



## Swardsley Priory, Showsley Grounds Towcester, Northamptonshire

Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results



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**Swardsley Priory, Showsley Grounds, Towcester,  
Northamptonshire**

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## Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results

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# **Sewardsley Priory, Showsley Grounds, Towcester, Northamptonshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results**

### **Summary**

In June 2007, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Channel 4's 'Time Team' at the site of Sewardsley Priory within the gardens of Showsley Grounds, Towcester, Northamptonshire (NGR 471810 250740) to investigate the remains of a Cistercian Priory founded, according to documentary sources, *c.*1155. The priory remained relatively poor throughout its existence, but also had an unfortunate propensity for scandal in the later medieval period. This involved financial irregularities and other excesses, culminating in an association with a case of witchcraft in 1470, and the declaration as null and void of the election of one of the last prioresses in 1530 on the grounds of her unfitness for the post. At the time of the Dissolution in 1536, Sewardsley was the second poorest nunnery in the country.

The aim of the evaluation was to attempt to reveal the layout of the monastic buildings, to confirm (or otherwise) the suggested mid 12<sup>th</sup> century construction date, and to establish the date range of the surviving archaeological remains. The evaluation revealed that the priory had a similar layout to many religious houses in Britain, based upon a 9<sup>th</sup> century hypothetical blue-print of the ideal monastery known as the St. Gall Plan. The layout comprised a central cloister with a chapel or church to the north, and ranges of buildings surrounding the remaining three sides.

A number of phases of construction were identified, the earliest dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with later buildings constructed at times of relative prosperity. Burials accompanied the earliest phase of construction, and further burials dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century were also excavated. A possible two-storey building was located to the south-west of the cloister, perhaps the remains of the Prioress's lodgings, although its precise nature and function is uncertain.

# **Swardsley Priory, Showsley Grounds, Towcester, Northamptonshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results**

### **Acknowledgements**

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The geophysical survey was undertaken by John Gater, Jimmy Adcock and Emma Wood of GSB Prospection. The field survey was undertaken by Henry Chapman of University of Birmingham. The excavation strategy was devised by Mick Aston of Bristol University. The on-site recording was co-ordinated by Steve Thompson assisted by Laura Catlin, both of Wessex Archaeology. Laura Catlin was also in charge of on-site finds processing.

The excavations were undertaken by Time Team's retained archaeologists, Phil Harding (Wessex Archaeology), Kerry Ely, Ian Powlesland, Helen Geake, Raksha Dave, Tracey Smith, Faye Simpson and Matt Williams with assistance from Anthony Maull, Ian Fisher, Rhiannon Mann, Paul Kajewski, Angela Warner and Tim Upson-Smith of Northamptonshire Archaeology. On-site pottery identification was carried out by Paul Blinkhorn, small finds by Helen Geake and human bone by Jacqueline I. McKinley

The archive was collated and all post-excavation assessment and analysis undertaken by Wessex Archaeology. This report was compiled by Steve Thompson, with specialist reports prepared by Lorraine Mephram (finds), Paul Blinkhorn (pottery), Jessica Grimm (animal bone) and Chris Stevens (Environmental). The illustrations were prepared by Kenneth Lymer. The post-excavation project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Lorraine Mephram.

The work benefited from discussion on-site with monastic specialists Glyn Coppack and Iain Soden, monastic historian Dr Janet Burton, Phil Harding and Jacqueline I. McKinley of Wessex Archaeology and Mick Aston of Bristol University.

Finally thanks are extended Stephen, Sarah, Amy and Poppy Coleclough for inviting Time Team to Showsley Grounds and allowing access to the Site for geophysical survey and excavation.

# Swardsley Priory, Showsley Grounds, Towcester, Northamptonshire

## Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results

### 1 BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Videotext Communications Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological recording and post-excavation work on an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Channel 4's 'Time Team' at a site of Swardsley Priory, Showsley Grounds, Towcester, Northamptonshire, hereafter the 'Site' (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 This report documents the results of archaeological survey and evaluation undertaken by Time Team, and presents an assessment of the results of these works.

#### 1.2 Site Location, Topography and Geology

1.2.1 The Site is located within Showsley Grounds, near Towcester, in the parish of Easton Neston, south Northamptonshire, approximately 11 miles north-east of Brackley and 5 miles south-west of Northampton (NGR 471810 250740).

1.2.2 The Site is located on a relatively flat area of garden lawn at a height of 115m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology is a mixture of clay, Northamptonshire sand and limestone (BGS Sheet 202).

#### 1.3 Historical Background

1.3.1 Early Cistercian houses were founded in desolate places and showed a marked lack of adornment. The order prospered and in 1152 when there were 340 houses in Europe, the governing body (the General Chapter) called a halt to new foundations in case the original ideals of this (the first truly 'reformed' order) were diluted. After this, the rate of expansion slowed (Clarke 1984, 98-9).

1.3.2 The Cistercian nunnery at Swardsley, dedicated to St. Mary, was founded by Richard de Lestre, the lord of the Manor of Easton Neston, c.1155, in the reign of Henry II. De Lestre notified Robert, Bishop of Lincoln, that *'he had granted lands in Swardsley and Wimandesley, etc to the priory of Swardsley, with leave to turn three oxen, ten cows, and two hundred sheep into his pasture, the sisters promising to return to use his counsel in the reception of nuns and to admit none except through him'* (Serjeantson, Ryland and Adkins 1906, 125-7).

1.3.3 Between c.1179 and 1319, the documentary sources indicate that the nunnery was quite poor, the Bishop on two occasions granting indulgences to those

who would bestow alms on the house. During this time the nunnery also saw the pardoning of a debt to the Exchequer, an indication of their poor state (*ibid*, 125-7; Riden and Insley 2002, 98-126).

- 1.3.4 In 1328 the house experienced a period of relative prosperity and purchased the manor and estates of Easton Neston, although by 1366 it had fallen again on hard times; the sisters obtained a licence to beg alms in consequence of their poverty and lost the manor to Sir Henry Green. Difficulties continued following the death of Sir Henry Green who bequeathed the manor to his son, Sir Thomas. He initiated legal proceedings against the nunnery to gain the advowson of the parish church, and so nominate someone to hold office within the church. Following an appeal to the Crown, the case decided in the favour of the nunnery (Brookes 1857, 139).
- 1.3.5 In 1378 Bishop Bokyngham sanctioned *'the appropriation to the prioress and convent of the church of Easton Neston, his reciting that the value of their lands had been so affected by the pestilence that they were insufficient to maintain the number of sisters at first instituted'* (Serjeantson *et al.* 1906, 125-7).
- 1.3.6 In 1403 the vicarage of Easton Neston was founded and endowed by Swardsley Priory, although by this time the expense of the court case against Sir Thomas Green, which won them the advowson of the parish church, appears to have provoked corruption. It seems the nuns began to replenish their coffers with tithes from the church, for instead of nominating a rector as they had done five times previously, they ordained the vicarage and appointed their own chaplain, thus claiming the church tithes for themselves, amounting to more than a third of the gross income (Brookes, 1857, 139; Riden and Insley 2002, 98-126).
- 1.3.7 With the increased income from the tithes, the fortunes of the priory appeared to be turning for the better. This, however, did not last, for in 1426-31 the excesses of the prioress and the nuns were investigated by Bishop Gray. Three years later in 1434, the priory came under further scrutiny when the Bishop of Lincoln investigated reports that the nuns *'following the enticements of the flesh and abandoning the path of religion and casting aside the restraint of all modesty and chastity, are giving their minds to debauchery, committing in damnable wise in public and as it were, in the sight of all the people, acts of adultery, incest, sacrilege and fornication to the death of their own souls, the shame of the religion and the mischievous example of others'* (Serjeantson *et al.* 1906, 125-7; Lincoln Record Society 1914, 111-12; Power 1922).
- 1.3.8 By 1459-60 the income of Swardsley Priory had become insufficient to maintain the inhabitants and repair their buildings, so at the request of their patron Sir Thomas Green (Sir Henry Green's great-grandson) to the Bishop of Lincoln it was appropriated to the comparatively substantial Cluniac Abbey of Delapré (St. Mary de Pratis) near Northampton (Videotext Communications 2007, 15). Despite the appropriation there is no evidence that the Order of the priory was changed and it appears to have retained

considerable independence, but also its propensity for scandal. (*ibid.*, 2; Knowles and Hadcock 1953, 272).

- 1.3.9 In 1470 the priory was associated with a case of alleged witchcraft when in February Jaquetta, Duchess of Bedford, appeared before the Council at Westminster accused by Thomas Wake of creating lead figures of a man-at-arms, and one each of the King and Queen, to be used in witchcraft and sorcery. Wake stated that the image had been shown to various persons and had been exhibited at the nunnery at Swardsley. The Duchess was eventually cleared of any wrongdoing (Serjeantson *et al.* 1906, 125-7).
- 1.3.10 In 1530 on the death of prioress Eleanor Scaresbrig, Agnes Carter was elected as the new head of the nunnery, but the election was declared null and void by the Bishop 'on the grounds of her manifest unfitness' (*ibid.*, 125-7).
- 1.3.11 At the time of the Dissolution in 1536, only four nuns and the prioress Elizabeth Campbell were at Swardsley, and it was the second poorest nunnery in the country. The lands were subsequently granted by lease to Thomas Broke of London, and then passed in 1550 to Richard Fermor (*ibid.*, 125-7; Knowles and Hadcock 1953, 272).
- 1.3.12 Following Fermor's death in 1551, the manor passed to his eldest son Sir John Fermor and was incorporated into the lands of Easton Neston, where in 1570, when Sir John's son George married Mary Curson, he agreed to accommodate the couple for the first four years at Easton Neston and then Swardsley, which he agreed to repair for them, and provided £100 towards rebuilding, restoration and furnishings.
- 1.3.13 Baker, writing in his 1836-41 work *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton Vol. 2*, describes the priory as 'long since degenerated into a common house' although with some evidence of the former priory still visible in the kitchen (Baker 1836-41, 155; Videotext Communications 2007, 16).
- 1.3.14 Brookes (1857, 139) reports that during rebuilding work on the house c.1855, five skeletons were found under the north-east wing, and three grave slabs were identified to the south. Wall foundations were identified for an east-west aligned rectangular building on the east side of the house, with areas of the land around the house 'being levelled for a flower garden' (Brookes 1857, 139). By this time, Brookes states 'the greater part of the old manor house itself has long since disappeared' (*ibid.*, 139; Riden and Insley 2002, 98-126).
- 1.3.15 In 1872 Swardsley Farm is described as containing good pasture, 'although much of the arable is cold and wet' and 'the buildings were substantial and well-arranged' although it was recommended that 'the thatched roof of the house be replaced with slate or tile'. By 1909, most of the farm was laid down to pasture, and the farm buildings were described as 'unusually good' (Riden and Insley 2002, 98-126).

## **1.4 Previous Archaeological Work**

- 1.4.1 The only archaeological investigation which has occurred at Swardsley took place in 2005, when Archaeologica Ltd undertook an evaluation to the west of the main house. No significant archaeological remains were identified (Ivens 2005).

## **2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1.1 A project design for the work at Swardsley Priory was compiled (Videotext Communications Ltd 2007). Full details of the circumstances and methods of the evaluation may be found in the Project Design, which is held in the archive, a summary of its contents being presented here.

- 2.1.2 The aims of the project can be summarised as follows:

- to establish the extent and nature of the archaeological remains surviving on the site, to place them in their landscape context, and to compare the site with other Cistercian sites in Britain;
- to establish the state of preservation of the surviving archaeological remains;
- to establish the date range represented by the surviving archaeological remains.

## **3 METHODS**

### **3.1 Geophysical Survey**

- 3.1.1 Prior to the excavation of evaluation trenches, a geophysical survey was undertaken by GSB Propection across the Site using a combination of resistance and magnetic survey as well as ground penetrating radar (GPR). The survey grid was set out by Dr Henry Chapman of Birmingham University and tied in to the Ordnance Survey grid using a Trimble real time differential GPS system.

### **3.2 Evaluation**

- 3.2.1 Six evaluation trenches of varying sizes were excavated. Their locations were determined in order to investigate geophysical anomalies.
- 3.2.2 The trenches were excavated using a combination of machine and hand excavation. Those excavated with machine were done so using a rubber tracked mini-digger with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision, and all machine excavation ceased at the identification of significant archaeological deposits or remains or where natural geology was encountered first. When machine excavation had ceased all trenches were hand cleaned and archaeological remains investigated.

- 3.2.3 All areas were excavated using hand digging with the excavated up-cast was scanned by metal detector.
- 3.2.4 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Trenches were located using a Trimble Real Time Differential GPS survey system. All archaeological features and deposits were planned at a scale of 1:20 with sections drawn at 1:10. All principal strata and features were related to the Ordnance Survey datum.
- 3.2.5 A full photographic record of the investigations and individual features was maintained, utilising colour transparencies, black and white negatives (on 35mm film) and digital images. The photographic record illustrated both the detail and general context of the archaeology revealed and the Site as a whole.
- 3.2.6 A unique site code (SPT 07) was assigned prior to the commencement of works. The work was carried out between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June 2007. The archive and all artefacts were subsequently transported to the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury where they were processed and assessed for this report.

## **4 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 Details of individual excavated contexts and features, the full geophysical report (GSB 2007) and details of artefactual and environmental assessments are retained in the archive. Details of the excavated sequences can be found in **Appendix 1**.

### **4.2 Geophysical Survey**

- 4.2.1 Conditions for survey were good, with mown lawns and few obstacles. The survey grid was deliberately set out at an angle to the suspected wall lines in order to achieve the best possible responses from any buried features (**Figures 1 & 2**).

#### *Resistance Survey (Figure 2B)*

- 4.2.2 The results from Swardsley produced a range of high and low resistance anomalies that clearly reflect the complex make-up of the lawn; past landscaping and consolidation of the ground, modern services, former garden features and the buried archaeology are all responsible for these variations in resistance. As a consequence it is difficult to be totally confident about the interpretation of many of the individual anomalies.
- 4.2.3 The easiest anomalies to interpret are the high resistance responses (A) which clearly correspond to the chapel of the former priory; there are hints of subdivisions that may reflect differing floors. At the eastern end of the chapel the extension to the nave is clearly visible (B). There may be a side chapel to

the north (C) but the results are not totally clear, and a possible southern side chapel (J).

- 4.2.4 To the south of the chapel, excavation showed a probable range of buildings (D) but many of the walls had been totally robbed out; this explains why the resistance results are again not particularly clear. The results are further confused by the very high resistance readings (E) which coincide with a former drive / carriageway to the main house that occupies the site (S. Ainsworth pers. comm.). This has obscured many of the deeper features.
- 4.2.5 The area of the cloisters (F) also produced what might be termed disappointing results in that the resistance readings do not show a clear outline. Modern services are known to cross this part of the site, leading to a septic tank; while not immediately apparent in the results the cutting of the pipe trench will have added to the disturbed nature of the ground and hence the results.
- 4.2.6 To the south and east of the cloisters are further high resistance readings (G) and (H) which are presumably related to a range of priory buildings. Again the presence of the drive (E) is confusing matters.
- 4.2.7 In the south-western corner of the survey area there are a number of high resistance readings (I) that have a hint of rectilinearity about them. An adjacent excavation trench identified a series of walls, and the location of the anomaly corresponds with the position of domestic buildings such as the kitchens or brew house or potentially lodgings as identified on other excavated religious houses.
- 4.2.8 The overall results provide a good ground plan for the Priory that compares well with the layout of a similar excavated nunnery at Little Marlow near High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, where excavations by Mr Vaughan Williams in 1902 revealed a practically complete plan (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42532#s1/>).

*GPR Survey (Figure 2A)*

- 4.2.9 The responses largely mirror those obtained from the resistance survey, albeit with an increase in detail. Reflections (1) associated with the chapel are relatively clear and were confirmed through excavation, which revealed that the two east-end walls (2) relate to different phases of construction. A potential wall (3) to the north may indicate a further section of the northern side chapel.
- 4.2.10 Less defined responses (4) may be of interest and could relate to a smaller annexed chapel structure as they lie in close proximity to *in situ* contemporary stone graves. However the lack of defining form and the limits of the survey area have precluded a more confident interpretation.
- 4.2.11 Further south, rectilinear anomaly (5) was suggested to be a facet of the cloister area and, again, excavation over the corners confirmed this to be the case. Beyond these features the provenance of anomalies is less clear. The

anomalies (6) are coincident with the line of a former drive / carriageway outside the current house.

- 4.2.12 Anomaly (7) corresponded with a north-south aligned wall identified through excavation which appeared to form part of an eastern range of buildings and which may imply that anomaly (6) relates to that range of buildings and not the carriageway in to the property. GPR responses coincide with high resistance anomalies but the shared orientation of both modern and antiquated structures has made the definition of phases impossible from the geophysics alone.
- 4.2.13 Anomalies (8) adjacent to the cloister are considered more likely to have archaeological origins, given their position and rectilinear nature; however, more recent interventions cannot be discounted. The same is true of relatively strong linear groups of reflectors (9) which extend into the west, anomaly (10). Trenching revealed sizeable remains in this latter area and the radargrams revealed a mass of strong reflections but with little discernible form to their distribution; distinct wall lines were not clear. This may have been due to the presence of a substantial demolition spread.
- 4.2.14 Trend (11) is thought to be a service running out from the house to a buried feature (12). This is not necessarily active and could be of considerable antiquity, but it is impossible to date from this survey alone. Excavation confirmed (13) to be an area of modern disturbance with robbing of material, associated with drainage.
- 4.2.15 The origin of trend (14) is unclear; it may be of archaeological significance (associated with the increased resistance) but could also be little more than a drain, or similar, of indeterminable date.
- 4.2.16 Results from both geophysical datasets complement each other and provide a basic ground plan of the building remains associated with the Priory. Excavation confirmed many of the results and helped to explain the lack of clarity of the data in instances where walls had been robbed out.

### **4.3 Evaluation Trenches**

#### *Trench 1 (Figure 3)*

- 4.3.1 Trench 1 was positioned to investigate the eastern end of geophysical anomaly A and its relationship to anomaly B, which was interpreted as the priory chapel.
- 4.3.2 A number of late garden features were identified under the current garden lawn, dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. feature (108)); these features all cut through a landscaping layer which formed part of the rebuilding work that occurred on the Site c.1855. *In situ* stratified archaeology was identified below this landscaping layer, and an earlier landscaping/levelling deposit (103).
- 4.3.3 The earliest stratified archaeology comprises the south-east corner of the priory chapel nave (GPR anomaly 1) where wall foundations (116) and (117)

were revealed within construction trench (115). No floor layers were identified which relate to the first phase of building and only the natural subsoil (114) was recorded in the area defined by walls (116) and (117).

- 4.3.4 Associated with this phase of activity were several east-west aligned graves at the eastern end of the chapel. Two graves, (125) and (128), were uncovered within two small sondages excavated against later walls (see below). Both the skeletons were intact and had the foundation stones of wall (120) (see below) resting upon the remains. The grave cuts were not visible in plan due to the constant reworking of the deposits through which they had been cut, but they had been dug through layer (133), which was located outside the east end of the chapel, and were overlain by layer (123/124) which had resulted from the reworking of this deposit. Levelling events outside the chapel sealed (124) below layer (112). A slightly later grave (110) was identified cutting deposit (112) and was clearly stratigraphically later than grave (130). Grave (110) contained no skeletal remains and it appeared that the buried individual had been disturbed and removed during later building at the eastern end of the chapel. The grave backfill contained fragments of skull. All human remains from these graves were recorded *in situ* and were reburied on completion of the programme of works.
- 4.3.5 The second phase of activity saw the extension of the eastern end of the chapel (GPR anomaly 2) with the construction of walls (119) and (120) within foundation trench (118); wall (119) continued slightly past the end of the junction with (120) to form a small buttress. The foundation trench clearly cut through grave (110). With the construction of walls (119) and (120), the original north-south aligned wall (116) became obsolete and was reduced down to ground level. Deposits (112) and (124), previously external, now formed the make up for the internal floor surface.
- 4.3.6 Following the construction of the extension, a second buttress (121) was built butting the southern corner, against wall (119), and this was then strengthened by the addition of rubble deposit (122).
- 4.3.7 No firm dating evidence was recovered from the building phases of the chapel, although shelly coarse ware pottery recovered from deposit (123) was dated to *c.* 1100-50, corresponding to the earliest recorded date for the foundation of the priory.

*Trench 2 (Figure 4)*

- 4.3.8 Trench 2 was located within a circular stone walled garden feature (222) which surrounded four ornamental stone grave slabs, recorded as (204), (205), (206) and (207), and inserted into reworked natural deposit (203). The trench aimed to investigate whether the stone slabs were those recorded by Brookes in 1857, following the rebuilding work of *c.*1855. It was believed that the graves slabs were not *in situ* and had been moved to create a garden feature.
- 4.3.9 The southernmost of the slabs, (204), was associated with low stone grave marker (208). This stone slab was highly weathered, and had broken into a number of parts, allowing the eastern portion of the slab to be removed,

showing that it did in fact seal an *in situ* grave, cut into the reworked natural, and was not redeposited. The grave (214) contained articulated inhumation burial (215). Only the lower limbs of the individual were revealed and on-site analysis of the bones indicated that the individual was <45 years old and potentially female due to the gracile nature of the bones (J.I. McKinley pers. comm.). The skeleton was contained within a coffin, as evident from the coffin nails recovered. The grave backfill contained pottery including shelly coarseware, calcareous ironstone coarseware and Lyveden/Stanion 'B' ware, the latter dating to *c.*1225-50 and providing a *terminus post quem* for the grave. Analysis of the ornamental decoration of the slab supported this, dating it to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century (G. Coppack pers. comm., and for dating of other slabs, see below). All skeletal remains and coffin nails were reburied following the completion of works.

- 4.3.10 To the north of (204), grave slab (205) was heavily weathered and damaged; associated with it was low stone grave marker (209). The western section of the slab was removed to reveal that it overlay stone slab (216); this was highly fragmentary and may have represented a separate stone slab to (205), or was perhaps the basal part of the main slab. Slab (216) overlay grave cut (218), which contained fragmentary skeletal remains and a number of coffin nails, but no articulated remains were present. Examination of the slab indicated that it was also late 13<sup>th</sup> century in date.
- 4.3.11 Slab (205) was butted at the eastern end by grave slab (206), which was not further investigated. The highly weathered and damaged slab was dated to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century from the ornamental design. The close proximity of (206) and (205) may imply that the former had been relocated, as the latter overlay a burial.
- 4.3.12 The northernmost of the slabs, (207), was accompanied by stone grave marker (210). The grave slab was not removed and no further investigation was undertaken. The ornamental carving on the slab dated it to *c.*1220.
- 4.3.13 The low stone grave markers (208), (209) and (210) were probably placed at the head ends of the graves to mark them prior to the carving and placing of the large ornamental covering slabs. Other such grave markers are known from sites such as St. Blane's Chapel on the Isle of Bute (J.I. McKinley pers. comm.).

*Trench 3 (Figure 5)*

- 4.3.14 Trench 3 was positioned on Resistance Survey anomaly I, to the south-east of the priory chapel.
- 4.3.15 The first phase of construction within Trench 3 comprised the northern corner of a structure formed from south-west – north-east aligned wall (303) and its returning wall (312). Within the interior of the building layer (309) appeared to be the levelling layer for a floor surface. The function of this building is unknown, but it is located in what was typically the domestic area of religious houses, perhaps kitchens or personal quarters. The latter is perhaps more likely as evidence from the second phase of activity potentially shows evidence of a first floor to the building; butted on to the western side

of wall (303) was structure (304), a semi-circular niche. The function of this feature is unclear, although as it is located on the outside of the building, it may have been a garderobe.

- 4.3.16 The third phase of activity saw the addition of large walls (305) and (306). The former (305) clearly sealed the possible garderobe feature, and could have only been constructed if the main garderobe tower had been removed. Wall (306) was butted onto the northern side of wall (312). The demolition of the garderobe and its replacement with thick walls may indicate the need to support the structure as more floors were built.
- 4.3.17 The final phase of activity was the robbing and recycling of usable building material, as indicated by large robber cut (307), which appears to have removed the large decorative quoins of the building. Sherds of sandy coarseware and Potterspury ware dating to *c.* 1250-1400 were recovered from the backfill of robber cut (309), material discarded during the lifetime of the priory.

*Trench 4 (Figure 6)*

- 4.3.18 Trench 4 was positioned to investigate GPR anomalies 5 and 7. Evidence of two structures was revealed within the trench: the cloister and possibly the chapter house. The south-eastern corner of inner cloister wall, recorded as walls (408) and (409), was encountered at the western end of the trench. These walls, which were quite narrow, would have held a colonnade and faced into the quadrangle of the cloister. Within the area enclosed by the two walls was layer (411), the floor surface or perhaps makeup for the quadrangle floor.
- 4.3.19 A number of possible cloister walkway surfaces and levelling layers were revealed following the removal of the backfill material within large robber cut (405), which cut through a late 17<sup>th</sup> century levelling/demolition layer (403). Cut (405) yielded sherds of pre-Dissolution pottery, including a sherd of Dutch tin-glazed earthenware. The earliest deposit revealed below (405) was levelling layer (426), which contained shelly coarseware pottery dating to *c.* 1100-50, corresponding to the earliest date for the foundation of the priory. This was overlain by occupation layer (425), potentially derived from activity on site during the initial construction of the priory. Layer (425) was sealed by levelling layer (404) and overlain by floor surface (424); the latter contained calcareous ironstone coarseware pottery dating to *c.* 1225-50. Overlying (424) was floor surface (410).
- 4.3.20 To the east of the inner cloister wall (409) was wall (421), potentially the outer cloister wall which also served as the western wall of the eastern range of the priory, possibly the chapter house. Wall (421) was a substantial north-south aligned wall, and had been heavily robbed for usable material. The robber trench (412) contained pottery dating to *c.* 1225-50. The GPR survey indicated that wall (421) (Anomaly 7) was possibly associated with Anomaly 6 and formed an east-west aligned building. The substantial nature of wall (421) could have supported at least a first floor above the ground floor rooms – in other religious complexes the dormitory was typically situated above the chapter house on the eastern side of the cloister. The distance between inner

cloister wall (409) and outer cloister wall (421) was c.4m, giving the width of the cloister walkway.

#### *Trench 5 (Figure 7)*

- 4.3.21 Trench 5 was positioned to investigate the western end of the southern wall of the priory chapel (GPR anomaly 1) and its relationship to the inner and outer cloister walls (GPR anomalies 5 and 7).
- 4.3.22 A large robber trench (510) was observed cutting through a demolition/landscaping layer (502) which contained late 15<sup>th</sup>/early 16<sup>th</sup> century pottery (potentially relating to Dissolution levels). The robber trench was aligned on outer cloister wall/possible chapter house wall (421) in Trench 4, and may therefore have removed the continuation of the cloister outer wall.
- 4.3.23 Following the removal of (502) it became clear that the western end of the southern priory chapel wall did not continue through into Trench 5 and that it had been removed, although no date for this removal was ascertained. The remnants of a number of possible floor surfaces or perhaps make-up layers were observed with Trench 5, although again they were undated (deposits (513), (512), (509) and (507/508)).

#### *Trench 6 (Figure 8)*

- 4.3.24 Trench 6 was located at the south-west corner of the inner cloister wall as indicated by GPR anomaly 5. *In situ* archaeology was identified beneath the current topsoil and subsoil, but following the hand cleaning of the exposed archaeology no further investigation was carried out due to time constraints.
- 4.3.25 The south-west corner of the inner cloister wall (which would have held the colonnade) was exposed and recorded as (606) and (605). In the interior of the cloister no quadrangle surfaces were exposed although layer (604) could have been a levelling layer. This layer produced sherds of St. Neots ware (c. 1100-1200) and Potterspury ware (c. 1250-1400).
- 4.3.26 To the south of wall (605) was layer (603), a possible levelling layer for the perambulatory of the cloister; sherds of shelly coarseware pottery dating to c. 1100-50 were recovered from this layer.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

- 5.1.1 Finds were recovered from all six of the trenches excavated, although few finds came from trench 2. The assemblage is of medieval to post-medieval date. Only pottery, ceramic building material and animal bone were recovered in any quantity; other material types are much more sparsely represented. Human bone was recorded in trenches 1 and 2 (3 inhumation burials, plus fragments from two other disturbed burials), but was recorded *in situ* and not lifted. Accompanying coffin furniture from one inhumation burial was recorded but reburied.

- 5.1.2 All finds have been quantified by material type within each context, and totals by material type and by trench are presented in **Table 1**. Subsequent to quantification, all finds have been at least visually scanned in order to gain an overall idea of the range of types present, their condition, and their potential date range. Spot dates have been recorded for selected material types as appropriate (pottery, metalwork). All finds data are currently held on an Access database.
- 5.1.3 This section presents an overview of the finds assemblage, on which is based an assessment of the potential of this assemblage to contribute to an understanding of the site in its local and regional context, with particular reference to the use of the site as a Cistercian nunnery and its subsequent development.

## **5.2 Pottery**

- 5.2.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 218 sherds with a total weight of 3,263g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference was 1.09. The assemblage was entirely early medieval or later, with the range of fabric types showing that there has been activity at the site from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the present.
- 5.2.2 The assemblage is most notable for an unusual pattern of early medieval (12<sup>th</sup> century) vessel consumption, and also for the presence of a sherd of Dutch tin-glazed earthenware which dates to the pre-Dissolution period, only the second find of such pottery in the county of Northamptonshire.

### *Methods*

- 5.2.3 The pottery was initially bulk-sorted and recorded on a computer using DBase IV software. The material from each context was recorded by number and weight of sherds per fabric type, with featureless body sherds of the same fabric counted, weighed and recorded as one database entry. Feature sherds such as rims, bases and lugs were individually recorded, with individual codes used for the various types. Decorated sherds were similarly treated. In the case of the rimsherds, the form, diameter in mm and the percentage remaining of the original complete circumference was all recorded. This figure was summed for each fabric type to obtain the estimated vessel equivalent (EVE).
- 5.2.4 The terminology used is that defined by the Medieval Pottery Research Group's *Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms* (MPRG 1998) and to the minimum standards laid out in the *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of post-Roman Ceramics* (MPRG 2001). All the statistical analyses were carried out using a Dbase package written by the author, which interrogated the original or subsidiary databases, with some of the final calculations made with an electronic calculator. All statistical analyses were carried out to the minimum standards suggested by Orton (1998-9, 135-7).

### *Fabrics*

- 5.2.5 The late Saxon and medieval pottery was quantified using the chronology and coding system of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS), as follows:

F200: T1 (2) type St. Neots Ware, AD1000-1200. 2 sherds, 6g, EVE = 0.  
F330: Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400. 47 sherds, 534g, EVE = 0.76.  
F360: Misc. Sandy Coarsewares, AD1100-1400. 4 sherds, 53g, EVE = 0.  
F316: Calcareous Ironstone Coarseware., ?AD1100-1400. 4 sherds, 45g, EVE = 0.  
F324: Brill Boarstall Ware, AD1200-1500. 13 sherds, 192g, EVE = 0.  
F320: Lyveden/Stanion 'B' Ware, AD1225-1400. 1 sherd, 1g, EVE = 0.  
F329: Potterspury Ware, AD1275-1600. 17 sherds, 226g, EVE = 0..  
F401: Late Medieval Oxidized ware, ?AD1450-?1550. 17 sherds, 1507g, EVE = 0.33.  
F403: Midland Purple ware, AD1450-1600. 1 sherd, 41g, EVE = 0.  
F404: Cistercian ware, AD1470-1700. 1 sherd, 1g, EVE = 0. .  
F405: Tudor Green ware, AD1450-1600. 3 sherds, 6g, EVE = 0.  
F407: Red Earthenwares, AD1550+. 5 sherds, 66g.  
F408: Rhenish Stonewares, AD1450+. 1 sherd, 6g.  
F409: Staffordshire Slipwares, AD1680-1750. 7 sherds, 74g.  
F410: Dutch tin-glazed earthenwares, 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century. 1 sherd, 3g.  
F413: Staffs. Manganese Glazed wares, late 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century. 14 sherds, 253g.  
F426: Iron-glazed earthenware, late 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> century. 4 sherds, 77g.  
F429: White Salt-glazed Stoneware, AD1720 – 1780. sherds, g.  
F1000: Misc. 19<sup>th</sup> century wares. 22 sherds, 159g.

- 5.2.6 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is held in the project archive. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is fairly typical of central Northamptonshire. The presence of sherds of fabric F316, Calcareous Ironstone Coarseware, is worthy of comment. Recent excavations at the Bury Mount, Towcester produced relatively large amounts of this ware (Blinkhorn in press), which is virtually unknown elsewhere in the county, suggesting it was made in or near Towcester. The presence of such pottery at this site, given its proximity to the town, offers further support for this suggestion.

- 5.2.7 The sherd of Dutch tin-glazed earthenware is also worthy of comment. It came from a large robber cut in trench 4 (405), and was associated with other pottery sherds pre-dating the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is a rare find in the county, with only one previous example noted, from Northampton (Hurst 1999, 99). This pottery has strong associations with religious sites in England, usually being represented by a single example of a ring-handled 'flower vase' or a jug (*ibid.*, 91-2). It also has strong associations with depictions of the Virgin Mary and the Annunciation in north-west European painting of the late medieval period, with the pots often depicted containing lilies, her symbol in the art of the time, such as in the left foreground of Rogier van der Weyden's *Annunciation Triptych*, painted around AD1440. In England, paintings of the Annunciation with tin-glazed pots containing lilies are known from a number of churches in Devon (Allan 1999, pls. 4-6). Given that the nunnery at Sewardsey was dedicated to the Virgin, it is not perhaps such a surprise to find such pottery here.

### *Chronology*

- 5.2.8 Each context-specific group was given a seriated phase-date, as shown in **Tables 2** and **3**. The data in **Table 3** shows the pottery occurrence per ceramic phase. The largest group dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the time of the construction of the nunnery at Swardsley, with smaller groups dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, and another dating to around the time of the Dissolution.
- 5.2.9 There is little evidence of any activity dating to before the Norman Conquest. The only possible pottery which could be of such date are two sherds of T1(2) type St. Neots ware, both of which were redeposited. They could feasibly originally date to the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, but the bulk of this ware usually dates to the later 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The fact that none of the context-specific assemblages date to ceramic phases Ph1 or Ph4 is probably likely to simply be a result of a combination of the small assemblage size generally, and the vagaries of archaeological sampling.

### *Vessel Types*

- 5.2.10 The range of medieval vessel types is typical of sites of the period in the region, although the proportions in which they occur are perhaps worthy of comment, specifically in relation to the 12<sup>th</sup> century assemblage. The rim sherds from that time, with a total EVE = 0.68, are entirely lacking in jars, being made up of bowls (19.1%), jugs (58.8%) and a pedestal lamp (22.1%). Such vessels are all known from pottery assemblages of this date in the region, but normally, early medieval groups are made up almost entirely from jar rims, along with bowls, jugs and lamps in small quantities. For example, the early medieval (c. 1100-1150) assemblage from the Derigate excavations in Northampton consisted entirely of jars, with that from the later 12<sup>th</sup> century deposits consisting of 75.4% jars, 12.3% bowls and 12.3% jugs (Blinkhorn 2002, 49).
- 5.2.11 A large proportion of jugs, coupled with a complete lack of jars, as is the case here, is highly unusual, and demands explanation. The most likely is that much of the 12<sup>th</sup> century pottery assemblage is associated with the construction of the buildings at the site. There is evidence that pottery assemblages from sites associated with industrial activity tend to produce higher than normal occurrences of vessels associated with the consumption of drink. For example, a large proportion of the pottery from a late medieval tannery at King Stable Street, Eton was drinking pottery (Blinkhorn 2000, table 5) and a similar pattern was seen at an early post-medieval tannery in Northampton (Shaw 1996).
- 5.2.12 The later pottery at this site is mainly rather fragmented, other than a large number of sherds of a large Late Medieval Oxidized Ware (fabric F401) vessel, probably a bunghole cistern, from demolition/levelling layer (403) and the fill of ?robber cut (405) in trench 4. A number of cross-fits were made linking the two contexts. It is a typical product of that tradition.

### *Discussion and Summary*

- 5.2.13 This small group of pottery has proved useful in enhancing the understanding of aspects of the medieval ceramics of Northamptonshire. The presence of a few sherds of fabric F316 offers further support to the suggestion that the material was produced and largely used in Towcester and its hinterland, and the sherd of Dutch tin-glazed earthenware is only the second find of such material from the county. It is otherwise typical in terms of the range of forms and fabrics, although the high proportion of jugs from the earliest phase of medieval activity at the site is also of note, and is almost certainly related to the period of construction of the nunnery buildings.

### **5.3 Ceramic Building Material (CBM)**

- 5.3.1 This category includes brick fragments, roof tile and other roof furniture, and floor tile. CBM was recovered in some quantity, particularly from trenches 4 and 5.
- 5.3.2 The bricks are in coarse, poorly wedged fabrics with a mottled appearance; all examples are unfrosted (topsoil in trenches 1, 4 and 5; demolition/levelling deposit (403)). There are no complete bricks, and only one fragment had measurable dimensions (width 110mm, thickness 65mm). Size and appearance date these bricks as post-medieval, probably no earlier than the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- 5.3.3 The roof tiles vary in coarseness and include medieval as well as post-medieval examples; attachment was by means of either a small, central nib on the underside of the top edge, or by paired peg holes on the upper edge. Five glazed, slightly curved tile fragments, all in pale-firing fabrics, may be from ridge tiles (trench 1 topsoil, grave (218), demolition/levelling layer (403)), and there is a small, glazed fragment, also pale-firing, from what might be a louvre or finial (layer (403)).
- 5.3.4 Seven fragments from trench 5 topsoil are from the louvre top of a modern (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century) chimney pot (van Lemmen 2003, 24).
- 5.3.5 Of most interest within this category, however, are a small number of fragments of decorated floor tiles (levelling deposit (103), reworked natural deposit (203), demolition/levelling layers (403) and (502), topsoil in trenches 4 and 6). These are all line-impressed, and three motifs are represented: a running dog, a crowned head, and a floral motif (**Figure 9**). Each motif utilises the same die. It is apparent that not just whole tiles (140 x 140mm) were produced with these designs, but also half- and quarter-tiles, some of the larger tiles being scored for subdivision. The arrangement of motifs varies according to size of tile. Whole tiles featuring the floral motif have five motifs (four in each corner and one centrally), whilst the scored examples just have four motifs, one for each quarter. One whole tile with a crowned head has this motif placed diagonally across one corner; half- or quarter-tiles have one motif in each quarter, placed upright. All the tiles are quite worn, and there are some fragments from which the glaze and even the design have been completely removed by wear.

- 5.3.6 All three motifs are recorded on tiles from the 14<sup>th</sup> century Penn production centre in Buckinghamshire (Eames 1980, nos. 114, 129, 130). The Penn tiling is one of the best documented in the country – between the 1330s and 1380s its tiles were used by the king's clerk of works in royal buildings. Besides being used in most of the churches in Buckinghamshire and many in neighbouring counties, Penn tiles were distributed to sites along the Thames from Oxford to London. The examples found at Swardsley appear to fall into the earliest of three phases of production, probably pre-dating the Black death, which featured larger, well made tiles with a range of designs including animals - later tiles were smaller and less well made (Eames 1985, 56).
- 5.3.7 There may, however, be a more conscious selection of motifs at Swardsley, relating to the dedication of the priory to St Mary (J. Burton pers. comm.). The floral motif is a rose, and is the symbol of the Virgin Mary. The crowned head is the 'Queen of Heaven', also a representation of the Virgin Mary.

#### **5.4 Stone**

- 5.4.1 Most of this category comprised building material, although there is one portable object – a micaceous schist whetstone from demolition/levelling layer (403). For building stone, several different sources had been exploited. The local sandstone ('skerry') is known to have been used for the bulk of the standing structural remains; fragments recovered from the trenches almost certainly represent building material, but show no obvious signs of working. Also present are roofing tiles in sandy and shelly limestones, some retaining nail holes (grave (214), robber cut (307), demolition/levelling layer (302)). Oolitic limestone was used for ashlar and mouldings (topsoil in trenches 2 and 4, layer (403)). Four small quartz pebbles have not been utilised; their occurrence in a grave fill (grave (214)) is probably not significant.

#### **5.5 Glass**

- 5.5.1 Alongside fragments of modern vessel and window there are a few very degraded, almost devitrified fragments of window glass, probably of late medieval or early post-medieval date (trench 1 topsoil, demolition/levelling layer (502)), including one piece with a flame-rounded edge. There is also one small fragment from a green wine bottle of later 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century date (demolition/levelling layer (302)).

#### **5.6 Metalwork**

- 5.6.1 Metalwork comprises objects of copper alloy, iron and lead. The copper alloy includes one coin (halfpenny of William III, struck between 1694 and 1698, from trench 4 topsoil), three buckles (one with buckle plate), two buttons, a pin with wire-wound head, two cartridge ends, a small mount, a fragment of a rumbler bell, and two sheet fragments. All these objects are demonstrably or probably of post-medieval date. In addition, a shroud pin observed in grave 218 was reburied with the inhumation burial.

- 5.6.2 The ironwork includes 13 coffin nails, accompanying burials 214 and 218, which were recorded but immediately reburied, and nails also make up most of the remaining ironwork (16 examples). Fragments of a modern vessel came from trench 5 topsoil. Other objects comprise small unidentified scraps.
- 5.6.3 Apart from two weights and one shot, the lead consists of waste fragments (some appearing melted) and offcuts.

## **5.7 Other Finds**

- 5.7.1 Other finds consist of small quantities of fired clay (probably abraded CBM), worked flint (one flake), ironworking slag, and oyster shell. Apart from the prehistoric worked flint, none of this is datable.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

- 6.1.1 The evaluation at Swardsley Priory was successful in providing a possible layout of the priory buildings, together with dating evidence contemporary with the earliest foundation date for the priory in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6.1.2 The remains appear to belong to a number of distinct phases of activity, and this appears to fit with the historical information concerning the Site. The largest group of pottery dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the period of the priory's foundation, with smaller groups dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **6.2 Priory Layout**

- 6.2.1 Coppack states that '*There was no such things as a typical monastery because the monastic movement was one of continuing reform and expansion*' and that each particular order (Cluniac, Savigniac, Cistercian) '*observed its own particular customs, which were reflected in dress, liturgy, architecture, manuscripts, strictness of life and position in society. In every case, their buildings differed in details of planning and in the degree of decoration and fittings*' (Coppack 2006, 11-12).
- 6.2.2 There is, however, a more general plan of monastic building layout, which contains all the buildings thought necessary for the religious house to be self sufficient. The layout is based on the hypothetical or ideal monastery layout known as the St. Gall Plan. The 9<sup>th</sup> century blue-print, named after the monastery of St. Gall in Switzerland where the plan is kept, was probably drawn by Haimo, Bishop of Basle (803-23) at the monastery of Reichenau, at the request of Abbot Gozbert of St Gall (816-36) sometime between 819 and 826 (Aston 2000, 65-6; Clarke 1984, fig. 39, after Horn and Born 1979; <http://www.stgallplan.org/>).
- 6.2.3 The St. Gall plan shows a single church with a cloister to the south, and an eastern range of buildings generally thought to contain the chapter house and extending from the south side of the church and encompassing the cloister. The south side of the cloister is bordered by the refectory with kitchens and

domestic buildings to the west and south west. The church and cloister are surrounded by a number of ancillary buildings, including brewery, bakery, and lodgings as well as orchards, stables and livestock sheds. There is also a cemetery to the east (Aston 2000, 65, fig. 27). This layout of buildings can be seen in many of the monasteries, abbeys and priories in Britain, for example at Little Marlow, Buckinghamshire, Kirklees, West Yorkshire, Elstow Abbey, Bedfordshire, Kingston St. Michael, Wiltshire, Alnwick Abbey, Northumberland, Battle Abbey, East Sussex, and Norton Priory, Cheshire. (Gilchrist 1994, figs. 36, 42-45; Coppack 2006, fig. 9). There are also a number of exceptions which have the cloister and associated surrounding buildings located to the north of the chapel, such as Watton, Humberside, Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, and Burnham, Berkshire (Gilchrist 1994, figs. 30, 34, 46).

- 6.2.4 The priory at Swardsley appears to have the general layout of the chapel to the north with the cloister and associated buildings to the south as identified from the geophysical survey and evaluation trenches.

### **6.3 The Priory Chapel**

- 6.3.1 The geophysical survey showed the chapel located to the east of the current house within Showsley Grounds, with the western end probably lost under the footprint of the house. Only the eastern, chancel end of the chapel was exposed in the evaluation trenches. Evidence from trench 1 showed that chapel was built in two phases, with the earliest phase of construction accompanied by a series of burials to the east. The deposits disturbed by the digging of the graves contained pottery dating to *c.* 1100-50, providing dating evidence which corresponds with the believed priory foundation date in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6.3.2 The burials in trench 2 were dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of the ornamental grave slabs. It is possible that these burials took place prior to the second phase extension of the church, as up until the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the priory was relatively poor.
- 6.3.3 The second phase of construction clearly impacted upon the earlier burials with the extension of the chapel to the east and the removal of the original eastern wall, followed by the addition of a buttress. The resistance survey may show that this buttress was the beginning of a butting wall associated with a structure on the southern side and recorded as anomaly (J), possibly a side chapel.

### **6.4 The Cloister**

- 6.4.1 The cloister was identified in the resistance survey as (F) and in the GPR survey as anomaly 5; it is the GPR survey which appears to show the more detailed layout when compared with the archaeology revealed in the evaluation trenches.
- 6.4.2 Trenches 4 and 6 respectively exposed the south-east and south-west corners of the inner cloister wall, which would have held a colonnade and divided the

quadrangle from the covered walkway. The outer wall of the cloister was only observed in trench 4 where it had been heavily robbed. The outer cloister wall was traced to the north in the GPR survey (anomaly 7) though it had clearly been robbed in trench 5. The width of the walkway around the quadrangle was recorded as *c.* 4m. This is a comparable width to the cloister walkway of the Cistercian abbey at Sawley in Lancashire which was founded in 1147, and gained a cloister around 1200 (Coppack 2006, 91, fig. 54).

6.4.3 The outer cloister wall would have also formed the walls of the surrounding 'U' shaped range of buildings encompassing the cloister. Situated to the east of the cloister and south of the chapel was normally the chapter house, day room or dormitories, and it is possible that such a building was identified in the GPR survey as anomaly 6. To the south of the cloister was generally the refectory and the remains of such a building may account for anomaly 8.

6.4.4 The eastern range of buildings of a monastic house was normally north-south aligned, as indicated in the St. Gall Plan, but there were exceptions to this. At Sawley, the chapter house was positioned to the south of the southern transept of the church and on the east of the cloister as normal, but the building was east-west aligned and not north-south (Coppack 2006, fig. 54), and this is potentially the case at Swardsley. If anomaly 6 in the GPR survey is a continuation of anomaly 7 (wall 421), then it clearly shows an east-west aligned, substantial building – perhaps the chapter house with the dormitory above. Alternatively, wall (421) may continue to the north into trench 5, as robber cut 510.

## **6.5 The Prioress's lodgings?**

6.5.1 The archaeology in trench 3 was not entirely understood, but it was clear that there were several phases of activity, the first phase comprising a small structure which was later added to by the construction of a possible garderobe on the outside of the western wall. This was replaced by the construction of much larger walls. If the structure was indeed a garderobe it implies that the structure had at least a first floor; and this implies lodgings and accommodation as opposed to kitchens or bakeries.

6.5.2 The structures in trench 3 were clearly on a different alignment (orientated north-east – south-west) to the main priory structures. This may indicate that the structures are of a different date, and this seems to be the case from the recovery of 15<sup>th</sup> century pottery from trench 3.

6.5.3 Evidence from the layouts of similar monastic houses appears to place the Abbess's (or Prioress's) lodgings to the south-west of the cloister and it is possible that the remains within trench 3 represent such a building.

## **6.6 Representations of the Virgin Mary**

6.6.1 The dedication of the Priory at Swardsley to the Virgin Mary was identified in the historical records and the recovery of finds during this programme of works has shown evidence of how St Mary was symbolised within the religious house.

- 6.6.2 Flowers in the medieval period held religious significance and several examples of floor tiles decorated with a rose motif were recovered, although none *in situ*. The rose was seen in the medieval period as the queen of flowers, with white roses in Paradise blushing red after being kissed by the Virgin Mary. A fragment of imported pottery, Dutch tin-glazed ware from a ring-handled ‘flower vase’ or jug, was also recovered. Such pottery often depicted lilies, another symbol of the Virgin Mary.
- 6.6.3 During earlier work at Swardsley a wax seal dating to either 1325 or 1344 was recovered depicting the Virgin Mary adorned with a crown and holding the infant Jesus, seated on the ‘Throne of Power’. In her left hand she holds a stylised *fleur de lys*, a representation of the lily. The Swardsley wax seal (photograph held by the National Archives; ref E210/2057, photo ref PICT 4449-54) depicts Mary wearing a crown and this depiction was also noted on several decorated floor tiles recovered during the excavation. The symbol of the crown adorned Mary identifies her as the ‘Queen of Heaven’ (J. Burton *pers. comm.*).

## **7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1.1 No further work is suggested for any of the finds. A copy of this report will be submitted to the County Sites and Monuments Record. It is recommended that a summary of the results is submitted as a short note for inclusion in the annual round-up of archaeological investigations in *Northamptonshire Archaeology*.

## **8 ARCHIVE**

- 8.1.1 The excavated material and archive, including plans, photographs and written records, are currently held at the Wessex Archaeology offices under the project code 65307 and site code SPT 07. It is intended that the archive should ultimately be deposited as part of the South Northamptonshire Archaeological Collection at the archaeological storage facility at Daventry, in anticipation of their eventual display at Towcester Museum.

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<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42532#s1/> Plan of Little Marlow Priory

<http://www.stgallplan.org/> St Gall Plan

**Table 1: Finds totals by material type and by trench (number / weight in grammes)**

<b>Material</b>	<b>Tr 1</b>	<b>Tr 2</b>	<b>Tr 3</b>	<b>Tr 4</b>	<b>Tr 5</b>	<b>Tr 6</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Pottery	33/435	16111	15/182	120/2070	13/71	41/430	<b>238/3299</b>
<i>Medieval</i>	26/379	12/48	7/87	98/1650	2/5	27/204	<b>172/2373</b>
<i>Post-Medieval</i>	7/56	4/63	8/95	22/420	11/66	14/226	<b>66/926</b>
Ceramic Building Mat.	70/3466	9/423	48/3621	142/15,552	84/12,059	29/2947	<b>382/38068</b>
Fired Clay	2/49	-	-	-	-	1/133	<b>3/182</b>
Stone	12/901	11/952	7/3108	7/3224	20/2136	1/1453	<b>58/11774</b>
Flint	-	-	1/1	-	-	-	<b>1/1</b>
Glass	6/6	-	5/23	6/25	8/26	1/14	<b>26/94</b>
Slag	-	-	-	-	1/6	1/7	<b>2/13</b>
Metalwork (no. objects)	22	15	2	20	23	13	<b>95</b>
<i>Copper Alloy</i>	3	2	-	5	1	3	<b>14</b>
<i>Iron</i>	7	13	1	10	10	2	<b>43</b>
<i>Lead</i>	12	-	1	5	12	8	<b>38</b>
Animal Bone	12/166	13/38	19/271	80/2841	17/200	28/478	<b>169/3994</b>
Shell	-	-	2/18	-	1/4	1/6	<b>4/28</b>

**Table 2: Phases and major defining wares for the medieval ceramics of Northamptonshire c. AD1100-1550**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Defining Wares</b>	<b>Chronology</b>
Ph0	Shelly Coarsewares, Sandy Coarsewares	<i>c.</i> AD1100-1150
Ph1	Lyveden/Stanion 'A' Ware	<i>c.</i> AD1150-1225
Ph2/0	Lyveden/Stanion 'B', Brill/Boarstall ware	<i>c.</i> AD1225-1250
Ph2/2*	Potterspurty Ware	<i>c.</i> AD1250-1400
Ph4	Lyveden/Stanion 'D' Ware	<i>c.</i> AD1400-1450
Ph5	Late Medieval Oxidized Ware	<i>c.</i> AD1450-1550

**Table 3: Pottery occurrence per medieval ceramic phase**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Wt</b>	<b>EVE</b>
Ph0	33	491	0.68
Ph1	0	0	0
Ph2/0	19	94	0.08
Ph2/2	13	143	0
Ph4	0	0	0
Ph5	19	389	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>0.76</b>

## Appendix 1: Trench Summaries

bgl = below ground level

<b>TRENCH 1</b>		Type:	Hand Dug
<b>Dimensions:</b> 6.5m by 4.1m		<b>Max. depth:</b> 1.06m	
		<b>Ground level:</b> 115.88m aOD	
context	description		depth
101	<i>Layer</i>	Current topsoil and turf of lawn garden, mid to dark brown silty loam.	0-0.22 bgl
102	<i>Layer</i>	Dark brown silty loam with abundant limestone fragments, mixed deposit of limestone rubble and degraded natural and possibly topsoil derived material. Deposited likely to be associated with the landscaping of the garden during rebuilding work c.1855.	0.22-0.37 bgl
103	<i>Layer</i>	Mid yellow clay loam deposit with common limestone fragments, levelling/landscaping deposit which probably occurred during the c. 1855 rebuilding and followed the exposure of the walls identified on the 1857 map.	0.10m
104	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Cut of curving gully which forms part of a circular garden feature, gully is 0.20m wide and 0.10m deep with a total diameter of 1.75m. Cuts (102). Probably part of c.19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century garden feature.</b>	<b>0.10m</b>
105	<i>Fill</i>	Mid to dark brown silty loam topsoil derived material filling garden feature.	0.10m
106	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Cut of modern sub-circular tree bole hole. Deliberate planted tree, part of formal garden. Unexcavated.</b>	-
107	<i>Fill</i>	Very dark grey-black silty loam deposit, very similar to topsoil, very humic, compost rich, contains a modern wooden post which would have supported small tree. Fill of (106).	-
108	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Cut of roughly circular steep sided and irregular bottomed feature. Probably part of garden feature, which cuts through deposit (102).</b>	<b>0.15m</b>
109	<i>Fill</i>	Very dark grey-brown, silty sandy loam, with common limestone fragments, fill of garden feature.	0.15m
110	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Cut of east-west aligned grave, located to the east of the earliest phase of the priory church. Grave cut through deposit (112) and has been cut by the construction cut (118) for wall (120). Grave appears to have been emptied and the human remains removed, possibly when wall (120) was built. One of a number of burials located at the eastern end of the church, impacted upon by the chancel extension. Grave recorded as sub-rectangular in shape, 1.40m long by 0.80m wide and 0.22m deep.</b>	<b>0.22m</b>
111	<i>Fill</i>	Mid yellow-brown clay loam backfill of grave (110). Deliberate backfill of grave but following the identification of the grave following extension to the church the remains were removed and the grave filled in. Deposit contained skull fragments (reburied).	0.22m
112	<i>Layer</i>	Light to mid yellow-brown silty clay, deposit originally part of external landscaping outside of the eastern end of the chancel which following the construction of the extension (walls (119) and (120)) would have been levelling for floor surface. Cut through by grave (110).	0.11m
113	<i>Layer</i>	Light brown silt clay deposit with abundant limestone fragments, demolition deposit, probably contemporary with (102).	0.15m
114	<i>Natural</i>	Light yellow silty clay with small amounts of small limestone fragments. Natural basal geology.	-
115	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Construction cut for the first phase of buildings identified within trench 1. Foundation trench for N-S aligned wall (116) and E-W aligned wall (117). Cuts (133) and recorded as 1.80m long by 2.20m wide, depth unknown.</b>	-
116	<i>Structure</i>	Eastern wall of first phase of construction of the priory church, unclear if forms the end of the nave or chancel. North-south wall recorded as 1.20m wide and 1.80m long and a height of 0.08m. Only the foundations remain. Constructed of roughly shaped limestone blocks with no mortar, as packed with foundation trench. Bonded at its southern end to the eastern end of wall (117). Wall has been highly truncated following the extension of the building. Identified in the GPR Survey as anomaly 1.	0.08m high max.

117	<i>Structure</i>	Southern wall of the first phase of construction of the priory church, E-W aligned and recorded as 2.20m long by at least 1.10m wide and 0.39m high. Bonded to the southern end of wall (115) and butted by phase 2 extension, wall (119). Forms the southern wall of the nave possibly the chancel. Identified in the GPR Survey as anomaly 1.	0.39m high max
<b>118</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Construction cut for second phase extension to the church with the building of walls (119) and (120). Cut recorded as 1.80m long by 3.20m wide and at least 0.80m deep. Foundation trench cuts through deposit (123) and fill (111). Two sondages excavated on the western and eastern side of wall (120) within (118) revealed two inhumations. (118) did not cut through the skeletons though the walls did overlay the remains.</b>	<b>0.80m</b>
119	<i>Structure</i>	E-W aligned wall recorded as 3.60m long by 1.20m wide and 0.30m high, appears to be only the foundation which remains, constructed of roughly worked limestone blocks, and recorded as three course of dry-stone walling. Some patches of lime mortar identified. Wall butts the corner of bonded walls (116) and (117). Identified in the GPR Survey as anomaly 2.	0.30m high
120	<i>Structure</i>	N-S aligned wall recorded as 1.80m long by 1.40m wide and 0.96m high, quite substantial foundations, 6 courses of roughly worked limestone blocks, dry-stone walling, no mortar identified or required as the foundation trench would have provided the stability. Phase 2 extension to church at the eastern end forming new eastern wall. Wall foundation overlies to skeletons (126) and (129), though the bones have not been disturbed. Identified in the GPR Survey as anomaly 2.	0.96m high
121	<i>Structure</i>	Probable buttress positioned on the southern side of wall (119) where it is bonded to (120), buttress put in place to strengthen the corner of the Phase 2 extension to the eastern end of the church. Recorded as roughly square in shape and 1.20m long by 1m wide and 0.10m high, and built of roughly shaped limestone blocks, no mortar identified and strength if the buttress derived from the foundation trench (131) in which it is sited.	0.10m high
122	<i>Layer</i>	Dump of limestone blocks around buttress (121), this is possibly a later addition of material to further strengthen the corner of wall (119) and (120). Rubble consists of unworked limestone blocks.	0.60m
123	<i>Layer</i>	Mid yellow-brown silty clay with limestone fragments layer; identical to (124). Highly disturbed deposit formed as a result of the excavation of inhumation graves through it; the deposit is a mixture of grave fills and reworked grave fills. The identification of grave cuts within this deposit was impossible. Deposit potentially derived from deposit (133). Cut by (118) and recorded as (123) on east side and (124) on western side.	0.80m
124	<i>Layer</i>	Identical to (123) located on the west of wall (120).	0.80m
<b>125</b>	<b><i>Grave</i></b>	<b>Cut of inhumation grave containing skeleton (126), not identified in plan or section, but revealed in sondage excavated on the eastern side of wall (120). Grave assumed to be at least 0.90m long by 0.55m wide and 0.86m deep. Skeleton (126) sealed under wall (120), but not damaged by its construction. One of a number of graves excavated at the eastern end of the church and subsequently sealed by the construction of the extension at the eastern end.</b>	<b>0.86m</b>
126	<i>Skeleton</i>	E-W aligned skeleton with the head at the western end, not fully exposed as only revealed in sondage. Only the torso, pelvis and femurs exposed. Skeleton supine and extended. Remains left <i>in situ</i> .	-
127	<i>Fill</i>	Mixed mid to light yellow-brown silty clay fill of grave (125). Deposit identical in appearance and consistency to (123).	0.86m
<b>128</b>	<b><i>Grave</i></b>	<b>Cut of inhumation grave containing skeleton (129), not identified in plan or section, but revealed in sondage excavated against (120) on its western side. One of a number of graves excavated at the eastern end of the church and subsequently sealed by the construction of the extension at the eastern end. Recorded as 0.45m long by 0.60m wide and 0.80m deep.</b>	<b>0.80m</b>
129	<i>Skeleton</i>	E-W aligned skeleton with the head at the west, not fully exposed as only revealed in sondage on the western side of wall (120). Skeleton is supine and extended, remains left <i>in situ</i> . Only the bottom of the pelvis and the top of	-

		the femurs exposed.	
130	<i>Fill</i>	Mixed mid to light yellow-brown silty clay fill of grave (128). Deposit is identical in appearance and consistency to (124).	0.80m
<b>131</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Construction cut for buttress (121).</b>	-
<b>132</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Construction cut for rubble deposit possible buttress (122).</b>	-
133	<i>Layer</i>	Mid to light yellow-brown silty clay deposit, natural deposit identified below deposits (123) and (124), reworked to give rise to these deposits.	-

<b>TRENCH 2</b>		<b>Type:</b>	Hand Dug
<b>Dimensions:</b> 3.3m by 3.3m		<b>Max. depth:</b> 0.70m	
		<b>Ground level:</b> 115.65m aOD	
<b>context</b>	<b>description</b>	<b>depth</b>	
201	<i>Layer</i>	Dark brown very humic silty loam, leaf litter rich deposit in amongst grave slabs (204), (205), (206) and (207), accumulation of humic material which overlies deposit (202). Located within ornamental garden wall (222). Modern accumulation	0.05m
202	<i>Layer</i>	Mid to dark brown silty loam, very humic deposit, formation of garden soil against grave slabs (204), (205), (206) and (207), within wall (222)	0.05m
203	<i>Layer</i>	Mid yellow-brown sandy clay, upper layer of natural geology which has been slightly reworked giving rise to this dirty natural layer. Reworked by the excavation of a number of graves through it, seals clean natural (211).	0.09m
204	<i>Grave Slab</i>	Ornately carved grave slab, roughly rectangular in shape, damaged and weathered limestone slab. Recorded as 2.02m long by 0.54m wide and 0.08m thick. Slab overlies grave (214), skeleton (215) and grave fills (216) and (217). Potentially associated with head stone (208). Late 13 <sup>th</sup> century in date.	0.08m
205	<i>Grave Slab</i>	Highly damaged and weathered roughly rectangular limestone grave slab, no ornamental design remains on the upper surface of the slab, recorded as 1.10m long by 0.40m wide and 0.09m thick. Slab overlies grave (218) and grave fill (217) and stone layer (216). Late 13 <sup>th</sup> century in date.	0.09m
206	<i>Grave Slab</i>	Highly damaged and weathered ornately carved limestone grave slab, recorded as 1.18m long and 0.40m wide and 0.10m thick. Late 13 <sup>th</sup> century in date.	0.10m
207	<i>Grave Slab</i>	Ornately carved limestone grave slab, not as badly damaged or weathered as the others grave slabs, recorded as 1.80m long by 0.50m wide and 0.10m thick. <i>c.</i> 1220 in date.	0.10m
208	<i>Structure</i>	Low stone grave marker, located at the western (head) end of grave slab (204). Recorded as 0.30m long by 0.08m wide and 0.10m high, in cut (219).	0.10m
209	<i>Structure</i>	Low stone grave marker, located at the western (head) end of grave slab (205). Recorded as 0.32m long by 0.08m wide and 0.10m high, in cut (220).	0.10m
210	<i>Structure</i>	Low stone grave marker, located at the western (head) end of grave slab (207). Recorded as 0.34 long by 0.08m wide and 0.09m high, in cut (221).	0.09m
211	<i>Natural</i>	Mid yellow silty clay with rare limestone flecks and fragments. Natural basal geology.	
212	<i>Fill</i>	Mid yellow compact silt clay, deliberate fill of grave (214). Overlies (213). Identical to (213) separated by arbitrary division, and is overlain by slab (204).	0.28m
213	<i>Fill</i>	Identical to (212), overlies skeleton (215) within (214).	0.32m
<b>214</b>	<b><i>Grave</i></b>	<b>Cut of grave for inhumation burial, only partially revealed, and recorded as 0.60m long by 0.42m wide and 0.50m deep. Grave contains skeleton (215) and is backfilled with (213) and (212) and sealed by slab (204)</b>	<b>0.50m</b>
215	<i>Skeleton</i>	E-W aligned skeleton with head to the west within grave (214), not fully exposed supine and extended individual <45 years old and probable female from the gracile nature of the bones. Buried within wooden coffin, evidence of nails within backfill (212).	-
216	<i>Stone slab</i>	Series of limestone blocks identified below (205) and possibly represents a separate stone slab however as the stone is highly damaged and decayed it is possible (216) is actually the decayed base of (205).	-

217	<i>Fill</i>	Mid yellow-brown silty clay upper fill of grave (218). Backfill over skeleton within grave (218), no skeleton identified, though skull fragments located with fill, possible evidence of the disturbance of other graves by the excavation of (218).	0.30m
218	<i>Grave</i>	<b>Cut of inhumation burial, no skeleton identified, and filled with (217), and sealed by (216) and grave slab (205). Not fully excavated. Recorded as 0.60m long by 0.42m wide and 0.30m deep.</b>	<b>0.30m</b>
219	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Cut for the placing of possible head stone (208). Cuts (203)</b>	-
220	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Cut for the placing of possible head stone (209). Cuts (203)</b>	-
221	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Cut for the placing of possible head stone (210). Cuts (203)</b>	-
222	<i>Structure</i>	Garden wall placed around the grave slabs. Modern.	-

<b>TRENCH 3</b>			<b>Type:</b>	Hand excavated
<b>Dimensions:</b> 3.1m by 2.4m		<b>Max. depth:</b> 0.70m	<b>Ground level:</b> 116.01m aOD	
<b>context</b>	<b>description</b>		<b>depth</b>	
301	<i>Topsoil</i>	Dark brown sandy clay loam, humic layer, current turf and topsoil of garden lawn	0-0.27m bgl	
302	<i>Layer</i>	Mid yellow-brown sandy clay with common limestone fragments. Layer of demolition/levelling material directly below the topsoil and overlying the main structures within Trench 2.	0.55m	
303	<i>Structure</i>	Roughly N-S aligned wall, recorded as 2.20m long by 0.48m wide and 0.10m high and constructed of roughly worked limestone blocks, no mortar identified, implying that this is foundation walling. The wall is bonded on its northern end to E-W aligned wall (312). First phase of building in trench 3.	0.10m high	
304	<i>Structure</i>	Added on to the western side of wall (303); sub-rectangular stone structure recorded as approximately 1m long by 0.70m wide, with internal semi-circular niche. Niche only partially exposed as it had been overlain by later wall (305). Niche recorded as 0.60m wide, but potentially up to 1.20m across. Structure initially believed to be a fireplace or chimney, but there was a distinct lack of heat damage to the masonry, and the structure is located outside the building with no evidence of access from inside. Therefore probably the base of a garderobe. Second phase of building in trench 3.	0.10m	
305	<i>Structure</i>	Roughly N-S aligned wall, recorded as 2.20m long by 0.76m wide by 0.30m high, which would have originally been bonded at the northern end to the western end of wall (306), forming a corner; however this junction has been robbed, most likely for the ornate quoins. Structure (305) overlies possible garderobe structure (304), and is probably a strengthening extension to the original structure formed by (303) and (312), potentially for the addition of upper floors. Wall constructed of roughly worked limestone blocks. Third phase of building in trench 3.	0.30m high	
306	<i>Structure</i>	Roughly E-W aligned wall recorded as 1m long by at least 0.60m and 0.30m high. Wall (306) is the return of wall (305) to the east. Junction of (306) and (305) robbed. Phase 3 of building in Trench 3.	0.30m high	
307	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Robber cut for the removal of the quoins of the structure for re-use, which cuts through (305) and (306), filled with backfill (308).</b>	<b>0.38m +</b>	
308	<i>Fill</i>	Mid to light yellow-brown sandy clay with common limestone rubble, backfill of robber cut (307). Deposition of un-recyclable material	0.38m+	
309	<i>Layer</i>	Mid brown sandy clay layer within the inside of walls (303) and (312). Deposit potentially a levelling or basal layer for either a flagged or tiled floor. Unexcavated.	-	
310	<i>Layer</i>	Mid grey sandy clay layer below the first course of stone work of wall (303), possible levelling layer at base of footings trench.	-	
311	<i>Natural</i>	Natural basal geology light-mid yellow brown silty clay.	-	
312	<i>Structure</i>	E-W aligned wall, recorded as 1, long by 0.50m wide and 0.10m high, and bonded on its western end to the northern end of wall (303). Foundation of first phase of building construction. First phase of building in trench 3.	0.10m	

313	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Construction cut of the building of wall (303) and (312), which is filled with levelling deposit (310) and walls (303) and (312).</b>	<b>0.10m</b>
314	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Construction cut for walls (305) and (306) and reused as robber cut (307).</b>	<b>0.30m</b>

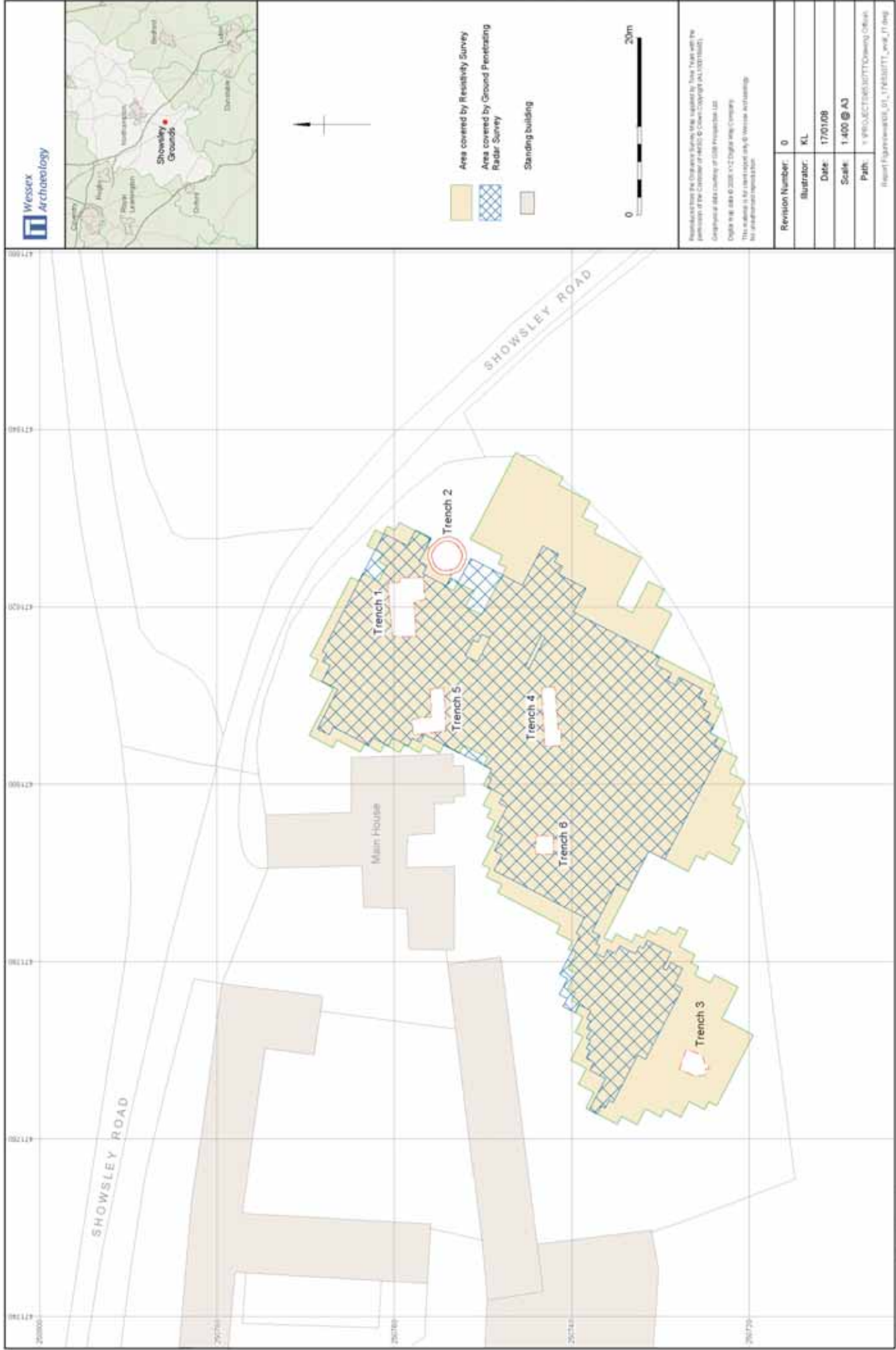
<b>TRENCH 4</b>			<b>Type:</b>	Machine excavated
<b>Dimensions:</b> 6.6m by 1.9m		<b>Max. depth:</b> 1m	<b>Ground level:</b> 115.43m aOD	
<b>context</b>	<b>Description</b>		<b>depth</b>	
401	<i>Layer</i>	Mid grey brown to very dark brown humic rich silty clay, current turf and topsoil of lawn garden.	0-0.15m bgl	
402	<i>Layer</i>	Mid brown humic silty loam, subsoil deposit which is sealed by (401)	0.15-0.25m bgl	
403	<i>Layer</i>	Large scale limestone rubble deposit, mid yellow-brown silty clay with abundant limestone fragments and flecks, deposit overlies layer (410), and is cut through by large pit feature (405), robber cut (412) and feature (419).	0.32m	
404	<i>Layer</i>	Dark yellow-brown clay loam deposit which is sealed by (424) and overlies (425). Deliberate deposit forming area of made ground.	0.17m	
<b>405</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Cut of large irregular shaped feature which cuts through (403) and is filled with (406), cut impacts upon mortar floor surface (424).</b>	<b>0.42m</b>	
406	<i>Fill</i>	Fill of (405), mid grey-brown silty clay limestone rubble rich deposit, single fill of feature (405).	0.42m	
<b>407</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Construction cut for walls (408) and (409), potentially the south east corner of the cloister wall.</b>	<b>0.40m +</b>	
408	<i>Structure</i>	E-W aligned limestone block built wall, recorded as 0.82m long by 0.45m wide and 0.40m high, constructed of six dry-stone courses of rough limestone blocks. Bonded at its eastern end to the southern end of wall (409), forming the south east corner of the inner foundation wall of the priory cloister; would have held a colonnade of pillars. Continuation of wall (605) in trench 6. Identified as anomaly 5 in the GPR Survey.	0.40m high	
409	<i>Structure</i>	N-S aligned limestone block built wall, recorded as 0.90m long by 0.40m wide and at east 0.40m high and surviving to five courses of roughly hewn limestone blocks. Bonded at its southern end to the eastern end of (408), forming the south-east corner of the inner cloister wall. Identified as anomaly 5 in the GPR Survey.	0.40m high	
410	<i>Surface</i>	Remnant of pale grey clay floor surface, which has been truncated by large feature (405). Overlies (404).	0.06m	
411	<i>Surface</i>	Pale blue-grey clay floor surface located on the inside of walls (408) and (409), floor surface within the centre quadrangle of the cloister. Unexcavated.	-	
<b>412</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Cut of large robber cut, for the removal and recycling of stone work from wall (421). Cut is slightly angled but then straightens and follows the line of the construction cut (422) for (421).</b>	<b>0.70m</b>	
413	<i>Fill</i>	Mid orange-brown silty clay with limestone fragments. Latest backfill deposit of robber trench (412).	0.30m	
414	<i>Fill</i>	Mid grey-brown silty clay with small limestone fragments, backfill of robber trench (412).	0.52m	
415	<i>Fill</i>	Mid orange-brown silty clay, with abundant limestone rubble. Large scale backfill layer within robber cut (412).	0.40m	
416	<i>Fill</i>	Mid brown silty clay, lower fill of robber cut (412).	0.45m	
<b>417</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Cut of robber cut, for the removal and recycling of stone work from wall (409), (417) cuts through the fill (406) of large feature (405), indication that the robbing is quite late in the sequence of events as (405) cuts rubble demolition layer (303).</b>	<b>0.30m</b>	
418	<i>Fill</i>	Mid green-brown mottled orange silty clay backfill of robber cut (417).	0.30m	

419	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Cut of steep sided concaved based ditch which cuts through (403). Feature only visible in section, as not observed during excavation. Recorded as 1.5m long by 0.55m wide and 0.35m deep.</b>	<b>0.35m</b>
420	<i>Fill</i>	Mid grey brown silty clay fill of ditch (419), appears to be a mix of natural infilling with deliberate backfill material.	0.35m
421	<i>Structure</i>	North-south aligned limestone wall, recorded as 1.5m long by 0.70m wide and 0.40m high; three courses of roughly hewn limestone blocks. Only remnant of foundation walling, as located below floor layer (410). Possibly the outer wall of the cloister, and western wall of east-west aligned buildings identified as anomalies 6 and 7 in the GPR Survey. Stonework removed by robber cut (412). (421) is almost twice as thick as the inner cloister walls (408) and (409) indicating its dual purpose in supporting the covered walkway and forming the west wall of the east range.	0.40m high
422	<i>Cut</i>	<b>Construction cut for the building of wall (421). Foundation trench, containing (421), unclear as to what this cuts.</b>	<b>0.60m</b>
423	<i>Natural</i>	Natural basal geology identified at the base of large robber cut (412). Mid orange clay.	-
424	<i>Surface</i>	Mid grey-white lime mortar surface, below (410), only revealed in section of sondage excavated through large feature (405), and seen to overly (404). Mortar would have been covered by ceramic tiles, which have been removed.	0.15m
425	<i>Surface</i>	Mid grey silty ash rich deposit, possible occupation layer identified below (404) in sondage, which overlies make up layer (426), probable activity occurring during construction of the priory.	0.05m
426	<i>Layer</i>	Mid grey-brown rubble rich levelling layer identified in sondage and sealed by (425).	0.15m

<b>TRENCH 5</b>		<b>Type:</b>	Machine excavated
<b>Dimensions:</b> 3.7m by 4.8m		<b>Max. depth:</b> 0.74m	
		<b>Ground level:</b> 116.26m aOD	
<b>context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>depth</b>	
501	<i>Topsoil</i>	Dark brown-grey clay loam, current topsoil and turf of garden lawn.	
502	<i>Layer</i>	Mid brown sandy clay layer with frequent large limestone fragments, demolition/levelling layer directly below the turf and topsoil of the lawn. Cut by (503), (505), and (510).	
<b>503</b>	<b><i>Modern Cut</i></b>	<b>Cut of trench containing modern ceramic drain pipe, cuts (502), filled with pipe and backfill (504)</b>	
504	<i>Modern</i>	Ceramic drainpipe and modern backfill of pipe trench.	
<b>505</b>	<b><i>Modern Cut</i></b>	<b>Cut of trench containing modern ceramic drain pipe, cuts (502), filled with pipe and backfill (506).</b>	
506	<i>Modern</i>	Ceramic drainpipe and modern backfill of pipe trench.	
507	<i>Surface</i>	Possible floor surface, or make up layer for a surface that has been removed. Irregular, patchy deposits of pale blue/green clay. Overlies (509). Equal to (508).	
508	<i>Surface</i>	Possible floor surface, or make up layer for a surface that has been removed. Irregular, patchy deposits of pale blue/green clay. Overlies (509). Equal to (507).	
509	<i>Layer</i>	Mid orange-brown sandy clay make up layer/reworked natural layer overlying the natural basal geology and sealed below (507/508).	
<b>510</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Cut of large ditch aligned north-south, cut through levelling layer (502), aligns with wall (421) in Trench 4. Interpreted as robber cut for removal and recycling of material making up the eastern cloister wall.</b>	
511	<i>Fill</i>	Grey-brown silty clay fill of robber cut (510). Large scale deliberate dumping event.	
512	<i>Layer</i>	Pale grey clay layer, with frequent limestone fragments, limestone rubble with possible clay bonding, which has been truncated by modern service pipe trench (503). Overlies (513).	

513	<i>Layer</i>	Pale grey mortar deposit, which overlies the natural basal geology. Thin mortar layer, only visible in sondage.	0.02m
514	<i>Natural</i>	Natural basal geology, the geology is quite varied and (514) refers to an area of iron stone rich red orange sandy silt.	-
515	<i>Natural</i>	Blue-grey clay natural basal geology.	-

<b>TRENCH 6</b>		<b>Type:</b>	Machine excavated
<b>Dimensions:</b> 2m by 2m		<b>Max. depth:</b> 0.67m	<b>Ground level:</b> 115.84m aOD
<b>context</b>	<b>description</b>		<b>depth</b>
601	<i>Topsoil</i>	Very dark brown clay loam, current topsoil and turf of garden lawn.	0-0.19m bgl
602	<i>Layer</i>	Mid brown clay loam limestone rubble rich subsoil layer, directly below (601)	0.19-0.48m
603	<i>Layer</i>	Mid yellow-brown clay loam layer located on the south side of wall (605). Possible levelling layer, for floor layers within the walkway of the cloister. Unexcavated.	-
604	<i>Layer</i>	Mid to light brown clay loam deposit located on the interior of space formed by walls (606) and (605), located north of (605) and east of (606). Possible levelling layers for flooring within quadrangle of the cloister. Unexcavated.	-
605	<i>Structure</i>	East-west limestone block wall revealed in plan, possibly the inner wall of the perambulatory around the cloister.	-
606	<i>Structure</i>	North-south limestone wall revealed in plan, possible outer wall of the perambulatory around the cloister. Bonded at its southern end to the western end of wall (605).	-
<b>607</b>	<b><i>Cut</i></b>	<b>Cut of sub-rounded feature in north-eastern corner of trench, cuts (604), feature unexcavated, possible garden feature.</b>	-
608	<i>Fill</i>	Mid brown silty loam fill of (607), appears as mixed deposit of topsoil and rubble waste.	-



Site Location and Trench Location Figure 1





Plate 1: Skeleton (126) in grave (125) beneath wall (120) (scale 1x0.20m)



Plate 2: Trench 1 from the east (scales 2x2m)

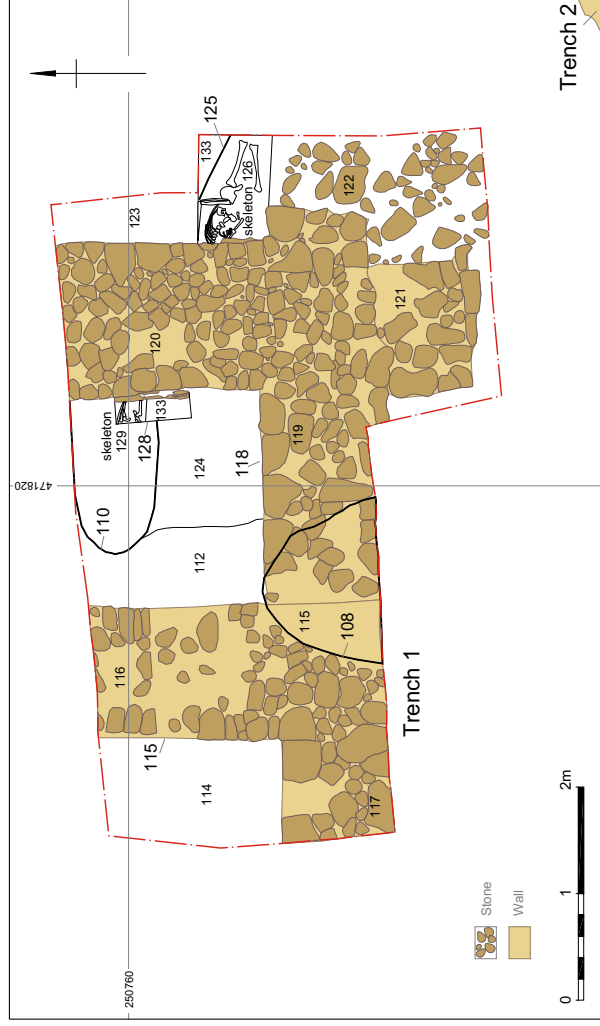


Plate 3: Trench 1 from the west (scales 2x2m)

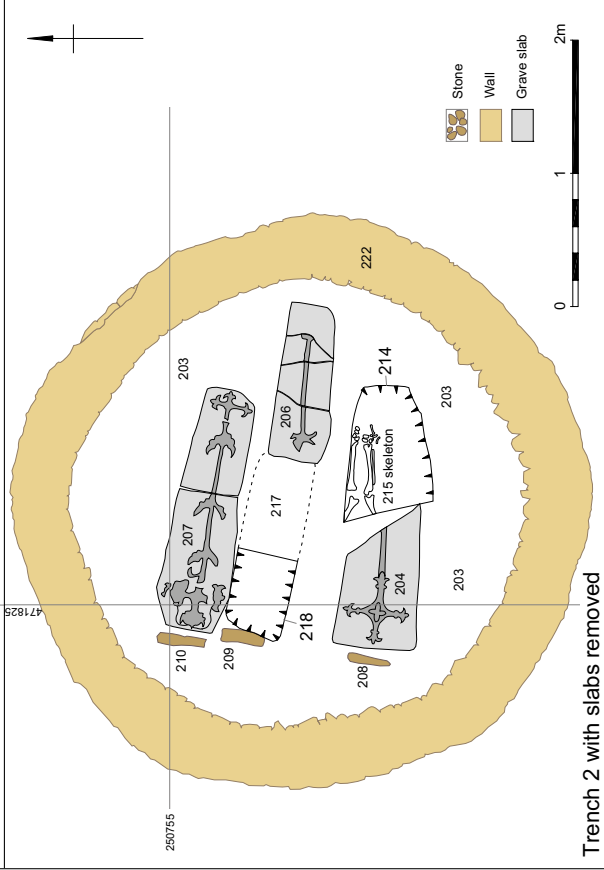
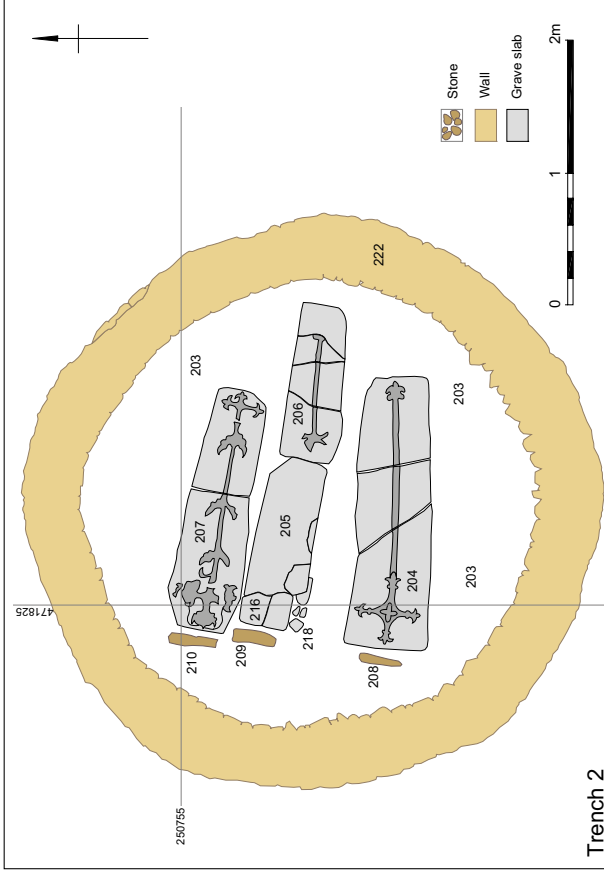


Plate 4: Trench 2 from the west (scale 1x1m)



Plate 5: Trench 2 from the south (scale 1x1m)



Plate 6: Skeleton (215) within Grave (214) beneath slab (204) (scale 1x0.5m)

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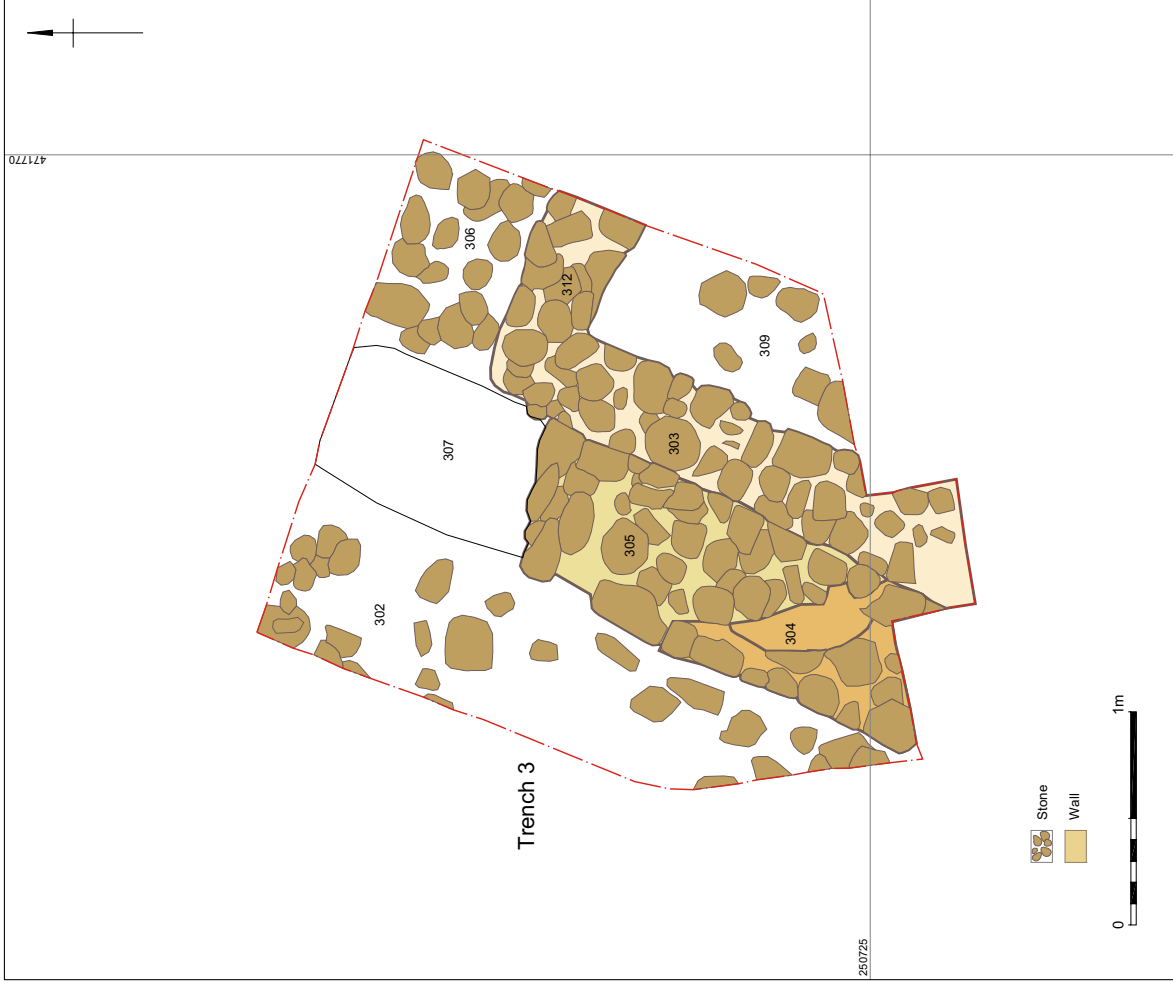


Plate 7: Trench 3 from north (scale 1x1m)



Plate 8: Trench 3, detail of garderobe structure (304), (scale 1x0.2m)

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Plate 9: Trench 4 from the west, inner cloister walls (408) and (409) in foreground (scales 1x1m, 1x2m)



Plate 10: Detail of inner cloister walls (408) & (409) from east (scale 1x0.5m)



Plate 11: Trench 4 from the east, outer cloister wall (421) in foreground (scales 1x1m, 1x2m)

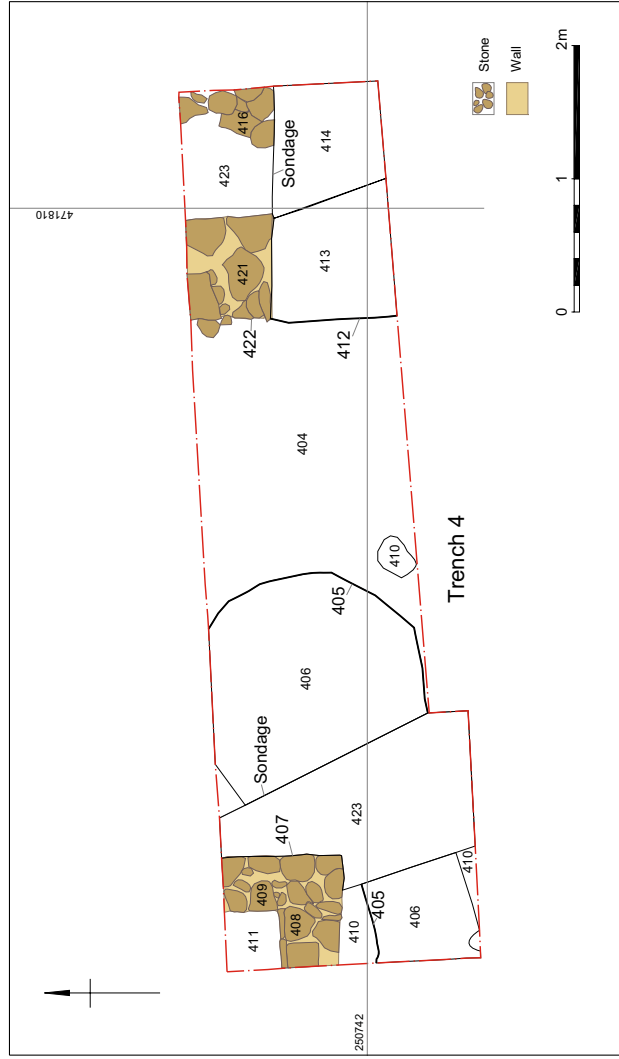


Plate 12: Recording of Trench 4

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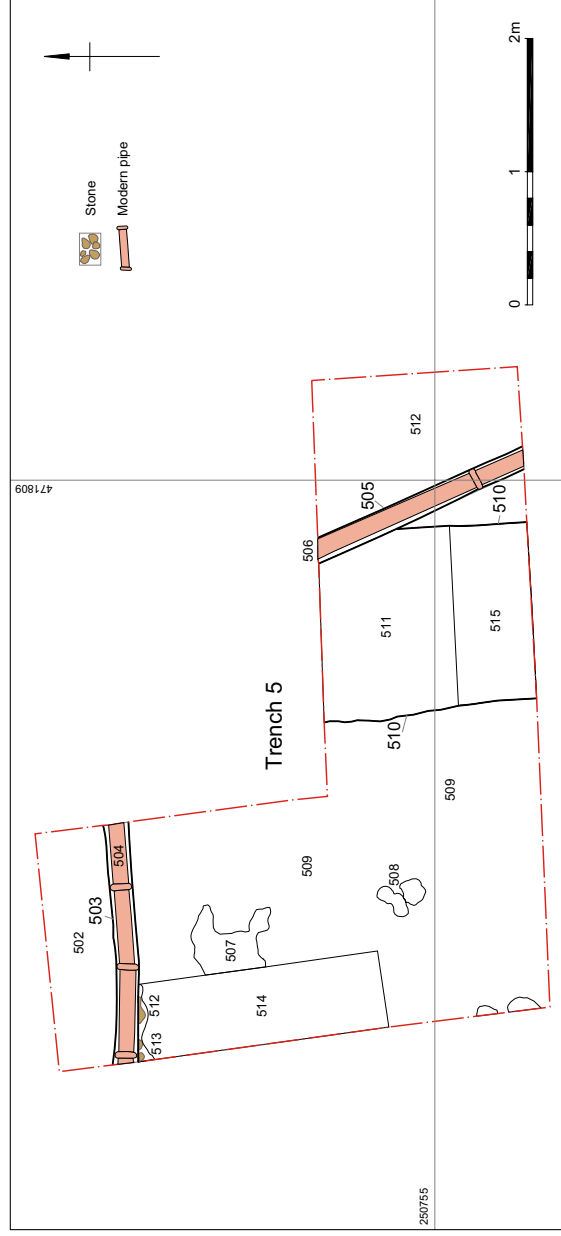
Plate 13: Trench 5 from the south (scales 1x1m, 1x2m)



Plate 14: Trench 5 from the east (scales 1x1m, 1x0.5m)



Plate 15: Working shot in Trench 5



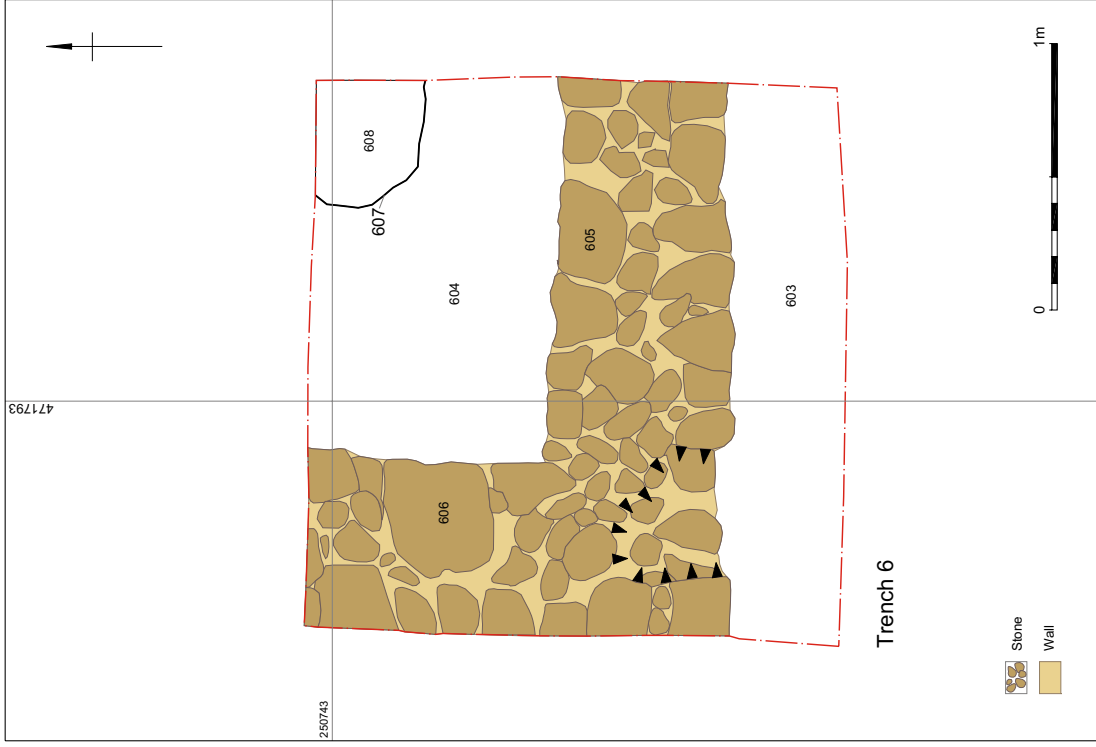


Plate 16: Trench 6 from the east (scales 1x1m, 1x0.5m)



Plate 17: Trench 6 working shot

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Medieval decorated floor tiles

Figure 9



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