



**An Earthwork Survey of  
Stanley Abbey:  
Wiltshire**

## An Earthwork Survey at Stanley Abbey

### *Summary*

*In 1151, twenty-three years after the founding of the first Cistercian abbey in England at Waverley in Surrey, a Cistercian monastery was founded by the Empress Maud and her chamberlain, Drogo, at Loxwell in Wiltshire. Three years later it was moved to Stanley in the parish of Chippenham. The site chosen for the abbey was on "waste" land beside the River Marden within the royal forest of Chippenham. Following the Dissolution of the minor houses in 1536, Stanley Abbey was purchased by one of the local gentry, William Baynton. The monastic buildings did not survive long and the stone was used as building material elsewhere. The area occupied by the monastery, although owned by the Baynton family until the late nineteenth century, was tenanted and became a farm. The site, nevertheless, retained some of its former importance with the Courts Baron being held there until at least the mid-seventeenth century.*

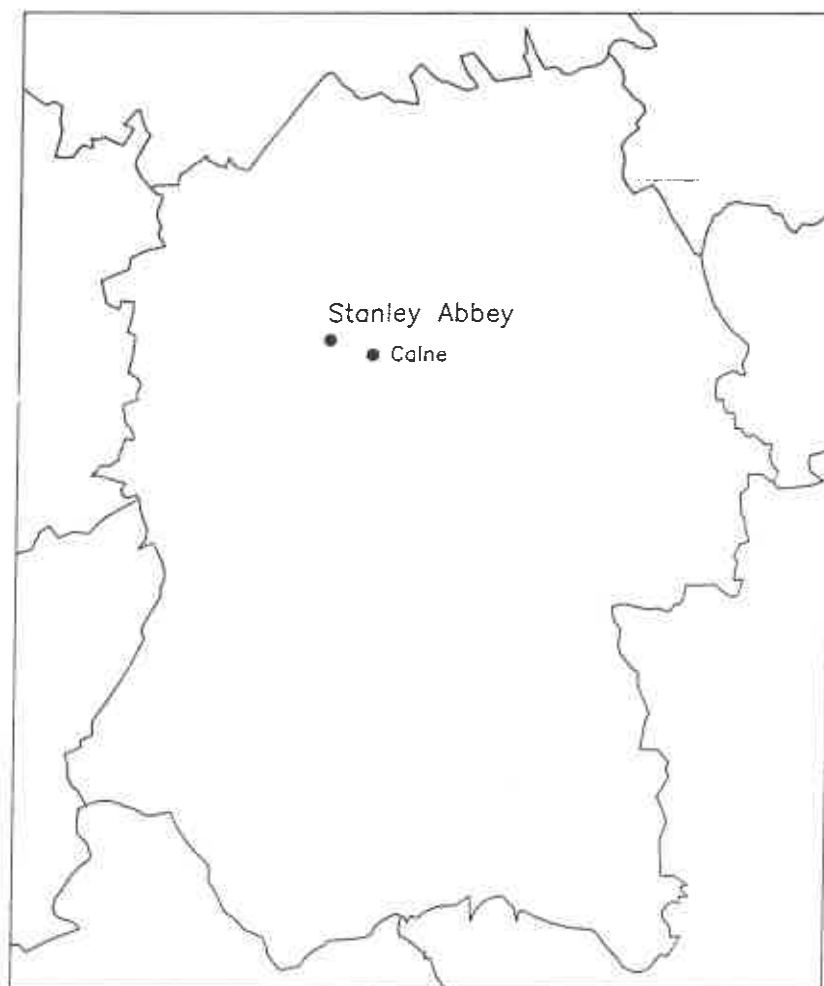
*The remains of well-preserved earthworks represent the stone-robbled monastery; the precinct including fish ponds; two possible mill sites; and other buildings associated with the economic functions of the abbey. Other earthworks within the surveyed area include ridge and furrow cultivation, field enclosures, and a network of drainage channels.*

### 1. Introduction

The site of the Cistercian monastery at Stanley (ST 97 SE 2), centred at ST963723, was surveyed by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) in the Spring of 1996 as part of the Avebury Environs Project.

Stanley was formerly a tithing of Chippenham parish, with Bremhill lying to the north. Changes in the last century have caused the parochial boundary to be moved from the River Marden to the line of the railway-line; thus the site now lies within the parishes of Chippenham, Bremhill, and Calne Without. Two farms, one on either side of the railway, occupy the site. The northern farm, Old Abbey Farm, includes a listed medieval building, whilst the southern farm, Stanley Abbey Farm, is of nineteenth century construction.

Stanley Abbey is situated on low-lying ground on the south bank of the River Marden approximately four kilometres to the north-west of Calne. To the south of the claustral buildings the ground rises gradually as far as the barns of Stanley Abbey Farm before falling again to the south, west, and east. The field boundary to the south of the precinct marks the area where the ground then begins to rise towards Studley and Derry Hill. It is likely therefore, that the claustral buildings would have been screened to the south by the hillock thus ensuring an area of solitude and contemplation, and a physical separation of the religious from the secular functions of the monastery.



*Fig 1. Location Diagram*

## **2. Historical Background**

Stanley Abbey is situated on the northern edge of the Forest of Chippenham. However, it was originally located at Loxwell (known as Lokeswelle in 1151 (Dugdale 1825, 563), and moved to Stanley in 1154 since it was deemed that Loxwell was unsuitable for their needs. The original foundation was for an abbot and twelve monks. A later perambulation of the forest in 1300 shows that the abbey was excluded from the forest bounds (Grant 1959, 446). The abbey was a daughter house of the Savignac abbey of Quarr on the Isle of Wight. In 1204 the monastery was well enough established to be able to send a colony to Graiguenamagh in Ireland (Knowles et al. 1971, 125).

Despite the new site being more spacious than their previous one, water seemed to be in short supply and in 1214 the abbot, Thomas of Calstone, completed an aqueduct from Loxwell to Stanley in order to improve the supply of water (Brakspear 1907, 544).

The monastery was re-built in the thirteenth century and accommodated up to twenty-four monks and forty lay-brothers. In 1291 the monk's were given the right to dig stone in the king's quarry in Pewsham Forest "*for building the abbey houses and a wall about them*" (Chettle & Kirby 1956, 271). They were also given other rights within the forest, for example, in 1189 they were granted the right of pannage and firebote (ibid, 269), and in 1294 they were given the right to dig, smelt, and remove iron-stone for two years (ibid, 271).

Further building work was undertaken to the church and cloister during the fourteenth-century; at the time of the Suppression some of the abbey was said to be "*newe buylded*" (Brakspear 1907, 545).

Gifts and grants to the abbey continued throughout the thirteenth century, the estates lay chiefly in North Wiltshire, including a quarry at Hazelgrove in the parish of Box, and also in the counties of Gloucestershire, Somerset, Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Sheep and cattle were both important to the Cistercian economy, although sheep were perhaps predominant during the period 1175 - 1325. By the end of the thirteenth century Stanley, along with other Cistercian monasteries, produced a considerable amount of wool which was shipped to the continent (Donkin, 84, 90); for example, in 1275 forty sacks a year were sent to Italy (Chettle & Kirby 1956, 272). Cattle were equally as important for a short time in most houses founded before the mid-twelfth century (Donkin 1978, 68, 83) and despite there being no readily available records for cattle at Stanley the landscape, and evidence from other monastic orders, would suggest that the marshes on the edge of Chippenham Forest were well suited (for example: London 1979, 57). Surviving accounts from the late thirteenth century would also suggest that the abbey was engaged in mixed farming for small profits. The home grange was responsible for providing supplies in kind; in 1414-15 they made deliveries "*to the lord's household at Stanley by tally*". The other granges were initially managed by lay brothers but later they were leased (for example Heywood Grange was let in 1415 for twenty years (Chettle & Kirby 1956, 272). The demesne covered 450 acres (ibid, 274).

An indication of the landscape at Stanley Abbey is shown from various grants during the thirteenth century. It would appear that, to the south of the river the land comprised woodland and marsh; for example, there were at least twenty-three grants of the right to common of pasture in the wood called "the More" which lay on the south side of the abbey. In 1227 the monks were granted "Alfletmore" (or Affledmore) or "La More", on the south side of the abbey gate and in 1290 they had licence to enclose "La More" as part of Chippenham Forest with a small ditch and low hedge (ibid, 271). Another grant gave the monks the right of common of pasture, presumably for cattle, in the wood (the More) from the entrance to the abbey to a close called Affledmore, and from the marsh called the More to the top of the hill, probably Studley, and that they may enclose the wood with a hedge and ditch (WRO 1215.8).

The *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, compiled in 1535 following the survey of ecclesiastical lands, shows that Stanley was valued at £177 0s 8d per annum; although this may be an under-valuation (Betley 1989, 60). There were ten monks, including the abbot Thomas Calne (or Morley) and a novice, and a total of forty-three servants, and included seven corrodians. The abbey had thirty estates in

Wiltshire and neighbouring counties (Chettle & Kirby 1956, 272). In 1536 the abbey, which was then valued at £204 3s 6½d was dissolved along with the other smaller Houses (Bettey 1989, 175).

Following the Dissolution in February 1536 the abbey estates were quickly broken up, six of the manors going to Sir Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp (L & P Hen VIII Vol X, 526). In June 1537 Sir Edward Baynton purchased the abbey, together with the demesne lands for the sum of £1200 (ibid, xii, pt1. 143). Although Fox-Talbot and Brakspear both suggest that Baynton soon began dismantling the church and most of the domestic buildings in order to use the stone to build his new house at Bromham, (Talbot 1875, 326; Brakspear 1907-8, 547); some buildings appear to have survived until at least 1555 when there was a sale document for the "*church, belfry and churchyard, houses, dovehouses, mills, and ponds, together with the park of Stanley and various closes*" (WRO 1213.20). In the same year the abbot's house was also searched for counterfeit coin-making equipment (Bettey 1989, 124). By 1600 the site was described as containing "*the cheife place, or mantion house, of the Late Moanasterie, of Stanley .... and other buildings there, commonly called, or knowen by the name, of the Abbot's Lodginge ..... the brewehowse, bakehowse, porter's lodge, and the stable, adjioyninge to the saide lodge, the maultehouse and grayner ...., water grist mill and land*" (WRO 473.245). By the mid seventeenth century when John Aubrey visited Stanley, little remained of the abbey; he described it as "*it is very rich land, and lies by the river's side, but in a place in the winter time altogether unpleasant. Here is now scarce left any vestiguim of Church or house*" (Jackson 1862, 112-3). Further references to the land-use at Stanley are evident from Surveys and Rentals. In 1665, the abbey "grist" mill is mentioned and in 1671 there is mention of "the abbey mills" (Freeman 1988, 41-44).

Stanley appears to have maintained its importance in the local area until at least the early eighteenth century since the Courts Baron were held there (WRO 473/253, 254). In the early nineteenth century the Chippenham branch of the Wilts & Berks canal was constructed. This canal, which crosses the western part of the surveyed area, remained in operation until 1914 when it was closed by an Act of Parliament (Hadfield 1959, 277).

Thirty years after the completion of the canal, work started on the Calne to Chippenham branch railway which cuts through the centre of the site. The construction was first proposed in 1859 and was to be a single broad gauge track. The construction of the railway necessitated a cutting from the western end of the site to a point close to the claustral range. Whilst excavating the cutting four skeletons were located four feet below the surface (DM 16.79). Coins were also recovered (Maggs 1990, 7), although there is no indication of their type or date. The number of skeletons is at variance to other reports that suggest twelve to fourteen skeletons were unearthed lying face down. Seven feet beneath the surface a blacksmith's forge was also discovered together with coal (Daniel 1894, 54). The railway was opened in October 1863 and remained in use until its closure in 1965.

By the mid-nineteenth century the site of Stanley Abbey was owned by Charlotte Starkey, a descendent of the Baynton's, and the farm was occupied by Jacob Fry. The land was principally in pasture and the eastern part of the site, beyond the claustral buildings, was known as The Park. A small orchard is evident on the island to the north of the farm (WRO: Tithe Award map Tithing of

Stanley in Chippenham, 1850). In 1863 the Marquis of Lansdowne of Bowood House purchased Stanley, together with Lockswell and Studley (DM16.160).

### 3. Archaeological and Architectural Background

#### Archaeology

Harold Brakspear excavated the site of the monastery with the assistance of four labourers over a period of several months in 1905 (Brakspear 1907-8, 541-81; Brakspear 1907, pp. 493-516). The excavation technique adopted is unclear, but probably entailed trenching along the probable lines of walls and trenching in other places. His plan shows a series of building sequences dating from its foundation in the twelfth century to the Dissolution. The site of the monastery had been extensively stone-robbled following its suppression and his conclusions appear to be based largely on evidence from other Cistercian houses. The church and claustral buildings were excavated but little within the precinct apart from the infirmary and the site of a possible dovecote, however, the evidence for these two sites is inconclusive. Apart from a plan of Stanley, no excavation notes were found despite Brakspear's papers on Wiltshire being deposited at Devizes museum following his death in 1934.<sup>1</sup>

The church occupied the southern side of the cloister and there appears to have been three building phases. In the final stage it measured c227 ft x 76 ft (c. 69x23m) overall, with the south transept 48 ft x 33 ft (c13x11m) and at least four side chapels against the south nave measuring 57 ft x 24 ft (c. 17x7m). Little is known about the earliest church, however, it appears to have been smaller and comprise an aisled nave with two chapels in the transepts and a low tower over the crossing. The second church, probably dedicated in 1266, was larger and apparently incorporated part of the earlier church. Brakspear suggests that the nave may have been merely remodelled but the presbytery and south transept were enlarged. The north transept remained the same. In the fourteenth century the church was further enlarged with the addition of a row of at least four chapels on the south side of the nave.

The cloister garth was almost square and measured 105 x 100ft (c. 32x31m), and had a pentice covered walk on all four sides. The inner wall was complete on all sides apart from the south, with the alley varying in width from 12 to 9ft. The flooring on the west side was complete for 40ft (c12m) and is preserved beneath a shed.

The claustral range extended north from the church towards the leat. On the east side was the vestry, chapter-house, parlour and novices lodging with the dorter above. The chapter-house was a six-bay building dating to the thirteenth century and measured 60 x 30ft (18.4 x 9.2m). In the second bay were three stone coffins, all had been disturbed. To the north of the chapter-house was the parlour, a small room measuring 27.5 x 16ft (8.4 x 4.9m). Beyond the parlour was the novices lodging, extending some 166ft (51m) and with twelve bays. The side walls had been largely stone-robbled apart from a fragment on the east side by the ninth bay and the foundations on the west at

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Oswald Brakspear dated 15 May 1996 in which he says that Canon Goddard removed those papers relating to Wiltshire following the death of his father and were deposited in Devizes Museum. However, the only papers held at the museum are a plan of the site, and drawings of tiles which are in *WAM*.

the eleventh bay. Above the novices lodging would have been the dorter with a reredorter to the side. Evidence of post-suppression activity was found in two places in the novices lodging. The first was a rubbish pit located at the fourth column; Brakspear also suggested that the cross-walls at the northern end may not be monastic. The reredorter lay on the east side of the novices lodging and measured 55 x 30ft (16.8 x 9.2m). The abbey drain extended east/west on the northern side of the reredorter.

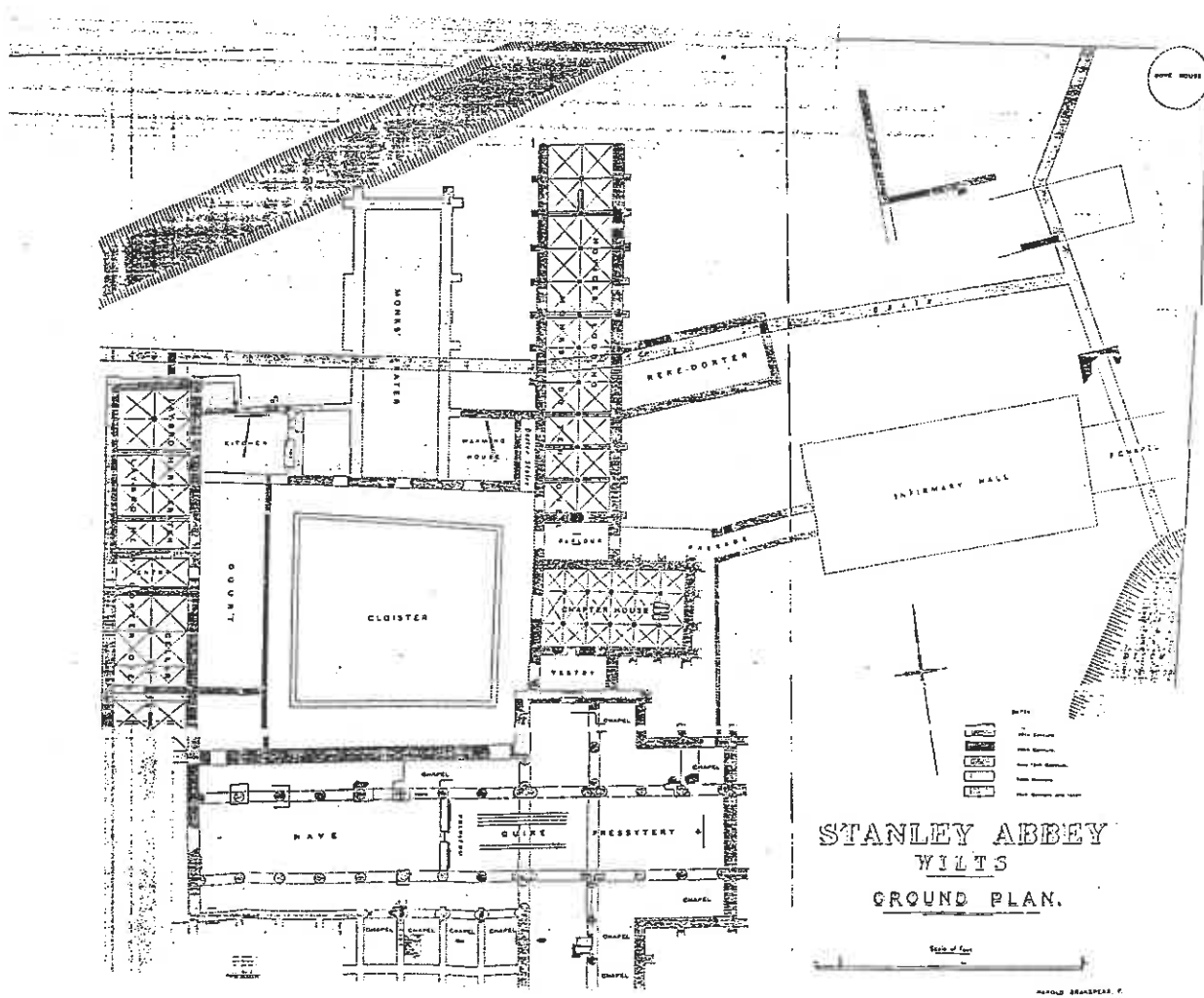


Fig. 2. The 1907 Excavation Plan

Along the northern range of the cloister was the warming house, frater and kitchen. Nothing was found of the warming house apart from a small length of drain leading from the direction of the cloister. The frater, or dining room, measured 110 x 30ft (33.6 x 9.2m). Small sections of the wall

were located but the remainder of the building was defined by depressions in the ground. The kitchen originally adjoined the frater but was later modified in the thirteenth century and moved to the west. The intervening space was possibly used as a scullery or pastry house. In its final stage the kitchen measured 36 x 25ft (11.1 x 7.7m) with a stone drain 9in wide extending north from the centre to meet a second drain against the northern wall. On the north-west side of the kitchen was probably the scullery.

On the western range was the cellarer's building, the lay brothers frater, with dorter above. This building range was separated from the cloister by a court, part of which is preserved under a modern shed. The court was an unusual feature in monasteries and is known at only five other sites (ibid, 572). The use of the court is uncertain, but one suggestion is that it was the cloister for the lay brothers. The cellarer's building was 148 x 29.5ft (45.2 x 9m), it was divided into two apartments with a central entry. To the south of the entry was a cellar 58ft (17.9m) long, divided into four bays, almost the complete east wall of this cellar was located. On the northern side was a chamber 66ft (20m) long and divided into five bays; much of the walling was located. This bay is thought to have been used as the lay brothers frater. The reredorter for the lay brothers was not located but was probably situated at the northern end of the building.

The infirmary lay to the east of the claustral range and measured 118 x 54ft (36 x 16.4m). Its location is marked by the trenches of the stone robbing. The infirmary was linked to the cloister by a passage, of which, fragments of the walls were found. To the east of the infirmary was another building which is thought to have been a chapel. The infirmary and possible chapel had been totally stone robbed, and their location was only determined by the building debris.

To the north of the infirmary further building foundations were located together with a possible dovecote measuring 24ft (7.4m) diameter. East of the infirmary is a level area which was thought to be the site of the gardens.

The excavation only partially uncovered the water supply system within the monastery. A main drain was located in the east extending along the north side of the reredorter from a channel cut from the angle of the main channel in the south. This latter channel dog-legged as far as the leat in the north. Evidence for the supply of water to the remainder of the abbey appears to be fragmentary.

No further archaeological investigation took place at Stanley until May 1968 when the Ordnance Survey carried out an earthwork survey of the monastic precinct at a scale of 1:2500; however, the survey was confined mainly to the major earthworks of the water channels, the causeway, and the fishponds.

### **Architectural Survey**

*This report was written by Threatened Buildings of RCHME.*

Old Abbey Farmhouse is a conversion of a late medieval rubble building which was associated with Stanley Abbey. Most of its existing features date from the eighteenth or nineteenth century though



it was first converted to a house in the sixteenth century. This date is suggested by the details of the stack which was inserted into the south end of the range. On the ground floor it had a fireplace with chamfered stone jambs and a timber bressumer which has been cut through. The fireplace was narrowed in the nineteenth century. On the first floor the fireplace had a chamfered four-centred wooden bressumer with chamfered stone jambs. These jambs have broad chamfers in their upper part which are stopped and reduced in width on the lower part of the jambs. These fireplaces are only on the north side of the stack, indicating that the two-bay south rooms in the late sixteenth century were unheated. The insertion of this stack led to a lobby entry plan being created.

The medieval building which was converted into the house was six-bays long, with five roof trusses and two end trusses. The two bays at the south end of the range have some smoke-blackening but the rest of the roof is unsooted. The trusses are relatively simple ones with two ranks of butt purlins and windbraces. Two trusses have remains of ties which ran across the full width of the range, though most of the trusses have been short truncated ties. The trusses also have collars.

The roof and the building in general raises the issue of how many stories were in the original medieval building. If two-storeyed, the ties across the range would have prevented practical circulation between bays, as the ties are around 1.5m above the present floor. There is a set back in the side walls where the upper parts of the east and west walls thin back. Does this indicate that the early building was a tall single storey building which was raised in the sixteenth century at which time the roof was raised and the ties cut back? Definitive proof was not found in the gables or quoins; a result of later alterations to these parts of the building.

#### 4. Earthwork Survey and Interpretation

*The letters and numbers in italics relate to those on the plan.*

##### **The Survey**

The abbey and polygonal-shaped precinct is contained within a bank and ditched enclosure covering an area of c. 11.4ha. To the north it is bounded by the River Marden (which flows in an east/west direction), whilst a bank and ditch forms the boundary in the east and west; the southern end of the western boundary is obscured by a road and farm buildings. In the south the boundary is marked by a fragmentary bank and the main water channel. The south-west boundary continues for c. 220m, defined by a bank (n<sup>1</sup>) on the southern side c. 5m wide and c. 1.5m high, to a point where it meets the causeway by the fence-line. Cutting through the centre of the precinct in an east/west direction is a disused railway line, and a disused canal marks the western limit of the survey. Three areas within the precinct were not surveyed due to vegetation and monastic building debris, these are defined by a pecked line on the plan. Part of a stone coffin was noted on the south side of Old Abbey Farm.

##### *The Abbey*

The church and cloister buildings lie to the east of Old Abbey Farm and extend as far as the main channel to the east of the monastic gardens.

The church (a) formed the southern limit of the monastery and is marked in the south by three sub-circular depressions, possibly chapels, linked by a linear scarp; overall the church measures c. 60 x 20m. To the north lay the cloister buildings, forming an almost square feature extending c. 70 x 75m from the church to the mill leat. The features and levelled area to the east of the church is a possible site for the monk's cemetery. The cloister buildings are defined by a series of sub-circular depressions and banks, in a similar manner to the church. At (b) a large, heavily robbed, sub-circular depression measuring 15 x 8m and up to 1.9m deep, was the probable site of the chapter-house. To the north of the chapter-house linear scarps and a bank measuring c.45 x 10m probably represent the site of the novices lodging (k), whilst to the east, on lower ground and on the same orientation as the monastery, is a sub-rectangular feature formed by a bank measuring 20 x 15m.

A level rectangular area (c) measuring c. 30 x 20m to the east of an out-building was the cloister garth. The out-building (d) covers a tiled pavement of the western cloister alley (ibid, 562). Much of the western cloister range is masked by monastic building debris, farm walls, and a modern garden, however, a spread bank (m) may form part of the lay-brothers frater and dorter.

The northern range comprises an irregular-shaped platform (e), which can be identified as the kitchen. A sub-rectangular depression c. 20 x 5m to the east marks the site of the frater (f).

To the east of the cloister, and set on a slightly different alignment to the claustral range, is a rectangular feature defined by a ditch on the north and south sides and measuring c. 30 x 17m; this is the probable site of the infirmary (g). Extending from the eastern side of the infirmary is a rectangular hollow (h) measuring c.10 x 5m which is probably the site of the infirmary chapel. The circular feature (j) to the north-east of the infirmary was interpreted by Brakspear as a dove-cote (ibid, 576). Lying to the south of the dove-cote is a sub-rectangular structure measuring c. 15 x 10m.

The area immediately to the east of the claustral range and infirmary is enclosed on the south, east, and north sides by an embankment up to 0.2m high. On this platform a number of slight linear scarps sub-divide the area, forming a series of smaller enclosures. This area includes a small circular mound (l). This area is likely to have been the site of the monastic gardens with a dove-cote.

A ditch extends from the angle of the main channel on the south-west corner of the garden for a distance of c. 50m before dog-legging for a further 23m to the leat. This ditch formed part of the water supply to the abbey.

### *The Precinct Boundary*

The precinct boundary is defined by a bank and ditch on three sides, whilst on the fourth side it is marked by the River Marden. In the east the precinct boundary extends as a bank measuring c.0.5m high with an external ditch. This bank measures c. 190m from the mill race to a point where it has been cut at the southern end by the water channel. In the north, within the boundary, is an

entrance with two possible buildings on either side (n) thus forming a gatehouse. Further south a gap, c.8m wide, may have been another, albeit minor entrance on this side.

The southern side of the precinct boundary is defined by a water channel which varies in depth from c. 2m at its western end to c. 4m in the east, and up to 10m wide. At (o) an embankment, possibly a collapsed bridge, can be seen. Another bridge is located at the western end of the water channel (p) which links the causeway to the Outer Court. Exposed stone rubble is also evident in this area. Externally the intermittent lengths of bank along the southern side of the water channel, are possibly remnants of a former boundary wall.

Adjoining the southern boundary ditch is a curving bank with an internal ditch (q). Within this area there are a number of linear drainage channels and related features. To the north, on a ledge of higher ground are a series of possible building platforms, varying in size from 20 x 10m to 10 x 5m.

The precinct boundary on the western side is marked by a water channel (o<sup>1</sup>) which extends from the railway-line to the pond at (k<sup>1</sup>). The pond (r) at the northern end is separated from the remainder of the channel by a farm track which was probably a former bridge. A bank and ditch to the west of (r) formerly extended to the west (ibid, fig. 1), but much of its course has been destroyed by the construction of an open barn. The water channel to the south of (r) varies in depth from c. 1m in the north to a point near the southern end where it is c. 2m. A spread truncated bank (s), measuring 10m wide and c. 0.1m high, extends from the channel towards the railway-line. This bank is on a similar alignment to the claustral range and Inner Court.

On the northern side of the railway-line the precinct boundary is defined by a bank and external ditch (t) which extends north from the line to the farm outbuildings. A sub-square terrace located to the east of the bank and measuring c.10m<sup>2</sup>, is a possible building platform. The line of the farm outbuildings reflects the course of the precinct boundary to the river and presumably overlies the remainder of the boundary bank.

The northern side of the precinct is formed by the River Marden, with fish ponds lying to the south, separated from the monastery by a leat. The mill-race extends from the river in the east and flows in a westerly direction. At the eastern end the mill-race is broad and shallow, possibly due to silting, with a bank on the northern side. The race is truncated at (u) by a deeper narrow sluice which appears to have been an outflow into the river from the main abbey water supply. The mill-race narrows for c. 60m to a point where there is a c.8m<sup>2</sup> platform (v), possibly the site of a mill. From this point the leat again widens to c. 10m and two cuts on the northern bank may be sluices for the fish ponds, whilst those on the southern side are possible drains from the abbey. The bank on the northern side of the mill-race is c. 1m high whilst on the southern side it varies from c. 1m on the stretch by the monastery to c.2.5m near the possible mill site. At (w) the channel splits, one branch leading to the river while the second continues in a westerly direction. Stonework in the bank at (w) would suggest that it was revetted in this area. The westerly channel narrows to c. 4m and a change in level at this point may be the result of a collapsed bridge, this is further supported by the curving nature of the stonework on the southern side. Further west the channel has been filled in and an open barn erected. An extant bridge (x) marks the point where the channel opens

out to a pond-like area and the river. This area is overlain by a barn which is probably modern apart from a lower course.

The splitting of the channel effectively creates an island on the northern side. On this island is a meandering ditch, possibly an old water course (y), whilst along the northern edge are at least two possible building platforms. Extending north-east from the bridge (x) is a hollow way c. 0.1m deep and c.5m wide leading towards the river.

### *The Fish Ponds*

The fish ponds lie to the north of the leat and cover an area of c. 0.56 ha. They comprise possibly four irregularly shaped ponds which are supplied with water from at two possible points along the leat. The largest pond (z) is sub-rectangular in shape and measures c. 30 x 15m. To the east is a L-shaped pond which appears to feed into another one to the north. This extends south-east to a smaller pond and becomes the drain into the river in the north. On the western side of (z) is an irregular shaped pond with a linear depression on its northern side. A former river course can be seen to the east of the pond area, flanking the present day River Marden.

### *Features Within the Precinct*

Within the eastern side of the precinct two trapezoidal moat sites have been created by the construction of the water channels. However, the channel here continues west beyond the moats for 160m before turning south for a further 40m. The depth of the channel varies from 2m in the east to c. 4m at its terminal.

The northern moat covers an area of c.5 ha and has a sub-rectangular pond measuring c. 30 x 10m and c. 1.5m deep at the northern end; ridge and furrow, orientated north/south overlies a sub-rectangular platform on the eastern side. The southern, larger moat, covers c. 0.7 ha. Within it, on a terrace to the south, are three sub-rectangular platforms, possibly buildings. On the east and west sides of the island is a spread bank c. 0.1m high.

To the west of the southerly moat is an enclosed area (a<sup>1</sup>) bounded by a main water channel and a linear ditch in the south which varies in depth from 0.7m in the west to 0.4m deep in the east. It is defined on the western side by a prominent bank which has been cut by the railway-line. This area is largely devoid of earthworks apart from a sub-rectangular enclosure in the south-west corner measuring c. 30 x 25m.

To the south of the church is a large sub-rectangular enclosure measuring c.150 x 100m which is bisected by the disused railway-line. Along its southern side the enclosure is defined by a series of at least eight sub-rectangular platforms varying in size from c.20 x 10m to c.10 x 5m. Some appear to have internal divisions, such as (b<sup>1</sup>), whilst others are on two levels, such as at (c<sup>1</sup>), which is possibly a building and an ancillary structure. To the south-east is a slight hollow way (d<sup>1</sup>) leading to the bridge at (o); the boundary bank and ditch (e<sup>1</sup>) links the enclosure to the water channel. The eastern side of the enclosure is defined by a boundary bank which abuts an east/west ditch at (f<sup>1</sup>). To the north of the railway-line the bank, a stone-robbled wall, continues for c. 40m and turns west

where it is partially cut by the main water channel. It continues for a further 30m to the church. On the western side the enclosure is defined by a bank (g<sup>1</sup>) which appears to be overlain by another example leading from a substantial enclosure to the west. This enclosure is defined as a sub-rectangular depression (m<sup>1</sup>) measuring c. 20 x 15m, with an embanked wall on the east and north sides and an entrance c.5m wide in the north. Above this depression and to the south, are traces of further buildings that have been cut by the railway.

Cutting diagonally through the enclosure from the south-west side of the church to at least the railway-line is a bank measuring c. 0.5m high which may be related to the hollow way (d) and bridge (o).

To the south-west of the enclosure, and set at a slightly different alignment, is an embanked and heavily robbed enclosure measuring c. 30 x 25m (q<sup>1</sup>) with another immediately to the north (l<sup>1</sup>).

On the east side of the enclosure, close to the church, is a rectangular enclosure c. 25 x 10m (h<sup>1</sup>) bounded by a bank on the west and a broad linear depression on the east. To the west of the bank, by the railway-line, are further possible building platforms.

#### *The Causeway*

To the south of the precinct a dog-legged causeway provides access to the monastery. On either side is a slight ditch which tapers out on the western side but widens on the east. On the western side, between a substantial embankment close to the road and the causeway, there is a relatively flat trapezoidal area (j<sup>1</sup>) of c. 0.4 ha with herring-bone linear drainage channels that drain into a pond (k<sup>1</sup>) to the north. Here the pond is bisected by a broad curving bank and a platform measuring c. 10 x 5m. This platform (p<sup>1</sup>) is 0.6m above the level of the pond and the causeway bank is a further 1.5m above this.

On the western side of the precinct and to the east of the road, a bank (n<sup>1</sup>) extends south as far as the causeway by the fence-line. On the west side of the embankment there is a terrace with slight traces of possibly four platforms measuring up to 10 x 5m.

#### *Miscellaneous Features*

Ridge and furrow is evident in five places within the survey area. The lands are generally orientated north/south and measure c.8m between lands and are c. 0.2m deep. The largest area, covering 1.6 ha., lies on the western side of the precinct. Here the ridge and furrow is bisected by a drainage ditch which appears to feed into a former river course in the north. The drainage ditch is c.1m deep and has been infilled to the south. A sub-circular ditch, measuring c.0.2m is partially overlain by the drainage ditch. On the western and eastern side of the ditch a terrace above the former river course formed a headland.

Beyond the eastern precinct boundary, ridge and furrow lies on either side of the railway-line. Overlying the lands are a series of linear drainage channels which feed into two parallel ditches and drain to the east. To the south of the railway-line the ridge and furrow is contained in an old,

terraced field measuring 120 x 60m. The ridge and furrow extends to the north of the field but is less well defined with an amorphous area of depressions close to the precinct boundary.

To the south of Stanley Abbey Farm there are further slight traces of ridge and furrow with the lands orientated north-west/south-east and c.0.1m deep.

On the south side of the modern road is an embanked enclosure covering an area of at least 2.5 ha with an external ditch on the north and south sides, and an entrance in the east. Within this enclosure there are slight traces of ridge and furrow (this is, however, more apparent on AP: NMR 15411/503 dated 8 Feb 96). To the south of the enclosure are at least three mounds, possibly heads.

To the south of the embanked enclosure is a bank (ST 97 SE 24) which extends from a house in the south close to the causeway, through a pasture field for nearly 1 km; it is 8m wide and up to 0.9m high.

### **Interpretation**

Stanley is first recorded at the time of the Domesday Survey when there was one plough, ten acres of meadow, and a population of six (Thorn 1979, 37:6). It is unclear where the settlement was located, although it has been suggested that it lay on the site of the monastery, however, there is no earthwork evidence to support this. It has been suggested that the settlement may have been sited on Studley Hill (ST96357175), again, excavation did not reveal any conclusive evidence, rather, many of the depressions on the hill may be the result of stone quarrying, natural fault, and slippage (ST 97 SE 14).

Stanley Abbey is today approached by a minor road which leads from Studley towards Chippenham and Bremhill. However, it appears that there were other tracks in the region during the medieval period leading through the woodland and marsh. One particular track of significance is shown on Andrews and Dury's map of 1773, here a track describes a broad curve to the west of a stream known as Pudding Brook, between Studley and a farm near Stanley Bridge; another track joins it thus forming a Y leading to a farm called Forest Gate Farm (fig. 3; Andrews and Dury map of Wiltshire 1773). The track near Forest Gate Farm is c. 8m wide and is defined by a bank measuring c.1m high x c.4m wide on the western side, and by a hedge row on the east. In the north, near Stanley Bridge, it is defined by a track with a headland on the northern side. The track avoids the abbey precinct and the curving nature would suggest that it is avoiding an earlier feature. By the late nineteenth century it was apparently no longer in use (OS 1st Edition 1889). It seems unlikely that the present road would have been constructed during the medieval period so close to the precinct and was, therefore, probably constructed following the Suppression to give better access to the farm.

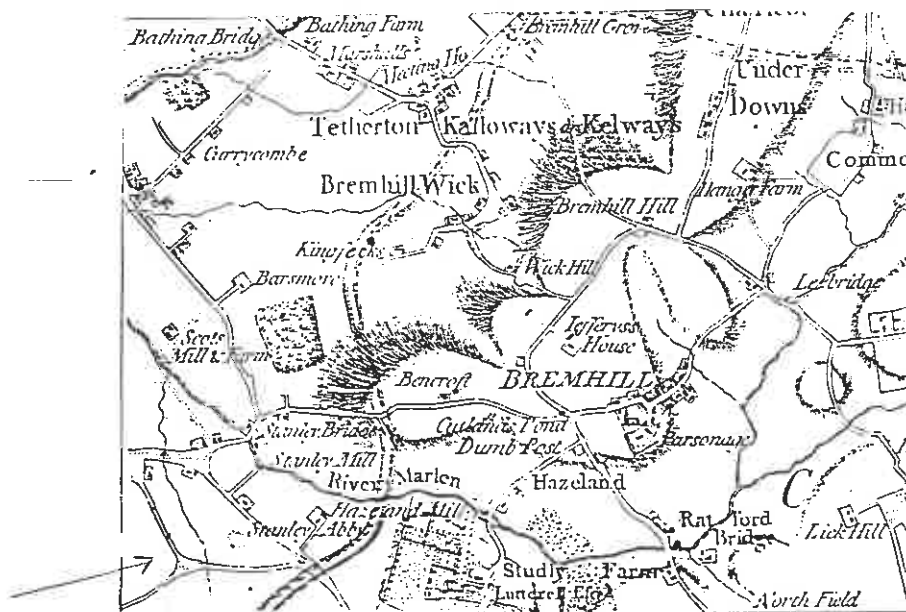
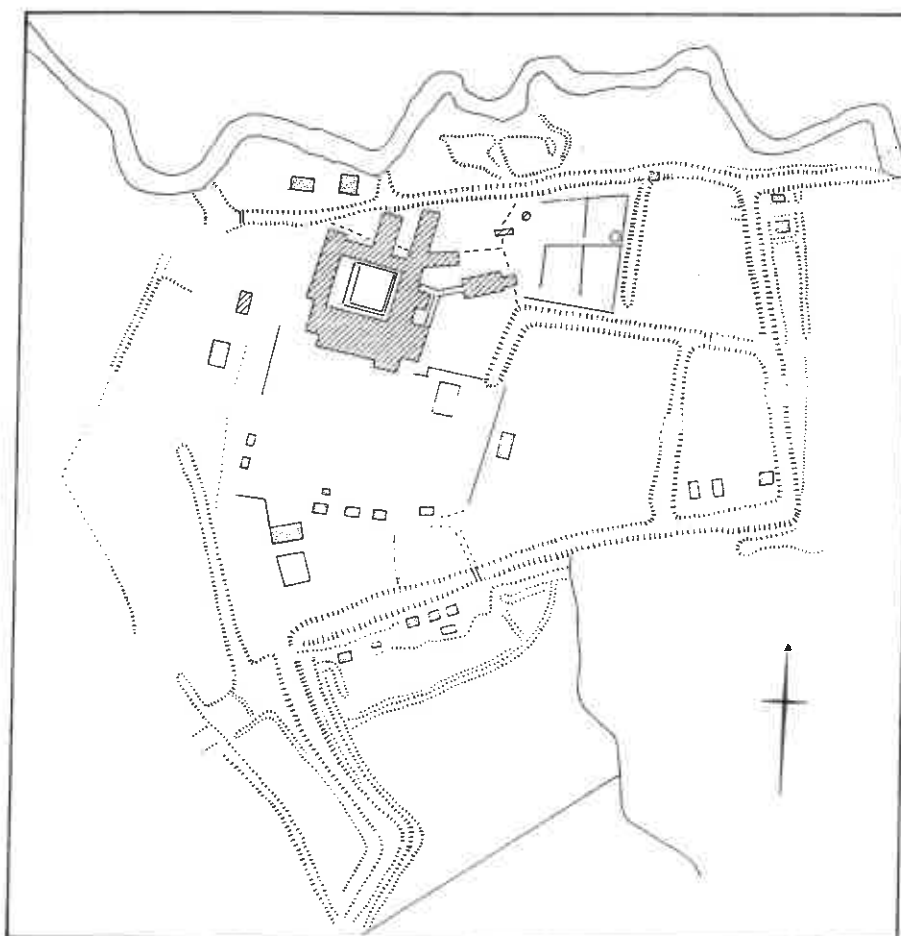


Fig 3. Andrews and Dury Map 1773

The precinct boundary is largely defined by the water channels, with a bank and ditch on the east and west sides. Indications within the precinct, however, would suggest that there was more than one phase in the development and that it was enlarged at some time, possibly when the church was being re-built in the mid-thirteenth century. At the southern end of the eastern boundary bank it appears that it is overlain by a water channel; similarly in the west the bank (s) also appears to be overlain by a water channel (significantly the other channels within the precinct conform to the alignment of the claustral range and Inner Court, unlike the eastern channel. Two water drainage ditches, on either side of the canal to the east of the precinct, are probably monastic since they are the only ones along the River Marden. They may, therefore, have been later extensions to the precinct, giving an overall precinct area of c. 15.9 ha.

The precinct can be divided into three distinct areas (fig.4): the church and claustral range; the Inner Court which would probably have contained the guest accommodation, brewhouse, and a gatehouse; and the Outer Court with a gatehouse and agricultural and industrial buildings.

The church, claustral range, infirmary and gardens, are all contained between the mill leat in the north and the main water channel in the east. The Inner Court is defined by the large sub-rectangular enclosure to the south of the church. It was probably a walled court with buildings arranged along the southern side. Internally, on the western side are indications of stone-robbled walls. Building material is also exposed in a number of places along the south. On the south-western side is an embanked enclosure (1<sup>1</sup>), possibly the gate-house for the Inner Court, with a court-yard and stabling to the south.



*Fig 4. Simplified Diagram of Stanley Abbey*

The remainder of the precinct formed the Outer Court and comprised the water management system; the moats; fishponds; and other secular functions of the monastery. The gatehouse was probably located at the bridge (p).

### *The Water Engineering*

The most striking feature of Stanley Abbey is the water engineering. The move from Loxwell to Stanley has been attributed to the inadequate water supply at the original site (Donkin 1978, 34), however, this seems unlikely since there is abundant water at Loxwell, as the name implies. A



more plausible explanation was that Stanley afforded more space to lay out the monastery with its attendant buildings.

The water for Stanley Abbey was acquired from five sources. The first was from a natural spring within the precinct located to the east of Stanley Abbey Farm and which is today defined by a pond. Formerly water flowed south down the slope to the pond at the bottom. Here the water was either retained or directed through the main channels around the precinct. Brakspear suggested that the area of this spring was a mill site and that the large rectangular pond at the bottom was a mill-pond (1908, 549), this is, however, unlikely since the mill would have been at the highest point of the precinct. The linear herring-bone drainage channels would suggest that the whole of this area may not have been a pond, at least not in its final form. The pond at the bottom of the slope, contained by the curving retaining bank, may have been a simple fish pond.

The second source of water for the monastery was from the series of linear drainage channels to the south of the precinct. Although it is possible that they are post-medieval and were dug to create better pasture in the fields, it seems inconceivable that the monk's would not have utilised this source in some way. They were, nevertheless, clearly constructed to drain the marshy ground here and the water would have flowed into the main channel on the south side of the precinct. The drainage channels to the east of the precinct are, however, an exception; here the channels, which overlie the ridge and furrow, mainly drain to the east and ultimately to the River Marden and were therefore not used within the precinct.

The aqueduct from Loxwell provided the third source of water to the monastery. This was completed in 1214 and appears to be a contour leat through the woods to the precinct (Bond 1989, 86). A leat is also apparent leading from Studley Hill which meets the causeway by the fence boundary.

The River Marden provided water for the mill and fish ponds, and also formed the outlet for dirty water from the abbey. The leat can be traced as a linear ditch which extends from the river in the east. Since the water level of the river is appreciably lower than the leat, and was possibly only a little higher in the medieval period, some form of sluice would have been required in the river in order to raise the level sufficiently. On the bend in the river, slightly downstream from the leat there is an area of silting which possibly formed part of the water management here. Towards the western end of the leat the channel forks to the river, whilst the other continues west, under two bridges, to a pond.

Apart from the River Marden, the other sources of water entered the precinct via the southern main channel and flowed east and then north through the precinct, ultimately flowing into the leat on the northern side. The depth and width of the channels vary throughout and were dictated mainly by the local topography i.e. where the ground rises, a deeper channel was required. The channels probably also had other functions, such as fish ponds, or subsidiary channels to provide additional water when required. This is apparent on the eastern channel where it is particularly deep and yet it is at a low point which would not have required such a deep ditch for topographical reasons. It may, therefore, have been either a fish pond, or alternatively, used to augment the water supply to the mill leat if the water from the river was insufficient.

A network of sluices would have been used to control and direct water to where it was required. For example, it is likely that there was some form of sluice at the constrictions in the north-east and south-west corners of the southern moat. Excess water was directed to the river via a sluice cut in the north-east.

### *The Mills*

There were at least two mills at Stanley in the mid-sixteenth century, one of which was a grist mill (WRO 473.245); a fulling mill was also recorded in 1189 (Donkin 1978, 137 & 188). The earthwork survey would suggest one, or possibly two mills are sited along the leat. The first is on the northern side of the moat whilst the second possible site is between the fork in the race and the pond in the west. This pond may have also served as a fish pond despite it being lower than the reredorter; examples have been noted on other monastic sites (Bond 1988, 101). Another mill lies c. 800m to the north-east of the precinct and is known as Stanley Mill. Whether this is the site of an earlier monastic mill is unknown.

### *The Moats*

The construction of the main water channels effectively created two moat sites, which were probably gardens rather than prestigious sites for monastic buildings such as an abbot's lodging. Access to both moats would clearly have been difficult from the area of the Inner Court and it appears that the northern moat was approached from the north-east and the south-west while access between the two moats would probably have been via a bridge sited where there is a break in the island banks.

### *Miscellaneous Features*

Field evidence and aerial photographs show that arable fields lay primarily to the east and west of the abbey, although there is also evidence within the precinct. The field to the south, interwoven with drainage ditches but showing no evidence of cultivation, was probably meadow or pasture. On the western side cultivation probably extended south of the modern road as far as the southern bank of the enclosure, and the small north/south field to the south of Stanley Abbey Farm probably fossilises two further lands. The change in land use by the creation of the close meant that cultivation was confined to the north. Later, a drainage ditch, and a similar one to the west of the canal probably marked the demise of arable cultivation in this area.

On the eastern side of the precinct boundary, ridge and furrow probably extended from the river to the southern edge of the precinct. The southern half was later enclosed and the drainage ditches dug. To the south of the ridge and furrow the field boundary is defined as a ditch, with a more recent hedge row.

To the east of the causeway and outside the precinct boundary is an embanked enclosure (q) with an internal ditch forming an annex. On the northern side, abutting the main channel is a raised platform with a series of possible buildings. Below, on a relatively flat area, are drainage ditches;

on the south-east side is an entrance. The function of this enclosure is unclear, but is possibly either an industrial complex or more likely, an agricultural one, possibly a sheep-fold (*bercaria*), with the lower part used as a stock compound while the upper part held sheep pens or houses. This annex is linked to the precinct by the bridge to the north over the main channel and a hollow way giving access to the Inner Court. The field boundary in the pasture field to the south of the enclosure is embanked on most of the southern side, while on the east it is ditched. This field probably formed part of "*The More*" recorded in the thirteenth century.

## 5. Method

The survey was carried out using a TC2000 Total Station to establish a control framework and modern geographical detail such as field boundaries and buildings. The earthworks were surveyed using taped offsets from the control framework.

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