

Archaeological Investigations at the Parish Church of St John Baptist, Cirencester, 2008 and 2009

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INTRODUCTION by Mark Collard and Peter Davenport

In 2008 and 2009 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) undertook a programme of archaeological excavation and recording at the parish church of St John Baptist, Cirencester (Fig. 1) during internal alterations which included reflooring of the nave, the aisles and the tower, and the installation of underfloor heating and services. All works were carried out under a faculty granted by the Diocese of Gloucester and were undertaken on behalf of the parochial church council of Cirencester with Watermoor. The architects to the scheme were St Ann's Gate Architects of Salisbury. The archive and artefacts from the project will be deposited with Corinium Museum, Cirencester.

Background

The church lies on the north side of Cirencester Market Place, situated in the north-west area of the modern town. The underlying geology of the area is mapped as alluvial deposits associated with the River Churn (BGS 1998).

The site lies at the centre of the Roman town of *Corinium Dobunnorum*, within *Insula XXVI* (see Holbrook and Salvatore 1998, 19–34 for gazetteer and discussion of the Cirencester Roman street system). The projected line of Ermin Street (Fig. 1) runs north-west/south-east beneath the south-west corner of the church tower; within Market Place, just to the south of the church, an accumulated depth of 3 m of street surfaces was seen, extending from only 0.2 m below modern street level during a watching brief on the insertion of new services. The projected line of another Roman street (M on Fig. 1) runs south-west/north-east, c.10 m to the south of the church south porch. Street surfaces from this were recorded during the 1974 watching brief c.1.8 m below modern street level and these extended to a depth of 1.3 m. Fragmentary remains of the corner of a Roman building were recorded south of the porch in 1974 (Zeepvat 1979, 72).

No post-Roman finds or features have been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the church, but post-Roman accumulated deposits ('dark earth') were identified just south of the church, from immediately below the modern road surface to a depth of 3.2 m (Zeepvat 1979, 72). 'Dark earth' was recorded in a trench for sewer works, within Abbey Grounds to the north (HER nos. 28891, 685–7).

An Anglo-Saxon minster church was founded at Cirencester in the 9th or 10th century (Bryant and Heighway 1998) and was located to the north-east of the church in the area approximately

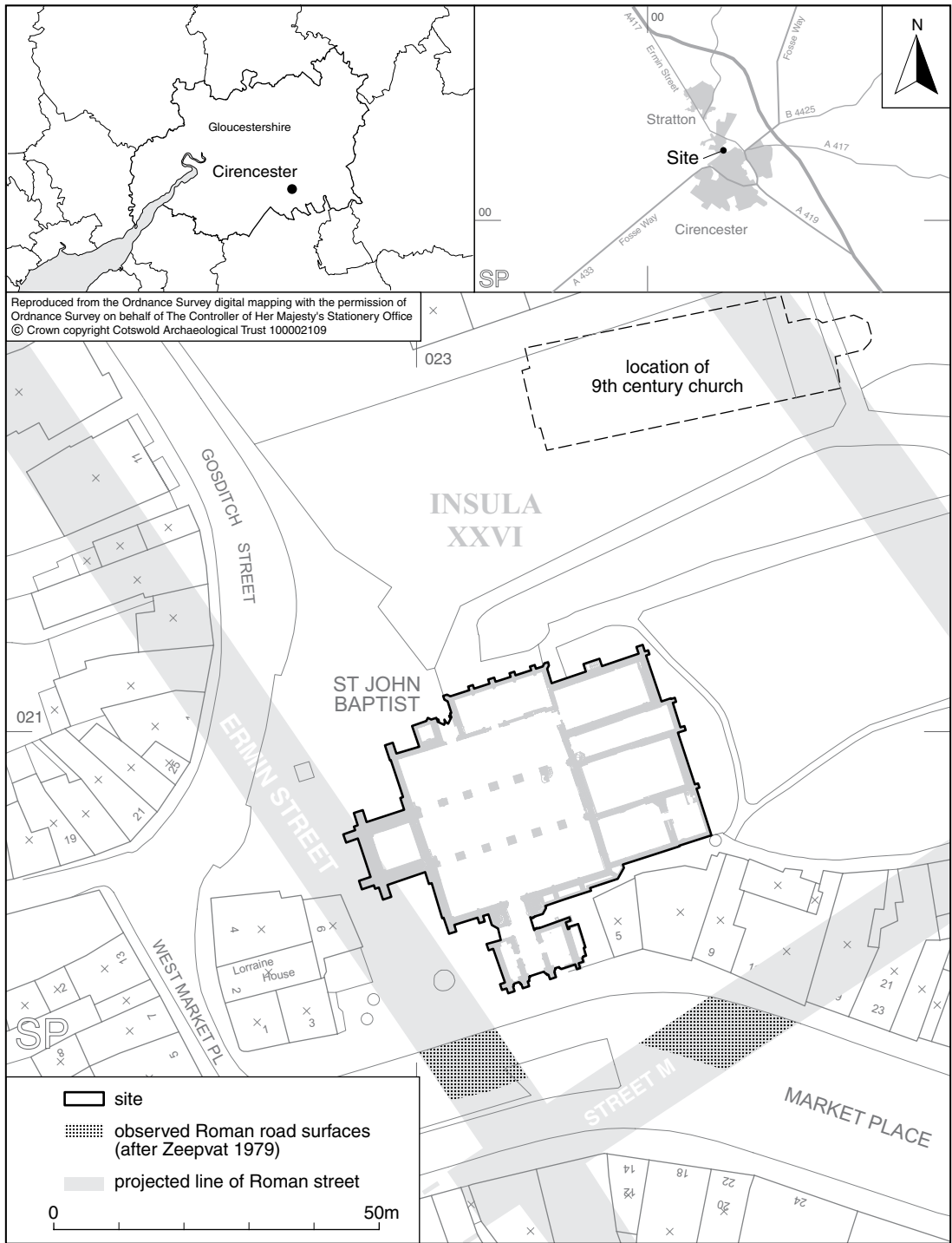


Fig. 1. St John Baptist, site location plan. Scale 1:1000.

corresponding to *Insulae XXV* and *XXVI* of the Roman town (Fig. 1). Its precinct is not thought to have extended as far as the site of the later parish church (Bryant and Heighway 1998, 7) and there are no recorded Saxon deposits or structures in this area.

The building history of the church has been given by Verey and Brooks (1999, 246–57) and by Rodwell (1997). McClees adds some extra detail in his short account. The earliest church was begun in the 1150s or 1160s to replace the loss of the abbey church due to its reform and rebuilding from the 1140s (McClees 1988, 38–40). Little of this building is visible above ground, but the distinctive masonry of the two eastern bays of the nave south aisle wall has been identified as being from this early phase, and a transepted plan for the early church envisaged (Rodwell 1997, 6). The tower was built *c.*1400 and the nave aisles were progressively rebuilt in the following decades, probably following structural problems with the tower. The stair turrets of the south porch are an addition to the south aisle wall, but predate the Town Hall of *c.*1500. The Trinity Chapel was added in the 1430s and the nave and upper parts of the aisles rebuilt between 1514 and 1529.

The east end of the church is much more complex, but is less relevant to the present project. The chancel arch is of a date with the rebuilding of the nave and is flanked on the south by the later 13th-century arch into the 12th-century St John's Chapel; the latter was altered in the later 13th and early 14th centuries. Two arches lead from the north nave aisle into St Catherine's and the Lady Chapels. These are 13th-century in date, but were rebuilt above head height in the 16th century, albeit recycling much old masonry, especially the voussoirs (Rodwell 1997, 7).

The church underwent various alterations in the 18th and 19th centuries, but its current form is largely the result of restoration and reordering by Giles Gilbert Scott between 1865 and 1867. As part of the development of the design for the recent sub-floor work reported here, an archaeological evaluation was carried out in 2004 (CA 2004). Three trial pits were excavated (Fig. 2, TP1–3) which confirmed that substantial areas of the nave and aisles had been reduced in level during the works by Gilbert Scott, with the formation of sub-floor voids and ducts to depths of between 0.6 and 1.4 m below the present ground level across most of the nave. The finished Victorian floor level lay 200 mm below the Tudor floor level, which was indicated by marks remaining on the walls and piers. This ground reduction had removed large volumes of the upper part of medieval and post-deposits, although the limited area of survival of *in situ* deposits beneath Scott's 19th-century tiled alleys suggests that the material removed was likely to have been homogeneous reworked deposits containing fragmentary disarticulated human bone, disturbed by repeated use of the church for burial. Medieval and later structural remains (e.g. wall footings and pier bases) had however apparently been left *in situ* by Scott.

The information provided by the evaluation was used to inform design of the sub-floor works. Ground reduction across the nave was generally limited to the same depth as Scott's works, with only a service duct around the perimeter dug to greater depth. Where buried structural remains were found during construction, the design was altered to accommodate their preservation *in situ*. Consequently only limited intrusions were made into the archaeological deposits during the project.

Methodology

Three test pits (Fig. 2, TP1–3,) were dug in 2004 and the tower was refloored early in 2008 under an archaeological watching brief. The results from these investigations have been integrated with the results of the main works of 2008 and 2009 described here.

The archaeological investigations were designed to record any archaeological information revealed during the works, which required ground reduction across the whole area of the nave,

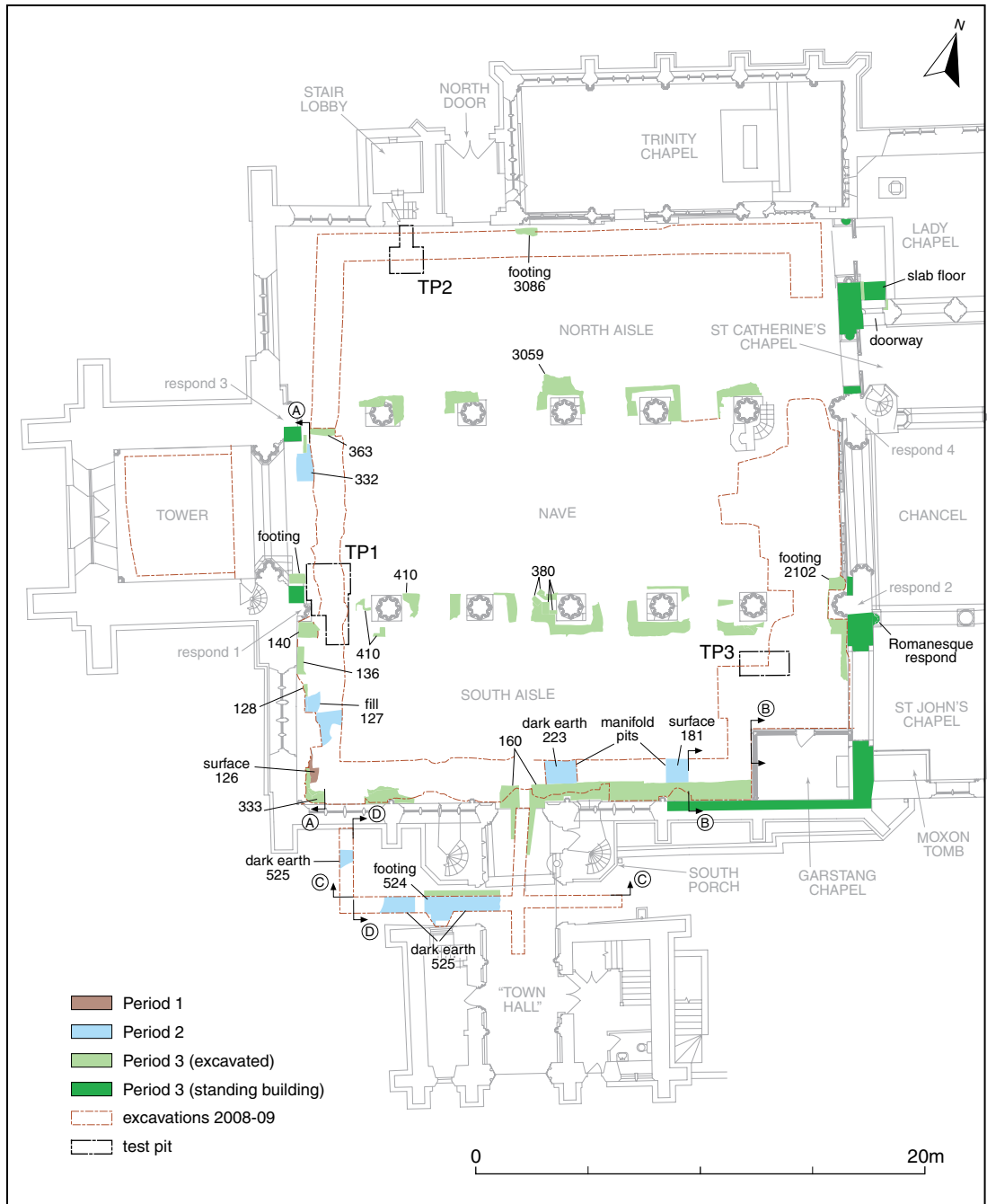


Fig. 2. St John Baptist, plan of excavated areas showing Periods 1–3. Scale 1:300.

aisles and ground floor of the tower, including the removal of Scott's Victorian tiled alley floors and the suspended timber floors beneath the pews and their supporting brick sleeper walls. The voids below the timber floors had been created by Scott's ground reduction and their bases had been sealed with a thin blinding of lime concrete. This generally formed the limit of excavation in the current work, at a depth of 0.45 m below the level of the church floor (prior to and after the 2008–9 works). The only exception to this was the excavation of a trench to construct a duct for the installation of services, 1 m wide and 0.85 m deep, around the interior of the nave and aisles, parallel to the exterior walls and the east end of the nave. At two points in the south aisle, this trench was deepened by 0.25 m to allow the installation of heating manifolds. In the nave, in front of the chancel arch, the excavations were expanded to allow diversion of the duct around *in situ* burial vaults. Observations were also made of the above-ground fabric in relation to the excavated remains. Externally, a new drain trench was excavated mechanically beneath the south porch and along the south side of the nave (Figs. 2 and 8) under archaeological watching brief.

Excavation of the upper deposits within the area of ground reduction across the interior of the church were carried out by hand by building contractors under archaeological supervision. Any archaeological deposits or structures encountered were cleaned and recorded by the archaeological team. The service duct trench was dug archaeologically where the removal of archaeological deposits, structures or burials was required. All structural remains encountered were left *in situ*, resulting in the exposure of only the upper levels of the pier bases along the nave arcades and the footings of the wall foundations around the south, west and north sides of the nave. Human bone was recovered from partially-excavated burials along the service duct, as well as disarticulated bone from other deposits. As the material was fragmentary and disarticulated, no recording was carried out on the bones, and all were re-interred within a crypt beneath the Garstang Chapel at the conclusion of the project.

During the works the organ loft was temporarily dismantled. This revealed previously unrecorded details of the standing building in St John's Chapel.

THE EXCAVATIONS

Period 1: Earliest pre-church deposits, probably Roman

In the south-west corner of the south aisle was a series of hard-packed limestone gravel layers cemented by lime finings (Figs. 2 and 3, section AA, 126). Its upper surface was at 110.45 m OD, or *c.*0.75 m below the floor of the church; it was more than 0.45 m thick and its base was not reached. Its surface sloped down to the west. Only a remnant survived, cut on the south and west by the earliest footings of the church (366, obscured on Fig. 3, section AA by Burial 25). It was also cut by a large 12th–13th-century pit on the north, pit 214 (Fig. 3, section AA, described below). Ermin Street is thought to run close to the west end of the church, only 0.2 m below the modern pavement (Zeepvat 1979; Darvill and Gerard 1994, 59 and fig. 18) and it is probable that the gravel layers 126 represent Roman road surfaces, although their location does not fall within the projected alignment of Ermin Street (Fig. 1) as it is currently interpreted.

Period 2: Later pre-church deposits, 11th(?)–mid 12th century

Below the west end of the nave a deposit more than 0.60 m thick of dark silty sand ('dark earth') was seen in the service duct (Fig. 3, section AA, 332). It was cut by early wall foundation 375 and the cuts for two post-medieval burials (313, 319), but retained laminations and lenses which

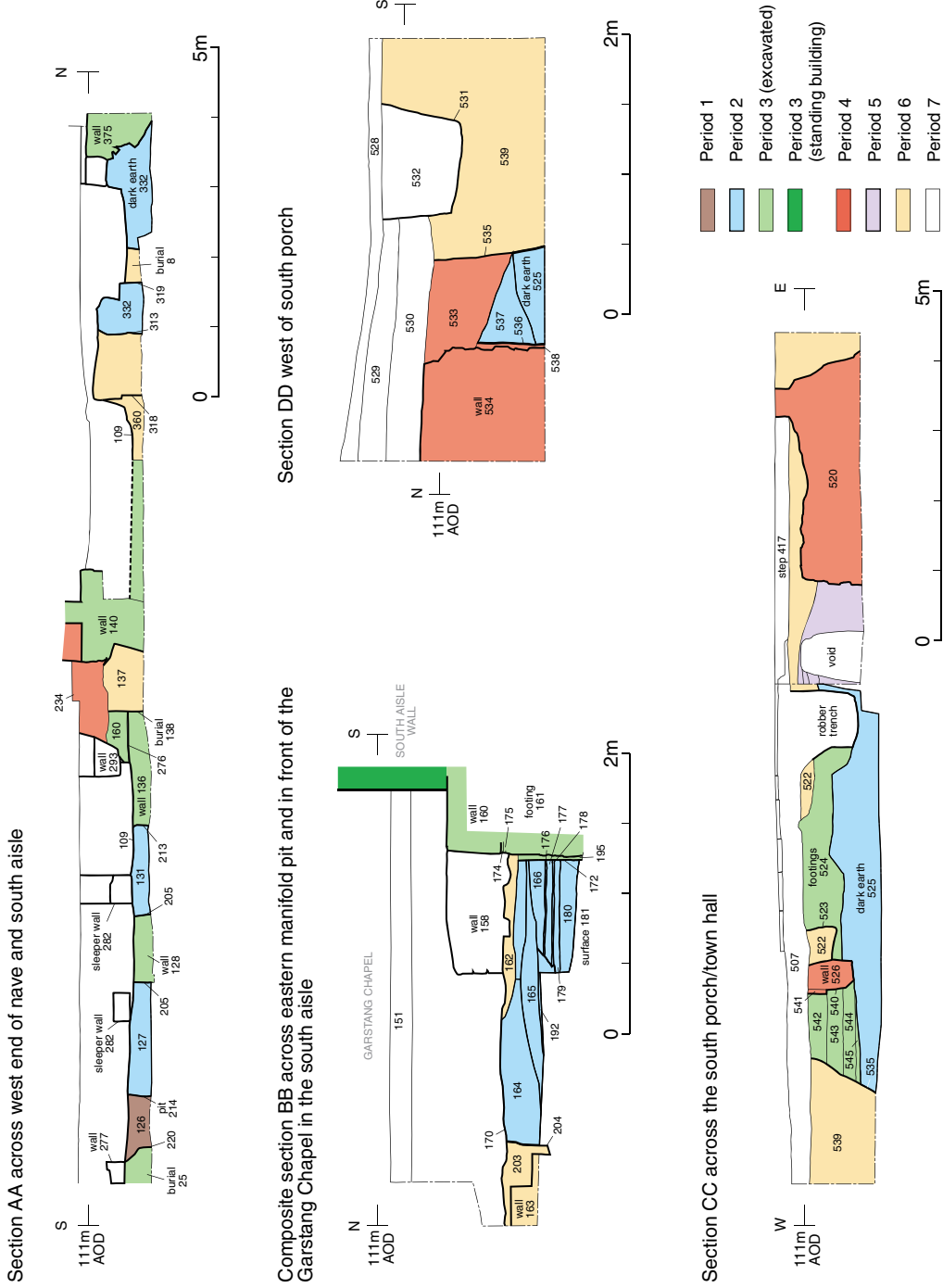


Fig. 3. Sections AA-DD. Scales 1:100 and 1:50.

indicated it had not been otherwise reworked. It contained 12th–13th-century sherds of Minety ware as well as a few abraded sherds of 3rd–4th-century Roman pottery. However, there is a strong possibility, based to some extent on its OD level, that this context was the fill of a pit, like fills 127 and 131 in pit 214 (see below). A similar deposit was exposed in the porch trench (525), more than 0.70 m thick; its base was not reached (Figs. 2 and 3, sections CC and DD). This pre-dated a stone footing which could not be directly dated, but was similar in character to those under the south aisle wall dated to between the mid 12th and mid 13th centuries (described below). Similar ‘dark earth’ deposits were observed in the western manifold pit in the south aisle. Only a small patch of deposit could be revealed (223) and its depth was untested, but it was in most respects identical to the more extensive ‘dark earth’ described above, other than it sloped down to the south. On the north side of the church, the service duct trench generally only revealed later deposits, but the early footing 3086 (Figs. 2 and 4) appeared to seal a small patch of ‘dark earth’ just east of the north door (3081).

At the west end of the south aisle was a large pit (Fig. 3, section AA, pit 214). It was excavated to 0.30 m, but its base was not reached. At the south end it cut layer 126 and to the west was cut away by the construction cut for the early foundation of the west wall, 136 (Figs. 2 and 3, section AA). The original extent of this pit is unknown, but it was more than 3.6 m long north to south and more than 1.5 m east to west. It was filled with a dark, sandy silt (127, 131), very like a ‘dark earth’ deposit. It contained some abraded potsherds of 3rd and 4th-century date, but also 12th–13th-century Cotswold oolitic ware. This may have been a quarry pit of Ermin Street for the construction of Period 2 gravel surfaces (below). It has been suggested above that context 332 (Fig. 3, section AA) may also be the fill of a similar pit rather than a ‘dark earth’ layer.

Several gravel surfaces were noted around the south-west part of the church. Where a relationship was able to be ascertained, these surfaces pre-dated the earliest church footings or overlay a ‘dark earth’. Thin gravel surfaces were seen in the manifold pits in the south aisle (Figs. 2 and 3, section BB, 181, and 210, not illustrated). They were lower than the top of surface 126, the probable Roman road, the highest point being at 109.90 m OD, but were totally different in density and thickness. They were clearly earlier than the construction trench for the south aisle wall (e.g. Fig. 3, section BB), and sloped down to the north. The thickness of surface 181 was not ascertained as it was at the limit of excavation, but surface 210 was only 0.05 m thick and rested on the ‘dark earth’ 223. In the south porch trench a comparable layer of gravel was seen (Fig. 3, section CC, 545). It too rested on the ‘dark earth’ 525, but its relationship to the church footings was unclear, due to later disturbances. Gravel layer 537 can also be tentatively assigned to this phase. It was considerably thicker and was only cut by late medieval footings, but it sat on 525 at the same depth as 545 (Fig. 3, section DD).

The gravel surfaces in the manifold pits were succeeded by a series of probable occupation layers or floors, still pre-dating the Period 3 footings. These survived to a maximum height of 110.30 m OD in a narrow strip of stratified deposits against the Garstang Chapel (Fig. 3, section BB). The first layer above the gravel surfaces was a deposit of dark clayey silt up to 0.3 m thick (Fig. 3, section BB, 180, and 224, not illustrated) that levelled the slope of the underlying layers and created a horizontal upper surface. Above this the sequence in the two exposures was clearly the same in essence. In the western pit three horizontal layers, the lowest of which was decidedly stony, formed over the levelling layer 224. Total thickness was only 0.15 m. To the east there were four layers rather than three, rather more stony and with a mortar lens in the sequence (Fig. 3, section BB, 176–9). Both sets of layers were concluded by a trampled layer of silt (176 and 209). The two lowest layers in the eastern manifold pit (180 and 179) produced a few abraded sherds of 3rd and 4th-century pottery, but layer 177 contained a sherd of 11th–13th-century Cotswold oolitic ware.

This sequence was sealed by a layer of dark silt (166) traced from the eastern manifold pit to the Garstang Chapel and for nearly 1.5 m from the south aisle wall. It was itself cut by a shallow feature on its north side before being covered by two dumps of silty limestone gravel, 164 and 165, with a combined thickness of 0.30 m, which extended over 2 m from the south wall (Fig. 3, section BB). These layers were the highest pre-footing deposits, all cut by the footing trench 172 for the Period 3 footings. Layer 166 contained potsherds dated to the 12th–13th centuries and 164 contained three sherds of 11th–13th-century Cotswold oolitic ware. The upper surface of 164 was at the same level as the break between the Period 3 footings 161 and wall 160 (marked by layer 174), suggesting that this was the contemporary ground level.

Period 3: Earliest church footings, mid 12th–mid 13th century

Under the south side of the chancel arch and the arch into St John's Chapel, along the south and west walls of the south aisle, and across the tower and also under both nave arcades, were pitched stone footings in a predominantly dark grey, gritty sand and gravel matrix. These supported the lower parts of walls of small irregularly-coursed rubble set in a distinctive reddish-brown mortar. In the south aisle, where this was best observed, the wall 160 sat on a bedding of yellow-brown loamy mortar on the top of the pitched footings (Fig. 5). Footings under the western stair turret of the south porch (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, section CC, 524) were very similar to wall 160 in the same reddish mortar. Near the centre of the north wall of the north aisle was a short piece of similar



Fig. 4. The 'dark earth' 3081 and stub of early footing 3086 under the Trinity Chapel.



Fig. 5. The wall 160, and footings 161, under the south aisle wall.

walling running north/south (3086), incorporated in the later east/west footings, but without any obvious footings (Figs. 2 and 4).

The pitched stones in the footings were up to 0.30 m long and the rubble blocks in the walls were typically 0.12–0.20 m long, in irregular courses 0.08–0.10 m thick. Wall 3086 in the north aisle was shallower. The maximum depth of footing seen was 0.70 m below the base of south aisle wall 160 in one of the manifold pits (at 108.87 m OD, Fig. 3, section BB) and the arcade footings were seen to a similar depth in the western duct run.

Wall 160 projected *c.*0.80 m from the inner face of the 15th-century wall above it, and about 0.5 m from the west wall. A service trench had been dug through the doorway from the south aisle into the south porch at some time in the past, presumably when the 19th-century works were carried out. It was bridged by grave ledger stones, forming a low tunnel under the porch floor. This trench had cut through wall 160, showing that it was up to 2.64 m (8' 8") wide (Fig. 2, 160). Where it was traced under the nave arcades the wall was more like 1.9 m wide (6' 2¾"), though often truncated by sleeper walls of the 1867 floor. Its centre line was generally 0.7 m to the south of the present south arcade's centre line. That this was likely to be the original width and alignment was shown by the survival of both wall faces at the east end of the south arcade and under one or two of the nave arcade piers, the 1867 sleeper walls having been set against the face (Fig. 10). The footing was originally continuous, only missing where later disturbance cut across it leaving gaps of as little as 0.30–0.40 m (although often considerably more). In the centre of the south arcade a contemporary channel in the north-west corner of the footing (380) suggests a drainage arrangement, which may have been for a font or a water stoup (Fig. 2). Its further route was removed by later disturbance.

The wall under the north arcade was less visible, but was still noted under most of the piers (Fig. 2). It projected a maximum of almost 1 m north of the central pier base, giving an offset (if this is typical) of *c.*0.50 m to the north from the present arcade. However, this particular projection (3059) is almost opposite the projecting north/south stub in the north aisle north wall footing, 3086, and may just represent the junction with that wall. Wall 3086 was only *c.*0.95 m wide and had relatively shallow footings (Fig. 4).

The footing under the west turret of the south porch has been noted above as being very similar to the wall (160 etc.) described above (Figs. 2 and 3, section CC, 524). It was stratigraphically isolated from the other Period 3 footings, and its depth and width could not be ascertained in the narrow trench, but it cut through 'dark earth' deposits 525. Three even and horizontal layers of dark silty clay with a total thickness of almost 0.70 m (Fig. 3, section CC, 544, 543, and 542) were noted alongside 524. These overlay thin gravel layer 545 of Period 2, but were otherwise undated and had no relationship with structures other than 526, which cut through them. The top of the lowest layer coincided with the apparent base of footings 524, so is likely to pre-date it, but this cannot be proved; the other two layers may have built up against footing 524. They have, therefore, been tentatively ascribed to Period 3.

Although it clearly functioned as the footings for the western side of the Period 4/5 south porch stair turret, footing 524 did not align well with it. In contrast, its equivalent, the footing for the eastern stair turret, was of very different, dry-stone, construction and more accurately aligned with its load. This suggests that 524 was indeed part of the Period 3 church, reused as a foundation in the later periods (see Period 4/5 below). Its eastern end had been robbed and this may represent the position of a north/south wall. It is possible that 524 was part of a Period 3 porch and this could help explain the great width of the masonry recorded in the tunnel under the north doorway of the porch (Fig. 2, 160).

At the west end of the Lady Chapel and St Catherine's Chapel, a small area north of a round-arched doorway between the two was stripped of its wooden floor (Fig. 2). This revealed a rough, stone slab floor, set in a soft mortar, butting up to a simple chamfered plinth on the west. The present door threshold was modern and obscured the relationship of the plinth and the floor to the door jambs (see below).

Period 3: Above-ground observations

In most places the Period 3 wall and footings was seen to be quite distinct from the yellow-brown-mortared footings and walling of the present church built directly off it. In other places, however, it could be seen to be integral with the existing above-ground fabric. At the east end of the south aisle, for example, the wall to which respond 2 is attached (Fig. 2) was of one build with the Period 3 footings. It has been much altered, but contains a fragment of round-arched recess on its western side (Rodwell 1997, 32). On its eastern side a flat respond has had its corners bevelled and a shaft removed from it at some time in the past. The temporary removal of the organ loft revealed the upper part of this shaft and its late Romanesque capital forming the western respond to the south chancel arcade (Fig. 6). A date of 1170–90 would be appropriate stylistically.

The arch in the west wall of St John's Chapel was clearly built onto this section of wall and used the same section of footing for its north respond. It was noted that the footing (2102) ran southwards across the chord of this arch for 1.45 m until it was removed (at the shallow depth observed) by a later disturbance, probably a burial (Fig. 2). The arch is dated by Rodwell (1997, 32) to the late 13th or early 14th century. The presence of the Garstang Chapel prevented the observation of the junction at foundation level between the south aisle south wall and the west wall of St John's Chapel. However, above ground it could be seen that the lower part of the two eastern



Fig. 6. The Romanesque capital and cut-back shaft of the western respond of the south chancel arcade.

nave bays was of one build with that wall and was integral with the Period 3 footings. It was not possible to see if the chapel arch had been inserted into this section of wall or was contemporary with it. However, the removal of the Moxon tomb, on the eastern side of this junction, revealed that the southern wall of St John's Chapel was butted against the south aisle corner. This removal also revealed vertical runs of reddish-brown staining on the south wall. The composition was unclear and while it certainly was not ashlar lining, as in the west side of the chapel arch (Rodwell 1997, 32), it may have been paint drips.

The distinctive Period 3 footing was also seen under the tower/nave junction. Again, parts of the above-ground fabric were integral with it. The jambs of the outer order of the tower arch were set directly on two courses of large, square-cut slabs of limestone about 0.25 m thick, which in turn were set on the older reddish-brown mortar footings (140 and 375) of the west end (Fig. 3, Section AA) and were bonded in the same mortar. The lowest part of these tower-arch jambs are also stratigraphically older than the main structure of the tower (Fig. 7). This lower masonry has different coursing and a different plinth design (a simple hollow over a half round) from the rest of the tower masonry. It has also been cut back for the jamb mouldings of the tower arch on the south side and dogged into on the north, suggesting that as much as the lower 1.5 m might be older masonry. The chamfer on this masonry has a broach stop, which was certainly in use in the 13th



Fig. 7. The base of the southern tower arch jamb, showing junction of early and later work (to left and right, respectively), and broach stop to chamfer.

century at the east end of the church. Whilst perhaps not a very sensitive chronological indicator, it seems somewhat out of place in a design dating from *c.*1400 (Rodwell 1997, 21). The footing presumably continued across the east side of the tower, but later disturbances have removed or obscured all trace under the arch itself.

The plinth and paving next to the doorway between the Lady Chapel and St Catherine's Chapel (Fig. 2) was clearly the same build as several courses of ashlar masonry above the plinth and with the western door jamb. Furthermore, the plinth was shown to be buried by another plinth for the attached shafts of the later 13th-century arch into the Lady Chapel. The rubble walling associated with this later plinth seems to have been built against the cut-back ashlar above the earlier plinth, confirming its earlier, probably Romanesque, date (*c.*1066–1170).

Period 4: The footings of the walls of the present building, *c.*1400–30

The present southern wall of the south aisle rose directly from the Period 3 wall base. In contrast, the west wall of the aisle rose on footings of rubble (232, 234) set in a yellowish-brown mortar (Fig. 8). This rested on the Period 3 footings, the wall base of that period having been removed.

Later intrusions had removed any trace of a construction trench and had also cut into the west side of the footings, leaving them very ragged. This wall post-dated the tower and the provision of new footings may have been related to the strengthening works that became necessary during the tower's construction. These included the addition of a pair of partially flying buttresses either side of the tower. This supposition is supported by the discovery of a large, deeply offset footing (534) for the south aisle wall to the south of the west bay (Fig. 3 section DD; Fig. 8). This was set in a gritty grey-brown mortar distinct from the other footings of this period. Its size and position are unnecessary simply to support the aisle wall and its buttresses and may indicate that it was part of foundation works for the tower's southern flying buttress, around the south-west corner of the south aisle.

The earliest phase of the existing south porch consisted of the two stair turrets and south door. Rodwell has shown that the stair turrets are secondary to the south aisle wall (1997, 58). Two massive stone footings were noted just south of the stair turrets. That on the west (524) has been noted already as perhaps of an earlier period, reused (Fig. 2). The eastern one (520) was of unmortared stone, but was more accurately aligned with the above-ground structures (Fig. 3, section CC; Fig. 8). Wall 526, similarly unmortared, was added to the west side of 524 and may have been required to make footings 524 wide enough to be usable for the new work.

The Victorian stone floor of the tower had been lifted during the earlier watching brief and the offset footings on north, south and west were noted (1003), immediately under the floor bedding (Fig. 8). The tower dates from the years after 1400 (Rodwell 1997, 21), and in common with all the later medieval work at the church, the roughly-cut limestone blocks in the footing were set in a yellow-brown mortar. Only the upper surface of the deposit within the tower footings was seen (1002). No foundation cut through this deposit was visible and its description suggests it was a disturbed burial earth with disarticulated human and animal bones, which, in its present form, post-dates the tower footings. Certainly one and probably two inhumations were noted, in the north-east corner and centre of the tower (Fig. 8), in addition to disarticulated remains. The floor here was not lowered by the 19th-century works as much as in the nave and the graves were therefore visible immediately below the floor slab make-up, only about 0.2 m below the present floor levels. This was presumably the case in the nave prior to the 1867 works there. The 19th-century lowering left exposed medieval grave slabs which had been cut up and used to level the lowest courses of the tower arch inner order. Stylistically, these were of 13th and 14th-century type, with simple incised crosses and related designs on the upper surface.

There was no sign of the walls in the north aisle having used pre-existing footings. The footings of the western end of the aisle and the north wall (3078), west of the stair lobby (Fig. 8), were clearly of one build, very similar to footings 234 in the south aisle. Interestingly, these footings incorporated nine medieval grave covers of 13th or 14th-century style. They were laid, sleeper-like, across the footings, below the wall base (Fig. 9). Only a part of the narrow or foot end was visible, the blocks all being laid head end towards the exterior. The grave stones were up to 0.27 m thick, chamfered in profile, with some having grooves and slight mouldings on the chamfer. An incised cross could be inferred from the fragment of the top surface visible in most cases, or in other cases a cross in shallow relief. The decoration was similar to that on those reused in the tower footings (above) and in the nave arcade footings (below), but those were mostly ledger-type slabs. Below the door to the stair lobby the footings appeared to have been replaced by Victorian underpinning. Eastwards, a simple footing of cuboid limestone blocks on a rougher, lower footing in yellow-brown mortar (3079) was noted to at least 1 m below the present floor (Fig. 8). This was seen to continue to the door to the Lady Chapel (footings 3083–5) but in places had been removed by the foundations of the Trinity Chapel piers and by Victorian ducts and brick underpinning.

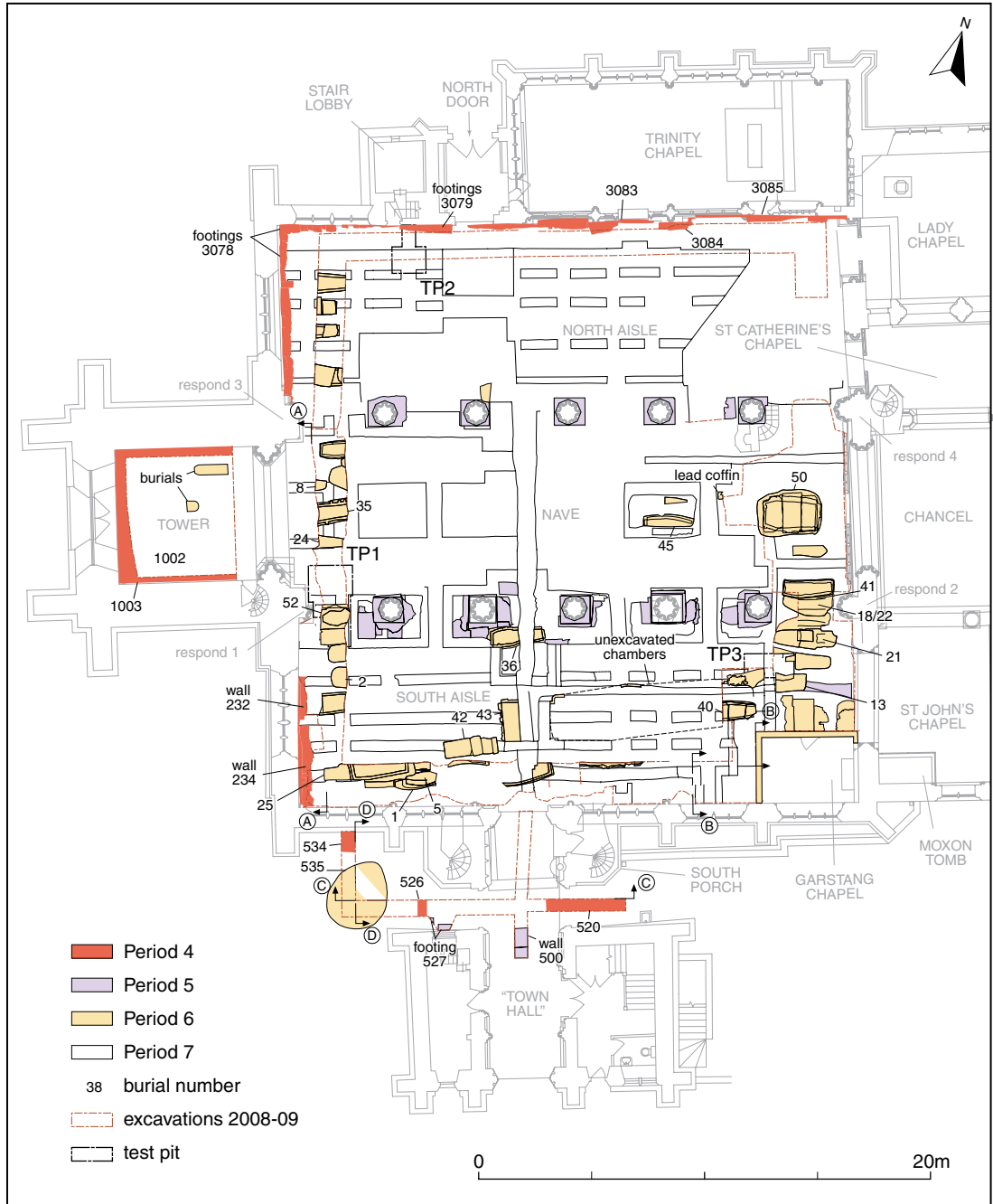


Fig. 8. St John Baptist, plan of excavated areas showing Periods 4-7. Scale 1:300.



Fig. 9. Medieval grave covers used in the north aisle footings.

Period 5: The nave arcades, south porch and Town Hall, c.1490–1530

The nave was rebuilt within the existing aisles between 1514 and c.1530 (Verey and Brooks 1999, 250–1). Shallow stone platforms, c.1.2–1.5 m square, were built on the earlier Period 2 footings in limestone set in yellow-brown mortar at each pier position (Figs. 8 and 10). There were smaller platforms for the east and west responds. The platforms were levelled with reused medieval grave slabs, which were set just below floor level, and finished with ashlar plinths at floor level. The pier bases were separate and not linked into one foundation wall.

The porch was built in two phases, the second being the almost free-standing Town Hall (Verey and Brooks 1999, 250). Parts of the north wall of the cellar (500) under the entrance way were noted along with what was probably part of a vault crown (Fig. 8). This wall was similar in construction to the other Period 4 and 5 walls. Another similar footing (527) was noted under the north wall of the western half of the Town Hall (Fig. 8). No floors related to the porch buildings were seen in the trenches here, but a series of dumps and mortar spreads may represent dumping and make-up immediately following the construction of the cellars. No dating evidence was retrieved from these layers.

Period 6: Post-medieval, c.1530–1867

The only remains of this period from inside the church were the burials, their associated excavated deposits and the cellar or crypt under the Garstang Chapel (Fig. 8). Outside, just to the west of the porch, was a large pit 535 (Figs. 3 and 8, sections CC and DD). It is clear that the entire area of the nave and aisles was used for interments and, at the depth and in the areas seen, little other



Fig. 10. The multi-period base of the central pier in the south nave arcade.

than burials and the disturbed ground resulting from a long practice of burial survived. Only limited areas survived to be investigated above the general level of Victorian reduction. These were in the eastern bay of the nave and south aisle, and in patches in the north aisle between 19th-century ducting. Apart from providing the matrix into which the latest graves were set, this material contained disturbed coffin fittings and disarticulated human bone. Where it survived it clearly continued almost up to the underside of the 1867 floor.

The burials encountered in the works could be allocated to one of three groups: uncoffined burials not in a vault; coffined burials not in a vault; and coffined burials in a vault.

Uncoffined burials

Only 12 recognisably individual burials were recorded without evidence of coffins (plus two possibles in the tower). While the absence of a vault could be easily demonstrated, the absence of a coffin was far less certain: few graves were excavated to a depth where the coffin might lie, and where that depth was reached, the absence of metal fittings could not be taken as evidence of absence of a timber coffin. As burial in the church is in itself an indication of a higher-than-normal status, the absence of a coffin might have a religious or chronological significance. However, this could not be followed further given the quality of the evidence.

Coffined burials not in a vault

A total of 24 coffined burials were noted in unlined graves. This class was quite clear and consistent as the presence of a coffin and the absence of a brick-lined grave or vault were unmistakable criteria. The coffins were all of wood, some with decorative studs and iron handles. The coffin fittings all seem to date stylistically to the late 17th–19th centuries (McSloy, below).

Coffined burials in a vault

The vaults were all, with one possible exception, of the same design – a coffin-shaped grave lined with a single skin of red brick set in white mortar. Stone slabs formed the top cover, but in many cases these had been removed by the 19th-century works. The vaults were generally built for a close fit of the coffin, but several (unexcavated) chambers in the south aisle (Fig. 8) may have been slightly more generous in proportion. Other vaults were fragmentary, having been disturbed by more recent works. Where the vaults were intact, there was next to no soil infill, but broken ones were partially or completely infilled. None were excavated to full depth and, where coffins were seen, the suspicion was that others lay stacked below them. It seems unlikely that any uncoffined burials were set in a vault, but this possibility remains given the limits on excavation depth.

In the south aisle, approximately five vaults were observed beneath the concrete working level deposited by Gilbert Scott (Fig. 8, unexcavated chambers). These were left undisturbed, as they lay outside the impact area of the works; all appeared to contain lead caskets. Curiously, no lead caskets were observed elsewhere.

What may have been a burial vault (but if so, very different from all the others) was noted in plan only in the south aisle. It was represented by the north and west stone lining of a square or rectangular pit (Fig. 8, 43). Its southern side coincided with a later sleeper wall and it was cut away entirely by a Victorian brick-and-stone duct on the east. If it did not extend east of this duct (there was no evidence either way due to disturbance) it could not have been a chamber for an east/west burial as it would have been a maximum of 1.4 m long. If it did extend further east it would have been truncated by one of the unexcavated chambers under the concrete blinding. If this was the case, then it would have been very wide for a vault, up to 1.8 m (and might have been a double vault).

Burial 50 comprised two interments in a double-width brick vault. The two coffins were relatively well preserved, each with extensive decorative studding on all visible surfaces and a brass coffin plate on the upper panel (Fig. 11). These gave burial dates of 1784 and 1788 and the names Clutterbuck and Cripps. These were members of prominent families in Gloucestershire, a prominence reflected in the central position of the vault, close to and in front of the chancel arch, and by the elaborate coffin fittings. Burial 45 was anonymous, but its central position in the nave just west of Burial 50 suggests a similarly prominent individual.

It seems probable that the vaults were originally marked at floor level or occasionally on the wall, but the ledger stones or plaques were reused in the 19th-century deposits and structures (see below).

Vault under the Garstang Chapel

The cellar or crypt under the mid to late 15th-century Garstang Chapel is of uncertain origin and function, although it was presumably intended as a burial vault. It is constructed of roughly squared rubble walls and a very shallow, segmental, brick vault. Access to it was via a set of stone steps on the north, but on discovery the crypt was at least half-filled with rubble and soil. The



Fig. 11. The double Clutterbuck and Cripps vault after removal of the cover slabs.

chapel over it has been moved to several positions in the church but was moved back to its present and, it seems, original, position in 1906, which is the date of the stone slab base and tiled floor (Rodwell 1997, 56). It seems reasonable to assume that the crypt is the same age as the chapel, but the use of bricks at this period in the Cotswolds seems improbable, and they may date to the 1906 refurbishment. Otherwise, a 17th or 18th-century date would seem probable. The crypt was neither emptied nor investigated in detail, but it seems that the south and west walls were cut into the line of the Period 3 footings, to align with the above-ground walls.

Period 7: 1867 and later

The reflooring by Gilbert Scott in 1867 caused the removal of substantial amounts of material. The nave and its aisles were lowered by ≈ 0.80 m and a thin concrete blinding laid. On this were built low, stone sleeper walls to support a new timber and tile floor, and to provide ducting for the new heating system and other services. Where burial vaults were at or below this level they remained undamaged, but, if higher, were truncated. A new cellar was constructed under the south side of the eastern bay of the north aisle and a wide duct connected it to the crypt under the Lady Chapel. A considerable area of the east end of the north aisle was disturbed for services,

but this was not investigated at any depth. The eastern bay of the nave and south aisle were not excavated at all in 1867, except for small trenches for service pipes.

Apart from the removal of burial earth and the top of burials, the major impact of this work was in cutting through the Period 3 wall under the nave arcades between each pier, and, of course, in removing the pre-1867 (and presumably early 16th-century) floor, although every part of it must have been lifted several times for the insertion of burials. This floor seems to have contained many ledger stones from burials, but these were removed from their context in 1867. Several were found intact, but most were broken for reuse of one kind or another. Most have now been reburied under the new nave floor. Various reorderings were carried out after Scott's work, up to the First World War, but none had any significant impact on the western part of the church (Rodwell 1997, 11).

THE FINDS

Pottery by E.R. McSloy

Pottery of all periods amounted to 209 sherds weighing 4776 g. The pottery was sorted by fabric and quantified by sherd count and weight, with vessel forms recorded where identifiable. In most instances the Roman pottery is clearly redeposited, occurring with medieval material, and is typically well broken up and abraded. Average sherd weight for the Roman group, excluding amphora sherds, is low at 11.7 g. Average sherd weight for the medieval component is significantly higher at 25.8 g.

The pottery assemblage comprised 53 sherds of Roman pottery, weighing 1108 g, 74 sherds of medieval pottery weighing 1911 g and 82 post-medieval/modern sherds weighing 1757 g in total. The material is described by stratigraphic period (below). Pottery type codes reflect those of the Cirencester pottery type series housed in Corinium Museum and as used in existing published pottery reports from the town (Rigby 1982; Ireland 1998).

Period 2

The earliest 'pre-church' deposits (Period 1) contained a mix of Roman and medieval pottery (Table 1). Several deposits, including possible floor surface 180, levelling layer 224 and 'dark earth' deposits 131 and 141, produced exclusively Roman material, but are insufficient to ascribe a Roman date. In these and other deposits the emphasis is with Late Roman fabric types, including Oxford red-slipped or white-slipped wares (fabrics 83 and 84) and Midlands shell-tempered wares (fabric 115). The presence of the latter type in particular is an indicator for 'latest' Roman activity, after *c.*360.

Medieval pottery from Period 2 and redeposited within later deposits conforms to two types, well documented from previous excavations in the area of the church (Ireland 1998, 103–4). Most abundant is unglazed, limestone-tempered coarseware (type 202), which occurs as jar sherds with 'undeveloped' or ledge-rimmed rims. These appear typical of the 11th and 12th/early 13th centuries. One vessel of this type features applied strip decoration. Glazed wares are present as handmade Minety-type wares (type 200), occurring as tripod pitchers. Examples occur with distinctive handles made from two rods of clay, partly enclosed in a U-section handle, and stabbed. Most vessels also feature combed wavy line decoration to the outside and sometimes to the inner rim. The dating for such vessels is based on stratified examples from Bristol (Ponsford 1991) and Dublin (McCutcheon 2006, 40) which suggests currency from the third quarter of the 12th century, and probably continuing into the early 13th century.

Table 1: Pottery fabrics summary and dating

Broad date	Fabric	Description	Date
Roman	–	Amphoras unsourced	1st–4th cent. AD
	9	Early North Wilts. flagon fabric	1st cent. AD
	17/98	North Wilts. grey or oxidised	1st–4th cent. AD
	35	North Gaulish amphoras	1st–3rd cent. AD
	40	Baetican amphoras	1st–3rd cent. AD
	74	Dorset BB1	2nd–4th cent. AD
	81	Lower Nene Valley colour-coated	late 2nd–4th cent. AD
	83	Oxford red-slipped ware	late 3rd–4th cent. AD
	84	Oxford white-slipped mortaria	late 3rd–4th cent. AD
	88	Southwest white-slipped	late 2nd–3rd cent. AD
	118–20	Late BB imitations	3rd–4th cent. AD
	115	Late (Midlands) shell-tempered	4th cent. AD
	154b	Samian (Central Gaulish)	2nd cent. AD
	154c	Samian (East Gaulish)	mid 2nd–early 3rd cent. AD
	Medieval	200	Minety type wares (handmade)
202		Oolitic limestone-tempered	11th–13th cent.
Post-med/ modern	201	Ashton Keynes glazed earthenwares	mid 16th–18th cent.
	208	Cistercian type wares	16th–early 17th cent.
	209	Tin-glazed earthenware	17th–18th cent.
	213	Staffs. yellow slipware	Late 17th–18th cent.
	214	Plain china	Late 18th–19th cent.
	214	Transfer-printed ‘china’	Late 18th–19th cent.
	215	White salt-glazed stoneware	18th cent.
	218	Porcelain	17th–19th cent.
	220	Tudor Green	15th cent.
	236	Staffs. mottled brown-glazed wares	Late 17th–18th cent.
	237	Misc. stonewares	18th–19th cent.
	238	Black-glazed earthenwares	Late 17th–18th cent.
	243	Brown-glazed earthenwares	Late 17th–18th cent.
	252	Unglazed ‘flowerpots’	Late 18th–19th cent.
	259	Cream-bodied kitchen wares	19th cent.

Periods 5–6

The bulk of pottery from Period 6 (Table 2) was associated with post-medieval and later burial activity, including the insertion of brick-built vaults. Very little of the recovered pottery can be considered closely contemporaneous with this activity and consists of redeposited Roman and medieval sherds. Exceptions are a sherd of Tudor Green (type 220) from the backfill of Burial 27, sherds of glazed earthenware from Burials 38 and 2, and a sherd of yellow ware (type 259) from Burial 40.

Table 2: Pottery fabrics summary by period, given by sherd count (first figure) and weight in grammes (second figure)

Broad date	Fabric	2		3		6		7		Unph.		Total	
Roman	9	1	13									1	13
	17/98	6	56			6	67			5	79	17	202
	35					1	1					1	1
	40	2	123			1	148			1	98	4	369
	74	5	71			1	1	1	53			7	125
	81	1	12									1	12
	83	5	41	1	34					1	3	7	78
	84	3	33									3	33
	88					1	15					1	15
	118-120	2	19							1	5	3	24
	115	3	20			1	14					4	34
	154b									1	7	1	7
	154c									1	7	1	7
	amph	1	44			1	144					2	188
<i>Sub-total</i>		29	432	1	34	12	390	1	53	10	199	53	1108
Medieval	200	8	263			4	174	1	34	7	382	20	853
	202	18	411			15	254			21	393	54	1058
<i>Sub-total</i>		26	674			19	428	1	34	28	775	74	1911
Post-med/ modern	201					1	31			2	35	3	66
	208									1	12	1	12
	209					2	17			1	1	3	18
	213							1	21	1	4	2	25
	214									4	92	4	92
	214					3	7			35	712	38	719
	215					1	2			1	1	2	3
	218									14	252	14	252
	220									1	3	1	3
	236									1	11	1	11
	237									1	27	1	27
	238									2	71	2	71
	243					1	10			4	244	5	254
	252					1	9			1	114	2	123
	259					1	7			2	74	3	81
<i>Sub-total</i>						10	83	1	21	71	1653	82	1757

Coins by E.R. McSloy

A heavily corroded and illegible Roman coin was recovered from Period 5 cellar wall 502. The size and thickness suggests an earlier Roman date to c.200. One further coin, a James I copper farthing, was recovered from a modern horizon (102) and is described:

Deposit 102: Copper farthing of James I. Lennox type 3c (flower mint mark on obverse only). c.1614–25.

Metal Finds by E.R. McSloy

A full catalogue describing all items has been prepared for the archive. The catalogue lists 140 objects of metal, the majority comprising iron or copper-alloy coffin fittings (100) and nails (33).

The coffin fittings probably all date to the 18th and early 19th centuries and comprise iron side/end handles, decorative dome-headed studs of iron or copper alloy and nails or other miscellaneous items. There was, in addition, one small fragment from a name plate or *depositum* probably of tin. Copper-alloy studs are of two sizes with 5 mm diameter and 8 mm diameter heads. In some instances clusters of studs remained fixed to fragments of coffin wood and from fragments from Burial 41 it was clear that these were arranged as dates or possibly names. Unfortunately, in no instance were the fragments sufficiently complete to be legible.

There are 30 coffin handles, all of iron; some redeposited, but most *in situ*. Most are 'drop handles', presumed to be fixed to the coffin sides or ends, either by means of simple looped-over bar 'hinges' or by an arrangement incorporating a decorative plate. There is some variation in the form of the handle and of the retaining plates: the handles are of simple, angular form; angular form with expanded centre-section; or 'U-shaped' with expanded centre-section. Similarly the retaining plates differ in form and can be oval; oval with 'fishtail'-shaped terminals; waisted oval shape with pointed terminals; or keyhole-shaped.

The Grave Ledgers by Peter Davenport

Parts of 21 memorial stones were recovered during the excavations and have been listed in the catalogue (below). The majority were found either re-used as covers to the 19th-century heating ducts, or discarded, often broken-up, in the back fill of the 19th-century works or in the void under the floor. The thinner grey lias slabs, where they were not simply broken up, were most often used to bridge ducts. The thick oolite ones, all of late 17th-century date, were less suitable for this use and were more often found in the voids between the ducts under the 19th-century floor. None were found *in situ*. Only one plaque was clearly a wall monument, the lozenge or diamond-shaped plaque to the wife of Thomas Horder (no. 8). Diamond-shaped marks on the fourth bay of the south aisle wall may represent the original position of such plaques.

The stones fell into two clear categories, unpolished oolite limestone slabs and polished, probably grey lias, slabs. The oolitic limestone ones were clearly intended as floor slabs and probably covered vaults or graves. They were around 1.9m long and 0.9m wide. The earliest inscribed date was 1662 and the latest 1699. They had simple linear designs, sometimes merely a frame, sometimes subdivided into two registers by such a line (e.g. no. 17). Most had a double arcade in a single or double incised line at the top, springing from representations of brackets or corbels. The most complex was no. 16, which had two elliptical panels, each under its own double arcade. Lettering was predominantly upper case but lower case was also used. The sample was too small to show a trend over time.

The polished grey slabs were thinner and few survived entire, but some were clearly parts of full size ledgers. Inscribed dates ran from 1701 to 1836 (the date of death of 1682 on no. 10 is probably the result of a later inclusion on that memorial). The latter date is very close to when church burial was abandoned. The lettering and general design was more sophisticated than the earlier oolitic slabs. For example there was little ligaturing or abbreviation to fit the lettering in. Upper case lettering was nearly always restricted to names, for emphasis. Restrained foliate decoration in extremely low relief was used to edge many of the blocks.

It is striking that the latest example of the first type is only two years earlier than the first example of the second (nos. 15 and 11). The small sample is probably the reason why there is no overlap, but the change in fashion seems, nonetheless, to have been fast.

Catalogue of grave ledgers

The text is given in upper case and lower case as it occurred on the slabs. Ligatured letters have been expanded and underlined, letters marked on the stone as omitted have a diacritical dash; completion of missing text in square brackets, gaps as leaders. ‘/’ marks line breaks.

1. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone. Top left corner of a rectangular slab, broken on right side and sawn off at base 76 mm thick (3”), 0.87 m surviving width, 0.97 m surviving length. Inscription in 18th-century style italic copperplate.

In Memory of/ William Ellis who Depart[ed this life] .../...Day of D[ecember].../[A]L[SO]/... illegible...MARY illegible.../[De]parted this Life.../illegible...[17]46

2. Part of no. 8: see that entry.
3. Top half of large, smoothly finished oolite slab with simple incised double linear frame with two arches at top, probably referring to the tablets of the law, 0.87 m wide, 1.11 m surviving length, sawn off at base. 11 mm (4.33”) thick. The date is set in the arcade, two numerals in each arch. The lettering is large ligatured capitals. A brass plaque has been set in the centre of the slab, obliterating some of the text, and has since been removed.

1685/ HERE LY[ETH THE B]ODY OF/MARY T[HE WIFE] OF JOHN BVGGE.../[W]HO DEPAR/TED THIS LIFE [THE] ...TH DAY/OF NOVĒB A D 1685/AETATIS SVAE 22/ WAITING FOR THE RESVRECTION OF THE IVST

4. A similar slab to 3, with the arcade across the top. The arches spring from little linear representations of corbels. The top of the slab is broken off and the left hand side has been sawn off. Surviving width 0.67 m and surviving length 0.93 m (base of slab in place, estimated length c.1 m), thickness 9 mm (3½”). Ligatured capitals as in 3.

[HERE R]ESTETH THE BODY OF/[WILLIA]M ROWLES THE SONNE OF/ [...The ABOVE] E NAMED WILLIAM ROWL/[WHO] DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE/... OF IVNE ANNO DOMINI/1696 NERE/[THIS P]LACE RESTETH THE/[BODY] OF MARY THE WIFE/ [OF WIL]LIAM ROWLES^{JUNER} WHO/[DEPAR]TED THIS LIFE THE 7TH DAY [...] ANNO DOMINI 1696

A stepped incised line separates the entry for Mrs Rowles from that of her husband, although the entry continues on the final line of Mr Rowles’ epitaph.

5. Similar to 4 but only single incised line to arcade. Two joining fragments top half of slab 0.75 m wide and c.0.50 m from top to break. The lettering is in rather poor lower case.

Here resteth the body/[of ...B?U]DGE who de/[parted th]is life the 20/[th day o]f February/[anno domini] 1695/the...

6. Broken fragment of an oolite slab from near the centre of one side. Incised line as frame on edge and separating incised line under inscription. Lettering similar to 5 of which it is probably a part.

...resur/[rection]...[departed] this L/[ife]...

7. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, top mid section from a slab (top and bottom sawn off), left side also sawn away. 0.80 m surviving width, 0.50 m surviving height. Italic copperplate.

John T[?]imbrell/[who] Departed this Life/[the] 12 day of June 1745/ Aged 75/[Also] of Aletheia his Wife [who] Departed this Life...

8. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, a lozenge-shaped wall plaque, framed with a single incised line. Found in 15 pieces, 0.79 m across diagonals. Italic copperplate.

To/the memory of [Emm?]a Wife/of Thomas Horder/who departed this Life [the] 19th Day of April 1769/Also the...illegible/HORDER.../illegible

9. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, rectangular, with a frame of intertwined and scrolled foliage carved in very shallow flat relief. The foliage border is taken across the corners and is framed with a narrow plain band on both sides. Broken at base and on the left side. Right side worn/tooled away. Surviving length 0.97 m and width 0.67 m. Italic copperplate.

In memory of.../the Wife of.../[Ric]hard Eyles who.../October 16.../Aged 64 Ye[ars]/Also E...//...8...

10. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, rectangular, with a frame of intertwined and scrolled foliage carved in very shallow flat relief. The foliage border is taken across the corners and is framed with a narrow plain band on both sides. Broken at base and on the right side. Surviving length 0.94 m and width 0.93 m. Italic copperplate.
Here lyeth the Body of/Elianor Sollace who departed/This life the 21st day of June Anno Domini 1682//Here lyeth also the Body of Mrs Anne Weare wh[o departed]/This Life the 26th day of April Anno Dom 17... Aged 55 years...
11. Large, rectangular, oolite limestone slab 1.71 m long, 0.89 m wide. Thickness not recorded but between 100 and 150 mm. A rectangular piece has been sawn out of the top left. A simple incised line for a frame all round and a double arcade with 'corbels' at the spring at the head. Upper and lower case mixed and a dropped capital at the beginning.
Here Resteth the body/of THOMAS POWELL/[w]ho departed this life the 3^d/ MARCH ANNO DOMINI 1699 ⁸
Date indicated old and new style. The rest of this very large slab was left blank. Thomas Powell may have been the father or other relative of the Thomas Powell (d. 1718) who was the last husband of Rebecca Powell, and who is memorialized above the Garstang Chapel, along with her and her three other husbands.
12. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, rectangular, with no frame or other decoration. Broken at base and into four pieces. Surviving length 1.50 m and width 0.96 m. Italic copperplate.
[B]eneath...Remains of /JOHN ASPER.../who Departed this life/Dec 13 18[7] Ag[ed]...Years/
Also MARY his Wife/who died August 24 1836/Aged 85 Years//Also to the Memory of //BETTY MOUNTAIN...
13. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, framed as no. 10. 1.70 m long by 0.66 m wide. Now in two pieces. The marking out lines for the lettering are still visible and the rest of the stone is blank (see no. 9).
In Memory of/Richard Eyles/who died December 1st /1753 Aged 53 Years
14. A chunk of oolite, broken on all sides with a more than usually fragmentary inscription. Lettering in lower case. Dimensions not recorded.
...le William.../[who departed t]his.../...bvc(almost illegible).../...the...
15. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, no frame survives but swagged flowers in one corner in very low relief. 1.56 m x 0.96 m x 9 mm. The bottom is broken off. The inscription starts 0.56 m from the top. Presumably intended for William Hill himself. Lower case; the apostrophe is in italic.
Here Resteth the Body of/Elizabeth the wife of/William Hill who Departed/this life the 3 day of March/1719 Aged 77 Years

In Memory of Elizabeth/Daughter of Henry/Townsend Clothier of the/Parish of Painswick who was/here buried the 16th of July/1701 Aged 7 Years and 8 Mon

Weep not for me for I am past all pain
16. A block of oolitic limestone, in three pieces, broken off at base. Surviving length 1.22 m and width 0.63 m. Thickness not recorded but between 100 and 150 mm. There are two epitaphs one above the other, each within its own elliptical panel (0.58 x 0.45 m) and each with a two arch arcade on 'corbels' all in one frame of a single incised line around edge slab.
HERE resteth/the Body of/JOHN BVRGE who de/parted this life the 5th /Day of December/ ANNO DONI 1697

[HERE]Resteth/...
17. Large rectangular oolite limestone slab 1.75 m long, 0.82 m wide, 0.15 m thick. Bottom left corner deliberately cut at an angle followed by the simple incised line for a frame all round. Two fields divided by simple incised line across middle. All upper case.
HERE LYETH THE/ BODY OF CATHERINE/THE WIFE OF WILLIAM/WILLIS APOTHECARY/BVRIED THE 24TH DAY OF IVNE 1662/SVRGAM

HERE LYETH THE BODY OF/WILLIAM WILLIS SENIOR/WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE/
THE 10TH DAY OF FEBRVARY/ANŌ DŌNI 1680//SVRGAMVS

18. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, framed as 10. Only central section survives 0.96 m wide and 0.70 m high. Lower case.
 Mary the Wife of William Hinton Soap-Boiler who/Departed this Life August/y^e 2ⁿ(?) 1755 Aged 27 Years/Also Mary their Daughter who/Died June y^e 16th 1755 Aged 13 Month
19. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, double incised line, probably wall plaque. Probably cut away at base. c.0.50 m tall, c.0.96 m wide.
 Underneath/are deposited the remains [of]/JUDITH an Infant Daughter [of]/[WI]LLIAM & JUDITH LAWREN[CE]/who died March the 25th 1783
20. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, framed as 10. Bottom and lower right side broken away. 0.90 m wide and c.1.00 m high. Lower case.
 In remembrance/of Mary the Daughter of/[Geo Hil]l who died the 28th/[Day] of December 1743/ Aged 24 Years/Also of Thomas his Son/who died the 27th day of Augu[st] 17[-]7 Aged 25 Years/and also of Sarah the wif[e of]/Geo Hill who depart[ed] this life, the 27th day of M[a...]/1753 Aged 64
21. Bottom and right side broken away. 0.60 m max wide and c.1.20 m high. Lower case.
 Their C[hildren].../Margaret.../Aged.../Nathanael die[d]/Aged.../Ann died.../
 John died.../Susannah died.../Aged.../
 Joseph Cli.../
 Died March th[e].../Aged 85
22. Finely polished, hard, fine-grain, dark grey stone, probably grey lias limestone, broken and defaced at top. Not framed, possibly thinned down. Only seen as photo, c.0.90 m by 1.20 m.
 [died the ? day of] March 1705⁶/Aged 48 years

Architectural Fragments by Peter Davenport

The architectural fragments came from the 19th-century restoration levels and were all fragmentary and in poor condition. Where a date can be assigned to the pieces, they date from the late medieval period and are doubtless from the existing building. The most likely occasion for their finding their way into these deposits is the work carried out by Scott in 1867. As they are effectively sealed by the floor of that year, they cannot have resulted from later restoration campaigns. Some of the pieces that probably come from internal fittings in the church may have been broken off in the 16th or 17th centuries, or during the alterations that took place in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Most of the other pieces are simply fragments of window mullions or blind panelling. A full catalogue is available in the archive.

DISCUSSION

The archaeological investigations at St John Baptist revealed some evidence for a Roman road surface that may constitute part of Ermin Street. Early medieval activity was recorded, including important details relating to the construction sequence and plan of the mid 12th–mid 13th-century church, and offer a reinterpretation of the date of some elements of the building fabric.

Roman and Early Medieval

The excavations did not go very deep under the church floor, as they were limited to the requirements of the heating and flooring works. Extensive Roman remains were not therefore expected, but given the shallow depth of Roman road remains, it was clearly possible that they might be encountered (Zeevat 1979, 72).

Layers 126 seem likely to have been a series of Roman road surfaces, and its sloping upper surface might be the camber of the road. As so little survived, not a lot can be said about the road, but the laminations and the great thickness (inferred from the earlier observations: Zeepvat 1979) suggest continuation of road maintenance into what is likely to be a very late phase. The projected alignment of Ermin Street identified in recent publications runs to the west of these deposits. The projected alignment of Ermin Street (Fig. 1), which is based on the alignment of Roman buildings and surfaces in excavations further south (Holbrook 1998), runs some metres to the west, and may need to be redefined in the light of this discovery. A few scraps of 3rd or 4th-century pottery were found residually in later contexts, but otherwise this was the extent of Roman activity seen in the excavations.

There was clearly post-Roman activity on the site prior to the construction of the earliest church. A large pit was dug into the Roman road at the west end of the church, which can be seen as a borrow pit, possibly a source for the gravel layers recorded elsewhere on the site (pit 214). Its dark humic backfill was similar to the 'dark earth' deposits seen under the porch and the south aisle wall, and these layers might also be large borrow-pit fills. Residual Roman pottery from the pit fill was accompanied by pottery with an 11th–13th-century date range.

Layer 332, although only seen in section to the north of pit 214, was probably the most informative on the formation of these deposits, exhibiting a structure of tip lines and lenses in the 0.60 m depth visible. The silts presumably represent backfill and silting from occupation deposits nearby. The other 'dark earths' are somewhat lower than the Roman road, by *c.* 0.75 m, and on the evidence of layer 525, under the porch, were much less structured than 332. They may have developed on the silts presumed to be sloping away from the road itself – and noted at up to 2 m deep in Market Place (Zeepvat 1979, 72), *i.e.* 1 m lower than the highest recorded road surface.

More structured evidence of occupation over the 'dark earth' is indicated by the levels of trampled soils and gravel and a lens of mortar seen under the 12th–13th-century south aisle wall footings. These levelled up a noticeable slope of the 'dark earth' surface to the south and were probably floor levels or, at least, were evidence for some kind of structured activity. They had the same range of pottery as the borrow pit, *i.e.* residual Roman and 11th–13th century.

Period 3: 12th–13th century

The excavations revealed clear existence of a set of walls and footings of an earlier phase than to the present building (Figs. 2 and 12). The Period 3 nave arcade footings were *c.* 1.9 m wide, and at one point the early south aisle wall footings appeared to be over 2.8 m wide. However, this might be explained, not as the thickness of the wall, but as the junction of the east wall of a putative porch with the nave; the south end of this early porch would then be represented by the section of similar wall, 524.

The early footings indicate a building of approximately the same dimensions (west of the chancel arch) as the present nave and south aisle, with the possibility of a porch just west of the present one. The north/south footings under the north aisle wall suggest a later addition of a short aisle or chapel on part of the site of the north aisle. The exceptional projection of the footing 9059 from under the central pier of the north arcade (Fig. 2) may represent the junction of wall 3086 with the north wall of the nave, the rest having been removed by later intrusions. Alternatively, the footings may represent a separate building altogether, north of the original church.

It has been shown that a short length of north/south ashlar walling and buried plinth is integral with the western jamb of the small, round-arched doorway linking the west ends of St Catherine's Chapel and the Lady Chapel, and that it stratigraphically pre-dates several pieces

of 13th-century work. This sequence confirms the likely 12th-century date of the arch, an attribution supported by the style of the masonry tooling. This ashlar wall could have been the east wall of the space defined on the west by north/south wall (3086). It is tempting to reconstruct the north wall of such a room in line with the north wall of the Lady Chapel, but this would produce an extremely broad space. Alternatively, the plinthed wall may have been merely a projecting buttress.

Thus, the footings overall represent a nave of the same general dimensions as the present one, with a south aisle almost as wide as in the present church and possibly some kind of northern room. The length of the nave is no surprise, as the scar of the pre-Perpendicular nave roof has long been visible on the east face of the tower, preserved and clarified in the 19th century. The width of the south aisle is somewhat surprising, but is implied by the size of the arch from it into the chapel of St John. The ratio of nave to aisle width is about 5:4, so that the church could almost be said to have a double nave. What is clear is that while the lower part of the two eastern bays of the south aisle wall are certainly of this period, this can no longer be seen as evidence for a transepted early plan (Rodwell 1997, 6). No sign whatsoever of a north/south wall for a transept was seen in the excavations, nor on the 12th–13th-century south aisle wall (160), which continued westwards without a break.

There is good evidence for at least the beginning of the construction of a western tower in this period. The lower parts of the two sides of a tower arch clearly pre-date the present structure, are integral with the Period 3 footings and exhibit 13th-century style broach stops on the chamfers. They can still be traced to 1.5 m above modern floor level.

Currently, the chancel plan must remain as interpreted by Rodwell (1997, 7; Fig. 12), but it is now demonstrated that the fragment of walling and door at the west end of St Catherine's Chapel is a remnant of an earlier layout, as must be the Romanesque (11th–12th-century) capital of the western respond in the south chancel arcade.

Archaeologically, the footings for this earlier church post-date pottery with an 11th–13th-century date range (see above), but a more precise date can be argued from the structural sequence and architectural style of the above-ground structures. The arch of St John's Chapel and its respond are datable to the later 13th or early 14th centuries (Rodwell 1997, 32). It can clearly be seen, however, that the northern respond (discounting the 19th-century work) is added against earlier masonry, some of which seems to have been recycled in the lower part of the respond, and exhibits earlier diagonal tooling characteristics. The earliest masonry *in situ* on the west side of this wall are the four voussoirs of a blocked arch between the nave arcade and the St John's arch respond, and well above head height. This was a recess rather than an opening (Rodwell 1997, 32). It has been cut away for the construction of the arch into St John's Chapel, but seems to have already been blocked when that occurred. The blocking masonry is quite different from the St John's Chapel arch abutment and is abutted by it. It is evenly-coursed ashlar with diagonal tooling. It occurs adjacent to the nave arcade respond in the bottom 1 m of the recess and high up under the voussoirs (separated by modern infill). The rest of the masonry below and south of the recess is clearly part of the creation of the arch into St John's Chapel. This consists of rubble and a very differently dressed ashlar from the earlier stones.

Following the wall northwards to the responds of the chancel arch which was rebuilt in the early 15th century (Rodwell 1997, 25), more 'mixed' masonry is seen low down, against which the Perpendicular (late 14th-century) chancel arch shafts have been inserted. This masonry may well be the same age as the St John's Chapel arch jambs, if not earlier.

This suggests three phases of masonry work here: the arched recess, the infill and the St John's Chapel arch/early chancel arch jambs. This implies an earliest phase two campaigns earlier than c.1300. The diagonally-tooled masonry suggests a 12th-century date.

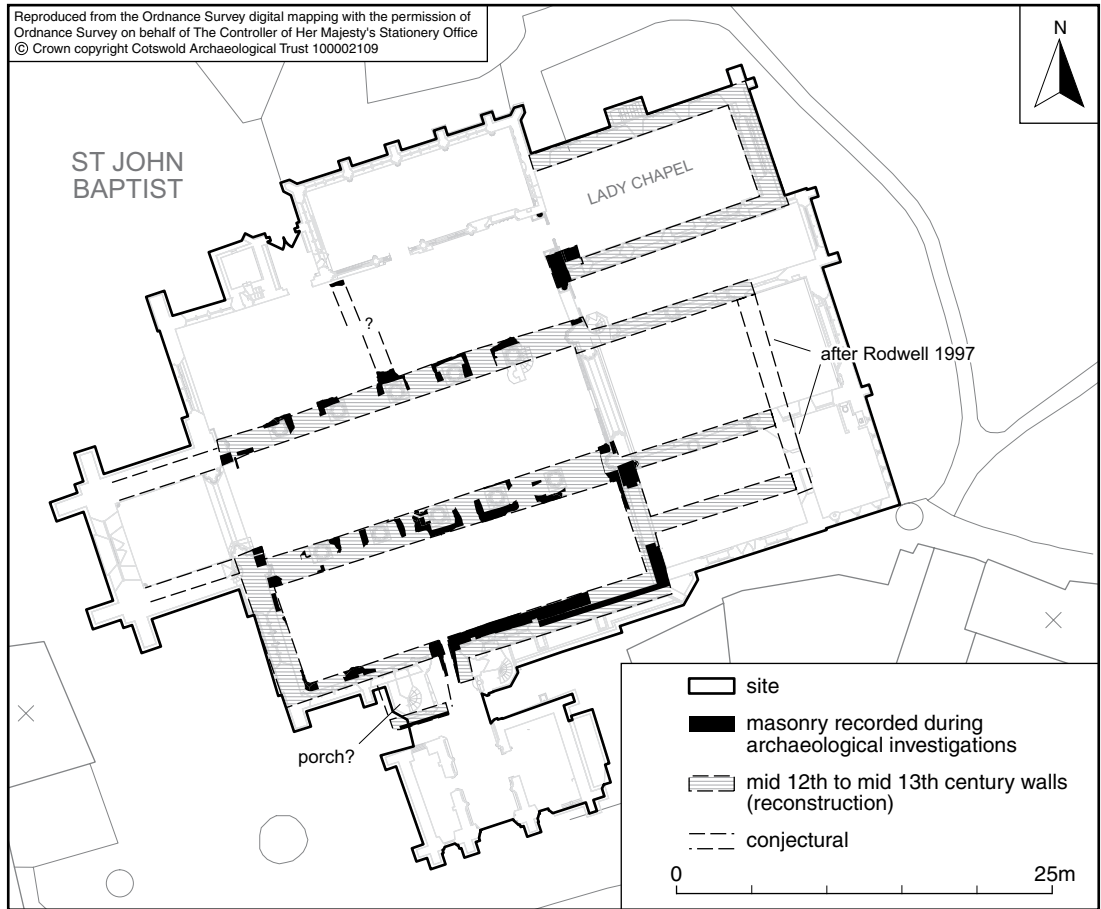


Fig. 12. St John Baptist, reconstruction of mid 12th–mid 13th-century plan (Period 3). Scale 1:500.

On the east side of this piece of walling, clearly abutted by the St John's Chapel arch, is a shallow pilaster-buttress, which originally had an attached shaft (the western respond of the south chancel arcade). This had been dressed smooth at the same time as its angles were chamfered and given a bar stop (13th or 14th-century). However, the upper part of the shaft was revealed when the organ case was removed and was shown to have a Late Romanesque capital *in situ* still carrying the later 12th-century chancel arcade (Fig. 6). This is very distinctive and has a likely date range of 1170–90 (Jackson 1913, figs. 142–3). This is very intriguing, as it is only a few years earlier than the likely date of the chancel arcade piers, yet is strikingly Late Romanesque in style where they are equally strikingly Early Gothic (13th-century) (Rodwell 1997, 28). A *terminus ante quem* of between 1170 and 1190 is therefore indicated for the Period 3 footings here. The foundation date of the church itself, around 1150–60 (Rodwell 1997, 5) provides a *terminus post quem*. These Period 3 structures must represent a first phase, perhaps never completed, of the south chancel arcade. On the west, they are clearly continuous with the Period 3 footing projecting along the

line of the south nave arcade. It is not at all clear, however, whether the construction of the nave continued without a break from this point.

The two eastern bays of the south aisle wall are, internally, clearly of one build with the west wall of St John's Chapel (the exterior seems to have been refaced in the early to mid 15th century). The relationship of the footings of these nave bays to the 12th-century footings at the east end of the nave arcade could not be established, but at least the east end of the south aisle wall must be of the same date as the south end of the west wall of St John's Chapel. This wall is probably late 12th-century in date. Because St John's Chapel itself must be late 12th-century in origin (the date of its north arcade), Rodwell (1999, 32) infers a 12th-century arch into the nave. However, it is entirely possible that there was no arch into the south aisle at all until the construction of the present one. Ancient plaster and paint obscure the point, and if it was smaller than the present arch it would, of course, have completely vanished.

The lack of any indication of a construction break anywhere in the footings suggests that the construction of the nave and south aisle continued without a significant break after the completion of the east end structures, but how long this construction took is unclear. The broach-stopped chamfers on the lower masonry of the tower are typically 13th-century, but are not more closely datable. However, the arch from the north aisle into St Catherine's Chapel can be dated to the first half of the 13th century (based on the 'water-holding' bases and filleted shafts), indicating that a short northern aisle or chapel was in existence by that date. The adjacent entrance to the Lady Chapel is stylistically a little later in the century (Rodwell 1997, 42).

If the west end of the chancel was achieved by *c.*1190, then the nave appears to have been completed, at least in plan, by the mid 13th century. There may, nonetheless, be evidence of a hiatus within this programme. This would be one explanation for the odd position of the blocked recess at the end of the south aisle discussed above. It is situated where one would expect the junction of the nave arcade, or the south wall of an aisleless nave, with the chancel arch wall. It could not have existed at the same time as either of these. It may be the case that the arched recess represents a halt in construction when the east end was complete and before the nave was started. It could have been external, or served a temporary, possibly wooden, nave.

Period 4: Very late 14th–15th century

Whether or not the 13th-century tower was ever completed, it was replaced by the present structure, begun *c.*1400 (Rodwell 1997, 7, 21). It appears that the north aisle was broadly contemporary with the tower and that the south aisle was rebuilt in the same campaign. The subsequent problems with stability implied by the construction of the huge and rather ungainly flying buttresses either side of the tower led to the partial rebuilding of both aisles.

It is clear that the north aisle walls were built *de novo* from new footings similar to those of the tower. Rodwell (1997, 49) suggests a 13th-century date, but this is unlikely given their totally different character from the other 13th-century footings, their similarity to the 15th-century footings elsewhere and the discovery in the recent work of 13th and 14th-century style tomb covers reused in these foundations. Only the lower part of the original rubble-stone west wall survives, from just over 1 m above the foundations against the tower, up to a maximum of 6 m on the north side. Whether the wall was completed in this form is unknown, but the steep oblique angle of the junction of this work with the rebuild above it would indicate that it was cut away around the tower and rebuilt in ashlar to include the tower flying buttress as the tower started (or was feared) to fail. The rebuilt ashlar work can be seen to abut the tower, rather than be bonded in to it. This aisle had a steeply-pitched gable at this point, still visible externally.

The history of the south aisle in this period (and later) is complex. The lower windows in the eastern two bays date from *c.*1400–30 (Rodwell 1997, 55) and are set into the 13th-century wall. They are similar in design to the west window in this aisle which predates the tower flying buttress (McClees 1988, 39), and on that premise are probably contemporary with it. The eaves of the old south wall are marked by the cills of the later 15th-century (Period 5a) upper windows in the eastern two bays. This level is reflected in the remains of a low-pitched gable below the present one on the western wall, but which was built after the great flying buttress had required the partial rebuild of the west wall. This most likely means that the south aisle was first rebuilt at about the same time as the tower (*c.*1400) to a height dictated by the lower roof line of the old (Period 3) nave and was then modified at the west end for the flying buttress.

Period 5a: Later 15th century

The western four bays of the southern wall of the south aisle are a later 15th-century rebuild on the old fabric and line, as are the two windows high up above the two eastern bays, marking the raising of the eaves line. It seems most likely that the 13th-century wall, presumably refenestrated as in the two east bays, had continued in existence up to this point, and that the western portion was then rebuilt including the addition of the south porch. The stair turrets of the latter structurally pre-date the Town Hall which was put up in the 1490s. The window design and tracery are of typical Late Perpendicular design, quite different from the early 15th-century windows in the rest of the aisle.

There are apparent anomalies in the sequence and dating of aisle and nave. The rebuild of the south wall included a considerable heightening of the eaves of the aisle roof. This also involved the replacement of the steep double-pitched aisle roof and a raised but low-pitched western gable. The latter post-dates the rebuild of the tower buttress, but also butts against the early 16th-century clerestory of the rebuilt nave. However, as the rebuilt aisle wall clearly pre-dates the construction of the original south porch octagonal stair turrets (Rodwell 1997, 58), it also must pre-date the construction of the Town Hall (Rodwell 1999, 8). Stratigraphically, it cannot both pre-date the porch (*c.*1500) and post-date the nave (after 1514; see below). The most likely explanation, which finds some support in the fabric, is that the south aisle wall does indeed pre-date the south porch and the nave rebuild (McClees 1988, 40), but the roof and gable were finally altered when the nave was rebuilt. The height of this part of the aisle at this period means that its roof must have risen above the clerestory of the 13th-century nave. This is such a clumsy arrangement that it is strongly suspected that the aisle was built in anticipation of a nave rebuild and was only finally modified at roof and clerestory junction at the later date. Refacing of the internal masonry high in the internal west gable of the south aisle may reflect this episode. The close similarity of the 16th-century clerestory window design to those in the south aisle may suggest the completion of a unified, but delayed, scheme.

Period 5b: Early 16th century

The present nave was built from 1514 (McClees 1998, 40). The timber roofs of the nave and aisles were replaced as part of this scheme, which supports the idea of a final roofline adjustment, put forward above. Both south and north nave arcade piers were seen in the excavations to be founded on large slabs resting on a levelling layer of cut-stone slabs which are mostly reused earlier medieval grave slabs, themselves set on the reused 13th-century (Period 3) arcade footings. This phase of work completed the transformation of the western part of the church into the totally Perpendicular design of the present day.

Period 6: 17th–early 19th century

The only archaeological features met with in this period were the burials. The only ones investigated beyond their capping or upper edge were those disturbed by the duct trench around the edge of the nave and aisles. Burial 50 was a double vault, the only certain one noted. Apart from its extra width, it was not structurally different from any other vault in the church. Its main distinction must lie in its position in front of the chancel arch. The occupants of the tomb, the Clutterbucks, were members of one of the leading families of the town and coffin plaques give dates of 1774 and 1778 for the interments. Their prominence is reflected in the position of the grave and perhaps by the ornate coffin decoration. A comparable prominence may be accorded to Burial 45, nearly central in the nave but further back from the chancel.

Coffins were generally of 18th–early 19th-century type with iron and copper alloy fittings (McSloy, above). Studs, representing the fixings for fabric coverings, were common and some at least seem to have been used to record the names of the graves' occupants.

The number of tombs and the stratigraphic relationships between them were too small to establish any chronological significance in the provision of brick vaults. Where there was a relationship, vaults cut through earth-cut graves, and so burials without coffins may be generally earlier, but only four occurrences were noted out of a total of 59 interments and not all graves were investigated. There was also intercutting of earth-cut graves, but some of this might be the result of the reuse of family plots, as seems possible with Burials 19, 21 and 27. Even so, such disturbance was relatively rare. This suggests that, while it appears that the entire area of nave and aisles was used for interments, there was enough control to ensure that intercutting was kept to a minimum. As a degree of wealth and status was a prerequisite for burial within the church, and graves were evidently marked, the fact of such control is hardly surprising.

In general, burials were aligned east/west, but there was an interesting variation to this in the burials, predominantly brick vaults, in the west end of the south aisle, which all shared an alignment some 10 degrees north of east. This made them point (approximately) towards the high altar. However, Burial 35 in the west end of the nave was also aligned in this way. In this position it did not point at the altar, thus weakening any idea that this alignment was significant.

The ledgers found during excavation gave a date range for the memorialized burials of 1662–1836, although none of the ledgers could be associated with particular burials (Davenport, above). A similar date was assumed for the bulk of the inhumations. All were found in contexts associated with the Victorian renovations. The material and decorative treatment again indicate the wealth and status of their subjects. The apparent coincidence of the change in style and material is striking. The earlier, rather unsophisticated memorials in oolite limestone gave way, around 1700, to more accurate and technically proficient stone-cutting using the harder and polishable stone, thought to be grey lias. This may reflect an increase in specialization in monumental masonry, which may reflect an increased interest in memorials.

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