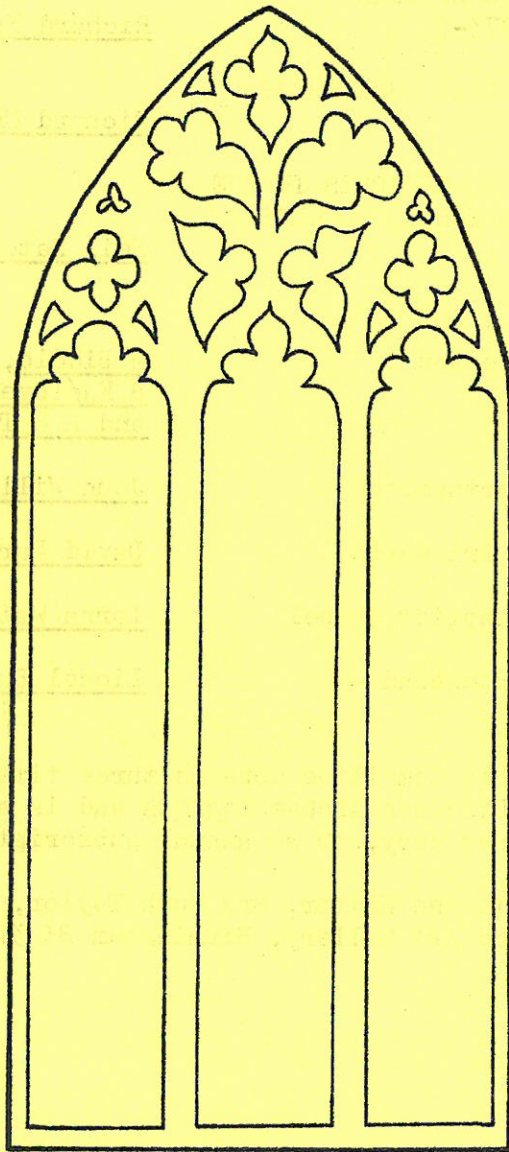


BULLETIN

of the C B A Churches Committee



St. Mary,
Birkenhead

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The Bulletin of the CBA Churches Committee appears three times a year. It is sent free of charge to Diocesan Archaeologists and is available to others for the sum of 30p per copy, or an annual subscription of 75p.

Contributions should be sent to the Editor, Mrs Ruth Taylor, Department of Archaeology, City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham B3 3DH.

NOTES

Annual Conference of DAC Members 1977

Consultants who are full members of their DACs are reminded that this year the Annual Conference will be held in Coventry at Lanchester Polytechnic from 6 to 9 September.

The occasion provides a good opportunity for consultants to discuss the problems and potentials of church archaeology with DAC officials, members, and archdeacons. Last year only one archaeologist attended the full Conference in Canterbury with Richard Morris present for part of the proceedings, and it is hoped that more consultants will avail themselves of the opportunity this September.

Conference on Techniques of Church Archaeology

A weekend conference is being organized by the Department for External Studies, Oxford University, at Rewley House from 16 to 18 December 1977. It will be essentially a practical course aimed at those employed in professional organizations and at interested amateurs wishing to undertake practical recording work. Among the subjects covered will be photography, excavation of graveyards and burials, techniques of fabric recording and survey, and excavation of a standing structure. Further details are available from the Course Secretary at Rewley House, 3-7 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA.

Changes

Bath and Wells:	Dr W J Rodwell has been appointed as a full member of the DAC
Canterbury:	Mr Frank Jenkins has been appointed as a full member of the DAC
Durham:	Mr C D Morris has been appointed as a full member of the DAC
Blackburn:	Mr Hugo Blake has been appointed as a full member of the DAC
Winchester:	Mr M F Hughes has agreed to act as Consultant for the Diocese
London:	Mr Brian Hobley and Mr Harvey Sheldon have agreed to act as Consultants for the Diocese
Sheffield:	Mr Derek Holland has agreed to act as Consultant for the Diocese
Lincoln:	Dr L A S Butler has been invited to serve as Consultant Archaeologist to the Cathedral
Beverley:	Mr R K Morris has been invited to serve as Consultant Archaeologist to Beverley Minster

Seminar

In February a two-day seminar on the aims and techniques of archaeological church survey was held in Wakefield at the invitation of the West Yorkshire Unit. This was attended by local archaeologists and consultants and by practitioners from further afield. The papers delivered were mainly

concerned with the West Yorkshire region but summaries of those of more general interest are given below.

Daryl Fowler in 'Archaeological surveys of churches : the architect's view' stressed the need for accurate survey work as a prerequisite for working with an architect and contractor on a building contract so that no unnecessary delays were incurred with subsequent added costs. He also pointed out the necessity of arranging for facilities to be given for archaeological investigation at the time of tendering for the contract and described the principal methods of tendering.

In 'Churches, townships and tenure', D J H Michelmore discussed the possibility of identifying churches likely to be of early origin and therefore likely to produce pre-Conquest remains by reconstructing the original organizational structure of the pre-Conquest church. As it seemed likely that the parochial system was preceded by a system based on relatively small numbers of minsters with dependent churches, it should be possible to reconstruct their territories by plotting the distribution of townships in other parishes from which payment was made to former mother-churches.

Stephen Moorhouse in 'The church and settlement' dealt mainly with chapels of ease, private chapels and the problem of 'chaplains'. He suggested that the distribution of chapels of ease was not necessarily related to density of population within the parish and that the agricultural boom of the 13th century did not appear to have increased the number of chapels.

DIOCESAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS 1973-1977

Richard Morris

There are 42 Anglican dioceses on the English mainland. In 1973 the Annual Conference of Diocesan Advisory Committee members invited the Churches Committee to draw up a list of archaeologists who would be prepared to act as diocesan advisers. Consultants were found for 38 dioceses.

By 1975 thirteen archaeologists had been appointed as members of DACs. Since then the number of members has continued to rise, and a survey carried out earlier this year shows that 27 dioceses now have an archaeologist sitting as a full member of the DAC. Two of the larger dioceses have in fact appointed two archaeologists in order to improve coverage and to ease the problems of travel. A number of recent appointments have come in response to a formal recommendation from the Council for Places of Worship which advised that archaeological consultants should if possible sit as full members of DACs.

The Council for Places of Worship has itself appointed an archaeologist to its Executive Committee, and two archaeologists are included in the membership of the Cathedrals Advisory Committee.

In the fourteen dioceses which have not so far appointed an archaeologist to the DAC the situation varies widely. In five dioceses the consultant is formally recognized by the DAC, receives its agendas and/or papers, and is in regular contact. In three more dioceses there have been recent changes, and the outcome of new approaches by the CPW to the DACs concerned is still awaited. This leaves six dioceses in which the situation is either unknown or unsatisfactory: Hereford, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Rochester, Truro (?), and Worcester.

It is encouraging to see that the dioceses which ignore archaeology altogether are now in a very small minority. The reasons range from

indifference to outright hostility; in several cases the DAC (or an influential member) clings to the old view of archaeology as being both a nuisance and something peripheral to the day-to-day business of caring for churches. Suspicion of archaeology also seems to be related to the idea that archaeological consultants are 'delegates' representing an amenity lobby first and the interests of the diocese and parishes second. Both views are, of course, wrong: in one diocese where the Consultant has involved himself in the quinquennial survey system it is reliably estimated that at least one church in ten is likely to be affected by works which will cause some degree of archaeological damage during the coming year.

The charge of archaeologists as being 'delegates' seems only to have been levelled in dioceses where communication is poor or non-existent; in fact, many DACs think highly of their archaeological members, and it is clear that most consultants contribute to the full range of DAC business. The attendance record of DAC archaeologists is on the whole good, and averages out at 75%. Between them consultants have carried out some 70 operations (watching briefs, churchyard surveys, diocesan surveys, site reports and investigations) during the last year.

The network of Diocesan Archaeological Consultants is now formally recognized by the CPW. Vacancies are filled on the recommendation of a small panel of four (two from the CBA and two from the CPW), although in many cases the departing consultant finds a successor himself. The CPW-CBA panel can only recommend a consultant, however, since DAC appointments are a matter for the bishop, and a DAC has no formal powers of co-optation.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF CHURCHES

Richard Morris

Estimates time is with us once again. In a recent Note on Medieval Research Priorities the Department of the Environment stated:

'Church archaeology will be an increasing problem over the next 10 years, not only because of redundancy but, following the introduction of state aid to churches in use, nearly every medieval church in the country (perhaps as many as 8,000) will be affected by restoration or minor works. In view of the limited funds available the case for a national programme of priorities is very strong. The Department therefore welcomes the help of the CBA Churches Committee in determining these.'

But how does one go about 'determining priorities' for church archaeology? The Rivenhall experience teaches us the importance of hidden potential in churches, but the possible existence of hidden potential is not likely to make much impression in Fortress House. The need to develop a technique for the assessment of churches is all the more urgent for the fact that scarcely a fraction of the priority churches are likely to be dealt with. Archaeological budgets eroded by inflation, and the eccentric distribution of units and resources will ensure that. If we are dealing with a mere handful of cases, therefore, it is essential to make sure that it is the right handful. In dioceses where communication is good the main need from now on is likely to concern the academic and research factors in church archaeology rather than continued demonstrations of the existence of threats. We must be in a position to choose the right site for investigation, and to put church archaeology on to a selective rather than a reactive basis.

With this need in mind the Churches Committee has prepared a research policy. A version of this policy, framed as a series of questions, is given below, and consultants are asked to give it their close attention. The Committee would welcome any suggestions for the improvement or modification of the document.

It is hoped that the questions will be of particular assistance to consultants in the preparation of archaeological assessments of churches referred under the Pastoral Measure 1968.

1.0 Origins

- 1.1 When is the settlement first recorded? Is the place name significant?
- 1.2 When is the church first mentioned and what is its status?
- 1.3 Are there significant changes subsequently in its status (e.g. the granting of parochial rights, monastic appropriation, etc.)?
- 1.4 Is the church mentioned in Domesday?
- 1.5 Is there any other documentary (possibly an 'early' dedication) or archaeological evidence to suggest a church earlier than that which now exists?

2.0 Archaeological context and significance

- 2.1 Is the church related to an archaeological site of possible significance, e.g. to:
 - a Roman urban or suburban site?
 - a Roman villa or native rural site?
 - an earlier defensive site or cemetery enclosure?
 - an Anglo-Saxon settlement, cemetery or other site?
 - an abbey or other ecclesiastical site?
 - an important urban site?
 - a settlement which has a known date of destruction or desertion within the medieval period?
- 2.2 Is the church a little-altered structure of a single period, offering hope of an undisturbed interior and consequent liturgical evidence?
- 2.3 Is the church important in a regional context for the evidence of enlargement at a period not otherwise well represented in architecture, or for the evidence of building material not otherwise well represented?
- 2.4 Is the church itself an important monument in the history of architecture and does its structural sequence need elucidating?
- 2.5 Is the church of any other known historical significance?

3.0 Archaeological potential

- 3.1 What assessment can be made of the relative disturbance or intactness of the site:
 - is there a burial ground around the church? If so, when was it last used?
 - are there many burials within the church?
 - are there vaults within the church? If so, are they located?
 - is there obvious disturbance by vegetation, pests, etc?
 - is extensive 19th century restoration likely to have removed significant archaeological evidence?
 - have more modern works such as drainage, damp-proofing, underpinning, reflooring or churchyard clearance caused obvious archaeological damage?

- 3.2 Do you consider the church to be:
- a) of exceptional archaeological importance and deserving full investigation or preservation (a distinction may be made between the archaeology of the site and the architecture of the building)?
 - b) of archaeological importance and deserving some (possibly full) investigation in the event of disturbance, demolition, conversion or building works?
 - c) of some archaeological interest and deserving a watching brief in the event of disturbance, demolition, conversion or building works?
 - d) of no foreseeable archaeological interest?
- 3.3 If the church is redundant is it on an urban site where redevelopment may reasonably be expected in the event of demolition?
- 3.4 If the church is redundant is it on a rural site where there is any obvious threat to the preservation of the site in the event of demolition (e.g. from vegetation or pests, agriculture, housing developments)?
- 3.5 Would the extension of the graveyard pose a threat the archaeological remains?

SURVEY OF RUINED CHURCHES IN THE DIOCESE OF NORWICH : PROGRESS REPORT

Neil Batcock

In Bulletin No 4, reference was made to a pilot survey of ruined churches in the area in which they are most numerous: Norfolk. This survey has been jointly organized by the Diocese of Norwich and the Norfolk Archaeological Unit under the auspices of the Churches Committee. A progress report has now been submitted by Neil Batcock, together with reports on the churches in the Archdeaconry of Norwich, of which some extracts are provided here.

1 Objects of the Survey

The Survey considers three classes of church: ruined, disused, and the sites of churches which have disappeared. Fieldwork involves the location of sites, an assessment of the state of the fabric, an evaluation of the architectural and archaeological interest of the structure, and (where applicable) a recommendation. The interest of the churchyard and its monuments is also taken into account.

2 The Scope of the Survey

The geographical range of the Survey approximates to the County of Norfolk, minus a section of SW Norfolk now in the Diocese of Ely, but including the deanery of Lothingland (the area around Lowestoft in the County of Suffolk). The City of Norwich is excluded. The Diocese of Norwich consists of three Archdeaconries: Norwich, Norfolk, and Lynn. It is expected that all reports on sites in the Archdeaconry of Norwich will have been completed by the end of March 1977. Reports on the Archdeaconry of Norfolk should be complete by November 1977, and on Lynn before Easter 1978.

3 Preliminary Notes on the Scale of the Problem

Claude Messent, writing in the 1930s on the ruined churches of Norfolk, drew up a list of some 240 churches. However, this list included churches

which had totally disappeared as well as those surviving as ruins. The sites of vanished churches are clearly of archaeological interest, but above-ground ruins present a problem demanding some sort of action or policy: we either preserve them, re-use them, or allow them to deteriorate. The chief aim of this Survey is to present the information which will enable such decisions to be made.

Of the 240 churches noted by Messent, some 140 have disappeared leaving no trace above ground. This figure may have to be adjusted by the time the whole Survey is complete, but it is unlikely that any change will be significant. Of 703 standing churches in the Diocese (excluding the City of Norwich) 93 buildings stand ruined or disused. Of these 93 at least half are either wholly intact or have substantial remains. Thus 13% of churches in the Diocese are ruined or disused, a proportion of more than 1 in 8. Statistics for the three Archdeaconries work out as follows:

<u>Archdeaconry</u>	<u>Total of standing churches</u>	<u>Ruined churches</u>
Norwich	194	31
Norfolk	298	30
Lynn	211	32

Figures for the individual deaneries of the Archdeaconry of Norwich are as follows:

<u>Deanery</u>	<u>Total of standing churches</u>	<u>Ruined churches</u>
Blofield	36	8
Flegg	34	6
Ongworth	33	5
Norwich N	18	1
Norwich S	13	2
Repps	31	1
Spearham	31	3
Tunstead	33	1
Waxham	17	4

4 Quality of Preservation

The ruined churches in the Archdeaconry of Norwich can be roughly divided into six categories:

A Wholly intact	9
B Mostly surviving	1
C Partly surviving	9
D Chancel only in use	3
E Tower surviving	6
F Very little surviving	3
	<u>31</u>

Categories A and B are of prime concern since total preservation or re-use (in certain cases) are viable possibilities. If neither of these courses is taken the problem will become one of danger, since with time the roofs will collapse.

Category C is the most difficult in terms of decision-making. If ignored the churches will soon deteriorate to Category F, and yet it may be difficult, expensive, or otherwise unworthwhile to preserve them. Category D is less difficult since in practice if part of the church is in use the ruined parts are usually kept up too.

Category E can be awkward. Ruined towers are liable to collapse if not kept in repair. The towers are often of architectural interest, and are invariably of landscape importance. Ideally they should be kept up and preserved.

Category F presents few problems, apart from the risk of destruction of below-ground archaeological evidence (e.g. by agricultural work).

5 Assessment

The importance and quality of ruins is obviously going to be a matter of relativity, and for this reason it has been decided to delay final recommendations until the Survey is finished. This will not prevent grading on an interim basis as the Survey proceeds. One fact to emerge from the Survey so far is the speed at which a structure can deteriorate once the roof has fallen in and the walls are exposed to the action of weather and vegetation. Churches on the threshold of ruination (Category A) thus deserve prompt consideration if there is to be any hope of halting their decline.

(Editor's note: the report on the Archdeaconry of Norwich, due for completion before the end of May, has not yet been received by the Committee so that extracts cannot be provided here).

C A S E S

St Wystan, Repton

M Biddle, B Kjølbbye-Biddle and
H M Taylor

Structural Studies - The investigations of 1976 have greatly clarified our understanding of the earliest stone buildings of the crypt or mausoleum below the chancel. It has long proved difficult to understand why the string-course which runs round the main interior walls and into the western recess was not to be seen in the south or east recesses. Until 1970 the commonly accepted explanation was that the original mausoleum was a rectangular chamber with only the one recess at the west, and that when the other recesses were cut into its side walls they were naturally cut with straight vertical sides which had no projecting string-courses.

But careful study of the fabric led in 1970 to the conclusion that all the recesses are part of the original structure because their side walls show exactly the same workmanship as that of the mausoleum as a whole. This, however, left unresolved the original question why the string-course was not to be seen in the recesses. A first step towards a solution was made in 1975 when indications of the survival of some original parts of the south recess were found behind a wall that had been built across the back of the recess in the 16th century or later to carry the present rectangular stone south window. We accordingly requested and were very generously granted permission to remove the greater part of this relatively modern wall to find out the true character of the original work behind it.

The results far exceeded our best hopes, exposing the whole of the side and back walls of the south recess, preserved almost intact behind the later wall, and closely resembling the walls of the west recess, with an exceptionally large flat stone set on edge to cover the lower part of

the back wall. Perhaps the most remarkable discovery is that the distinctive string-course survives intact on all three walls of the south recess where they were hidden behind the later blocking wall, and that in front of this wall the string-course was simply cut back and covered by later plaster. Thus it is now clear that this recess is part of the original design of the mausoleum; and it is also reasonable to deduce that the same applies to the east and north recesses.

But the results of opening out the south recess go much further still, for above the string-course it can be seen that the long thin stones that were later cut back were not originally laid flat but in succession each was more steeply canted up than the one below so as to form an arched barrel-vault such as still survives over the western recess. Moreover, removal of plaster has shown that this barrel-vault is quite a separate construction from the later domed and compartmented vault which covers the main body of the mausoleum and is carried on the famous twisted columns.

We thus now have detailed structural evidence for an early period in which the side walls of the mausoleum with their barrel-vaulted recesses bounded a rectangular central space which was no doubt covered by a wooden roof; then followed a period in which the central space was given its present twisted columns and elaborate stone vault; and finally above all this there was added the present chancel. A brief note is now being prepared to set out this story in somewhat more detail as an addendum to the 1972 edition of the Guide and History of the Church.

Excavations - The excavations of 1976 along the south side of the crypt and chancel added a wholly new and unexpected dimension to the archaeology of Repton. By the end of the 1975 season it had already become apparent that a large pit, filled by the 13th century at the latest, had once existed by the south-east angle of the crypt, extending east under School Yard and south beyond the width of our trench. During the work of 1976 this pit was gradually excavated and shown to form the western termination of a V-shaped ditch, at least 8.0m wide and 3.5m deep from the level from which it was originally cut. The ditch runs away from the church eastward below the Old Priory and the Garth. At its western, excavated, termination, it is closely related to the church in plan, the north lip of the ditch extending eastward the line of the south wall of the crypt, and the west end of the ditch running south on the line of the east wall. Any bank which had once existed on the 'inner', north side of the ditch can only have butted up against the east wall of the crypt and chancel.

A ditch of this size and character can only have served as a defence, and its close relationship to the crypt suggests that the church was incorporated in the defensive line. The evidence of the excavation shows that the ditch was cut through burials which were themselves later than the construction of the crypt. The ditch is not therefore earlier than the 8th century and may be later. The 'gleying' of the soil filling the lower part of the ditch showed that it had stood at least partially open for a minimum of 30-50 years. Thereafter it was apparently deliberately refilled from the north, probably by throwing back the bank into the ditch. By the 12th or early 13th century, when burials in the Outer Court of the priory began in this area, all trace of the ditch had vanished. A bronze pin with a faceted cubical head decorated with a 'ring-and-dot' design found in the lower filling of the ditch is of a type known from late 9th and 10th century deposits in Lincoln.

The early history of Repton is little known, but there is one occasion on which this defence could have been constructed, when the Danish army with its kings Healfdene, Guthrum, Oscetel, and Anwend wintered at Repton in 874-5. Although the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says nothing of any defences built on this occasion, our knowledge of later Danish practice makes this probable. The inclusion of the church as a strong-point, possibly as a gate, in the defences and the cutting of the ditch through the churchyard fits well with the urgent purpose of a heathen army.

As for the area enclosed, what can be said? The ditch running east from the church would have terminated 70m away on the bluff immediately east of the Chapter House Block, above the Cricket Field. The field was low-lying and marshy prior to the levelling which began in 1846 and continued until 1958, and which changed the whole topography of this area. West of the church, a hypothetical continuation of the ditch for 70m north-west to the 5m high cliff above the Old Trent could have completed the enclosure of an area of 0.8 ha (1.95 acres) at the end of the bluff defined by the Old Trent to the north and the Repton Brook to the east. This area would be over half that of the later Danish fortress of Trelleborg (1.5 ha), but the area enclosed provides no guide to the size of the army that wintered at Repton in 874-5, for many may have wintered outside the defences. The new bank and ditch, incorporating the church and probably enclosing the monastery to the north, need only have been designed for emergency and perhaps to protect the commanders lodged in the monastic buildings.

This is the first Danish Viking fortress to be identified with some probability in England. It opens wholly new prospects for the future development of the current excavations, whose advance in other problems there is no space to recount on this occasion.

St Peter, Northampton

John Williams

Excavations immediately outside the east end of St Peter's Church Northampton have probably confirmed the suspected antiquity of the church. The present structure is a fine example of provincial Norman architecture dating to the middle of the 12th century. The archaeological evidence now suggests that there was a stone church on the site in the 8th century AD and possibly superseding an earlier timber church.

In 1974, during the excavations on St Peter's Street, three 'mortar mixers' were found. These consisted of shallow bowls between 2 and 3m across cut into the subsoil and lined with basketwork. On the basis of a central post-hole and the concentric grooves scored in a mortar residue within one of the bowls, it was argued that the bowls were being used to mix some kind of mortar and initial radio carbon determinations placed the mixers in the late 7th century. Obviously there was an important stone building in the vicinity at a time when stone buildings were particularly uncommon. The present excavation was designed to test the idea that the building was an earlier version of the present St Peter's Church.

Foundations of a square-ended building approximately 5m across north-south and on an east-west alignment have been found immediately east of the present church and are interpreted as the end of the chancel of an earlier church. The foundations are c 0.85m wide x 0.45m deep and formed of loose ironstone rubble. Up to two courses of the wall itself survived - 0.90m wide and of limestone and ironstone ashlar set in sand. Mortar

and limestone debris in adjacent areas suggests, however, that a mortar bonding was used for the upper courses of the walls. The wall was faced with a sandy plaster rendering 10-20mm thick and a mortar floor was overlaid by a lime slurry. No artefacts were found to date the structure. However, an excavations in hand sample confirmed by preliminary petrological analysis showed the plaster rendering closely matched material from one of the 'mixers' found in 1974 and the lime slurry was similar to a deposit found in association with another of the mixers. Although firm conclusions can rarely be drawn from techniques such as mortar analysis, the balance of evidence seems to indicate that the mixers were being used in the construction of the newly discovered church.

It is interesting to note that the mixers so far discovered were apparently being used not for the mixing of bonding mortar but for more specialized functions such as rendering. The Saxon crypts at Hexham and Ripon are plaster rendered, possibly even with the original Saxon material. Were the mixers an attempt to mix large quantities of material of an even consistency? Although the initial radiocarbon determinations gave results in the late 7th century, further samples suggest that the date of the mixers and accordingly the stone church should be revised to the 8th century.

These latest discoveries not only provide a rare addition to the ranks of middle Saxon churches which is important in itself, but also shows that middle Saxon occupation in Northampton stretches over an area of some 5 acres with a church at the present known centre of settlement. Work continues on these early levels, however, to establish more clearly the status and pattern of the settlement.

All Saints' Church, Brixworth

David Parsons

The Brixworth Archaeological Research Committee came into being in 1971 with the tasks of collating previous archaeological evidence from the parish, of watching local housing and other developments connected with the expansion of Northampton, of recording or excavating as necessary, and of conducting research into the church. The 'rescue' side of the Committee's work has been less fruitful than might have been expected, but increased fieldwalking by D N Hall and others has revealed a spread of early-middle Saxon occupation down the west side of the parish. David Hall has plotted known archaeological evidence on to a map of the parish, which also shows the extent of ironstone mining: this effectively reduces the area of the parish from which archaeological information may be expected.

Activity is now concentrated on All Saints' Church, the survivor of a supposed 7th century monastery. Early excavation produced new evidence about the structure of the western narthex of the church (D N Hall) and revealed the western boundary ditch and cemetery (Paul Everson). Excavation reports are due to appear in J Brit Archaeol Assoc, 130 (1977).

The ongoing research is summarized here with the name of the responsible member of the Committee in brackets. The initial concern has been to provide accurate working tools on which to base records and further investigation. A new ground survey from fixed datum points has recently been completed, so that there are now reliable plans of both the church (at 1:20) and churchyard (at 1:100) (E A Roberts). Also in hand is a 1:20 survey of the exterior elevations of the church. The plane north

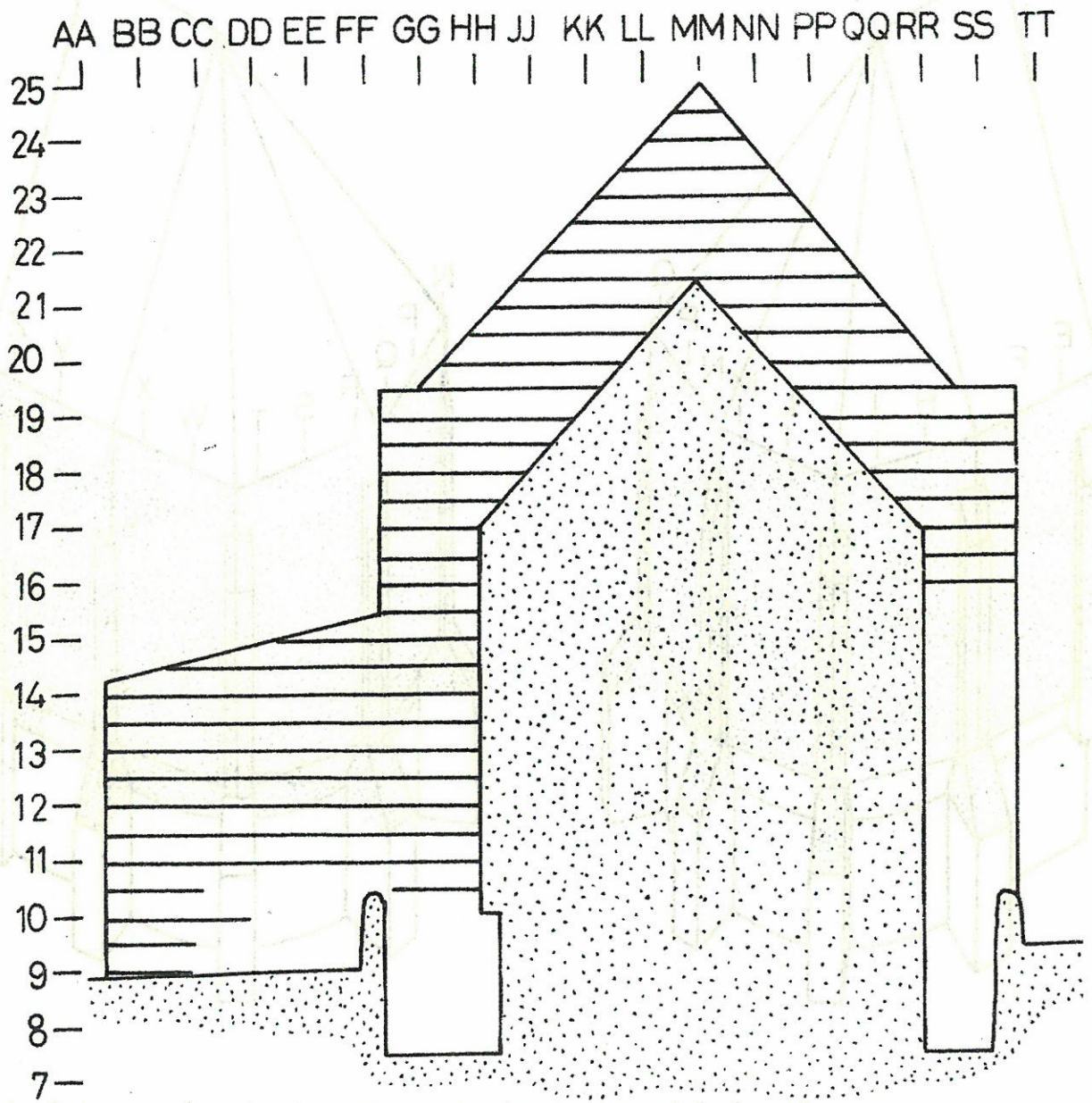


Fig. 1: Brixworth church, east elevation of choir and Verdun chapel. Horizontal bars indicate area drawn in 1976.

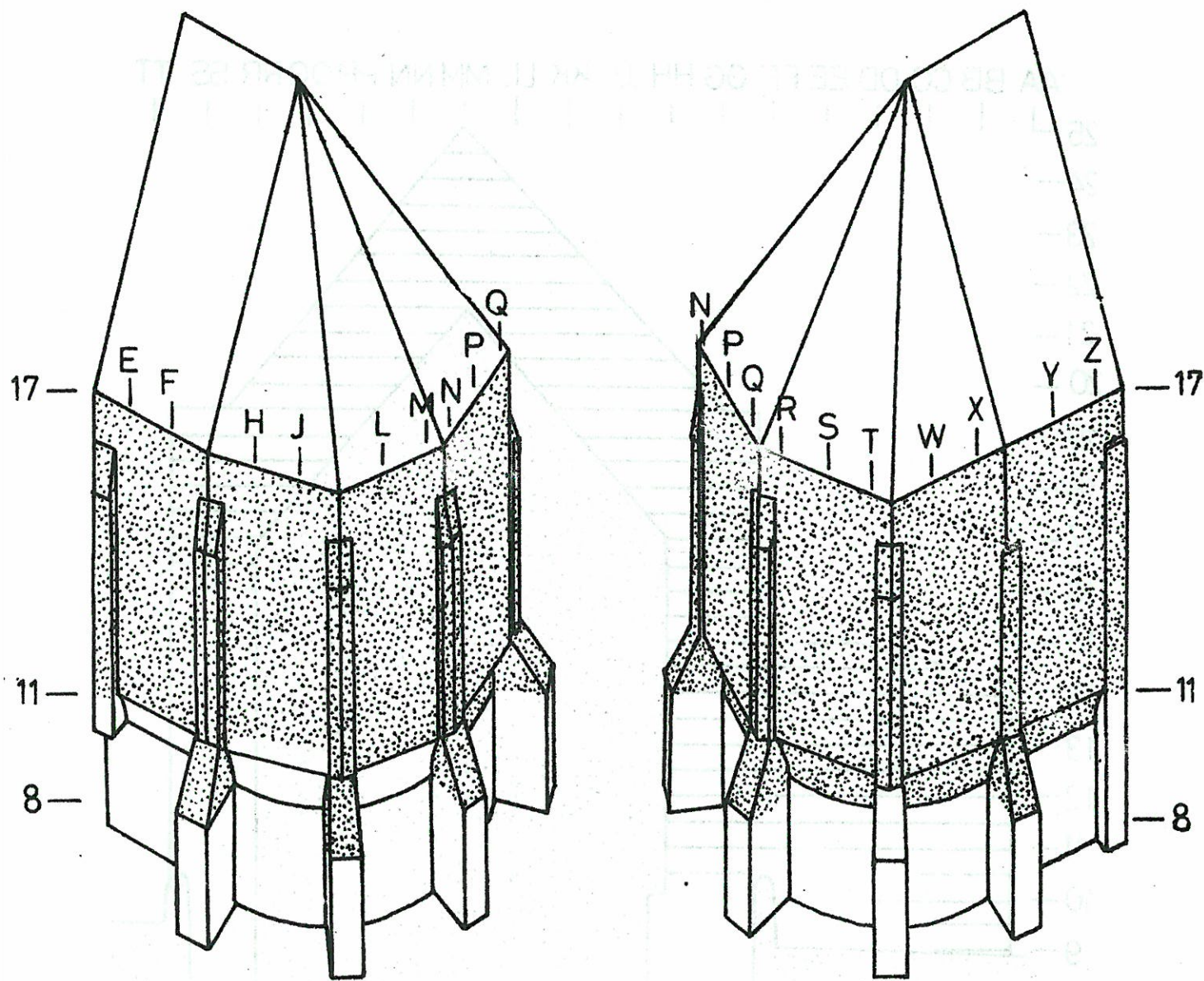


Fig. 2: Brixworth church, isometric projection of apse - left, from the south-east; right, from the north-east. Stippling indicates area drawn in 1976.

and south elevations are being drawn from a photographic survey by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England (Judith Stones), but the more complex east end and the curved western stair turret are being drawn direct from scaffolding (David Parsons). In 1976 most of the apse and the east wall of the body of the church were drawn at 1:10 for ultimate reduction to match the RCHM survey (see Figs 1 and 2). In 1977, as this account goes to press, a generous British Academy grant has made it possible to scaffold the western stair turret and the west face of the tower to a height of 21m (69ft), and despite atrocious weather the stone-by-stone recording has begun.

One of the bonuses of working from scaffolding is that for the first time the fabric can be subjected to a really close scrutiny. In 1976 the remains of the two Anglo-Saxon apse panels were observed to have not one but two layers of rendering preserved in patches, and in one area they were clearly stratified. It is possible that the earlier one is of early medieval date. A preliminary inspection of the turret and west tower shows a variety of renderings preserved, with stratification in some places; one area of plaster is so charcoal-rich that there is hope of a radiocarbon date. Another early observation in 1977 is that the parapet of the turret (reduced in height since it was first built) contains four protruding stone blocks, each of which was originally carved to form a group of three capitals. Despite a high degree of weathering these capitals seem to be of 13th century date, a period not otherwise represented in the church fabric. They are clearly re-used, but were designed to surmount slender shafts, probably in arch responds. At a height of over 15m (nearly 50ft) it is doubtful whether these capitals would ever have been recognized from ground level.

The plaster renderings mentioned above are being included in a mortar sampling programme. In previous years preliminary samples have been sent for analysis (Dr F W Anderson) with results that begin to look interesting. The sampling has so far been done on an ad hoc basis, but this year it is proposed to begin on a systematic programme of extracting samples at intersection points of the metre grid. When this has been carried out on the stair turret, which is a homogeneous structure, the results should provide a useful point of comparison, since the date of the turret is approximately known (see below). On the less homogeneous walling, the drawing of 'isomorts' or 'mortar contours' (lines joining points of identical mortar type) should give an indication of the structural phases.

Another line of enquiry seeks to identify the geological origin of every stone in the church (Dr Diana Sutherland). Preliminary colour-coded diagrams based on Royal Commission and BARC 1976 elevations are most impressive, but by no means complete. One notable building material is the brick, normally thought to be re-used Roman. In 1975 an opportunity arose to submit samples to the Oxford Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art. Preliminary thermoluminescence determinations indicate that the bricks range from Roman to late medieval, including two of apparently Saxon date. Further determinations are eagerly awaited.

Finally, 'back-room' research is not being neglected. The great mass of 19th century documentation, both primary and secondary, has been identified and collected (Clive Burch), collated and studied (Judith Stones). The mere existence of a catalogue raisonné of all this material is a major contribution to the understanding of the present fabric of the church. At the same time, the stair turret with its helical barrel vault has been studied from the art-historical point of view, and it appears that a date as late as the 12th century is likely; in any case it is not earlier than

c 1030 (David Parsons). It is hoped that this work will be published in Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters.

For background and preliminary discussion of some aspects of the church and monastery, see the chapter by D Parsons in Mercian Studies, edited by Ann Dornier (Leicester University Press, 1977, forthcoming).

(The author is Co-ordinator of Research, Brixworth Archaeological Research Committee)

Tewkesbury Baptist Chapel

Lorna Watts

A little known project currently taking place in Tewkesbury, Glos, is the complete restoration of the disused Baptist chapel, which is one of the oldest in the country, being in use by 1690 at the latest. It appears to have utilized and adapted a medieval building. The work has been made possible by a large grant from the Historic Buildings Council.

The chapel is a striking barrel-vaulted timber-framed building with wooden galleries supported on slender iron pillars. It now forms part of a long court, at right-angles to the road, near the almshouses and abbey. Enough photographs exist to enable the complex to be restored to its latest phase.

The present scheme involves the complete stripping of the chapel and its restoration as both a museum and a place of worship. The front houses are also being renovated and will house a small workshop and a giftshop. The attached graveyard, on the banks of the Severn, is also being preserved.

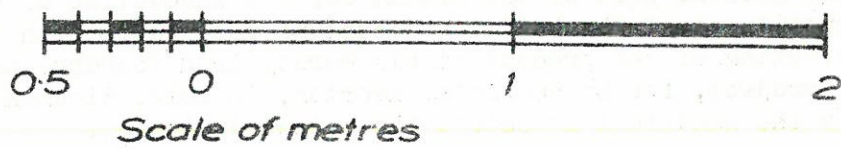
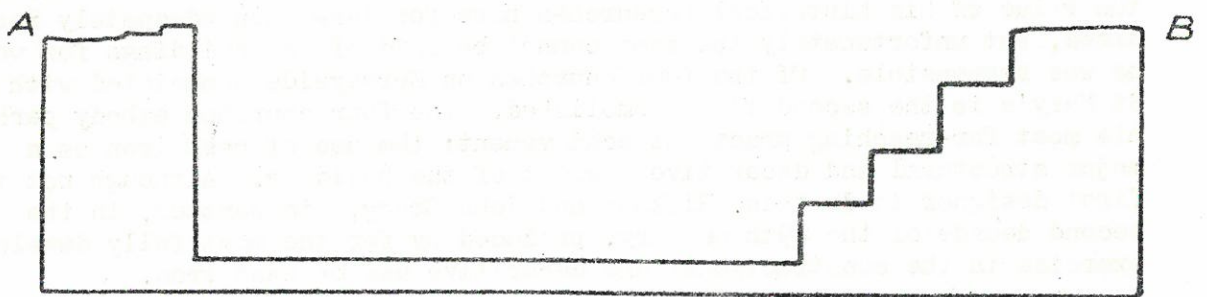
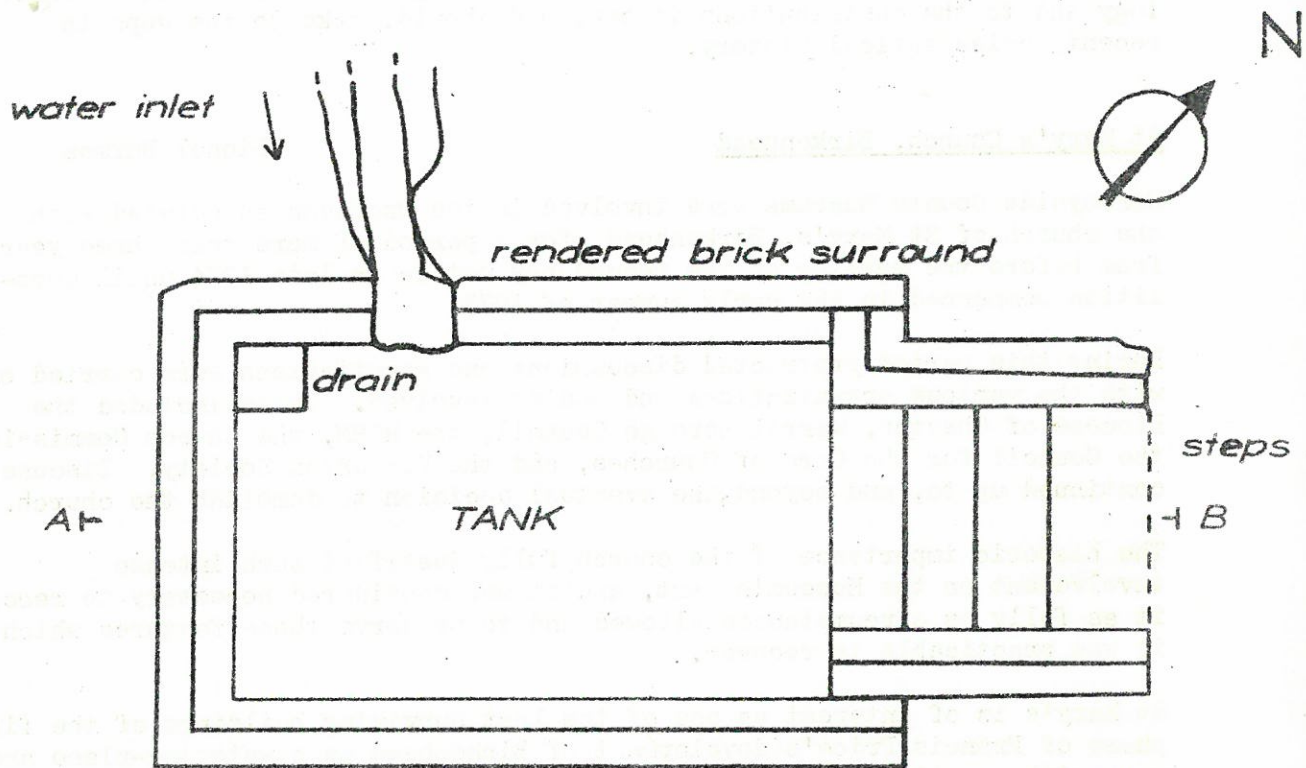
During the course of this work, a previously unknown baptismal tank was found in the central part of the chapel, near its north wall. Thanks to the vigilance of Mr John Hopkins, the tank was emptied under archaeological supervision and its structure recorded. Mr Hopkins is organizing the restoration in addition to his work as stonemason to the abbey and to Deerhurst church, for example.

The tank was built of bricks and then rendered. Access was by four steps on the east. It was filled by means of a water channel, running below the contemporary floor level, and emptied by a drain in the base. Its surround was probably level with the floor. The only dating evidence for the date of construction of the tank was the form of the bricks. These could not be closely dated but would suggest a late 18th-early 19th century date, which would thus not be contemporary with the chapel's initial use. Work on the Minute Books may clarify this.

The tank had subsequently been filled in mainly with bricks and sand, but the objects in the bottom included a school slate with a practice alphabet. Again there was no close dating for the sealing of the tank, but it presumably occurred when a floor was laid on top. Sporadic services continued, using this floor, until the 1960s. Whether the new chapel, built in the early 19th century, had a baptismal tank from the beginning is not at present known.

The archaeological work was limited in both time and cost - two people worked a total of three days. Efforts were restricted to the tank. Medieval aspects of the building and site were neglected beyond the observation of two short trenches dug by the builders, because this was

TEWKESBURY BAPTIST CHAPEL - IMMERSION TANK



SPQR. LW

the limit of the current threat. These trenches suggest there is a metre of archaeological deposits below the latest floor, some of which may be medieval, and that at least one of the main walls of the building is medieval, with a lias foundation. The tank is, nevertheless, well preserved and will form a focal item in the forthcoming display, a much more pleasant structure than its white-tiled counterpart in the present chapel.

This exercise draws attention to the wide-flung nature of church archaeology and to the contributions it can, and should, make to the gaps in recent ecclesiastical history.

St Mary's Church, Birkenhead

Lionel Burman

Merseyside County Museums were involved in the problems associated with the church of St Mary's, Birkenhead, for a period of more than three years, from before the serving of the redundancy notice in late 1974 until demolition commenced in the early summer of 1977.

During this period protracted discussions and negotiations were carried on with the various organizations and bodies involved. These included the Diocese of Chester, Wirral Borough Council, the RCHM, the Church Commissioners, the Council for the Care of Churches, and the Victorian Society. Discussions continued up to, and beyond, the eventual decision to demolish the church.

The historic importance of the church fully justified such intense involvement on the Museum's part, and it was considered necessary to record it as fully as circumstances allowed and to preserve those features which it was practicable to recover.

St Mary's is of interest as one of the last surviving buildings of the first phase of Francis Price's development of Birkenhead as a watering-place and mercantile residential district. That the latter concept was a success is evidenced by the successive extensions in 1832-5 and 1882-3 to Thomas Rickman's original building of 1819-21, and clearly it attracted a large and socially significant congregation.

Rickman's unique contribution to the early history of the Gothic Revival and the value of his historical researches have for long been adequately recognized, but unfortunately the same cannot be said of the buildings for which he was responsible. Of the four churches on Merseyside associated with him, St Mary's is the second to be demolished. The four churches embody perhaps his most far-reaching practical achievement: the use of cast iron as a major structural and decorative element of the building. Although not the first designer to do this, Rickman and John Cragg, his partner, in the second decade of the 19th century, produced by far the most fully developed exercise in the constructional and decorative use of cast iron.

Although the greater part of the credit for the innovation of cast iron as a major constituent of the building structure must go to John Cragg, as well as the perfecting of the process at his Mersey iron foundry, and the launching of the project, for St George's, Everton, in 1812, Rickman's was undoubtedly the hand that conceived the actual designing.

St George's, although the first to be built, remains the masterpiece of the four, and St Michael's-in-the-Hamlet (1813-15), though a not inconsiderable work, is perhaps more noteworthy for its adoption of cast iron for external structural features. On the remaining evidence, St Philip's, Hardman Street,

(built 1816 and demolished 1882) was a slighter and more conventional building. St Mary's, the last of the four, seems in its original form also to have been of relative simplicity but with an attractive restrained elegance; the ironwork principally consisting of window mouldings and decorative elements combined with moulded wood panelling and complemented by similar elegant mouldings in the plasterwork and masonry.

St Mary's was thus not only of historic interest in its physical and social setting, and a modest but artistically successful building of its period; it was also one of three survivors of an extremely important technological development of the early 19th century.

Demolition, however, became an unfortunate necessity, due in part to the exigencies of the procedures for church redundancy and to the limited resources available to the Diocese for its maintenance. The Merseyside County Museums therefore undertook, in association with the Royal Commission, in the first instance to record as much as possible, within the limits of staff and time available. This could not allow for detailed measured drawings, but an extremely detailed photographic survey, to high professional standards, was carried out and a full report was made listing and describing the fabric of the building and every item of furniture and fittings. Copies are deposited with the National Monuments Record.

There then followed a protracted period of recovery of items that could be salvaged, subject to the approval of the Diocese of Chester and the Church Commissioners. This could not always be obtained: for instance, the arts-and-crafts type florally decorated windows in the apse were sold at auction by the Diocese. A few internal features and most of the cast-iron windows had to be left for demolition.

It would be tedious to list in detail all the items recovered, the majority of which are now at the Merseyside County Museums, but mention should be made of the following objects:

The original font, designed by Thomas Rickman, with painted and gilded decoration.

A complete (cast-iron) window moulding, of two lights with flowing cusped tracery in the late Decorated style above. Another window was acquired and deposited with the Victoria and Albert Museum. The V & A also has a pair of doors, with part cast-iron mouldings framing the panelling. A quantity of cast-iron gothic bench-end and other decorative mouldings: other metalwork, and some of the grotesque carved heads from the exterior. The turret-clock movement: two-train, chair frame, anchor escapement, signed James Condliff, Liverpool, 1838.

A decorative screen, of simple arcaded gothic-arch form, was acquired by, and deposited with, Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

The church had a splendid belfry, with an outstanding peal of bells; these were removed under the aegis of the Birkenhead Historical Society. It is not known what their present state is.

The sculptured wall memorials, with the exception of several of no artistic interest, were removed and acquired by the Walker Art Gallery.

The cost of removing the clock and the window was partly met by a grant-in aid from the Fund for the Preservation of Technological and Scientific Material, administered by the Science Museum.

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CBA Publications on the Archaeology of Churches

- Research Report 13 The Archaeological Study of Churches edited by Peter Addyman and Richard Morris
Published: 1976 Price: £4.50 post free
- Research Report 15 Excavations at St Mary's Church, Deerhurst, 1971-73 by Philip Rahtz
Published: 1976 Price: £4.00 post free
- Research Report 19 Historic churches - a wasting asset by Warwick Rodwell with Kirsty Rodwell
Published: 1977 Price: £5.00 post free
- How to record graveyards by Jeremy Jones
Published: 1976 Price: £0.75 post free

(A grave recording form, designed by the author and approved by the CBA Churches Committee, is also available, price £2.00 per hundred plus postage).

All the above are available on application (cash with order) from the CBA, 7 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5HA.

