

Archaeological Watching Brief
at
WOODSPRING PRIORY,
COLLUM LANE, KEWSTOKE, NORTH SOMERSET.
for
The Landmark Trust



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Bristol and Region Archaeological Services



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Archaeological Watching Brief
at
WOODSPRING PRIORY,
COLLUM LANE, KEWSTOKE, NORTH SOMERSET

Centred on
N.G.R. ST 343 663

Client: The Landmark Trust

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<i>Signature:</i>	
<i>Date Issued:</i>	16 March 2010 

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Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	Km	Kilometre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	m	Metre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NGR	National Grid Reference
BC	Before Christ	NMR	National Monuments Record
c.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	Historic Environment Record		

NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

March, 2010.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundwork associated with the installation of pipe-work and electric cables running between three new heat pump units located on the west side of a garden wall and a storeroom in the farmhouse at Woodspring Priory, which is located in the parish of Kewstoke near Weston-super-Mare in North Somerset.

Other than a previously recorded external cobble surface, a short length of possible medieval wall and the base of a step belonging to a short flight of post-medieval steps, no features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed during the programme of intrusive groundwork.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) was commissioned by the Landmark Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief during excavation groundwork associated with the installation of three SANYO SHP-C90 GEN heat pump units (230v~50Hz) and associated ducts and cables at Woodspring Priory, Collum Lane, Kewstoke, North Somerset (**Fig. 1; Cover**).
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned to comply with a condition of scheduled monument consent (Planning Reference S00005257) granted by English Heritage and in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* prepared by Bruce Williams (Manager, BaRAS) of Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (Williams 2009).
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken over a period of three days between Monday 22 and Wednesday 24 February 2010 under the supervision of Tim Longman (Project Officer, BaRAS) who also compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with North Somerset Museum, Weston-super-Mare (North Somerset Museum Service) under the Accession Number WESTM 2009.61 and a copy of the report will be available to the National Monuments Record Centre (NMRC) in Swindon, which is maintained by English Heritage. The project has been entered in the North Somerset Council Historic Environment Record (HER) as HER Event No. 47505 and it has also been allocated the following OASIS ID: bristola1-68934.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 Woodspring Priory (centred on NGR ST 343 663) is located at the north end of Collum Lane in the parish of Kewstoke in the county of Somerset near the base of the southern slopes of the limestone promontory known as Middle Hope (National Trust), no more than 500m from the coast of the Bristol Channel. The property lies 2.25km north-west of the village of Wick St Lawrence and 2.75km north-north-east of the village of Kewstoke, which itself is situated approximately 2.5km north-east of Weston-super-Mare town centre.
- 2.2 The property comprises a group of buildings (**Fig. 2**), of which the former priory church is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 22847) and a Grade I listed building, while the east cloister wall, the farmhouse, the gatehouse, gates and mounting block, the infirmary, and the west cloister wall are also listed. North of the priory is Woodspring Cottage (custodians' house). The main pedestrian and vehicular entrance is via a narrow lane (Collum Lane) that leads to the property from the south-south-east, passing Nos. 1 & 2 Coronation Cottages. The property is bounded west and north-west by several farmbuildings (including a 15th-century barn) belonging to Woodspring Farm, and north, east and south-east by farmland.
- 2.3 Woodspring Priory house, comprising the late medieval former priory church and the early 18th-century farmhouse, is rented out as holiday accommodation, and includes a small museum (open to the public). It is surrounded by areas of lawn on three sides, including two walled gardens to the south (the outer court and the cloister garden), while to the west (immediately beyond the gatehouse) are areas of hard standing (including cobblestones).
- 2.4 The local topography is dominated by the scenic limestone promontory called Middle Hope, which reaches a height of 41m aOD to the north-west of Woodspring Priory. The hill slopes away fairly steeply to the south and east, the 10m contour lying just north of the priory. There is an Ordnance Datum height of 13.48m aOD on the west gable-end wall of the nearby 15th-century barn, while there are also Ordnance Datum levels of 7.25m aOD on the south-west corner of No. 1 Coronation Cottages and 6.72m aOD on the west-side of the bridge carrying the road (Collum Lane) over the Sand Rhyne (drain). The low-lying coastal plain that extends south and east typically lies at a height of about 6m aOD and is a north-western extension of the Somerset Levels.
- 2.5 The geology of the study area comprises white lias and blue lias limestone (Lower Lias) of the Jurassic period (British Geological Survey 1962) and Pleistocene and recent alluvium.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Woodspring Priory is situated in the parish of Kewstoke, which formed part of the hundred of Winterstoke in the county of Somerset. Winterstoke hundred is not yet covered in the *Victoria History of the Counties of England*, but an early account of both the hundred and the parish is given by the Revd. John Collinson (1791).
- 3.2 The earliest documentary reference to Woodspring is in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when it mentions *'William (of Falaise) holds Worspring (Woodspring) himself, with King William's assent. Serlo de Burcy gave it to him with his daughter (as a dowry). Everwacer held it before 1066; it paid tax for 6 hides and 1 virgate of land. Land for 12 ploughs. In lordship 4 hides & 3 virgates. 13 villagers and 6 smallholders have 6 ploughs and 1½ hides. Pasture, 10 acres; underwood, 10 acres. 16 cattle, 92 sheep. Value always 100s.'*
- 3.3 The priory of Victorine Augustinian canons was founded at *'Worspyng'* (Woodspring) about the year 1210 by William de Courtenay 'to the honour of the Holy Trinity, the blessed Virgin Mary and St Thomas Becket of Canterbury' (Collinson 1791). William was son of Robert de Courtenay, lord of the manors of Kewstoke, Swallowcliff and Locking, and a grandson of Reginald FitzUrse, who was one of the four West Country knights who had murdered Thomas a' Becket in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170.
- 3.4 In the years following the founding of the priory several grants of land were made, thereby providing an income. The priory subsequently also received grants of the local manors of Worle and Locking, plus lands in Devon, Dorset and Wiltshire.
- 3.5 Roger Tormenton, who was elected prior on September 24, 1525 when five other canons were in residence, was the last prior of Woodspring. Along with John Berche (sub-prior), Robert Coke and five other canons, he acknowledged the kings' (Henry VIII) supremacy over the Church on August 21, 1534. The priory was suppressed two years later on September 27, 1536 and the community of canons was disbanded. The revenues of the priory at the dissolution were £87 2s. 11d.
- 3.6 The priory, together with the demesne lands and the manors of Woodspring and Locking were granted by the crown to Sir William St Loe, knight, in 1536. Edward Fetyplace of Donnington (Berks.) acquired the lease of the priory and adjoining meadows the same year. He ordered that the chancel of the priory church be demolished and the east archway of the crossing blocked, thereby destroying the ecclesiastical integrity of the building. Other works converting the building to a domestic dwelling were started at about the same time.
- 3.7 Edward Fetyplace's lease ended in 1557 and the property returned to Sir John St Loe. In 1566 the property was sold to William Carr, esq., an M.P. and merchant from Bristol. It was then that the former church was fully converted to a house, completing the work begun by Edward Fetyplace. On the death of his son, Edward Carr, esq. of Woodspring, on January 19, 1605 the *'mansion house of the priory of Woodspring, and divers messuages, lands and tenements in the vicinity thereof'* were left to Anne Younge, his sister (wife of William Younge, esq. Of Ogborne St George, Wilts.).
- 3.8 The property was inherited by the Pigott family in the late 17th century, and it remained in their ownership for the next 200 years. One of their first acts was to have the farmhouse built, at the north-west corner of the former church, incorporating parts of the former Prior's lodgings. A date stone above the front door of the farmhouse reads 'DC 1701'.
- 3.9 In 1823 Ann Pigott inherited Woodspring Priory from her uncle, Wadham Pigott. Her husband was John Hugh Smyth (1792–1853), the illegitimate son of Sir Hugh Smyth, Bart. of Ashton Court (Long Ashton, Som.). They had married in 1815, lived at Brockley Hall

(Brockley, Som.) and had ten children. Due to a stipulation in her uncle's will she and her husband assumed the name and arms of Smyth-Pigott.

- 3.10 From the latter half of the 19th century the Smyth-Pigott's let the priory and lands to tenant farmers. In the 1870's the tenant was a John Buskin, while by 1894 it was William Phippen, then in 1906 a John Garrett.
- 3.11 In 1918 the property was sold to Maj. Vernon Tickell Hill, but it had changed hands again by 1939 when the owner was Mr Richard Frank Burrough.
- 3.12 In 1968 the property (including Middle Hope) was purchased by the National Trust, but the following year the priory and some 9 acres of adjoining paddocks and farmland was transferred to the ownership of the Landmark Trust.

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Williams 2009). The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999, revised 2008) and *Management of Archaeological Projects* (MAP II) issued by English Heritage (EH 1991). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundwork.
- 4.2 The watching brief involved monitoring some ground reduction work to the west of a garden wall and the excavation of a narrow pipe/cable trench across the lawn of the outer court and beneath a floor within part of the historic building.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 All groundwork was carried out manually using picks and shovels.
- 5.2 The first site visit, on Monday 22 February, involved monitoring ground reduction work (to a depth of about 0.2m) immediately west of a high garden wall (**Plates 1 & 2**), along with the excavation of a 1.2m deep pit that measured some 1.1m long (N-S) by 0.8m wide (E-W). The pit was dug to contain several cables leading to/from three heat pumps, and it had been intended that the cables would be laid beneath the neighbouring stone wall. However, due to the depth of the structure its base was not reached so a narrow below-ground hole was made through the wall (**Plate 5**).
- 5.3 The stratigraphy to the west of the garden wall (102) was found to consist of some 0.8m of brashy, brownish red subsoil/fill (101), which contained many plaster fragments and several broken roof slates. The latter deposit was sealed beneath a 0.4m deep layer of dark reddish brown topsoil (100). No significant archaeological deposits or features were observed.
- 5.4 The excavation of the cable/pipe trench commenced the next day (Tuesday 23 February). The narrow trench, which measured about 8m long by 0.3m wide, was dug across the lawn of the outer court that is located south of the farmhouse, immediately east of the high garden wall. The average depth of the trench (**Plates 6 & 7**) was some 0.35m below the existing ground surface. The contractors attempted to excavate the new trench as close as possible to the line of an existing electric cable, so as to minimise the potential impact on any archaeological features and deposits.
- 5.5 No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed beneath the overlying turf and topsoil (103), other than part of a previously recorded post-medieval cobble stone surface (104), some 0.12m thick, and no artefacts pre-dating the modern period were recovered during this phase of intrusive groundwork. The cobble surface was excavated and recorded during an earlier programme of archaeological work in 1992, after which it was taken up and re-laid (the ground level having been reduced by some 0.45m).
- 5.6 When excavating the cable/pipe trench next to (immediately south of) the doorway into the storeroom (part of the farmhouse) on Wednesday 24 February, the presence of the existing sleeved electric cable was noted (**Plate 8**). Part of a probable medieval wall had been recorded in the 1990's when the electric cable was originally laid, but that feature was avoided during this latest work. An existing hole made through the fill beneath the existing stone door sill was widened so that the new pipes/cables could lie alongside the existing electric cable and pass underneath into the room beyond.
- 5.7 Within the building the maximum depth of the cable/pipe trench (**Plate 9**) was to be 350mm below the modern floor surface, which comprised square concrete slabs (105) some 600mm in diameter by 50mm thick. The floor slabs lay on a 100mm thick layer of yellow sand (106).
- 5.8 Parts of the east and west faces of a north-south aligned stone wall (109) (**Plates 10 & 11**) were recorded within the trench between 0.5-0.7m south of the north exterior wall of the building, west of the doorway. East of the wall was recorded a brownish-red stony, slightly sandy, clay soil (107), while sealing the wall and west of it was a deposit of dark brown clayey soil (108), neither of which produced any finds. The wall lay mostly below the level at which the pipes/cables were to be laid, between 0.22-0.27m below the floor surface, so only the top of the masonry was exposed and subsequently left in-situ. The recorded length measured some 0.6m (N-S) by about 1.8m wide (E-W) and it may have formed part of a wall belonging to the medieval Priors' lodgings. The exposed masonry appeared to be mostly Pennant sandstone, but no bonding material was apparent. The east-facing wall elevation showed traces of white wall plaster still adhering to it, therefore suggesting it to be a former internal wall face.

- 5.9 An area of Pennant sandstone masonry (110) (**Plate 12**), probably associated with a former step belonging to an extant short flight of steps leading to/from a blocked doorway, was recorded at the west-end of the trench in the north-west corner of the store room. A timber lintel, showing the position of the blocked doorway, is visible in the external west-facing gable-end of the farmhouse. The recorded stones lay no more than 0.14m below the surface of the modern floor and probably date from the 18th or 19th century.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The watching brief identified no previously unrecorded structural archaeological remains within the areas affected by the intrusive groundwork, other than the base of a post-1700 stone step belonging to a short flight of steps within a store room at the west end of the farmhouse.

7. PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Longman MIfA (Project Officer, BaRAS) who also produced this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge (Design & Production Officer, BaRAS). The project was managed by Bruce Williams MIfA (Manager, BaRAS).

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

Published Material

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Collinson, Revd. J., 1791 | <i>The History of Somersetshire</i> (3 vols.) |
| English Heritage, 1991 | <i>Management of Archaeological Projects</i> |
| IFA, 1999 | <i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs</i> (revised 2008). Institute of Field Archaeologists |

Unpublished Material

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Williams, B., 2010 | <i>Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Woodspring Priory, North Somerset</i> (BaRAS Report; privately circulated report) |
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9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services would like to thank Carole Paton (Building Surveyor), Pamela Reed (Manager, Woodspring Priory), and Chris Crook (Custodian) of the Landmark Trust, Martin Hook (consultant/lead contractor), also Richard Edwards and Mark Ackland of Thorne/Edwards Groundworks Ltd, Richard Hopkins and Nick Britton of Southwest Heat Pumps Ltd, and David Bull (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Bristol) and Jessica Lennon (Casework Assistant) of English Heritage for their assistance and co-operation. Thanks also to Vince Russett (Archaeological Officer, North Somerset Council) for his advice.

APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

NATIONAL POLICIES

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work that would affect a SAM.

ODPM PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE

The Planning Policy Guidance of Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) consolidates advice to planning authorities. The Guidance stresses the non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource, details the role of the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), encourages early consultation with county and district archaeological officers and sets out the requirement for developers to provide sufficient information on the archaeological impact of development to enable a reasonable planning decision to be made.

PPG 16 also indicates the circumstances where further work would be necessary and outlines the use of agreements and conditions to protect the archaeological resource.

DISTRICT POLICY

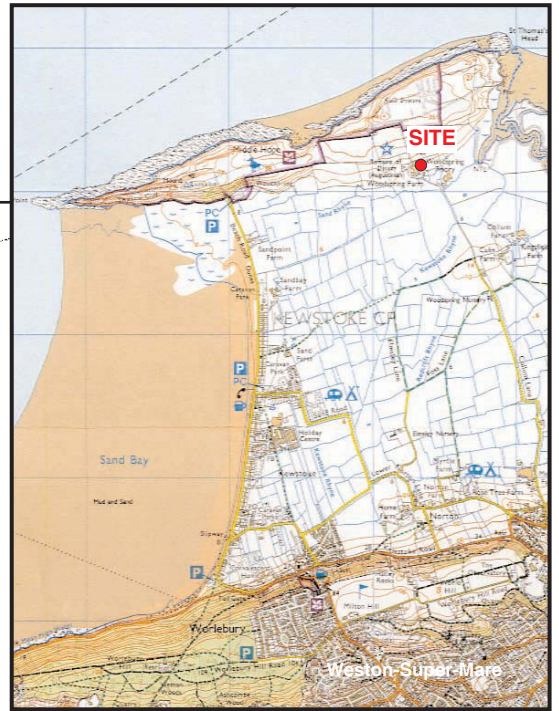
North Somerset Council Replacement Local Plan 2nd Draft (2004) states

(Policy ECH/6 Archaeology):

Development will not be permitted where it would involve significant alteration or cause damage to nationally-important archaeological remains (whether Scheduled or not), or would have a significant impact on the setting of such remains.

Where there is good reason to believe that development proposals could affect locally-important archaeological remains, the Council will seek a field evaluation and assessment, or may formally require the submission of further information, to establish the extent and importance of the remains before the planning application is determined. Where such assessment indicates the development would affect locally-important archaeological remains and the Council considers preservation in-situ is not justified it will seek before permission is granted a formal voluntary agreement by the developer to excavate and record the remains and to publish the results, or may grant permission subject to conditions requiring an approved programme of archaeological work to be undertaken before development commences.

Fig.1 Site location plan



Project

Scale 1/1250

Location

Drawn by

Client

Drawing No.

OS Licence No.
100023397 / 2008

Centre = 334363 E 166118 N
Date 18/9/2008

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Fig.2 Site location plan, trench marked in red

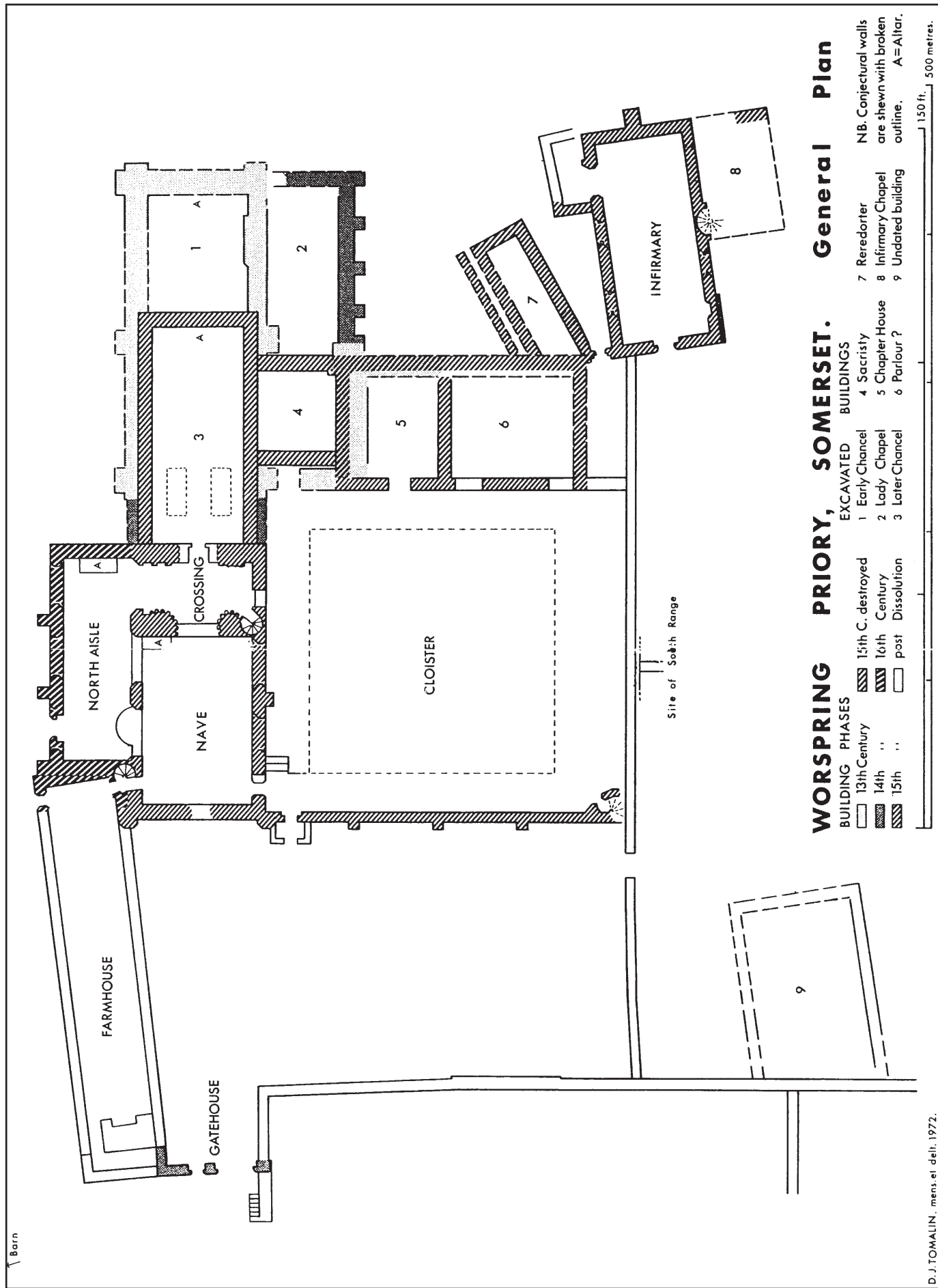


Fig.3 General plan of Woodspring Priory (courtesy of the Landmark Trust)



Plate 1
Proposed site of three
heat pump units (looking
east)



Plate 2
South-facing section in pit
adjacent to garden wall



Plate 3
South front of priory
farmhouse, overlooking
the outer court garden.
The cable/pipe trench
was to run between
garden wall to left and
room beyond open
doorway (looking north)



Plate 4 Woodspring Priory Church and adjoining west-wall of cloister garden (looking north-east)



Plate 5 East-side of garden wall, showing hole made for plastic pipe to/from heat pumps (looking west)



Plate 6 Manual excavation of cable/pipe trench in progress across the lawn of the outer court (looking south)



Plate 7 Looking north, towards the farmhouse, at surface of re-laid cobble yard (104)



Plate 8 Doorway into store room at west-end of farmhouse. Note existing electric cable (within white plastic sleeve) passing under door sill



Plate 9 Looking north along cable/pipe trench within store room



Plate 10
View of north-west end
of trench within store
room. Note short length
of plaster-covered wall
face (109), left of black
electric cables



Plate 11
Close-up (looking east) of
east side of plaster-
covered wall (109)



Plate 12
Area of Pennant
stonework, next to in-situ
steps leading to/from
blocked doorway (looking
west)