

MINSTER CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL,
HOWDEN, EAST YORKSHIRE

PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF
THE WEST FRONT

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On behalf of

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**PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY, MINSTER CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2006, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by Wiles & Maguire Architects Ltd to undertake a photographic survey of the west front of Howden Minster, Howden, East Yorkshire (NGR SE74782825) prior to a programme of repair and conservation works. The project involved the photographic recording of the west front, in particular those features at a high level which had not previously been easily accessible or visible. The photographic survey was accompanied by sufficient drawn and written notes to allow the preparation of a brief report.

The west front of Howden Minster is generally thought to have been completed in the period c.1308-11, based on the evidence of the arms of Bishop Anthony Beck of Durham which were formerly part of the stained glass of the north aisle window. Previous studies note that the west front follows a type which was very popular in the north, a design based on the east facades of Ely and Lincoln, with details also borrowed from work undertaken at York Minster in c.1300.

The photographic survey of the west front has uncovered no evidence to contradict or indeed add to the proposed development of the Minster put forward by previous studies. However, the survey has recorded the distribution of possible putlog holes across the west front, as well as other features, which may relate to the original construction. It has also allowed a much closer inspection of some of the decorative details of the west front than has previously been possible, and the resulting photographs will allow comparisons to be made with the details of other major churches in the region. Finally, the photographic survey has revealed the extent of the 19th century repair and restoration work to the west front; some of the recorded repairs almost certainly belong to 20th century rather than 19th century schemes.

1 INTRODUCTION

Circumstances of the Project

- 1.1 In July 2006, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by Wiles & Maguire Architects Ltd to undertake a photographic survey of the west front of Howden Minster, Howden, East Yorkshire (NGR SE74782825) prior to a programme of repair and conservation. The project involved the photographic recording of the west front, in particular those high level features which had not previously been easily accessible or visible. The photographic survey was accompanied by sufficient drawn and written notes to allow the preparation of a brief report.
- 1.2 The pre-intervention photographic survey was made a condition of grant-aiding the repair works by English Heritage. No written scheme of investigation or methods statement was prepared for the survey by either Wiles and Maguire or English Heritage, and so the scope of the work was determined following consultations between English Heritage and EDAS. There was no requirement to monitor the repairs and conservation works, or to produce records once this work was complete.

Site Location and Description

- 1.3 Howden Minster stands on the north-western side of the historic core of Howden town centre (see figure 1). The church is one of the largest in East Yorkshire, of considerable architectural importance, and comprises both the standing church and the ruins of the choir and associated chapter house. The standing portion comprises a nave of six bays with north and south aisles, north and south transepts (the latter with an east aisle), crossing below a central tower of three stages, a south porch and a school building. The ruined portion is formed by a six bay chancel with north and south aisles, a north transept aisle and an octagonal chapter house (Thorseby Jones (und), 14). The west front overlooks a small square, Corn Market Hill. The Minster and its associated ruins are a Grade I Listed Building (see Appendix 3).

Previous Work and Illustrations

- 1.4 The Minster has been the subject of both architectural study and research for a considerable period, ranging from antiquarian accounts to the present day, although as Coldstream (1989, 109) pointed out, it remains relatively neglected given its architectural importance. It should be noted that no primary or secondary documentary research was required as part of the photographic survey work.
- 1.5 A number of useful studies were made of the Minster in the 19th century. For example, a drawing of the west front appears in Allen's 1831 volume on the history of the area (Allen 1831) (see plate 1), and in 1843 Richardson reproduced a series of colour plates of the building as part of his study of monastic ruins in Yorkshire, including a section through the moulding of the central window of the west front (Richardson 1843). Shortly afterwards, in c.1848, Edmund Sharpe published a series of detailed volumes on church architecture, concentrating on Yorkshire examples, including Howden. The series included a general volume entitled *Architectural Parallels* (Sharpe 1848) which dealt with all the abbey churches recorded by Sharpe (including Howden - see plate 2), as well as a separate volume dealing specifically with Howden itself (Sharpe c.1848a). It was not possible to source the latter as part of the present survey, although the general

volume is held in York Reference Library and the Yorkshire Archaeological Society holds copies of two other volumes in the series which also include details of the church (Sharpe c.1848b & c); Sharpe's original drawings of Howden and the other churches are held by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London (RIBA DRAW-COLL PB181-183).

- 1.6 Finally, Coldstream (1989) provides an outline review of other more recent works on Howden (e.g. Bilson 1913), as well as the most detailed architectural description to date, while the church also appears in some detail in regional architectural works (e.g. Pevsner & Neave 1995, 485-490).

Project Aims and Objectives

- 1.7 The aims and objectives of the project were:
- to produce a photographic survey of the west front while it was fully scaffolded, with particular emphasis on those areas which would be inaccessible once the scaffolding was removed;
 - to supplement the photographic survey with any relevant written or drawn records that might be thought necessary.

Survey Methodologies

- 1.8 As noted above, the scope of photographic survey was defined by consultation between English Heritage and EDAS. The work equates to a "Photographic Survey" as defined by English Heritage (2006, 15), with some additional drawn records. Two main elements were involved.

Photographic and drawn records

- 1.9 A general photographic record was made of the west front from the scaffolding, together with close-up photography of significant details, prior to the start of the repair works. The guidelines produced by English Heritage (2006) were followed, and each photograph was normally provided with a photographic scale, subject to practicalities and access; artificial lighting in the form of electronic flash was used where necessary. Photographs were taken in both black and white, and colour. The black and white photographs were taken with a medium format camera with perspective control, as well as a series of 35mm colour transparencies and digital photographs. A total of 62 medium format black and white prints were taken, together with 59 colour transparencies and 74 digital shots.
- 1.10 A set of 35mm transparencies and digital photographs were taken on 28th July 2006, while the black and white and other colour photographs were taken on 3rd August 2006. All photographs have been clearly numbered and labelled with the subject, orientation, date taken and photographer's name, and will be cross referenced to film and negative numbers. All photographic film was exposed and processed to ensure high quality definition, and was processed to archival standards according to manufacturer's specifications. A photographic register detailing (as a minimum) the location and direction of each shot has been completed. The black and white photographs have been scanned and are appended to this report together with a photographic register.
- 1.11 A set of colour rectified prints of the west front at a scale of 1:25 had been produced by James Brennan Associates, and these were used by Wiles and

Maguire Architects to produced details of the proposed repair and conservation works. Copies of these drawings were used by EDAS as the basis for the drawn record, which was undertaken on 28th July and 1st August 2006. The elevation drawings were neatly marked up to show any relevant structural information visible from the scaffolding; in the event, this comprised mostly putlog holes. Given the nature of the information recorded, it was decided not to produce any new drawings of the west front, but to simply identify the details on the base plots. In addition, a limited number of sections through prominent mouldings were made, as well as plans of south nave and south aisle turrets (see figures 2 and 3).

Report and Archive

- 1.12 Only limited provision was made in the project funding for report writing, and so an outline description of the west front has been prepared from the photographic survey and other observations made on site. An analysis of its form, function, history, and sequence of development lies outside the scope of the survey work, and the report text is largely descriptive, although reference is made to secondary publications where relevant.
- 1.13 An archive of material relating to the photographic survey project (EDAS site code HM 06), which includes field notes, the marked up rectified drawings and photographic prints, negatives and slides, has been prepared for deposition with the East Riding of Yorkshire Museum Service (accession no. 2008/119).

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE WEST FRONT

Introduction

- 2.1 As stated above, the following text forms a description of the west front based on the photographic survey, drawing heavily on previous accounts (e.g. Thoresby Jones (und); Coldstream 1989; Pevsner & Neave 1995; Listed Building description - see Appendix 3). When reading the description, reference should be made to the figures at the back of the report, noting that not all the marked up field-drawings have been reproduced here.
- 2.2 Throughout the following description, reference is made to the black and white photographic record. These photographs are referenced in the text using bold type, the numbers before the stroke representing the film number and the number after indicating the frame (e.g. **2/1**). These photographs are appended to this report (Appendix 1), together with a register for all photographs that were taken as part of the project (Appendix 2).

Historical Background

- 2.3 As might be expected, Howden Minster has a long and complex architectural history, the full complexity of which is brought to light by Coldstream (1989), while Maddison places the Minster within the evolution of the Decorated Style in East Yorkshire as part of a discussion of St Patrick's church in Patrington (Maddison 1989). In summary, there was a church at Howden in the Saxon and Norman periods, although almost all above ground traces of these early structures have now disappeared. In relation to the existing church, the transepts, crossing and the first bay of the nave were probably built between c.1267-72, with the nave (including the west front) being completed in c.1310 and the choir in c.1320-40. The chapter house was begun in 1349-50 and recommenced after a long intermission in 1380, whilst the tower was begun in the very late 14th century but was still incomplete in 1405. The grammar school, abutting the west end of the south aisle, was built in c.1500. The nave and tower were restored in 1852-55 and the grammar school in 1863. The tower and chancel were badly damaged by fire in 1929, with restoration work not completed until 1932 (Bilson 1913; Pevsner & Neave 1995, 485-90; Listed Building description).

Pre-intervention Survey Description

- 2.4 The west front (excluding the grammar school to the south aisle) is c.19.5m wide and rises to a maximum height of c.20.5m. The majority is built of cream-coloured Magnesian limestone ashlar, although there are significant portions of the lower part now faced with a weathered brown sandstone; it is not known whether or not this relates to the 19th and early 20th century repair schemes, but several of these stones have distinctive short narrow slots in them that resemble lifting points or "Lewis holes". Numerous examples of possible blocked putlog holes were also noted across the west front. They vary slightly in size, but most are c.0.15m square, "cut out" of one corner of a larger stone, and have been carefully infilled with the same Magnesian limestone as used for the rest of the west front. They are spaced at approximately the same heights around either side of the three large windows in the west front and sometimes on the buttresses (**2/10** and **4/6**).
- 2.5 Commencing at ground level, the whole west front rises from a double-chamfered plinth, better preserved to the buttresses than elsewhere; it has, for example, almost completely decayed away to either side of the west doorway. The west

doorway itself is of pointed form, with deep moulded jambs of thin shafts and filleted rolls with leaf capitals (4/12, 4/14, 5/1 and 5/2). There appears to have been some 19th century repair to the upper part of the north jamb. The head is similarly moulded, and again appears to have been repaired on the north side during the 19th century, although some “repairs” may actually be the result of differential weathering. The west doorway is flanked by panels of blind arcading with quatrefoils to the spandrels (4/10, 4/13 and 4/16); the north panel is badly eroded.

- 2.6 Above the doorway, the west window of the nave rises almost the full height of the central part of the west front. The window has four tall lights (3/3 and 4/2), grouped in pairs and sub-divided by an inserted Perpendicular transom (3/14); they contain tracery of pointed trefoils and quatrefoils, with a large cusped quatrefoil enclosed in a square with convex sides to the apex (2/13). Figure 3 shows a profile across the south jamb of the window, and both jambs are composed from both original pieces and 19th century replacements (3/6, 3/15 and 4/1). The slight ridges to the flat outer edge of the jamb are now very eroded on the original masonry, although Sharpe illustrates a similar detail to the east window jamb (Sharpe 1848c, plate XIV). The west window is surmounted by a crocketed gable (2/6) and finial, with a cusped statue niche containing a figure of Christ (1/12 and 1/14); Thoresby Jones refers to this as a “Majesty” (Thoresby Jones und, 15), a variation on the term *Majestas*, denoting a representation of Christ in Majesty placed in a prominent position as a reminder of the Last Judgement (Friar 1998, 269). The base of the figure of Christ is flanked by quatrefoils and pointed trefoils; the crocketed gable containing them is likened to those to the interior of the York Minster nave aisle by Coldstream (1989, 111). There are further quatrefoils flanking the apex of the crocketed gable (1/14); these may once have been glazed, but are now boarded behind (1/13). There are the remains of cresting or crocketing to the ridge coping of the central part of the west front (1/11), with a stone cross to the apex (1/5).
- 2.7 The west window is flanked by panels of blind arcading containing three trefoils to their apexes with crocketed gables and finials (2/12, 2/14 and 3/5), another detail borrowed from work undertaken at York Minster in c.1300 (Coldstream 1989, 111). These are in turn flanked by the gabled nave buttresses, enriched with two-light blind arcading (2/11 and 2/16). At the base of the arcading are two figures beneath canopies, one on each nave buttress. The figures presumably once represented St Peter and St Paul but they are now very eroded (3/12 and 3/18); the canopy over the northern figure has almost completely decayed (3/11), whilst the upper half of the southern figure is in poor condition (3/13 and 4/4). However, accurate, relatively detailed drawings of the statues are available (e.g. Sharpe 1848) (see plate 2).
- 2.8 Surmounting the nave buttresses are hexagonal gabled pierced turrets with crocketed spirelets and finials, their west faces apparently running parallel to the wall face below (2/2 and 2/4) (see figure 2); however, close examination reveals that north turret is set at a very slight angle to the wall face, presumably as a result of an original miscalculation. The south-west angle of the north turret is supported on a corbel in the form of a man supporting the masonry above with one hand (2/12), while the equivalent point on the south turret has the face of a man but with very prominent ears towards the top of the head. The north turret is in very good condition, with virtually no evidence for 19th century or later repair (1/1, 1/2 and 1/4), while the south turret (1/6, 1/7, 1/8, 1/10 and 1/16) has some replaced mullions and small metal straps to the spirelet.

- 2.9 The west window is flanked by the west elevations of the north and south aisles. Both aisle windows are of three pointed lights, above which are circles sub-divided into six alternately pointed and rounded trefoils (3/17, 4/5 and 4/17). A similar pattern occurs in the vestibules of York chapter house, the cloister of Lincoln and the east window of Ripon Cathedral (Coldstream 1989, 111). A moulding profile across the south jamb of the south aisle window (see figure 3) is representative of both (4/11). The mullions and parts of the tracery of the south aisle window were replaced in the 19th century, while the moulding to the window head appears to have been recreated by crudely rendering the weathered original, rather than replacing it wholesale. There are two glazed slits to the south of the window and one to the north. A possible staggered joint rises from the immediate north of the apex of the window head, and there may be a further similar feature to the south, perhaps denoting an area of alteration or repair here, although at what date remains uncertain. All the tracery within the north aisle window dates to the 19th century (3/17) and the moulding of the window head has also been extensively repaired. There is a glazed slit to the north of the window, with a drip mould positioned above to cast water away from it. A staggered joint also rises from the immediate north of the window head (3/9) and there may be another similar feature further north, closed to the aisle buttress.
- 2.10 The aisles are finished horizontally, not with lean-to roofs, but the inner side of each rises above the horizontal roof line as a gabled buttress. There are similar gabled buttresses to the outer sides of the aisle, surmounted by hexagonal pierced turrets with crocketed spirelets and finials very similar to those seen above the nave buttresses. However, the aisle turrets are set at an angle to the wall face below, rather than running parallel to it, and their outer angles do not end in the stubby fins as those to the nave do (see figure 2). On its north side, the projecting angle of the south aisle turret is carried on a corbel in the form of a carved winged head (4/6); unfortunately, the equivalent feature to the north aisle turret has eroded away. The south aisle turret (2/17 and 3/8) preserves evidence for galleting (the insertion of small pieces of tile into the joints between the stones) and has had some mullions replaced, while the north aisle turret (1/17, 1/18, 2/1, 2/7, 2/8, 2/18, 3/1 and 3/2) has been more extensively repaired; the repairs include the insertion of a grid of metal tie-rods to the interior linked by a central ring (3/7).
- 2.11 To the south of the south aisle is the west end of the Grammar School. The pointed three-light west window of the Grammar School is clearly a 19th century insertion. There is a buttress to the south and a low pediment above the parapet. This part of the west front was not included in the repair works, was not scaffolded and so could not be examined closely. There is a clear joint between it and the south aisle (4/7 and 4/18).

19th and 20th Century Repairs

- 2.12 As set out above, the survey work recorded much evidence for relatively recent repairs to the west front. It is assumed that many of these relate to the scheme undertaken on the nave and tower in 1852-55, although some appear very crisp for work over 150 years old, and so some might be early 20th century rather than mid 19th century.

3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 As has already been noted, the west front of Howden Minster is generally thought to have been completed in the period c.1308-11, based on the evidence of the arms of Bishop Anthony Beck of Durham which were formerly part of the stained glass of the north aisle window (Pevsner & Neave 1995, 486). Coldstream (1989, 111) states that the west front follows a type which was very popular in the north, a design based on the east facades of Ely and Lincoln, with details also borrowed from work undertaken at York Minster in c.1300. In turn, the west front at Howden was copied, at 4/5th scale, to produce the west front of Salford Roman Catholic Cathedral in Manchester in 1845; this appears to be an exact copy, apart from the statues which although present at Salford, are presumably not St Peter or St Paul (Andrew Wiles, *pers. comm.*).
- 3.2 The photographic survey of the west front at Howden has uncovered no evidence to contradict or indeed add to the proposed development of the Minster put forward by Coldstream, or its relationship to other major churches in East and North Yorkshire. However, the survey has recorded the distribution of possible putlog holes across the west front. Unlike other large later medieval buildings, such as for example Sheriff Hutton castle in North Yorkshire, the putlog holes do not form regularly-spaced rows associated with obvious building breaks (Richardson & Dennison 2008). Rather, they are spaced at approximately the same heights around either side of the three large windows in the west front and also sometimes to the buttresses. A similar pattern of blocked putlog holes has been noted around the west nave window of All Saints Church at Pontefract in West Yorkshire (Dennison 2004). This pattern presumably relates to the need to scaffold a tall elevation but one that contains very large gaps in the form of the windows. It is also possible that while other scaffolding was taken down, that to the front of the windows may have been left *in situ* until the very end of the works to protect the glass therein. The staggered joints adjacent to the north and south aisle windows might be a constructional feature, perhaps suggesting that the buttresses rising from the aisles to the nave may have been completed first and then the rest of the aisle added. Alternatively, they may be much later, and relate to the repair / rebuilding of these parts of the aisle roofs.
- 3.3 The photographic survey has also allowed a much closer inspection of some of the decorative details of the west front than has previously been possible, and the resulting photographs will allow comparisons to be made with the details of other major churches in the region. For example, the position of the ears on the man's face forming the angle corbel of the south nave turret are reminiscent of an ass-eared hood, a standard attribute of the fool in the later medieval period and one which was in use by c.1250 (Jones 2002, 100-120; Malke 2001). Given that the west front was completed by c.1311, the usage of this image at Howden might be a relatively early one in church architecture, but further research would be needed to confirm this.
- 3.4 Finally, the photographic survey has revealed the extent of the 19th century repair and restoration work to the west front and, as stated above, some of the other repairs almost certainly belong to 20th century.

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Sharpe, E c.1848a *Illustrations of the Collegiate Church of St Peter at Howden* (Vol 11)

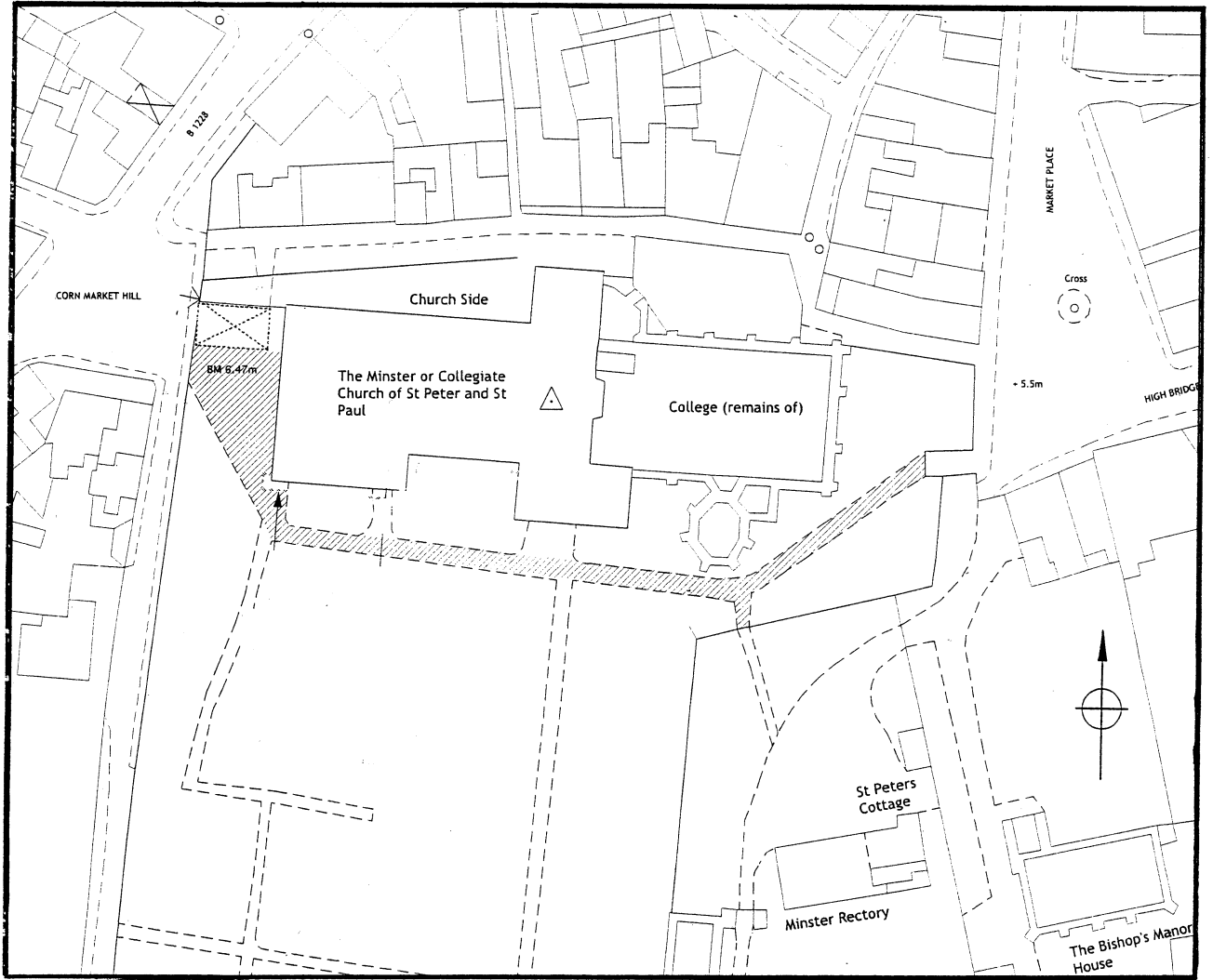
Sharpe, E c.1848b *Illustrations of the Sculptural Foliage & Other Ornamental Details of the Following Abbey Churches: Fountains, Kirkstall, Furness, Roche, Byland, Hexham, Jervaulx, Whitby, Rievaulx, Netley, Bridlington, Tintern, St Mary's, York, Guisborough, Selby and Howden* (no Volume number)

Sharpe, E c.1848c *Plans, Elevations and Sections of the capitals, bases, arch mouldings, window jambs etc and other details of the Following Abbey Churches: Fountains, Kirkstall, Furness, Roche, Byland, Hexham, Jervaulx, Whitby, Rievaulx, Netley, Bridlington, Tintern, St Mary's, York, Guisborough, Selby and Howden* (Vol 14)

Thoresby Jones, P (und) *The Parish Church of St Peter, Howden*

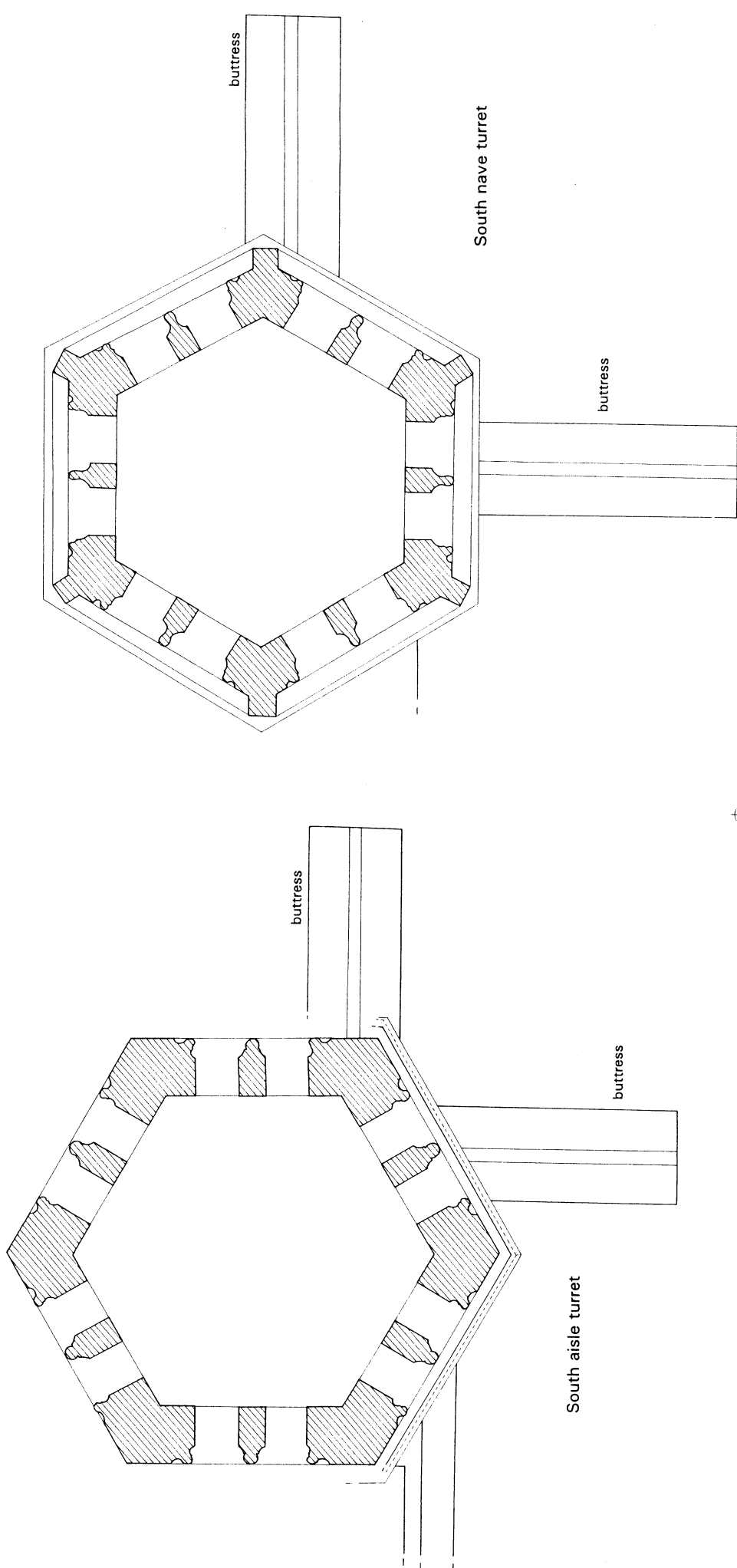
5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 5.1 EDAS would like to thank Wiles and Maguire Architects (especially Andrew Wiles and Nadia Watson) and the site contractors, Quibells of Hull, for their assistance in carrying out the photographic survey. The black and white photographs were taken by Stephen Haigh, and the remainder by Ed Dennison. The inspection of the west front and the production of the drawn record was carried out by Shaun Richardson and Richard Lamb. The final report was produced by Ed Dennison of EDAS, with whom the responsibility for any errors remains.



Base plan provided by Wiles & Maguire

PROJECT		HOWDEN MINSTER WEST FRONT	
TITLE		SITE PLAN	
SCALE	DATE	FIGURE	
NTS	OCT 2008	1	
EDAS			



PROJECT	HOWDEN MINSTER WEST FRONT		
TITLE	TURRET PLANS		
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	OCT 2008
	EDAS	FIGURE	2



0 1.5m

PROJECT		HOWDEN MINSTER WEST FRONT	
TITLE		SELECTED MOULDINGS	
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	OCT 2008
	EDAS	FIGURE	3

glass

South jamb, west window, south aisle

glass

South jamb, west window, nave

0 40cm



Plate 1: Whittock's drawing of the west front (Allen 1831).



Plate 2: Detail of Sharpe's 1848 drawing of west front.

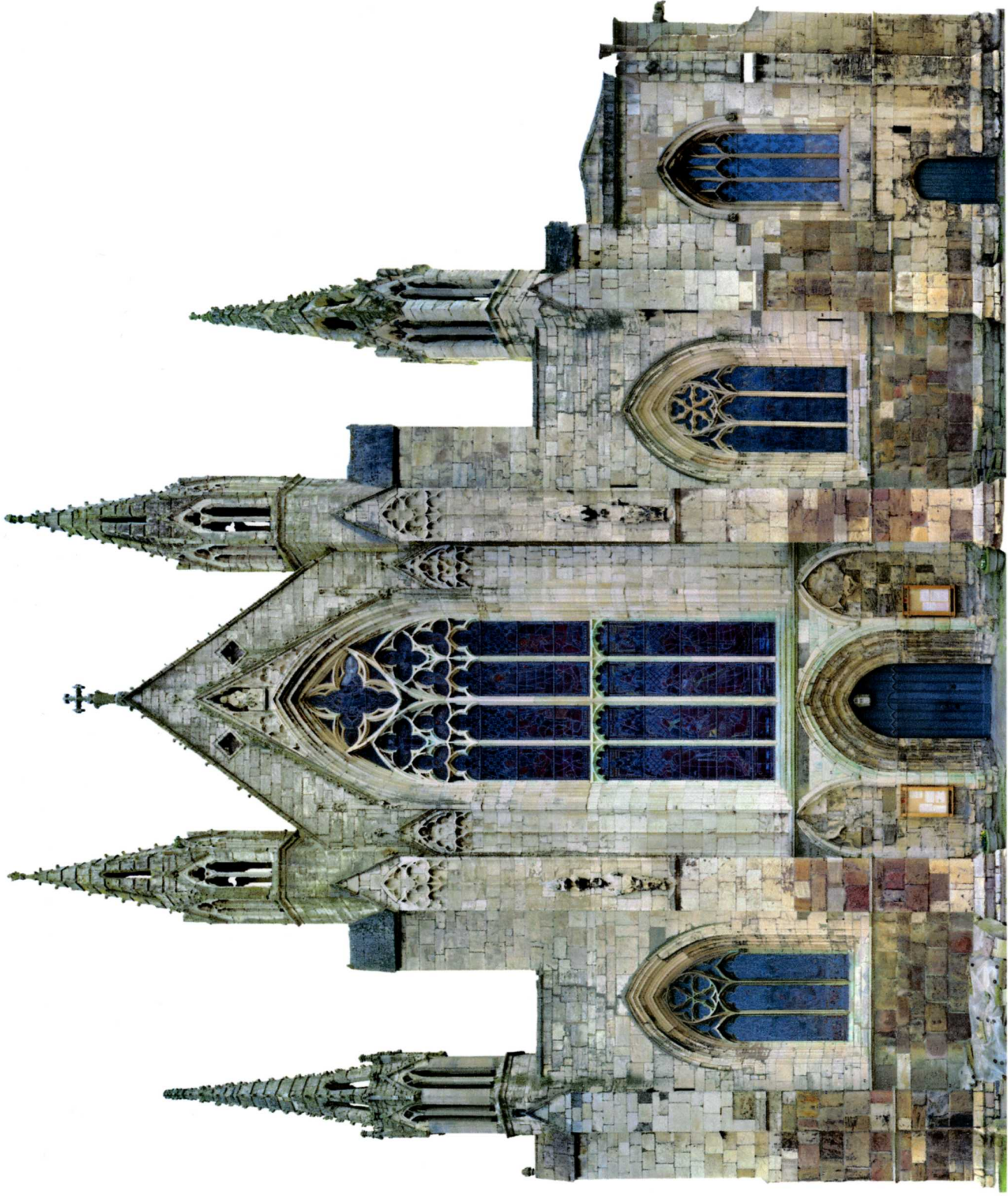


Plate 3: Rectified photograph of west front, prior to restoration (James Brennan Associates).



Plate 4: West front prior to restoration.



Plate 5: West front after restoration.