village but now incorporated within Northampton. It is built primarily of Northampton Sand with Ironstone,

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with introductions of red brick from the 18th century onwards, but most visibly from the 19th century. The roofs are of Collyweston tile and Welsh slate.

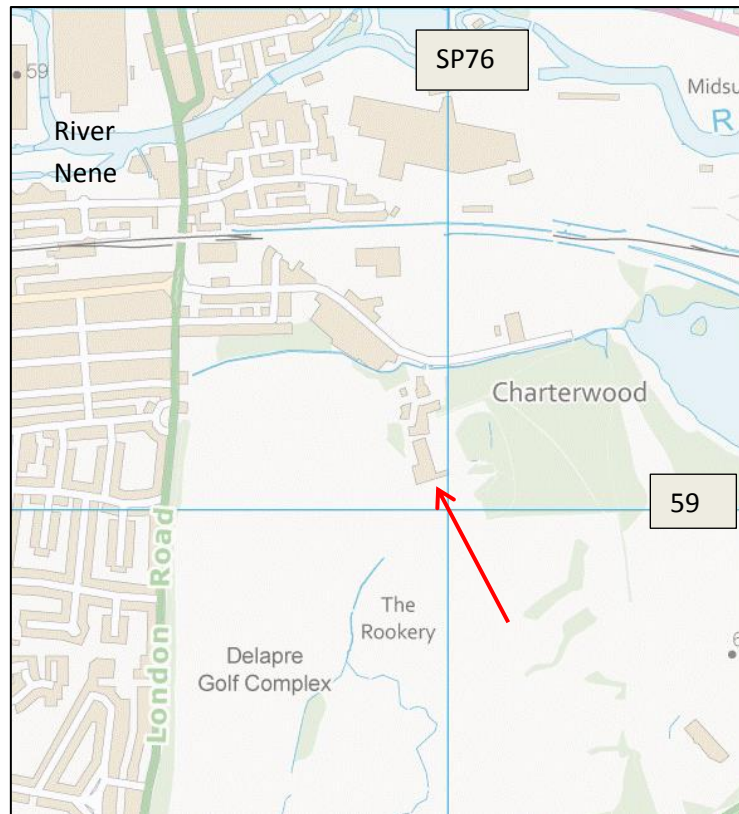


Fig 1: Location of Delapré Abbey (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2019

The National Heritage List entry for the abbey (designation number 1039791) sets out a much more comprehensive architectural summary and is as follows:

Delapré Abbey 1. II GV 2. The building forms a rectangle with an internal court. It is possible that some of the structure of the original abbey building remains on the north and east sides of this house but the older part appears C16 with a C17 west front and the south front C18 with early c19 and later alterations. The west front has a recessed centre of two storeys, ironstone with battlemented parapet and central projecting battlemented porch which has an arched opening with moulded springers and architrave round arch, and is flanked by fluted Tuscan columns on plinths supporting sections of entablature crowned by ball finials. The sides of the porch have blocked circular windows in moulded rectangular panels. On each side of the porch is 1 bay of 8-light mullioned and transomed windows. To left of centre is a double gabled projection of two storeys and attic. The inner gable slightly projecting has a convex and concave curved outline, the outer gable is plain. Each has a 3-light stone mullioned attic window and 2 bays below, tall C18 sashes on 1st floor, the left hand gable has similar windows on ground floor, the right hand has 4-light stone mullioned and transomed windows. The stonework suggests different periods of building. To right of central part is a large two storey stuccoed early C19 'Tudoresque' projection of poor design but with stonework of original wing remaining on half the north side in which is 1 bay of 8-light mullioned and transomed windows. The south front with cornice and parapet and C19 balustrading has 10 bays of sash windows plus the Tudoresque addition to left hand. The windows have architrave surrounds and the 2 right hand bays are separated by a pilaster with a corresponding pilaster on the right hand end. It seems likely that*

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the house was originally symmetrical on this front and also on west front, excluding left hand gable. The north and east fronts have some mullioned and transomed windows and some later windows in irregular arrangement. Internally some old doorways with four-centred arched heads and lantern wall recesses to a corridor are in the north wing. The corridor in which are the lantern recesses is supposed to be part of the original cloister of the Abbey. The recesses are framed in moulded stone and are at each end of the inner wall facing in two directions. They may be earlier than mid C16. Considerable redecoration must have been done in C19. Illustrated in Old Halls and Manor Houses of Northamptonshire by J A Gotch

Delapr  Abbey with its Stable block, Billiard Room, Garden Wall and Gateway, Game Larder, Coach-House and Park House (also listed (Grade II) but separately and not presented here) form a group.

A further architectural summary can be found in Pevsner and Cherry (1990, 352-3).

As noted, the abbey lies within Delapr  Park, which mostly comprises the Registered Battlefield of the Battle of Northampton (1460; National Heritage List entry 1000028), one of a number of battlefields dating from the Wars of the Roses. The most comprehensive modern history of the battle is that by Ingram (2015).

The Conservation Management Plan for the registered battlefield of Northampton can be downloaded from the following local authority website (visited 19/01/2018):

<https://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200207/building-conservation-and-trees/1952/site-of-the-battle-of-northampton-1460>

Conservation and regeneration from 2013, funded by Local Authority and The Heritage Lottery Fund, has given the former abbey and country house a new lease of life and it will now be open to the public under the care of the Delapr  Abbey Preservation Trust (DAPT).

History

It is not the purpose of this report to present a new or revised history of the house and its owners - that has been done elsewhere. It is rather to present an overview of site-based records which in themselves can now be seen to represent the work of a particular period or person, and which facilitate a level of interpretation not previously possible.

A general history of the Cluniac monastic house was long ago set out in the Victoria County History (VCH 1906, 114-6). This can nowadays best be found by visiting <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol2/pp114-116> (visited 19/01/2018). It is not proposed to revisit that history here, as little of what it says there has a bearing on the records made in the current works, or *vice versa*, since the VCH was concerned with documents, rather than structures and physical evidence.

The VCH summary was expanded upon shortly after by Rev R M Serjeantson, an excellent local antiquarian, whose understanding of the building, its origins and descent are arguably unsurpassed (Serjeantson 1909(a) and 1909(b)) – largely because so little new evidence has come to light since 1909. His appreciation of the few early sources remains a benchmark.

The descent of the house through the hands of John Marsh, a Dissolution property speculator (1538-48) and thence to the Tate family (c1548-1764) and their successors, the Bouveries (1764-1946), again has little obvious correlation in the standing fabric but the reader is referred to two documents – the entry in a seminal county-wide survey of country houses (Heward and Taylor 1996, 166-70) which sets down the established wisdom (from Serjeantson onwards) concerning the house layout and development, and the up-to-date website of the Delapr  Abbey Preservation Trust at:

<https://www.delapreabbey.org/about1> (visited 19/01/2018) which is both accessible and readable and picks out the prominent persons in each family whose ideas shaped the growth and development of Delapr  as a country house.

During the 20th century the notable county architect J A Gotch included Delapr  in his selection of the county's architectural highlights (Gotch 1936), while later the former County Archivist Joan Wake wrote extensively, based in part upon her intimate knowledge of the building she worked in (Pantin and Wake 1958). In their County-wide gazetteer, Pevsner and Cherry (1990, 352-3) provide an accessible summary for the architectural historian.

More recently an update has been published on selected buildings, their possible development and their family associations, in a volume on sale at the abbey by Peacock (2017).

Most of all, the reader is encouraged to visit the house in person; its charms are considerable and the work of conservation has left it once again a prominent landmark in a characterful setting, of which the town of Northampton and its community can be justly proud.

Scope of works, impacts and limitations of the evidence

The recent archaeological works at Delapr  Abbey, both below and above ground, had been carefully planned, their potential scoped in an Archaeological Brief by Northamptonshire County Council and Northampton Borough Council (2014, 2015) and mirrored in a series of Written Schemes of Investigation by Iain Soden Heritage Services, issued for each stage of work and assembled to try to foresee most, if not all, eventualities. The work was carried out in accordance with industry best-practice (often in terms already defined by the CfA, previously the IfA) and in accordance with Health and Safety Law.

Set-piece excavations

The courtyards, floors, hard-standings, access roads, adjacent fields and lawns were all subject to a regular and wide-ranging archaeological watching brief on-and-off for two years. Most were being impacted by new drains or services and these often had to be carefully monitored since little was known about surviving levels below the modern ground surface. Some areas yielded very little but occasional un-stratified finds, some nothing at all, but the whole was punctuated by sudden, unexpected and in some cases, surprising discoveries which led in their own right to small set-piece excavations.

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A total of seven of these separate archaeological excavations were carried out during the works which occurred in disparate parts of the abbey buildings and their immediate surroundings. They comprised:

- A Roman possible cremation group, north of the abbey
- Emptying a South Range basement
- Excavating a garden destined to be the site of a new kitchen, adjacent to Abbey Cottage
- The site of a former conservatory intended as a new restaurant, part of the South Range
- A Victorian plunge bath, adjacent to the North Range
- The site of a new detached car park
- A static water tank, west of the Abbey

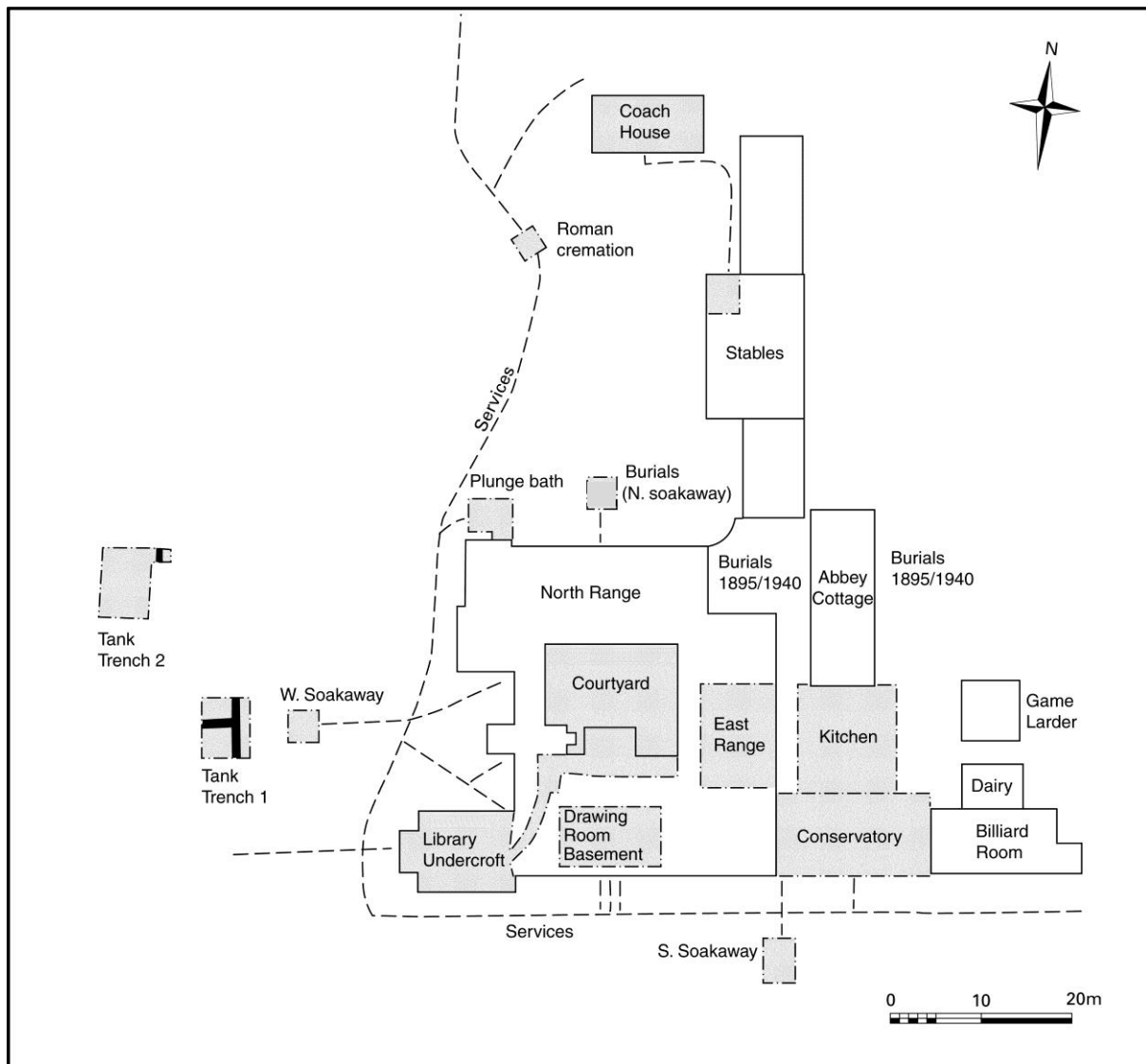


Fig 2: Location of all excavations and principal labels used in the text (Andy Isham)

Further afield an approved monitoring programme accompanied the sensitive introduction of new services which were needed to upgrade the Abbey to facilitate its opening to the public. These chiefly involved new gas and electricity mains alongside (and north of) the access drive from nearby London Road, together with renewal of a drainage outfall. These new services have been reported

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upon separately (Soden 2016b, 2017, Prentice and Soden 2019) and are not re-presented here again in detail. Each was accompanied by two phases of metal-detection and one was also accompanied by Geophysical Survey of a wide swathe of the field by Museum of London Archaeology (MoLA), Northampton (Meadows 2016). Their results showed, as might be expected, that there was a background scatter of Roman material and post-medieval agricultural presence but no certain features were recognised in the deliberately-low-key and low-impact interventions. There was no evidence that medieval occupation was intensive out beyond the Abbey core and each indicated that no impact was discernible upon the battlefield.



Fig 3: Steve Critchley metal-detecting before the service trenching



Fig 4: Use of a chain-trencher to minimise impact

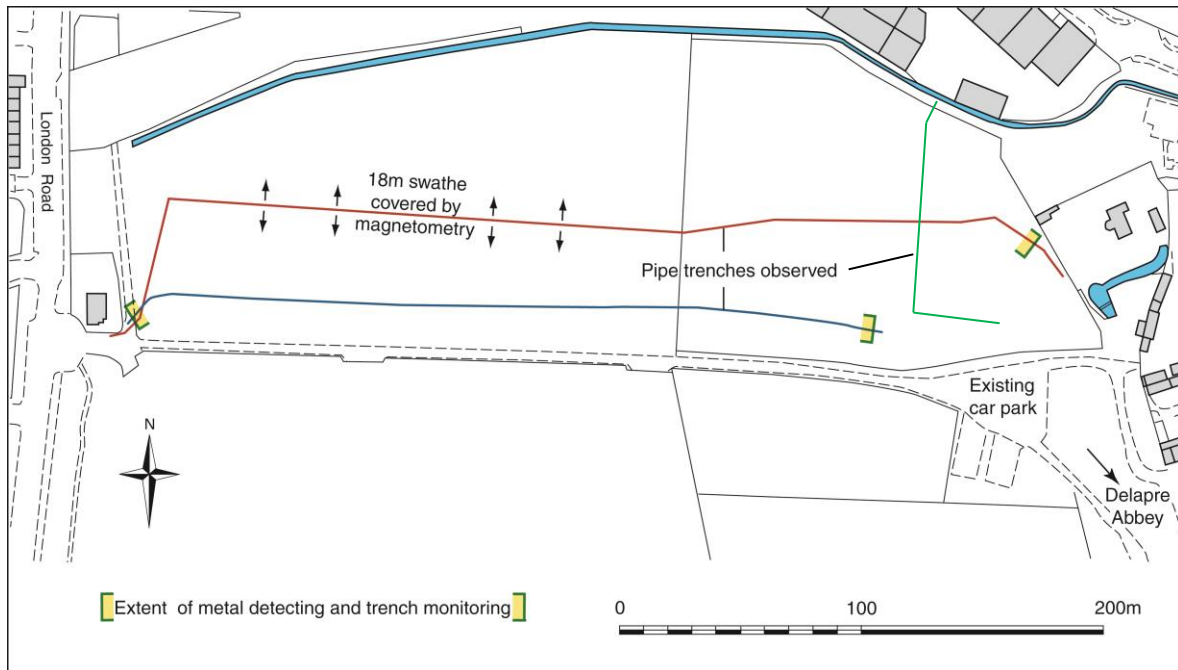


Fig 5: Location of the new services across part of the registered battlefield.

The similar works on a small part of the battlefield which saw the creation of the new car park for the Abbey (2017) are presented below, however. While they cover once again part of the course of the previous new services already worked on, they represent a much-preferred archaeological open-area approach to a landscape and indicate the value of a variety of methodologies which can be brought to bear, both to throw light upon the potential finds distribution of a battlefield or, in this case, to verify that battlefield deposits have not been impacted in a deliberate and carefully-conceived low-impact construction methodology. Adjacent works on the 2019 drainage outfall have been added for the completest picture.

Monitoring

Other than the mains services already noted, provisioning a major visitor attraction with new services necessarily involves a complicated programme to replace old consumer connections of many different types, be it gas, electricity, water, computer cabling or additional drainage capacity. In some cases it has been possible to make continuing use of existing service lines and these have been noted where seen. Some older ones had to be re-located in order to connect new ones and so establishing the locations of hydrants, joints, valves and inspection chambers often necessitated fresh intervention. In some cases the laying of wholly new services was unavoidable. These were noted and watched in accordance with their expected planned courses and anticipated depths. Visits were thus regular, but often comprised short viewings, simply to verify that low-impact works were in accordance with what had been agreed. Thus mostly their results were minimal, with some exceptions. For instance a new north soakaway unexpectedly disturbed human remains, close to where nearby pipework and new paths previously found no reason to suspect their existence; these were subsequently re-buried at the site to fulfil the condition of a Ministry of Justice license for accidental disturbance. Similarly divergence of conduits to avoid tree-roots, away from a line

previously discussed, found a Victorian Plunge bath and triggered a rapid programme of archaeological recording – and further alterations to the new pipework.



Fig 6: Typical monitoring conditions outside the north range - on this occasion the conduit trench which discovered the Victorian plunge bath

Such trenches, often dug with a narrow, toothless machine-bucket, and deliberately kept by agreement to the shallowest depth permissible, allow for very restricted views of buried archaeology. In all these aspects it is impossible to surmise what lies even a few centimetres beyond the edges of each intervention. Wider work necessarily delves into the area of (sometimes unhelpful) conjecture, but these localised interventions do provide an indication of possible remains, simply for the future management of the site, if only to avoid their further disturbance at any unspecified date.

Building Recording

Regular visits by up to three archaeologists were kept up throughout 2015 and 2016 while the abbey core was being selectively altered and conserved.

With the whole project steered by a conservation-led team whose brief was by careful design to minimise potential loss of historic fabric and eschew widespread disturbance, the opportunities for building recording were sometimes unpredictable and mostly from disparate places in the building – below a floor here, above a ceiling there, or a glimpse behind an architrave removed for paint-stripping or a view of stonework behind a patch of blown or cracked plaster before it was re-plastered.

While some areas received necessarily intensive scrutiny, commensurate with the intensity of intervention, others were seen merely through fortuitous key-holes into the fabric, sometimes for strengthening a beam, at others for threading a new cable or feeding a new conduit under boards or behind panelling. Some revealed nothing untoward, while still others remained inaccessible.

For this reason, few interventions produced consistent levels of record. In some cases there was room for only a small digital camera to be inserted and a brief view achieved. Elsewhere an entire floor was taken up. In addition it was the brief of the works to address only those parts of the complex which were to be used in the planned conversion and re-opening to the public, regardless of the extent of intervention. Thus the heavily-stripped-out north range, with large areas of floor-framing exposed, was scrutinised in detail at first floor level, but at second floor level (not part of the works), no records were required, even though the floor-framing was (already) well exposed. Likewise the reduction of the ground floor, which varied from room to room, received relatively cursory inspection, since it had Victorian and later floors, over a great deal of contemporary build-up, known from the 2014 test-pitting programme which had covered key parts of ground floor where disturbance was planned (Soden, 2014 with addendum).

Sometimes a range came under regular but disjointed scrutiny. Thus in the north range, some floors were taken up but others left largely in place, while the pattern was reversed some weeks later. Thus the whole range was not scrutinised together, leaving the view on the pages here as a composite, put together piecemeal over a period of time and collated for this report.

The site archive

The site archive is divided into three parts – paper, digital, and the finds. The paper and digital elements will be deposited with the Northampton Borough Museum, in due course. By agreement with all parties, architectural fragments remain at Delapré Abbey where they can be used for changing displays and for ongoing educational purposes in the hands of DAPT. Finds were washed, marked (or in the case of architectural fragments, tagged), bagged and boxed for the purpose. The site code throughout has been DA plus the date -14, 15 etc. The HER event code is at the foot of this report, and the report will be lodged with the OASIS national database for inclusion in the ADS national Grey Literature library with the following series:

<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/series.xhtml?recordId=1000315&recordType=GreyLit>

The structure of this report

Hereafter this report is split into two basic parts - *A and B*.

Part A comprises the evidence and interpretation of that evidence for those areas in which set-piece archaeological excavation took place, whether by initial design or required by the results of monitoring and the remains which that particular methodology began to uncover. Here each excavation is presented in chronological order; that is the date of the remains found in each intervention – thus Roman is set out first, then Medieval (various instances) with Post-medieval last.

Part B is that element which comprised solely or predominantly building recording and analysis and any closely-related excavation within or beneath the floor of a standing building. The elements of Part B are presented by Range (in cardinal order North, East, South, West) and thereafter in stage order- that is Basement, followed by Ground Floor, then First Floor and Second Floor/attic last.

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It is a peculiarity of the scope of the work that few of the elements on site, whether above or below ground, had any kind of physical or stratigraphic link between them. Below ground this separation might only have been a matter of a few metres (as Medieval undercroft was from Victorian Conservatory, for example), but they were in every way discrete and separate, as was the methodology employed to deal with them and accommodate the plans for those separate parts of the site. Therefore each entry is addressed separately within the report, and data, evidence, finds and interpretation are presented for each, before moving onto the next.

This is essentially the same approach for presenting the building recording in each range, although one must allow for the fact that the ranges are physically joined. Thus records on one range might be separated from those of its neighbour by a single (often corner) room in which no records were required. Finds from basement-emptying or sub-floor searches (of which very few were possible) are presented next to their relevant range and rooms.

The report continues with 'Discussion', a section of general observations and interpretations, noting where the work has added to our understanding of the buildings, or a period of study, or a monastic order or the Post-medieval occupiers. It moves on to highlight new research questions the work has posed and to suggest what possible fieldwork or other investigation might benefit the site further in the future from a current standpoint.

A bibliography then covers the entire report.

The summary data of the OASIS entry concludes the report, in connection with its deposition in the Archaeology Data Service Grey Literature Library.

Part A

Archaeological excavations in and around The Abbey

A possible Roman cremation group

By Ian Meadows

Introduction

A group of Roman pots and a glass vial were recovered some 30m north of the North Range of Delapré Abbey, along with two metal objects; unfortunately they had been broken and dispersed by a number of 19th-20th century disturbances which had also scattered any cinerary material. The individual pottery vessels comprised a bowl in a hard fabric, a creamy coloured beaker and a thin walled flagon in a white fabric, additionally two joining pieces of a grey ware jar were recovered. Following writing-up (below), these were passed to DAPT for reconstruction and display in the Abbey. It is not known which, if any, had been the cinerary vessel.



Fig 7: Initial discovery of the flagon (see below), its top half scattered.

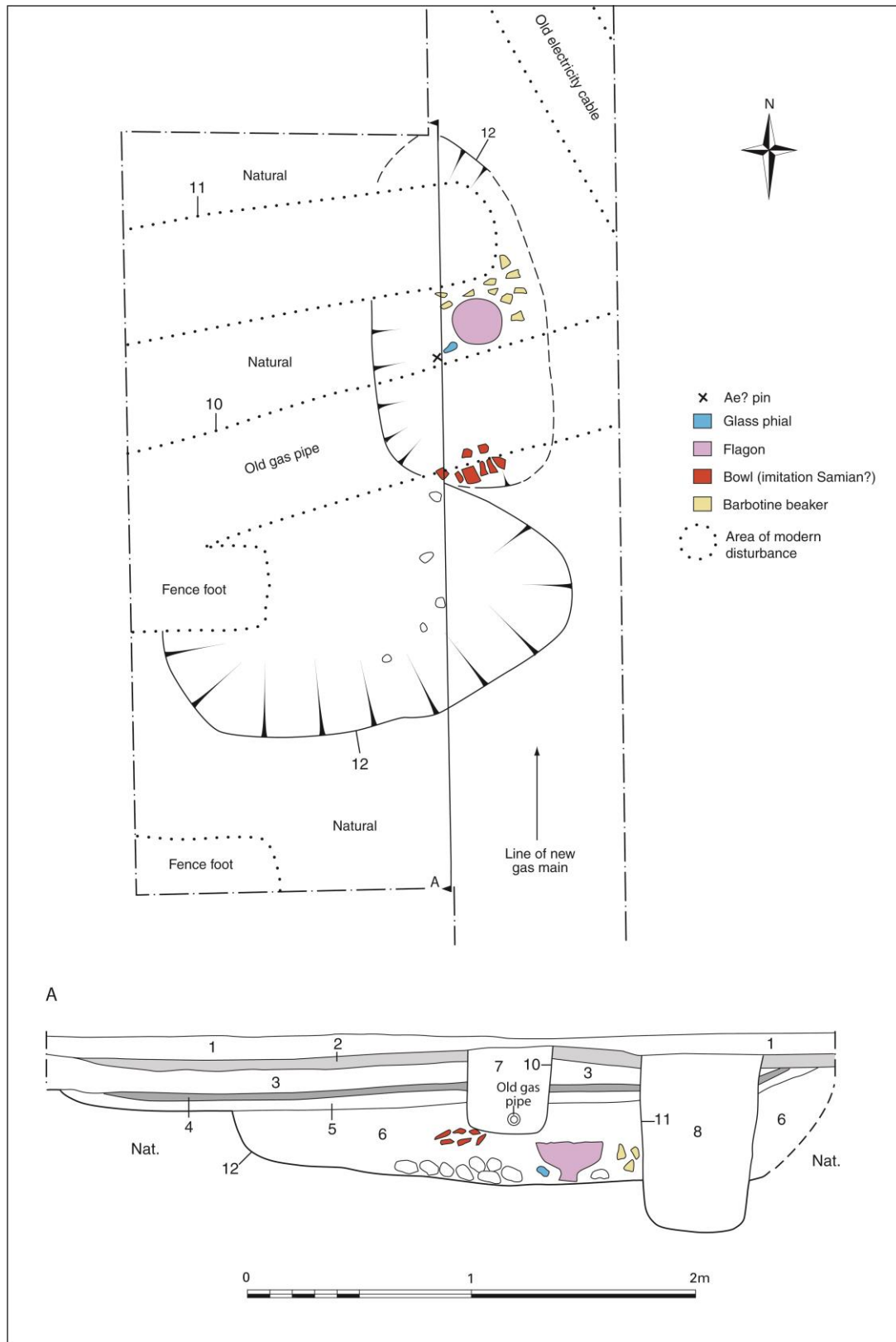


Fig 8: Plan and section of the Roman deposit exposed by the gas main and subsequently excavated (Andy Isham). Feature 12 and fill 6 comprise the Roman pits (of which only one contained all of the finds). All other features constitute either overlying soils (1-5), or modern disturbance (7-11). Natural ground at A lies at 62.9m above OD (Andy Isham)

Discussion

The appearance of a group of near complete Roman vessels in close association, such as those uncovered in the service trench here, usually reflects their deliberate deposition either as a pottery 'throw out' deposit or as companion vessels to a cremation. The circumstances for the general deposition of material means that stray fragments, sherds, will occur in most types of contemporary feature but the recovery of complete or nearly vessels is usually a reflection of the deliberate and careful disposal or placing of pots in a context. The vessels that comprise this group represent a range of types of pots but all are associated, or can be associated, with the consumption of food and drink and not in preparation or storage. Dumps of material, whilst sometimes containing a range of vessel forms, would usually include more utilitarian vessels than were present in the Delapré group. They are unlike anything made at the Roman kiln site at the north-western edge of Delapré Park which was excavated in 2006 (for which see Woodfield 2010).

The group comprises a bowl, a beaker and a flagon, along with a glass phial and a copper alloy hairpin fragment; two sherds from a grey ware jar may also be associated. The bowl, similar to a Samian form, was in a hard sandy fabric with a grey surface colour and had a decoration of lozenges of comb tooth marks on its outer surface reminiscent of London type wares. The beaker was in a creamy fabric and its outer surface was decorated with zones of densely applied barbotine dots again almost in lozenges, traces of mica were also present on the surface and presumably the vessel had originally been entirely mica dusted. The flagon was in a creamy buff fabric and originally had a globular body, a narrow neck and two narrow handles between the neck and the top of the body. Direct parallels were hard to find for the bowl in particular and it is possible both it and the flagon are not local products from the Nene Valley and indeed may be imported.

This group of vessels would reflect the containing of fluid, presumably either drink or oils, in the flagon, drink in the beaker and perhaps foodstuffs in the bowl. As such they may reflect the belief in the need for food and drink to accompany the deceased on the journey to the underworld/afterlife both in a symbolic and practical fashion. Classical belief entailed the spirit, after death, going on a long journey to reach the afterlife as described in some detail by Virgil (Aeneid Book VI). The belief in this journey saw many classical graves include offerings of food and drink perhaps to sustain the spirit on that journey and symbolically beyond. That these vessels were all broken is probably the result of the intrusion by the twentieth century service trench however sometimes vessels were also symbolically broken to signify the breaking of the link between this world and the hereafter, a process sometimes called ritual killing.

A similar range of pottery vessel types can be seen in several of the graves from the Roman period, for example, from the cemetery at Ospringe in Kent (Whiting et al 1931) where several graves contained three and sometimes four vessels including flasks bowls and beakers as well as jars - for example group LXX, which included a large vessel along with a flagon, a beaker and two Samian bowls. In the Eastern cemetery of Roman London a number of burials also reflected this placing of food consumption related vessel with cremations for example cremation burial 195 which contained a flask, beaker and bowl along with the main cremation in a jar (Barber and Bowsher 2000).

The glass phial within the group may reflect the presence of cosmetics within the deposit. Phials of this style generally date from the first or second centuries and the presence within a burial context reflects the continuing attempt to furnish the departed with materials they may have needed either

for the journey to the afterlife or for use in the afterlife. The same can be said about the hairpin. It should also be remembered that the recovery of the inorganic finds such as pottery etc may only be a part of the original burial suite which may have included foodstuffs and clothing that have left no trace, as well as whatever the vessels themselves contained.

Due to the dispersal and broken nature of the remains, no certain human bone lay in association with the pottery. A small amount of bone fragments recovered may denote a cremation - however it was not calcined as is frequently the case. The cremation of bodies was however often of quite variable degree with bones displaying a range of heat effects depending where in the pyre they were. It is unclear if the pyre or bustum for this burial was nearby or if the cremated material was carefully curated and taken to a selected location, this may be suggested by the apparent isolation of this burial on this prominent spot with views across the Nene Valley. It is unclear if the burial relates to a nearby site such as the villa at Wootton or perhaps the potteries within Delapré or even a site as yet to be discovered. The location is however not unusual with burials frequently placed at locations with views of the landscape thereby including the dead in continuing everyday life. The vessels and artefacts would place the burial in the Second Century which was a time when cremation was probably the most frequently used burial type in Britain.

Catalogue

- The greyware jar was in a hard, light grey sandy fabric, the two joining sherds represented part of the side of the body and shoulder just below the rim. The vessel would have had a mouth of about 13cm diameter.
- The bowl was in a hard slightly sandy fabric about 4mm thick with a creamy core with its outer zone grey however the surface was a rusty red. The vessel form was broadly reminiscent of a Samian bowl form, perhaps a Dragendorf 30 or a Ritterling 9, and it may have been consciously based upon one of these forms. The bowl had a maximum diameter of 16cm and a height of about 10.5cm. The rim of the vessel was plain, 2.5cm below it a narrow cordon was present below which, centrally located on a slightly concave surface, a series of lozenges formed of closely set diagonal lines above and below which were two parallel comb type impressions. This motif is reminiscent of a London ware type decoration although this vessel is not in that fabric. The base of the pot had a wheel turned foot ring 7cm diameter.
- The beaker was in a creamy coloured fabric generally about 3mm thick and uniformly fired. It had a rim diameter of about 10cm and a height of about 11.5cm. Its rim was plain and out turned above a plain turned zone separated from the body by a shallow incised groove. The body of the vessel was covered with zones of densely applied white barbotine dots in rectangular areas arranged slightly on the slope but as a full lozenge. Each zone of the applied dots was about 2cm apart at the top converging lower down the vessel to terminate immediately adjacent. The design had a total of 14 dots from top to bottom but a less consistent number around the girth but generally about 12. The 6cm diameter base was plain, flat and wheel turned. Traces of mica still adhered to the body of the vessel which had presumably originally been entirely mica dusted.
- The flagon was in a creamy buff fabric slightly whiter in the core than the surface. The vessel had a globular body with a girth of about 15cm at the widest point tapering down to a turned foot 58mm diameter. The upper part of the vessel was less well represented

although part of the tapering neck (25-35mm diameter) and part of one of probably two original narrow (16mm wide) pulled handles that had originally formed a right angle linking the upper part of the neck to the upper surface of the body were recovered. No trace of the rim was recovered. The vessel had possibly three small puncture holes driven from the outside in just above its foot, it was unclear if these were the result of recent activities or if they were part of a burial ritual.

- In addition to the pottery vessels most of a pale blue glass phial was recovered. It was sadly missing its neck and rim but the surviving bulbous lower part was 54mm tall and 26mm maximum diameter tapering to 14mm just at the base of the neck which would have been about 12mm diameter as indicated at the break. Vessels of this form are known from Colchester where they are seen at their peak in the first century after 60AD and at St Albans similar vessels are assigned a first or second century date (Cool et al 1995, 85; Charlesworth 1972, 206-7).



Fig 9: The glass phial soon after excavation (Photo by Craig Forsyth, NBC)

- The two metal finds comprised a single iron nail 40mm long and largely missing the head. This nail had a rectangular cross sectioned shank tapering from about 7mm across to a point. The other metal object was the upper 43mm of a copper-alloy hairpin including the decorative head comprising reel/bead/flattened sphere. This pin conforms to a Crummy type 2 (Crummy 1983, 28-9) to which she assigns a generally second century date. If this hairpin was associated with the burial it would suggest a female burial.

A medieval monastic undercroft

By Iain Soden

The new kitchen site

Just south of the 18th-century Abbey Cottage, a range of offices at Delapré Abbey, ground clearance in a former grassed garden area uncovered a series of stone and brick foundations. A 19th-20th century cottage was known to have stood there in the recent past and been demolished. The location is now that of the new abbey catering kitchen.

Most recently the garden had been a simple grassed area which also contained a slightly grand flight of stone steps which led up to the conservatory from its north side.

Excavation revealed a sequence of well-dated structures which indicate that the site was used repeatedly from the 13th-15th century onwards.

Early earth-cut features

The earliest features on the site comprised a short length of north-south aligned gully (115), of c40cm diameter and 25cm deep, cut by an east-west aligned ditch (113), up to 2m wide but at c70cm, relatively shallow, with a gentle U-shaped profile. Both were cut into the natural geology. Their clayey sand fills were similar (116, 114 respectively) and the latter contained sherds of medieval pottery dating no earlier than c1250, denoting the period during which both gully and ditch went out of use as being probably the 13th-14th century.

A medieval undercroft

The majority of three ironstone walls, east [106], west [121] and south [131], survived of a rectangular, partly basemented / cellared ironstone building, measuring at least 8.8m long x 3.7m wide (interior measurements). It was in essence an undercroft, which took up the majority of what was uncovered and was approximately 1.4m deep. The structure had a single buttress at the north end of the east wall [106], just under the excavation baulk. Close to this was a single stone-packed post-hole [122], probably connected with construction of the building, since it lay close in the angle between the east wall and the buttress. Its fill (123) produced pottery of the 13th-14th century.

The surviving south wall of the structure [131] was c20cm thinner than the other two (which were c60cm thick), and a narrow strip of mortar floor survived just inside [132], which was covered in fragments of wall- and ceiling-plaster from its demolition, some still with reed-impressions.

The west wall of the building [121] only survived in part, more than half of its southern portion having been removed by later construction. However, beyond it (to the west) lay another stone foundation, separate, but built close up against the west side of the building. The detail of this was unclear but it may have been the base of a stone (or timber) external stair to access the first floor of the building. Such a structure was excavated at Coventry's Cheylesmore Manor, where it stood up against the first-floor apartments, which oversailed an undercroft in the 14th century east wing there (Soden 1992). Elsewhere, and closer to Delapré Abbey, both geographically and in origin, such a stone stair was formerly very much in evidence at nearby Daventry's Cluniac Priory, accessing the

west range of what was long known as 'The Abbey' and which survived into the 19th century, along the way being drawn by Peter Tillemans in 1719 and mapped in 1824 for Christchurch College Oxford (Greenall 1999; Soden et al 2005). At Grove Priory (Beds) a similar arrangement was seen on buildings S41 and S55 (Baker 2013), while on a more domestic scale, external stairs have been excavated at Woolmonger Street, Northampton (Soden 2000). In all these contexts, they appear to be 13th-14th century in origin.

The east wall of the building was the most revealing [106], as its west-facing elevation was the first to indicate that this structure was built over a shallow basement. Its surviving coursed ironstone went down some 1.4m where it bottomed onto natural geology. Within its remaining fabric was a single re-used decorated floor tile of the 14th century which indicates a general *terminus post quem* for construction, perhaps c1300, but probably a generation or two later, when such tiles were no longer a new fashion and had become more widespread for re-use.

The south side of the undercroft is entirely conjectural, but excavation showed it must have stopped short of the later drains which cut across the building, somewhere south of the boiler pit. South of the drains lay a mortar floor surface, on which the demolition plaster had accumulated, so by this point the basemented portion must have terminated. A combination of the boiler pit and a related brick culvert had between them removed or at least masked the south end of the sunken portion.

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Fig 10: Plan of the undercroft with tanking, steps and well (Andy Isham)

Water, hygiene and the use of the undercroft

The most interesting aspect of the building was related to its surviving internal arrangements. At the north end of the excavated area, beyond which the building lies under the present cottages, lay an exactly centrally-placed wide stone-built well [120], which originally had a passageway to get around it on both sides. This was central to the medieval building remains, not the walls of its 19th-century successor.

The well was plastered on its outside, as was the subsequent ironstone blocking on either side [126-closing off the above-mentioned passageways] which showed how the room, originally part of a through-room, was eventually divided off from a further portion of the undercroft which (presumably) still lies under the cottage to the north.

Against the base of this plaster and up each of the walls was thick blue-grey lias clay, up to 100mm thick, which had also been spread just as thickly in a mat across the floor, on top of the natural geology. Against the inside of the west wall, the clay was also deliberately formed around the remains of a stone stair, of which the superstructure [128, 129] three robbed treads were discernible [127]. The stair was secondary and had been deliberately seated into the clay, with a small clay-packed gap between it and the west wall. The clay had effectively 'tanked' the interior of the room.



Fig 11: The undercroft, partly emptied. The east (top) and west (bottom) walls can be seen, with the well (far left centre) and robbed stair bedded in clay (bottom left). A sondage at top right centre has been cut through the sandy floor and basal tanking layer (arrowed), which stretched at least 1m up the sides; scale 1m. North to left

Most surprising was the fact that the robbed and much-modified shaft of the well could be discerned within the fabric of the cottage gable, and was still present at what was (and still is) first floor level. In order to ensure that this was not the imagination of the excavator/author, the gable wall for this reason was drawn 'unseen' by the illustrator of this report, from below-ground site elevations and carefully-taken and scaled digital images designed to produce no converging verticals

or distortion of perspective. This exercise did indeed perpetuate the visual differences in the gable which seem to show that the well had once formed a continuous shaft extending right up to the first floor. Such survivals are probably rare, the only extant example known to the author being the keep of Richmond Castle, North Yorkshire, from which water could be drawn through bucket-windows at different levels.

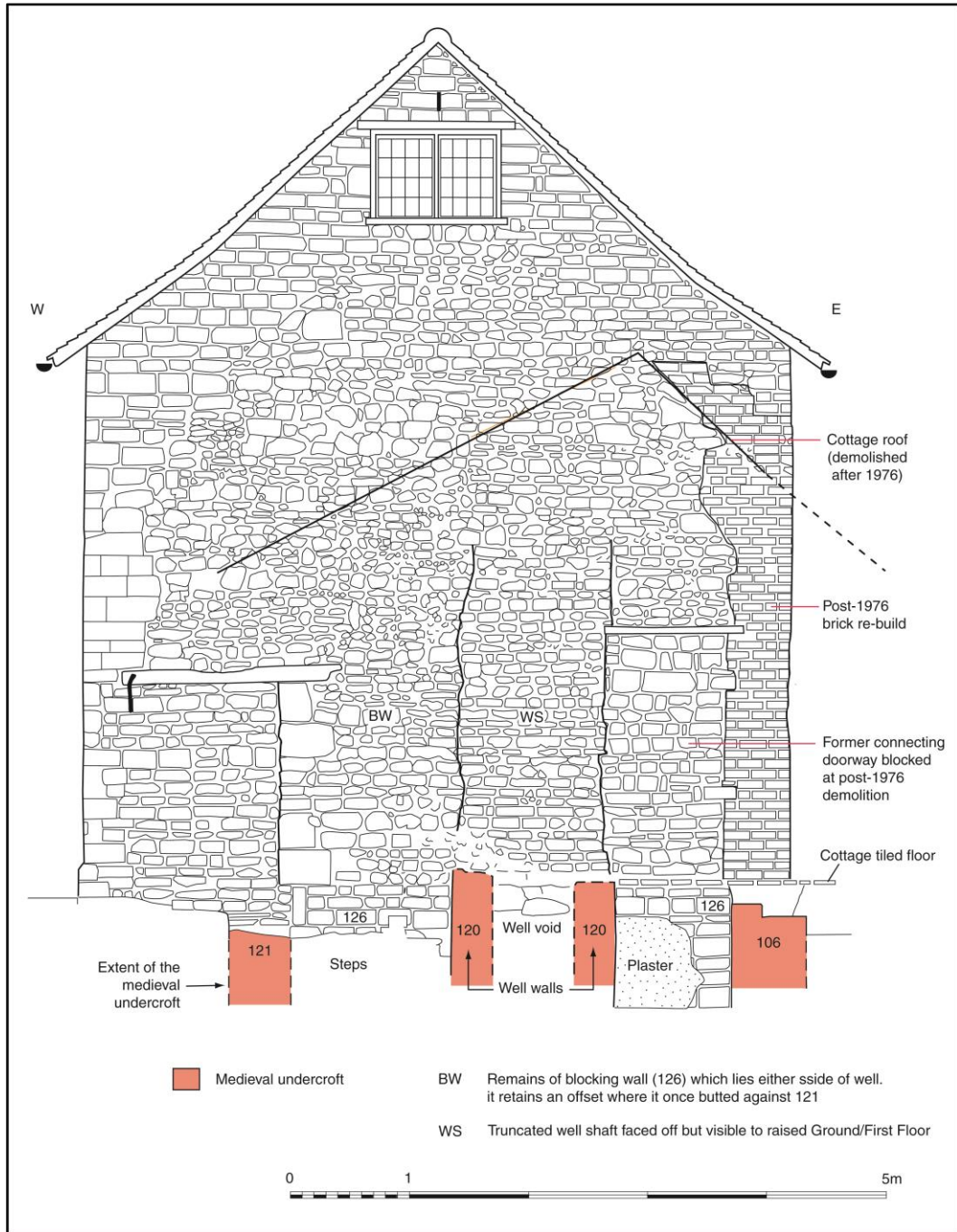


Fig 12: Elevation of The Cottage south gable with excavated remains below. Note the comparative proportion of the medieval undercroft, its central well [120], the infill-walls [126] and the apparent filled-and-robbed well-shaft up the wall, discernible in the different stone size and shapes. (Andy Isham)

This semi-basement or undercroft contained no finds of medieval date, but appears to have been kept clean until its disuse. At its demolition it was filled in, its demise securely dated by pottery of the mid-18th century. The treads of its secondary stair had all been deliberately robbed out, suggesting that they had comprised finely-cut stones, desirable for re-use elsewhere.

South and south-east, and in close association with the clay-tanked undercroft, a layer of sandy clay (101) contained a dump of medieval pottery dating between the 13th and 16th century, particularly jugs and which, although far from complete, comprised relatively large sherds, suggesting an origin in this or another building very close by, with little subsequent disturbance.

The tanking of the room, high up on the free-draining ironstone-based geology, is surely an effort to keep in the liquid contents of the room, while also preventing damp from spreading up walls and into the next basement room (although it would not address any natural damp from under or outside the building from creeping up. While damp is a characteristic which might be applied to many undercrofts, the tanking effectively means that this room, with direct stone-stair access, became simply a huge wet-room (in modern parlance), in which natural drainage (normally a requirement) was discouraged and very probably was entirely unintended. By blocking-in either side of the well, adding the stairs afterwards, the entirety of the water-seal was maintained for this end of the building.



Fig 13: Early in the excavation, the Blue Lias-clay tanking can be seen up the left side of the plastered well shaft; it has been removed in the right half but rain-water is still seen ponding on its truncated base. The dashed line shows its former extent. View looking north

While monastic houses were (and still are) well known for their skills at water-management, perhaps most particularly (in large numbers) the Cistercians, or perhaps even (on a small scale) the Carthusians, that is usually in respect of piping-in and distribution of supplies to serve the various parts of the monastery. Some florid and poetic 10th- 12th-century descriptions survive of the lengths to which engineers went in order to bring water in and make it work for the monastic house. Archaeological examples are numerous (see Bond 1993 and 2001 for overviews). Cluniacs are no exception and their decorated stone lavabo at the Cluniac Wenlock Priory in Shropshire remains one of the most admired, if apparently simple, examples of its type to survive in England. Close by, Daventry's Cluniac Priory created and managed (with some discord) a conduit and piped water supply, but was poorly curated, leading to legal proceedings and episcopal anger (Bond 1993, 53; Soden *et al* 2005, 115). Monastic water-management generally however, is all about clean-water-in

and dirty-water-out. Storage tanks and cisterns are of course part of this general pattern, but a water-holding basement represents one step further. This is believed to be a characteristic of particular importance to the Cluniacs.

Bathing is not prescribed by the *Rule of St Benedict* except for the sick who may partake as and when required (Chapter 36). Nor indeed is physical cleanliness a characteristic of any of the subsequent variations which seem to have placed little store in anything which might just be seen as luxurious or distracting from the serious business of being pious. Abstinence seems to have been key; indeed, bathing for anyone not sick is generally discouraged. It is for these reasons that amongst excavated sites, buildings recognised for washing, bathing and even laundry are very few (Bond 2001, 101-2).

However, a description of the monastery (Cluny II, and dating to the period c1042-9, does make specific reference to bathing for Cluniacs: '*Outside the monks' refectory and 60 feet from the end of the latrines, twelve sunken chambers with as many tubs are to be organised, where baths may be prepared for the brethren at the appointed times*' (Albers 1900, II: Ch I, 137-9). Bath-time, it seems, was already prescribed at Cluny, the heart of the order, for the otherwise-great-unwashed about a century before Delapré Abbey was founded.

Broadly similar water-collection or water-holding arrangements have been noted in the excavations at the Cluniac Abbey of Bermondsey, London (Dyson et al 2011, 32-3, 37-8). So too were such arrangements recorded at the Cluniac Lewes Priory, Sussex (Lyne 1997, 38-9). Although neither was a mirror-image of the other, both have been interpreted as connected with monastic ablutions, often in tandem with the monastic infirmary, with a reredorter not far away.

At Delapré Abbey the juxtaposition of the internally-tanked undercroft, with a flight of stairs placed over and against the tanking, and a well, potentially rising to the first floor (-or perhaps more properly a raised ground floor-), is considered to be very strong evidence for the existence of an eastern range which may have had either the Nuns' *dorter* (dormitory) at first floor or an infirmary (if, as seems most likely here, set back from the east range-proper), with a bath-house in the semi-basement beneath. It is entirely unknown if the basement was a single bathing plunge-pool (as would certainly fit the evidence) or if it contained a series of wooden tubs more like a bath as we know it today (such as in the above 11th-century description), in which regular and haphazard spillage was nothing to bother about.



Fig 14: Undercroft west wall rear [121], robbed stair [127] foreground and c100mm of lias clay tanking between, looking west; scales 1m and 50cm

Pottery related to the undercroft

A total of 231 sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered from seven contexts, and which weighed 6102 grams.

The contexts producing pottery and/or medieval floor tile were as follows:

100, 101 (two separate areas), 114, 119, 123, and 133 (all prefixed by K [Kitchen])

The pottery was related to the accepted numerical coding system of the Northamptonshire County Type Series although each is also known by commonly understood names.

The pottery types present in all were as follows, by context, sherd numbers and weight in grams:

Type/context	CTS no	Date range	100	101 (E)	101 (S)	114	119	123	133	Total
St Neots-type ware	200	C11th-12th		13/100g	7/79g	2/12g				22/191g
Nuneaton A ware	347	c1250-1350		1/5g	1/12g		1/2g			3/19g
Lyveden/Stanion A ware	319	c1100-1300		2/68g				1/11g		3/79g
Lyveden/Stanion B ware	320	c1250-1500		8/100g				9/182g		17/282g
Shelly Coarseware	330	C13th - 14th		20/341g	43/1633g					63/1974g
Medieval redware	360	C14th		2/22g	3/65g					5/87g
Potterspury ware	329	c1250-1500		3/35g						3/35g
Paffrath blue-grey ladle		C13th			7/132g					7/132g
Brill/Boarstall ware	324	c1250-1350		3/103g						3/103g
Tudor Green - type	369	c1380-1450				1/11g				1/11g
Late medieval glazed wares		c1400-1500					3/132g			3/132g
Cistercian ware	404	c1450-							1/21g	1/21g

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		1550								
Midland Black (early forms)	411	c1550-1640							1/44g	1/44g
Midland Black (later forms)	411	c1680-1800	1/46g				5/218g		16/1265g	22/1529g
Tin Glazed Earthenware	410	C17th					2/19g		19/347g	21/366g
Staffordshire slipware	409	1680-1740	1/12g				4/115g			5/127g
Manganese-glazed mottled ware	413	1680-1740	1/4g				1/2g		3/153g	5/159g
Nottingham Stoneware	417	C18th					14/527g (1)		3/51g	17/578g
White salt-glazed stoneware	429	1720-80	3/48g				19/116g			22/164g
Westerwald Stoneware	420	C18th		1/22g						1/22g
Porcelain	412	C18th							1/4g	1/4g
Unglazed Earthenwares		C19th				1/1g	3/41g			4/42g
Transfer printed earthenwares	1000	C19th	1/1g							1/1g
Total			7/111g	53/796g	61/1921g	4/24g	52/1172g	10/193g	44/1885g	231/6102g

Amongst the medieval material, that from East and South of the building predominates (101). Although this is a relatively small assemblage, there is a dominance by shell-tempered types, already known across the county, but suggestive of a wide sphere of ceramic influences, including Lyveden/Stanion in East Northamptonshire, which small-scale appearances by Potterspury, Brill/Boarstall and Nuneaton (Chilvers Coton) products, showing just how important was the highway of the Watling Street (The A5) as a long-lived Roman road, still in daily use. None of these are especially early or remarkable, but a range of basic kitchen/tablewares in Lyveden/Stanion wares might be expected, similar to the stratified material from Woolmonger Street, Northampton (Soden 2000). Products from Lyveden/Stanion (as likely as not the source of the Shelly Coarsewares) comprise fragments from large jugs and pitchers, often green glazed with applied stamps and trailed slips of white-firing clay (for which type see, most recently, Chapman et al, 2008). The ware is generally dated between c1250 and c1500, and here the average sherd weight (14g) of all types in the context 101 is large enough to suggest the deposit, although not necessarily primary, may have been little-disturbed. Having said that, the single sherd of cobalt-glazed imported Westerwald stoneware is an 18th-century intrusion. The Nuneaton and Brill-Boarstall types are a few tiny sherds so may be residual, as are the more numerous but also small St Neots wares of the 12th-13th centuries and a date may be suggested for context 101 of the later 13th or early 14th century. The German Paffrath blue-grey ladle is a type-fossil of the later 13th century, although with care, there is no reason why such a specialist vessel might not last some time before breakage. Once thought rare, they are now being found across Northamptonshire and Warwickshire in increasing numbers.

The material derived from 101, and spread to both east and south of the modern kitchen area, suggests that both spreads were once common to a single source. That source is likely to be the undercroft building excavated adjacent, although it is unknown if further, unexcavated, medieval building remains lie under the conservatory to the south or to the east under the post-medieval game larder or the conjoined dairy and billiard room.

As mainly jugs and pitchers and a ladle, the vessels which characterise this bi-focal deposit suggest either a nearby function for either serving of liquids at table or of ablutions. If a reasonably 'standard' monastic plan is understood at Delapr , then the nuns' kitchen and refectory may be postulated somewhere in a long-removed south range, while the excavated undercroft has very particular need of water jugs, if the above interpretation is followed.

The rarity of early materials, given the early 12th century foundation date of the Abbey, and the absence of late medieval wares, is not problematic, or at least can be simply explained by there being either a different layout in that early period, or at least of different disposal patterns. In the later medieval period, perhaps in the generation or two until the Dissolution, old jugs may have continued in use, or other vessel materials may have supplanted them, such as bronze, brass, or even wood or leather, all of which were on occasions fashioned into water-holding vessels.

Post-medieval pottery from contexts associated with the demise of the undercroft are 119 and 133. Both contain domestic wares of the 18th century, probably around the middle decades and 119 in particular shows that the undercroft was filled in before they were dumped, or that they formed part of the deliberate infilling.

A newly-discovered West Range

By Iain Soden

Late in the development programme came the digging to insert a static water tank on the west side of Delapr  Abbey, in order to provide a 45000-litre reservoir of water for firefighting purposes, since the existing main was considered insufficient in an emergency (Fig 2 for location). As with previous interventions, arrangements were made to monitor the works archaeologically, not least since the trench was to be 6m x 6m x 5m deep, eventually necessitating sheet-piled edges and a reinforced concrete base at depth to support the new tank. It was intended to lie 25m directly west of the current main western entrance porch to Delapr  Abbey.

Almost as soon as the 6m x 6m trench was begun it became clear that the intended trench contained a great deal of structural archaeology, where none had ever previously been suspected.

At approximately 500mm below the modern ground surface lay two very large mortared ironstone walls at right angles to each other. One was 800mm wide on a slightly wider offset base and was aligned approximately north-south across the whole trench. Forming a right-angle and aligned westwards was an even larger ironstone wall 950mm across.

East of the building lay 1.1m depth of soils, just like in the nearby west front soakaway and that seen around the south front too. The two interior spaces formed by the angle of the two walls differed considerably. On the one hand that to the south appears to have comprised soil with ironstone rubble. On the other, that to the north comprised rubble alone which lay upon a substantial stone base smothered in thick mortar. This was thick enough in the corner to suggest that the stone floor had been used for mortar-mixing; indeed there were marks which suggested heel-impressions in it.

The floor had a deliberate and very marked arris at its west edge, just inside the trench, as if it formed the edge of a step down westwards. A westward extent to this building was not apparent in this trench; nor was a northern or southern return present.



Fig 15: View of the west range in the aborted 45000L tank trench, looking north (Abbey to the right); scales 2m and 1m. Some 1.1m of deep soils lie outside the building to its east (right).



Fig 16: View of the west range in the aborted 45000L tank trench, looking west (Abbey behind camera); scales 2m and 1m. Note how the wall in the foreground has been bedded on rammed soil.

It was a straightforward decision upon cleaning these remains, which bore no particular identifying characteristics, other than that they are medieval in origin and would not have been allowed to stand in front of the 17th-century west front of the Abbey (which they would have obscured totally), to alter plans for the water tank and choose another location.

Consequently a replacement location was chosen to the north and slightly further out from the Abbey (Fig 2 for location). Here an initial test-trench found the west wall of the same medieval range, indicating a building range in excess of 22m length and with a width of c8m. The new trench was then adjusted slightly to lie outside this building and the remainder was dug successfully and the tank inserted. Here too the depth of soils was some 1.1m, increasing at one end to 1.4m.



Fig 17: The west wall of the west range, adjacent to the successful 45000L Tank Trench 2 beyond, looking west (Abbey behind camera and slightly to left); scale 1m. The tank trench was c6m x 6m in plan, and 5m deep.

Of characteristically large proportions, the building is commensurate potentially with Anglo-Norman construction. Its construction and subsequent use is dated by pottery under it, in it and close by, to the 12th-15th centuries. This previously-unknown range of buildings may be the monastic west range of the Abbey, or possibly a range of buildings pertaining to a monastic outer court, perhaps barns and stables or bakehouse, brewhouse etc. In either case its demise is almost certain to have taken place in the 16th century as such a massive structure would not have been allowed to stand in front of the early 17th century west porch and what was by then the principal front and reception of the country house. Such a massive building would have prevented all views in and all prospects out. Even at 22m long, its north and south limits are not known.

The deep soils on both the inside and outside of the building are intriguing as they resemble what is seen on the outside of the south range, where a deliberate programme of raising the ground seems to have taken place in the 18th century.

While demolition of such a massive western range would have had the effect of raising the ground level around-about, this depth characteristic is seen in all interventions on this side too, and seems to have begun early on.

In contrast to the deep soils on the west side, a similar soakaway pit on the north front just outside the former church was machine-dug (initially without an archaeological presence) and badly

disturbed two burials at only 400mm depth. What remained of the graves were hand-excavated and their locations recorded (Fig 2 for location); the disturbed remains were gathered up and all reburied at the abbey in accordance with a Ministry of Justice license. In concert with the previous disturbances of 1895 and 1940, this shows that areas set aside for burials at the abbey are far more extensive than had previously been considered. Anywhere east or north of the former church is a possible area for burials, along with the north range, the east range (former Chapter House being assumed), the cloister alleys and the cloister itself. Together they could contain hundreds of burials, many in disconnected 'islands' of archaeology between services and post-medieval interventions, but there is no indication of the extent of any area so used, so the future management of graves is almost impossible except for either a blanket approach of managed, shallow, minimised disturbance or of wholesale archaeological excavation.

In fact, during 2016 resurfacing work in the cloister garth, more recently simply called the inner courtyard, did not progress deep enough (at 300mm) to expose any more than brick and concrete foundations to 20th-century temporary buildings. A single sondage suggests there may be a further c500mm of post-medieval make-up there. The existing floors in the 'cloister alley' were not disturbed in the current works, but conserved. This might be described as an example of successful 'managed minimal disturbance'.

A final soakaway outside the south front experienced a 1.4m-depth of topsoil before any change of material was encountered. At that depth (the maximum needed for the soakaway) was seen a variety of stone fragments, including architectural fragments. The varying depths of soils across the site are intriguing and will be addressed later in this report.

Associated medieval pottery

Pottery related to the West Range

There was very little by way of any finds from the first tank trench. However, what pottery was present strongly suggests that the range dates from the 12th century, in keeping with the exceptionally wide wall-widths noted – a characteristic seen previously in Northampton, where Anglo-Norman construction (at St James End, for example) is generally appreciably wider than that of subsequent centuries. Further pottery suggests its use continued through the 13th and 14th centuries.

The west range and the area in front of the west porch has produced 64 medieval sherds, a significant assemblage of pottery, that suggests the soil accumulation there may have included some deliberate dumping of waste, not in pits but perhaps middening before manuring the fields. The potential volume of these soils all around the west range suggests that there may be a lot of finds in this vicinity. The complete absence of post-Medieval pottery from this area suggests that the soil accumulation stopped at The Dissolution.



Fig 18: Tom retrieving 12th-13th century pottery against the north-south wall of the outer West Range

Pottery associated with the west range medieval building was as follows:

From the soils in the southern 'room' of the west range building came 8 sherds comprising a sherd of St Neots-type ware (CTS 200, 1000-1200), 6 sherds of Shelly Coarseware (CTS 330, 1200-1400) and a sherd of Medieval Redware (CTS 360, 1300-1400).

In association with the wall and on the outside (east) of the building came a further 8 sherds comprising a sherd of St Neots-type ware, 3 sherds of Shelly Coarseware, 3 sherds of Medieval Redware and a sherd of Potterspurty ware (CTS 329, 1250-1500).

From the deep homogenous soils to the west of the west range, in Tank Trench 2, came 13 sherds of pottery, comprising 11 sherds from a single bowl in Brill/Boarstall-type ware (CTS 324, 1250-1350), a sherd of St Neots-type ware and a sherd of Potterspurty ware.





Meanwhile the West Front soakaway (between the West Range and the 17th-century porch) itself produced 31 sherds of medieval pottery, of which 19 are probably from a single bowl in a shelly coarseware fabric (probably CTS fabric 330 but it has been scorched). Also three sherds of Nuneaton wares, two of Brill-Boarstall ware and seven miscellaneous sherds. Probably 13th- mid 14th century. Nearby four sherds of fabric 330 shelly coarseware were retrieved from deep soils in a service trench just outside the west porch.

Architectural stonework (medieval and later)






From a variety of locations was retrieved a large number of architectural fragments, some medieval and some Jacobean. These included many of the same form or moulding (such as ovolo mullions or blocks with only a single tooled face) and many of these were later discarded. Few were recovered from well-stratified deposits and they offer little useful dating to the contexts from which they came. The best examples are set out below, together with a description, their provenance and a photograph. Each is now stored in the finds archive at Delapré Abbey.

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Medieval items (Fig 19)

19.1	<p>Large fragment of 15th-century Oolitic limestone window tracery based around a deeply-recessed spandrel with cusped arcs to either side of cavetto profile, with groove for glazing. Rear faced off. Two trefoil heads either side of a missing mullion. Dimensions 515mm wide x 267mm high x 270mm deep; possible original depth 310mm. From north wall of coach-house: east wall unblocking. Scale 50cm</p>	
19.2	<p>Fragment of straight 15th-century window mullion in fine-grained Blisworth limestone with cavetto moulding one side of a glazing groove with roll-moulding projection on the other. Dimensions (475mm) long x 213mm wide x 114mm deep. From beneath conservatory. Scale 50cm</p>	
19.3	<p>Two fragments of substantial plain very shelly limestone cavetto moulding, possibly from a 14th- century vault rib. Dimensions 200mm x 210mm x 240mm and (140mm) x 210mm x 240mm. From beneath conservatory. Scale 50cm</p>	
19.4	<p>Fine-grained Blisworth Limestone fragment from a junction between an arch and a possible jamb. Medieval but may have been reused before the Dissolution. Dimensions 303mm x 320mm x 158mm. Scale 50cm</p>	


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19.5	Small, fine-grained Blisworth limestone fragment from a window arch. Dimensions 300mm x (140mm) x 123mm). From North wall of B11, cutting for new door. Scale 50cm	
19.6 a	A small capital in (slightly scorched) Northampton Sand Ironstone from on top of a (probably disengaged) shaft from between two bays of blind arcade, or sedilia. Groove at rear of roll-moulding may mark former depth of wall setting. From excavations for new Kitchen (DA15 K 123) on site of what is thought to be the former monastic bath-house. Dimensions 152mm x 120mm x 100mm. Side-view opposite; scale 30cm	
19.6 b	End-view of 6 above; scale 30cm An exact parallel for this stone can be seen as a capital to each of the shafts between the sedilia in the 14 th -century chancel at St Lawrence's Church, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire (c, below).	
19.6 c	Example of 6. in use in 14 th -century chancel sedilia at St Lawrence's Church, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire	
19.7 a	Fragment of Northampton Sand with Ironstone from a finely-carved arch-moulding, possibly from a small niche. Unstratified from a service trench during observations just north of the North Range, so potentially closest to the former monastic church's west end. Dimensions (190mm x 115mm x 130mm). Scale 30cm	

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19.7 b	Profile view of 7 opposite; scale 30cm	
19.8	Fragment of Blisworth Limestone from a trefoil cross-section shaft. Dimensions (110mm) long x 115mm across two trefoil lobes. From floor reduction in Basement B13; scale 30cm	
19.9	Fragment of Blisworth Limestone, very similar to 19.8, but less well-preserved. (130mm x 110mm). From excavations for new Kitchen (DA15 K 133) on site of the former monastic bath-house. View here shows the profile as the better-preserved of the two; scale 30cm	
19.10	Fragment of Blisworth Limestone from an octagonal shaft with upstanding roll-moulding around all faces. Possibly a fragment of cross-shaft. Dimensions (155mm) x 115mm diameter across roll-moulding/astragal. From below floor of stables in room G59. Scale 30cm	

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19.11	<p>Fragment in Blisworth Limestone of an irregular, curving cylinder carved almost in the round. Possibly a fragment of arm from a wall-mounted statue or recumbent tomb effigy. Dimensions (120mm long) x 75mm diam. From excavations for new Kitchen (DA15 K 100) on site of what is thought to be the former monastic bath-house. Scale 30cm.</p>	
19.12	<p>Fragment in Blisworth Limestone of a regular octagonal shaft. Dimensions (140mm long) x 90mm diam. From 1.4m depth in deep soils of south soakaway; unstratified. Scale 30cm.</p>	
19.13	<p>Small fragment of plain but chamfered blue-grey Purbeck Marble from the corner of a plinth or tomb/altar table. Unstratified from a service trench during observations just north of the North Range, so potentially closest to the former monastic church's west end. (81mm x 71mm surviving) surface x 47mm thick, of which 20mm is chamfer. Edges inc chamfer have striated tooling. Upper surface has been highly polished. Lower surface has been smoothed but not polished. (Scale 5cm). A similar, but much thinner complete Purbeck marble tablet was excavated from the church of the Coventry Charterhouse in 1986 where it had been a portable altar table (Soden 1995, 126-7). Such an association here cannot be confirmed here as 19.13 does not include an incised corner cross (one of the wounds of Christ). A tomb/grave cover is as likely. There was a massive industry of incised Purbeck marble tomb/grave covers through London workshops in the 13th-14th centuries.</p>	

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Post-Medieval items (Jacobean) (Fig 19)

19.14	Two Northampton Sand with Ironstone fragments of 17 th -century mullion, one a king-mullion. The single mullion is typical of 17 such related fragments with ovolo exterior (and slight ogee) retrieved from a variety of sources on the site and which comprised mullions, transoms and chamfered sill fragments with matching stoolings (mostly discarded). There are <i>in-situ</i> existing examples on the standing east and north ranges. Dimensions (King mullion) (378mm long) x 200mm wide x 164mm deep; Single mullion (253mm long) x 128mm wide x 154mm deep. From North wall of B11, cutting for new door. Scale 50cm	
19.15	Fragment of Northampton Sand Ironstone 17 th -century mullion with glazing groove and integral jamb splay, from at-depth in DA14 Evaluation test-pit G2. Dimensions 310mm x (200mm x 200mm). Assumed therefore to derive from the former South Range. Scale 30cm	
19.16	Small fragment of white statuary marble ?plinth from space below the drawing room floor. No extant edges. Probably derives from the former 17 th -century South Range before it was rebuilt in the 1750s.	See 'finds from beneath drawing room / basements'
19.17	Small fragment of polished black marble from space below the drawing room floor. One edge only. Probably derives from the former 17 th -century South Range before it was rebuilt in the 1750s. Perhaps from a fireplace.	See 'finds from beneath drawing room / basements'

Medieval decorated floor tiles

Three fragments of lead-glazed earthenware decorated medieval monastic floor tile were recovered from the excavations for the new kitchen. They are of the relatively thinly-printed type, which was common in the late 14th or early 15th-century, rather than the more deeply-impressed motifs which characterise those of the earlier 14th-century traditions.

None have ready parallels in Elizabeth Eames' British Museum catalogue (1986), although admittedly these are all worn fragments. Their red-firing clays are redolent of the North Warwickshire tradition (especially Stoke adjacent to Coventry), for which see Chatwin (1936) and subsequent excavated assemblages from Coventry and Leicestershire (Soden 1995, Whitcomb 1957). Indeed it is known that other Northamptonshire monastic houses, such as the Cistercian Catesby Priory (nunnery) in 1415, would send representatives to visit the market in Coventry in order to specifically buy tiles at three for a farthing (whether roof or floor is not clear) in the early 15th century, so their tiles were well-known in Northamptonshire (Soden 2009, 182).

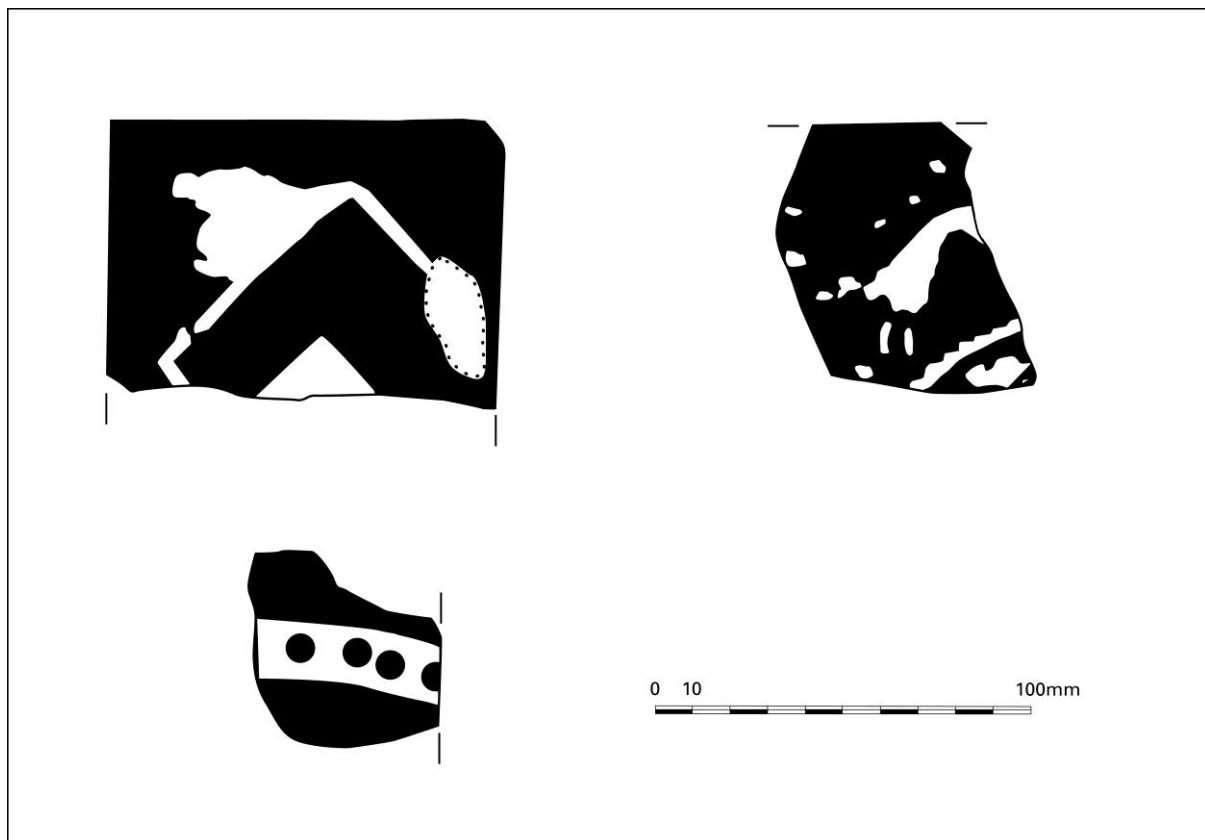


Fig 20: The decorated medieval floor tiles-1 (top left); 2 (top right); 3 (bottom left). (Andy Isham)

The tiles are as follows:

1. Half of possibly a multiple-tile design with armorial bearings comprising a printed shield border with an indistinct motif, and an equally indistinct decorative element outside. DA15 K 106 (Built into the east wall of the east-range undercroft). No parallels found. Its location is of note since it is structural dating for the construction of the undercroft.

2. Fragment of a tile from a four-tile design bearing a circular border with one of a probable procession of running animals (probably a left-facing stag or stags) processing in a circle around the four tiles. DA16 K 119 (Residual in the 18th-century backfill of the east range undercroft). Closest parallels are from Warwickshire Chatwin (1936, fig 9:13); also excavated more recently at Coventry Charterhouse where post-1385 (Soden 1995, fig 27:86-7).
3. Fragment of a tile from a four-tile design bearing a segment of a border in relief with running dots upstanding and possible flower petals in one demarked zone within the border. DA16 K 119 (Residual in the 18th-century backfill of the east range undercroft). The upstanding dots are distinctive and closest parallels are Chatwin (1936, 43:8 from Burton Hastings and Maxstoke Priory), Leicester Abbey (Whitcomb 1957 nos 6,7) and Coventry Charterhouse, where post-1385 (Soden 1995, figs 27:84, 28:94).

Two complete but worn plain medieval tiles (98mm x 98mm x 20mm; 122mm x 117mm x 22mm) were retrieved (unstratified) from a service trench adjacent to the carriageway just west of the coach-house. Neither is significant.

Remains which supplanted the in-filled monastic undercroft

The 19th-century boiler-house cottage

After the former monastic bath house was knocked down and the semi-basement infilled, during the 18th century, the site may have been open for a while. In the later 19th century a brick-built cottage was constructed on the site which was demolished in the 1940s or 1950s, at about the same time that the conservatory was dismantled [Brick walls 103; base to a fire-box, chimney and ash-pit 105, 104 & 107] (– all green on the excavation plan above showing the bath-house).

The brick walls were extremely denuded, and no floors had survived, although they had had added on the south a very substantial deep brick-lined pit and underground channels which housed the former Victorian heating boiler for the abbey. From the same boiler led the cast-iron pipes which fed under the floor of the conservatory to the south and back out from the abbey to the west.



Fig 21: A snatched view along the buried brick culvert from the boiler house to the house, entering under the back door (to G5). This view was only possible by placing head and shoulders in the former maintenance pit.

Thus, heated via a fire-box to the north, the hot water from the boiler was initially fed at high level under the conservatory's north wall, where heat was most important, and then channelled via 5-inch cast iron pipes, east to the billiard room or west to the dining room and drawing room, before cooling as it found its way back to the boiler pit.



Fig 22: View south from the boiler pit along the heating channel which fed the former Conservatory with hot water. The base of the channel was 1.6m below the conservatory floor. This view is directly south from the inspection chamber adjacent to the boiler pit. Following the loss of the conservatory, the whole was later truncated by a set of steps (and that incremental truncation is visible in the rising brick courses; scale 2m
(Scanned from B&W negative in site archive)

Fresh water to top-up the heating system was provided from roof-water via a brick drain which fed from the billiard room and dairy roofs at the south-east.

The Victorian Conservatory

By Joe Prentice

The remains

The former conservatory at Delapr  was located, unsurprisingly, on the south front. It was built during the last decades of the 19th-century.

The documentary evidence for the conservatory is depressingly scarce. It was not in existence when the South Range was depicted by George Clarke in 1854. Map evidence indicates a building on the site of the building from around 1886 although on that map it is merely indicated as a solid block together with the rest of the Abbey and the Billiards Room. On the 1887 edition the conservatory is indicated by the use of diagonal cross-hatching, a convention used by the Ordnance Survey to show glasshouses and conservatories.

The conservatory is indicated throughout the twentieth century on OS maps until 1962 when it is no longer shown although a short flight of steps is shown on the north side of the former location (see below). Confusingly it re-appears on the 1965 edition but is gone again on the 1968 edition, apparently a mistake by the map makers.

Rare photographs in which the conservatory appears almost by accident, show a remarkable confection of surprising complexity, typical of late nineteenth-century styling.

The building itself was situated between the east gable wall of the South Range and the west gable of the Billiards Room which had been converted from the eighteenth-century Orangery. Thus, its size was dictated by the available space in an east-west direction. Its southern elevation also aligned with both of the existing buildings and so the only possible opportunity to expand would have been in a northerly direction. However, this too had existing structural elements and earlier doorways within the east wall of the east range and in fact the boiler which provided the hot water for heating both for the conservatory and the main house was built there. Therefore it has to be said that the size of the building which resulted was almost entirely dictated by surrounding structures, a somewhat unusual situation as conservatories are most usually either free-standing or situated with only one or two elevations against existing buildings.

However, this does not appear to have caused any particular problems and at the time when it was built, such structures, though perhaps to some degree containing 'off the peg' elements would for a property of this status largely have been designed to the client's particular requirements anyway.

The east-west internal dimension, not including the additional brickwork of the three blind arches built against the east wall of the South Range and the west wall of the Billiards Room was 17.3m (56 feet 9 inches). The north-south internal dimension was 7.9m (25 feet 11 inches).

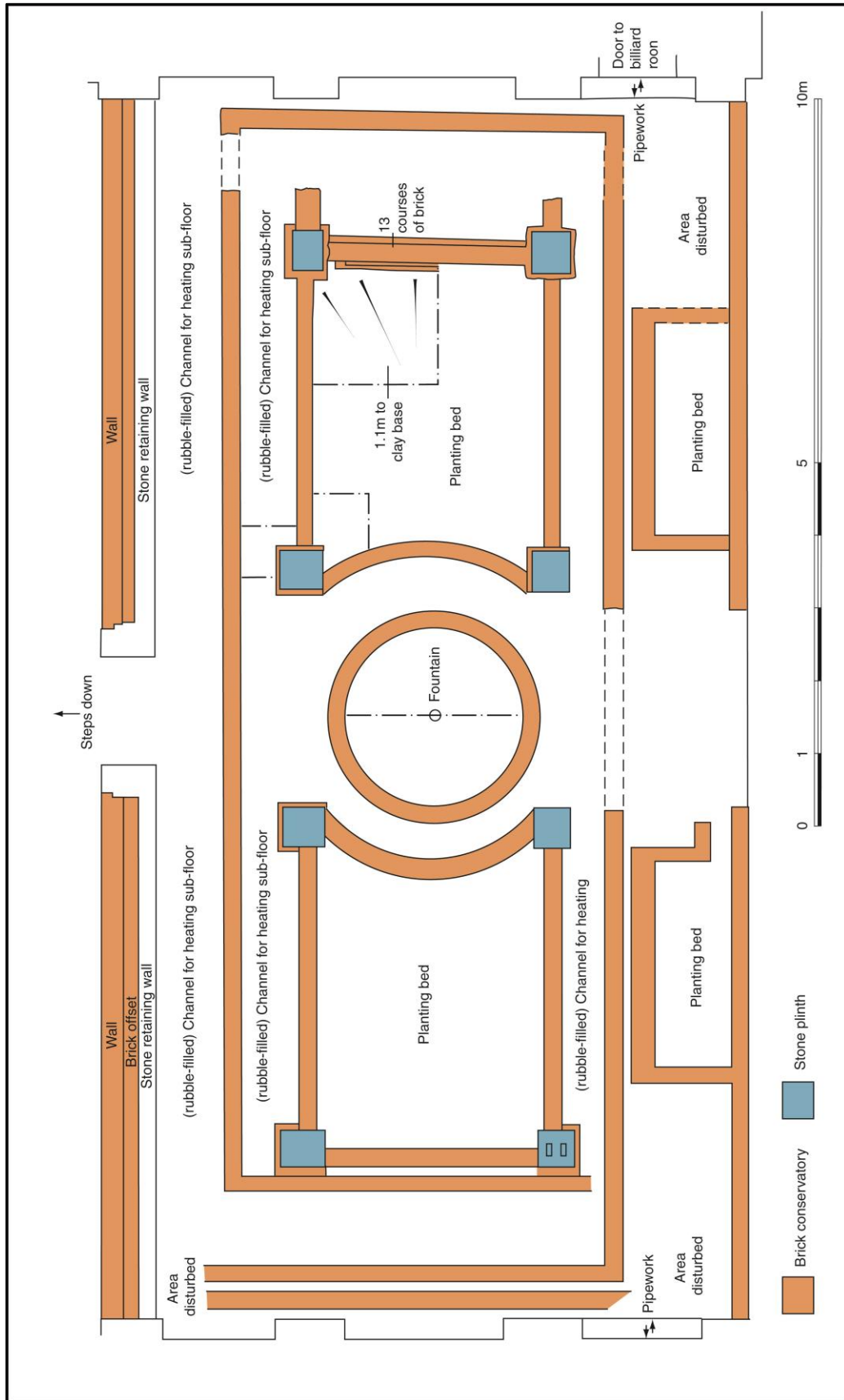


Fig 23: Plan of the Conservatory as excavated (Andy Isham); North is to the left, Billiards Room to the top, Dining Room to the bottom. The pond and planting beds are now picked out in the floor of the Delapré Abbey café which occupies the site.

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In plan the conservatory was laid out with a symmetrical design centred on a circular pool. The plan of circle with scalloped rectangles to either side is a common one and can be seen used in the dining room plaster ceilings at both Althorp House not far away, and at Normanby Park (designs dated 1905-7) (Gore and Gore 1991, 170); also in a contemporary engraving at Somerleyton Hall, Suffolk in a conservatory layout of 1855, demolished 1912 (Girouard 1979, fig 18).

Most, though not all, conservatories had a water feature. This was not just to provide another environment for planting (and usually fish) but to help keep humidity levels high even more so when, as in this case, there was a fountain jet. The pool here is relatively small and quite shallow though in proportion to the overall space. A similar example, though in that case octagonal, is to be found within the conservatory at Castle Ashby where the conservatory is still in use.

The pool was constructed of red brick and rendered internally with hard, grey, cement. In the centre was the truncated stump of the water inlet pipe which almost certainly held the brass fountain rose or spigot (see below). In the base of the pool, on the north side, was the water outlet hole which would have been fitted with a bung or plug until such a time as the pool required cleaning and emptying. During general use there must have been an overflow since at this period there were no circulating pumps and the fountain must have simply been gravity fed which means that as water came in and produced the fountain, water must have been let out otherwise the pool would have overflowed. This was the standard format of the period which meant that mostly the fountains only played for short periods since they would have been supplied by header tanks which usually held relatively small supplies of water.

Due to truncation at the time of the removal of the building no remains were found of the decorative rim of the pool.



Fig 24: Charlotte recording the central pool, looking east.

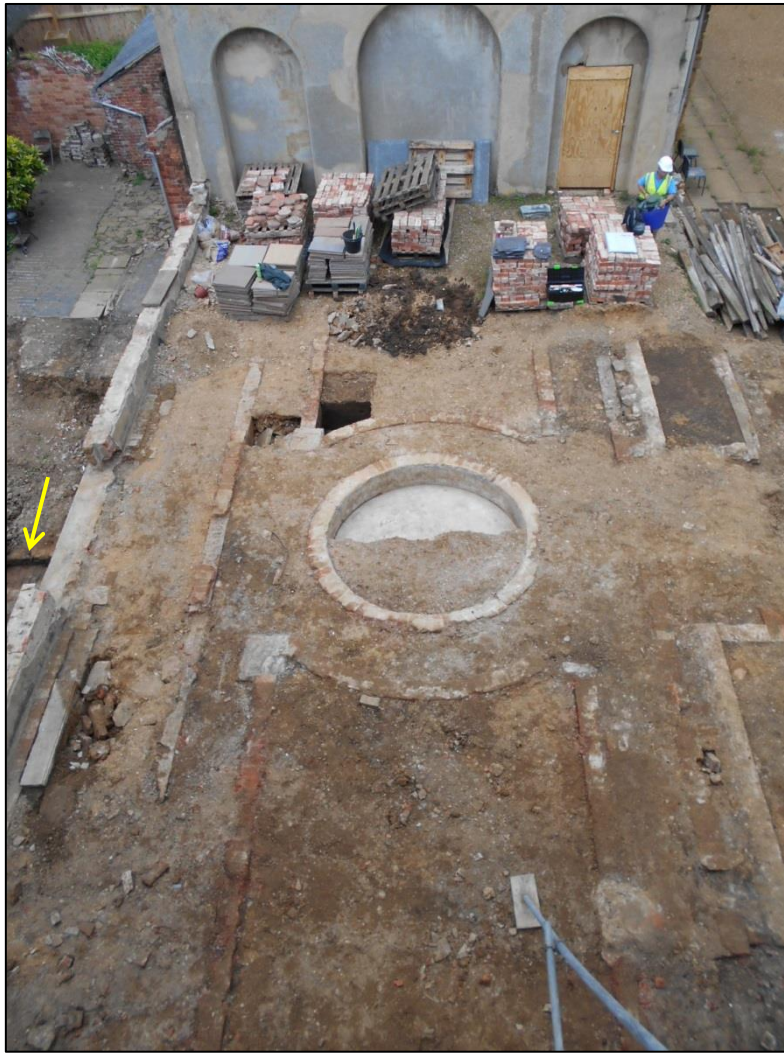


Fig 25: Photograph of the Conservatory during excavations, taken from the roof of the South Range. Note the brick heating source channel from the boiler house glimpsed at far left (arrowed)

There was a centrally placed door on the south side of the building, furnished with a short flight of steps. A second was later built down from the conservatory site leading north. However, these northern steps post-dated the demise of the conservatory since they truncated and then smothered the remains of the brick heating channel which emanated from the boiler house.

A doorway located in the southern of the three arches placed against the west wall linked the west side of the conservatory to the Dining room on the south front whilst another door in the southern arch of the three against the east wall linked the conservatory to the Billiards Room. In this way family and guests could make use of all parts of the range without having to pass outside if the weather was inclement. It would also have provided a route which allowed couples to perambulate some of the way together and at a certain point allow the men to continue alone into the Billiards Room whilst the ladies stayed in the Conservatory. Such segregation by virtue of the nature of the physical space was an accepted social convention by the late nineteenth-century.

The fragmentary nature of the remains makes the heating system difficult to understand but it appears that apart from the two large central beds situated east and west of the central pond, along with two smaller beds located adjacent to the south wall, the remainder of the floor was entirely

filled by ducts containing the heating pipes. If this was the case the ratio of heating to planting appears extremely high and might suggest that the planting required higher than usual temperatures. Unfortunately no record has been found of the planting scheme. Conservatories in such domestic situations usually have relatively small areas of ducting in proportion to floor space since the larger the area of pipework, the more heating - and therefore more expense.

The ducts which held the heating pipes are located not only around the perimeter as would be expected but appear to also wrap around the central pool. However, no clear evidence for this was found in the form of elaborate pierced grille covers where only straight sections were found. Since all of the ducting voids had been rubble-filled it may be that the section which lay around the pool was otherwise filled and had no grille.



Fig 26: The elaborate cast iron grille repositioned in its rebates on broken limestone paving blocks as it would have lain in the floor over the heating pipes before demolition; scale 30cm. (Scanned from B&W negative in site archive)

Positioned in two rows of four, aligned east-west, were square plinths constructed of brickwork with stone caps. These would have supported eight posts or columns, almost certainly of cast iron which would in turn have helped support the roof structure. Unfortunately, no evidence survived to determine their shape or size and they would most likely have been carefully removed for re-use or for scrap.



Fig 27: A 13 brick-courses deep sondage into the eastern planting bed. Bottomed on a sloping bed of white limestone fragments, it was filled with thick black humus. At the rear is a brick plinth supporting one of the columns; scale 1m

The planting beds contained deposits of dark, almost black soil which would have been artificially enriched with humus to provide high levels of nourishment for the plants grown in them. They were 1.1m deep, sloped slightly from the edge and the bases contained large quantities of limestone rubble for drainage, packed in clay. Throughout the planting bed was a relatively large quantity of broken flower pot; its presence here may represent either deliberate addition for additional drainage along with some casual loss from crocking whereby smaller fragments may have become incorporated into the soil when plants were transplanted from pots into the main bed.

Context

The history of creating artificial environments for the propagation and cultivation of plants is a surprisingly long one. The construction of artificial structures is hinted at in fifth-century BC Greek writings in references to the gardens of Adonis but, as with many things, it was during the Roman period that the first certain evidence appears both in written and archaeological evidence (Hix 1996). At that date thin sheets of mica were used to protect plant pots and provide additional protection. However, in Western Europe it is not until the seventeenth-century that glasshouses were developed in ways that we would recognise them. They first appear primarily to house citrus trees. In 1620 Salomon de Caus described a design he had made for a portable wooden orangery for the Elector Palatine in Heidelberg. The building, he wrote, was intended to be 280 feet long:

'..and covers thirty small and four hundred medium-sized trees and is made of wood which is put up every year around Michaelmas and the oranges are warmed by four furnaces all the winter, so that in the time of the great frosts one can walk in this orangery without feeling any cold.'

The success of this building inspired de Caus to propose further buildings with permanent stone walls. As the century progressed these structures, whilst initially only possible for the most wealthy clients, became steadily more widely known, but it was not until the development of metal frames and the widespread availability of cheap glass that the structures became the 'must have' garden building. This only occurred during the nineteenth-century by which time any property owner of any pretensions had to have one. The prolific writer and man of an opinion on everything related to gardening and building in general, John Claudius Loudon, published a book '*Remarks on the construction of Hot-Houses*' in 1817.

But it was not just writers such as Loudon who created this new craze; the expansion of the British Empire as the nineteenth-century progressed allowed plant hunters wide ranging opportunities to collect plants, and industrial developments allowed larger and more efficient glasshouses to be built. Huge British coal reserves, the expansion of the railway system and cheap labour allowed heating systems to be installed and extravagantly used which allowed increasingly exotic plants to flourish. As they became more common conservatories were used not just by botanical enthusiasts but were recommended for a variety of uses. In '*The English Gardener*' by William Cobbet (1829) he states

It is the moral effects naturally attending a greenhouse that I set most value upon. There must be amusement in every family. Children observe and follow their parents in almost everything. How much better during the long and dreary winter for daughters and even sons to assist their mother in a greenhouse than to be seated with her at cards or in the blubberings over a stupid novel or at any other amusement than can possibly be conceived!

Conservatories were often designed in combination with other buildings used exclusively for amusement and for many the plants were simply secondary decoration. It is not known whether at Delapré the plants were part of a serious collection or were simply incidental dressing for the space. The planting medium in the beds contained not only large quantities of broken flower pot but also broken wine and beer bottles (not retained for safety reasons). The conservatory was not just a place to grow exotica, but its location between Dining Room and Billiards Room encouraged its use fully as a 'Winter Garden' with a convivial atmosphere, but one step removed from the male-only environment of the Billiards Room.

The combination of the conservatory and games room, smoking balcony or music room (though how the heat and humidity affected the musical instruments is not commented upon) is one which was frequently combined during the 1870's and 80's. One such example of the attached conservatory and Billiards Rooms is illustrated in the Gardener's Chronicle of 1880. It was constructed at Theydon Grove, Epping by the firm of Weeks and Co (Hix J 1996).

Finds from the Conservatory

Finds were only retained from secure contexts which showed no sign of later disturbance.

The central pond

A copper alloy fountain nozzle 50mm diameter top, lower end 20mm diameter with internal screw thread for attachment to water supply pipe. The flat upper surface retains four concentric rings of

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holes through which the water would have spurted. The outer contains 17 holes, the next 12 holes the third 6 holes with a single slightly larger hole in the centre.

Section of hollow iron pipe, 20mm external diameter, 17mm internal diameter with attached copper alloy (probably brass) tap attached. Total length 265mm.

2 x copper alloy flat headed nails or tacks with square-section shafts.

5 x copper alloy (most likely brass) domed cross-head screws. 70mm long, 10mm diameter wide at head.

2 x iron nails 80mm and 90mm long.

3 x fragments zinc? Strip, one with nail hole. All fragmentary, purpose unknown.

2 x fragments putty of triangular section with right-angle surfaces where fitted against frame and glass and smooth long edge where smoothed from exterior.

2 x fragments window glass finely ribbed on one side only. 8mm thick, dimensions of complete pane unknown.

2 x fragments dark grey high-fired floor tile, 14mm thick both incomplete, original dimensions of tile unknown.

3 x fragments animal bone.

1 piece lead strip 85mm long, 35mm wide, 2mm thick.

Iron tie bolt 10mm dia with two corroded square-section nuts attached. Perhaps for attaching sections of timberwork either for shelving or within the conservatory superstructure. Total length 307mm.

5 x frags of coarse grained limestone narrow moulding, all incomplete profiles and lengths. All straight edged so not from pond rim but perhaps planting bed edging. All retain hard grey cement on flat (rear) surface indicating they were bonded to another surface. Largest fragment 190mm long, 75mm tall, 85mm deep (front to back).

2 x red clay bricks 200mm long x 85mm wide x 45mm thick. One flat surface and all sides encrusted with mortar indicating they had most likely been set as a surface rather than walling.

1 x bullnose brick with one rounded arris. Body of brick pierced by three rows of holes, two containing 7 holes, the third 6 holes created by extrusion process. 220mm long x 10mm wide x 75mm thick.

Planting bed

82 fragments (weight 6,335 g) of terracotta flower pot of standard flared form with external rounded rims. Some bear fragmentary elements of text which indicate that some were manufactured by Sankey the most prolific makers of such containers during the Victorian and

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Edwardian period. Representing a variety of sizes the smallest c. 45mm at the base up to 104mm and c. 60mm at the rim up to 200mm radius.

6 fragments cast iron. 3 fragments of decorated heating duct grille, all incomplete. 2 frags cast iron bracket? 1 frag waisted (hour glass) shape, circular section, max dia 30mm length 50mm.

1 x copper alloy (most likely brass) domed cross-head screw. 70mm long, 10mm diameter wide at head.

1 x copper alloy (most likely brass) pulley wheel and integral mount. Grooved wheel 18mm wide 40mm dia. Almost certainly from window or roof opening system for ventilation.

8 x fragments green bottle glass including one neck fragment with moulded lip to rim.

3 x fragments window glass finely ribbed on one side only. 8mm thick, dimensions of complete pane unknown.

Finds from interior clean-off

1 x zinc plant label retaining pencil name, Ilex Aquafolium (sic). Incomplete, suspension hole missing. Probably modern since it retains the pencil inscription.

A Victorian plunge bath

By Joe Prentice

The discovery of a sunken, tiled plunge bath represents a previously unknown episode in both the social and architectural development of the abbey during the latter years of the nineteenth century. It was discovered during the cutting of a trench for the installation of new services.

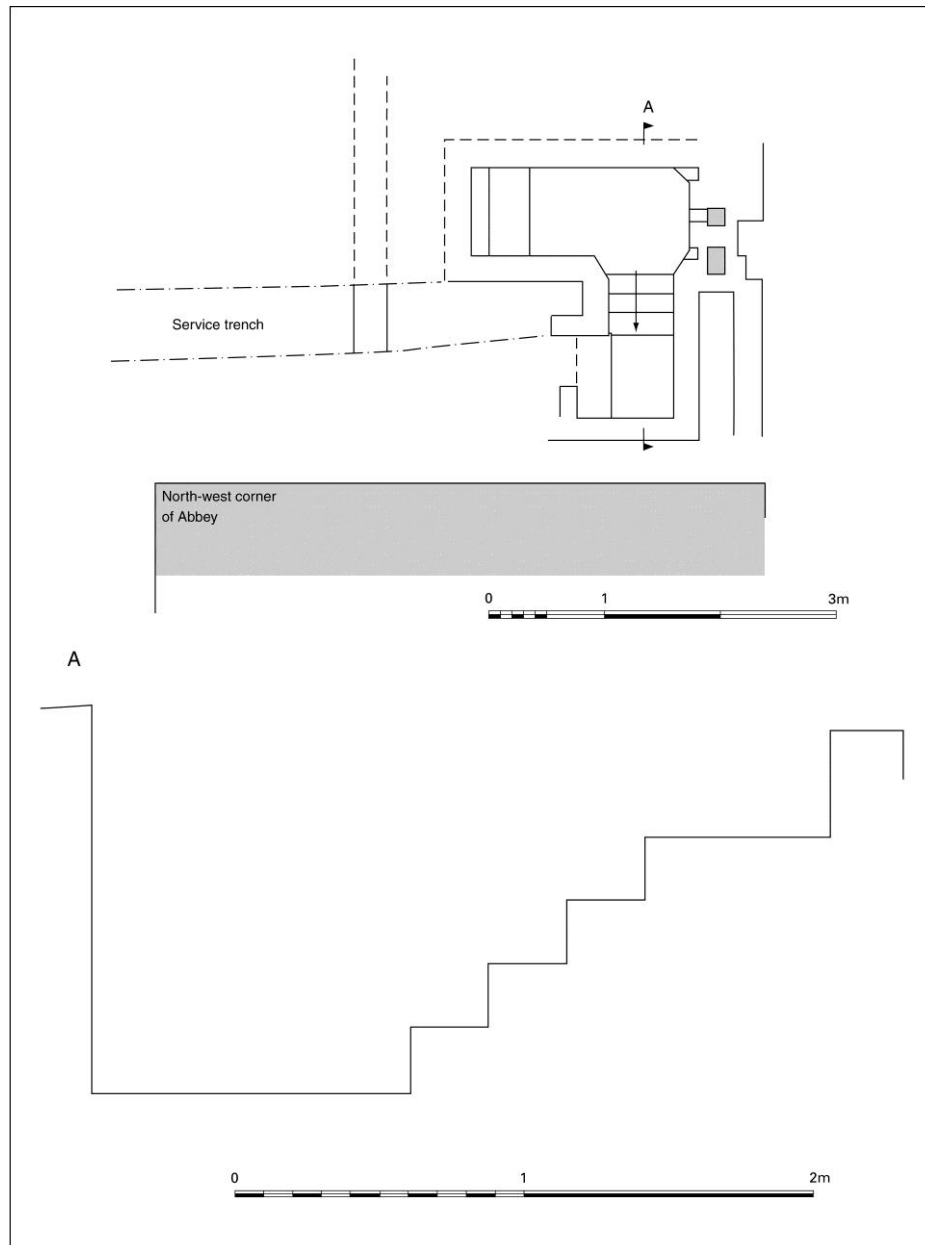


Fig 28: Location, plan and cross-section at A of the plunge bath; north to top (Andy Isham)

The bath is located to the north of the north range close to its west end. Situated outside the main structure, it must, when constructed, have been located within a purpose-built subsidiary building attached to the north wall of the range. Prior to its discovery no indications of it remained above ground in the form of scars in that north wall which might indicate its former height or other dimensions. Below ground a truncated brick wall footing to the west of the bath suggests the

presence of a brick superstructure providing a covered space. The extent of the excavations carried out when the bath was discovered were limited to those areas necessary for the installation of the services being laid and also by the presence of trees located close by. Thus there was not the possibility at that time to extend the trench to uncover other footings which might have provided the full dimensions of the covering bath-house, however, should such opportunities arise in the future the full extent may be revealed. The building is seen on a photo taken before 1901 (Fig 32).

The bath comprises a brick lined structure c2.5m east-west and c2.5m wide from north-south with a connected flight of steps on the south side closest to the north range.



Fig 29: The plunge bath, looking south. Abbey north range to top; 1m scale.

The steps were accessed originally from the west and descended towards the east where at a quarter landing they turned north to provide access into the bath itself. The original floor height of the room which surrounded the bath is not known since all evidence had been removed at the time of its infilling but the present ground level and the internal floor levels of the north range suggest that there may only have been one other full step above that which now remains. If that step was the same height of the surviving treads the floor level would most likely have been situated c300mm above the topmost surviving remains. It is assumed that the floor area around the original bath was paved with smoothly dressed York stone paving which was used for the treads of the steps rather than the pale creamy-yellow ceramic tiles which lined the sides on the feature. Stone, although just as cold, would have provided better grip than the tiles which is, no doubt, why it was used for the steps. Those steps are plainly finished having simple rounded profiles to the nosing and all of the risers are tiled.

At the bottom of the steps the east and west corners of the side walls are slightly canted so that the corners of the main bath present less sharp corners. The east end of the bath housed the taps and

water outlet, both missing at the time of discovery although the former locations could be seen as either an empty socket or in the form of an infilled patch.



Fig 30: The former tap and drain locations in the east wall of the bath, looking east, 1m scale.

It seems that the water inlet spout was located in the centre of the east wall where there was a roughly rectangular section of tiling missing. That void in the tiling led to a concealed space to the rear of the east wall of the bath and presumably contained the necessary pipe work for the water supply. None of the pipe work remained at the time of discovery. Two empty sockets located at the tops of either of the canted corners may indicate the positions of the hot and cold taps. The tiling beneath the empty socket on the south side was encrusted with lime-scale perhaps indicating the hot water tap location.

Located at the base of the east face of the bath, located just above the level of the floor of the bath was a patch of hard grey cement which appears to represent the infilled water outlet. This suggests that the water outlet was not just a simple plug in the floor of the bath but may have been a more sophisticated arrangement which was operated by a mechanism perhaps at the level of the taps rather like some modern sink and bath fittings which are operated by a fitting rather like a piston. It could, however, have been a simple plug but located in the base of the wall, not the floor, to simply prevent the uncomfortable experience of standing on the plug when in the bath.

The main part of the bath is a simple rectangular space lined on all sides with glazed ceramic tile. The west side contains an integral seat made of the same smooth York stone which provides a seat. The west wall of the bath slopes back slightly to provide a more comfortable sitting position.

There were no other fixtures or fittings such as shelves or hand-holds present within the surviving structure. When emptied the infill was mostly brick rubble and soil with no finds which might indicate when the bath was last used.

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The materials used suggest a construction date within the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, a fact confirmed by the depiction of the bath house on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map (see below). This was a period when there was an increased interest in the perceived beneficial effects of plunge baths such as might be experienced at spa centres across the country and Europe.

Bathing was hugely popular in the Roman period, not just for cleanliness, but also as a social activity and for its health-giving benefits. Its use declined in Britain in the years following the end of the Roman occupation and for many people was not widely practised until the eighteenth century, though the widely held belief that people had ‘a bath once a month whether they needed it or not’ is largely based in comedy rather than fact.

During the medieval period bathing was an important part of life for all who could afford the time and money to heat even small quantities of water. Evidence at Cluniac houses (now including Delapré) is beginning to suggest monks and nuns would have considered bathing part of their religious routine. Knights returning from Crusade brought back with them the ideas of bath houses and in 1162 there were eighteen baths-houses in the London district of Southwark alone (Worsley 2011). By the sixteenth century the very rich and royalty could even have hot and cold running water, Henry VIII had ‘two large bronze taps...to bring hot and cold water in’ within one of his palaces. By then rudimentary heating via ‘tile-ovens’ was catching on.

By the eighteenth century the idea that cold bathing was beneficial for health began to take hold and even towards the end of the seventeenth century Sir John Floyer wrote that a cold bath ‘excites the drowsy spirits’. By 1707 it was being written that a cold bath could cure scrofula, rickets and a ‘...general disorder of the whole Codpiece Economy’ if weak libido was an issue. However, hot water was still considered somewhat risky.



Fig 31: A comparative plunge bath conserved amongst Victorian public examples at Buxton Pool Rooms, Derbyshire. Here an invalid chair is lowered in as an aide for the sick to derive benefit from the waters.

Delapre Abbey 2014-19

The great era of purpose-built bathrooms flourished during the nineteenth century with the relatively low cost of staff (they carried the water up and down stairs if plumbing was not present), and the manufacture of large quantities of relatively cheap pipe work and the bath fittings themselves. In 1814 the poet Lord Byron created a heated plunge pool by digging out and sealing the former monastic slype of the former east range of his home at Newstead Abbey, Notts (Coope and Smith 2014, 103-4). He reputedly swam up and down it regularly, occasionally accompanied by animals from his menagerie. However bathrooms were still relatively slow to catch on, even within large and wealthy households. Sir Edwin Luytens built at least two country houses in the early years of the twentieth century which had no purpose-built bathrooms.



Fig 32: A photograph, from before 1901, shows the plunge bath building (arrowed). Note also the Conservatory at far right.

The principal evidence for the form of the building above the Delapr  plunge pool survives in the form of map evidence. The date of the construction of the bath house is uncertain although the 1885 Ordnance Survey map (sheet XLV. SW, surveyed 1883-84) shows a small building present against the north wall of the north range. By the publication of the 1901 Edition that building is gone indicating that it had been demolished and totally removed between 1885 and 1901. It is shown, although to no great effect, on a photograph (above), which also shows the contemporary conservatory.

At this period it was fashionable (if perhaps slightly masochistic) in some social circles to take only cold baths and sleep outside, summer and winter. For the latter, some houses of the period were provided with sleeping balconies which although covered to protect the sleeper from rain, had open sides for the benefit of open-air sleeping. There is no evidence that this was practised at Delapr  and it maybe that the plunge bath was not quite so brutal an experience, especially as it appears to have been provided with both hot and cold water.

It might simply be that the installation of plumbing inside the house was more troublesome and expensive than the construction of a small attached bathroom. It is particularly pertinent that there is no surviving evidence for any bathrooms anywhere within the fabric of the abbey which date to the late nineteenth century, even within the extensively altered and enlarged east range. The only provision must therefore to have been hip-baths in bedrooms or dressing rooms with hot and cold water carried into the rooms and then out again afterwards by staff. For everyday use washstands were almost certainly present in all of the bedrooms.

The provision of the plunge bath in its slightly unusual location may have been eminently practical and have been decided upon since it would not have required the extensive alteration of existing rooms, installation of pipe work and water heaters. These would carry the additional risk of fire from boilers and potential water damage from leaks.

Part of the foundation of the small building above was uncovered. It was evidently of brick, but its overall plan can be seen as a simple square on the 1st edition OS map and it can be glimpsed on the old photograph above. Pottery found within the fill of the plunge bath indicates that it was filled in the 1930s or 1940s. However the building above it may have remained in use during the Second World War as two metal ground-anchors were found adjacent (probably out of a configuration of three or four, together with cut-off steel cable-ends attached to them. They probably relate to a former radio mast mounted on or very close to the plunge-bath building and serving a section of the Royal Corps of Signals serving at Delapré during the war.

The new car park – creation and finds

By Iain Soden

Late in 2017 the area approved for a new car park was monitored in accordance with a strict archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation, set out in line with the fact that the area falls under the designation of the Historic England register of battlefields.

Only 50mm of turf and the barest amount of topsoil was removed after the area had been first metal-detected. This first process of metal-detecting, carried out by Steve Critchley, found only modern rubbish, which was discarded (sweet wrappers, ring-pulls, shredded drinks can fragments, modern low-denomination coins).

Subsequent careful turf-removal was by large tracked excavator under archaeological control, a process which consistently removed only 50-100mm of the surface, principally to strip vegetation and the current growing medium. It was machined by MMK Civils very commendably indeed. Thereafter the entire site was metal-detected a second time, again by Steve Critchley, and a total of 40 finds were retrieved. They are listed below. Care was then taken to ensure that in the process of importing materials to create the composite car park surface, no heavy plant ran on the exposed soil; this to avoid rutting.

No archaeological deposits or horizons below topsoil were exposed and no finds which certainly predate the start of the 19th century were present. Nearby during creation of a new drainage outfall in 2019 further finds confirmed this post-medieval scatter but added a single (residual) Roman brooch (Prentice and Soden 2019). There was no disturbance of medieval or battlefield-related features and no related finds from that period in any of this fieldwork.

To the south of the new car park, the existing car park was refurbished and extended, with new circulation routes. The extension excavated is shown purple on the plan below. This area was found to have been stripped out previously down to natural and infilled, dated by a 1p coin of 1971. It was made up with brick and concrete rubble and ash- and cullet-based waste, the whole being redolent of a site compound. The date 1971 is significant since that was the year in which the former County

Delapre Abbey 2014-19

Architect John Goff renovated the Delapré Abbey stables (Pevsner and Cherry 1990, 353). This is likely to have been the compound for that work.

A layout of hand-dug pits for 15 lamp posts was subsequently monitored for provision of management depth data for the whole car park site (L1-L15 in the figure below). Each pit was 900mm-1m deep and c300-400mm in diameter. These produced no further finds but served to indicate a remaining (and varied) soil thickness over natural geology of between 300mm and 1m. However, there was no apparent pattern to the observable depths, probably due to previous agricultural practices and the vagaries of both the previous car park construction and the 1971 works.



Fig 33: Stripping turf for the Car Park under archaeological scrutiny



Fig 34: Steve Critchley metal-detecting the car park for a second time (after the turf strip)



Fig 35: The car park construction mats put down over the turf-less soil

Delapre Abbey 2014-19

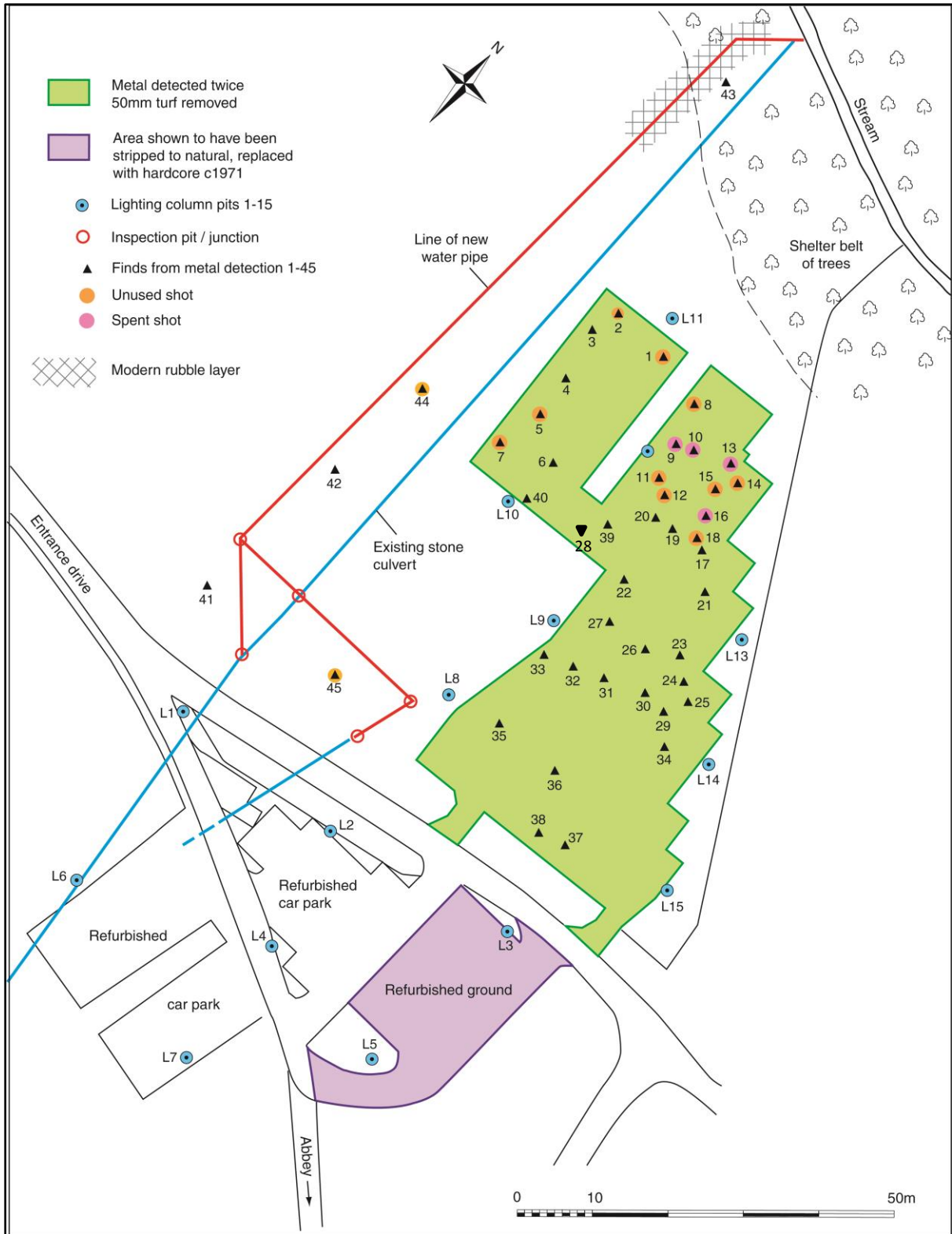


Fig 36: Plan showing extent of car park works, with metal-detected finds [1-40] plotted and lighting column pits L1-L15. Also those finds 41-45 along the 2019 drainage outfall (Andy Isham)

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Finds from metal-detecting on the new car park and drainage outfall

1	Lead musket ball
2	Lead pistol ball
3	Halfpenny Edward VII, 1908
4	Halfpenny George V, 1921
5	Lead pistol ball
6	Amorphous iron fragment
7	Lead pistol ball
8	Lead pistol ball
9	Lead pistol ball (flat, spent)
10	Lead pistol ball (flat, spent)
11	Lead pistol ball
12	Lead pistol ball
13	Lead pistol ball (flat, spent)
14	Lead pistol ball
15	Lead pistol ball
16	Lead (?pistol) ball (flat, spent)
17	Halfpenny Victoria, 1862
18	Lead pistol ball (ill-shapen,?spent)
19	Lead disc/offcut
20	Halfpenny George V, 1921
21 (2 coins found together)	Penny George V, 1912; Halfpenny Edward VII, 1907
22	Halfpenny George V, 1918
23	Halfpenny George V, 1921
24	Halfpenny George V, 1917
25	Lead bullet (19 th century)
26	Farthing Victoria, 1875
27	Farthing Edward VII, 1902
28	?Jetton, worn and clipped
29	Penny George V, 1913
30	Penny, illegible (19 th -20 th century)
31	Penny, Victoria, 1898
32	Halfpenny George V, 1926
33	Halfpenny George V, (date illegible)
34	Penny Victoria, 1867
35 (2 coins found together)	Penny Victoria 1890; halfpenny 1889
36	Halfpenny George V, 1921
37	Penny Victoria, 1875
38	Penny Victoria, 1900
39	Halfpenny Edward VII, 190[-]
40	Bronze pocket-watch key
41	Halfpenny George V, 1914
42	Penny Edward VII, 1906
43	Aucissa type copper alloy Romano-British bow brooch, 50mm length. 1st century AD (residual in modern rubble)
44	Lead musket ball
45	Lead musket ball

Delapre Abbey 2014-19

A small scatter of blue glass fragments from a reticulated glass 'clay pigeon' (originally about the size of a large apple), was found at the centre of the site, and it is tempting to see the numbers of pistol balls, whether unused or spent, as representing casual target practice at such a water-filled vessel, as a leisure pursuit, as much as shooting vermin, which was considered more part of country-house estate management. Muzzle-loading muskets and pistols remained in use in large numbers all the way through the 19th century.

The coins represent a period (in terms of their minting) 1862-1926. They probably represent two to three generations of very occasional casual losses, by people from the abbey, the adjacent farm, or wandering visitors from the town. None is significant except that they serve to show that battlefield deposits, if they exist hereabouts, have not been impacted by the works. The consistently low denominations present may suggest that some are losses by children.

Part B

Building observations and structural analysis within the abbey

The scope of records

This part of the current report presents those areas in which records were sufficiently extensive for the results to be presented meaningfully on the page. That is not to relegate results elsewhere to a level without meaning, but it recognises that some records remain in archive since they are insufficiently extensive or intensive to show any link to adjacent areas or the origins or development of a room, its subdivision, its opening-out or the various uses to which it might have been put. Thus its significance might remain largely unrealised for the time-being, until such a time in the future as similar or more extensive interventions are required once more.

The majority of the building was unaffected by modern interventions – and received comparatively little or no attention, but as a result will be available for examination in the future should the need or opportunity arise.

The text of this section comprises descriptions of observations made 2015-16 by as many as three archaeologists on site at one time. Room numbers are those given on the architect's plans and in use throughout the works of conservation. Where two or more rooms were given the same numbers, subsidiary numbering has been allocated in this text to distinguish the separate rooms; these are given in brackets.

Access to sub-floor spaces was often not possible due to space constraints but where areas of particular interest were seen or suspected help was afforded by the contractors whenever possible. Special thanks are extended to the staff of Hawkes Construction, in particular Crawford, Scott and Dan whose unfailing enthusiasm, interest and help were on offer throughout the project. Thanks are also extended to the many other workmen and women on the project who we did not get to know by name.

The existing accepted development of the abbey is that published by the former Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (Heward and Taylor 1996, 166-70). That is followed here as the basis of understanding, against which to compare new evidence and data.

The following plans show the upstanding parts of the abbey investigated and analysed, floor by floor, with room numbers. This is to facilitate the reader's orientation in the pages which follow. There is no second-floor plan shown here, since no interior records at that level were sufficiently extensive to present here.

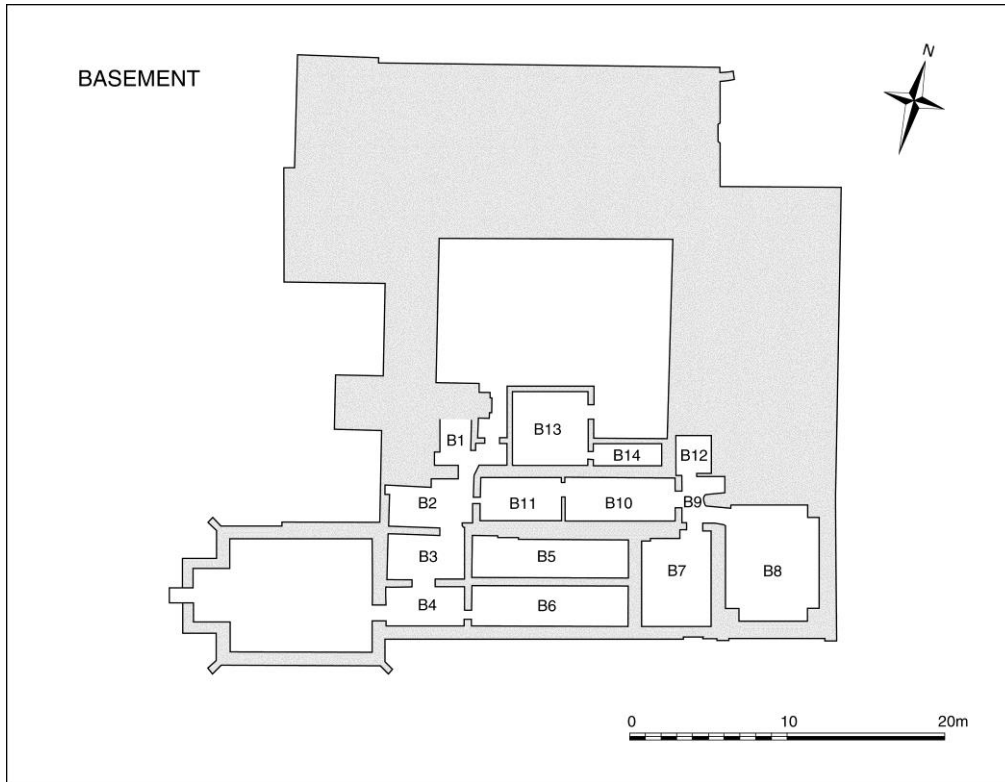


Fig 37: Plan of the Abbey Basements (South Range) with room numbering (Andy Isham)

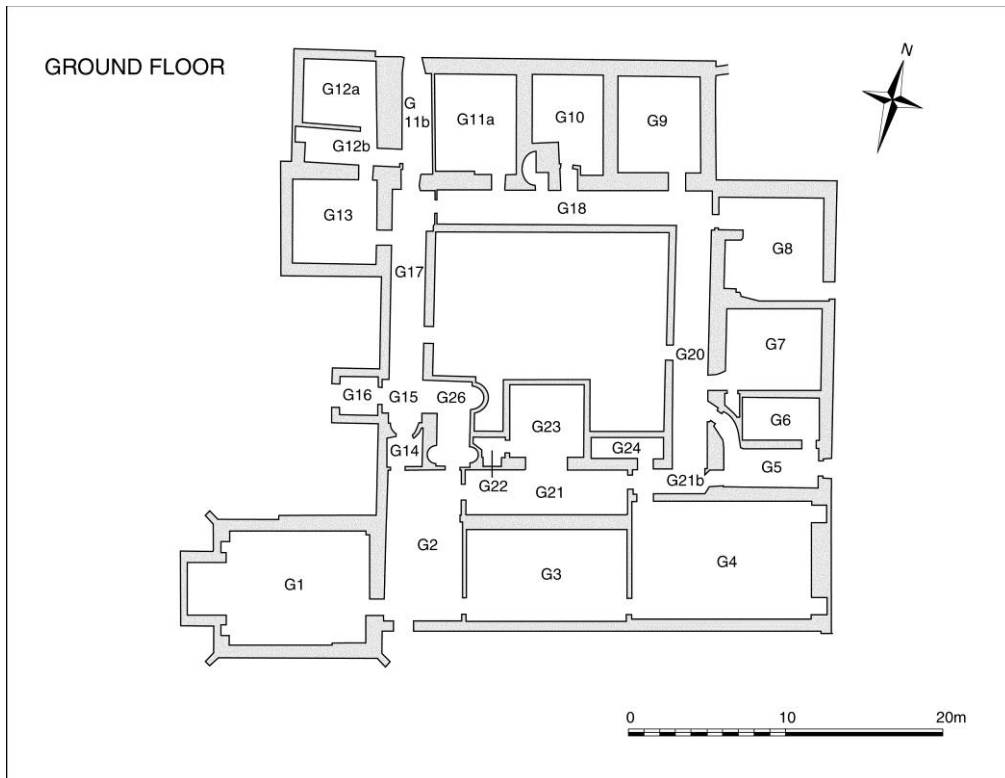


Fig 38: Plan of the Abbey Ground Floor (West, North and East Ranges) with South Range raised Ground Floor (Andy Isham)

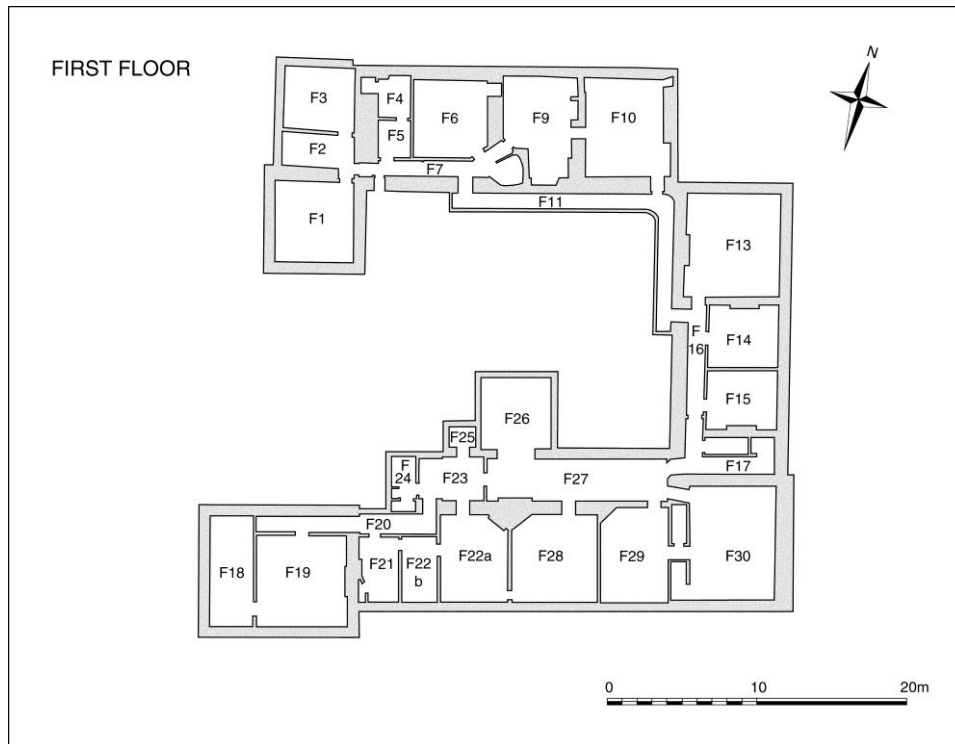


Fig 39: Plan of the Abbey First Floor West, North and East Ranges with South Range raised First Floor (Andy Isham)

The North Range

North Range, Ground floor rooms

A test pit in 2014 in room G7 (just inside the north door) showed that the stone flagged floor was largely Victorian and that it rested upon dry friable sandy material at least 500mm thick (Soden 2014). Ground reductions for a new lift shaft adjacent disturbed no previously undisturbed ground. That area is believed to be the interior of the medieval nunnery church.

In the corridor along the north range, cosmetic works to the stone of an already-notable (in received-wisdom) 16th-century doorway to Room G11a showed that many paint and plaster applications had covered some fine detailing. This was now stripped of modern paints using a poultice and the fine detailing of fifteen tiny arches in a running blind arcade were fully exposed.

In a reassessment of this doorway, it is proposed that the doorway is monastic (offering direct access from cloister to church nave) and dates from the late 15th century or just possibly the early 16th (Glyn Coppack, pers comm). The row of tiny blind arches may represent either the number of prayers given to the popular Saint Bridget or the number of beads on a standard rosary (although 'standard' is a relative term). The prayers of St Bridget mulled over the wounds of Christ (of which there are traditionally five). Liturgical multiples of that number are common.

Regardless of the strength and potential veracity of the identification, the tiny blind arcade seems to have stood in place of a drip moulding around the door-head. Of particular note however, is the fact

that it was subsequently scoured and plastered over, perhaps because its subject was incompatible with post-Reformation thinking. It also means that there may be more of the monastic church in the standing fabric of the ground and first floor levels of the North Range than has previously been considered.



Fig 40: Fifteen tiny blind arches - stone detailing exposed for the first time for many generations in the north 'cloister'. Now believed to be possibly a monastic doorway.

North Range, First floor rooms

Room F3 (4.27m N-S x 4.72m E-W x 2.91m high)

This distinctive room lies at the north-western corner of the abbey, where its entire plan, together with the room below and the gable above, juts out beyond the rest of the north range of the complex. Where access from the interior was possible, there appears to be a girding beam buried so deep within the north and west walls, well behind the skirting boards, that the entire north-western block may be postulated as originally a timber-framed structure, lightly clad in a protruding ironstone skin.

The floor is characterised by a north-south aligned oak axial beam c300mm deep x 220mm across, into which were tenoned two smaller oak timbers on either side, each of c300mm x 100mm. Into these were tenoned the oak joists in two pairs, one for the floor and one for the ceiling below, each c100mm square in section. There is a selection of carpenter's marks I-III in sequence.

Where the framing joins the wall between F3 and F2, the adjacent 17th-century stairs, here too there is clearly a timber frame. Everywhere that a view could be had of the north, south and west walls, however constrained, the space between the framing was filled with neat brick-nogging, forming an inner wall independent of the unremitting stone exterior.

Only the exceptionally thick east wall was entirely of stone. This wall is probably the thickest in the complex, and is believed to be a vestige of the medieval church west gable wall.

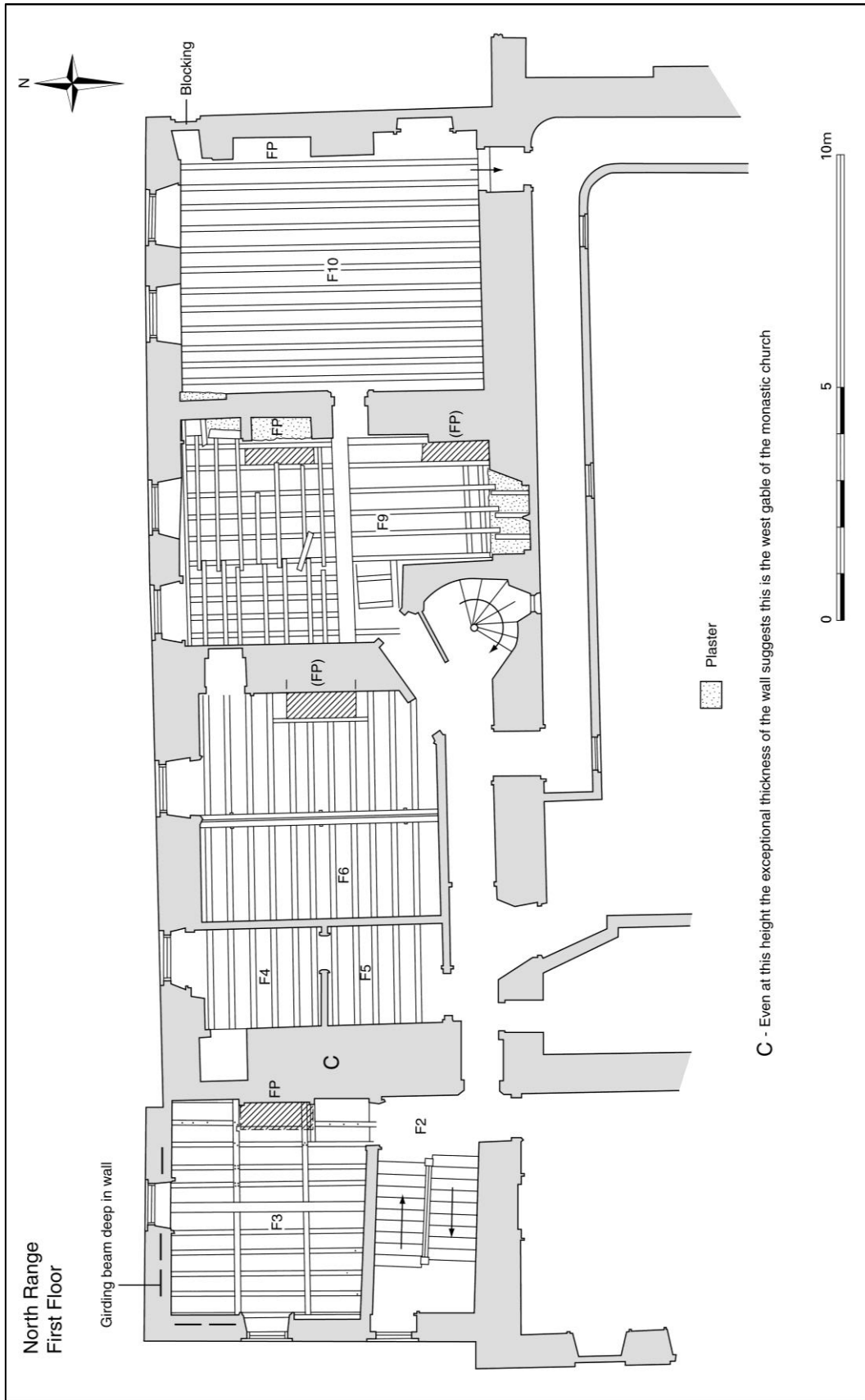


Fig 41: plan of first floor of north range with floor framing (Andy Isham).



Fig 42: F3 The full sequence, hessian peeled back;
Scale 1m



Fig 44: F3 – 19th-century wallpaper on hessian



Fig 43: F3 surviving rail/muntin junction



Fig 45: F3 The full sequence complete.

The walls of F3 were originally panelled throughout, but of which only a few rails and muntins survived. Between these vestiges had been erected vertical softwood planking, with a hessian-type fabric stretched over it. Over this fabric had been stretched wallpapers. A white marble and wooden fireplace in the east wall is distinctively 18th-19th-century in origin with egg and dart decoration and an overmantel for a picture, an assembly which in plan notably does not respect the framing of the floor. A chair rail, a picture rail and skirting board, all of which match the fireplace, respect the planking. It is likely therefore that the room-sequence for F3 is:

17th-century – Secondary timber framed end to North range constructed, with interior oak panelling. Contemporary floor framing.

18th century - Insertion of fireplace, walls possibly nogged in brick at the same time. Old panelling retained.

19th century – Panelling replaced by planking and fabric with wallpaper. Current fireplace surround, skirting, chair rail and picture rail added.

20th century – fitted out with white-goods and retained as a kitchenette for the last Miss Bouverie during the Second World War. Wallpaper painted over.

Rooms F4, F5 and F6.

Rooms F4 and F5 were relatively recent subdivisions out of F6 for which records are presented as a whole. The floor arrangement continued under the adjacent corridor to the inner wall of the range.

The room's floor framing was supported upon a pair of axial softwood beams measuring c125mm square and bolted together, an assembly which is typical of the 19th century, indicating that the earliest floor of this room is itself a replacement. The joists socketed into them are at 450mm centres, a relatively wide spacing.

The floor joists are trimmed at the east wall by the frame support for a former fireplace. Most of the ceiling of the room below had been replaced in recent decades.



Fig 46: Looking North-West across F6 (F4 and F5 removed)

Rooms F8, F9

In this room were noted assorted re-used joists at irregular centres with an average of 450mm. The joists mainly 130mm x 80mm, made of oak. The 300mm-square oak axial beam is aligned east west – and is probably the only 16th/17th-century survivor at this first-floor level. New timber (pine) had been laid on top of existing oak 125mm x 100mm deep joists (at wide 500mm centres) to correct sagging of the principal and secondary floor supports in order to provide a level or almost level surface once the existing floorboards were replaced.

An envelope addressed to a member of the Royal Corps of Signals found beneath the floorboards indicates that this room was used by the army during the Second World War, although in what capacity is not known.



Fig 47: Room F9 looking east into F10. Note the cobbled-together panelling infilling a former fireplace left of centre



Fig 48: Room F9, discovering a hidden fireplace in the south east corner of the room; note the angled flue to top left

Room F10

Panelled throughout, there was only restricted opportunity to record in this room, which was mostly used to store the stacked floorboards from the other rooms of the North Range first floor. Glimpses of the floor joists at the north wall showed that the floor probably had a principal axial beam continuing the line of that in F9. The joists were 100mm across x 125mm deep (reversing that noted in F9). All of the walls are panelled in 17th-century panelling, although much of it has been cut down so does not derive from this room originally. In the east wall lies a stone-fireplace surround, later reduced in size using brick and an iron support strap (19th century), but which lies behind panelling. It was finally blocked in the mid- 20th-century using Fletton bricks. A panelled cupboard 'hidden' within the panelling to one side is actually a small blocked window which can be seen in the corner of the east range.



Fig 49: The reduced and blocked 17th-century fireplace in the east wall of F10; scale 1m



Fig 50: East end of the north range. Note at right the small blocked window which once opened into F10 next to the fireplace

The East Range

By comparison with the North and South Ranges, works to the East Range were relatively minor. Where they were most intensive, they revealed glimpses of the sequence, mostly subsumed in previous works which had (among other things) made good after a late 19th-century fire in the building. Little evidence of the original range was forthcoming, except to indicate that the original post-Dissolution wing was (like its counterparts) of two storeys.



Fig 51: The majority of the East Range's east face, in a view briefly opened up by the archaeological excavations and then only possible after the scaffold cradle had been taken down. Note the added top floor in brick. The interior location of a gable kneeler (illustrated below) is arrowed. Supposed medieval doorway below.

Rooms G5, G6 and G7

At ground floor level, works to the east range were concentrated on the insertion of new WCs for the abbey. This involved new services being taken into rooms G5, G6 and G7, in which floors were taken up and reduced.

This work exposed natural geology almost straight away and showed that no archaeological deposits were present.



Fig 52: Floor reduction in G5; the curved corridor (looking north) shown to be an adaptation of a more angular access, linking G5 through G6 and into G7, the changes covered by render; scale 1m



Fig 53: Floor reduction to natural geology and old services in Room G7, looking east to the outer wall. No earlier levels had survived; scale 1m

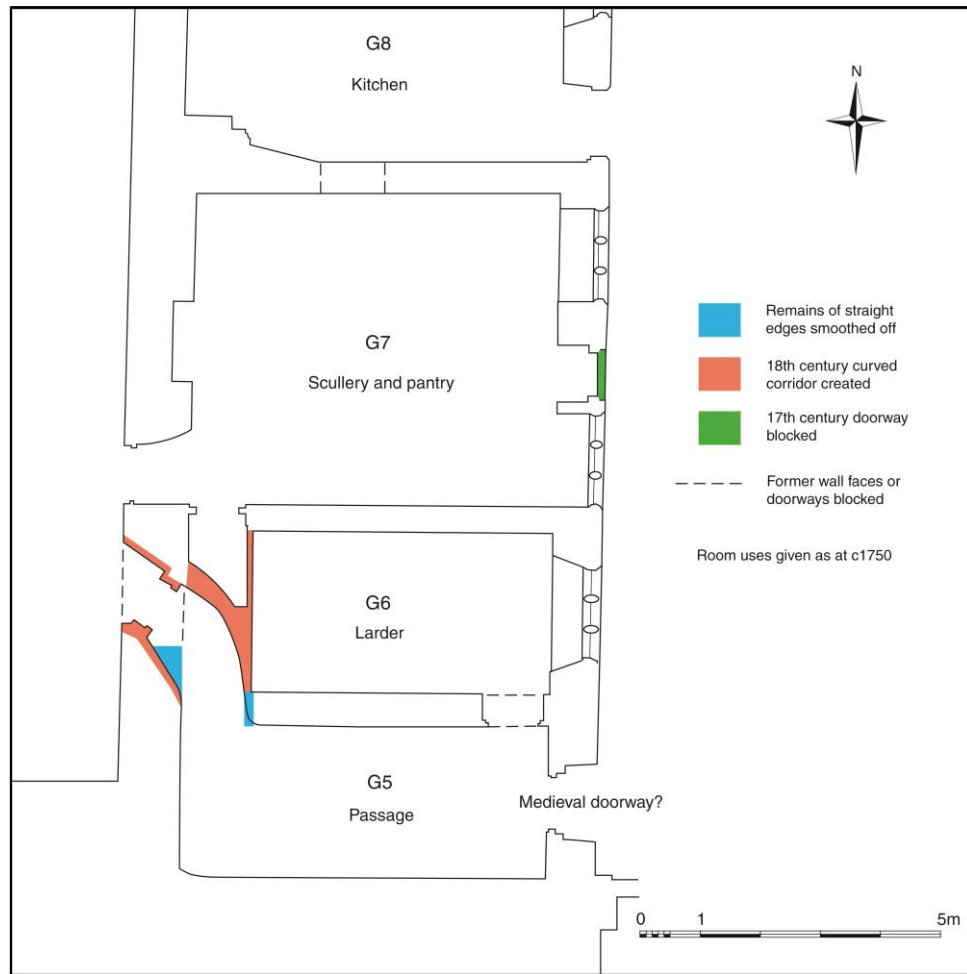


Fig 54: Plan of G5, G6 and G7 with excavated sequence (Andy Isham)

In only one place works showed that the curving corridor from G5 into the east 'cloister' G20, was an insertion (depicted for the first time in c1755 in a plan in Northamptonshire Record Office (Map 1179B) and printed in Heward and Taylor (1996, 169), where possibly there had formerly existed none, and where there had previously been through-access from G5 to G6 to G7. The very top of the deliberate and delicately-curving single-storey wall could be seen in plan between the joists of the corridor floor above (F16).

If the 17th-century East Range supplanted a monastic predecessor, then such a range would (traditionally) have contained Chapter House, Slype (a room or passage largely of indeterminate use), possibly a warming room and possibly a kitchen. However, no pre-17th-century evidence survives except for the best-known piece of (supposedly) medieval masonry in the complex, the exterior doorway in the east wall of G5. There is nothing in its size or configuration to suggest what type of room it originally served.

While most of this doorway is in fact a later, plain approximation within a distinctively round-headed Romanesque-style arch (with possible stone drip-moulding faced off), the new work uncovered the base of both jambs for the first time. One was decayed, but the southern example contained an *in-situ* clustered roll-moulding indicative of a 12th-13th century date. Although it has long been the best candidate for (upstanding) earlier medieval stonework, it is not certain that it is entirely *in situ*.



Fig 55: Supposedly medieval in origin, no new evidence was uncovered to support assertions as to the east doorway's 12th-13th-century monastic origin; scale 1m



Fig 56: Base of the southern jamb to the eastern doorway, with medieval roll-moulding. This is the best evidence for a late Romanesque/Early English origin. No counterpart survived on the north side; Scale 1m



Fig 57: In-situ kneeler low in the east corner of the south wall of room S9; scale 1m. Its presence shows that the original junction of lower (first floor) eaves in the east and south ranges in the early 17th century onwards must have been configured in a separate gable. The addition of a second floor in brick covered this up.

A scaffold cradle afforded the opportunity to look closely at the inward, courtyard-facing wall. Here a pair of deeply-set first-floor lunettes mounted high in the wall let light into a corridor (F16). This offered privacy to (and from) the occupants coming and going from bedrooms F14 and F15. As east-facing rooms (subject to early-morning natural light) these were probably servants' rooms. The high lunettes were more to light the corridor while denying prying servants a view into the courtyard and the principal stair. At the same time their splays, turned in brick and rendered (in contrast to the background walling stone), were exaggerated in order to maximise the inflow of natural light, essential for early-rising and late-retiring servants.

Although the stonework had been well made-good when the lunettes were put in, there remained the vestiges of earlier, lower-set windows in that inner face, which date probably from the first half of the 17th century, when the range comprised only a ground floor and a first floor. Within the stonework can be made out the sills and at least one jamb (with brick blocking) of a pair of windows, which date from a period when there was no thought of separating off corridors - and facilitating lighting but denying views. At that time F16 did not exist and F14 and F15 may have been one room. It is possible that a third and even fourth such former window may lie behind plaster and which formerly lit room F13 on its west side, where there is now a corridor (F11). The former windows lay approximately 600mm lower than the sills of the lunettes.

It remains unclear how much of the previous alterations seen during these works date from the 18th-century re-ordering of the East Range, when the top floor was added in brick and stone, and how much can be laid at the door of making-good after a fire in 1893. Not enough of the interiors were stripped out in the present works to be absolutely sure.



Fig 58: Two courtyard-facing lunettes replaced earlier stone-mullioned windows (dashed), view looking north-east; Scale 1m



Fig 59: Another, more oblique view of the more southerly of the two lost window locations (dashed), view looking east; scale 1m

The South Range

On casual inspection the South Range appears to present the most coherent face of a single build of the mid-18th century. However, this is a fallacy and the range does in fact contain elements of previous phases, which were exposed during the 2014-17 works, however briefly.

The eastern gable

After 1854 (when a George Clarke drawing shows a huge gap between the range and the orangery already existed) a set of clasping brick arches was added to the existing east face of the south range, since that range, long-since itself redeveloped in the 18th century, was probably becoming structurally-suspect. The old gable end on its west, increased in height from two to three storeys – and then with the interiors (as we shall see) re-ordered back to two, now teetered above a new brick-turned cellar, freshly fitted out using wine bins of Staffordshire blue engineering bricks (not present before the mid- 19th century). On its east side lay a site which lay open, over which was laid a new conservatory over a deep and sinuous array of heating pipes which served the abbey, the former orangery (then being converted into a billiards room) and the conservatory itself.

Two connecting doorways were created within the southern and northern of the three clasping arches when the former conservatory was added. A matching set of three arches was also added at the same time to the west elevation of the Billiards Room where the southern arch also contained a freshly-cut access doorway, probably as the billiard room was converted from its former guise as an orangery.



Fig 60: Looking west, applied brick buttressing used to add solidity to the old 17th-century gable end when it was increased in height in the 18th century. With 1.6m+ of unstable build-up on this (east) side, and a basement on the far (west) side, stability was paramount. Some remnants of the former stone gable were left where they could be, where build-changes suggest a former window location (dashed); scale 1m.

During part of the recent works, the existing cement render was removed from the entire east elevation of the gable, to be replaced with a conservation-grade lime-mix. This revealed that although the majority of the elevation was built of red brick, parts of the earlier, stone gable remained and had been incorporated within it. Curiously the stonework of the earlier elevation survived in separate 'layers' both at ground level and towards the top of the applied brick arches with the later brickwork inserted in between. The reason for this is unclear but it seems that the red brick must simply be a skin and the earlier stonework had been left in place (or just chopped back to

a core) where its survival was recognised as being of sufficiently good quality and stability to be left in place.

The gable interior (F30)

At first-floor level the fragmentary remains of a two-, or possibly three-light mullioned window were observed during the same process of render removal, and confirmed behind massive cracking of plaster in the east wall of Room F30. The size and profile of the surviving mullion indicate a seventeenth-century date and at that level the external stonework also survived. This wall was very substantially rebuilt using brick, interlaced (in very typical 18th-century fashion) with courses substituted using lengths of timber (usually oak) for bonding and levelling. This lay at the root of widespread rot and sinkage, with dire cracking of plaster. Without this gradual but substantial degradation, the former gable window might never have been discovered.



Fig 61: East wall of Room F30, with the old stone fabric and window (yellow) made good in brick with lacing timber courses. Hastily opened up and propped in 2016, the collapsing wall was substantially rebuilt from the inside; scale 1m.

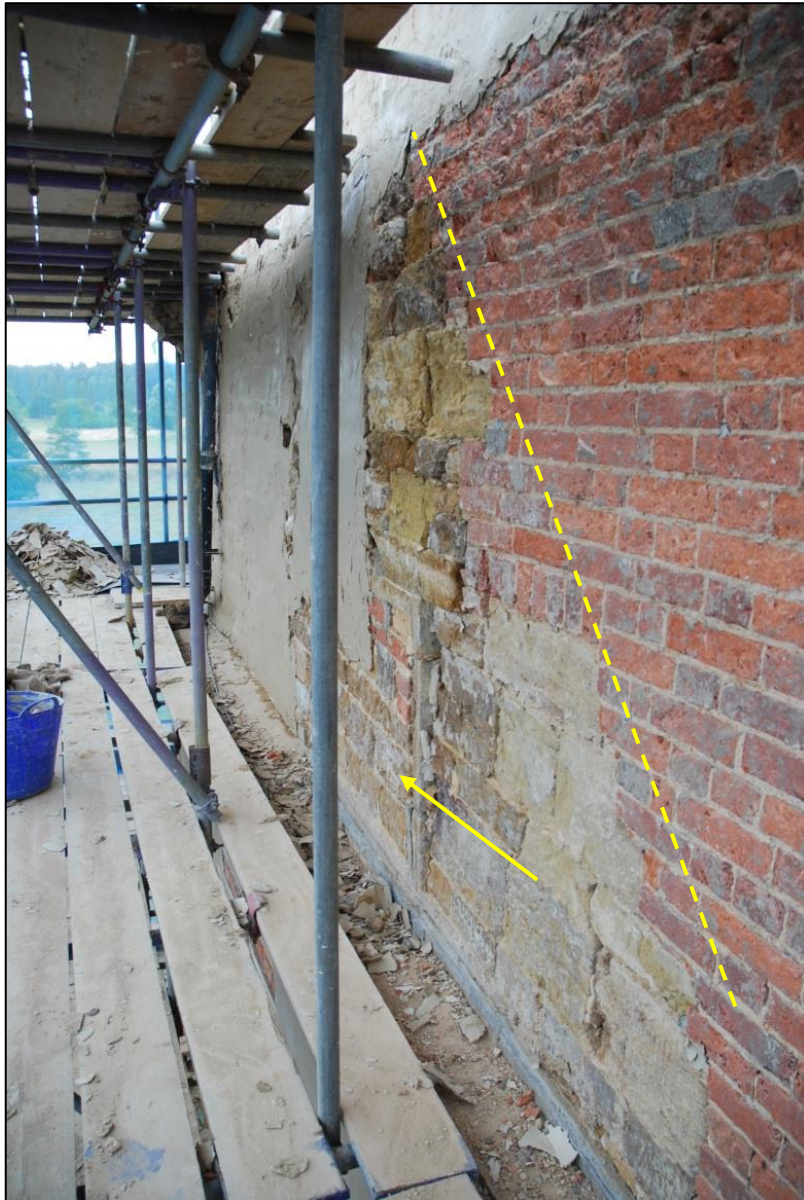


Fig 62: First floor blocked stone-mullioned window (arrowed) formerly looking east from Room F30. It looked out over the open site which would become the Victorian conservatory. Note the angle of the 17th-century stone gable.

South Range, South external elevation; eighteenth century range

Little of moment was carried out on the exterior of the south face which is of note. However, ground reduction in 2014 and again in 2016 showed that externally the land surface had been considerably raised to create a level approach to the south front, groundworks which must have taken place to marry up with the existing doorways and fenestration which was first set out in the 1750s. This depth was noted up against the range as well as further out where observation of digging for a soakaway noted 1.4m of topsoil.

Delapre Abbey 2014-19

This unusual thickness of topsoil can be traced in many places on the site, but principally it is notable here since its dumping must have been a direct consequence of the new South Range built in the 1750s. In fact this also equates on the interior to the thickness of the entire sub-floor space which characterised the inaccessible 'semi-basement' that formerly existed beneath the drawing room and which was excavated archaeologically as part of the current works.



Fig 63: New services entering high in the basement wall of B5. Here Test pit G2 in 2014 noted 18th century destruction material (17th century fragments) at 1.2-1.5m below the modern ground surface (Soden 2014). Natural ground is 1.8m below the current ground surface.



Fig 64: Digging the South Front soakaway. 1m down and still in 19th-century material, some 5m away from the South Range. Scattered medieval architectural fragments occurred at 1.4m down.

Ground Floor (basements) B5 and B6

Inside the ground floor of the South Range, all of the rooms stood above basements or semi-basements. Along most of the range these cramped spaces had been created as part of the 17th-century layout. Prior to that, a south-range location would be the traditional site of the monastic refectory. Circumstantial evidence may be sought in the excavated area of B5 and B6, but direct finds evidence for the medieval precursor (at least from inside) is generally lacking; as has been seen, pottery evidence outside has been more forthcoming. None of these areas were intended for access, at least from the mid-18th century, but they did mostly become gradually more accessible, especially with the creation of the library and its dedicated basement in the 1820s. Only B5 and B6 remained untouched until 2015.

Careful hand excavation in B5 and B6 (beneath the painted Drawing Room), saw the emptying of both spaces in order to provide a new boiler and plant room for the re-furbished abbey. The features present there lay directly upon or cut into the natural geology and were relatively ephemeral, but clearly relate to a layout in plan which had little to do with the substantial east-west walls which characterise the current foundations of the existing South Range.

A longitudinal ironstone wall which runs down the centre of the range, bisecting B5 and B6, appears to be later than the outer walls and is probably there simply to support the span of the drawing room floor. So too are the end walls (to west and east) which divide off these spaces from the adjacent basements and (until the current works) ensured that they were discrete and inaccessible - except with the floors up. Within B6 was found a short stub of cross-walling, aligned north-south, together with an applied narrow pilaster-cum-buttress. The whole assembly had been cut off at North and South by the 18th century and later longitudinal walls, where the construction trenches could be discerned too.

Within the combined basements lay a number of features that stood on or were cut into the natural ground. These comprised a carefully laid-out arrangement of an ironstone dwarf wall, edging a neatly laid wide shallow platform of thick ceramic floor tiles, all surrounded by a clear pattern of post-holes and related post-settings. It is believed that this arrangement is the last vestige of the foot of a stair which led up to the first floor (when this was a ground floor). While it may be medieval in origin, the only feature which may be dated is an animal burrow adjacent to the tiles (utilising a post-hole) which contained a clay tobacco pipe bowl of c1680-1700. This may be surmised to have been deposited during the life of the assembly since the current range post-dates this by half a century.

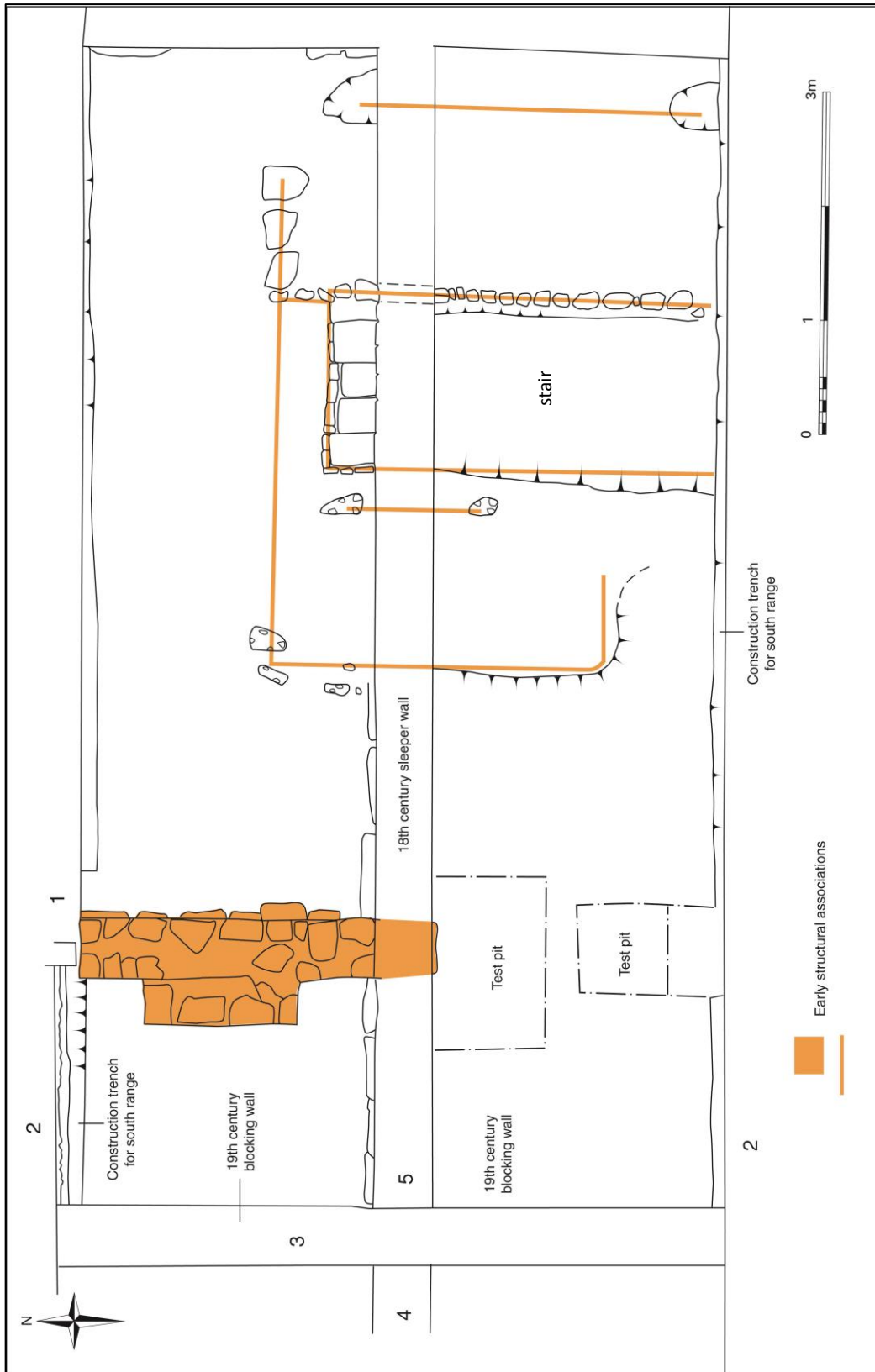


Fig 65: Plan of excavated features in basements B5 and B6 below the Drawing Room. 1-5 are all support -walls for the current South Range, standing since the 1750s. The brown-shaded elements including a butressed wall and a stair base laid on natural geology, probably date from the early 17th century, when this was the ground surface before the levels were raised by some 1.4m (Andy Isham).



Fig 66: B6 excavated. View looking east in B6 showing the neat, carefully-edged tile arrangement (bottom step of the stair) under the 1750s spine wall, a dwarf wall of ironstone beyond, and, in the foreground an animal burrow which contained a clay tobacco pipe bowl of c1680-1700; scale 1m



Fig 67: B5 excavated. View looking east within the emptied B5, during cleaning of the natural ground surface; the spine wall, broken through to link B5 and B6, is to the left. This level was then further reduced by a metre to create the new Plant Room. Sand-staining part-way up the walls marks the former height of removed debris.

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First seen in Test Pits in 2014, and strewn liberally over all areas of these basements was a dense layer, up to 800mm thick, of finely-comminuted and dry debris which had been allowed to accumulate at a time (or times) when the ground floor, and possibly floors above that, had been temporarily absent. Thus it had accumulated when there had been building work, maintenance work, demolition work (and the likes) above. It contained no soils whatsoever, but was composed of a dense but un-bound matrix of sand, dust, mortar, plaster, wood chips, brick and tile fragments, Collyweston-type stone tiles, and ironstone fragments.

Within this immense debris layer, which was evaluated in 2015 and later removed by hand over a number of weeks, were finds which derive from decorative schemes and work-programmes of demolition, construction and alteration which took place between the 17th and the 19th centuries. Since the decorative scheme which survives today in the Drawing Room above is the Victorian painted scheme of the Bouverie family, all of the finds must predate the creation of the painted scheme.



Fig 68: View east in B6, Danny and Will during evaluation of the thick debris-layer, here visible in the background. Buttressed 17th-century wall in the foreground.

While these are the only remains of former decorative schemes from the rooms which lay above, they do indicate the diversity of what once adorned the range, before the surviving 19th-century scheme was put in. For instance they indicate that at least some of the rooms of the early range were probably oak-panelled, since panel-fixings have found their way into the deposit (6f, 6g). So too there seems to have been a widespread scheme of Classically-inspired decorative plasterwork (14a-d), some of which was broken before it was affixed or coloured.

Fragments of marble suggest that such material was in use for perhaps fireplace surrounds (black marble) and decorative statuary (white marble).

Finds from below the Drawing Room (B5 and B6).

These finds, all now in archive, are as follows:

1. Iron bowl. 19th century (B6)
2. Left hob-nailed boot, previously re-soled and re-heeled, approximately size 8, 19th century (B5). Probably placed below the floor as a good-luck charm.
3. One shoe heel, one sole and a leather case/trunk handle from (B5)
4. Wooden bracket formerly for affixing a plaster cornice (B5). Probably 18th century.
5. Length of cord of braided fibrous material with attached leather (B6). Unidentified.
6. Iron fragments:
 - a. Piece of cast iron floor grille (B6)
 - b. Iron sheet fragment (B6)
 - c. Iron spike with retaining bracket, possibly for affixing a pipe to a wall (B6)
 - d. Length of Lead water pipe or tube (B6)
 - e. Iron stay or grille fragment (B5)
 - f. Iron fixing for driving into stone or brick (B5) to affix wall panelling or covering
 - g. Iron fixing with screw for driving into stone or brick (B6) to affix a batten
7. Plain medieval floor tile fragment (B5)
8. Two small fragments of window glass (B6); five further fragments from (B5)
9. Fragment of black marble (B5) and fragment of white statuary marble (illustrated below)



Fig 69: Fragments of marble; scale 10cm

10. Two complete bowls and ten stem fragments of clay tobacco-pipes of 18th-century form (B6); a further four stem fragments and two bowl fragments from (B5) (illustrated below); a broken clay-tobacco pipe bowl from an animal burrow in (B5).



Fig 70 : Two clay tobacco-pipe bowls of late 17th-century / early 18th-century form from basement B5; scales 10cm

11. Two small complete glass phials (B6) (illustrated below)



Fig 71: Glass phials from basement B6, possibly for pigments; scale 10cm

12. Rodent-chewed hazelnut and plum-stone (B6)
13. Base of a shaft-and globe bottle, 18th century (B6)
14. Eight fragments of broken but possibly unused plaster cornice fragments (all B5), comprising:
- One fragment of unidentified fragment of a fluted order on an ogee-profile, perhaps bordering a larger panel or as part of a cornice
 - One fragment consisting of half a flower with six petals
 - One fragment of border with raised repeated dots
 - Five fragments of guilloche



Fig 72: Decorative plasterwork from basement B5; scale 10cm

Further west, under the 1820s Library, it had been known since 2014 that the ground levels had been reduced to natural geology when the Library was constructed. The present works uncovered a brick (drain) conduit, sub-circular in section, which was aligned from the courtyard and then found its way out westward under the centre-line of the library before exiting the abbey, all some 1m below the natural ground level. The library basement floor (natural geology) was reduced further throughout, but no archaeology was present.



Fig 73: The library conduit where it entered from the courtyard's south-west corner, 1m below courtyard level.

Room G14 (New lift in a former cupboard)

Room G14 works on two levels. Firstly it lies behind a curved apse (actually a door) off the entrance porch on the west range, but can be accessed equally from the grandly-appointed Entrance Saloon of the South Range (G2). Here it has most recently assumed the role of a simple cupboard and since it marries up the ground-level entrance on the west and the elevated ground floor of the South Range, it formed an ideal space into which has now been fitted a lift affording access for the disabled. A previous test pit in 2014 (no 8) had established that an un-investigated basement space lay below it, in which the lift-base apparatus could be housed.

The room was formerly the location of a flight of stairs up into the south range.

The space was formerly lit by a west-facing window, so it does in essence go with the west range, rather than the south. However, part of the window was blinded, when the stair was altered to its present configuration. It is likely that the full ground floor 'landing' actually lay within the entrance saloon and rose in that third of the room which is today north of the short 'colonnade'. It may have been blanked off and made redundant when the library was built in the 1820s, but certainly had to be lost when the current Bouverie saloon scheme was created in the later 19th century.



Fig 74: View directly up within G14, showing the underside of the former grand stair into the 1750s South Range when built.



Fig 75: Phases present in G14; note the vertical butt-joint and the curved wooden former creating half an ogee

The first floor

Rooms F18, F19, F21, F22 a-b, F27, F28 and F29

While the conservation of the Victorian painting schemes of the Ground floor precluded any meaningful interventions in the Ground Floor of the South Range, there was more intervention required on the first floor, some of which had far-reaching interpretations for the range before the current set-out.

In Rooms F21, F22, F28 and those above the 1820s Library (F18 and F19), all of the floors (and with them the ceilings below) had been similarly treated. Constructed (or re-laid) in the 19th century, they are characterised by supporting principal beams which comprise pairs of parallel pine baulks bolted together in a fashion characteristic of a time when large suitable oaks were in short supply (many destined for naval construction) and there was a growing reliance (if not trust in) Baltic and North

American pine. The entire range appears to have been so-treated and so probably acquired its present first floor (and ground-floor ceiling) especially for the Bouverie re-painted scheme which survives. It is difficult to see how the designers of the present scheme would rely totally on a supporting scheme which was much older, even from perhaps the 1820s. During the present works, one of the pine pairs (above the library) was found to have failed, and a steel flitch had to be bolted in to prevent the ceiling collapsing.

There was widespread use of battening between joists to provide a sub-floor space on which to lay a plaster layer for the dual purpose of heat and sound insulation.

In addition, in one of the rooms above the 1820s Library (F18) lay the hearthstone of a missing fireplace, deliberately planned into the floor layout. While such a fireplace might easily have vented gases into a flue which would link up with the big chimney from the Library below, it appears not to have been constructed, but instead the space created for a window looking across the main entrance/approach.

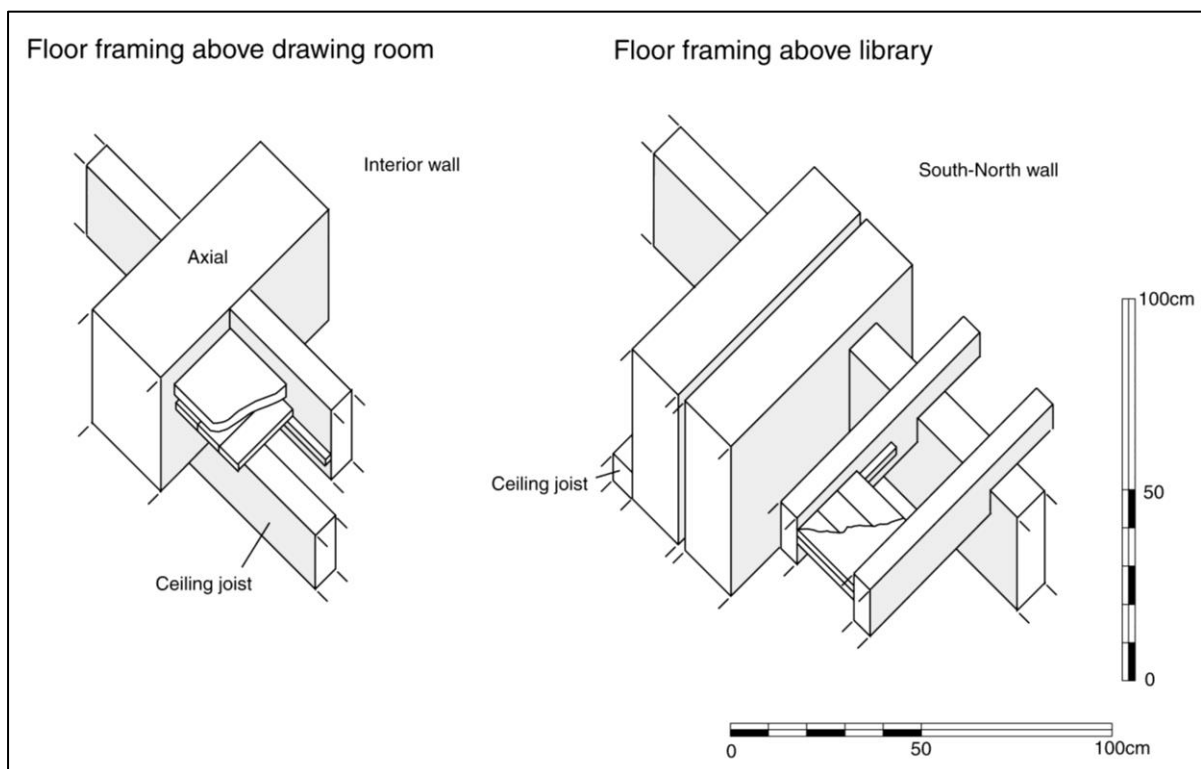


Fig 76: Axonometric cross-sections of the first floor framing of the South Range. Separating ceilings from floors prevented movement and cracking, while the plaster on battens deterred loss of heat and deadened the transfer of noise (Andy Isham).

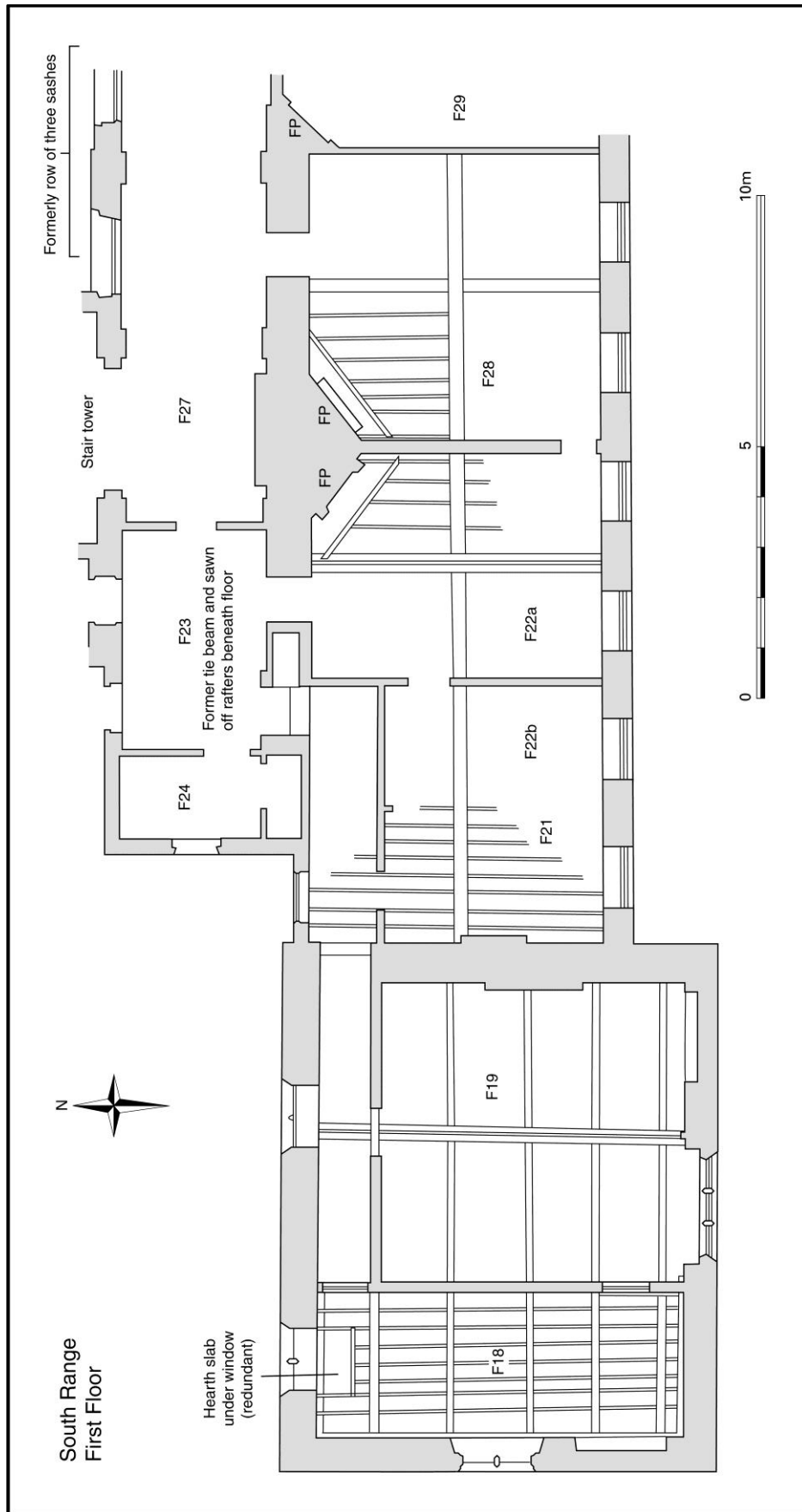


Fig 77: The floor-framing of the South Range First Floor. (Andy Isham)

Rooms F23 and F24.

During installation of new service cabling beneath the floors of these rooms truncated rafters were observed which appear to represent the survival of a former roof, most likely of seventeenth century date. All of the timbers were of oak. The surviving timberwork indicates that the ridge of the roof was aligned east-west, parallel with the long axis of the former south range. The north ends of the truncated timbers had been subsequently built around by modern brickwork.



Fig 78: Sawn off rafter beneath the floor of F23 (arrowed); scale 50cm



Fig 79: Glimpsed row of truncated rafters of a former, probably seventeenth-century, oak roof structure beneath the floor of rooms F23 and F24, looking west under floorboards.

The north end of a principal tie beam with a chamfered end was also seen which appears to indicate the level of the former ceiling of the floor below and probable level of the attic room/s. If this is the case this appears to match the level and disposition of the three levels still present in the north range where the seventeenth-century layout survives.

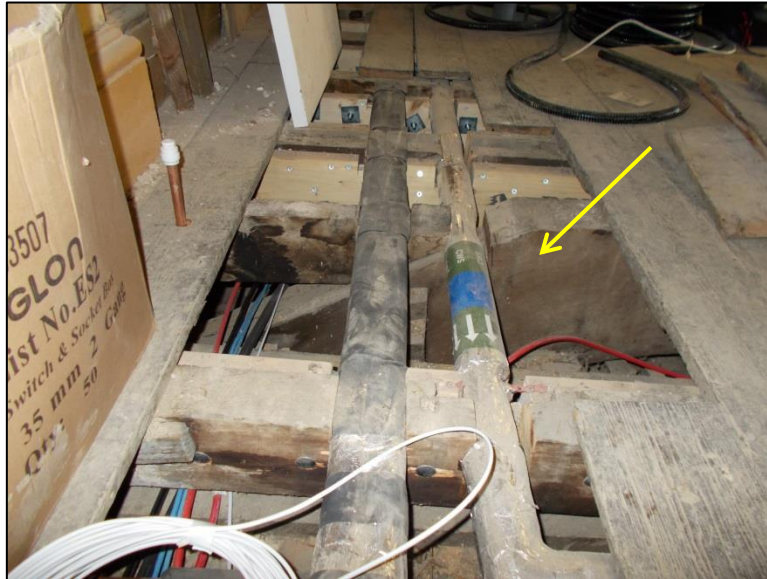


Fig 80: North end of a tie beam hidden below the floor of F23 (arrowed). Its camber (centre-left) matches the angle of the sawn-off rafters.

South Range, North (central courtyard) external elevation

High in this elevation the scaffold access uncovered evidence of the former layout of the top floor of the south range. The corridor F27 seems to have had a row of sash windows, very similar to those which dominate on the south side of the building. Hitherto (ie before the Bouverie layout) there had clearly been a different purpose to this space, which latterly was given only a lunette to admit light from a high angle but restrict views out.



Fig 81: Behind the scaffold cradle lies a row of three former (probably) sash window locations (marked). There is a single replacement lunette (right); scale 1m.

Historic Wallpapers

During the removal for repair of a late nineteenth-century over-door pine pediment a fragment of nineteenth-century wallpaper was observed. The paper retained a pattern in shades of yellow of a floral design.

Similar 19th-century wallpaper fragments were located and photographed in F3 of the North Range (see above). Also slivers of paper, either later 19th century or early 20th century, were found preserved under architraves which were removed.



Fig 82: Nineteenth-century wallpaper behind later timber pediment. Room F27, looking east.



Fig 83: Two wallpaper fragments found under door architraves and photographed before loss.

Coach House

During the creation of two new doorways in the former north wall a fragment of cusped limestone tracery was recovered from the easternmost of the two new doorways (see stonework report, above).

Coach House, Ground floor

When the coach house floor was re-laid, the old sub-floor was scanned by a metal-detector. This retrieved two copper alloy buckles of 17th-century date.

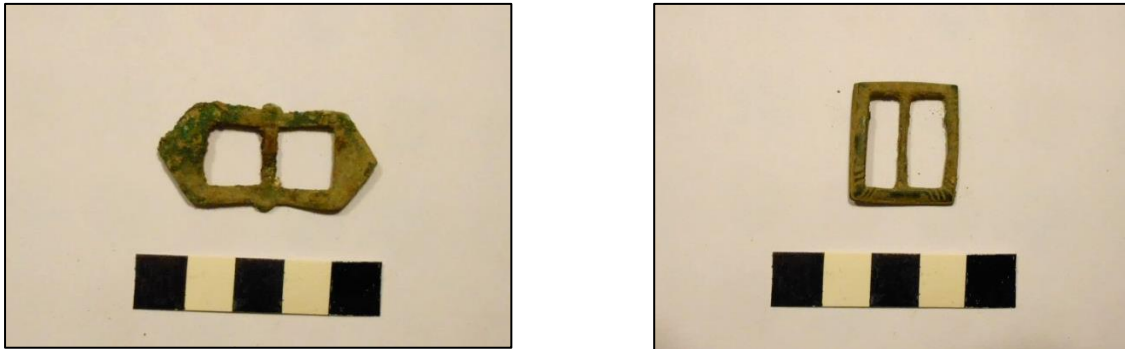


Fig 84: Two 17th-century buckles from below the last (now previous) coach house floor; scale 5cm.

Stable Block, Ground floor

While there was extensive lowering of floors in the stable block, it was in only one room (G59) that any deep disturbance took place. This located an earlier brick floor, beneath which lay an octagonal shaft fragment in Blisworth limestone. This is presented in the excavated stonework catalogue (above).

Discussion and Conclusions – future work

Not everything is, or can be, significant. Archaeology so often records the ordinary and mundane, with only occasional recourse to finds of an exceptional nature. The work above shows that Delapré Abbey contains much that is exceptional, but may not be immediately appreciated. It also shows that the site is in some ways a denuded resource, as is perhaps reflected by the Grade II* standing buildings, but the un-scheduled nature of the site on which they stand.

Roman remains

Despite the vicinity of the Delapré kiln field, Roman remains were not particularly expected. A single possible cremation group may not be of national importance, but its survival does indicate how even in close proximity to a medieval abbey and the town centre, Roman remains survive and have the capacity to surprise. It is another mark on the growing map of Roman Northampton, with the kiln field and a number of villas within a matter of a few miles. Roman interest in the picturesque and fruitful Nene Valley did not stop where Northampton eventually began and more such sites may be

expected within the town, although few are likely to be intact. For the Delapré finds, the presence of a range of likely imported pottery types is notable, when so many local products were available.

Medieval and monastic

The medieval Delapré Abbey has long been at the centre of speculation. This is because, despite a modicum of knowledge about the foundation and the nuns, there has been precious little forthcoming about the buildings of the abbey. Very little archaeological fieldwork has been carried out on the site until now and what Serjeantson began (1909) was augmented by very little, even as late as Heward and Taylor's gazetteer entry (1996). Speculation has centred around a 'standard' monastic plan, as if it were a small (male) Benedictine house or something cast in a tried-and-tested Cistercian mould. Sadly, as one of only three Cluniac nunneries in England (with Arthington, Yorks and Delapré's own daughter house, Swardsley, Northants), there was never going to be much to bear close comparison. Of these, only Arthington has a good Dissolution survey surviving and this tells us little when transposed to Delapré (Brown 1886; many thanks to Dr Glyn Coppack for providing a copy of this).

However, in establishing a possible layout, it is not peculiarities of the Cluniac order which are foremost, but those borne in this case of the gender of the core inhabitants. The comparative poverty of nunneries, as opposed to the far more numerous and better-financed houses of their male counterparts, regardless of the order, is well known. This is related directly to their gender, which was looked upon in a far more restrictive and (to our eyes) shocking way than gender-issues encountered today. Many were little more than repositories for high-class-but-unmarriageable daughters, those for whom a dowry would not be forthcoming, the infirm and the widowed. The interested reader in such matters is referred perhaps to the likes of Lawrence (1984, 176-91) to explain the issues the medieval world had with womanhood and how monasticism responded, largely inadequately.

Suffice to say that nunneries were usually under-endowed with either funds or lands, struggled to assert themselves, even struggled to profess to a monastic order, and always, without exception, needed men to build, to work their lands and precincts, and ultimately to act as priests to perform the sacraments (Brooke 2003, 201-16). Men sent to nunneries did not always go happily, so what we might call paid secondments were accepted, such as corrodians – effectively state-sponsored pensioners, where the destination was stipulated with the pension, or 'corrody'. That state sponsorship left them duty-bound to report back on the life of the establishment as required.

Thus simply-planned nunnery churches are rarely aisled, cloisters rarely glazed, and we surmise that early (often timber) buildings stood for longer, than those of their male counterparts, or perhaps were never replaced in stone. Such a state of affairs was simply due to the relative scarcity of funds. By the later 15th century, even the mighty Cistercian order was in dire financial straits, with England feeding vast funds to Cîteaux and Clairvaux, so it is perhaps no surprise to hear that Delapré had already experienced its own money troubles when in 1303 Bishop Dalderby granted 40 days' indulgence to anyone helping with the rebuilding of the church (Serjeantson 1909, 9). It was also known as the nuns' 'basilica' in 1469 (Edwards et al 2005, 45). The other buildings which may be surmised from sundry references are the refectory, being rebuilt in 1258 (timber being provided), possibly also the refectory in 1245 and the presence of male corrodians' quarters from 1221 (for all of which see Serjeantson 1909, 3-4). It also had male 'house tenants' who would have needed

quarters separable from the Nuns in the mid-late 15th-century (Edwards et al, 2005, 45). There must also have been separate quarters for priests – whether Cluniac monks or secular priests (without whom the nuns could not hold mass –although if any corrodians were professed monks or ordained priests, these might suffice as the celebrands). Brief descriptions of the surrender of the house in the winter of 1538-9 also attest to farm buildings for livestock and crops (of which the commissioners found plenty in store).

The current works, for the first time involving thorough, targeted excavations, have shown that the east and south ranges today contain no surviving monastic work, these horizons having been stripped to natural geology to provide for the 17th-century domestic buildings. Apart from the potential for the more substantial elements of the north range to incorporate parts of the pared-down church, the embittered 1714 statement by Walker in ‘Sufferings of the clergy’ (p91) seems to have been borne out – (Zouche Tate) ‘built on the scite of the nunnery and part of the church; turned other parts of it to prophane uses, particularly the chancel, to a dairy, buttery and other such offices...’

Loss of the monastic plan has been a recurring problem for the post-Dissolution buildings. Tate’s early 17th-century works disturbed many burials. These were followed in 1895 by more disturbances during sewer laying and again in 1940. Two more disturbed to the north of the church attest the fact that Delapré’s graveyards, representing 400 years of burials, are extensive and stretch under the various courtyards to the north and east of the church (north range) and under the gardens beyond. There may also be burials also in the cloister garth, under the cloister alleys and possibly under the Chapter House in the East Range. They are all likely to be denuded, however, and preserved as disparate islands, due to the development and relative success of 400 years of the post-suppression house.

It is the likely future of Delapré Abbey’s graveyards to continue to be occasionally disturbed here and there at the edges, quite likely in connection with varied public use and related upkeep, alteration and repair. It is likely that ongoing public use will continue to militate against fuller understanding of the numerous graveyards which would need all remaining burials to be addressed together in a single planned excavation (if their extent were known), an unlikely exercise not to be undertaken without very good reason and a very great deal of funding.

The single most valuable discovery in the recent excavations has undoubtedly been the excavation of a filled-in medieval undercroft on the site of the new kitchen and related medieval pottery nearby. Far from being a gender-related building (although in this case it is so by association), the distinctive water-holding properties of the basement, in an area of free-draining ironstone (definitely not a damp-related remedy), is to be closely attributed to a general medieval Cluniac approval of bathing, backed up by similar discoveries at the Cluniac properties of Lewes Priory and Bermondsey Abbey. In the absence of a clear surviving claustral core, no one could have sought a structure for excavation which is now increasingly recognised as more mainstream-Cluniac than this. While early monastic ordinances provide generally only for the washing of feet in a clear Christian tradition (such as related in La Corte and McMillan 2004, 99), Cluniacs seem to have taken overall cleanliness as next to godliness, although how much is related to physical hygiene and how much to spiritual cleansing is debatable. With the Cluniac Bermondsey Abbey and Lewes Priory both having bathing provisions not too dissimilar from Delapré, it would be interesting to know whether

comparable features ever stood at Delapré's 'daughter' house of Swardsley (Showsley, near Towcester) or at either of the local male Cluniac counterparts, St Andrew's Priory, Northampton and Daventry Priory. At Delapré there is clearly more of this structure below ground under Abbey Cottage just to the north.

If the proven much-denuded state of the female preserve of the claustral core at Delapré is a cause for discouragement for future archaeologists, then a perfect counter is the discovery of a major western range of buildings beyond the western entrance to the abbey as it now stands. These buildings may be as simple as barns, or livestock sheds, bakehouses or brewhouses, or a combination of them, but their size and excellent state of preservation just below the surface stand in glorious contrast to the denuded state of the medieval core. Future fieldwork directed at these buildings, unencumbered by the later core, would not go amiss in future. Their former existence also shows that after a century of enquiry, we have far from understood how extensive in plan the nunnery actually was. There are open areas beyond (particularly) the western and southern ranges (under deep soils), and the lawned gardens to the east, where carefully-chosen specialist geophysical survey methods could be fruitfully brought to bear, with key, targeted archaeological excavation when time, opportunity and funds permit, provided that the ongoing study of this partly-denuded monastic house fits with the prevailing Research Strategies of the day. Clearly the needs of research, conservation, financial priorities and the direction in which the archaeological profession is travelling will all play a part.

The topography of the site

The topography of the site has been little-understood, with particular emphasis placed upon the ground having been raised beyond the south range in the 18th-century.

It now appears however, that enigmatic changes in ground level are to be seen across the site.

Where the Roman cremation was found, the natural ground was only 300mm below the modern ground surface (62.9m aOD), very similar to where burials lay adjacent to the north range, 25 metres away.

In the north range (G11) a new lift found only disturbed ground down to 800mm, while under the east range the natural ground lay directly beneath the floor (Room G7). On a par with the floors of the east range is the inner courtyard (probably the cloister garth) where there is at least 500mm of post-medieval overburden. In the base of the current stairs, natural was fully exposed directly beneath the 19th-century floor. Clearly there are small, localised terraces on the site about which we know little, not least their date. Some may be filled-in ditches or (more likely) include the main monastic drain, which ought to make its way, fairly directly, to the river.

A pertinent example of the detail of this is that while the floor-level of the abbey's entrance porch lies at 63.41m above OD, the natural ground just east of the newly-found outer West Range lies at 61.75m (its stone floor lay at 62.02m, the walls surviving as high as 62.42m). This might suggest that the porch might stand on some 1.66m of 'made ground' (regardless of date).

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It was notable however that on inspection it could be seen that the main walls of the newly-found west range lay on only about 100mm of compressed soils on top of natural gravels. The floors raised the interior slightly, but on the east side of the range the soils which stretched towards the abbey, totalling 1.1m in depth, were accumulated through the medieval period (but not beyond). However, if the newly-discovered west range was not to appear as a ruinous eyesore directly outside the monumental west porch of the Tates' home, then the range would have to have been lost from view well within a century of the Dissolution. To the west of (ie outside) this range, excavation showed that deep soils continue, in places 1.4m down and contain just as much dumped medieval material, but an absence of anything later.

The natural ground in the basement of the South Range lay at 62.96m, while outside in a test pit adjacent to the Drawing Room the natural geology lay c1.8m down, at approximately 62.8m, beneath 400mm of archaeological deposits.

All in all, the levels, although separated in most cases by many metres, suggest that a high degree of levelling, build-up or terracing has taken place, be it during the medieval period, post-Dissolution or in the 18th-century (depending upon which area). Together they have made for a site of very unpredictable survival, but wherever tested, the natural ground as it has come down to us seems to have once been relatively flat, undulating only slightly at 62.8m – 63.0m. While some variation might be expected in this, it does seem that medieval remains, where they lie under the immediate four-square cloister, only survive as foundations or deeper features cut into that natural ground. Otherwise they seem to have been obliterated by later building. Future archaeologists at the site would perhaps do well to target areas of known medieval buildings (the new west range, apparently intact) or soil build-up (around the west range, under the conservatory and billiard room, the south lawn, east lawns, central courtyard). There they are likely to find buildings related to the abbey estates, burials and outer courts, largely male domains of farming, brewing, baking, stabling, and heavy work which is common to all monastic establishments. Elsewhere, although enlivened in discrete islands by (probably truncated) cut features or redeemed by the occasional total surprise such as a bath-house, they are likely to encounter, in the female-dominated abbey core, a much-denuded medieval horizon.

Although the 1536 Act which led to the Dissolution of the smaller monasteries called for the stripping and desecration of monastic churches, it went on to encourage.... *'all singular persons, bodies politic and corporate, to whom any site or precinct with the houses thereon builded...shall be bounden by the authority of this act...to keep or cause to be kept an honest, continual house and household in the same site or precinct.'* Clearly, while this may have been adhered to initially, a generation or so later, with decades of violent recusancy and religious struggle forming a backdrop, most sensitivity was dropped. *They were influenced by site, orientation, plan and provision of the institution that went before...* (Howard in Gaimster and Gilchrist 2003, 227). At Delapré the lack of continuity in the claustral core is balanced by the apparently excellent state of the outer court western buildings just discovered, a survival which may be just as much a happenstance product of the topography as the destruction of the core.

The post-Dissolution country house

The rationale behind the building recording of the current works has already been explained. The data retrieved has been disparate in its origins and mostly without links, since the investigations

have not viewed a continuous sweep of the house but rather a sondage here, and a cut-out there. The data has been detailed but is largely valuable only as repeated glimpses for future management, or waiting for complementary rooms, floors and wings to receive similar or more intensive treatment, such as was used to great effect at Combe Abbey, Warwickshire where 106 interiors were recorded (Soden 2006).

Thus there is a great element of local reconstruction from small keyholes, such as (for instance) the first floor framing of the south range. The opening-up has told us much, but new overall views have not generally been forthcoming which might allow for Heward and Taylor's phasing to be modified. One noteworthy exception has been Room F3 where the extent of opening up the floor and the north wall has promoted the hypothesis that this whole corner block may hide a timber frame beneath its skin. Certainly a girding beam is so deeply embedded on both north and west, with brick noggin at the back of all décor, where seen, that some form of box framing is possible. It would explain why this corner block protrudes beyond the north face of the range, a necessary protrusion to accommodate a stone skin to acquire long-term weather-proofing and achieve uniformity.

Therefore while the work might have benefited greatly from wholesale replacement of floorboards (revealing the inter-joint spaces with potentially centuries of clean, dry, dessicated detritus), new piping and cabling was put in through keyholes. Similarly, almost no carpenters' marks were exposed since, with the exception of two thirds of the north range, first floor, so little of the sub-floor framing was opened up. Likewise, 95% of plaster stayed on the walls. However, all these areas remain for the future.

The 20th-century institutions which preserved the house through turbulent times, such as army requisitioning and the Northamptonshire Record Office ensured that institutional wallpaper strippers and broad paintbrushes swept away most of the gaiety and high-quality décor to which even the more financially embarrassed members of the minor aristocracy once aspired. Glimpses of Victorian wallpapers and fragments of ornate plaster cornices are all that remain, except for the sumptuously-painted ground floor rooms of the Bouveries' south range.

The house patiently awaits a programme of detailed recording at such a time as all remaining floorboards are taken up and sub-floor searches carried out, range by range, floor by floor and room by room. The rewards are likely to be commensurate with the ambitious scale of such an intervention.

The survival of the layout of the Victorian conservatory was surprising, since one might expect such buildings to be as flimsy as their covering. However, 'permanent' deep planting beds in brick, an elaborate heating system linked to the house, and a set of deep foundations ensured that its survival was ensured. It also has potentially entombed a medieval horizon beneath, which will have survived the latest building at that location, a visitor café. As a conservatory, it fits squarely in the Victorian tradition, part of an elaborate dance of societal etiquette and gender segregation, sandwiched between dinner and billiards.

A Victorian plunge bath speaks eloquently of a health-fad as compelling as any modern fitness regime. No doubt its construction destroyed earlier archaeology, and it is difficult to see the bathing extending much beyond, perhaps, the First World War. Certainly it was filled in not all that long after, probably in the 1940s, and the building which stood over it demolished soon after that.

Whether it was the pursuit of one person, or extended to the whole family of owners or tenants is unknown, but fed with hot and cold water, it might well have drawn envious looks in its heyday. Excavation did not extend to examine its water supply or indeed its drainage, the latter probably disturbingly deep in such a sensitive historical site. It is an irony that the builders of the plunge bath had no idea that their home had once supported a rare medieval bath-house for the Cluniac nuns who lived there. There is also a considerable gulf between the monastic thinking behind one and the aristocratic concept of the other.

Research Agendas and Strategies

No one uses a crystal ball in archaeology. In an understandable lack of foresight, neither the 2006 Resource Assessment and Research Agenda (Lewis, in Cooper 2006, 198ff), nor the update of 2012 (Knight et al 2012, 94) made any reference to either Delapré Abbey or Cluniacs (except in passing), let alone nunneries. For many, the 1970s-80s heyday of monastic archaeology seems to have passed.

However, perhaps the time has come for a reappraisal. Old received wisdom about fossilised monastic layouts and set plans is clearly not the case and while a site such as Delapré may be at the bottom of any list for looking at a claustral core, there are opportunities for new discoveries, such as the west range, to look at monastic provisioning, storage and agrarian exploitation. There have been few medieval finds here, except where a dump of pottery dominated by simple, locally-made jugs next to the bath-house suggests their use there, but it is one association which did not exist before, and specific use of pottery is so rarely enquired about. Finds from the separate and (almost) untouched west range could be of inestimable value.

In the absence of a local or regional spotlight, it is perhaps more appropriate to see the potential Delapré still has in future in terms of a national agenda put forward by Greene (in Keevill et al, 2001, 4-8) who laments that the functions of so many outer court buildings even at the best-known sites remain unknown, and calls for work on (amongst other things) barns, smithies, dovecotes etc..with resulting information about the monastic economy.

Of the post-suppression house Courtney (in Cooper 2006, 234) noted that the archaeology of the Reformation is a priority. He highlighted the changing uses of space as the Dissolution took hold and were we to extend this, we might add the evidence for the changing role of women at Delapré, either side of the suppression of the abbey. Gender segregation is certainly present throughout.

For the later period, Campion (in Cooper 2006, 242) notes that while increasingly building analysis turns its attention to the vernacular and to institutions (which he welcomes), he also highlights the continuing study of elite landscapes and their country houses and the immense changes they have undergone since 1750. Delapré is now a static exhibit in this sense, bereft of its elite ownership. There are decades ahead in which to turn attention to better understanding of the house and its setting.

The house has entered a new phase of its life. Once more open to the general public, the standing buildings will experience the rough-and-tumble of thousands of pairs of feet where once it was the preserve of a privileged few. Its paintwork will be rasped and finger-marked, its skirting boards scuffed; its windows will be broken and its water pipes will occasionally burst. Its carefully mown grass will be accidentally rutted and the topsoil likely as not sown with ring-pulls. But under it all it

must be borne in mind that everything like this has happened to it before, and under each tear, break and hole is a potential glimpse into another page of its past. Sensitively monitored and managed in line with the Grade II* listing, they will amount to an ever fuller story and add a 21st-century chapter of their own.

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Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Delapr� Abbey 2014-19
OASIS ID	Iainsode1-310044
Project Type	Excavation; watching brief; building recording
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	None planned
Current land use	In use as a (public) building
Development type	Conservation
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 7594 5908
Start/end dates of fieldwork	2014 - 2019
Archive recipients	Northamptonshire Archives (paper + digital) and Delapr� Abbey (finds)
Study area	c1ha



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

6 March 2019