

East Front Garden Hampton Court Palace



Historic Building Recording



November 2008

Client: Historic Royal Palaces

Issue No:1

OA Job No: 3595

NGR: TQ 159 687

Client Name: Historic Royal Palaces

Document Title: East Front Garden Niches, Hampton Court Palace.

Document Type: Building recording and investigation
Issue Number: 1
National Grid Reference: TQ 159 687
]

OA Job Number: 3595
Site code: HCP53
Invoice code: HCP53BS

Archive location: Historic Royal Palaces

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East Front Garden Niches, Hampton Court Palace.

BUILDING RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Aims and objectives	1
1.3 Methodology	1
1.4 Acknowledgements	2
2 Historical background	2
2.1 Hampton Court Palace.....	2
2.2 The Niches.....	3
3 Description	3
3.1 Introduction	3
4 Conclusion.....	5
APPENDIX I Bibliography	5
APPENDIX II Summary of Site Details	6

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	Plan of the Hampton Course estate, 1547
Figure 3	Elevation 1
Figure 4	Elevation 2
Figure 5	Elevation 3
Figure 6	Elevation 4
Figure 7	Elevation 5
Figure 8	Elevation 6
Figure 9	Elevation 7
Figure 10	Elevation 8
Figure 11	Traced examples of graffiti

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1:	Niche 1
Plate 2:	Niche 2
Plate 3:	Niche 3
Plate 4:	Recess in the wall containing the niches

East Front Garden Niches, Hampton Court Palace. HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION

SUMMARY

In March 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out building recording and watching brief works within the East Front Garden at Hampton Court Palace. The work was commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) in advance of some repairs and alterations to the bricks of the East Front Garden Niches. These alterations involved some intervention into the historic fabric of the walls and niches in this area, both above and below ground, including the replacement of some damaged bricks and the removal of salt accumulations. The recording and archaeological investigation produced an accurate record of the niches and surrounding walls for posterity, comprising of a plan, elevations and a photographic archive, together with a record of several of the inscriptions that could be damaged or disappear completely during the works.

Hampton Court Palace is clearly among the most significant buildings in the country and the current project has provided an opportunity to carry out recording of one of the lesser known parts of the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Kent Rawlinson, Assistant Curator at Hampton Court Palace, to undertake a programme of historic building investigation and recording on a series of niches in the East Front Garden at Hampton Court Palace, Surrey. The work related to the restoration of the niches and it was designed to provide detailed information on the state of the walls, as well as on historic graffiti which would be threatened by the works.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The overall aim of the work was to make a detailed record of the niches and walls for posterity prior to and during the restoration works and then to make the results of the record (and the archive itself) publicly accessible. The work would add to the existing archive and increase the content for future study, in addition to this report.

1.2.2 The recording concentrated on the construction, structure, history, development and use of the Niches.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The recording programme was generally undertaken to English Heritage Level II-III (EH, 2006) and consisted of three main elements: a drawn survey, a photographic survey and a written survey.

- 1.3.2 The **drawn survey** consisted of hand drawn, brick-by-brick elevations of the niches and surrounding walls at 1:20 (Fig. 3-10). These were enhanced with annotation to detail the construction and phasing of the structure together with other features of interest like the several graffiti that adorned the structure. In addition tracings on acetate sheets were made of significant areas of historic inscriptions and graffiti.
- 1.3.3 The **photographic survey** used 35 mm film (colour slide and black and white prints) and consisted of general shots and specific details (of brick work and inscriptions). In addition a Medium Format Camera was used to get a detailed photographic record of the niches (again black and white prints and colour transparencies).
- 1.3.4 The **written survey** complemented the other surveys and consisted of descriptive notes to explain and interpret the structure.
- 1.3.5 The site work was undertaken between the 13th and 15th of March 2007, before the start of the niches restoration, by members of the Buildings Department at Oxford Archaeology. All the material produced by the current study (site drawings, photographs, slides, photographic negatives, site notes, a copy of the current reports, etc) will be deposited with Historic Royal Palaces.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Kent Rawlinson, Assistant Curator at Hampton Court Palace, Julia Grinham (HRP) and the restoration company Nimbus for their help and support throughout the project.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Hampton Court Palace

- 2.1.1 Hampton Court Palace is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Surrey No. 83) of outstanding national importance. The wider historical background to Hampton Court is well documented and it would not be appropriate to detail it at length here. However, specific written and cartographic information pertinent to the area of research was prepared and supplied by the Assistant Curator's Department. Below is a short summary of the main developments of the buildings at Hampton Court.
- 2.1.2 The Knights Hospitallers acquired the manor of Hampton in 1236 and used the land as a grange. The only known buildings at this time were a great barn or hall and a stone *camera*. The first known occupant, other than the Knights, was John Wode who obtained a lease for the court, the exact date of which is unknown. Alterations to the building during his time may have included the extension of the residential part of the dwelling by means of a tower. Wode died in 1484 with no heir and it was not until 1494 that the manor was re-leased.
- 2.1.3 The next occupant of Hampton Court was Sir Giles Daubeney, who in 1494 acquired an eighty-year lease. The freehold of Hampton Court was unobtainable by Daubeney, but he did however obtain a new ninety nine-year lease in 1505. This

new lease was much improved allowing him to enlarge the property. Daubeney died in 1508. When his son came of age in 1514 he immediately gave up the lease to Thomas Wolsey.

- 2.1.4 As with Daubeney's lease, Wolsey's gave permission for alterations to be made to the fabric of the buildings. During his time at the palace Wolsey carried out many alterations and new builds. Henry VIII, who acquired Hampton Court in 1529 continued this rebuilding of the palace.

2.2 The Niches

- 2.2.1 During the 16th century, the ground on which the niches are built was part of "The Course" whose north boundary was a road which led to Kingston bridge (current Hampton Court road). This road was enclosed by Wolsey by means of a wall at either side, the southern one of which was likely to be in line with the wall where the niches are currently located. As a result of this enclosing, The Course became a suitable showground to house exhibitions based on deer coursing with greyhounds. In addition a tribune was built to the east in order to accommodate the members of the audience in the location showed in the plan (Fig. 2).

- 2.2.2 In the late 17th or early 18th century, during the reign of William III, the landscape designer Henry Wise created the Broad Walk which extends on a north to south alignment immediately to the east of the palace. At the north end of this walk is the Flower Pot gate which allows access from the former Kingston road (current Hampton Court road) and this gate forms an opening in the wall in which the niches are located. The wall formed part of an attractive area which was laid out in the later 17th or early 18th centuries and it is believed the niches were inserted into the wall in the 18th century.

3 DESCRIPTION

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The niches which form the main focus of the current study are located in the south side of an east to west orientated wall in the East Front Gardens. The wall forms part of the north boundary of Home Park. and runs parallel to Hampton Court Road. There are three adjacent niches which are located within a single semi-circular recess in the wall (Plates 1-3).

- 3.1.2 The recess has a diameter of c.3 m and to either side there is a contemporary brick panel (c.1.75 m wide). These panels and the semi-circular recess are all constructed from a fine orange facing brick which contrasts with the lower quality, maroon coloured stock brick which forms the main boundary wall. The recess and contemporary side panels are likely to be a later insertion into the boundary wall, probably having been added in the mid to later 18th century.

- 3.1.3 The recess opening is flanked at each edge by quoins formed from alternating blocks of ashlar stone and brick (five courses) and there is a further similarly

constructed panel with alternating stone and brickwork which divides each panel from the maroon-coloured stockbrick beyond. However this pier is constructed using a later brick, not bonded into the earlier orange brick, and with fine white joints. These piers may have been 20th-century restorations.

3.1.4 The wall has an ashlar (Portland stone) plinth and cornice each of which continue along the panels and around the recess.

3.1.5 Within the recess are the three niches which are set adjacent to each other and which extend into the thickness of the wall. They would have formed partial enclosures which could have held a statue or urn although they could have been used as seats or as decorative additions in their own right.

3.1.6 Each niche is c.80 cm wide with a flat base, semi-concave top with very fine gauged brickwork and a semi-circular plan. The niches and surrounding walls are constructed using Flemish bond (Plate 4).

3.1.7 As per the adjacent wall, the niches are made of fired red clay bricks, which have been bonded with a friable light brownish white lime based mortar with a 5% of calcium carbonate flecking and a 2% of small stones. The niche's bases or 'sits', probably intended to hold a decorative addition, were made of flat slabs made of limestone, Portland type.

3.1.8 The niches were 31 courses high, and some patches of a slightly different type of brick were noted in niches 2 and 3. These were possibly the result of early 20th century repair work. This repair work showed the use of new red bricks measuring 0.22 x 0.11 x 0.45m, bonded in a light brown mortar with 20% of small inclusions. These were more visible on the outside of the wall than on the inside.

3.1.9 The original bricks which form the main part of the structure measure 0.22 x 0.10 x 0.05 m. The bricks have been re-pointed and the original bonding material, a friable light brownish white lime based mortar with a 5% of calcium carbonate flecking and a 2% of small stones was also visible.

3.1.10 The concave upper part of the three niches presented a particular problem with the accumulation of salt (Fig. 8, 9 and 10). This damaged the integrity of the structure and therefore needed to be rectified.

3.1.11 ***Graffiti***

3.1.12 The bricks are relatively soft and at least 90% are covered with different inscriptions or graffiti (Fig. 3-7, 11). This is particularly true of those bricks which form the niches, although the adjacent walls to east and west also have a high level of inscriptions.

3.1.13 The range of inscriptions varies greatly. The earliest is thought to be from 1715, but most of them seem to be from the 19th and 20th century. The inscriptions themselves do not have much variation, comprising mostly of the name of one or two individuals and a date, normally just a year.

3.1.14 There is an inscription from 1611 and another signed by Henry VIII (both almost certainly fake inscriptions).

4 CONCLUSION

4.1.1 In March 2007, Oxford Archaeology carried out a small programme of building recording on a set of three niches in the East Front Garden at Hampton Court Palace. This was done in advance of some repair works due to the spread of salt in some of the bricks forming the niches.

4.1.2 The niches are located to the north-east of the Palace within a recess in the Home Park boundary wall. It forms one of the lesser known areas of the Palace gardens and perhaps due to it being secluded from the main park there has developed a tradition of couples or others inscribing their names in the bricks of the niches.

4.1.3 Most of the inscriptions and graffiti in the bricks are from the mid to late 19th century onwards, with a few earlier examples from the early 18th century. This suggests that either this is a recent fashion starting in the 19th century, or the earlier inscriptions may not be visible anymore. In addition, some repair work was carried out at some point during the earlier 20th century, and this could have removed a significant amount of inscriptions. It is interesting to highlight some inscriptions done by the same person with twenty years gap between them. The niches themselves are believed to be of 18th century date.

4.1.4 The survey has provided an opportunity to investigate and record a lesser known part of the palace gardens and the graffiti adds a particular interest to the site.

4.1.5 The survey produced detailed elevations of the three niches and adjacent walls, showing the spread of salt in the surface of the bricks, plus the recording of numerous inscriptions and graffiti, to be preserved for future generations due to the historical interest of the structure.

Javier Naranjo-Santana
Oxford Archaeology
November 2008

APPENDIX I BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Sources

Thurley, S. *Hampton Court* (2003)

English Heritage *Understanding Historic Buildings: a Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006)

APPENDIX II SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: East Front Garden, Hampton Court Palace

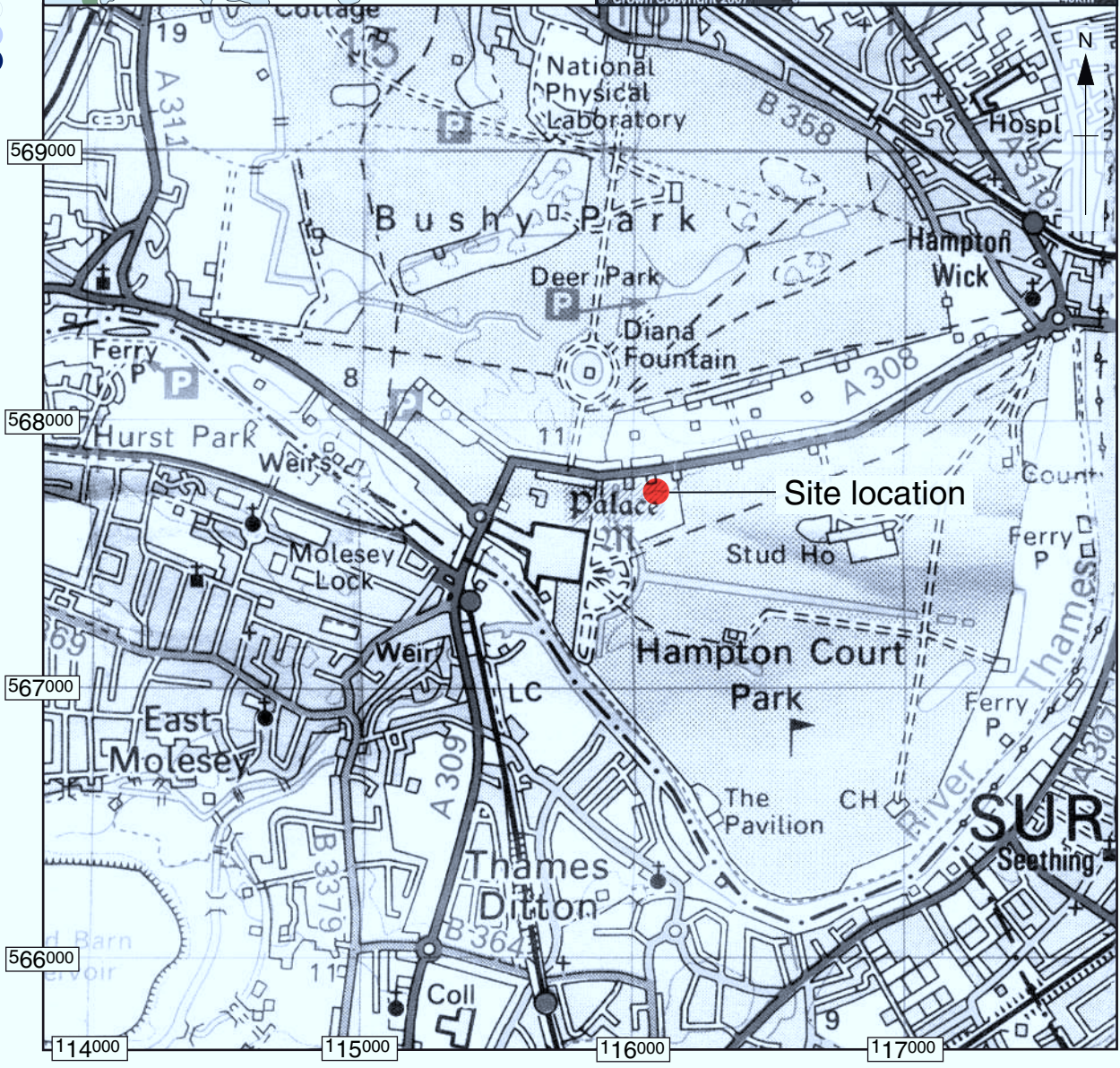
Site code: HCP53BS

Grid reference: NGR TQ 159 687

Type of evaluation: Historic building recording and investigation

Date and duration of project: Site work undertaken in March 2007

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. It will be deposited at an appropriate museum or other agreed body.



Scale 1: 25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

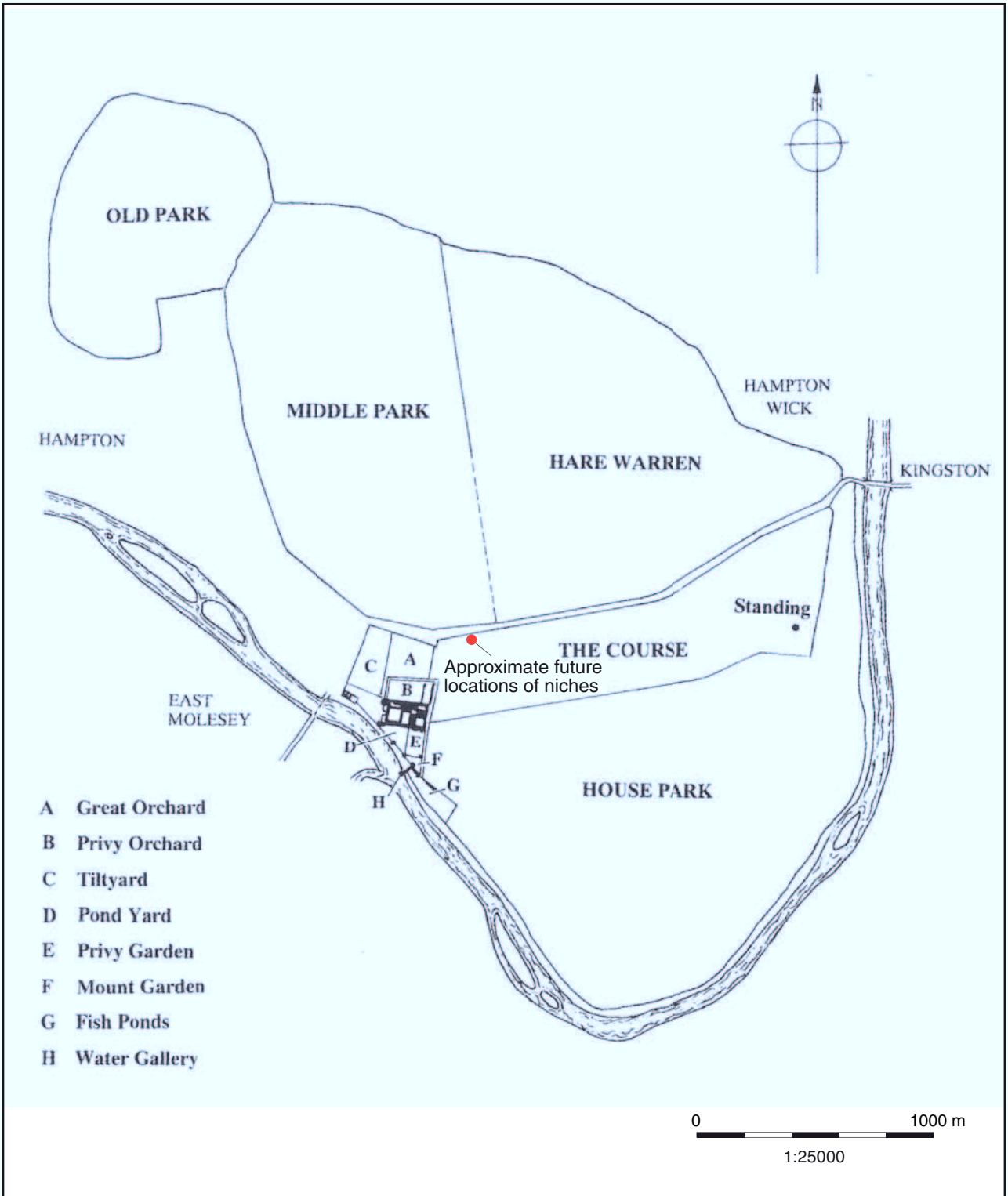


Figure 2: Plan of the Hampton Court Estate, 1547
Drawing Daphne Ford (Thurley, 2003)

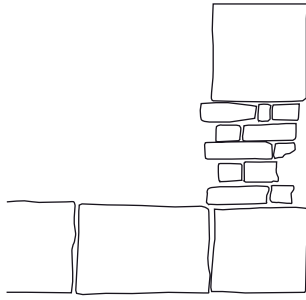


Figure 3: Elevation 1, south facing elevation Wall 1 (western wall), lower east corner

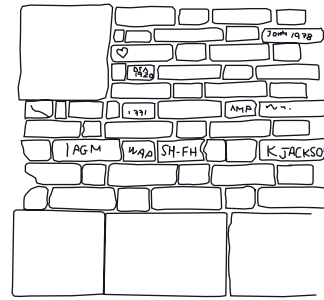


Figure 4: Elevation 2, south facing elevation Wall 2 (eastern wall), lower west corner

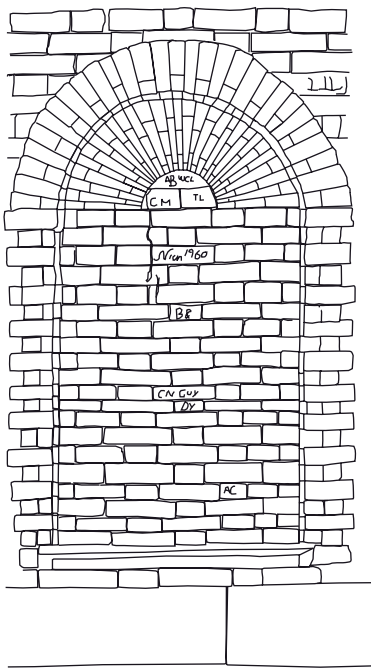


Figure 5: Elevation 3, south facing elevation, niche 2 (middle one)

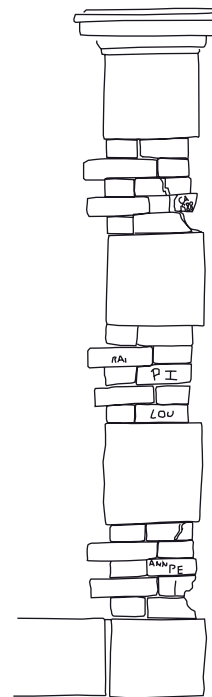


Figure 6: Elevation 4, west facing elevation, corner wall 2 with niche 3



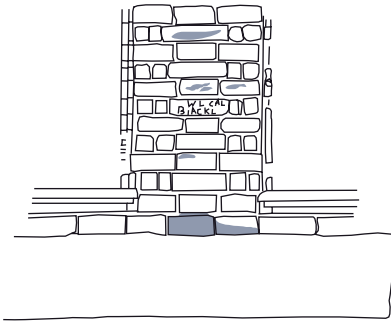


Figure 7: Elevation 5, southwest facing elevation, area between niches 2 and 3

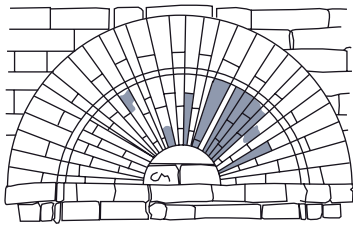


Figure 8: Elevation 6, niche 2 (upper part) showing salt spread

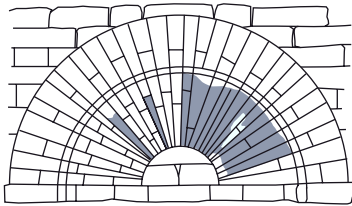


Figure 9: Elevation 7, niche 1 (upper part) showing salt spread

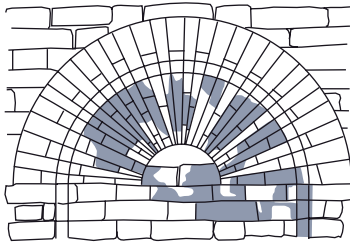
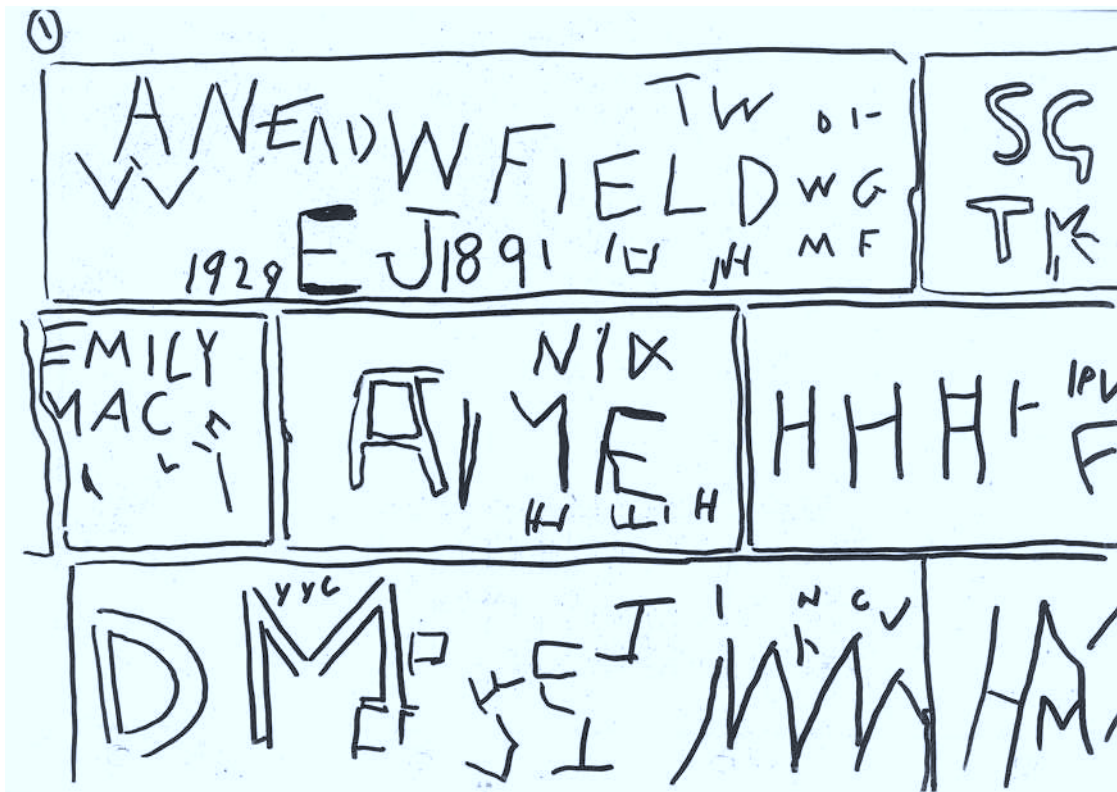
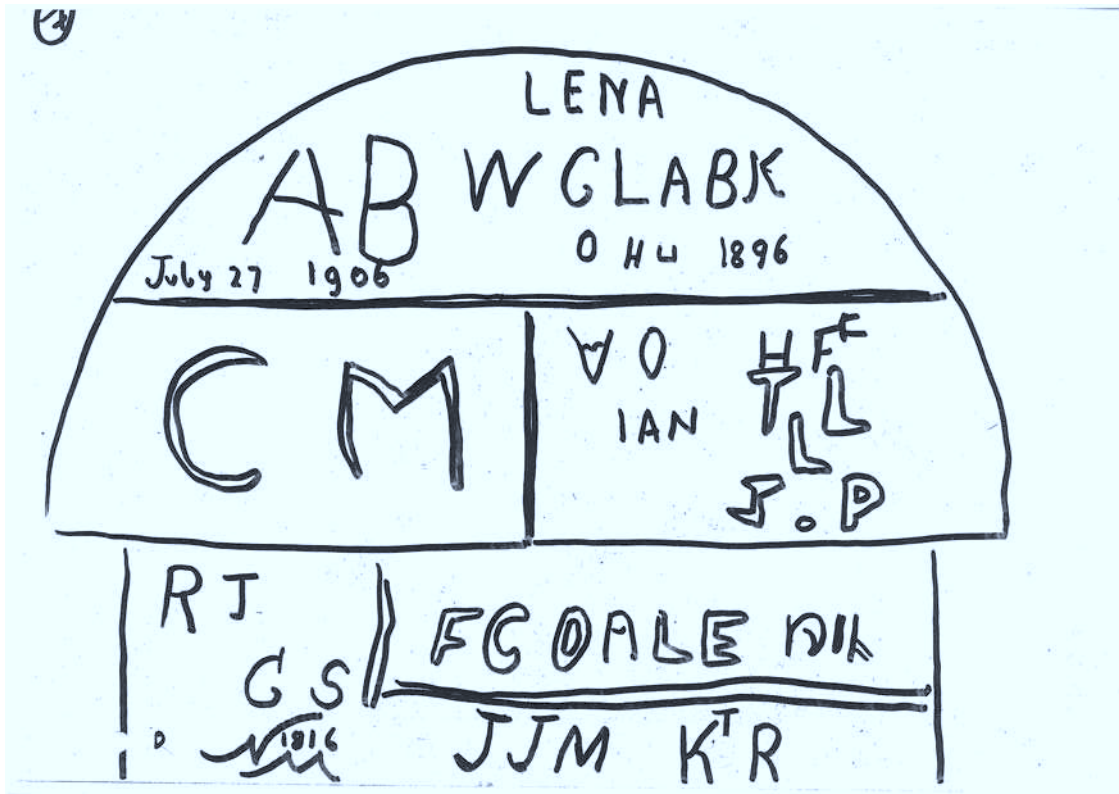


Figure 10: Elevation 8, niche 3 (upper part) showing salt spread





0 100 mm

1:2

Figure 11: Traced examples of graffiti on niches



Plate 1: Niche 1



Plate 2: Niche 2

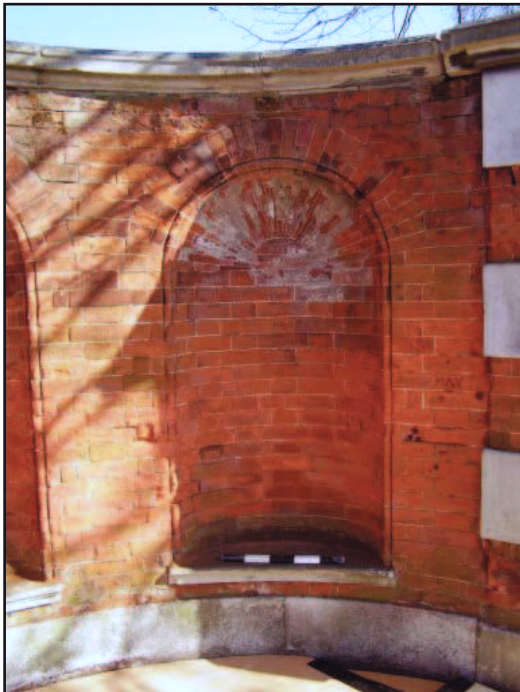


Plate 3: Niche 3



Plate 4: Recess in the wall containing niches



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