

Landmarks in church archaeology

a review of the last thirty years

by Warwick Rodwell

Excavations at Winchester and York in the 1960s led to the recognition of the wealth of archaeological evidence which is encapsulated in and around churches. In 1972 the first steps were taken to establish church archaeology as a sub-discipline and to promote widespread recognition of its importance. This has been achieved to a remarkable degree and fabric studies, excavations and surveys have taken place in many parts of Britain, organised both for research and in response to perceived threats. Consequently, our understanding of the origins and development of numerous buildings, and their settings, has been revolutionized.

Thirty years ago the concept of 'church archaeology', in its modern sense, had not been born. Church buildings were studied by architectural historians and their fixtures and fittings were the preserve of art historians. Occasionally, 'medieval archaeologists' – themselves a newly emergent group – excavated on the sites of lost or ruined churches. Academic, practical and logistical developments over the course of the ensuing generation have been momentous, and the difficulty facing any reviewer is to decide where to begin and what to include. I have no intention of chronicling the historiography of church archaeology in its widest sense: that is a subject which has yet to be tackled on a serious scale. Instead, I shall draw attention to a number of sites and themes that seem to have materially advanced the study of church archaeology.

Concept and approach

The Second World War was ultimately responsible for the birth of modern church archaeology. The devastation of German cities and their subsequent reconstruction provided the opportunity for large-scale excavations to take place at several major ecclesiastical centres with histories known to stretch back to the Roman period: Cologne is a prime example. The true complexity of the evolution of churches, great and small, had not hitherto been grasped: excavation after excavation yielded deeply stratified deposits and plan sequences reminiscent of a nest of boxes, one inside another.

For the most part, little attention was paid to the archaeology of bomb-damaged churches in Britain. The honourable exception was London, where Grimes explored the sites of five city churches, beginning with St Bride, Fleet Street, in 1952 (Grimes 1968, 182). Recovery of the plan sequences was the major objective and these excavations provided the first English evidence for the complex development of urban parish churches. Other aspects, such as the archaeology of burials, were not considered material. Thus at St Alban, Wood Street, in 1961 'the removal of the burials proved to be a very lengthy process, reducing the

time that was available for the archaeological investigation' (*ibid* 204).

Even by 1968, techniques had not advanced materially in London. The excavation of St Mary Aldermanbury was carried out by a gang of five Irish labourers, supervised by an ex-army captain who professed an interest in archaeology but had no previous experience. Recording was basic and largely conducted on Thursday afternoons when the director paid his weekly visit to check on progress and to take away any artefacts. Finds were not an onerous problem: building materials were not generally retained; skeletal remains were shovelled into sacks and taken away for disposal by the local council and lead coffins were rolled up by the labourers and transported to a scrap yard on Friday afternoons in order to provide cash for the weekend.

Elsewhere, one of the few excavations undertaken on the sites of bombed churches was at St Mary-le-Port, Bristol, 1962–63 (Watts & Rahtz 1985). Though the standard of excavation was higher than that practised in London, only the below-ground dimension received consideration. Standing structures were not, by and large, viewed as part of the archaeology: thus at Irthlingborough (Northants) in 1965 the ruined parish church of All Saints was excavated only 'after it was levelled by bulldozing'.¹ Mercifully, the same fate did not befall St Martin, Wharrah Percy (Yorks), where the deserted church was the subject of a research programme between 1962 and 1979 (Bell *et al* 1987). Initially, excavation was the aim: study of the building came later. Investigation of the church formed part of a long-term examination of the deserted medieval village.

In an urban context, meticulous excavation of church sites was instigated by Martin Biddle at Winchester in the 1960s, beginning with the Old Minster (1962–69), and continuing with St Mary Tanner Street (1965–71) and St Pancras (1968–71).² These were all level sites, where no above-ground structure had existed for centuries. Standards set at Winchester have rarely been surpassed.

The problems of dealing with archaeology in living

churches came to prominence at York Minster. Here, a major engineering programme involving underpinning and stabilization was carried out 1966–73. The circumstances demanded round-the-clock rescue archaeology, a concept hitherto unimaginable. Initially, the archaeological response was woefully inadequate but, following the appointment of Derek Phillips as Minster Archaeologist in 1968, impressive *ad hoc* rescue and recording systems were devised and continually refined (Phillips 1976). Crucially, at York the building was studied as well as the buried remains and the published results reflect the magnitude of the achievement (Phillips 1985; 1995).

Winchester and York provide the hinge-pins upon which the door to modern church archaeology hangs.

The arena of investigation

The next landmark was unwittingly provided by the drafters of the *Pastoral Measure 1968*, a piece of ecclesiastical legislation designed to unburden the Anglican Church of superfluous buildings. Church redundancy was no new concept, but it now acquired a high public profile and legal recognition. Moreover, an avalanche of historic churches coming onto the market for conversion and demolition was feared (Fig 1). Medieval archaeologists saw this as a heaven-sent opportunity for church excavation projects throughout England. The first steps to establish

church archaeology as a subject of national concern were taken in 1972, when the Council for British Archaeology set up its Churches Committee.

The first national gathering of would-be ‘church archaeologists’ (the term was not yet in general use) took place at Norwich in 1973 (Jesson 1973). Redundancy was still at the top of the agenda, but a flag was tentatively flown for the archaeology of living churches and their graveyards (Rahtz 1976b).

Prior to the mid 1970s there was a tacit assumption that any church which remained in use for worship was safe and an almost universal presumption that such churches were somehow beyond the reach of investigators. Once both premises were shown to be false, a gradual awakening to the potential of archaeology in the living church took place (Rodwell & Rodwell 1976). At every turn there were indications that archaeological evidence, both above and below ground, was being revealed and often destroyed without record during the course of normal maintenance and repair programmes, extensions, liturgical re-ordering, churchyard improvements, and even burial. The idea that restoring a parish church could be highly destructive was greeted in many quarters with incredulity.

To gain widespread recognition of the problem, let alone precipitate action, its very existence had to be demonstrated through regional church surveys and investigation at several sites. In 1971 the opportunity for a case study arose at

Rivenhall (Essex). At this modest rural church external repairs, drainage operations and a church-hall extension were proposed. Excavation and structural recording yielded a harvest of archaeological and architectural evidence that exceeded all expectation (Rodwell & Rodwell 1985; 1993).

Ecclesiastical recognition of the potential archaeological interest of living churches received its first formal expression through the publication of a guidance note, *Churches and Archaeology*, by the Council for Places of Worship in 1974.³ The case for involving archaeologists in church restoration was made, albeit not proven to everyone’s satisfaction. Sceptics maintained that the findings at Rivenhall were exceptional and not likely to be repeated elsewhere.

Investigations at Rivenhall were entirely external, but the opportunity for a complementary and wholly internal investigation arose at

Fig 1 An early casualty of the *Pastoral Measure 1968* was St Mary Castlegate, York, which was stripped-out in 1975 for conversion into a heritage centre. Archaeologists had to record as best they could amidst the builders’ chaos (Photo: York Archaeological Trust)

Hadstock (Essex) in 1973–74, when the nave and transepts of this notable 11th-century church were refloored. A full-scale excavation, again supported by structural study and recording, revealed the extent to which crucial evidence would have been lost had reflooring occurred without investigation (Rodwell 1976).

The wider case for archaeological involvement in church repairs and maintenance was made through regional studies. In 1973–75 a broadly based archaeological study of 220 parishes in the Archdeaconry of Colchester looked at the below-ground evidence, upstanding fabric, the churchyard, and the historical setting of each building (Rodwell & Rodwell 1977).

Meanwhile the Council for British Archaeology, with encouragement from the Council for Places of Worship, set up a country-wide network of Diocesan Archaeological Consultants, many of whom carried out surveys and investigations in their own regions. Both an overview and detailed snapshots of the archaeology of the English parish church were rapidly accumulated and the results disseminated through conferences and publications (Addyman & Morris 1976; Morris 1983; Butler & Morris 1986). By the early 1980s church archaeology was gaining widespread acceptance. Pivotal in this process had been the appointment of Richard Morris as research assistant to the CBA Churches Committee where his enthusiasm and deep commitment were fundamental in raising public awareness of, and academic interest in, church archaeology. Concurrently, the Council for Places of Worship and the Cathedrals Advisory Committee⁴ did much to promote archaeological concerns within the Church of England, for which we are indebted to Peter Burman and Dr Richard Gem. The introduction of state aid for repairs to historic churches in use, in 1979, was alarming: a new wave of restoration began with no provision for investigation or recording. Fortunately, funds for recording were soon made available. Thanks to the devoted work of Richard Halsey and his colleagues at English Heritage, archaeological monitoring and recording is now one of the pre-conditions of grant aid for repairs to parish churches and cathedrals.

Both the scholarly and public profiles of church archaeology were enhanced by a series of complementary, but largely unconnected, studies in different parts of the country. Several of these were instigated by the late Dr

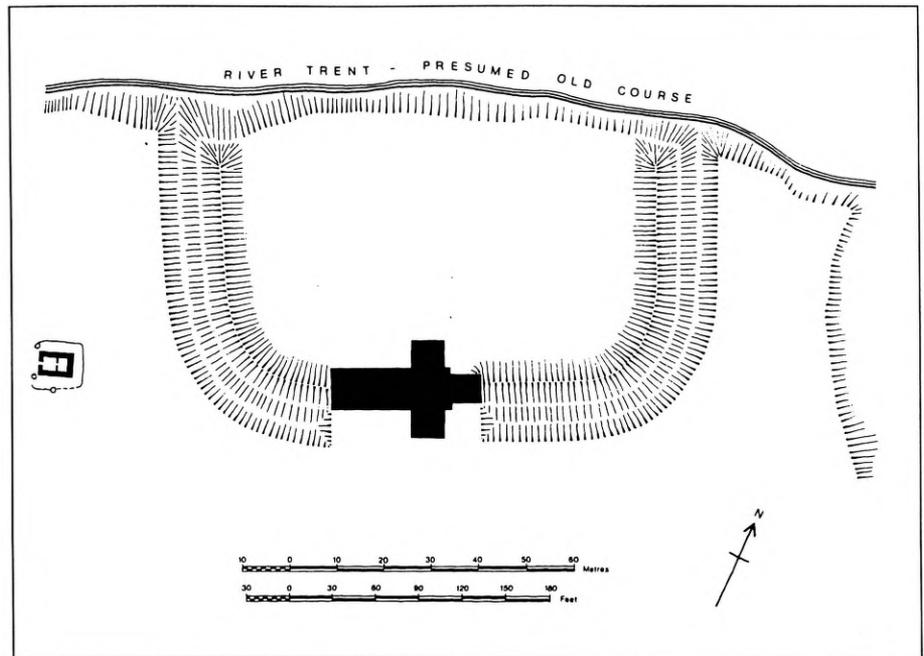


Fig 2 *St Wystan's Church, Repton, embraced by the defensive circuit of the Viking winter camp of 873–4: a reconstruction based on archaeological evidence. The mid-Saxon mortuary building under a mound to the west of the church was unknown prior to the recent excavations (after Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle 1992)*

Harold Taylor, whose energetic devotion to the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon church was a driving force. He was particularly influential at Deerhurst (Glos), Repton (Derbys), Brixworth (Northants) and Barton-upon-Humber (Lincs), and wrote numerous studies in addition to his three-volume *opus* on *Anglo-Saxon Architecture* (1965; 1978). He constantly called for systematic archaeological investigation and analysis of churches as a means of bringing much-needed precision to architectural history (Taylor 1972, 259–72; 1974, 7–14; 1976, 3–9). At the same time, pioneering work on northern British monastic sites – most notably Jarrow and Monkwearmouth – was being instigated by Professor Rosemary Cramp.

In 1973 the Society of Antiquaries adopted Deerhurst Church as one of its research projects (Butler *et al* 1975; Rahtz 1976a), while at Brixworth, detailed fabric recording (from 1972), coupled with limited excavation, led to a fresh understanding of the development of this complex and uniquely significant Anglo-Saxon church (Cramp 1977; Audouy 1984; Sutherland & Parsons 1984). Between 1974 and 1988 the Biddles conducted an intensive research campaign at Repton which revolutionized our knowledge of that critically important ecclesiastical site and opened up numerous avenues of enquiry (Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle 1992) (Fig 2). Meanwhile, Taylor published his own analyses of the Anglo-Saxon elements of the churches at Bradford-on-Avon (Wilts), Deerhurst and Repton (Taylor 1973; 1977; 1983). In each he was able to show through unprejudiced observation, careful measurement and logical

argument that previously accepted architectural histories were far from accurate.

In the event, redundancy has not been the major stimulus to church archaeology, although there have been a few notable exceptions. The extensive stripping at Little Somborne (Hants) (1975–76)⁵ provided the opportunity to record a simple building thoroughly, while extensive repairs on the highly complex church of St Peter, Barton-upon-Humber, facilitated excavation, architectural study and historical research on an informative scale between 1978 and 1984 (Rodwell & Rodwell 1982). Churches which long ago fell out of use and have become ruined represent both a resource and a problem that until recently lay almost unnoticed (Batcock 1991) (Fig 3).

Demolitions occasioned by redundancy have been poorly attended by archaeologists. For the most part, the losses have been of 19th-century churches, and in some instances the underlying structures have been thoroughly investigated, yielding results of seminal importance, as at St Mary Major, Exeter (Bidwell 1978), St Paul-in-the-Bail, Lincoln (Gilmour 1979), and St Mark, Lincoln (Gilmour & Stocker 1986). Some medieval structures have also been razed (Fig 4): not one was dismantled archaeologically.

Indeed, the only opportunity so far to carry out a controlled archaeological demolition came at Kellington (Yorks), in 1990–91. Here, the medieval tower, in dire structural condition, had to be dismantled stone-by-stone and re-erected (Atkins 1994). This exercise provided valuable insight into medieval masonry and the technology of tower construction. The Kellington project also involved complete internal excavation of the church, and considerable external excavation, all occasioned by underpinning associated with coal mining (Atkins *et al* 1991).

Churches damaged by fire, explosion or collapse have also fared badly in the recording stakes: clearance and rebuilding have only recently been accompanied by adequate archaeological recording. The south transept fire at York Minster, in 1986, was an early example.

Conceptually, investigation has now largely superseded excavation in the arena of church archaeology. We have at last returned to the Victorian understanding of the term 'ecclesiastical archaeologist': one who studies all aspects of ancient churches and their setting.

The testimony of the fabric

There is no denying that some of the most remarkable discoveries which have revolutionized our understanding of particular buildings have been made through excavation. Thus at York, the true plan of Archbishop Thomas's cathedral of the 1080s has been revealed after generations of faltering attempts to reconstruct it from disparate shreds of evidence. No less significant has been the negative

revelation that the early Norman church neither incorporated any of the fabric of its Anglo-Saxon predecessor, nor was directly upon the same site.

A great deal of ink has been spilled on the subject of the pre-Conquest cathedral at Canterbury, with numerous attempts at reconstructing its plan from documentary evidence alone. In 1993, however, a major part of that plan was revealed when the nave of the present building was refloored; no less than four pre-Norman constructional phases were discovered (Blockley 1993). Of equal significance was the elucidation of a Viking and Anglo-Saxon religious and funerary complex associated with Repton church.

In the 1970s the idea that standing buildings could be subjected to rigorous archaeological recording and analysis was poorly understood and actively opposed in many quarters. Masonry and carpentry were not seen as appropriate subjects for archaeological study. The same applied to sculpture, mouldings, plaster, paint, funerary monuments, glazing, furnishings and fittings. These were all the preserve of individual groups of scholars, who rarely shared information, let alone collaborated in multi-disciplinary studies. Academic compartmentation was leading to increasingly detailed knowledge of particular aspects of churches, but little advance in understanding them *in toto*.

The much-needed dialogue between architectural

Fig 3 The ruined church of St Felix, Babingley, is one of scores of such buildings in Norfolk. Despite its condition, the architectural development of the church can readily be ascertained through inspection (Photo: Christopher Dalton)

historians and archaeologists has been slow in coming, but progress is being made. Church archaeology has opened up fields of enquiry that were previously inaccessible, exposed *lacunae* in long-held dogmas, and pinpointed inconsistencies in structural histories and accepted dating.

The application of careful recording techniques and rigorous structural analysis has led to architectural re-evaluations of some well-known churches, as well as many that are less familiar. The RCHME has surveyed selected groups of churches at Northampton and in Wiltshire (RCHME 1985; 1987), the local archaeological unit has tackled the medieval churches of West Yorkshire (Ryder 1993), and other areas have been surveyed by individuals, for example in Kent (this volume; Tatton-Brown 1994) (Fig 5). The first large-scale archaeological recording project (in the modern sense) on the fabric of an English cathedral was carried out at Wells during the restoration of the west front, 1976–84. Here, stone-by-stone analysis of the fabric and detailed recording of the 297 surviving medieval statues led to an extensive re-appraisal of the history and technology of this remarkable facade (Sampson forthcoming). A similar exercise at Salisbury is in progress, while an analytical record of Exeter's west front was made during conservation (Allan & Blaylock 1991).

At Westminster Abbey, where numerous refacings of the masonry have occurred, and the structural history thoroughly confused, Tim Tatton-Brown has recently charted the survival of medieval work at the west end of the church (Tatton-Brown 1995). Yet another west front which has benefitted from archaeological scrutiny is that of Lincoln Cathedral. Art historians had long claimed that the famous Romanesque frieze was inserted some 50 years after the facade was built, but when an inspection scaffold was erected in 1983 it was immediately obvious to the structural archaeologist that the frieze was an original feature. Art historians, however, dismissed the structural evidence because it undermined a profound dogma. The originality of the frieze masonry has been definitively confirmed during the current conservation programme.

The Lincoln problem does not stand alone, and over the last 20 years in particular there has been widespread recognition by building archaeologists that current interpretations assigned to many churches are not supported by the physical evidence. As a general premise, the evidence for sequence in a structure must take precedence over stylistic and interpretative issues.

Unquestioning acceptance of the familiar is perhaps the most dangerous trap into which any scholar may fall, and at Salisbury many have taken the tumble. Although the cathedral was erected *de novo*, mostly in the second quarter of the 13th century, the constructional sequence is complex and the original design concept was not followed. Hardly more than a decade ago, it was denied that archaeology

could have anything to contribute to the study of such a straightforward 'single-period' building. Aspects of the architectural history of both the cathedral and its close have been analysed by RCHME, and it might be thought that there is little more to say on the subject (Cocke & Kidson 1993). However, as repairs to the cathedral and associated buildings proceed under careful scrutiny, it becomes clearer that the archaeology of Salisbury is no less complex than that of any other cathedral close. Rigorous study of the tower and spire has been particularly rewarding (Tatton-Brown 1991).

The general recognition that we do not know as much about the greater churches as has generally been supposed is itself a landmark. Retrospectively, it is difficult to



Fig 4 Sir George Gilbert Scott's fine town church of St Nicholas, Colchester, seen during demolition in 1956. The church, which had Anglo-Saxon and medieval predecessors, was not recorded prior to demolition, and the site was excavated with a dragline. A department store stands here today (Photo: Colchester & Essex Museum)

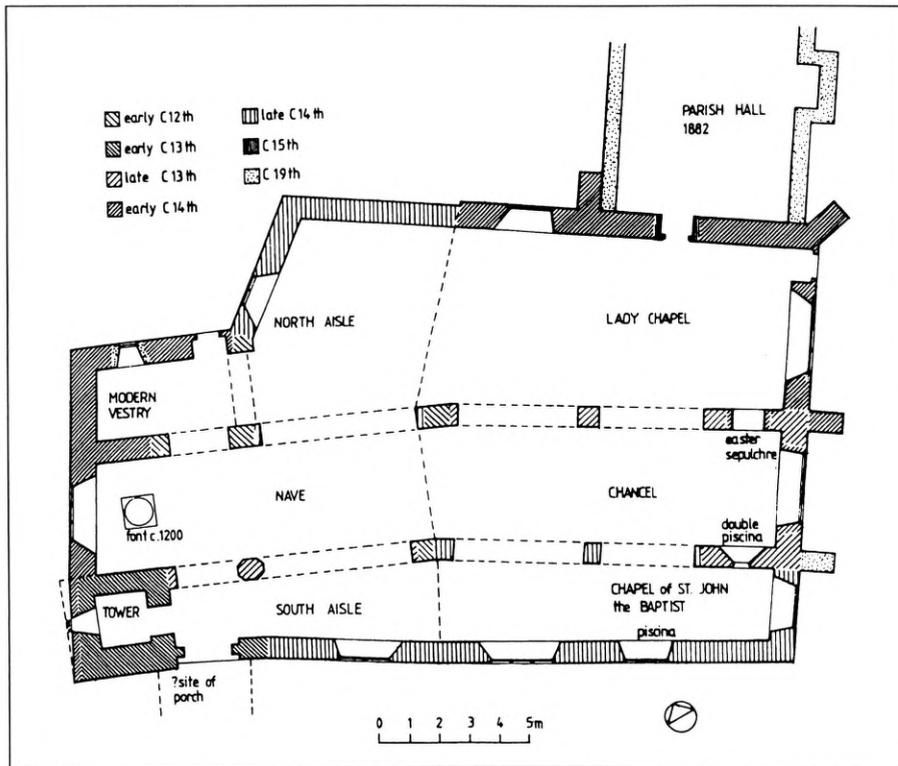


Fig 5 The remarkable plan of St Peter, Canterbury, reflects the development constraints imposed by a central urban location. This is one of a series of archaeological analyses carried out on Kentish churches (after Tatton-Brown 1994)

comprehend how some far-reaching but insupportable assertions ever gained credence, and how many remarkable structural survivals appear to have escaped attention. For example, it was not until the mid 1980s that notice was taken of the fact that the library at Lichfield Cathedral is floored with one of the half-dozen finest 13th-century tile pavements in England (Rodwell 1989).

The archaeological study of quarrying and stone supply for church building has been pursued since the 1980s with some remarkable results (Parsons 1990). One such instance is Brixworth, where tracing the sources of stone rubble, as well as recycled Roman bricks, has led to the recognition that long-distance trading in undistinguished building materials was practised in the Anglo-Saxon period (Sutherland & Parsons 1984).

Careful analysis of the distribution of distinctive materials in a church may not only reveal periods of construction, but also shed light on the logistics of stone supply. The horizontally banded use of different materials in the tower at Sompting (Sussex), provides an instructive example (Aldsworth & Harris 1988) (Fig 6). Fluctuations in the supply of Douling stone for the Early English cathedral at Wells correlates with the fortunes and building programmes at Glastonbury Abbey, the owner of the quarry. An interlocking and closely dated sequence for the early building phases at Wells and Glastonbury has been skilfully elucidated by Jerry Sampson, using evidence of petrology, tooling and block size (Sampson forthcoming, ch 1).

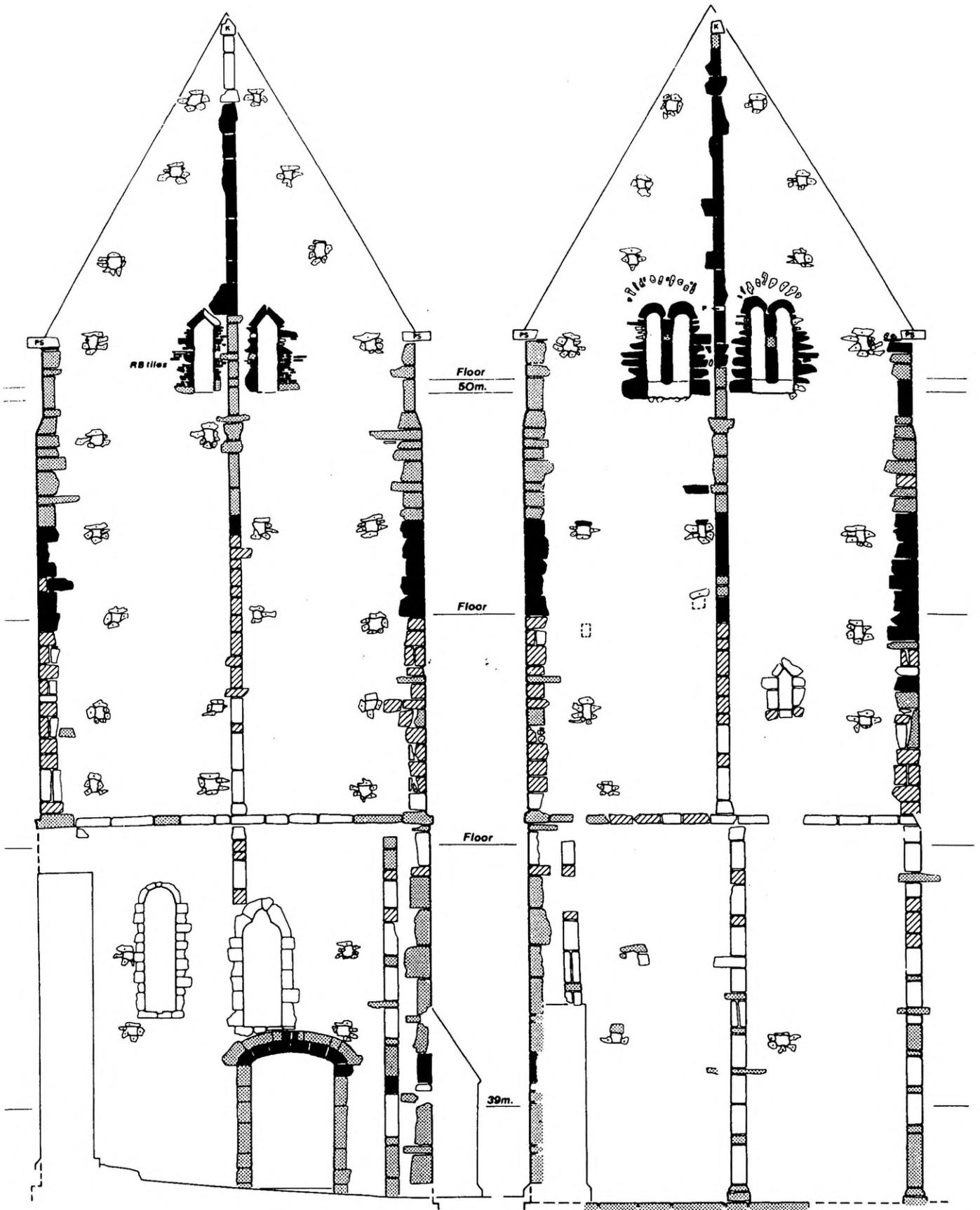
Another informative aspect of masonry construction is the mortar: not its chemical composition (which seldom proves to be worth the effort of analysing), but the technique of its use. Mortars belonging to different building campaigns are often dissimilar in appearance and constructional phases and inserted features can be readily detected by the structural archaeologist. Yet it was not until the 1970s that the relevance of mortars to architectural analysis received serious consideration. It appears that, prior to 1974, there was no general recognition by archaeologists that fresh mortar laid on one day will not unite imperceptibly with that laid on the previous day. There is always a minute fissure and drying-out line at the point of junction, often emphasized by slight discolouration caused by the migration of iron salts to the drying surface. The practical effect of this is the ability to trace

individual days' work, or 'building lifts', thus opening up new possibilities for objectively assessing the progress of construction.

Mortar studies also provide the ability to determine whether a particular feature, such as a window or doorway, is original to the wall in which it is situated. Guesswork and unsubstantiated assertion in this aspect of the architectural history of many buildings is now being replaced by firm evidence. Allied to the study of building lifts is that of scaffolding, again a neglected subject prior to the 1970s: its potential is still largely unrealized today. For the most part ancient scaffolding schemes were logical and predictable, and the residual evidence in church walls can be very revealing. A few detailed studies of scaffolding schemes have been attempted: eg in the Anglo-Saxon turriform church at Barton-upon-Humber (Fig 7) and in the simple Norman building at Bradwell-juxta-Coggeshall (Essex) (Rodwell 1996).

The study of church carpentry has moved forward rapidly in recent years, following the pioneering work of Cecil Hewett, who in the late 1960s began to demonstrate that joint details and constructional forms could be systematically classified and dated (Hewett 1982; 1985).

Fig 6 (opposite) This analysis of the various stone types used for dressings in the west and south faces of the tower of St Mary, Sompting, reflects both the architectural development of the structure and the archaeology of salvage (after Aldsworth & Harris 1988)



BUILDING STONE

0 1 2 3 4 5 Metres

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Ceon | Flint |
| Querr | Pulborough |
| Binslead | Purbeck |
| Ferruginous sandstone | Kentish rag |

The rigorous application of archaeological techniques has resulted in some thoroughgoing reassessments, as at Sompting (Aldsworth & Harris 1988). The recording and analysis of large and complex roof structures is another recent achievement (cf Foot *et al* 1986). Concurrently, the development of dendrochronology offers the potential of unimaginable precision in dating. Of all the technological advances available to structural archaeologists, this is perhaps the one most deserving of landmark status.

Secrets of the grave

The exhumation of human remains is probably the most difficult subject with which the church archaeologist has to contend. It is influenced by public emotion, irrational decision-making and duplicity of standards. In the 1960s and 70s we were often forced by circumstances outside archaeological control to excavate burials badly. The situation has undoubtedly improved, but is still volatile. It is instructive to read the account of the opening and summary

recording of nine of the most important medieval graves in Lincoln Cathedral in 1955: the task was completed in less than one day (Bruce-Mitford 1976). Hardly more inspiring was the opening and study of Archbishop de Grey's tomb in York Minster in 1968, which was undertaken rapidly at night (Ramm 1971, 107). The following year Archbishop de Ludham's tomb received a similarly peremptory investigation. It is difficult to believe that the contents of these outstanding medieval tombs could have been given such cavalier treatment only 25 years ago.

The academic validity of excavating pagan cemeteries has never been in doubt, but the archaeological study of Christian graveyards did not receive general acceptance until the 1970s. Many of the early church excavators simply disregarded human remains, as we have already seen in the case of London. Hence the move to excavate and record adequately substantial groups of burials in a few churches and cemeteries marked a breakthrough in the conceptual approach. The site of St Helen-on-the-Walls, York, excavated 1973–74, provided one of the more substantial burial assemblages (Dawes & Magilton 1980), while at Raunds (Northants), a small pre-Conquest church and its entire cemetery of 363 graves has been examined (Boddington 1996). However, the largest number of burials

excavated from within and around a parish church (2800) comes from Barton-upon-Humber. The intensive, six-year research programme on the skeletal remains currently in progress at Bristol University represents a level of scientific investigation that has never before been approached.

The clearance of vaults and crypts in urban churches for reuse as offices and tea-rooms has become popular, and teams of professional destroyers have usually been engaged to dispose of the contents in the most ruthless manner imaginable. Archaeologists have been lamentably slow to intervene in this grizzly and highly lucrative business. The case of Christ Church, Spitalfields, stands as a beacon in sepulchral archaeology, for it was here that the first archaeologically controlled vault clearance took place in 1984–86 (Reeve & Adams 1993). The remains of a thousand individuals – nearly 400 of them bearing contemporary identity labels – were removed for anthropological examination (Molleson & Cox 1993).

The archaeology of Christian burial is now recognized as a complex

Fig 7 Cutaway isometric view of the turriform church of St Peter, Barton-upon-Humber, showing positions of recorded putlogs, primary floor and roof timbers, and a crane beam (B) (after Rodwell 1986; drawing by S Coll)

subject embracing grave construction, funerary ritual (Litten 1991) and corporeal decomposition (Boddington *et al* 1987). No less important are the remains of associated monuments. The recording of churchyard memorials (Jones 1976) and internal floor slabs has only recently been treated as a subject that demands serious archaeological input. The study of memorials was for too long on a par with train-spotting: names and dates were presumed to be the only details that mattered. The systematic planning and analysis of floors generally is one of the most recent developments in church archaeology (Rodwell 1997).

Churches in the landscape

It is astonishing to reflect that, although churches have been studied by antiquaries for three centuries and more, scant attention was paid to the minutiae of their setting until a quarter of a century ago. Although historians have discussed and analysed ecclesiastical holdings and their relationship to secular developments, there have been few reconciliations between documentary evidence and physical remains.

Recognition that the 'modern' landscape throughout the greater part of the British Isles owes both its general morphology and local detail to relict features that stretch back for centuries if not millennia, is probably the single most important landmark in British post-war archaeology. The implications for church archaeologists are legion, although they cannot be explored in this paper. Several localities have been studied in detail, such as Wootton Wawen (Warks) (Bassett 1983–90), Bampton (Oxon) (Blair 1986; 1988a), Raunds (Fig 8) and Rivenhall.

Church siting and orientation, the size and form of the churchyard, the nature of its boundaries, positions of entrances, road alignments, topographical relationships to hall, rectory and glebe, and innumerable other local factors contribute to a meaningful understanding of the church within the community that it serves. The reasons for the multiplicity of churches within certain towns, their siting and relative chronologies, as well as the often tantalizing relationships glimpsed between medieval buildings and underlying Roman structures, are all topics for archaeological investigation in the future. The breadth and scope of the subject has been most ably demonstrated by Professor Richard Morris (1989), Dr John Blair (1988b; 1992) *et al*.

Conclusion

This paper has concentrated on developments in the archaeology of church fabric and the immediate context of buildings. I have not attempted to embrace churchyards generally, ancillary structures, monastic complexes, or the archaeology of Nonconformity. In all of these areas there

have been important developments over the last 30 years. Nor should the numerous studies in allied branches of church archaeology be overlooked: each has contributed to the discipline as a whole. In some of these subjects there have been landmark developments; eg the compilation of several regional volumes of the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, under the direction of Professor Rosemary Cramp.

There have also been technological advances, and the pioneering work of Dr Christopher Brooke on the application of remote-sensing techniques deserves special mention (cf. Brooke 1986; 1994). The application of photogrammetric recording, especially to large and complex structures, has greatly eased the burden on the archaeological draughtsman. Photogrammetry is now increasingly used by architects as an aid to church repair and conservation, with the result that opportunities to combine architectural and archaeological work are increasing: the recording and interpretation of the tower of St Mary Bishophill Junior, York, in 1980, provides an early model study (Wenham *et al* 1987).

Perhaps the most important point to remember is that church archaeology, as an identifiable sub-discipline, did not exist 25 years ago: there were no practitioners operating under the label 'church archaeologist', and no general textbook on the subject until 15 years ago (Rodwell 1981). Since then various handbooks have appeared on aspects of church recording, and ecclesiastically orientated chapters are found in some general works (eg Wood 1994). The teaching of ecclesiastical archaeology in courses on archaeology and historic conservation is an important step for the dissemination of knowledge and the encouragement of a wider awareness of, and interest in, the subject. An agenda for the future has recently been set out (Blair & Pyrah 1996).

Finally, the recognition in law of the archaeological dimension of the ecclesiastical heritage has been most welcome. Not only does the *Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990* stipulate that archaeology must be taken into consideration in all interventions with the fabric and site, it also *requires* the administrative body of each cathedral to retain the services of a professionally competent archaeologist. That recognition in both Ecclesiastical and Statute Law, must mark the 'coming of age' of church archaeology. A detailed plan for an appropriate level of recording is now a prerequisite of any application to carry out archaeologically sensitive works in an Anglican cathedral. Integrating the demands of archaeology, a repair programme, and the daily life of a cathedral or parish church does not present insuperable difficulties: all that is required is careful pre-planning, common sense and good humour.

We have indeed come a long way in 30 years, passing landmarks great and small, but the pursuit of evidence, the recovery of facts and the reconstruction of lost history,

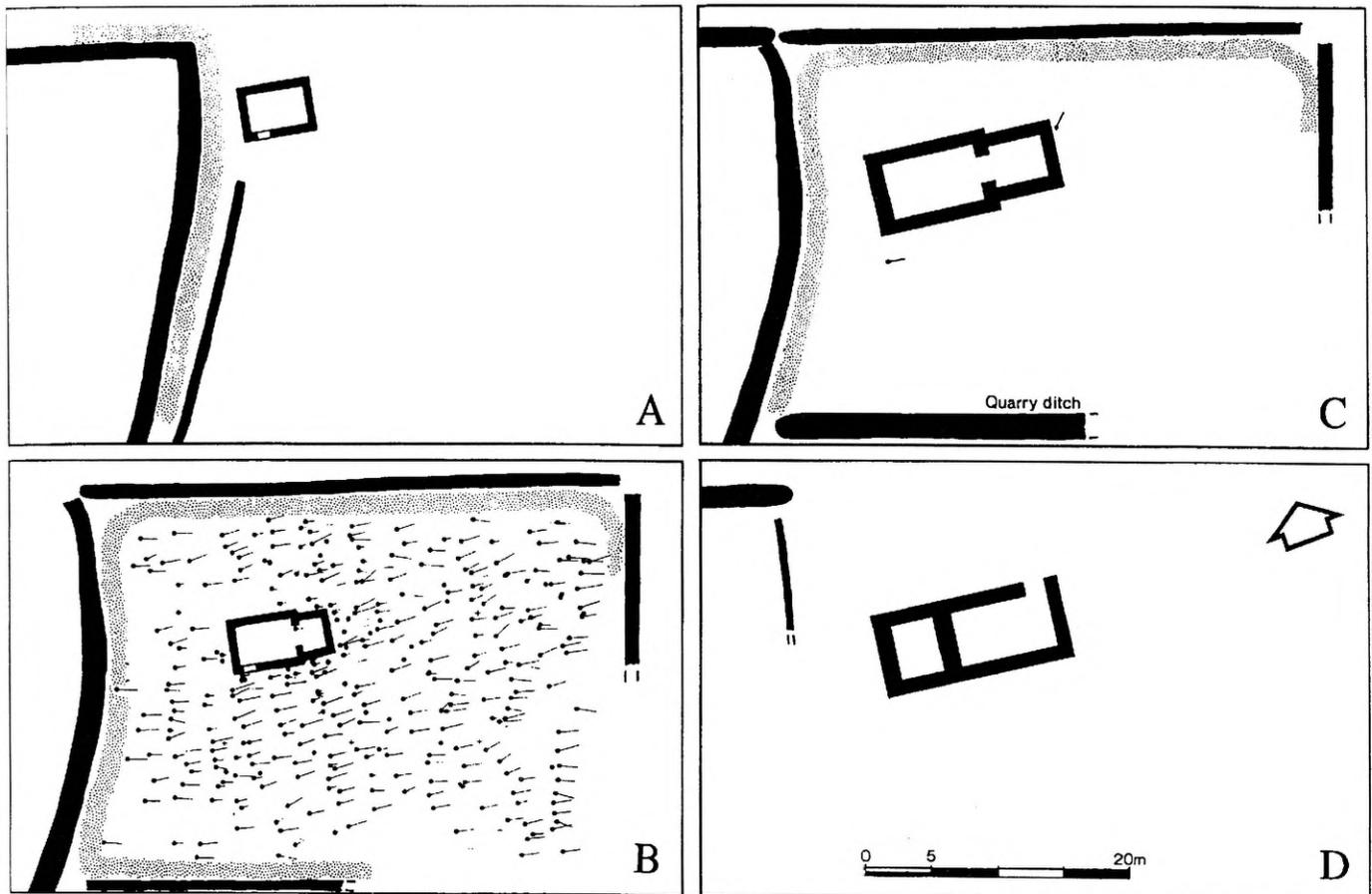


Fig 8 The rediscovery and excavation of a lost Anglo-Saxon church and graveyard at Raunds. A. the first church; B. addition of chancel and creation of graveyard; C. the second church (early Norman); D. medieval conversion to secular use (after Boddington 1996)

remain the objectives of our discipline. In 1975 Martin Biddle succinctly summarized the whole subject that concerns us here in one phrase: 'The archaeology of the church: a widening horizon' (Biddle 1976). Twenty years on, the horizon is still widening.

By way of conclusion, it is sobering to reflect on the following quote:

'It is essentially necessary that the enquirer should have a clear head, free from system, and that he be a careful collector and comparer of facts; and in this, above all, noting carefully the construction of the masonry (without faithfully doing this, an antiquarian draughtsman is little better than nothing, yet how few attend to it); for from the state of it much may be learned of the then skill of the workmen and the progress of the art of building. As to evidence drawn from record only (unsupported by the style of the building), that is of itself insufficient; for although it affords undoubted proof that at the period mentioned a building of some kind was then in existence at that spot, yet it is no proof, nor does it effect to be so, that what remains now is the same. Further, tradition is least of all to be trusted, for she is usually in the custody of the ignorant, and with them the greater their ignorance the older the building.' (Simpson 1828, ii)

Apart from a few anachronisms in phraseology, the above could have been written by Harold Taylor in the 1970s, in one of his pleadings for a systematic and rigorous approach to church archaeology, but it was in fact penned 150 years earlier. The simple uncluttered truth of this mission statement is no less relevant today than it was in 1828.

This modest contribution is offered, *in memoriam*, to the late Dr Harold Taylor, a distinguished scholar and devotee of church archaeology who was also my mentor and friend.

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Notes

1. *Med Archaeol*, 10 (1966), 187.
2. For the series of interim reports, see *Antiq J*, 44 (1964) to 55 (1975).
3. Now known as the Council for the Care of Churches (CCC). A fuller consideration of the Anglican Church's responsibilities for archaeology was undertaken in 1987–88 by a joint working party of the Council for the Care of Churches and the Cathedrals Fabric

- Commission for England. Its report received limited circulation: *Archaeology and the Church of England* (1988).
4. Now known as the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE).
 5. *Med Archaeol*, 20 (1976), 182.

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