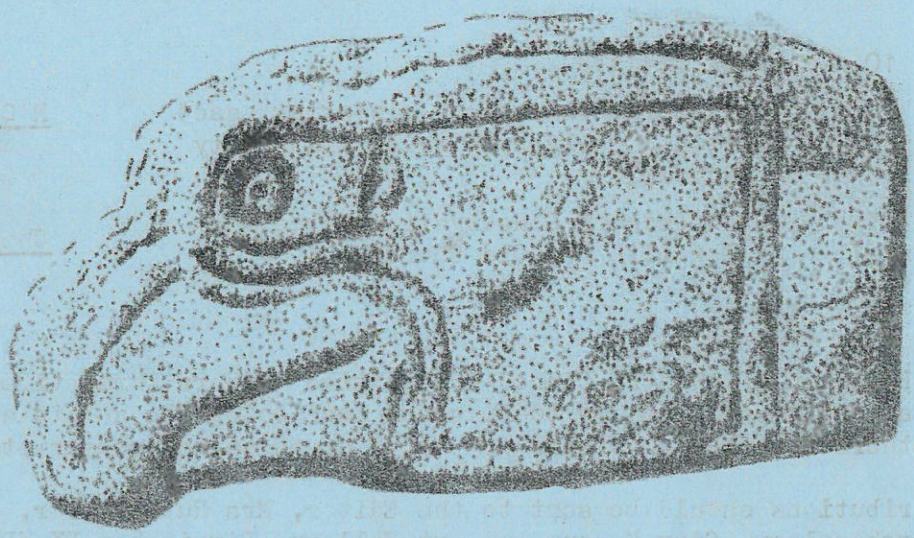
# BULLETIN

## of the C B A Churches Committee



St. Patrick's Chapel, Heysham

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Number 8 February 1978

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NOTES

Conference on Urban Churches - a report by Richard Morris

The Urban Research Committee held the second of its annual conferences at the Museum of London on 28 January 1978. The first conference held in December 1976 had offered a panoramic view of urban archaeology. On this occasion the Committee decided to swing away from the general and close in on the particular, devoting the whole day to the subject of urban churches. The programme was designed to introduce the various classes of evidence relating to urban churches which archaeologists are attempting to explore and combine.

Mrs Dorothy Owen and Dr Derek Keene presented case studies of two contrasting towns, King's Lynn and Winchester, in which documentary evidence, church siting, and town topography were considered and compared. Dr Warwick Rodwell drew attention to the evidence which is s ill latent in the superstructure and layout of many urban churches. The subject of graveyards was dealt with in four contributions. A stimulating introduction by Philip Rahtz was followed by accounts of three current cases: St Nicholas-in-the-Shambles, London (in progress), St Mark's, Lincoln (excavation complete), and St Helen-on-the-Walls, York (post-excavation work complete). From these, it was clear that there may be subtle yet significant variations in the mode of burial which might be of importance if we could learn to read them. Results of a painstaking analysis of a large sample of skeletons from York, hot from the computer, suggested a decisive genetic change shortly after the Norman Conquest.

Each contribution offered glimpses of the diversity and value of the evidence which lies in, under, and around urban churches. It was clear that much of the evidence is supremely relevant to the study of the origins, developments, and characteristics of urban life. The conference was perhaps less successful in drawing together the various strands of enquiry into a coherent policy for archaeological action.

Changes

Lichfield : Dr Margaret Gelling has been invited to serve as Consultant Archaeologist to the Cathedral.

Salisbury : Mr Lawrence Keen has been appointed as a full member of the DAC.

## C A S E S

### St Patrick's Chapel, Heysham, Lancs

R D Andrews

The ruins of St Patrick's Chapel stand on an exposed promontory, looking out over the Irish Sea and across Morecambe Bay to the Lake District whilst on the landward side overlooking the parish church of St Peter and the village of Heysham itself. The excavation which took place over Easter, 1977, at St Patrick's was concerned with establishing a date for the Chapel and the relationship between St Patrick's, the rock-cut graves nearby and the parish church, which is of 8th to 9th century date.

The existing ruin is of a single-cell chapel, 27' x 9', with a door with a moulded lintel in the south wall. Baldwin Brown suggests an 8th century date, while H M and J Taylor date it more closely to AD 800-850. Excavation revealed that this chapel was successor to an earlier stone building of the same width but of shorter length; its sides were in the ratio of 3:2 against 3:1 in the later building. The earlier masonry was of sound quality with a foundation course of large through-stones laid on the crests of natural bedrock waves and over the orange silt between, while that of the later building was cruder and built on less substantial foundations. The doorway which still stands is not in its original location but was probably reused from the earlier structure; if this is so, it was in the west wall and led out onto a short levelled area before the ground fell away to the sea. The early building was plastered inside and out and had a flagged floor with yellow clay surface.

At the east and west sides of the promontory are rock-cut graves. On the west side is the larger and supposedly more important group of six, aligned east-west and with sockets at the head for, one presumes, cross shafts. These graves originally had monolithic covers which have since been lost. On the east side is an adult and child group which share a cross shaft socket. There is a paucity of suitable comparisons for these graves but they have been attributed to the 8th-9th centuries.

Between the two groups of rock-cut graves, and fitted into the troughs in the bedrock, were over 60 other burials, of two distinct main phases. The earlier phase could be recognized by the lines of rough upright stones between the burials which in a few cases had flatter stones covering. Associated with the eastern group of these was a short flight of steps cut into the bedrock, leading down from the chapel to the graves. The second phase of burials was in the largest trough and appeared to have lasted for a short time span. The occurrence of nails in only two graves of some 40 of this type excavated would suggest that these were predominately shroud burials.

The absence of stratigraphy on the site and the lack of any datable finds apart from four small sherds of medieval pottery (two green glaze) make the attribution of dates to the building phases and the use of the graveyard more difficult than would normally be the case and there will be a considerable dependence on radio-carbon dates from the bones. Two finds which will repay closer study are stones: one rhomboidal, partly dressed, with a double-cable border around the largest side; the other a remarkable eagle's head scribed and carved onto one side of a flat stone shaped at one end to fit a socket. First indications are that these are of 8th or 9th century date. Two pieces of lettered plaster, found in the demolition layer of the earlier building, will provide a terminus post quem for the later chapel and are yet another indication that St Patrick's Chapel was in use more recently than at one time thought; there is no evidence at all that the Chapel was in use before the 8th century.

St Oswald's Priory, Gloucester — C Heighway

St Oswald's Priory is a standing ruin at the north-wast corner of Gloucester's medieval defensive circuit. It was founded in 909 by Æthelflaeda of Mercia to house the bones of King Oswald of Northumbria whose remains until then had rested at Bardney, Lincs. Near the church is the late Saxon palace of Kingsholm (Hurst 1975) and the fact that the church later claimed to be a Free Chapel Royal suggests that it was originally built as a royal foundation of particular significance. Its importance was later overshadowed by the Abbey (now Gloucester Cathedral) but it retained its vast extra-mural parish. In the 11th century its possessions came into the hands of the Archbishops of York (Hamilton-Thompson 1921; Heighway 1978).

Excavations in 1975 began in an area west of the church where building was to take place. The housing project is now cancelled but the first season's work showed that the church had a western apse and that the standing fabric was more complex than had been suspected, a considerable part of it being late Saxon. In 1976 and 1977 work continued with the aid of a grant from the Pilgrim Trust of £1,000, supplemented by grants from the Manpower Services Commission. A detailed drawing of the standing building was done by Richard Bryant and funded by the Department of the Environment (Ancient Monuments).

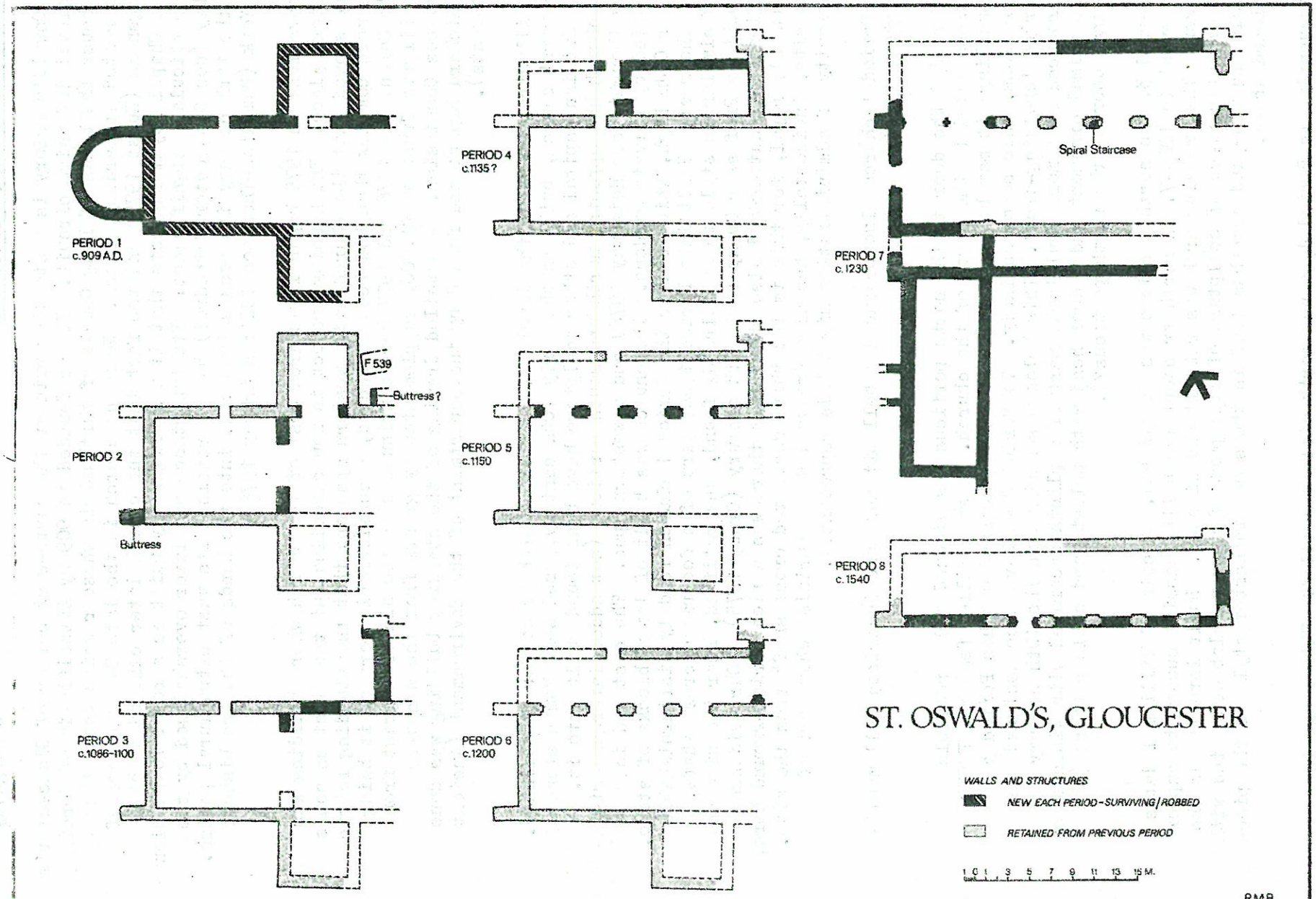
The illustration shows the development of the church as so far established. The first church, built in the early 10th century, used some Roman stone: a Corinthian capital and other sculpture have been found built into it. The church had opposing north and south porticus (not added later as originally thought: see Heighway 1978) and a western apse. The east end is occupied by private gardens. The church was built of large blocks of stone, 0.3 or 0.4m high, which render the Period 1 church readily distinguishable from the rest. Built into Period 1 was part of a decorated cross shaft, very similar in style to one already found, unstratified, near the site and thought by Professor Cramp to be 9th century (Cramp 1975). Our evidence confirms this dating and also shows that there was a rich burial-ground here, presumably royal, for this is the third decorated cross shaft from the site. (The site, incidentally, has also produced Roman burials: what sort of continuity of administration might this represent?).

The Period 1 church also produced a bell pit and some inscribed bell moulds (Heighway 1978).

In Period 2 the door to the north porticus was widened and a possible buttress added to the north of the church. A sand-filled feature, F 539, is puzzling: it may be pre-church but since the sand matches Period 3 alterations, this seems unlikely. To Period 2 we have also assigned the inserted 'crossing-arch'. This belongs somewhere in the 10th century and it produced some more sculpture: part of a plinth decorated with Winchester style animal ornament and a door head with pellets and cable pattern (the original door to the north porticus?).

In Period 3, the north porticus was demolished. A coin of William I dates this event to 1086-7. A north transept was built, massive enough to support a tower. The crossing arch was rebuilt and widened. Built into it was the most dramatic piece of sculpture of all: part of a grave slab decorated with animals and vine and acanthus leaf in the same Winchester style as the piece mentioned above.

Subsequently, in Period 4, a new north aisle was added. This range is 'basilican' in style. It may date to 1135 when the secular college became an Augustinian Priory. In Period 5 the 'basilican' arrangement was converted into a true aisle when the north wall of the nave was pierced with a row of Norman arches whose style is mid-12th century.


PERIOD 1
c.909 A.D.
PERIOD 2
F 539
Buttress?
Buttress
PERIOD 3
c.1086-1100
PERIOD 4
c.1135?
PERIOD 5
c.1150
PERIOD 6
c.1200
PERIOD 7
c.1230
Spiral Staircase
PERIOD 8
c.1540
ST. OSWALD'S, GLOUCESTER
WALLS AND STRUCTURES
NEW EACH PERIOD - SURVIVING/ROBBED
RETAINED FROM PREVIOUS PERIOD
1 0 1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 M.
R.M.B.

In Period 6 a Transitional style arch was inserted to open up the north aisle to the north transept.

Period 7 saw the adding of a new north aisle wall which widened the north aisle considerably and of an extensive cloister range to the south of the church. This was excavated by D Mynard in 1967.

At the Dissolution the nave was demolished or perhaps it was already ruinous. However, the church still had a parish (now called St Catherine's) and as this needed a church, the north aisle was converted into a chapel for the parishioners (Period 8). This seems to have been destroyed in the 17th century and the parish was churchless until 1866, when a new church was built only to be demolished in 1915. The present parish church is north-east of the city, nearer the centre of the parish.

The excavations and subsequent researches are turning up even more information. We have excavated nearly 500 burials Saxon to Victorian, all dateable to within a century: these are being studied. We have shown that charcoal burials are 10th and 11th century but cease at the Conquest. Documentary research is only beginning but it may be that the foundation of St Oswald's and the creation of its parish represent a key point from which more can be deduced about the early pre-10th century administrative arrangemnnts in Gloucester. There is more to be discovered about the royal burial ground; and was there an earlier royal church? Finally, further excavation should solve many outstanding problems about the development of the church plan which is already much more complex than expected. Access to the gardens may even be possible, in which case the east end where the shrine of St Oswald was presumably placed can be excavated, and we can establish whether the plan was symmetrical. There is probably more sculpture too.

I wish to acknowledge here the help of the whole team at Gloucester Museum and also the help of others. The following supervisors did most of the excavation: N Cox, R Davis, T Hayes, L Marley, C Marley, J McKiernan, and A Peacey. Richard Bryant, who drew the detailed drawing of the ruin, has added an enormous amount to our understanding; no photograph could be a substitute for the intimate structural knowledge which a stone by stone drawing was able to achieve: equally, the excavation added invaluably to our understanding of the ruin and the whole operation provides an object lesson in the importance of the different kinds of evidence. M Hare, D Hill, and J Rhodes helped with the documentary research. The City of Gloucester Parks Department is currently marking out some of the excavated walls: the whole area is to become public open space.

CRAMP 1975 — Rosemary Cramp, 'Anglo-Saxon Sculpture of the Reform Period' in Parsons (ed,), Tenth Century Studies (London 1975), 191.

HAMILTON-THOMPSON 1921 — A Hamilton-Thompson, 'The jurisdiction of the Archbishops of York in Gloucestershire', Trans Bristol and Gloucs. Archaeol. Soc.43 (1921), 85-180.

HEIGHWAY 1978 — C Heighway, 'Excavations at Gloucester 1975-6: Fourth Interim Report: St Oswald's Priory', Antiquaries Journal 58 (1978) forthcoming.

HURST 1975 — Henry Hurst, 'Excavations at Gloucester: Third Interim Report: Kingsholm 1966-75' Antiquaries Journal 55 (1975), 267-294.

St Lawrence, Burnham, South Humberside

G Coppack

The deserted medieval village of Burnham lies 6.5km south of Barton on Humber in the parish of Thornton Curtis, South Humberside, at TA 058171. Excavation by Glyn Coppack and Richard Williams for DoE in Chapel Close, Burnham, revealed the well-preserved remains of the village church and established a date for its foundation. Five principal phases of development were recorded before the abandonment and demolition of the church in the mid-16th century.

Apart from a slight scatter of late Roman pottery, the earliest features recorded were a series of chalk-cut post holes representing the south and east walls of a timber structure of early 10th century date. Associated with this building was a single infant burial found just within the east wall, and to the west, two deep, almost vertically sided pits, the largest of which measured c. 4m by 1m and was at least 1m deep. It was lined with decayed mortar. The building itself seems to have occupied only the area of the chancel of the later church. Its north wall can only have lain beneath the north wall of the later chancel, and is shown projected. The line of the west wall is more problematical. No trace of it was seen within the later nave, and it may have been destroyed by the east wall footings of the nave. If this was the case, the building would have measured c. 5m by 4m. There seems little reason to suppose it was not the original church.

In the second half of the 10th century, the timber structure was replaced by a two-cell church built of chalk rubble set in dense mortar, with an outer facing of roughly dressed sandstone, set on a substantial foundation of pitched and crushed chalk. In places, this structure survived to a height of more than 1m and the total absence of burials ensured that the internal arrangements survived more or less intact. The cill of an original door in the north wall of the nave was probably matched by an opposing entrance in the south wall. Both respond bases for the chancel arch survived, with simple chamfers on their west and opposing faces. The chancel floor, some 0.10m higher than the nave, survived intact. Two post-settings were also recorded on the south side of the chancel, one just within the arch. The nave floor survived in patches sealing a series of post holes suggestive of scaffolding during construction and a small lead working hearth. This hearth was used to produce window cames, and would indicate that at least some windows were glazed.

At some point in the 12th century, perhaps towards the end, there were two major changes to the structure of the church. The nave was extended to the west by 3m, the new walling being of flint and cobbles built without a proper foundation. The original north and south doors were blocked and a new south door was provided further west. At the same time, the nave was refloored. It may have been at approximately the same time that a new, pointed, chancel arch was provided, set on the 10th century responds. Three voussoirs from the south side of the arch remained where they had fallen. The internal arrangements of the chancel were not changed.

No further work was done to the church until the early years of the 14th century and it seems to have fallen into serious disrepair. Frost damage to the inner wall surfaces suggests that it may even have been unroofed for a short time. During the first quarter of the century the church underwent a drastic restoration. It was refenestrated and glazed throughout, and the upper walls were either repaired or heightened in brick. The west end of the nave was walled off to provide a vestry and in the course of this, the 12th century south door was blocked and the original door re-opened. Internally, the walls were thickly plastered and painted. Against the west wall of the nave, a timber tower or belfry was built on padstones and cill walls and there is slight evidence for a door into the tower from the vestry. Below the nave floor, three hearths provided evidence for glazing and the

number of lead roof-clips recovered show that a lead roof was provided at this stage. On the nave floor, a mutilated statue of St Lawrence lay where it had fallen in the 16th century from a niche south of the chancel arch. Artistically it belongs to the period of this restoration. At the same time, the ritual arrangements of the chancel were altered. An altar platform set with plain and printed tiles occupied the eastern half, with an altar set against the east wall, and the footing of a bench in the north-east corner. The north-west corner of the chancel was disturbed by a deep robber trench which may indicate the position of a chest-tomb. The lower chancel floor was set with bricks. Two silver pennies from below the nave and chancel floors suggest that all this work was completed by c. 1325, which conforms with the church being re-licenced at this date.

The final development involved only the western part of the church. Early in the 15th century, the timber belfry was demolished and the vestry at the west end of the nave was drastically altered. Its door into the nave was blocked and a substantial thickening of heavily mortared flint walling was added to all its wall faces. The most likely interpretation of this is that a low tower was built over the west end of the nave. An interesting feature was the provision of nesting boxes in the lower part of the thickening, indicating that the lower stage of the tower was used as a dovecote whilst the church was still in use.

The church was unroofed in the mid-16th century and may have been included in the suppression of chantries. Certainly its status had changed in the course of its history and it may well have been endowed as a chantry. It was slowly demolished, the unwanted materials being piled inside, ensuring the preservation of the lower walls. The site was levelled in 1977.

St Editha, Tamworth — R Meeson

Tamworth, an important Mercian centre where Offa and later Mercian kings had a palace, became in the 10th century a 'burh' with a mint, a church (St Editha) and timber hall-type buildings.

Prior to structural alterations in the crypt of the church and below the south aisle, excavation took place between April and July 1977, by R Meeson for the Tamworth Excavation Committee. Technical difficulties included the removal of a large quantity of spoil up narrow steps and propping to support the floor of the south aisle.

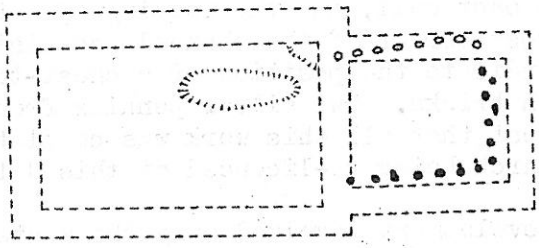
Three of the four bays of the crypt floor were excavated. A row of post-pads and a row of post-holes in the floor of the crypt could not be dated.

A stone-by-stone drawing of all internal elevations of the crypt is being compiled and will be published shortly. At H (Fig. 2) one bay of the crypt had a painted inscription on plaster which, from the style of the lettering, may be 16th century. At K was a grave which had probably contained a stone coffin but this had been removed when the burial was disturbed, perhaps in the 19th century.

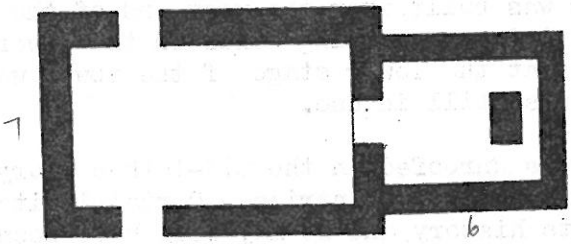
Beyond the west end of the crypt an overburden of c. 1.5m of debris was removed and this resulted in the discovery of two early graves and the massive rubble foundations of a substantial wall (C in Fig. 2). A was a stone-lined burial (male, aged about 40) and it contained a Saxon, vesicular pot-sherd. The skull of the second burial, B, had been removed when the grave was disturbed by the introduction of a brick floor. The east end of both burials had been cut through by the massive footings of a north-south aligned wall. These were almost 2m wide and had been placed in a trench at least 1.8m deep. The wall was stepped out almost 0.50m at D

# BURNHAM St LAWRENCE CHURCH

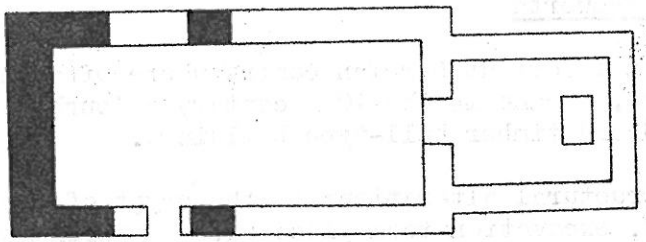
early 10th century



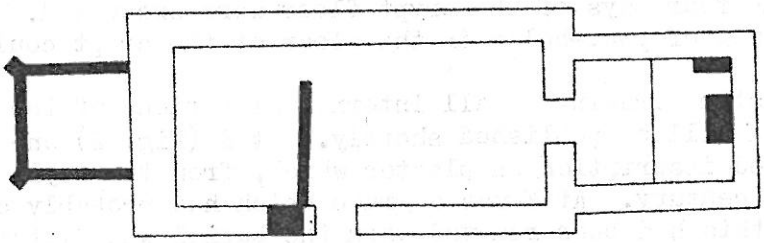
late 10th century



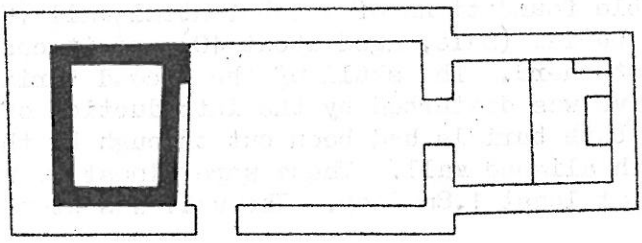
12th century



early 14th century



15th century



(new work in each phase is shewn in black)

0 5m

but it did not turn west at that point. E may be the surviving east facing of this wall. The underpinning of this face at a later date may indicate that the wall C belongs to a structure which had a higher floor than the later crypt.

A passage cut through C was flanked on both sides by a stone facing, F. The door to that passage has a round-headed arch apparently of the same build as the flanking walls. The wall at G is of uncertain date and incorporates a re-used Norman capital. But the wall at H, and of the two succeeding bays to the east, is of neatly coarsed small sandstone blocks characteristic of Norman work. The stone vault of the crypt has semi-octagonal pilasters and groins and is contemporary with the outside wall of the church at J. The vaulting at the west end of the crypt cuts across the top of the round-headed arch and J is almost certainly later than F. The church was damaged by fire in 1345. The wall at J and the vaulting over the crypt are taken to date from the reconstruction of the church by Dean Baldwin de Witney after that fire. Use was made in the webbing of the crypt vault of 12th century stone coffin lids, one with a good floral cross design.

If the above observations are correct, J and the round-headed arch must be Norman and they are later than the substantial stone footings at C. Such wide and very deep foundations were not expected in a Norman context, yet the chronological sequence suggested above seems inescapable. The entire area due for alteration has now been examined so it is difficult to justify further expensive excavation at this stage. Of many questions left unanswered the most perplexing one related to the context of the wall at C.

## Derby Cathedral: The Cavendish Vault

R K Morris

Derby Cathedral is one of the so-called 'parish church cathedrals'. As in the cases of other dioceses of recent creation, such as Chelmsford, Wakefield, and Birmingham, a major parish church was selected to hold the episcopal chair. Derby dates chiefly from a rebuilding of 1723-7 to designs by Robert Adam but Adam retained the late-medieval west tower (a magnificent specimen of late Perpendicular built between 1500 and 1527 by John Otes) and the ecclesiastical use of the site goes back to before the Conquest. However, virtually nothing is known of the form of the rest of the medieval church, except for the fact that certain vaults were incorporated below it early in the 17th century.

Chief among these is a vault containing burials of members of the Cavendish family. In its original form the vault was constructed to the specification of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury (Bess of Hardwick). Elizabeth died in 1607 and thereafter the vault was in constant use for burials of members of the family until c. 1848, when it was bricked up. The vault was reopened and inspected in 1969, and again in 1973. Earlier this year a decision was taken by the cathedral authorities to proceed with a scheme for the conversion of part of the vault into a small chapel. This involved the removal of coffins from the outer chamber into an inner section of the vault. Since the latter was already full, the additional coffins were to be stored in the connecting passageway, thereby rendering the inner chamber inaccessible for the foreseeable future.

Before work began the cathedral authorities contacted the CBA in order to ask for advice on what recording might be necessary. This request was referred to the Churches Committee and after a preliminary inspection a small investigation was undertaken under the auspices of the Department of Archaeology of the University of Leeds. The study took two days to complete and involved:

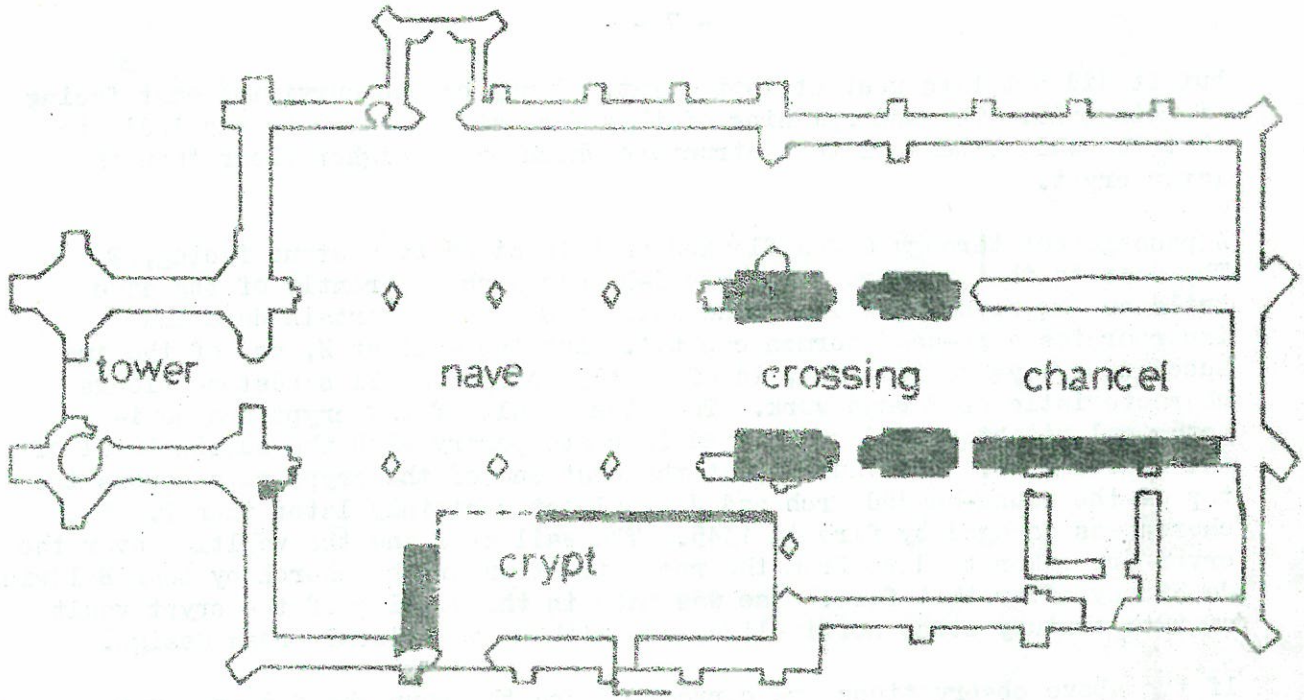



Fig 1

Norman masonry

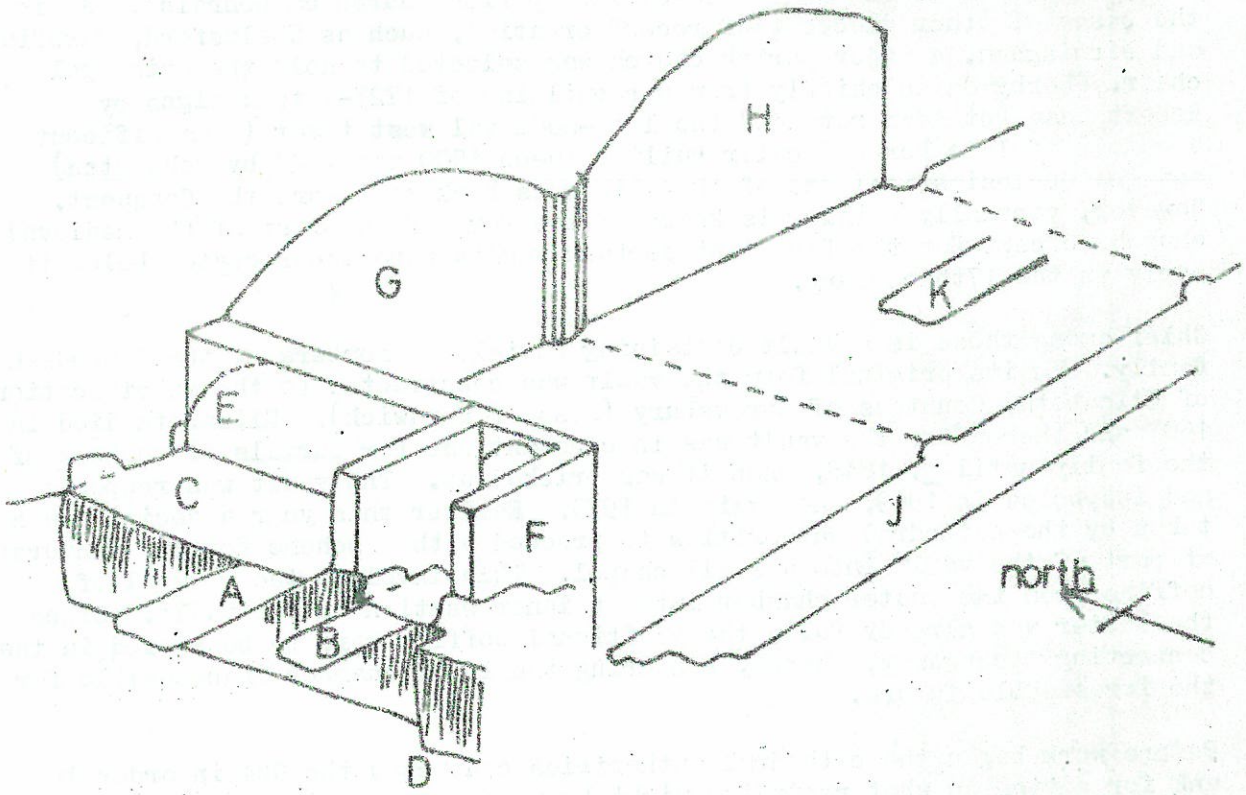



Fig 2

1 the making of a detailed photographic record (5 x 4 and slides);
2 a measured survey of the vaults and connecting passage;
3 close inspection of all the coffins and fittings; and
4 selective ampling of lead, wood, textiles and coffin furniture.

An examination of the contents of the coffins would undoubtedly have been of great interest but in the circumstances this was not attempted. Several factors influenced this decision. First, most of the coffins were wholly or partially inaccessible; to open them would have required their removal from the vault. This would have been a major and expensive exercise which could scarcely have been justified in view of the fact that the proposals for alteration would have left the majority of the coffins undisturbed. Second, the value of the remains lay in their unity as a group of named and dated individuals, of aristocratic background, and in many cases with extensive biographical details. A policy of selective inspection was considered but this too was rejected on the grounds that it would diminish the value of the group as a whole and that interference with the burials was unnecessary.

The structure of the vault

The vault consisted of three elements: an inner chamber, a connecting passage, and an outer chamber with access down a flight of steps and a short corridor from the 18th century south nave aisle. The outer chamber was the more spacious of the two and from the details of its construction it had evidently been enlarged. The south-eastern portion appeared to belong to the primary stage and may have served as a small ante-chamber to the original inner vault. When the inner vault was full the outer chamber was extended in order to receive subsequent burials. The junction between the two phases was obvious, appearing in the east wall as a change in the size and coursing of the sandstone ashlars and in the vault as a change from stone to brick. Both the inner and outer chambers were capped with segmental vaults, arching from north-south in the case of the inner and east-west in the outer. The connecting passage was roofed with a depressed segmental vault turned in brick.

The arrangement of the coffins

There were 44 coffins: 35 in the inner vault and 9 in the outer. Burial had started in the north-west corner of the inner chamber, where the coffins were stacked in tiers three deep and rested on shelves made of sandstone slabs. The confined space of the inner chamber left little room for manouevre and it is possible that the shelves were built up gradually as and when the need arose. Above the top shelves a further series of coffins had been stuffed in below the vault. These had clearly been displaced from elsewhere since they occupied space not intended for burials and the coffins at each end had had to be flattened to accommodate the slope of the vault. The shelves of the outer vault were all easily accessible and must have been constructed at the same time as the vault was enlarged. Out of the 21 spaces available in the outer chamber only eight were occupied when we inspected, although a ninth (the 'Rome' coffin, see below) had recently been dragged out of its housing and placed against the east wall. The last burial (Felicia Susan Cavendish) was made in 1848, after which the vault was sealed up.

The coffins

The earliest examples consisted of a simple lead case containing the inner wooden coffin. With later specimens, however, the lead box was itself enclosed in an outer wooden case, which in turn was clothed with fabric fastened to the wood with round-headed studs. One coffin (containing the Right Honourable Henrietta Frances, Countess of Bessborough) was extra-ordinarily large and was so long that a hole had had to be drilled in the

wall toprevent it from projecting from its shelf. Henrietta Frances died abroad in Florence in 1821, and the most probably explanation for the imperial scale of her coffin is that the Derbyshire undertaker thought it prudent to enclose her in a further series of cases before the funeral.

There were variations in the techniques used to make the coffins. Some were formed of panels which had been connected by running molten lead into the joints, giving a ribbed appearance. Others were sheet sided, and it may be these were formed simply by folding the sheets over the inner wooden coffin. Several other types of joint were noticed, including a species of smear join (presumably effected with a hot iron), a rippled join where horizontal strips had been applied at the angles, and a nipped join in which the edges of the panels had been crimped together. Since the dates of all the burials are known, it may be possible to work out some kind of typological sequence for the manufacture of lead coffins which will be of help in dating isolated examples encountered in church excavations elsewhere.

One coffin was of particular interest since it had been removed from its shelf and was available for inspection 'in the round'. Moreover, this coffin was of continental manufacture and contained the remains of the Most Noble Elizabeth, Duchess of Devonshire, who died at Rome on 30 March 1824. The coffin was of interest on two counts. First, in comparison with the English models it was of excellent construction, having been sealed with a continuous flange of lead along the upper and lower edges. Second, a window had been incorporated above the head through which it was possible to ascertain that the Duchess had been embalmed. She was in fact in a recognizable state, although it was suggested at the time that certain details (such as eyes) were in fact artificial and represented some kind of cosmetic treatment carried out as a precaution in Rome before she was shipped home for burial. It was clear from the condition of the coffin and the Duchess that the act of moving the coffin across the vault had opened up cracks and disturbed the equilibrium of the interior and that renewed deterioration had set in after a period of comparative stability. During cleaning of the coffin the undertaker's name and address were discovered scratched into the lead at the foot: M Francois Moneta, Rue Condotti, No. 49, Rom(e).

The 44 Cavendish burials form a remarkable group, ranging in age from 2 to 79 years, spanning nearly two and a half centuries and including a number of notable political and scientific personalities. It ought to be appreciated, however, that such groups are not uncommon; many such vaults are in existence up and down the country and quite ofter their existence or location has been forgotten. The Straffod/Wentworth vault at York Minster, for example, was rediscovered by accident during the recent restoration. Where repairs of changes to a church necessitate wholesale disturbance a very strong case could be made for a detailed examination and analysis, carried out under controlled conditions. Clearly, the circumstances at Derby were not right for such a project but when the Derby study is published, it is hoped to use the report as an opportunity to suggest research directions for comparable work on future occasions. Quite apart from the opportunity to study a group of related, exactly dated individuals with known life histories, there is the realm of virus survival to explore.

BOOK REVIEWS

Warwick Rodwell with Kirsty Rodwell, Historic Churches - a wasting asset 30 x 21 cm, 130pp, 31 figs. CBA Research Report No 19 1977, Price £5.00.

In a useful contribution to the papers deriving from the CBA's conferences on Church Archaeology, held in East Anglia in 1973 and Middlesborough in 1975, (The Archaeological Study of Churches, CBA Research Report No 13, 1976), Dr Warwick Rodwell outlines his credo: the investigation of churches in use offers high rewards to the determined and resourceful, and is made an urgent necessity by examples of ignorant maintenance as much as by neglect or demolition. He goes on: "it is not our purpose here to provide a catalogue of disasters under the various headings; this is available elsewhere". This is a valuable indication to the question of why Historic Churches - a wasting asset was published, and for whom. Another indication is given by a disclaimer which occurs in the introduction to the book itself: "A vast catalogue of the destruction of historic evidence sustained by each parish would have been unreadable, the contents offensive and the whole exercise negative", (p.v.). Dr Rodwell clearly realized the dangers of an evangelical posture and was anxious to avoid its consequences; unfortunately he has not altogether succeeded.

This book is primarily an account of the condition of churches in the Archdeaconry of Colchester, in Chelmsford Diocese. This is the "Survey" mentioned throughout the introductory Sections 1 and 2, and defined in subsection 2.3. The results are summarized in a Gazetteer at the end of the book (pp. 94-125) which contains much information on the architectural history and present condition of 220 churches. Section 3 (pp. 11-18) deals with the fate of disused churches in recent years. Lessons from the Survey are amplified in four Case Studies: the first, the churches of Colchester, being an enlargement of part of the Gazetteer, and the last dealing with three churches undergoing conversion to other uses. The Case Studies lead to a statement of "Threats to Church Archaeology in the Diocese". "Summary and Recommendations", the concluding chapter, makes an attempt to marshall research problems, archaeological resources and official participation, although curiously in the reverse order. Nearly all the Sections are difficult to read, partly because they are too long and partly because they are summarily chopped into numbered paragraphs. The Report is illustrated by maps, plans and two pictures: St Nicholas's Colchester during demolition (cover) and the scene of Parker's excavation at Bradwell-on-Sea in 1864 (fig. 7), (the latter an evocative plate).

The two Sections which show the clearest sense of purpose are the case studies on Rivenhall and Hadstock, both excavations on parish churches carried out by the author and his wife within the Archdeaconry under survey.

Rivenhall, (Section 6, pp. 42-49) was certainly a worthwhile exercise and well demonstrated, among other things, the value of dissecting standing buildings and the ubiquity of Roman and pre-historic settlement. One may question, however, the adequacy of the sample (at least on the evidence presented) for the reconstruction of either settlement or church. The information given in fig. 19, "Village Development", offers a pretty meagre beginning to what is promised: a "coherent account of the pre-historic, Roman, Saxon and medieval agricultural communities which occupied those few hectares besides the Cressing Brook, and whose religious and funerary activities have centred on the plot of land which we now call Rivenhall Churchyard for at least a thousand years, and perhaps as long again" (p. 49). Rousing words like these are no substitute for data.

At Hadstock, an Anglo-Saxon Minster, (Section 7, pp. 50-54), the results were claimed to be "far reaching in their implications", but it is not easy to be sure what they were, since virtually every new feature on the plan sequence (fig. 22) is conjectural, and the conclusions given are also speculative.

There have been, of course, a number of large-scale church excavations where more comprehensive archaeological evidence has been obtained, and not all of them have taken place on the continent. This highlights a difficulty which is frankly one which Rodwell and his editor have made for themselves. If this book was intended to be about churches in the Archdeaconry of Colchester, it should have been published as such, and the pioneering work of the Gazetteer (suitably edited, evaluated and extended to include succinct assessment of the churches' inter-relationship with their communities), might then act as a guide for further surveys. If, however, it is, as the title suggests, meant to be about Historic Churches in general, then it would stand better, in fact it would only stand, with the help of adequately researched and illustrated examples from a wide experience within the Christian world. If this could not have been undertaken, the CBA would have been wiser to wait before issuing a sequel to the concise and telling manifesto already published as its Research Report No 13.

The great unwritten chapter in Historic Churches - a wasting asset, is the one which explains why Historic Churches are an asset at all. We do not all agree that either the past or our knowledge of it has any intrinsic merit, and to be sufficiently convinced to take action on its behalf we require at least an appealing tale or a persuasive philosophy. In this Report we are left in no doubt what we are doing wrong; we do not appreciate medieval architecture (especially if ummured in brick), we make holes in wall-paintings, cut pieces off corbels, dig trenches along walls, discard our old stoves, remove tombstones, mow the grass, allow vagrants in our porches and sparrows in our fonts; above all we do not understand the "archaeological evidence" which is thus being lost. But understanding comes through interest, not through censure. Detailed examples that would fire the imagination (e.g. the pre-Conquest tank sunk in the floor at St Nicholas' Colchester, P. 31) are rare in an account presumably intended to inspire an affection for history and historic things. Instead we are given an axaggerated impression of what archaeology is intended or empowered to achieve: "the destruction of ancient chapels, for example, represents a tremendous loss to history" (p. 4); "To the archaeologist these (floor) layers can be read like the pages of a book - each layer represents a chapter in the life history of the church and its congregations" (p. 72); "....to offer a reasoned account of the history of the church as an institution, in a particular area. This must surely be the ultimate aim" (p. 93). These statements seem to me to misunderstand the nature of archaeological evidence and constitute a challenge that demands some sort of answer. "Church Archaeology"is here being put forward as a specially valuable, and specially vulnerable, historical source. Even if the case were presented with more research and less rancour, would it be credible?

Firstly, we know more about the Christian Church and Christianity, than any other religion that was ever practised. We know what everything in a church was for, and what happened there on every day of the liturgical year; and this information has its own clear sources, which are rarely archaeological. Excavation does not dig up hymns; it digs up nails, buttons, stones and mud, from which extrapolation to abstract concepts is notoriously difficult. The knowledge that an excavator might be working on a religious site can distort both his strategy and his interpretation, espeically if he feels that religious practice ought to be separated in some way from the rest of everyday life. Archaeological investigation recovers structures, finds, biological residues and their sequence, whence comes an understanding of settlement evolution in a broad and impersonal sense. We cannot beg the question of continuity of worship from timber traces underneath a church, nor their date from a documentary aside. Churches are particularly unedifying as archaeological sites: the structural sequence is difficult to read

and usually impossible to date. Artifacts are rare, and the only biological deposits susceptible to analysis are generally those of human bones, normally so numerous that their incidence can be disentangled from each other, and from structures, only with elaborate and often unrewarding efforts.

Some of these deficiencies are faced in this book (pp. 89-90), but the obvious conclusions still need to be drawn: churches can be evaluated archaeologically only on their deposits, and subsequent excavation is of little value unless combined with that of an associated settlement. It is the nature of the archaeological method itself which should dictate the direction in which the "church archaeologist" should now turn: not to the church 'as an institution', nor to 'historic churches', for all their antiquarian interest, but to the material milieu of which these battered buildings are one component, and to the communities which created and made use of them.

M O H Carver
(Mr Carver is Lichfield Diocesan Archaeological Consultant)

Historic Churches - a wasting asset

A Reply to Mr Carver

The greatest difficulty in choosing a title for a book is in anticipating what the reviewers would wish that title to mean. We chose a simple, non-specific title rather than a fully descriptive one, which would have been: 'A Survey of the Archaeological Implications of Restoration, Redundancy, Conversion and Demolition in respect of Anglican Churches to c. A.D. 1750 in the Diocese of Chelmsford, with particular reference to the Archdeaconry of Colchester; and an Excursus on the General Threats to Church Archaeology in Britain'. Long winded, but this is what the survey is all about; we set this out briefly in the first section.. Mr Carver has taken us to task for producing a modest implications report, rather than the half-dozen or so volumes which he would like to see written.

Specifically, we did not set out to write a treatise on church archaeology in Europe (although that is needed), a survey of church archaeology in Britain (R Morris is writing that for the CBA), an evangelical work (R Morris has written that for the CBA and CPW), a popular work 'to inspire an affection for history and historic things' (see the two recent books by M Binney and P Burman: Change and Decay and Chapels and Churches: Who Cares?), or the definitive reports on Rivenhall (2 volumes forthcoming) and Hadstock (work still in progress).

More serious, however, than Mr Carver's misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of our report is his underlying contention that churches are not worth bothering with. Whereas he dismisses them as being 'particularly unedifying as archaeological sites', we would contend that they offer more promise to the perceptive archaeologist than most types of monument. On how many classes of site do stratified deposits survive to roof level? To regard a church as a 'battered building' and a graveyard merely as a sea of unstratified bones is to deny the value of stratigraphic investigations and to ignore some of the most significant advances in archaeological methodology of the last 20 years. If the excavation of a church is 'of little value unless combined with that of an associated settlement', then the converse is doubly true.

The parish church is often a microcosm of settlement history and the evidence recoverable from an area in the average medieval settlement equivalent to that of the churchyard cannot be expected to amount to more than a fraction

of that potentially recoverable from the churchyard itself. Thus at Rivenhall, for example, the immediately visible elements of the church and graveyard represented only a few 'boxes' in the settlement matrix: below these were not only a pre-church cemetery, a Roman villa and an Iron Age farm, but also seven timber buildings of the Saxon and medieval periods. And we only excavated a tenth of the graveyard . . . .

There is nothing exceptional about Rivenhall: Asheldham has already yielded a comparable sequence; and the fact that at Wharram Percy the excavators have found it necessary to return again to the churchyard demonstrates the crucial significance of that part of the village in the elucidation of the settlement history of the area.

There is a much closer analogy to be drawn between a church and an iceberg than Mr Carver would have us believe. . . .if only we did 'know what everything in a church was for, and what happened there on every day of the liturgical year'.

Warwick Rodwell
Kirsty Rodwell

Department of the Environment, Aspects of Conservation Three: New Life for Old Churches, 24 x 18 cm. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1977. Price £2.00.

This is the third booklet in a government series on aspects of conservation and it is a most useful publication albeit rather expensive for its modest size.

One of the effects of the fuel crisis commencing in 1973 was a great rise in building costs. Consequently the saving, restoration and adaptation of existing buildings has become a sound economic way of providing accommodation, Previously it was all too easy to justify the destruction of buildings not past use and to replace them by new structures. This 'economic' aid to conservation is shown in the comparative low cost of many of the schemes illustrated in the book. Please however, could not the costs of conversions shown be updated to the time of publication of the book? Some schemes were not dated at all and unless a real and true comparison of costs is made there is little value in showing costs at all.

The enthusiastic presentation of the schemes illustrated surprisingly omits to mention what it is hoped, has been borne in mind in all the projects i.e. the need to record all those features of the structure or its fittings which may be radically altered or destroyed during the conversion. Particularly important are memorial tablets which may contain information of historical or genealogical interest. Furthermore what archaeological data may be destroyed by the laying of drains or insertion of new ground floors? Some notes of caution on these matters would have been a valuable addition.

Lastly some mention should be made of the future. In fifty or a hundred years time there could easily be a need to reconvert some of these now redundant churches back to places of public assembly and possibly for worship. A scheme of conversion should be reversible and not impose irreversible damage upon a historic structure.

Criticism therefore mainly of omission from an otherwise valuable booklet showing how imaginative schemes can bring new life to old churches, preserving them not only as interesting buildings but as very valuable features of both townscape and landscape.

Charles Brown
(Architect for Brimingham and Coventry Dioceses and Lichfield Cathedral)

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, 112 Kennington Road. London SE11 6RE.