



ABBEY OF ST EDMUND  
HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP

# The Abbey of St Edmund

## Heritage Assessment



June 2018



*Cover Image: Aerial photograph of the Abbey of St Edmund, looking north-west, taken 28<sup>th</sup> May 2005  
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# Richard Hoggett Heritage

9 Church Street, New Buckenham, Norwich, NR16 2BA  
07855 383799      [richard@richard-hoggett.co.uk](mailto:richard@richard-hoggett.co.uk)

# Executive Summary

In the early decades of the 10<sup>th</sup> century the mortal remains of the martyred East Anglian King Edmund were brought to the Anglo-Saxon settlement of *Beodricsworth*. This was the single most significant event ever to happen in the history of the settlement which was to become Bury St Edmunds, a town which was to go on to experience a long history of significant events. As a direct result of its holding the royal relics, during the medieval period the emergent Abbey of St Edmund grew to be one of the wealthiest and most powerful monasteries in England, and became one of the major pilgrimage sites in western Europe. In the 500 years since the Dissolution, the site has enjoyed a rich and varied 'afterlife', which has seen the study area develop and adapt with the changing needs and fortunes of individual landowners and the wider town.

The great significance of the heritage of the abbey precinct is well represented in the high concentration of Designated Heritage Assets which it contains and which ensure that its individual elements and wider landscape are suitably recognised and protected. At the same time, the site is also highly valued both by local people and by the many visitors to the town. It is with the aim of ensuring that the need to conserve the remains of the medieval abbey is adequately balanced with the demands of managing a vibrant and busy public park that St Edmundsbury Borough Council, in consultation with Historic England and the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership, led by St Edmundsbury Cathedral, have commissioned this assessment of the former monastic precinct.

This report focusses on the heritage of the precinct, with a specific emphasis on its historic environment and the heritage assets which are to be found within it. For the first time, this report collates and assesses all of the available historical and archaeological information, characterises the known and potential archaeological and built heritage resource, and reviews the history of the site from the earliest times to the present day.

The research undertaken for this assessment has identified over 100 individual episodes of archaeological or antiquarian investigation, ranging from stray finds and chance archaeological discoveries made during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to

set-piece archaeological excavations undertaken in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This total is far higher than had been anticipated, yet many of the archaeological investigations which have taken place in the past have been piecemeal and the site has not been systematically investigated or synthesised.

When faced with a monastic site of the scale and complexity of the Abbey of St Edmund, we must remember that the site has been intensively occupied for many hundreds of years. Although some elements might have been relatively static during that time, both the historical and archaeological records give us a strong impression of continual change within the precinct either brought about deliberately from a desire for constant improvement or accidentally in response to disasters such as fires, collapsing masonry or rioters.

Many of the excavations undertaken to date have been primarily concerned with uncovering and consolidating the walls and foundations of the claustral buildings. Very little of this clearance work has penetrated the medieval floor-layers, concentrating instead on the removal of tons of demolition rubble which sit over the top of the main structural features. As a consequence, the buried archaeological resource, already incredibly significant in its own right, is very well preserved and lies largely intact across much of the site, rendering it even more significant. Excavations have demonstrated that highly complex and potentially deeply stratified medieval and Late Anglo-Saxon archaeological deposits survive across much of the site, with enough material to suggest that a Middle Anglo-Saxon precursor also lies within the precinct.

The site of the Abbey of St Edmund has been a significant place on the regional, national and international stage since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, if not before, and its story is intimately bound up with those of the royal martyr Edmund and the wider town of Bury St Edmunds, with which the abbey enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. As the millennial anniversary of Cnut's refoundation of the abbey approaches, we are witnessing a resurgence of interest in the abbey, the town and the king, and it is to be hoped that the site will be even more widely appreciated and enjoyed during its second millennium than it has been during its first.

## Recommendations

This report highlights some of the gaps in our current knowledge and understanding of the study area and indicate areas in which further fieldwork could be beneficial to the management of the study area. Specifically, these recommendations are:

- Complete the publications of the excavations of the Queen's Chamber and the Cathedral Centre development.
- Publish the many smaller pieces of fieldwork, such as the chapterhouse excavation in 1902/03, Biddle's sewer trench across Bradfield Hall in 1962, and Dufty and Radford's excavations in 1957.
- Assess the feasibility of a large-scale research and interpretation project modelled on the Glastonbury Abbey Archaeology project.
- Enhance the Suffolk Historic Environment Record to address the substantial gaps and omissions in the records.
- Convert Whittingham's 1952 interpretative plan to GIS, as a basis for future interpretation and analyses.
- Commission a new topographical survey of the precinct to give accurate locations for all of the identifiable elements of the monastic complex.
- Commission a new architectural survey and interpretation of the remaining masonry in the monastic complex.
- Procure or commission high-resolution LIDAR data for the study area.
- Monitor the study area for the appearance of parch-marks and record these accordingly.
- Commission high resolution geophysical surveys of all of the open space within the precinct.
- Ensure that no unnecessary invasive fieldwork is undertaken within the study area, and that any fieldwork is consistent with appropriate research agenda, standards and guidance.
- Ensure that the research potential of all invasive management-related groundworks is maximised.
- Reassess the suitability and extent of the existing heritage designations, and consider how the international significance of the site might be designated.



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# Abbreviations

DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPR	Ground-penetrating Radar
HE	Historic England
HER	Historic Environment Record
LIDAR	Light Distance and Ranging
NMP	National Mapping Programme
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
SACIC	Suffolk Archaeology Community Interest Company
SCCAS	Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
SRO	Suffolk Record Office

# Archaeological Periods

In accordance with the common terminology employed by archaeologists,<sup>1</sup> the following time periods are referred to in this report. These periods are employed for chronological convenience and no cultural connotations are implied by their use.

- Prehistoric 1,000,000 BC – AD 43
- Palaeolithic 1,000,000 – 10,000 BC
- Mesolithic 10,000 – 4000 BC
- Neolithic 4000 – 2200 BC
- Bronze Age 2200 – 700 BC
- Iron Age 800 BC – AD 43
- Roman AD 43 – 410
- Early Anglo-Saxon AD 411 – 650
- Middle Anglo-Saxon AD 651–850
- Late Anglo-Saxon AD 851–1066
- Medieval AD 1066 – 1540
- Post-medieval AD 1540 – 1900
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century AD 1901 – 2000

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.heritage-standards.org.uk/chronology/>

# 1. Introduction

The Peterborough manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year AD 869 records that: 'In this year the raiding [Danish] army took up winter quarters at Thetford. And that winter King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes had the victory, and killed the king and conquered all the land' (Swanton 2000, 71). Writing just over a century later, the French monk Abbo of Fleury described Edmund's martyrdom in greater detail, telling how he was bound to a tree and shot with arrows, before being decapitated. Abbo also described one of the first of many miracles associated with St Edmund, relating how his head called out to those searching for his body, guiding them to the spot where it was being guarded by a large wolf. Head and body were reunited, and buried in a chapel close to the site of the martyrdom (Whitelock 1970). There is strong historical and archaeological evidence for the rapid establishment of a cult of St Edmund (see Pinner 2015), and within a generation of his death Edmund memorial coinage was being struck within the area of the Danelaw (although there is no evidence to suggest that this coinage had any connection with Bury St Edmunds) (Eaglen 2006, 13–16).

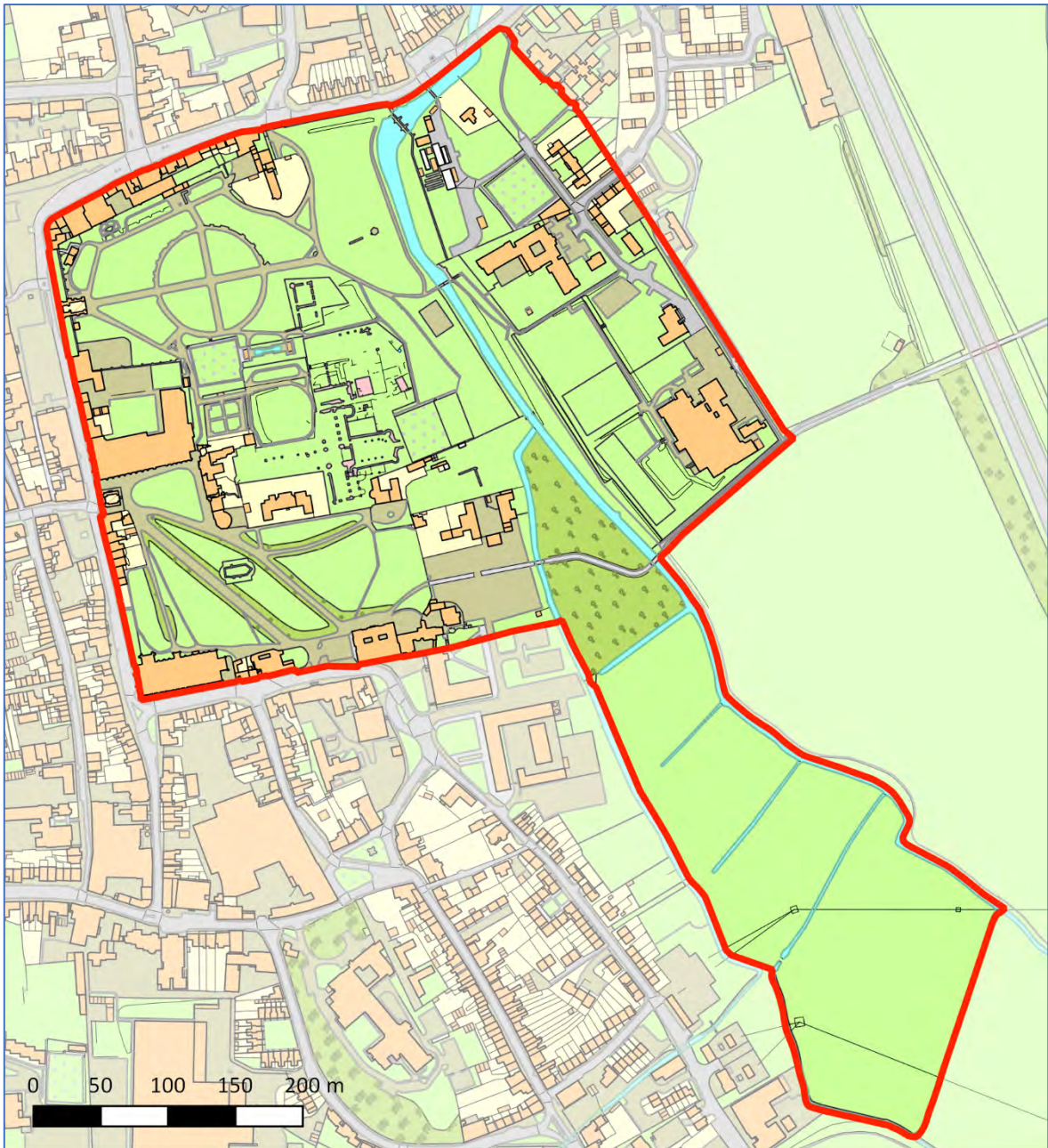
For reasons which remain obscure, although presumably related to the emergence of his cult, Edmund's body was moved to the site of *Beodricsworth* (now Bury St Edmunds) in the early part of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Here, his body was inspected and found to be miraculously whole and incorrupt, and was subsequently housed in a large wooden church (Ridyard 1988, 211–13). The royal patronage of King Cnut encouraged the foundation of the Benedictine monastery of St Edmund in AD 1020, resulting in the construction in stone of the first incarnation of the abbey church and buildings. After 60 years, construction work began on a second, larger monastic church, into which Edmund's remains were translated in 1095, and which was eventually completed in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout this period, the surrounding monastic precinct developed and expanded to incorporate areas of the Anglo-Saxon town and was encircled with a high boundary wall with external ditch and substantial gatehouses.

During the medieval period, the Abbey of St Edmund grew to be one of the wealthiest and most powerful monasteries in England, and became one of the major pilgrimage sites in western Europe. The history of the abbey is well attested in the copious archives and manuscript sources which survive (Thompson 1980). The abbey was the stage for visits from royalty, hosted parliaments, and was the burial place of many notable figures, including the sister of Henry VIII. The institution overcame numerous difficulties: the central tower collapsed in 1210, the western tower collapsed in 1430, the abbey was attacked by rioters in 1305, 1327 and 1381, and a major fire gutted the abbey church in 1465 (James 1895). Ultimately, however, like all monastic sites, the abbey succumbed to the politics of the Reformation and was dissolved in 1539. The relics and treasures were taken and the site was subsequently sold, the monastic buildings being systematically stripped of their stonework and reduced to ruins.

Yet even the Dissolution did not erase the abbey completely. The boundary of the monastic precinct survived largely intact, and its medieval walls have continued to shape the development of Bury St Edmunds up to the present day. The churches of St Mary and St James, and the associated Great Churchyard, all of which stood within the precinct and were originally monastic foundations, continued to serve the population of the town. St James' church was elevated to cathedral status in 1914, and the Norman Tower, which was once the formal entrance to the abbey church, still stands as a bell tower for the cathedral and is one of the town's, if not the region's, most iconic buildings. The west front of the abbey church became the host of a series of *ad hoc* dwellings, which have since been formalised into another of the town's unique features (McAleer 1998a; 1998b).

Much of the interior of the precinct became private gardens and remained largely undeveloped, a process to which much of the archaeological record of the site owes its survival. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a botanic garden was established, which was subsequently expanded to encompass much of the area of the former Great Court of the abbey. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Abbey Gardens were created as a public park for the population of Bury St Edmunds to enjoy, and the gardens remain the focus of many of the town's recreational and celebratory activities to this day.





**Figure 1:** Bury St Edmunds and the boundary of the Study Area. (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675)

## The Scope of this Report

The site of the medieval abbey, its many heritage assets and its long and fascinating history are highly valued both by local people and by the many visitors to the town. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Abbey Gardens welcomes over one million visitors per year. The study area holds value and interest for numerous community groups and organisations in Bury St Edmunds and further afield. Local schools and colleges and academic institutions, such as the University

of East Anglia, the University of Suffolk and the University of Cambridge, have research and education interests in the heritage of the Abbey of St Edmund. Therefore, it is with the aim of ensuring that the need to conserve the remains of the medieval abbey is adequately balanced with the demands of managing a vibrant and busy public park that St Edmundsbury Borough Council, in consultation with Historic England and the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership, led by St Edmundsbury Cathedral, have commissioned this assessment of the former monastic precinct and surrounding area (Figures 1 and 2).



**Figure 2:** An aerial view of the former monastic precinct, looking north-west. Photograph taken on 28th March 2012. (© Mike Page, reproduced with permission)

This report focusses on the heritage of the study area (see Section 3), with a specific emphasis on its historic environment and the heritage assets which are to be found within it. In terms of definitions, in *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, published by English Heritage (now Historic England) in 2008, 'heritage' is defined as 'all inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility' (English Heritage 2008, 71). In the same document, and the *National Planning Policy*

*Framework* (NPPF), the phrase 'historic environment' is defined as comprising 'all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible or buried, and deliberately planted or managed flora' (English Heritage 2008, 71; DCLG 2012, 52). At the time of writing (June 2018), a new draft of the *Conservation Principles* document is being prepared, but it is understood that these definitions are still considered to be current. The widespread usage of 'heritage asset' has arisen since the 2008 publication, and is defined in the NPPF as 'a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)' (DCLG 2012, 52).

The *Conservation Principles* state that in order to identify the heritage values of a place, its history, fabric and character must first be understood. Any assessment of this kind should examine the place's origins, how and why it has changed over time, and the form and condition of its constituent elements and materials. Its history of ownership may be relevant, not only to its heritage values, but also to its current state (English Heritage 2008, 35). This report therefore provides baseline information to inform the forthcoming Conservation Plan for the study area, which is to be developed by Purcell during 2018. The Heritage Assessment was commissioned separately from the Conservation Plan due to the large and complex nature of the historical and archaeological source material involved, much of which is fragmentary, unpublished and dispersed across multiple locations.

This report collates and assesses the available historical and archaeological information for the study area, characterises the known and potential archaeological and built heritage resource, and reviews the history of the study area as a whole from the earliest times to the present day. The methodology employed in researching and writing this report is set out in Section 2, below. Although the primary purpose of this report is to provide the baseline for the production of a Conservation Plan, it is also anticipated that the information

presented here could be used for a range of future projects, such as the development of a range of heritage interpretation resources. This report also aids in the identification of gaps in the archaeological knowledge and historical information across the study area where further investigation might be required, and highlights those areas of the study area in which the heritage resource is considered to be at risk from inappropriate management and unchecked development.

Given the scale of the task and the timescale and budget of the project, it was clearly stated at the outset that the Heritage Assessment was to focus exclusively on the study area defined in the project brief (effectively the former monastic precinct with a few additional areas) and this study area is discussed in more detail in Section 3. The study area contains a very high concentration of Designated Heritage Assets – Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and a Registered Park and Garden – and these are considered in detail in Section 4.

In the brief it was explicitly stated that the Heritage Assessment should not aim to provide a comprehensive or authoritative account of the socio-economic and political history and development of the medieval abbey or the town, and should only provide a summary of the historical information pertaining to the abbey and its later history (see Section 5). A more detailed assessment of the historical development, exploring the social history and its significance to the study area, will be addressed as part of the Conservation Plan using the baseline information set out below and will use it to present an assessment of the heritage values and heritage significance of the study area.

The study area has a long history of antiquarian, archaeological and architectural investigation, which begins in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and continues to this day, and details of this history and the results of these investigations are summarised in Section 6. The investigative history of the site is complemented by a long sequence of historic maps depicting the site, and numerous sketched and engraved views of the abbey site and its ruins. These sources span the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and provide a good visual history of the development of the study area during the past 250 years. The detailed results of the material discussed in these sections are

included in the relevant parts of Sections 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, which present the sites, monuments and buildings within the study area broken down by historical periods. The archaeological evidence for the pre-monastic phases of the study area, which spans the Mesolithic to the Anglo-Saxon periods, is presented in Section 7, which describes the developmental history of the study area up to the eve of the translation of Edmund's remains in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century. Section 8 considers the historical and archaeological evidence for the development of the study area during the 10<sup>th</sup> and early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Edmund's body was housed within a wooden church and his cult began to expand. Section 9 focusses on the developments which began in the years following AD 1020, during which time the first phase of stone-built monastic buildings was constructed and the monastic precinct began to be consolidated. Section 10, the largest section, discusses the major rebuilding and expansion of the abbey complex which began under Abbot Baldwin in the 1080s and continued in to the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. This section also considers the physical changes brought about by the various events which unfolded during the course of the medieval period, culminating in the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s. Section 11 sets out the post-Dissolution history and development of the study area, enabling an appreciation of how different elements of the area have survived, been adapted or even destroyed, and how the area has come down to us in its present form. These sections of the report are complemented by appendices containing more detailed datasets and by the project Geographic Information System (GIS).

The conclusions which can be drawn about the study area, including its archaeological potential, the likely depths of surviving archaeological deposits and its susceptibility to risk are presented on a sub-area by sub-area basis in Section 12. The conclusions which can be drawn from this work, along with an assessment of the gaps in our current knowledge of the study area and recommendations for further research and fieldwork are presented in Section 13.

## 2. Methodology

This report collates and assesses the available historical and archaeological information for the project study area, characterises the known and potential archaeological and built heritage, and reviews the history of the study area as a whole from the earliest times to the present day. The research and writing of this Heritage Assessment was undertaken in three main phases: 1) data collection, 2) analysis and 3) reporting.

Phase 1 comprised data collection, and saw the creation of the project database and GIS mapping and its population with data pertaining to the study area, which was collected from a range sources. Up-to-date Ordnance Survey base mapping for the study area was obtained from St Edmundsbury Borough Council and is reproduced here under the terms of OS Licence No. 100019675. Historical Ordnance Survey mapping was accessed via the National Library of Scotland website<sup>2</sup> and the Old Maps website,<sup>3</sup> with hard copy mapping also viewed at the Suffolk Record Office. Environment Agency LIDAR Digital Terrain Model and Digital Surface Model data for the study area were obtained from the government's Open Data Portal<sup>4</sup> and processed using QGIS.<sup>5</sup>

Geological data were obtained from the British Geological Survey's online Geology of Britain viewer, which provided details of solid and drift geology for the study area, as well as the location of the geotechnical boreholes within it.<sup>6</sup> Scans of relevant borehole logs were also accessed via this interface. Soils data was derived from the Land Information System (LandIS) Soilscape viewer hosted by Cranfield University,<sup>7</sup> and was augmented by maps and records held by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

In terms of existing heritage data, GIS datasets for national designations – Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, and Listed Buildings –

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<sup>2</sup> <https://maps.nls.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.old-maps.co.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://environment.data.gov.uk/ds/survey/#/survey>

<sup>5</sup> <https://qgis.org/en/site/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscares/>

were downloaded from the Historic England Listing Data Download Area on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017.<sup>8</sup> These GIS downloads are complemented by data presented on the National Heritage List for England website.<sup>9</sup> The national Listed Building GIS dataset is provided as point data, and this was complemented by polygonised data provided on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017 by the St Edmundsbury Borough Council GIS Officer, who also provided GIS data for the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Conservation Area. The *Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2007)* was downloaded from the West Suffolk website.<sup>10</sup>

An export of the records held by the Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER) was obtained on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in PDF and GIS formats. These records comprised details of the known archaeological monuments, events, findspots and sources pertaining to the study area and underpinned the creation of the timeline of archaeological investigations of the site. These data exports were complemented by a follow-up visit to view the hard-copy secondary files held by the HER on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017, during which copies were made of relevant documents and reports. Following a search of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Archive catalogue, a further visit was undertaken on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018, during which aerial photographs and archaeological archives were viewed and assessed. The holdings of the HER are augmented by the Archaeology Data Service's Library of Unpublished Fieldwork Reports, which contains digital copies of many of the 'grey literature' reports relating to archaeological fieldwork in Suffolk undertaken since the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> The digitised back-issues of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* were also particularly useful.<sup>12</sup>

An extensive assessment of all relevant published and unpublished sources was also undertaken as part of Phase 1, and the results incorporated into the text of this report and project GIS mapping, as appropriate. All cited sources are included in

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<sup>8</sup> <https://services.historicengland.org.uk/NMRDataDownload/default.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

<sup>10</sup>

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/Conservation/upload/ConservationAreaAppraisalBury080320.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.suffolkinststitute.org.uk/proceedings-of-the-suffolk-institute-for-archaeology-history-online>

the bibliography and, where possible, links are provided to the originals where these are available digitally. The catalogues of a number of relevant documentary and artefactual archives and repositories were searched in order to identify relevant source material. These were then accessed remotely where possible, and visited in person if necessary. Relevant documents were photographed, or copies requested, as required. The archive documents and sources viewed are listed in Appendix I, and those which have directly informed this assessment are cited in the text.

The Bury St Edmunds branch of the Suffolk Record Office holds large quantities of material pertinent to the study area, including administrative records, correspondence, historic maps, engravings, photographs and newspapers. The SRO was visited on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2018, where much of this material was viewed and photographed, although problems with the roller racking have meant that some material could not be retrieved from the store, although this has not impacted on the overall study. Additional scans of some larger items and digital copies of images from the Spanton–Jarman photographic collection were also obtained after these visits.

Moyse's Hall Museum holds material excavated from the study area, as well as paintings, maps and drawings showing parts of the area, and the museum archives were visited on 13<sup>th</sup> February and 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018 so that objects could be studied and photographed. Additional images and details from the museum collections were provided by the museum curators following these visits. Several artefacts discovered on the site are also held in the museum collections of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and photography was commissioned of these objects.

Material pertaining to the management of the site by the Ministry of Works and its later incarnations is held in the National Archives in Kew, and includes the original Registry files, as well as large-format survey drawings and site illustrations. The National Archives were visited on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018, during which the Registry files were photographed and high-resolution scans were subsequently ordered of several of the site plans. The active Registry files pertaining to the site are still held by Historic England, and access to these was requested via a Freedom of Information request. Although there are a large number of files, those relevant to



the Heritage Assessment were identified from a list of titles and the relevant files were able to be viewed and photographed at the Historic England East of England office in Cambridge on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018. A similar range of illustrative material, including over 250 plans, drawings and photographs relating to the study area, as well as the Historic England 'Building Files', is held at the Historic England Archive in Swindon, which was visited on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018. The material and paper archive of the archaeological excavations undertaken on the site of the Queen's Chamber between 1976 and 1980 is held at English Heritage's Wrest Park Collections Store, which was visited with the director of the excavations, Anthony Fleming, on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

The Historic England Archive also holds the national collection of vertical and oblique aerial photographs, the catalogues for which were queried in advance and relevant images extracted in advance by Historic England staff. These were also viewed during the visit on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018. Some of these images are available via the Britain from Above website.<sup>13</sup> Additional aerial photographs held by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service were also consulted during the project, as were the more recent aerial images of the study area taken by Mike Page,<sup>14</sup> which are reproduced in this report with his permission.

Notebooks, lecture notes and correspondence belonging to M.R. James and pertaining to his studies of the Abbey of St Edmund were examined and photographed at the Founder's Library of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and in the Manuscript Reading Room of Cambridge University Library on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018. Additional material relating to the abbey site was consulted at the British Library on 21<sup>st</sup> March. Information from the archives of the Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons was also supplied remotely by their curatorial staff.

In addition to archival research, a series of site visits was undertaken in order to appraise, describe and illustrate the current state of the study area and describe and photograph the various standing buildings, structures and landscape features present within it. These visits were undertaken on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 13<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <https://britainfromabove.org.uk/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.mike-page.co.uk/>

February, 7<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March and 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The visit on 7<sup>th</sup> March was undertaken in the company of Bob Carr, formerly of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service and currently the Cathedral Archaeologist. The visit on 17<sup>th</sup> April included the opportunity to climb both the cathedral tower and the Norman Tower in order to view the study area from an elevated position. The resultant site notes and photographs have been integrated into this report.

Phase 2 of the project comprised the analysis of the collected data, and the identification and description of the designated and non-designated heritage assets within the study area. As part of this process, the relevant geological, geotechnical and topographical data, including aerial photographs and LIDAR, were reviewed in order to understand the physical form of the site, and where possible these data were used to create indicative models of the study area. Historical mapping and pictorial sources were also used to chart the historic development of the study area.

During the course of the analysis phase, the wider study area was broken down into a series of spatial and chronological themes, in order to better distinguish its historic character and aid its future management and interpretation, and these form the basis of the structure of this report. These analyses have enabled the identification and mapping of potential impacts on the heritage resource caused by previous occupation and development within the study area, as well as the identification of non-archaeological constraints on any future investigations. They have also enabled the identification of gaps in our existing knowledge of the study area, including those areas which remain un-investigated or which would benefit from further fieldwork.

Phase 3 comprised the writing of this report, which provides a baseline description and characterisation of the study area. This report is supported by an accompanying GIS, which is supplied electronically on the CD-ROM mounted at the back of this report. It is intended that this digital material will be presented in a web-based form as the work of the Heritage Partnership develops.

The process of researching and writing this report has been facilitated and greatly aided by the regular series of four meetings held between the authors and the members of the Heritage Assessment Advisory Group of the Abbey of St Edmund

Heritage Partnership. These meetings took place in Bury St Edmunds on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 23<sup>rd</sup> February and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018. Two working drafts of this report were circulated on an 'as is' basis, the first on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018 and the second on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2018, and an Editorial Review Board meeting was held in Bury St Edmunds on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018, at which the content of the report and interpretation of the study area were discussed. A final draft of this report was submitted on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018, and following reviewers' comments the final version of this report was presented to members of the Heritage Partnership at a meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

This Heritage Assessment comprises a fully illustrated report, with appendices and accompanying GIS. Although this work has been largely synthetic, and has drawn upon published and unpublished archive materials (all of which are fully referenced and referred to here), a number of items of original archaeological archive (site notebooks, plans, photographs, etc.) have been brought to light during the course of researching this report. These materials have been lodged with the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, holder of the archaeological archives for the county, following completion of the report.

### 3. The Study Area

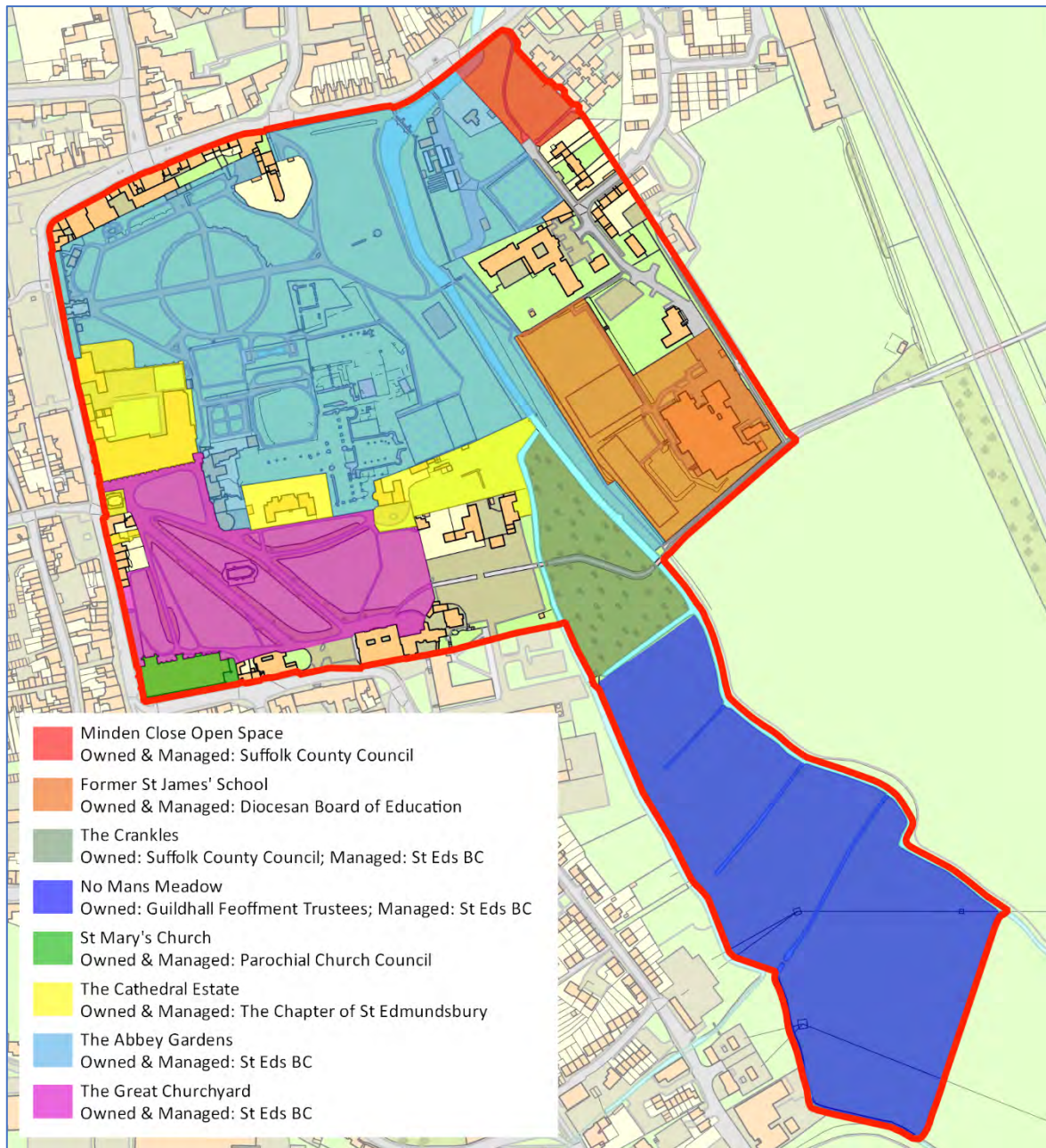
The study area for the Heritage Assessment covers the site of the medieval Benedictine Abbey of St Edmund and associated land to the south-east (Figures 1 and 2). This section sets out the boundary of the study area and the different owners and land-managers whose interests are represented within it. LIDAR data, archaeological survey data and historic mapping are used to present a summary of the site's soil-scape and underlying geology and assess the topography of the area. The interpretative categories ascribed to the site during the series of landscape character assessments which have been undertaken in the past are assessed. Finally, the 15 Sub-Areas developed by the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership and suggested in the consultancy brief as a method of structuring both this Heritage Assessment and the subsequent Conservation Plan are presented and described.

#### Boundary and Ownership

For much of its length the boundary of the study area is coterminous with the boundary of the former monastic precinct, and in many places the boundary is marked by surviving stretches of the precinct wall itself (Figure 1). Beginning in the north-western corner of the study area, the boundary runs eastwards along the south side of Angel Hill and Mustow Street, past the point at which it becomes Eastgate Street at the junction with Cotton Lane, as far as the north-eastern corner of the Minden Close open space. The boundary then turns south along the edge of the built up area, cuts across the rear of the properties which front onto Minden Close and The Vinefields and joins the unmade track which runs to the north-eastern side of St James' Court and the site of the former St James' Middle School. The boundary follows this track to its junction with Kevelaer Way, which marks the easternmost point of the monastic precinct, before turning south-west to follow the line of an extant portion of the precinct boundary wall until it reaches the footbridge which crosses the River Lark (known as the Riven Bourne or Burn until 1801). Whereas the former precinct boundary seems to have crossed the river in this area, the boundary of the study area follows the sinuous eastern bank of the Lark upstream to encompass No Mans Meadow, before turning southwards to

follow a linear drainage ditch which links the Lark to the River Linnet at the very south-east of the study area (the Linnet was known as the Maydewater until the 18<sup>th</sup> century). The boundary then returns downstream along the eastern bank of the Linnet, completing the encircling of No Mans Meadow, until it reaches a point just south of the intersection of the extant southern precinct boundary wall with the river. Here, the boundary turns west to parallel the line of the precinct wall across the area of the former Shire Hall car park and follows the southern wall of St Margaret's House and the Old Shire Hall (until 2016 the site of the Magistrates' Court), from whence it follows the northern side of Honey Hill until it reaches St Mary's church. The church marks the south-western corner of the study area, just as it marked the south-western corner of the monastic precinct in the past, and the boundary of the study area then turns northwards again to follow the eastern side of Crown Street, in front of the Norman Tower (also known as St James' Tower) and St Edmundsbury Cathedral, which both formed part of the western edge of the monastic precinct. The study area boundary then continues northwards as the road becomes Angel Hill, passes to the west of the Abbey Gate and the grassed areas which flank it, and returns to the point of origin at the north-western corner, outside 28 Angel Hill.

The study area incorporates the Abbey Gardens and ruins of the Abbey of St Edmund, St Edmundsbury Cathedral, St Mary's church and the Great Churchyard, as well as various institutional, commercial and residential properties within and adjacent to the monastic precinct, and land associated with the abbey to the south. There are consequently several large landowners and land-managing institutions represented within the study area, many of whom are part of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership. These include St Edmundsbury Borough Council, the Chapter of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, St Mary's Parochial Church Council, Suffolk County Council, the Diocesan Board of Education, and the Guildhall Feoffment Trustees, and the extent of their respective holdings have been mapped by the Heritage Partnership (Figure 3). These larger holdings are complemented by the holdings of numerous smaller private owners and occupiers, and, although these smaller properties are included in this Heritage Assessment, they will not form part of the subsequent Conservation Plan.



**Figure 3:** Map showing the key landowners and land-managers within the study area. (© Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675.)

## Topography

The study area lies in the bottom of the valley of the Rivers Lark and Linnet, which flow from south to north and have their modern confluence within the central part of the study area, although historically this lay further to the north, near to the Abbot's Bridge (Figure 1). The central corridor of the study area, including the area of No Mans Meadow to the south-east, is therefore very low-lying and sits within the floodplain. The ground height immediately adjacent to the footbridge which crosses the river near to the children's play area is recorded at 32.3m OD, with the surface of the water lying approximately 1m lower than this at around 31m OD.

To the east of the river, the ground rises relatively steeply and evenly until it reaches the crest of the slope, on which the A14 trunk road sits in a cutting. There is evidence for parts of this slope having been terraced to accommodate later buildings, and this has affected the underlying archaeological record. A spot height on the track which runs alongside the former St James' Middle School and forms the north-eastern boundary of the study area is recorded at 41.7m OD

To the west, the topography of the study area is more muted, the slope being much more gentle in this direction, and it is here that the majority of the conventual buildings of the abbey were constructed. The ground continues to rise to the west, so that much of the town of Bury St Edmunds sits higher than the monastic precinct itself. A spot-height in the centre of the road on Angel Hill, immediately outside the north-western corner of the study area records a ground height of 37.2m OD, while at the centre of the road in front of St Mary's church the ground height is 40.6m OD.

Given what we know of the later changes made to the ground surfaces within the western part of the study area, in terms of large building platforms being constructed for the abbey buildings, the redirection of the river channels and the subsequent build-up of post-Dissolution rubble, it is difficult to be sure of the natural profile of the slope, although it would seem that the gentle drop experienced along the line of Honey Hill and through the former Shire Hall car-park down to the edge of the river is broadly representative of the natural topography of the west bank.

In terms of modelling the topography of the study area, while some of the various editions of Ordnance Survey mapping include contour lines depicting the topography of the area, most of these are too widely spaced to provide anything more than a general impression of the lie of the land. Today, the most effective assessments of the topography of the study area are to be derived from LIDAR data, which uses laser-scanning from an aircraft to take very accurate and detailed measurements of the ground surface. Several different LIDAR datasets which include good coverage of the study area are freely available to download from the Environment Agency, via the government's Open Data Portal, the most detailed of which are the 1m-resolution Digital Terrain Model (DTM) and Digital Surface Model (DSM) tiles surveyed in 2009.<sup>15</sup> These data can be used to model the topography of the study area, with the DSM presenting the ground complete with surface features (buildings, trees, etc.) and the DTM presenting a digitally processed model of the ground in which surface features have been stripped away. In more rural areas, the DTM is usually the most useful dataset for archaeological purposes, but in more built-up areas, the computer processing required to remove dense clusters of buildings can result in misleading depictions of the ground surface. As the present study area is largely open ground, but surrounded by buildings and planted with trees, and because the ruins of the abbey buildings themselves are crucial to the interpretation of the site, the LIDAR-derived modelling presented here uses the DSM, which includes surface features.

Figure 4 depicts the Ordnance Survey base-mapping of the study area from Figure 1 draped over the LIDAR DSM model, which has then been processed to add a degree of shading to create a pseudo-3D effect. From this plot it is possible to discern the nature and relative heights of the buildings within the study area, as well as the trees and upstanding abbey ruins. A closer examination of the area of the monastic ruins in particular (Figure 5) enables greater detail to be ascertained of the local undulations in the topography of the site which result from the artificial raising of the ground level in the past and also from the archaeological excavations conducted on the site since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

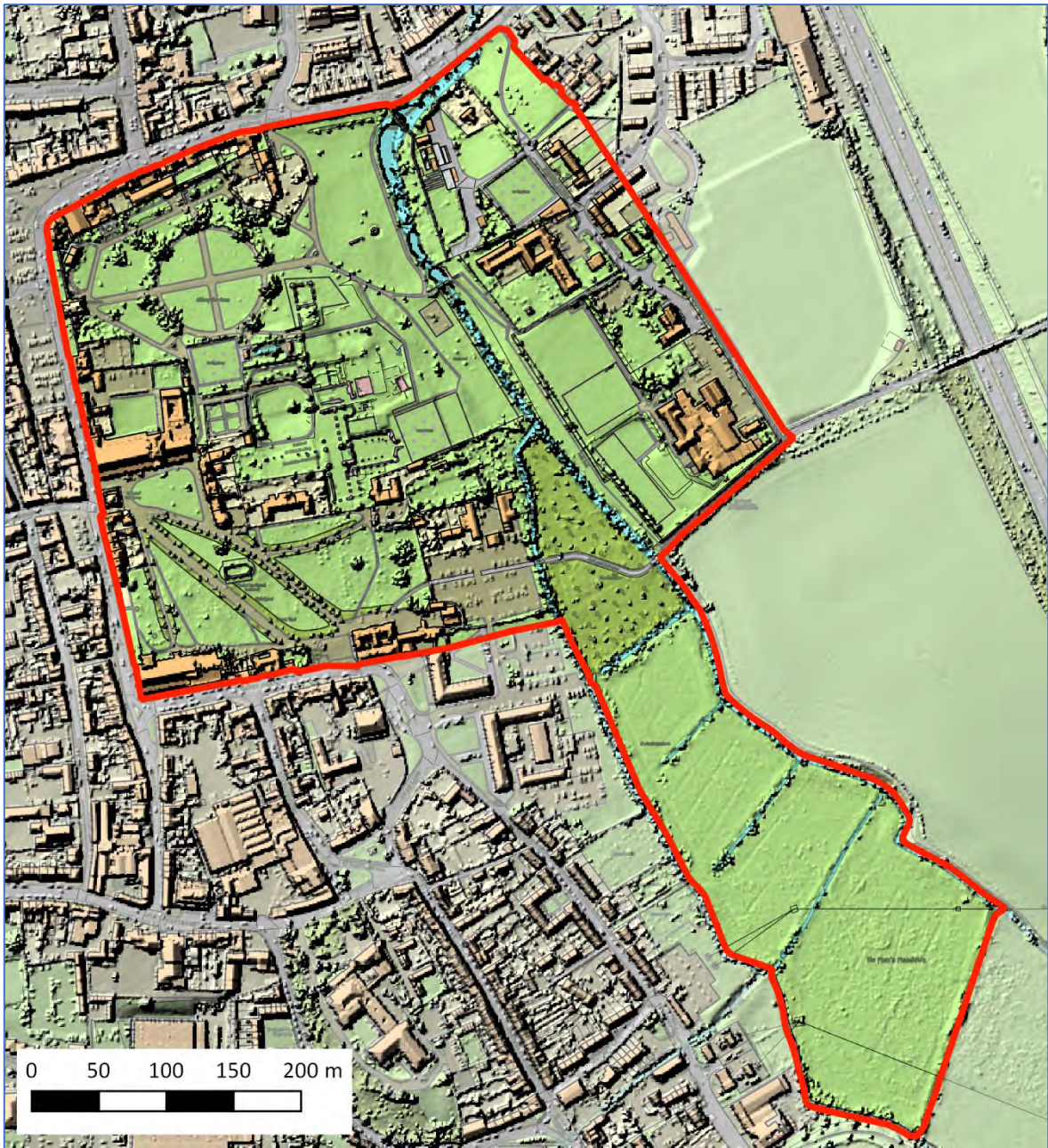
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<sup>15</sup> <https://environment.data.gov.uk/ds/survey/#/survey>



This view can also be rendered in 3D to give a clearer impression of the topography of the study area, as depicted from the south-east in Figure 6, and the vertical heights in this image have been exaggerated to emphasise the undulations of the ground surface. However, the best impression of the relative ground levels across the study area and the wider townscape can be obtained by the application of a false-colour spectrum spanning the lowest ground (dark blue) to the highest points of the tallest buildings (red), and the results are depicted in Figures 7 and 8. Such ground-surface models derived from LIDAR data are complemented in part by a more conventional topographic survey of the northern part of the study area which was undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service in 2009, as part of a suite of fieldwork aimed at assessing the archaeological potential of the Abbey Gardens (Gill 2009). The results of this survey are reproduced here as Figure 9, with contours depicting 20cm intervals and colour again being used to differentiate low ground (blue) from higher ground (red).

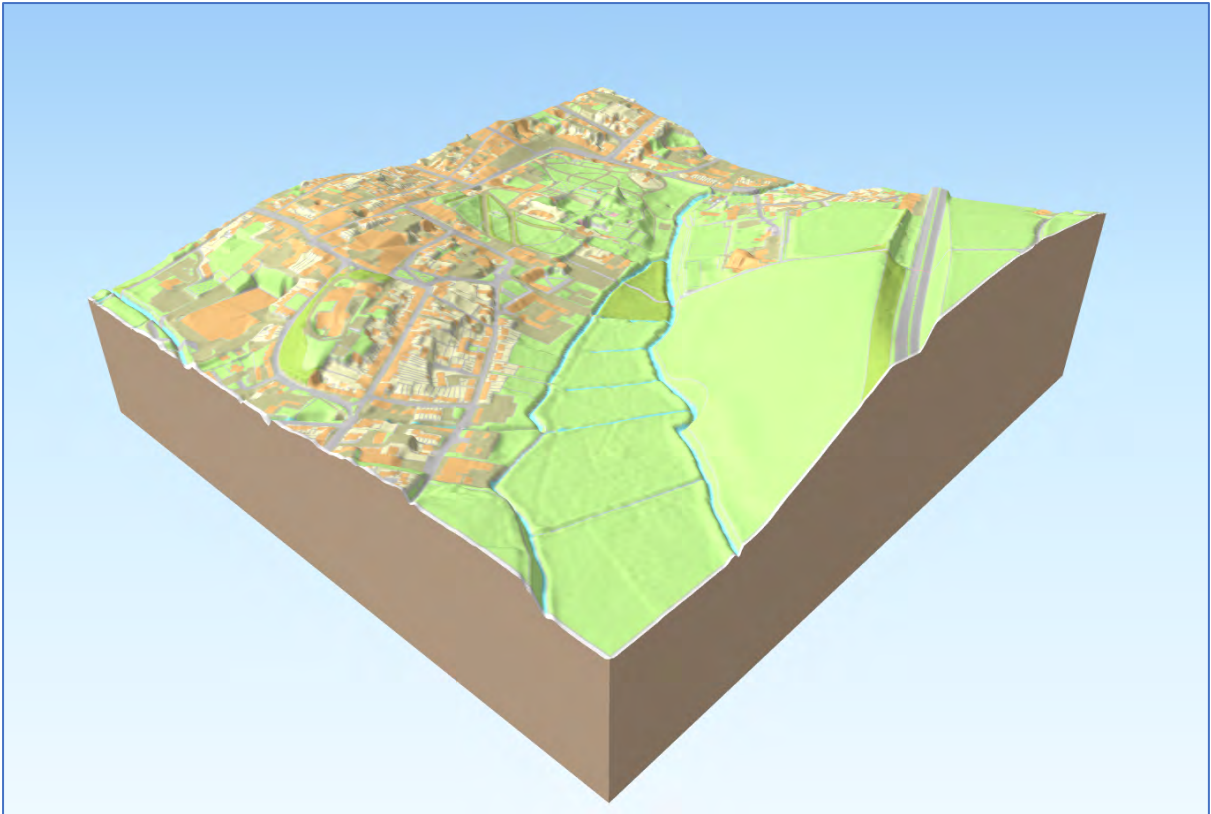
As can be seen from all of these images, there is a very clearly defined western edge to the floodplain of the rivers, which is marked by a steep section of river bank, and the majority of the monastic buildings are situated above this contour (approximately 34.2m OD).



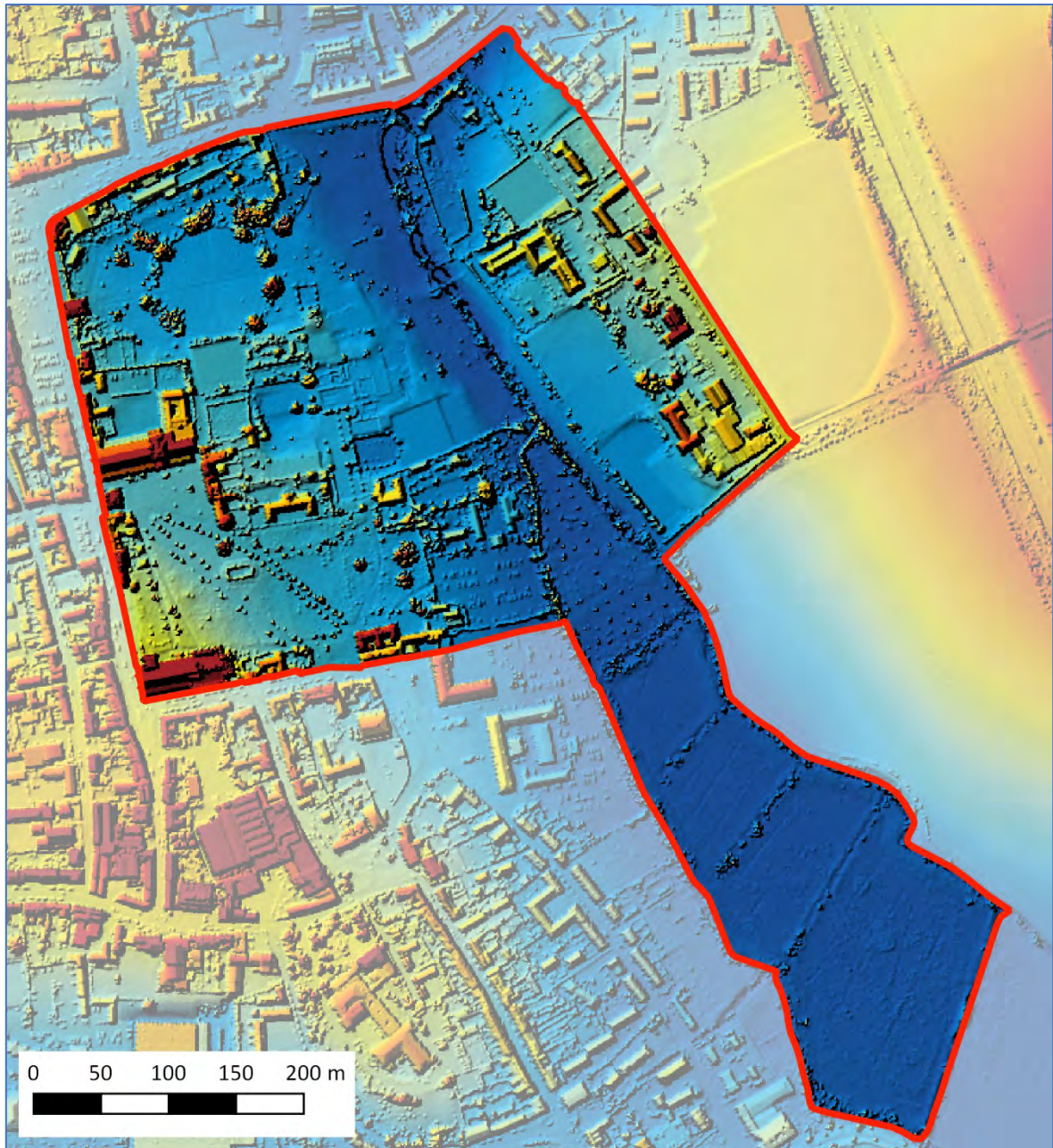
**Figure 4:** The Ordnance Survey base-mapping of the study area draped over the 1m-resolution LIDAR DSM. (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. LIDAR: Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015. All rights reserved.)



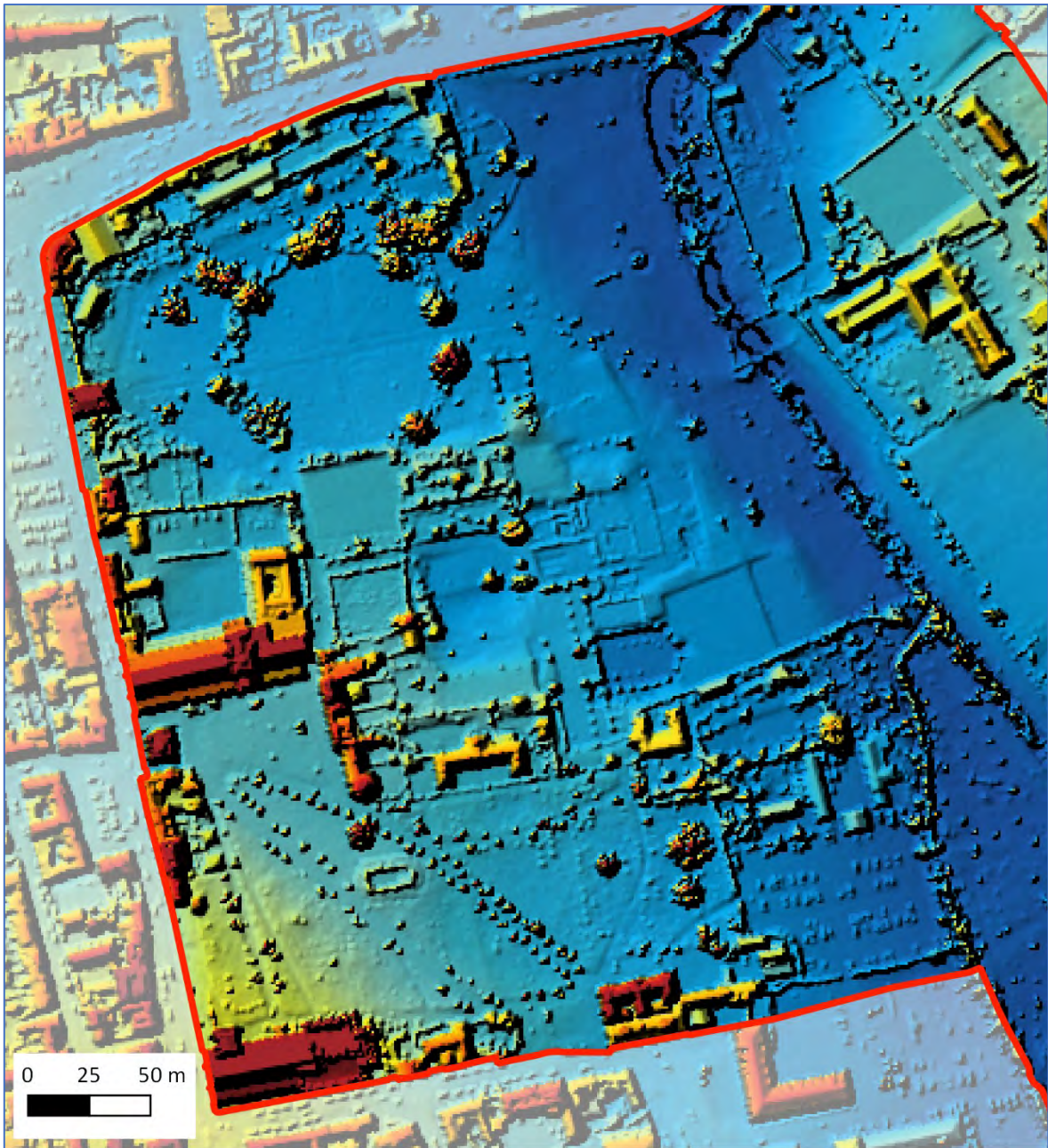
**Figure 5:** Detailed view of the Ordnance Survey base-mapping of the study area draped over the 1m-resolution LIDAR DSM, showing the area of the monastic ruins. (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. LIDAR: Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015. All rights reserved.)



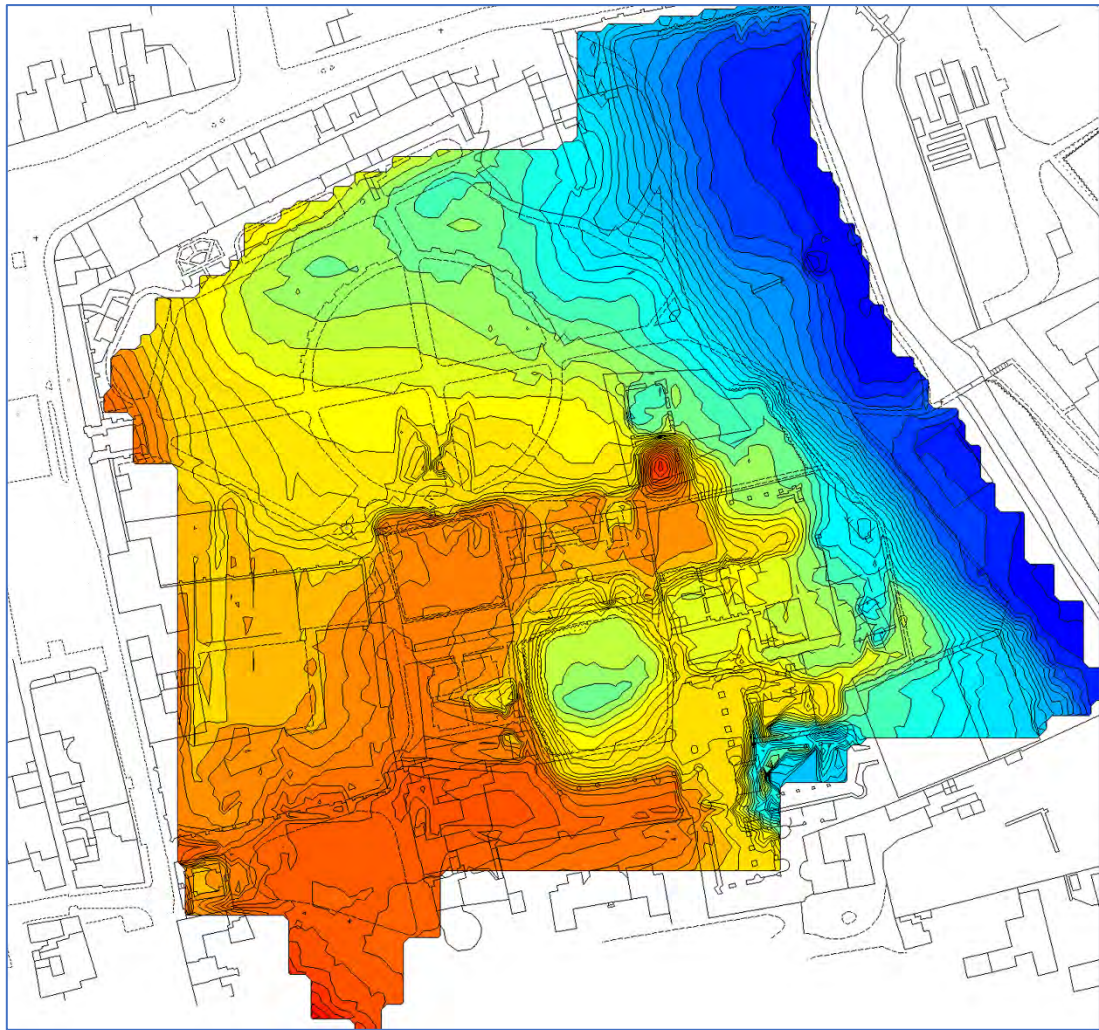
**Figure 6:** 3D view from the south-east of the Ordnance Survey base-mapping of the study area draped over the 1m-resolution LIDAR DSM. Note that the vertical heights have been exaggerated by  $\times 1.5$ . (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. LIDAR: Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015. All rights reserved.)



**Figure 7:** False-colour image mapping of the relative ground heights of the study area, derived from the 1m-resolution LIDAR DSM. Dark blue is the lowest ground and the highest points are red. (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. LIDAR: Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015. All rights reserved.)



**Figure 8:** Detailed view of the false-colour image mapping of the relative ground heights of the study area, derived from the 1m-resolution LIDAR DSM. Dark blue is the lowest ground and the highest points are red. (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. LIDAR: Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015. All rights reserved.)



**Figure 9:** Results of a topographic survey of the site of the monastic ruins undertaken by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service in July 2009 (Gill 2009a). Dark blue is the lowest ground and the highest points are red. (© Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service)

## Geology and Soils

Due to its largely open and undeveloped nature, the base geology and overlying soil-scape of the study area have been extensively sampled and are relatively well understood. As is the case in much of west Suffolk, the underlying solid geology of the study area is undifferentiated chalk bedrock, and this is overlain by superficial geological deposits of alluvium in the river corridor, and by head deposits and cover sand on the higher ground to the west.<sup>16</sup> There are two main soil associations present within the study area (Figure 10). The soils of the valley slopes to the east and west of the study areas belong to the Swaffham Prior soil association (0511e): well-drained calcareous coarse and fine loamy soils over chalk rubble.<sup>17</sup> The soil in the flat river corridor of the valley belongs to the Thames soil association (0814a): river alluvium comprising stone-less mainly calcareous clayey soils.<sup>18</sup> The relationship between the soil-scape and the topography can be best appreciated by draping the map in Figure 9 over the LIDAR DSM and viewing it in 3D, as is depicted in Figure 11.

The British Geological Survey records details of five geotechnical boreholes which have been sunk within the study area, although their use is a little limited by the fact that the depths recorded are given in feet/metres below the ground surface, rather than as heights above Ordnance Datum (Figure 12). Located at the very northern extent of the study area, BGS borehole TL86SE-183 'Eastgate Bridge No. 1' was sunk in 1974 and recorded made-up ground to a depth of 1.7m, overlying a layer of gravel which extended to a depth of 4.8m, beneath which was chalk bedrock.<sup>19</sup>

Two boreholes preceding the construction of the main outfall sewer which runs northwards across the site were sunk in 1955. Situated to the west bank of the Lark at the northern end of the study area, borehole TL86SE-4 'Main Outfall Sewer No. 24' recorded topsoil and loam to a depth of 1.8m, beneath which was a 0.6m band of clay, with black river mud from 2.4m to the bottom of the borehole at 3.7m. The

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<sup>16</sup> <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.landis.org.uk/services/soilsguide/mapunit.cfm?mu=51105>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.landis.org.uk/services/soilsguide/mapunit.cfm?mu=81401>

<sup>19</sup> [http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi\\_scans/boreholes/554073/images/12164113.html](http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi_scans/boreholes/554073/images/12164113.html)



water table was encountered 1.2m below the surface in this location.<sup>20</sup> The second sewer borehole, TL86SE-5 'Main Outfall Sewer No. 25', was situated further to the south, adjacent to the tennis courts, and revealed topsoil to a depth of 0.38m, beneath which was a clay soil with 'large flints and buried ruins' between 0.38m and 2.1m. Black river mud was encountered between 2.1m and 3.1m deep, with brown loam and peat between 3.1m and the bottom of the borehole at 4.2m. The water table was encountered at 2.8m.<sup>21</sup>

A pair of combined boreholes – TL86SE-268 'Abbey Gardens: Drift'<sup>22</sup> and TL86SE-269 'Abbey Gardens: Chalk'<sup>23</sup> – were sunk in 2002 at the south-eastern corner of the former Shire Hall car park, adjacent to the river (indicated on Figure 12 by the single point 'TL86SE-269'). The upper part of the borehole recorded the presence of a layer of sand and cobbles at a depth of approximately 2.5m, with gravel deposits to a depth of 15m, at which depth the top of the chalk was encountered.

All of these boreholes demonstrate that there is a substantial layer of topsoil present along the edges of the central river corridor, which overlays the buried riverine deposits in several places. This is in keeping with the historically understood geography and land-use of the site. It is also particularly interesting to note the presence of rubble layers within several of the boreholes, indicative of buried archaeological horizons, and these have been further confirmed by the many episodes of archaeological investigation which have taken place and which are discussed further in Section 6.

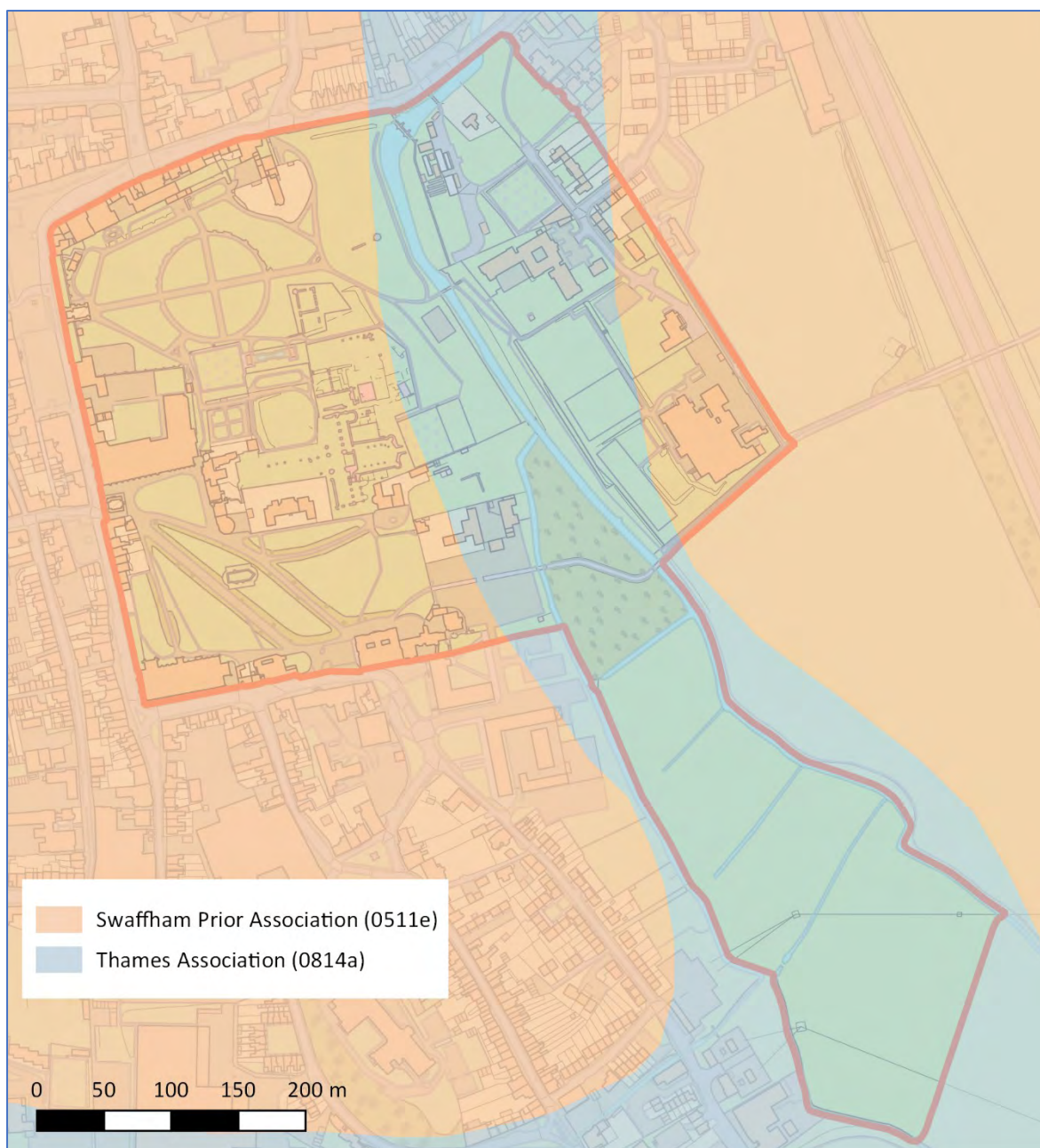
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<sup>20</sup> [http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi\\_scans/boreholes/553891/images/12163819.html](http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi_scans/boreholes/553891/images/12163819.html)

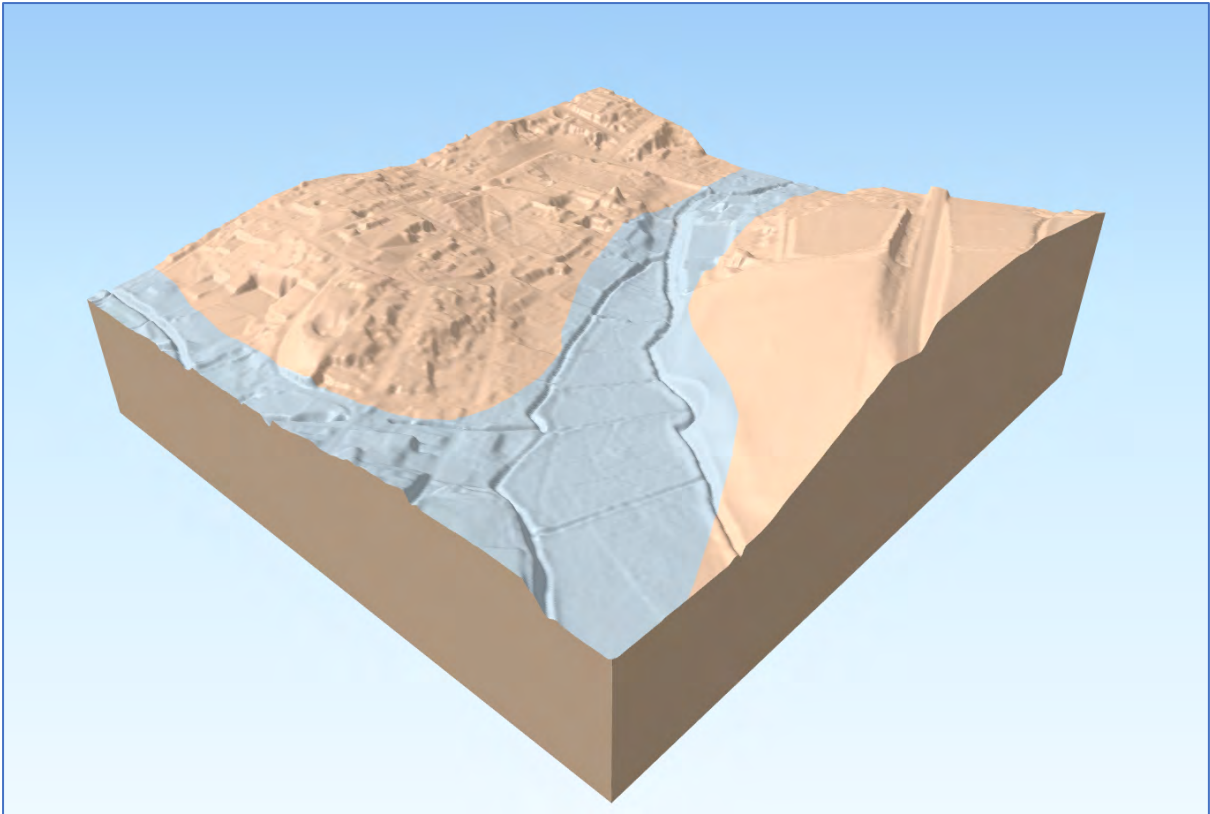
<sup>21</sup> [http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi\\_scans/boreholes/553892/images/12163820.html](http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi_scans/boreholes/553892/images/12163820.html)

<sup>22</sup> [http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi\\_scans/boreholes/17518503/images/17583705.html](http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi_scans/boreholes/17518503/images/17583705.html)

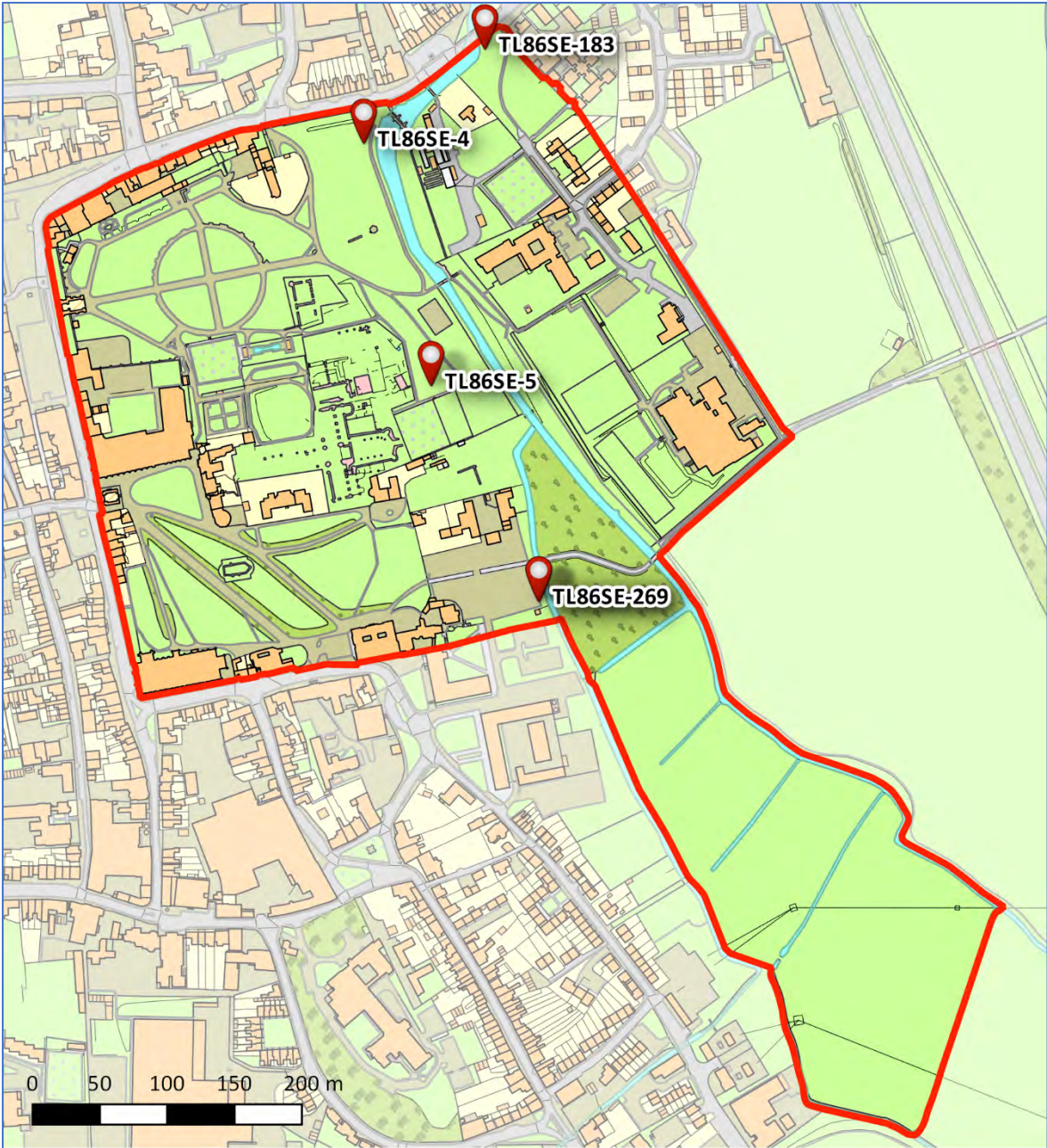
<sup>23</sup> [http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi\\_scans/boreholes/17518504/images/17583707.html](http://scans.bgs.ac.uk/sobi_scans/boreholes/17518504/images/17583707.html)



**Figure 10:** Map of the primary soil associations superimposed onto the Ordnance Survey base-mapping of the study area. (Soils data after LandIS. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675.)



**Figure 11:** 3D view from the south-east of the primary soil associations superimposed onto the Ordnance Survey base-mapping of the study area draped over the 1m-resolution LIDAR DSM. Note that the vertical heights have been exaggerated by x1.5. (Soils data after LandIS. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. LIDAR: Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015. All rights reserved.)



**Figure 12:** Map showing the location of geotechnical boreholes within and around the study area recorded by the British Geological Survey. (Based upon records provided by British Geological Survey (NERC). Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675.)

## Landscape Character Areas

In addition to the geological and soil-scape classifications of the site, a number of different agencies have assessed the current and historic landscape character of the wider environment within which the study area is situated. The site falls within 'Area 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands' of the Natural England Natural Character Areas,<sup>24</sup> but is flanked to the east by 'Area 83: South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands'<sup>25</sup> and to the north by 'Area 85: The Brecks'.<sup>26</sup> These are large, national character areas, and as such are limited in their usefulness for detailed analyses such as that presented here. A more localised analysis of landscape character was undertaken for the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment, although this assessment primarily focussed on the rural landscape and, as such, the whole of Bury St Edmunds was simply classified as 'Urban (Area 25)', including the study area.<sup>27</sup>

Greater subtlety was achieved by the Suffolk Historic Landscape Characterisation project, completed in 2008, which also mapped and classified the majority of the study area as a 'Built-up Area', reflecting the nature of the surrounding development rather than the specific character of the study area, but which also identified the low-lying areas of valley bottom to the south-east of the study area as 'Meadow or Managed Wetland', which usage is supported by the surviving historical documents pertaining to the site (Figure 13).<sup>28</sup>

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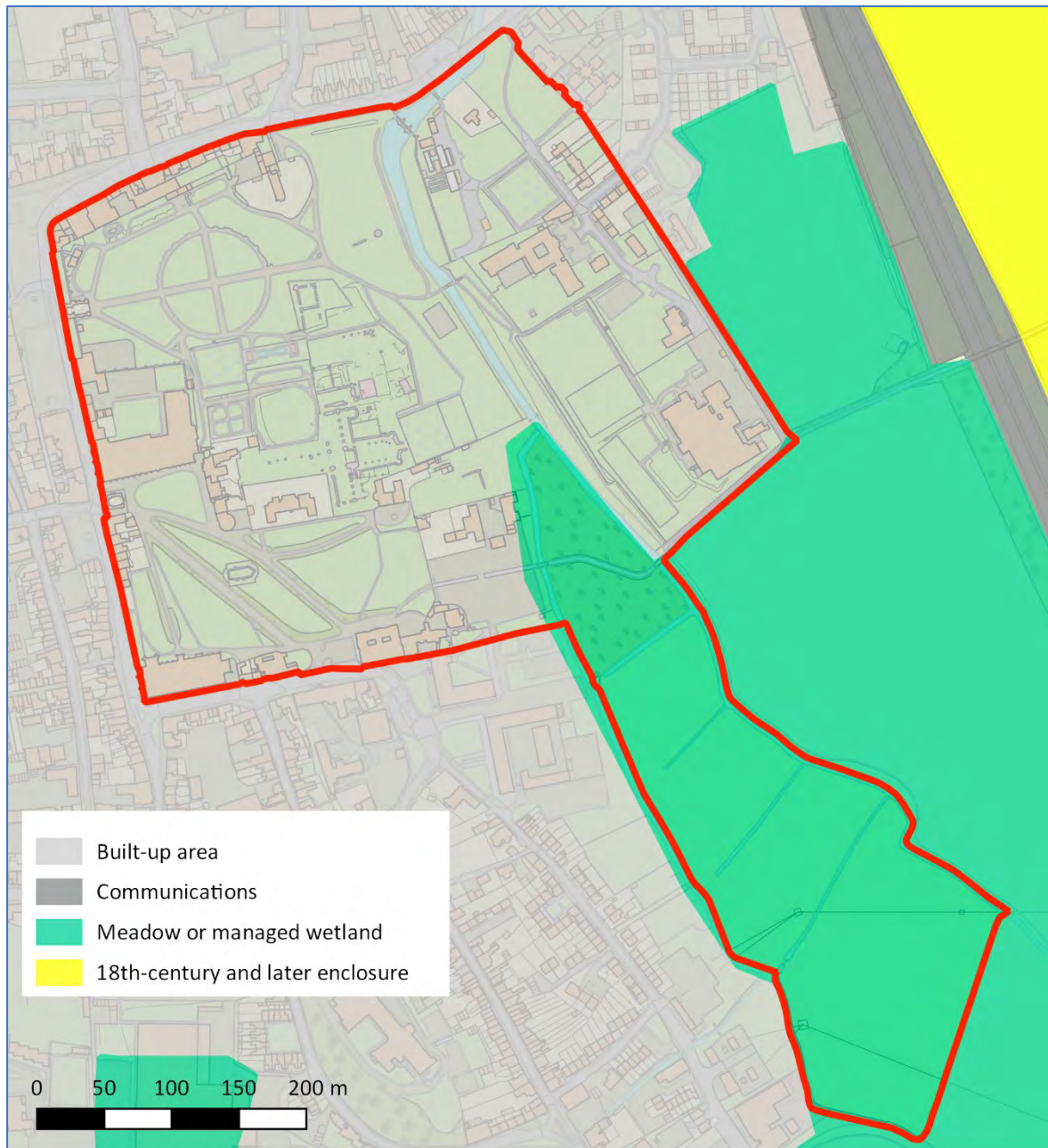
<sup>24</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5095677797335040>

<sup>25</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6106120561098752>

<sup>26</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4282581>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/hlc>



**Figure 13:** Extract from the Suffolk Historic Landscape Characterisation map categories superimposed onto the Ordnance Survey base-mapping of the study area.(HLC data © Suffolk County Council. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675.)

## Sub-Areas

Although unified by its former function as a monastic precinct, the study area encompasses a range of different landscape types and functional zones, which makes a universal approach to its assessment, interpretation and management difficult. This diversity is, in part, a reflection of the multiple uses to which areas of the precinct were put, and the site has become increasingly diverse during the post-Dissolution period. In order to address this problem, as part of the project development process the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership divided the study area into a series of 15 geographically- and/or functionally-linked Sub-Areas. These Sub-Areas are illustrated in Figure 14 and described below, and form the basis of the analyses of archaeological potential and susceptibility which are presented in the conclusion of this report. It is anticipated that the Sub-Areas will also form the basis of the forthcoming Conservation Plan, and they may be subject to modification as part of the development of the Plan.

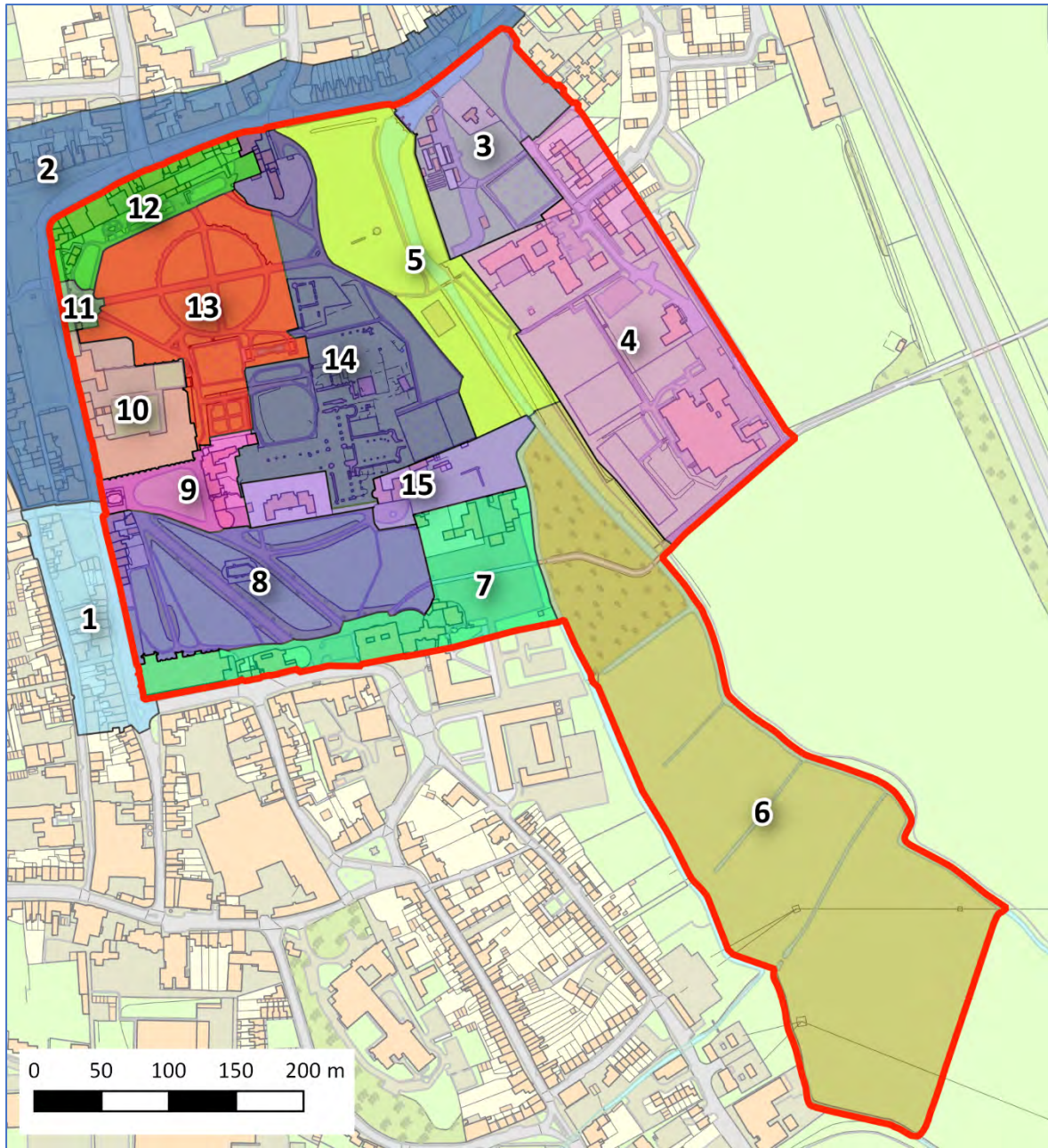
In numerical order, the Sub-Areas are:

- 1) **Churchgate Street & Crown Street:** The formal and ceremonial approach to the Abbey of St Edmund, the former St James' parish church and the surviving St Mary's parish church.
- 2) **Angel Hill & Mustow Street:** The main market place and arrival area for pilgrims and tradespeople to the old abbey and for present day visitors to the town centre and the Abbey of St Edmund.
- 3) **Abbey Industries:** The currently derelict Eastgate Nursery area included tanning and other industries in the medieval period next to the River Lark but just outside the Abbey wall and the Abbot's Bridge.
- 4) **Abbey Vineyards:** The area of the former abbey Vineyards overlooks the abbey ruins from the east and is now devoted to a variety of residential and institutional uses with footpath links into the Abbey Gardens.
- 5) **River Lark Valley Floor:** The valley floor of the River Lark within the Abbey Gardens once included the separate streams of the River Lark and the River Linnet which served a water mill near the remains of the old dovecote and joined near the Abbot's Bridge.

- 6) **River Lark Water Meadows:** The present confluence is fed by the River Linnet which rises to the south west at Ickworth Park and the River Lark which rises to the south east near Bradfield St George.
- 7) **St Mary's Church & Honey Hill:** St Mary's remains as one of the original parish churches within the abbey precinct whilst the former St James' parish church has become St Edmundsbury Cathedral.
- 8) **The Great Churchyard:** The Great Churchyard has significant environmental and historic interest and it is a through route mainly for local pedestrians and vehicular access to the Cathedral and the Cathedral residences.
- 9) **Norman Tower & West Front:** The Norman Tower marks the formal and ceremonial entrance to the old Abbey and it also houses the bells of the present Cathedral.
- 10) **St Edmundsbury Cathedral:** St James' parish church became the Cathedral for the new Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, established in 1914.
- 11) **The Abbey Gateway:** The Abbey Gateway is the main entrance for visitors to the Abbey Gardens from Angel Hill and it is a memorable counterpart to the Norman Tower.
- 12) **Abbey Gardens Facilities:** There is a range of facilities along the inner side of the old abbey wall on the north side of the Abbey Gardens.
- 13) **Formal Gardens & Amenity Area:** The famous central circular flower beds are the centrepiece of the formal gardens that began as the Botanic Gardens that were created in 1820.
- 14) **Abbey Ruins:** The famous ruins of the old abbey including the remains of the central piers at the crossing and an extensive network of flint and mortar walls provide an evocative image of the glories and long history of the medieval Benedictine Abbey of St Edmund.
- 15) **Cathedral Residences:** The historic Deanery and the residences of clergy in the abbey precincts are an important central feature of the whole area between the Cathedral, the abbey ruins, the River Lark valley floor and the Great Churchyard.

As is apparent even from these short summaries, there is a large number of historic buildings and structures within the study area, many of which are already formally designated as Heritage Assets, and these form the subject of the next section.





**Figure 14:** The Sub-Areas of the Project Area. 1) Churchgate Street & Crown Street; 2) Angel Hill & Mustow Street; 3) Abbey Industries; 4) Abbey Vineyards; 5) River Lark Valley Floor; 6) River Lark Water Meadows; 7) St Mary's Church & Honey Hill; 8) The Great Churchyard; 9) Norman Tower & West Front; 10) St Edmundsbury Cathedral; 11) The Abbey Gateway; 12) Abbey Gardens Facilities; 13) Formal Gardens & Amenity Area; 14) Abbey Ruins; 15) Cathedral Residences. (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675.)

## 4. Heritage Assets

As a large and complex heritage site situated within the heart of a medieval market town, it is perhaps not surprising that the study area contains a very high concentration of Designated Heritage Assets. These are features and structures which have been identified as being of national significance because of their archaeological, architectural and/or historical importance and their designations give them differing degrees of protection within the planning process and the wider legal system. Details are held in the National Heritage List for England (NHLE),<sup>29</sup> which is maintained by Historic England on behalf of the Secretary of State and is the official register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England.

The study area contains Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and a Registered Park and Garden, as well as partially lying within the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Conservation Area. The structures and areas of the site which fall into each of these categories are summarised here in turn, and links are provided to the full descriptions of each designation which are to be found online and need not be reproduced here. The mapping of these sites is derived from a GIS download of the extent of these designations which was obtained on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to Designated Heritage Assets, there is a second category of Non-Designated Heritage Assets, which are defined as buildings, monuments or areas or landscapes having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated.<sup>31</sup> Under the terms of the NPPF, Non-Designated Heritage Assets demonstrated to be of equivalent significance to Designated Heritage Assets can be treated as though they are also designated, although in practice most are of lesser heritage significance. The primary source for Non-Designated Heritage Assets is the Suffolk Historic Environment Record and this section concludes with a consideration of the HER data for the Study Area.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

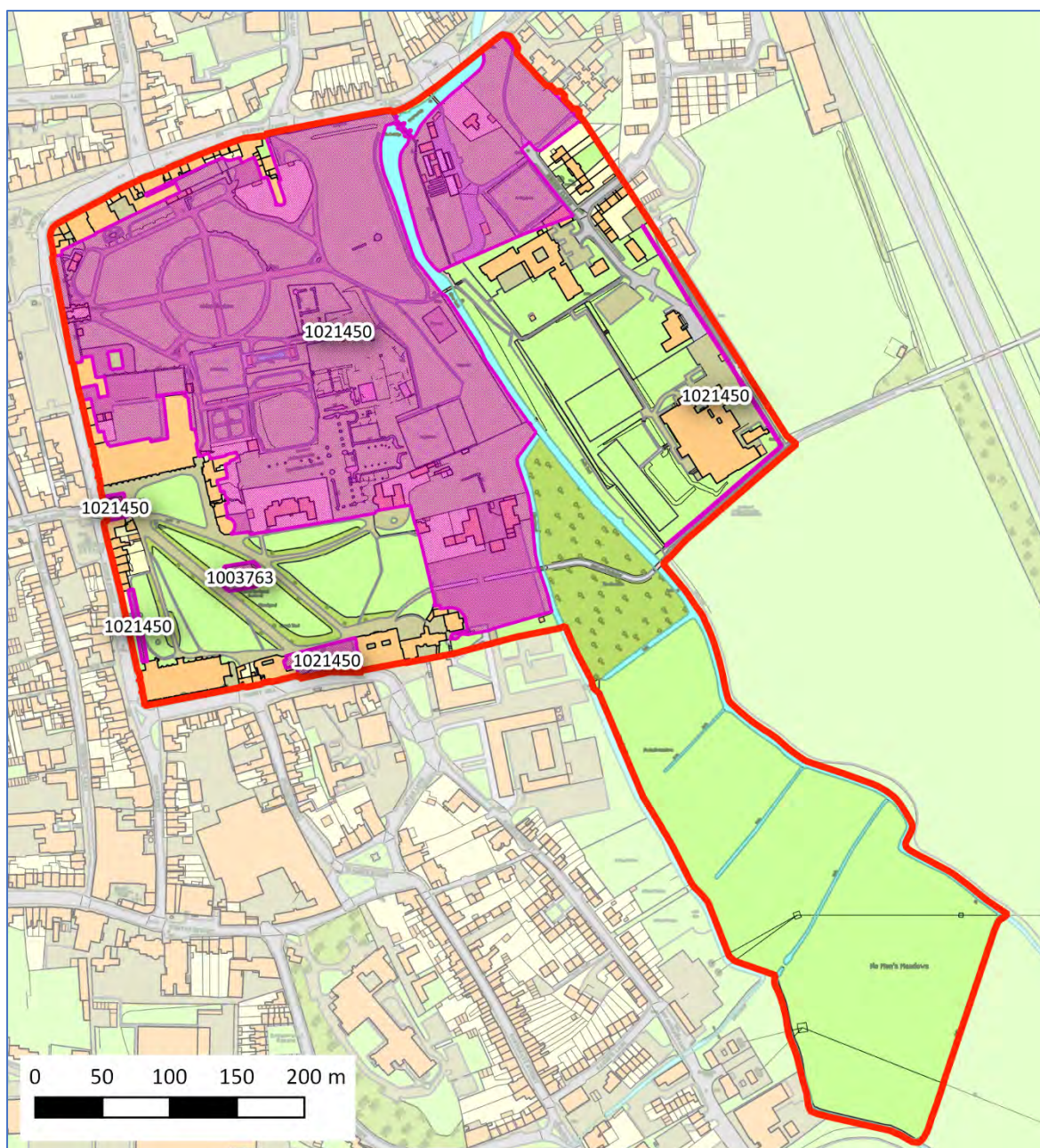
<sup>30</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/data-downloads/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment#non-designated-heritage-assets>

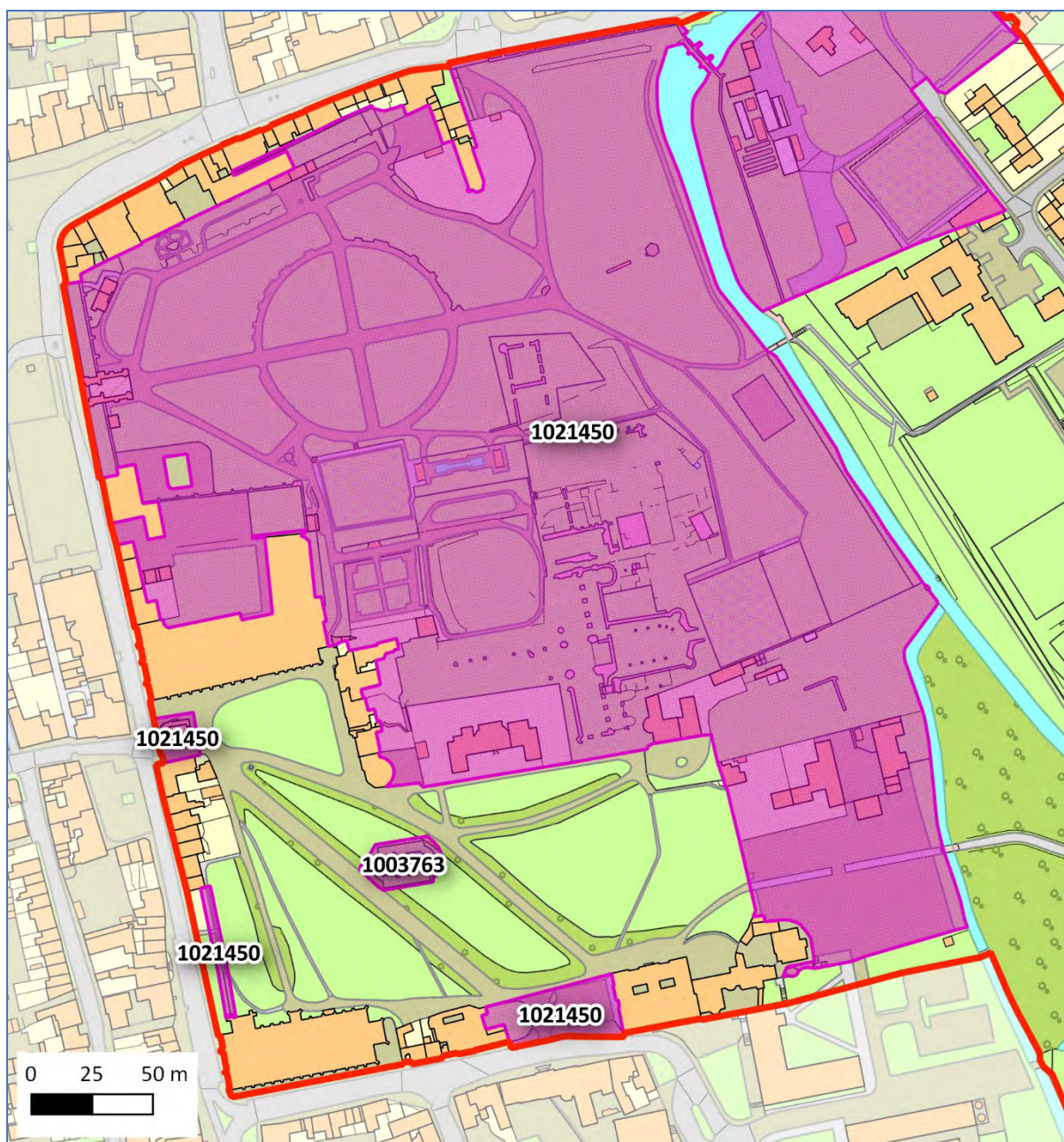
## Scheduled Monuments

An archaeological site or historic building of national importance can be designated as a Scheduled Monument under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979). There are two Scheduled Monuments within the study area, although one of them is split into several non-contiguous areas (Figure 15). The first pertains to the Chapel of the Charnel ([List Entry Number 1003763](#)), which stands in the centre of the Great Churchyard and was scheduled in the 1940s in response to proposals to remove the railings which surround the monument. The second, larger Scheduled Monument relates to the wider site of the Abbey of St Edmund ([List Entry Number 1021450](#)). The scheduling is intended to provide protection for all the buried and upstanding remains of the Abbey of St Edmund, and for archaeological evidence of the earlier Anglo-Saxon settlement and early medieval town which may lie beneath. As can be seen in Figure 15, the majority of the scheduled area comprises large blocks of open land on the west and east of the river, linked by the Abbot's Bridge. There are, however, a number of outlying areas which also belong to the same scheduled area and this non-contiguous nature is a reflection of the later development and disturbance which has occurred within the abbey precinct.

A more detailed look at the scheduled area (Figure 16) demonstrates that, while the heavily disturbed area of the Great Churchyard is not included in the scheduling, the area around the Norman Tower (St James' Tower) is included, as is the footprint of the stretch of precinct wall which extended northwards from St Mary's church towards the tower, and the area of the former St Margaret's Gate, which stood on the southern boundary of the study area fronting onto Honey Hill and gave access to the southern part of the precinct. A further scheduled area on the eastern side of the river (Figure 15) protects stretches of the precinct boundary wall which survive amongst the later buildings on the site.



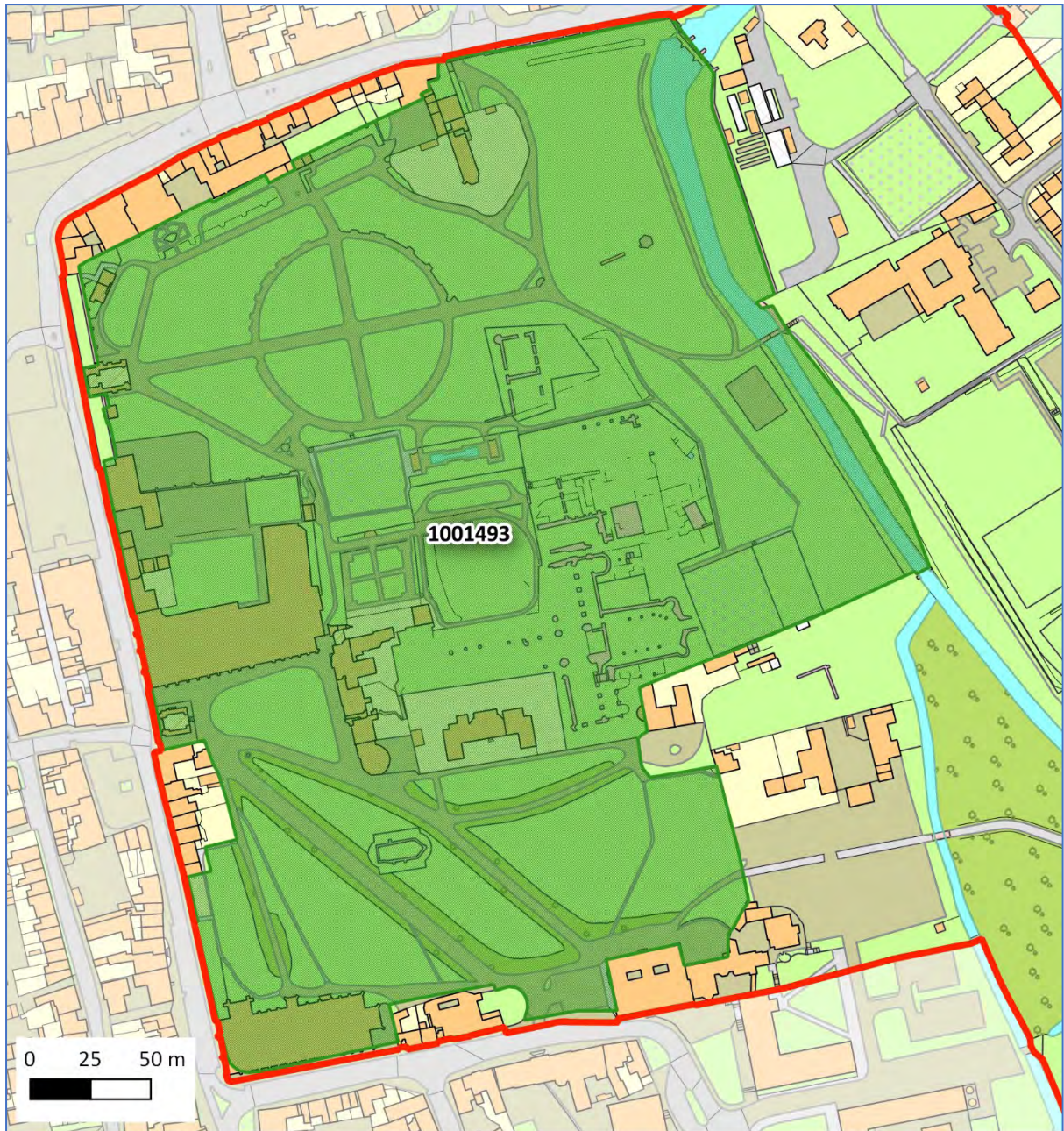
**Figure 15:** Map of the Scheduled Monuments within the study area. (© Historic England 2017. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. The Historic England GIS Data contained in this material was obtained on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk).)



**Figure 16:** Close-up view of the Scheduled Monuments within the northern part of the study area.(© Historic England 2017. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. The Historic England GIS Data contained in this material was obtained on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk).)

## Registered Parks and Gardens

Although the Great Churchyard is not included in the Scheduled Monument, it does lie completely within the Grade II Registered Park and Garden referred to as the 'Abbey Gardens and Precincts' ([List Entry Number 1001493](#)), which was registered in 2001 and the area of which is depicted in Figure 17. This designation specifically relates to the area of the current Abbey Gardens and associated public open spaces, which are based upon the botanic gardens laid out on the site in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see below) and the incorporated monastic ruins and later buildings. Because this designation concerns the park as it is now, unlike scheduling, its applicability is not affected by previous disturbance which may have occurred on the site.



**Figure 17:** Map showing the extent of the Registered Park and Garden within the northern part of the study area. (© Historic England 2017. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. The Historic England GIS Data contained in this material was obtained on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk).)

## Listed Buildings

Legislation pertaining to buildings and areas of special architectural and historic interest is contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Under the act, historic buildings and structures can be designated as Listed Buildings at one of three grades. These are:

- Grade I Buildings of exceptional interest (2.5% nationally)
- Grade II\* Particularly important buildings of more than special interest (5.8% nationally)
- Grade II Buildings of special interest (91.7% nationally)

Listed building data is provided by Historic England, but only as point data, so for the purposes of this analysis, a polygonised dataset provided by St Edmundsbury Borough Council has been used to visually represent the listed structures. There are 139 Listed Buildings within the study area, and these are shown colour-coded by Grade in Figure 16 and are discussed in turn in the following sections.

### *Grade I Listed Buildings*

There are 21 Grade I Listed Buildings within the study area (Figure 18), and these can be subdivided into a number of different categories.

### *Precinct Boundary and Gates*

Twelve of the Grade I listed structures pertain to elements of the precinct boundary wall, which survives in long stretches around large parts of the study area, along with the gatehouses and attendant churches which also form a part of the perimeter circuit. These entries are given here, beginning with that for the Abbey Gate and Gatehouse and proceeding around the perimeter of the precinct in a clockwise direction.

- Abbey Gate and Gatehouse ([List Entry Number 1375545](#))
- Precinct Wall to north of the Abbey Gate ([List Entry Number 1375546](#))
- North Wall of Great Court of the Abbey ([List Entry Number 1375553](#))
- Precinct Wall to the north of the former Abbey of St Edmund ([List Entry Number 1375548](#))
- Abbot's Bridge and adjoining east precinct wall ([List Entry Number 1375552](#))



- Wall to the east of the former Abbey Vineyard ([List Entry Number 1375551](#))
- Precinct wall of former Vineyard along north side of Kevelaer Way ([List Entry Number 1375550](#))
- Precinct wall on south to east of Shire Hall ([List Entry Number 1375549](#))
- Church of St Mary and attached wall and railings ([List Entry Number 1342765](#))
- Norman Tower ([List Entry Number 1375555](#))
- Cathedral Church of St James ([List Entry Number 1377001](#))
- Precinct wall to south of the Abbey Gate ([List Entry Number 1375547](#))

The details of the precinct boundaries and other structures are recorded and considered in more detail in the relevant section below.

### Ruins of the Abbey

Seven of the Grade I listings pertain to the ruins of the internal structures within the abbey precinct, including the ruins of the abbey church itself, and groups of upstanding masonry surrounding it. These ruins are freestanding and not contiguous, and although there is some logic underpinning their grouping, some of the elements which have been collected together are a little arbitrary.

- Numbers 1, 1a, 2 and 3 West Front and Samson's Tower ([List Entry Number 1375539](#))
- Ruins of Abbey Church of St Edmund ([List Entry Number 1375540](#))
- Ruins east and north of Abbey Church ([List Entry Number 1375541](#))
- Ruins to north of the Cloister ([List Entry Number 1375542](#))
- Ruins of Hall of Pleas and south west of Great Court ([List Entry Number 1375543](#))
- Ruins of Abbey dovecote and part of wall ([List Entry Number 1375544](#))
- Ruins of the chapel of the Charnel ([List Entry Number 1375556](#))

### Later buildings

Two Grade I listings relate to later properties constructed within the grounds of the abbey precinct.

- Alwyne House and Alwyne Cottage ([List Entry Number 1375554](#))

- Provost's House (now the Deanery) and No. 4 Churchyard (Clopton Cottage) ([List Entry Number 1375558](#))

### *Grade II\* Listed Buildings*

There are three Grade II\* listed buildings within the study area (Figure 18), all of them later properties constructed within the grounds of the abbey precinct.

- Abbey House ([List Entry Number 1141178](#))
- 31, 32 and 33 Angel Hill ([List Entry Number 1141179](#))
- St Margaret's House ([List Entry Number 1375562](#))

### *Grade II Listed Buildings*

There are 115 Grade II listed buildings within the study area (Figure 18), which break down into two categories: buildings which stand on or near the precinct boundary, and monuments and memorials which stand within the precinct and the great churchyard.

### *Buildings*

Most of the Grade II listed buildings stand on or near to the precinct boundary. From west to east along the northern edge of the precinct, fronting onto Angel Hill and Mustow Street these buildings are:

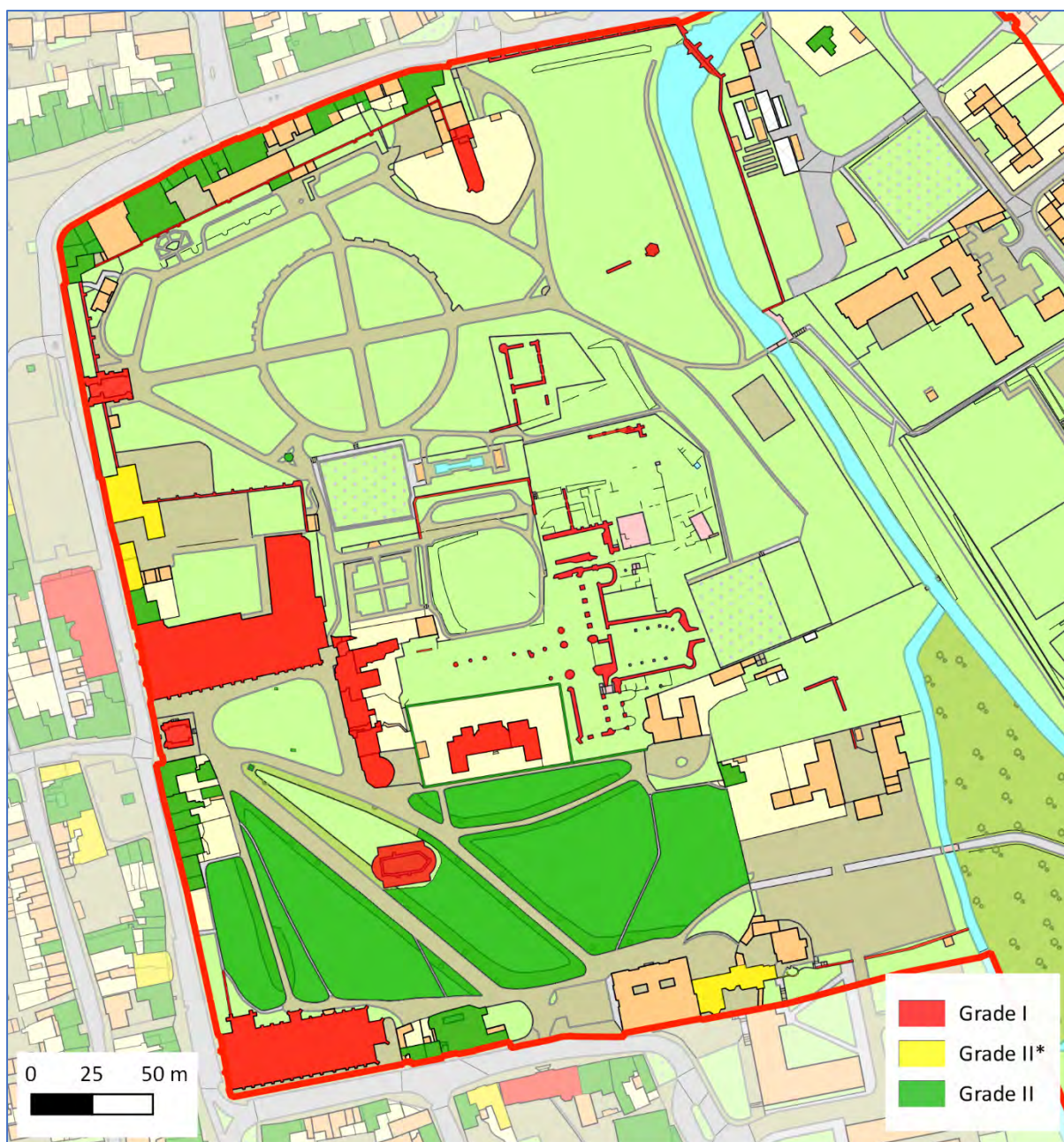
- Sworders ([List Entry Number 1141177](#))
- Crescent House ([List Entry Number 1141176](#))
- The One Bull Public House ([List Entry Number 1141173](#))
- Richard Green and Partners ([List Entry Number 1141171](#))
- 24 Angel Hill ([List Entry Number 1141170](#))
- 22, 22a, 23 and 23a Angel Hill ([List Entry Number 1141169](#))
- 19, 19a and 21 Angel Hill ([List Entry Number 1141168](#))
- 26, 28 and 29 Mustow Street ([List Entry Number 1022602](#))
- Lark House ([List Entry Number 1022601](#))
- Eastgate Cottage ([List Entry Number 1343603](#))
- Garden wall to 1 and 2 Churchyard ([List Entry Number 1375560](#))

## Memorials and Monuments

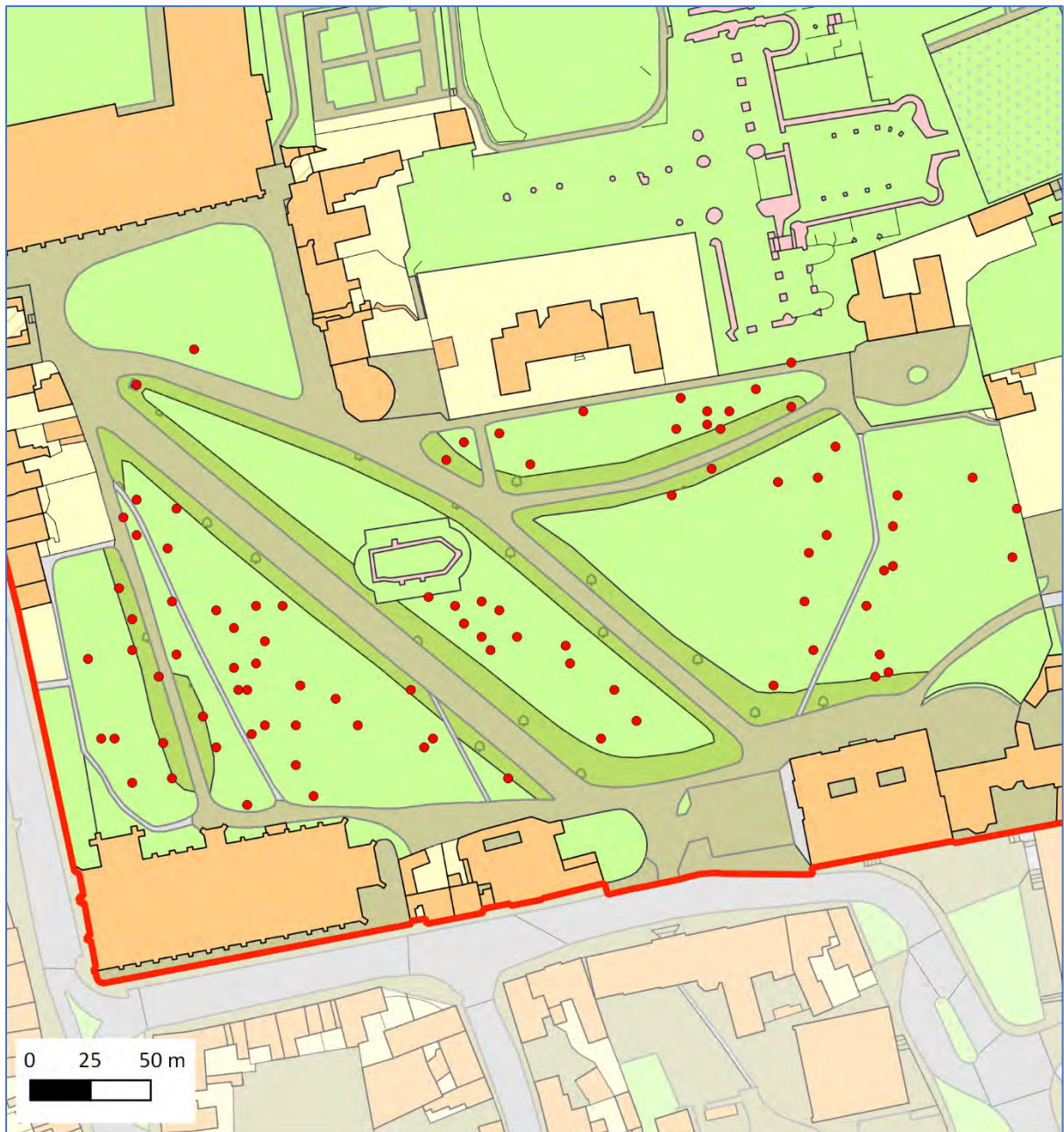
The remainder of the Grade II listed buildings within the study area relate to memorials and monuments, the vast majority of which are gravestones and memorials in the Great Churchyard. Given the quantity and density of these listings, and the fact that some relate to single stones and others to groups of monuments, not all of which stand in close proximity to each other, these listings have been amalgamated into larger areas on the GIS used by St Edmundsbury Borough Council (Figure 16). Similarly, it is not considered appropriate to cite or illustrate all of the individual listings here (although they are listed in Appendix II), and their general locations are plotted in Figure 19. Additional details and photographs of the relevant monuments can be accessed via the Heritage List for England website.

Two of the Grade II listed structures are worthy of specific mention, the former standing in the Great Churchyard and the latter standing in the Abbey Gardens. They are:

- Martyrs' memorial ([List Entry Number 1375565](#))
- Drinking Fountain and Sundial ([List Entry Number 1245038](#))



**Figure 18:** Map showing the listed buildings within the study area, colour-coded by grade. (© St Edmundsbury Borough Council. © Historic England 2017. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. The Historic England GIS Data contained in this material was obtained on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk).)



**Figure 19:** Close-up view showing the locations of the Grade II listed memorials within the Great Churchyard. (© Historic England 2017. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. The Historic England GIS Data contained in this material was obtained on 17th December 2017. The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk).)

## Conservation Area

The majority of the study area also lies within the boundary of the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Conservation Area, which was originally designated in January 1973 and revised in September 2012 (Figure 20).<sup>32</sup> The special character of the Conservation Area is summarised thus:

*The town centre of Bury St Edmunds includes a Norman grid of streets and spaces which has survived intact and is still very evident today. To the east is the Abbey Precinct, which contains the cathedral church of St James, St Mary's church and the remains of the great abbey, and provides a peaceful and green contrast to the densely built up streets. Historically, development continued out towards the five town gates and then to the north of the town centre, adding to the wealth of historic buildings. The overall quality of the buildings is exceptional, with hundreds of listed buildings reflecting this. The combination of residential, commercial and religious uses in the town centre makes it a vibrant and lively place with a special character derived from this.*

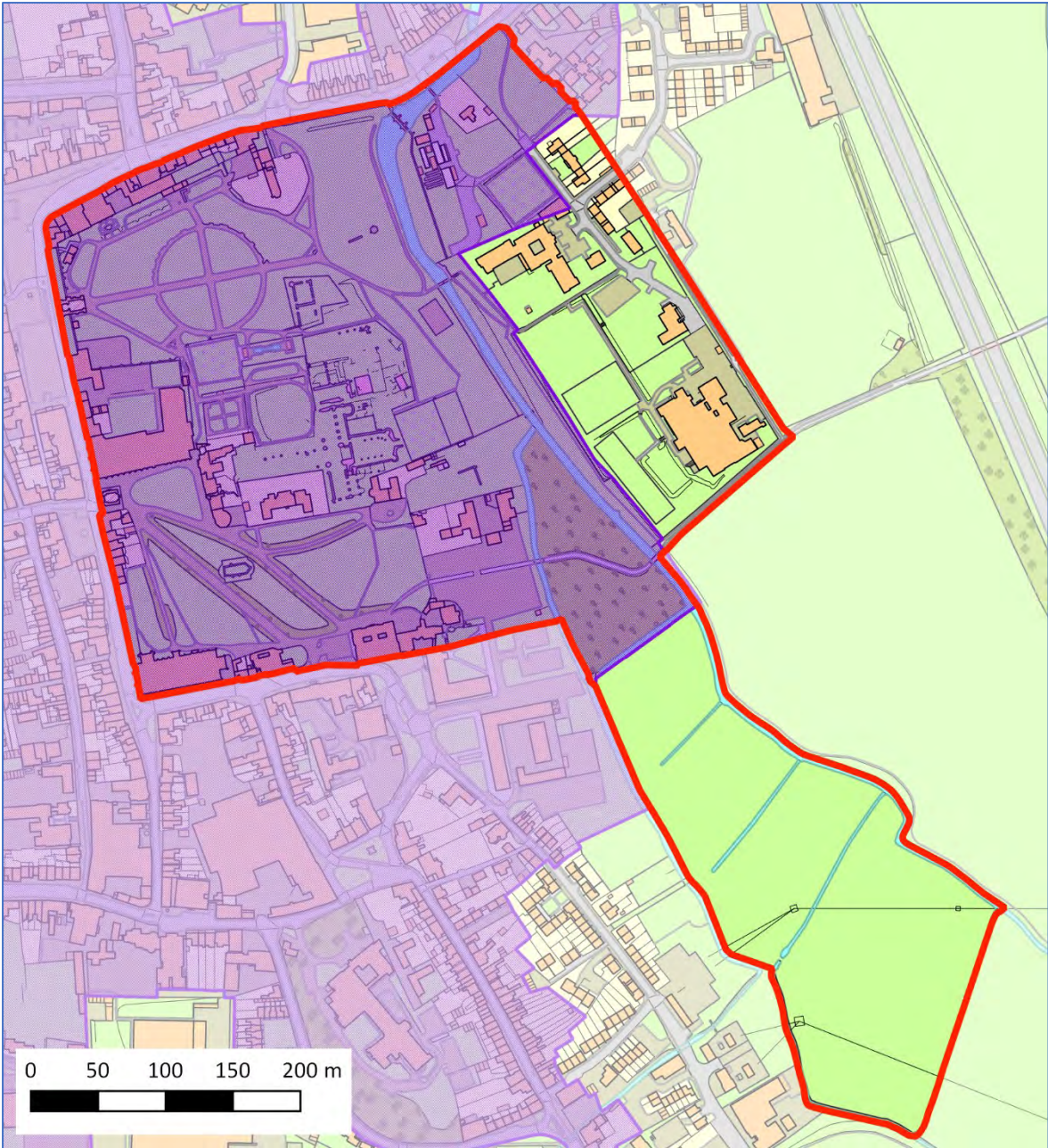
*Despite the strong Georgian influence, a rich mix of traditional building forms and materials are apparent throughout the conservation area giving interesting and varied streets. The mix of uses, building styles and materials combined with the visible history of the town give the conservation area its special interest which must be protected. (St Edmundsbury Borough Council 2007)*

From this statement, it is clear that the former monastic precinct and its later reincarnation as the Abbey Gardens, and the complex and contrasting relationship between the openness of the precinct and the town, are of fundamental importance to the special character and heritage of the area. More detailed exploration of these themes lies beyond the scope of this report, but will be developed further in the subsequent Conservation Plan.

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<sup>32</sup>

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/Conservation/seconservationareasandappraisals.cfm>



**Figure 20:** Map showing the extent of the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Conservation Area within the study area. (© St Edmundsbury Borough Council. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675.)

## Suffolk Historic Environment Record

The Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER), formerly the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), is the definitive database of known archaeological sites in the county. It is maintained by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service. The HER comprises a digital database containing textual data linked to digital mapping and supported by a large digital and paper archive of archaeological reports and other sources. The data in the Suffolk HER is divided into three main categories: 'Events' recording the nature and extent of the various episodes of fieldwork which have taken place in the past; 'Monuments' recording the character and date of archaeological or architectural features visible above ground or identified during fieldwork; and 'Sources' recording details of the reports, articles, notes and other sources which provide information about 'Events' and 'Monuments'.

A data export of records held in the Suffolk HER pertaining to the Study Area was obtained on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Details of 40 archaeological 'Events' were recorded within the study area, ranging from relatively minor watching briefs to large set-piece excavations, with 66 Monument records describing the results obtained from this fieldwork and other observations. Details of these records are listed in Appendix III and overview maps of the Events and Monuments are presented here as Figures 21 and 22 respectively. Given the multi-layered nature of HER data, much of which overlaps, static maps of this kind are not the best way to visualise and explore the data, and links to the interactive versions of the records on the Suffolk Heritage Explorer website are also listed in Appendix III.

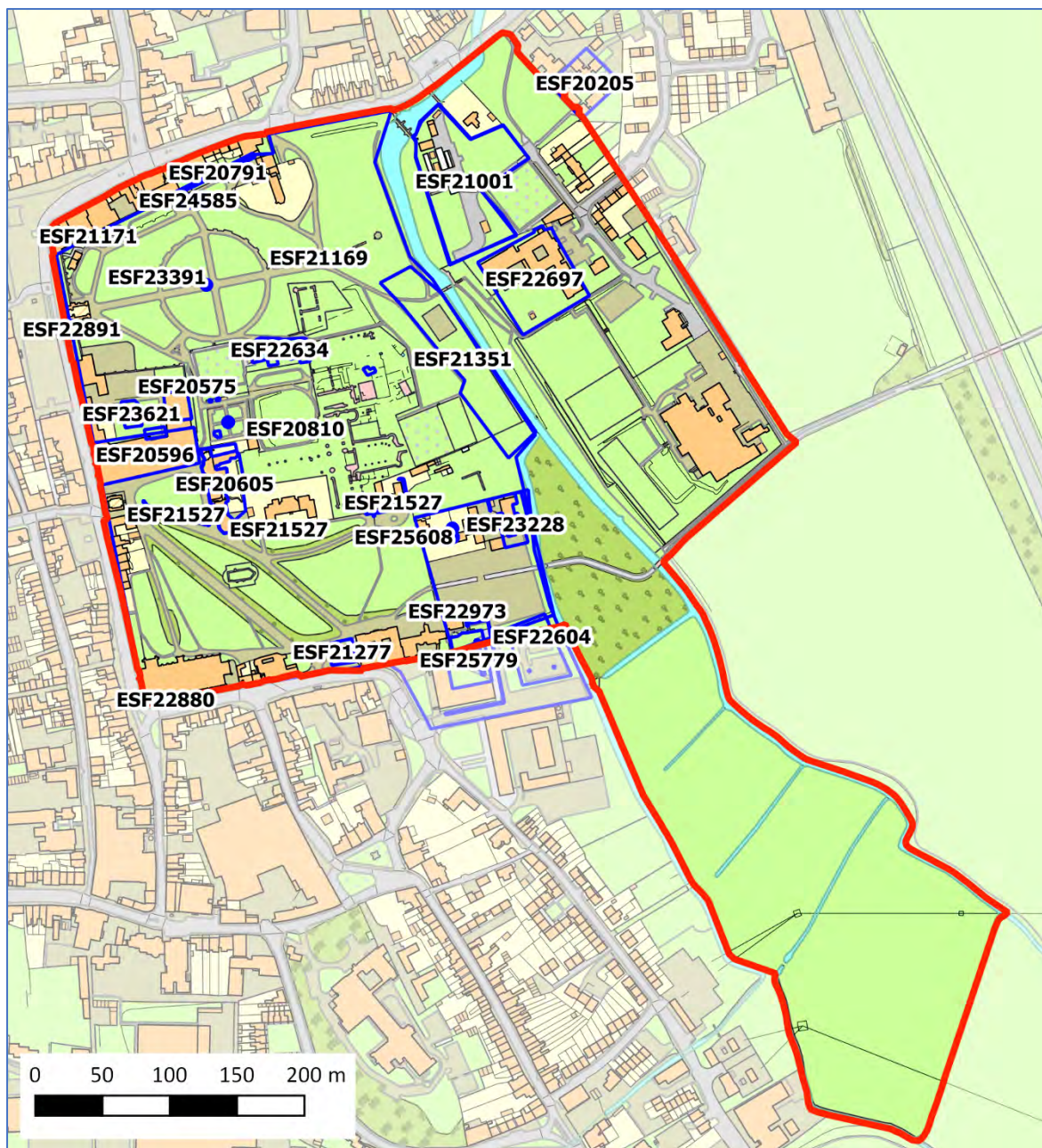
The Abbey of St Edmund is currently recorded in the HER under a number of different entries, making a full appreciation of the site difficult. At a high level, monument record BSE 241 records the entirety of the medieval urban area of Bury St Edmunds, while the main precinct is recorded under record BSE 010. Individual areas of the site are recorded in more detail under other numbers, such as The Vineyards (BSE 063) and The Crankles (BSE 062), while some individual structures are also given their own numbers, for example the Chapel of the Charnel (BSE 040) and St Mary's church (BSE 058). Other monument records relate to the results of specific episodes of fieldwork or the discovery of stray finds, such as BSE 120, which records the discovery of fragments of Middle Anglo-Saxon glass on the site.



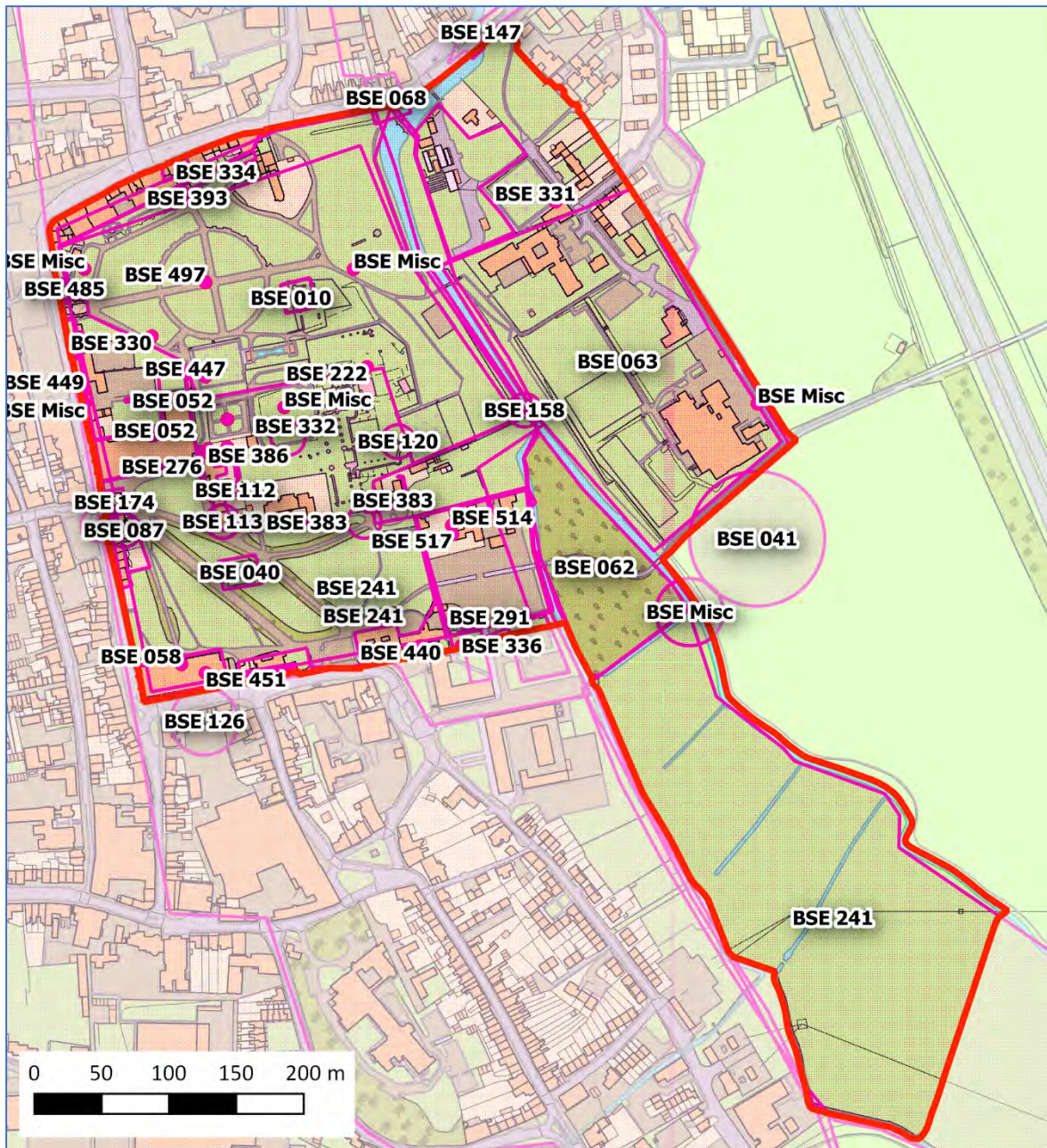
The contents of this report have been greatly informed by the holdings of the HER, and especially by the archaeological fieldwork reports contained within it, and these are referenced throughout the text, cited in the bibliography and listed in the Appendices. However, the HER does not claim to offer an exhaustive or comprehensive coverage, and there are substantial gaps and omissions in its coverage, as well as a large backlog of material awaiting entry into the record.

As a consequence of these recording practices, the data structure and the backlog, some parts of the study area are well represented in the HER, others are not. To date, the different units of record employed have not been applied consistently, with considerable overlap between records, making it very difficult to get an overall sense of the site and its development from the HER data alone. The research presented here has also identified a substantial number of additional episodes of antiquarian and archaeological investigation of the site which are not currently recorded in the HER, the results of which greatly enhance our understanding and appreciation of the study area.

While the enhancement of the Suffolk HER was not a stated aim of this assessment, a thorough overhaul of this data is desirable in order to make it more accessible and usable. It is recommended that the information collated here and listed in the Appendices should form the basis of a programme of HER enhancement to ensure that the study area is properly represented in the HER where the data collected will be of the most direct use to those who need it.



**Figure 21:** Map showing archaeological 'Event' records recorded in the Suffolk Historic Environment Record within the study area. Details of each record are listed in Appendix III. (HER Data © Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service. © St Edmundsbury Borough Council. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675.)



**Figure 22:** Map showing archaeological 'Monument' records recorded in the Suffolk Historic Environment Record within the study area. Details of each record are listed in Appendix III. (HER Data © Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service. © St Edmundsbury Borough Council. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675.)

## 5. Historical Context of the Abbey

The archives of the abbey of Bury St Edmunds are broad and extensive, and can be divided into two main categories: those materials pertaining to the administration of the abbey itself, and those materials collected in the abbey's extensive library. The latter have been primarily studied by M.R. James, who published an extensively researched catalogue of the monastic library's holdings in 1895 (James 1895, 1–114). Following further research and correspondence on the subject, in 1926 he published a revised list, to which some works were added and others removed (James 1926). The holdings of the monastic library have subsequently been studied by Thomson (1980) and Sharpe (1998), amongst others, and from their work it is possible to identify at least 1,989 titles held at the abbey by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with perhaps more than 2,200 being held by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Sharpe 1998, 216–17). By any reckoning, this made Bury's library one of the largest and most prized monastic libraries in the country, and it is therefore not so surprising that Abbot William Curteys (d. 1446) built a library room, ordered the return of all of the abbey's books held by individual monks and laid down new rules for how the library was to be managed.

The material pertaining to the administration of the abbey itself amounts to an enormous corpus of evidence, much of which has come down to us in its original form or copied into later manuscripts (see Thompson 1980 for an overview). This material ranges from account books, chronicles and charters, to early exercises in biography, such as Jocelin of Brakelond's accounts of Abbot Samson (Greenway and Sayers 1989), and high art in the form of the illuminated manuscripts of the Bury Psalter (SRO E5/9/608/7), Master Hugo's illuminated Bury Bible (Figure 23; Heslop 1998), the Cloisters Cross (Figure 24; Parker and Little 1994) – which may also be Hugo's work (Scarfe 1973) – and Lydgate's poetry (Figures 25–27; Bale and Edwards 2009). All stand as testament to the high level of art and craftsmanship attained at the abbey.

While many of the sources remain in archives, there is a long history of transcription and translation of Bury's monastic documents which has brought substantial elements of this material into the wider public realm by the likes of

Tymms (1850), James (1895), Arnold (1896), Douglas (1932) and, especially, Gransden (1963; 1964; 1973), whose single-handed contribution to our understanding of the history of St Edmunds monastery cannot be overstated. As a consequence of their work, there have been numerous published histories of the abbey, charting its development and recording the finer subtleties of its history, some aimed at more academic readers and others more popular.



**Figure 23:** Illumination from Master Hugo's Bury Bible showing Christ in majesty flanked by the four evangelists. (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 002III: *The Bury Bible*, f.281v)

Amongst the first to attempt such a history was Dugdale, whose *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655–73) was one of the very early works which viewed monastic sites as places of antiquarian interest, and whose work drew heavily on primary archive material. Dugdale took a national view, but the first work to focus solely on Bury St Edmunds was Battely's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad Annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745), which he researched and wrote in the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but which was not published until several years after his death in 1708 (Young 2008). Written in Latin, Battely gave a detailed account of the history of the abbey to the year 1272, to which his editors subsequently appended details of the sources he had used and also included several engraved views of the site.



**Figure 24:** The Cloisters Cross, a mid-12<sup>th</sup>-century walrus-ivory carving thought to be from Bury St Edmunds. (Metropolitan Museum of Art 63.12)



**Figure 25:** A miniature from Lydgate's manuscript depicting the installation of abbot Baldwin and the building of the abbey (BM MS Harley 2278 f.115v; ©The British Library)



**Figure 26:** A miniature from Lydgate's manuscript showing him praying at the shrine of St Edmund (BM MS Harley 2278 f.9; © The British Library)



**Figure 27:** A miniature from Lydgate's manuscript showing the shrine of St Edmund (BM MS Harley 2278 f.100v; © The British Library)

Battely's work formed the basis for many of the histories which followed, such as Ashby's *A Description of the Ancient and Present State of the Town and Abbey of Bury St Edmund's in the County of Suffolk* (1769) and Gillingwater's *An Historical and Descriptive Study of St Edmund's Bury, in the County of Suffolk* (1804).

A major contribution was made by Yates, whose *Illustration of the Monastic History and Antiquities of the Town and Abbey of St Edmund's Bury* (1805) brought together many of his late father's notes and drawings dating from the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. When Yates himself died in 1834, he left an expanded version of the work incomplete, and this was finally published as *History and Antiquities of the Abbey of St Edmund's Bury* (1843), a text which incorporated the earlier publication and numerous illustrations of the monastic ruins. Yates' focus on addressing the monastic ruins in tandem with the history of the site, instead of telling the story of the abbey from documentary sources alone, was followed by Hills (1865) and Morant (1873), whose accounts are considered in the following chapter.

A comprehensive account of the history of the abbey, with a particular focus on the abbey church and the monastic library, was published by M.R. James in 1895. In it, James included numerous extracts from manuscript sources, some of which were previously unknown prior to his work. The conclusions drawn by James, and the interpretative plans which he published, inspired several episodes of archaeological fieldwork, which are also discussed in the next chapter.

More histories continued to be published throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As is usual, a detailed account of the history of the abbey was included in the *Victoria County History* for Suffolk, where following the format adopted nationwide it appeared in the second volume (Page 1907, 56–72), and Hervey's *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi* (1907) and Goodwin's *The Abbey of St Edmunds* (1931) are just two examples of the series of publications which followed. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, following many decades of study, Gransden's two volumes on the history of the abbey from 1182–1256 (Gransden 2009) and 1257–1301 (Gransden 2015) are scholarly works of the highest order, and present what must be considered to be the definitive accounts of events in the later 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of the most readable summaries of the subject is that recently published by Francis Young (2016), which provides a very accessible account of the history of the abbey.



## Sigeberht

One of the recurring elements of the history of *Beodricsworth* and the origins of the later monastic site is the role played by Sigeberht, king of the East Angles in the AD 630s. Many of the later accounts describe how Sigeberht founded a royal monastery at *Beodricsworth*, to which he later retired, and this royal connection is seen as being the reason why Edmund's body should have been brought to the site in the first place. However, this historical connection is not as clear as it initially appears to be.

Bede discussed Sigeberht's story twice in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* of AD 731, and it is our only source for his life, albeit one both spatially and temporally removed from East Anglia (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: *HE*, ii, 15 and iii, 18). Bede described Sigeberht as 'a good and religious man', 'a devout Christian and a very learned man in all respects' and recorded that during his brother's reign Sigeberht had been in exile in Gaul, fleeing from the enmity of Rædwald (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: *HE*, iii, 18 and ii, 15). Sigeberht had become a Christian while in Gaul and 'as soon as he began to reign he made it his business to see that the whole kingdom shared his faith' (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, *HE*, ii, 15).

Sigeberht was aided in his efforts by Felix, a Burgundian bishop, with whom he established the first East Anglian episcopal see of *Dommoc* and who became the first Bishop of the East Angles. We also know that Sigeberht actively encouraged missionaries, such as Fursa, to establish themselves in his kingdom (Hoggett 2010, 22–51). After setting a number of religious developments in motion, Sigeberht wished to pursue holy matters on a more personal level and so abdicated and 'entered a monastery which he himself had founded. He received the tonsure and made it his business to fight instead for the heavenly kingdom' (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, *HE*, iii, 18). Entering the cloister did not remove Sigeberht from public consciousness, for c. AD 640, when Sigeberht had been in his monastery for 'some considerable time', the East Anglian kingdom was attacked by Penda of Mercia. The East Anglians asked Sigeberht, as their 'most vigorous and distinguished leader', to join the fight, but he refused and was forcibly dragged from his monastery to the battlefield. True to his new vocation, Sigeberht refused to carry

anything but a staff into battle and, unsurprisingly, was killed, along with his brother Ecgric and much of the East Anglian army.

Bede does not give the name of the monastery to which Sigeberht retired, and he may not have known it. A later tradition, interlineated into the 12<sup>th</sup>-century *Liber Eliensis*, records that the monastery in question was *Betrichesworde*, but this evidence is an inference from a much later period and the scholarly consensus is that it cannot be relied upon as a secure identification (Blake 1962, 11; Whitelock 1972, 4; Pestell 1999, 321). We cannot, therefore be confident in the statement that Sigeberht founded an Anglo-Saxon monastery at *Beodricsworth* and in the absence of more comprehensive archaeological evidence from the Anglo-Saxon period, as is discussed in later sections, we cannot be certain of the location, size or character of the Anglo-Saxon settlement to which Edmund's remains were later brought. It is unlikely that any new relevant historical sources are going to be brought to bear on this question, and it is one which archaeology is left to seek answers for.

## Edmund

No assessment of the Abbey of St Edmund would be complete without a brief discussion of the life and death of Edmund himself, for the presence of his body on the site is the catalyst for much that happened within the study area from the early 10<sup>th</sup> century up until the present day. Again, Edmund has been written about extensively since not long after his death, and the reader is referred to the many biographies of him which have been published, such as those by Mackinlay (1893), Hervey (1907), Whitelock (1970) and Gransden (2004), the most recent being that published by Young (2018) as this report was being finalised. The conclusion of all these biographies is that we know surprisingly little about the real Edmund, who was king of the East Angles in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, and most of the supposed details of his life, and death, are derived from later sources (Whitelock 1970).

A comparatively late source, the *Annals of St Neots* which were compiled in the Abbey of St Edmund in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, states that Edmund began to reign on Christmas day 855, when he was only 14, and that he was consecrated by Hunberht, bishop of East Anglia, on Christmas day 856. The place of his

consecration is identified as Bures, about 18 miles south of Bury St Edmunds (Whitelock 1970).

The only near-contemporary documentary reference to Edmund is found in the Peterborough manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which records his death in battle in the year AD 869: 'In this year the raiding [Danish] army took up winter quarters at Thetford. And that winter King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes had the victory, and killed the king and conquered all the land' (Swanton 2000, 71).

Our main source for the story of Edmund's death, which was that of a Christian martyr, is the *Passio sancti Eadmundi* written by the French monk Abbo of Fleury during his visit to Ramsey in about AD 985–7 (Gransden 2004a). Abbo's objective was to depict a king worthy of veneration and his portrait of Edmund is an idealized one which is paralleled in the lives of other saints. He represents him as a perfect, peace-loving Christian ruler who chose martyrdom rather than to cause the shedding of Christian blood. The story of the martyrdom given by Abbo tells how a Danish army, led by one Hinguar, demand Edmund's submission and tribute. Edmund refused and was captured by the Danes while at his royal vill of *Hægelidun*. The Danes beat him, bound him to a tree and shot at him with arrows, before finally beheading him. In these regards there are parallels with the suffering of Christ – the mocking and scourging – and those of St Sebastian – who was also tied to a tree and shot with arrows (Whitelock 1970; Gransden 2004a). Abbo goes on to tell how the Danes left Edmund's body at the place of martyrdom, but threw the head into some brambles in *Hægelidun* woods. Later, Edmund's followers found the body and began searching for the head. A party went into the wood, calling 'Where are you?' and the head apparently replied in their native tongue, 'Here, here, here!' The head was found guarded between the paws of a wolf 'of terrible appearance', which followed Edmund's retinue as they carried the head back to the body for burial, before it retreated again into the wood. The head and body were miraculously reunited, and buried in a chapel close to the site of Edmund's martyrdom (Scarfe 1970; Gransden 2004a).

Numerous attempts have been made to identify the site of *Hægelidun*, with suggestions including sites in Norfolk and Essex, as well as sites closer to Bury St

Edmunds (e.g. Whitelock 1970; West 1983; Briggs 2011; Young 2018, 61–6). In 1101, Norwich's Bishop Herbert de Losinga claimed that Hoxne had been the site of Edmund's martyrdom, although this was in part motivated by the rivalry between Norwich and Bury (Young 2018, 62), while many confidently associate the martyrdom with Hellesdon on the north-western edge of Norwich (e.g. Whitelock 1970). However, in 1978 it was recognised that the tithe map of Bradfield St Clare, six miles south-east of Bury St Edmunds, included a field called 'Hellesden Ley', while to the north were several 'Kingshall' place-names and to the south a 'Sutton Hall' (West 1983). A later account of Edmund's initial burial records that it took place at a site called *Suthtune* (Young 2018, 63–4), and Bradfield St Clare remains the most plausible candidate for the martyrdom.

There is strong historical and archaeological evidence for the rapid establishment of a cult of St Edmund following his death (see Pinner 2015). Within a generation, a memorial coinage inscribed 'S[an]c[t]e Edmunde Rex' was in wide circulation through the eastern region of the Danelaw. Over 2,000 examples of such coins are known, spanning sixty years. Edmund's veneration as a saint perhaps arose because he was a Christian king who died fighting pagan invaders. This coinage can also be considered to be near-contemporary documentary evidence of Edmund's existence and allows for the rough dating of his reign, although there is no evidence to suggest that this coinage had any connection with Bury St Edmunds (Eaglen 2006, 13–16).

The translation of Edmund's remains is traditionally recorded as having taken place in the reign of Æthelstan (AD 924–39), although more recent scholarship has cast doubt over this (Licence 2014a, xviii–xix; Young 2018, 74–6) and dates have been suggested as early as AD 889 (Young 2018, 74–6, 79–82). When Edmund's body arrived at *Beodricsworth*, according to Abbo's account, a 'very large church of wonderful wooden plankwork' (*permaxima miro ligneo tabulatu ecclesia*) was built to house it. Moreover, he asserts that the body was incorrupt; the only sign of martyrdom was 'a thin red crease around the neck, like a scarlet thread' (Whitelock 1970; Gransden 1994; 2004a; 2004b).

In AD 945, the new church received important patronage from King Edmund of England (as distinct from the martyred Edmund of East Anglia), making it one of

the richest churches in the country. Edmund's body remained in *Beodricsworth* until c. AD 1010, when his body was taken to London for safekeeping by Ailwin in order to avoid the ravages of the Danes, only to be returned to the site after a period of three years. As is discussed further below and in more detail in Section 10, c. AD 1020 Edmund's remains were moved into a new stone-built rotunda, and were moved again in c. AD 1095 when the eastern end of the Romanesque abbey church (begun c. AD 1081) was completed.

In medieval culture, where the intercession of the saints was a daily fact, some saints were more celebrated and powerful than others. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Edmund was internationally revered. Bury was one of the largest and most politically influential religious houses, linked into the chain of major shrines that formed a pilgrimage and economic network across Europe. This was partly a result of the growing reputation of Edmund's supernatural deeds and partly due to speculative investment by the monastery in the church and town of Bury St Edmunds.

An important aspect in the success of the cult of St Edmund was royal patronage. Edmund's association with the supernatural protection of not only East Anglia but England increased from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The royal veneration of Edmund was bound up with the origins and legitimacy of English kingship, and so his was a shrine particularly supported by Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Norman and successive rulers. Cnut, Edward the Confessor, William the Conqueror, Richard the Lionheart, Edward I, Henry IV and Henry VI all made pilgrimages to, stayed at and offered patronage to the Abbey of St Edmund.

Edmund's shrine stood in the apse of the Romanesque church. There are reports of a body in the coffin when it was opened in the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, and again in 1198 after a fire in the church (Scarfe 1970; Whitelock 1970). The shrine was rebuilt at this time, and the new coffin survived another fire in 1465 (Crook 1998). At the dissolution in the late 1530s, Henry VIII's commissioners recorded that it was a 'rich shrine that was very cumbrous to deface.' Surprisingly, no mention was made of the relics. Commissioner John ap Rice did, however, believe that the monks had 'confedered and compacted', and perhaps they had removed the relics already (Cook 1965).

There was a suggestion that Edmund's relics had been taken to the basilica of St Sernin in Toulouse, based on an inventory of 1489 which includes an entry for Edmund and an anonymous French source which indicated that French troops went to Bury in 1217 in search of plunder. Most of the relics from Toulouse were due to be sent to Westminster in 1901, but as their origin was not certain and their authenticity questioned they never reached their final destination and were cared for instead by the Dukes of Norfolk at Arundel. They remain in the chapel of Arundel Castle, and scientific analysis has indicated that there are the bones of several individuals (of both sexes) in this collection, although there has not been full analysis or any scientific dating of the relics (Gem 1998).

Young (2018, 139–53), has found evidence to suggest that Edmund's remains were hidden in a metal chest and concealed somewhere on the site, although we cannot be sure where this might have been. Among the more obvious possible hiding places are the monk's cemetery to the south-east of the abbey church, somewhere within the Great Churchyard or within either of the two churches – St James' and St Mary's – which survived the Dissolution. In any event, the episode raises the possibility that the mortal remains of Edmund, an Anglo-Saxon royal saint and martyr, remain buried within the monastic precinct, although it is unlikely that these would or even could be recognised using archaeological methods.

## Later History of the Abbey

While the early history of the site and its associations with Edmund's remains is somewhat hazy and the sources scant (see Gransden 1985), the later history of the monastery is well documented and has been extensively studied by antiquaries and historians for several centuries. It is, therefore, only necessary to include a summary of that history here, with a particular emphasis on the developmental history of the precinct, and those seeking more detail are referred to those more detailed published accounts (e.g. James 1895; Gage 1907; Gransden 2007; 2015; Young 2016) from which the following account is derived.

Reference has already been made to the fact that, following his translation in the early part of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, in c. AD 1020 Edmund's remains were moved into a new stone-built rotunda which stood to the north of the later abbey church, in the area that was to become the Lady Chapel in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century (see Section 9).

Following the Norman Conquest, Herfast, Bishop of Thetford (1070–84) moved his episcopal see from North Elmham to Thetford and attempted to gain control of the abbey. Abbot Baldwin (1065–97) successfully defended the abbey, and in 1081 King William confirmed the freedom of the abbey from episcopal control. Baldwin then increased the number of monks from 20 to 80, and with successive sacrists Thurstan and Tolin, began to build a new abbey church to accommodate them. In 1095, the body of Edmund was translated into a shrine in the new church in a ceremony conducted by the bishop of Winchester, suggesting that the crypt and the eastern arm were complete by this date (see Section 10). In addition to the translation of Edmund's remains, Abbot Baldwin also translated the remains of St Botolph and St Jurmin into the new abbey church, and these are frequently mentioned in the documents as lying near to the shrine of St Edmund.

On Abbot Baldwin's death, the construction of the abbey church seems to have experienced a ten-year hiatus, during which the next sacrist, Godfrey, and Abbot Robert II (1102–07) are said to have completed the chapterhouse, refectory, dormitory, infirmary and abbot's lodgings. Godfrey (whose sacristy lasted until 1121), working under Abbot Albold (1114–19) was also responsible for the renewed westward construction of the abbey church, working on a larger and more complex plan than that originally envisaged by Baldwin, so that the crossing piers which had been constructed as part of the initial phase of construction were repurposed as the western piers of the presbytery and a new crossing erected. This work appears to have comprised the construction of the transepts and crossing and the easternmost bays of the nave. Godfrey is also recorded as having bought a large bell, which may indicate that the crossing tower was also completed by this date, although we cannot be certain that the bell was intended for this tower.

The abbacy of Abbot Anselm (1121–48) saw the dedication of the altar of the high cross at the eastern end of the nave, the construction of the walls around the forecourt of the abbey which interrupted the alignment of Northgate and Southgate Streets, and bronze doors were made for the western façade by Master Hugo. The porticus of St Faith over the porticus of St Denis, in the northern arm of the western front, was dedicated by Bishop John of Rochester (d. 1142), suggesting

that the nave had reached the level of the clerestory by this date. Abbot Samson (1182–1211) was responsible for the completion of the west front, including the central and flanking octagonal structures, and by c. 1200 most of the construction work on the first phase of the abbey complex was complete.

In 1210, the central crossing tower collapsed northwards and was seemingly not repaired until the 1230s. The 13<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed some alterations and additions to the fabric of the monastery, for between 1220 and 1234 sacrist Richard of Newport oversaw the demolition and rebuilding of the chapterhouse and also completed a great bell for the newly restored central tower. In 1275, Abbot Simon de Luton (1257–79) built a large Lady Chapel on the north side of the choir, during the course of which the original rotunda was demolished, if indeed any trace of it still stood, and the foundations of the associated ambulatory were apparently also discovered (see Section 9).

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, tensions grew between the abbey and the townsfolk, which came to a violent head and the abbey suffered greatly at the hands of rioters. In 1327, an armed crowd stormed the abbey, forcing entry through the gate into the Great Court, where they attacked the monks. The Treasury and Sacristy were looted, as were the carrels in the cloister, and important monastic documents removed or destroyed. The abbey church was unscathed by the attack, which appears to have been specifically targeted on the secular, administrative side of the abbey. Later that year, the abbey church itself was attacked and the year's turmoil ended with the burning of the abbey gates and sacrist's offices, the abbey stables, malthouse, bakehouse and granaries on the north side of the Great Court; the guest quarters, cellarer's offices and infirmary followed, before the rioters were brought under control.

Following the destruction of the riots, a new Abbey Gate was constructed to the south side of the original gateway, and this was completed between 1327 and 1346. It was, however, no defence against the Black Death, which reached Bury in 1349, decimated the monastic population and returned again in 1369. The year 1381 also saw the abbey becoming a target during the Peasants' Revolt, during which the Prior was killed and his head displayed on a spike in the marketplace, although no lasting damage was done to the abbey buildings.



In 1430, the south side of the western tower fell, and the east side followed in 1431, so that the remainder of the tower was dismantled in 1432 and the slow and expensive process of rebuilding began. During the course of this work, in 1465, a devastating fire broke out which is vividly described in contemporary accounts (see James 1895, 208–12) and which gutted the interior of the abbey church, although most of the other monastic buildings survived unscathed. The shrine of St Edmund barely survived the blaze, its preservation seen as a sign of Divine intervention, and the later part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century saw the rebuilding process begin again in earnest. It is not clear how far these repairs had got by the time the abbey was dissolved in 1539, and although the main gates and much of the precinct wall remained intact, the abbey church and claustral buildings quickly became a quarry for construction in the town.

Throughout the medieval period, the abbey was an important stage on which regional, national and international politics were played out. Royalty regularly visited the abbey, often staying for long periods, and the abbots and the house played an important role in major historical events. Royal visitors to the site included Edward the Confessor, Henry I and Richard I, who made a devotional visit to St Edmund's shrine before setting off on the Crusades. King John visited Bury immediately after his coronation in 1199, although he apparently abused the abbey's hospitality, and visited again in 1203. The abbey played a further role in John's fate, when, in 1214, a group of the earls and barons who opposed him met John at the abbey and laid the foundations for the signing of the Magna Carta. In 1296, Edward I received the surrender of Rhys ap Rhys at the abbey, marking the end of his campaign in Wales, and his successors Edward II and III and Richard II are also recorded as visiting the site. In 1433, Henry VI determined to spend Christmas at the abbey, necessitating the hasty (and costly) refurbishment of the Abbot's Palace in order to accommodate him, and in 1486, Henry VII paid what was probably the last royal visit to the site.

The abbey was the burial place of significant members of the royal family and other nobles: Alan, Earl of Bretagne, and his wife Constance, second daughter of William the Conqueror; Thomas of Brotherton, Earl of Norfolk, and fifth son of Edward I; Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter and uncle of Henry V, was buried in

the Lady Chapel in 1427, adjacent to his Duchess, Margaret, daughter of Sir Thomas Neville; and perhaps most famously, Mary, the sister of Henry VIII, Queen of France and afterwards wife of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, was buried in the abbey church in 1533.

In the introduction to his recent book on the history of the abbey, Young states that 'the real legacy of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds is not its ruins – which are unimpressive in comparison with those of many other English abbeys – but rather its chronicles, books and archives. . . . The Abbey of Bury St Edmunds is a treasure trove for historians rather than a feast for archaeologists' (Young 2016, 1–3). While it is true that the ruins themselves may not be the equal of other monastic sites in the country, the subsequent sections of this report serve to demonstrate that the nature and extent of the buried archaeology on the site and the discoveries made during the last few centuries far exceed those of many other monastic sites. It is to the story of these discoveries that we now turn.

## 6. Investigative History

Although the site of the abbey effectively became a stone quarry fairly soon after the Dissolution, it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the physical remains of the abbey became the focus of antiquarian interest in its own right. The research undertaken for this assessment has identified over 100 individual episodes of archaeological or antiquarian investigation (Appendix IV), ranging from stray finds and chance archaeological discoveries made during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to set-piece archaeological excavations undertaken in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, antiquarian syntheses of historical documentation to the masterful interpretation of the abbey site published by Arthur Whittingham in 1952. This section presents a summary of the main episodes of archaeological and antiquarian fieldwork which have occurred, highlighting in particular those episodes which have produced significant results or greatly enhanced our understanding of the site and its environs. It should be emphasised that this discussion is not exhaustive, and there is a considerable body of material which is represented by Appendix IV and by the project GIS, but which has only contributed to this assessment in a very general way. It is beyond the scope of this project to present a detailed analysis of this material, but there is a need for it to be systematically worked through and integrated into our overall site narrative, and this aim would be best achieved via a programme of Historic Environment Record enhancement.

It should be stressed that until the earlier years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the exception of the standing masonry of the west front, the plan and details of the abbey church and cloister were obscured by a thick layer of demolition rubble, so that all of the plans and reconstructions which were offered by commentators and antiquarians were primarily speculative, drawing upon the handful of physical facts which could be demonstrated, coupled with the copious details alluded to in the numerous documents in the abbey archives. In this respect, the wider precinct was better served than the abbey church itself, for, as will be seen, much more of the layout and fabric of the buildings in the precinct were preserved and were less deeply buried during the post-medieval period, enabling them to be mapped and interpreted more clearly.

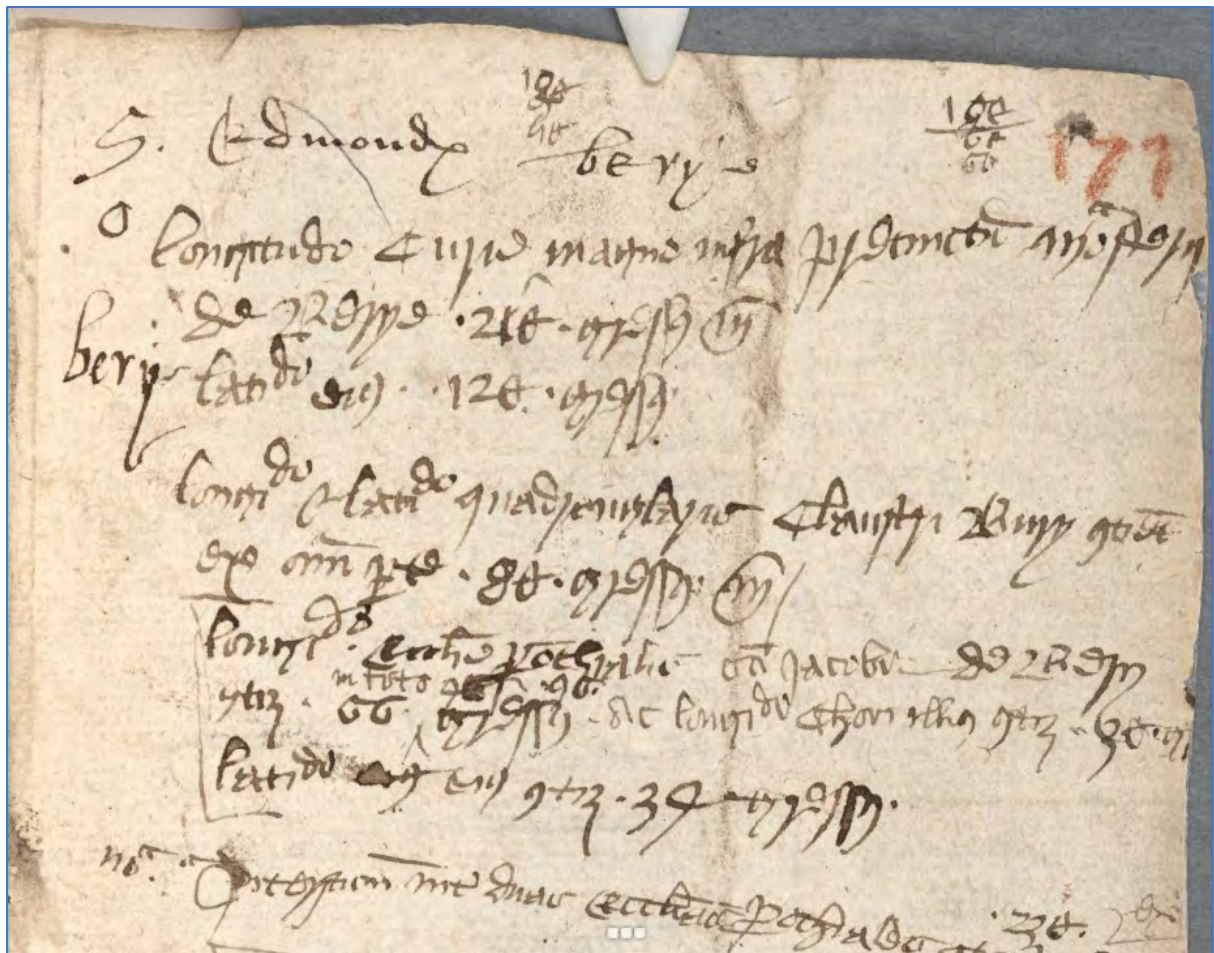
## Eyewitness Accounts

There are precious few eyewitness accounts of the abbey in its heyday, but there are three sources which shed light on the scale and layout of the abbey buildings, as well as capturing something of the atmosphere and splendour of the abbey itself. The first of these are the illuminations included in the manuscript copy of Lydgate's account of the life of Edmund, which include several depictions of Edmund's shrine. The second comes from William Worcester, who visited the abbey in 1479 and made paced measurements of its dimensions. Worcester's observations were complemented some 50 years later by those of John Leland, the King's librarian, when he visited the site on the eve of the Dissolution.

The manuscript of John Lydgate's metrical *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* is held by the British Library and its images have been digitised as part of their online collection (MS Harley 2278).<sup>33</sup> Dating from between 1434 and 1439, the manuscript was commissioned by Abbot Curteys as a gift for the young Henry VI, and is regarded as being one of the most important illuminated Middle English texts which have survived down to us (Bale and Edwards 2009, 11–24). Among Lydgate's images are numerous scenes from Edmund's life and death, and the events following his martyrdom, but of greater significance to this study are the images which depict aspects of the abbey itself. The first of these is a miniature included at the foot of folio 115 verso, which depicts the investiture of Abbot Baldwin in 1065 and a hypothetical view of the construction of the abbey buildings in the later 11<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 25). While this cannot be relied upon as a realistic image, it does at least give us a visual representation of the construction of the abbey, and in that regard the image is of interest. Of more direct relevance are the series of images in Lydgate's manuscript which depict Edmund's shrine (e.g. folios 4v, 9, 100v, 111v, 106, 108v, 109, 110v, 113v and 117). The shrine is depicted consistently, from different angles, and these images give a clear indication of the structure and elaborate decoration of the shrine (Figures 26 and 27). These illustrations are corroborated by documentary sources made during the lifetime of the abbey and at the Dissolution, and they may be taken to be realistic depictions of the shrine.

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6643&CollID=8&>



**Figure 28:** The first lines of William Worcester's *Itineraria* manuscript in which he describes the dimensions of the Great Courtyard and cloister (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 210, f.171; © the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution.)

Moving on from Lydgate, the earliest attempt to intentionally document the dimensions of the abbey church and other conventual buildings was that made by William Worcester in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, in a document which does not enjoy the widespread recognition which it deserves. Born in Bristol, Worcester became the servant, secretary and agent of Sir John Fastolf of Caister (Norfolk), in which capacity he travelled extensively throughout the eastern region and beyond, and enjoyed dealings with the influential Paston family, amongst others. Described by his biographer as 'an original and widely curious scholar', Worcester was a polymath who took a considerable interest in the world around him (Orme 2004). During the course of 1478–9, in the last years of his life, Worcester made several long journeys throughout southern England, during which he visited numerous

significant and ancient sites and compiled extensive notes on many different aspects of natural and local history. These *Itineraries* are now housed in the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, as MS 210 (see Harvey 1969), and have recently been digitised as part of the process of putting the contents of the Parker Library online (Figure 28).<sup>34</sup>

Worcester visited Bury in 1479, and during his visit he took the opportunity to take paced measurements of the abbey church and precinct, which he listed on folio 171 of his notes. Translated from the Latin, his measurements are given thus (Harvey 1969, 160–1):

*The length of the Great Court within the precinct of the Abbey of Bury [St Edmunds] is 210 of my paces [518 feet], and its width is 120 paces [308 feet].*

*The length and width of the square Cloister at Bury are 80 of my paces [150 feet] each way.*

*The length of the parish church of St James of Bury is 66 paces [135 feet] and of its choir 30 paces [59 feet], in all 96 paces [194 feet]. Its width is 34 paces [69 feet].*

*Note, the space between the two parish churches is 230 paces [458 feet].*

*The parish church of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary on the south side of Bury is in all 120 paces [209 feet], including the choir which is 40 paces [69 feet]. It has a clerestory and its width is 40 paces [68 feet].*

*The nave of the abbey church of Bury is 150 of my paces long [286 feet]; the belfry in the midst of the nave of the church is 26 paces across [43 feet], beyond the said 150; the width of the south transept of the church from the base of the belfry to the south door is 43 paces [86 feet], and the length of the choir from the east side of the belfry aforesaid to the*

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<sup>34</sup> <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/mp810zm2076>

*Chapel of St Mary is 70 paces [125 feet]. So the whole abbey church with the choir and belfry is 240 of my paces in length [454 feet].*

*The length of the Chapel of St Mary on the north side of the choir, where Thomas Beaufort [Duke of Exeter] lies buried, is 40 paces, and its width is 21 paces. The Chapter House is 50 paces long and 20 paces wide. The length of the Frater is 171 feet, which makes 90 paces, and its width is 21 paces or 40 feet.*

*The Crypt of the Chapel of St Mary beneath the Shrine of St Edmund is 50 paces long and 40 paces wide, and there is a very fine spring of water there. The Dedication of St Mary's Crypt is on 5 November. In it are 24 columns.*

Worcester reiterated some of his key measurements in a summary on folio 230 of his manuscript (Harvey 1969, 162–3):

*A.D. 1479. May. The Church of Bury [St Edmunds]*

*The church of St Edmund at Bury is 240 paces [c. 420 feet] long from the chapel of St Mary to the west door, and the width of the nave with its two aisles is 46 paces [c. 82 feet]. The choir with its two aisles is 42 paces [c. 74 feet] wide.*

*The Chapter House is 60 paces [c. 95 feet] long and 20 paces [c. 31 feet] wide.*

*The Great Court is 240 paces [518 feet] long and --- wide.*

*The Cloister is 9- paces [150 feet] each way.*

As can be seen, these notes are sufficient to compile a good depiction of the dimensions of the abbey church, although their interpretation is a little confusing without the knowledge that there were two chapels of St Mary in the abbey church, one at the east end of the crypt and the Lady Chapel off the north transept. As is discussed further below, Worcester's measurements informed the first published plan of the abbey, which was appended to the posthumous edition of Battely's *Antiquitates* in 1745 (Figure 35).

A final eyewitness account of the monastery was recorded by John Leland, the King's librarian, when he visited the site on the eve of the Dissolution, making him one of the last to see the abbey in its splendour. Leland was later quoted in Camden's *Britannia* (1722, 439) as saying of the abbey:

*A city more neatly feated the Sun never saw, so curiously doth it hang upon a gentle descent, with a little river on the east-side; nor a monastery more noble, whether one considers the endowments, largeness or unparalleled magnificence. One might think even the monastery alone a city; so many gates it has (some whereof are brass), so many towers, and a church, than which nothing can be more magnificent; as appendages to which, there are three more, of admirable beauty and workmanship, in the same churchyard.*

Leland was primarily visiting the site to assess the contents of the monastic library, with a view to procuring choice volumes, but he also made a series of notes on the history and layout of the abbey, which have informed subsequent interpretations of the site (Hearne 1770, 220–6; Toulmin Smith 1908, 148–50).

## Early Speculations

Among the earliest recorded episodes of the remains of the Abbey of St Edmund attracting the attention of those seeking treasures of the past is a royal licence granted to Mary Middlemore in April 1617. Descended from a gentry family with a history of serving at the royal court, Mary was maid of honour to Queen Anne of Denmark, the wife of James VI and I (Brockmann 2016). According to the preamble of the licence, Mary had:

*humbly petitioned us that, wheras there is, as she was informed, certeyn Treasure-Trove supposed to be found in or about certeyn of the late Abbies or Monasteries within our Realme of England, that we would be graciously pleased to grant to her and her Deputies, for the terms of five Years, Power and Authority to enter into all those Abbies Monasteries and Places; videlicet, the Abbies of Saint Albans, Glassenbury, Saint Edmonds-Bury and Ramsey, and into all Lands Houses and Places within one Mile belonging to the said Abbies or any of them, and to use*

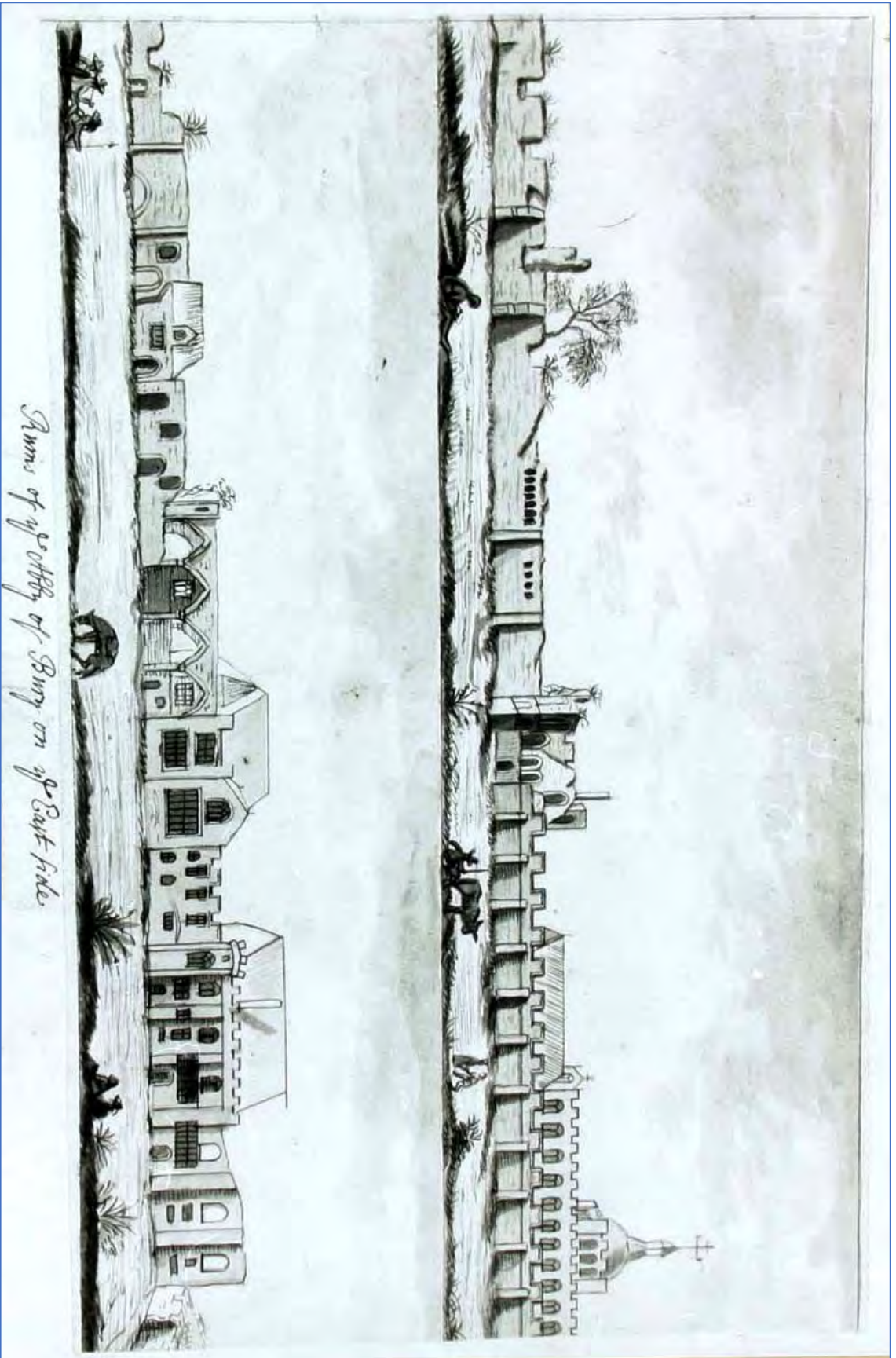


*and trye their Endeavors for the fynding and getting, as well of the said Treasure, as of Bookes and other things within the same Abbeyes and Precincts thereof which might help to discover the Places where the said Treasure-Trove should be, without hurting, or prejudiceing the Owners Tenants or Occupioures of the same, and using no other meanes in or about the Premisses then such as should agreable to the Lawes of this our Realme* (Rymer 1742, 9–10).

Mary's request was considered by the Treasurer, the Keeper of the Privy Seal and the Lord Steward of the Royal Household, who, along with the king, concluded that the petition should be granted, but suggested that: 'the said Petitioner should make choice of some one of the said Abbies for a Tryall, and afterwards to proceed to the rest, if there should appeare no juste Cause to the contrary' (Rymer 1742, 10). In addition, it was stipulated that one third of the value of anything discovered should be paid to the Crown, and the secular and ecclesiastical authorities were charged with helping Mary and her agents in their efforts,

The terms of this licence were both generous and wide-reaching, with the potential to pay great dividends if the proposed searches proved successful, although how workable the project might have been given the need for the co-operation of the relevant landowners and occupiers is unclear. We cannot be sure that Bury St Edmunds was chosen as the site of the trial investigation, but ultimately it seems that the licence was never taken up, as Mary died only nine months later and was buried in Westminster Abbey (Brockmann 2016).

A second early 17<sup>th</sup>-century episode was recorded by William Hawkins, the master of Hadleigh Grammar School, who in 1634 published an autobiographical poem in which he described how, during a break in legal proceedings at the old St Margaret's church, he went walking in the former abbey grounds and searched for the remains of St Edmund (Scarfe 1970, 317; Young 2016, 157–8). Given the poetic nature of the work, the degree of validity which can be given to this account as a genuine investigative episode is not clear, although in any event, Hawkins appears not to have done more than search among the nettles. Reference to his account is included here as an evocative indication of the growing interest in the precinct and what might lay buried within it which gradually built up during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 29:** Edmund Prideaux's sketches of 1735 showing the surviving southern (upper) and eastern (lower) ranges of the Great Court (Historic England Archive Card reference no: 5416\_107; © From the collection of Peter Prideaux-Brune Esquire, Prideaux Place, Padstow, reproduced with permission.)

## Antiquarian Interest

Set against the background of the emerging passion for antiquarianism (Gaimster *et al.* 2007; Pearce 2007), the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of intensive activity and interest in the former monastic precinct, which saw the publication of several significant historical accounts of the abbey, as well as a series of illustrations and engravings depicting the nature and extent of surviving ruins. The latter part of the century also saw some of the first archaeological discoveries made on the site, the results of which were quickly communicated in the foremost antiquarian publications of the day.

Some of the earliest depictions of the abbey ruins are those drawn by Edmund Prideaux in 1735. The originals of these drawings reside at Prideaux Place on the north Cornish coast, but photographic copies are held by the Historic England Archive in their 'Red Box' collection and can be viewed freely online.<sup>35</sup> Prideaux drew views of the Norman Tower, showing the campanile at its top, as well as imaginatively reconstructed views of the western and eastern facades of the Abbey Gate, which is shown with inset stair turrets on its north-west and south-west corners. He also produced a sketched view from beyond the eastern end of the former abbey church, looking westwards, which show the towering rubble cores of the crossing piers, from which plants are growing, and large blocks of masonry lying on the ground. Perhaps the most significant of his sketches, though, is the pair of panoramic views of the surviving southern and eastern sides of the Great Court (Figure 29). The uppermost images shows the view south across the Great Court, with the top of the Norman Tower visible in the background, and St James' church in front of that. Both are screened by the crenelated wall which still divides the Abbey Gardens from the Cathedral Yard (also known as the Cathedral Garth) today. Further to the east are shown the extant remains of the eastern and northern ranges of the cloister. The lower sketch depicts the view eastwards across the Great Court, looking towards the remains of the Abbot's Palace to the south and associated ruinous ranges of buildings running northwards.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/gallery/10880>





**Figure 31:** Detail of the Bucks' The East Prospect of St. Edmunds-Bury, in the County of Suffolk (1741). (*Maps K.Top.39.13.a*; © The British Library)



In 1738, Samuel and Nathaniel Buck published an engraving entitled *The West View of St Edmund's-Bury Abby, in the County of Suffolk*, which depicted the western face of the abbey gate, flanked on both sides by lengths of precinct wall, with traces of ruins visible behind. This view was followed shortly afterwards in January 1741 by the publication as part of the *Cities, Sea-ports and Capital Towns* series of *The East Prospect of St. Edmunds-Bury, in the County of Suffolk*, which presents a view over the former precinct from the hills to the east (Figures 30–32).<sup>36</sup> This image shows the churches of St Mary and St James, highlighted against the backdrop of the town, together with the abbey gate and the extant walls of the precinct. In the middle distance can clearly be seen the ruins of the abbey church and cloister, with later buildings clustering to their south around the edges of the Great Churchyard. To the north are the ruins of the structures in the abbot's garden. In the foreground, the river flows through the precinct, and the regular fishponds which were situated between the Lark and the Linnet are clearly visible. On the western bank of the river, the wall encircling the vineyard is shown, with bridges linking the area to the main body of the precinct.

Reference has already been made to Battely's *Antiquitates*, which he researched and wrote before his death in 1708. When his work was published posthumously in 1745, Battely's editors appended four views of the site drawn by James Burrough and engraved by George Vertue. The first of these headed the first page of the text and is a view looking west over the precinct from the east bank of the river, taking a vantage point not entirely dissimilar to that adopted by the Buck brothers for their 1741 *East Prospect* and the similarities between the two images are so great as to suggest that one might be the inspiration for the other (Figure 33). The second image was a view of the western front of the Abbey Gate (Figure 34), which is notable for its depiction of two turrets surmounting the roof of the tower, which were apparently added by Burrough at the prompting of local antiquary Thomas Martin in 1737, who remembered them standing (Young 2008, 472). The third published image is of great significance, as it constituted the first published plan of the abbey church and was derived from a combination of observations of the

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-east-prospect-of-st-edmunds-bury-in-the-county-of-suffolk>

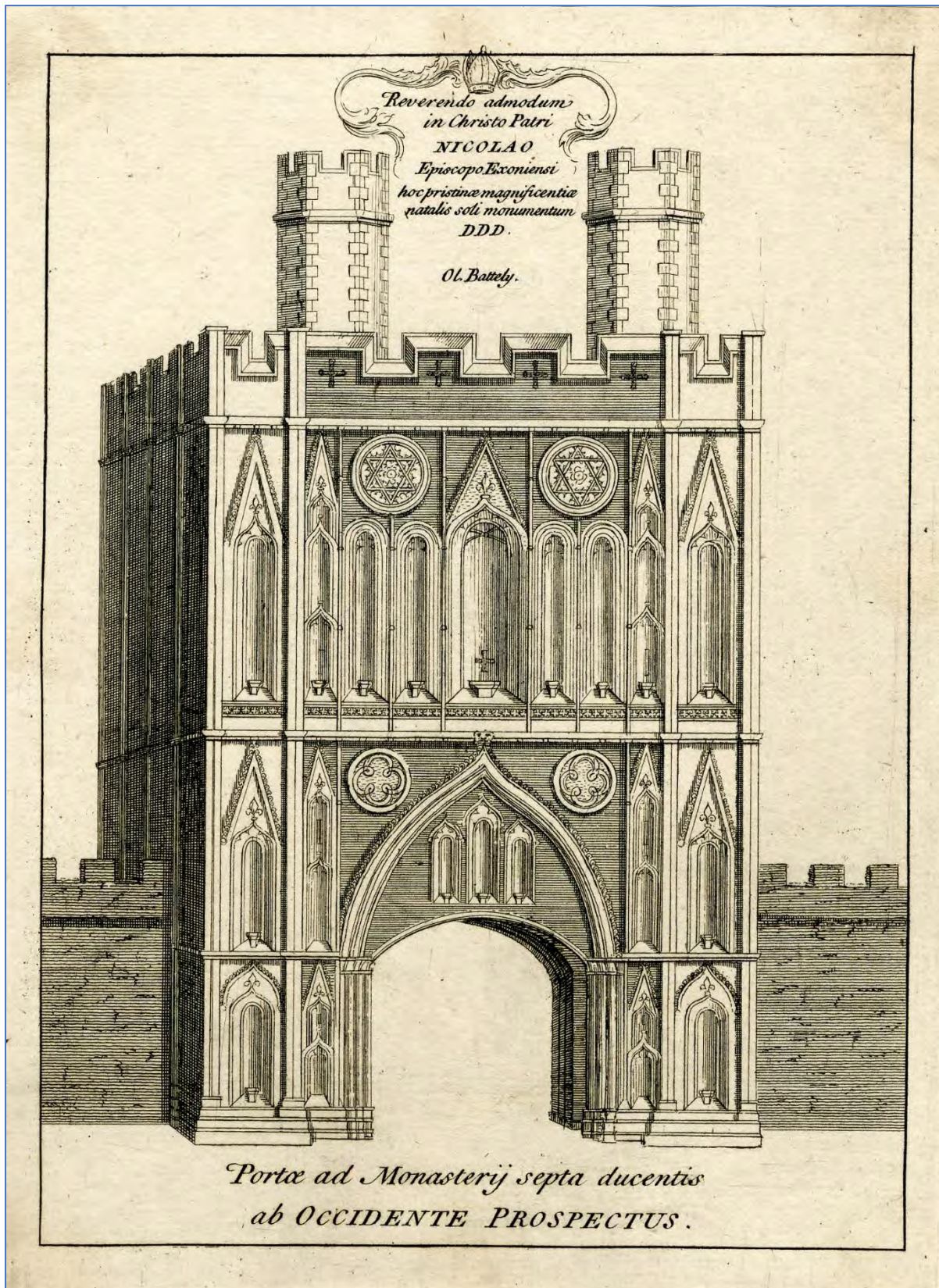
masonry which was still visible on the site and the paced measurements recorded by William Worcester (Figure 35). The final illustration was an engraving of the western elevation of the Abbot's Palace which was drawn by James Burrough shortly before its destruction (Figure 36). It is interesting to compare this image to the sketches made by Prideaux (Figure 29), and the similarities between the two images gives us confidence in the outward appearance of the Abbot's Palace.



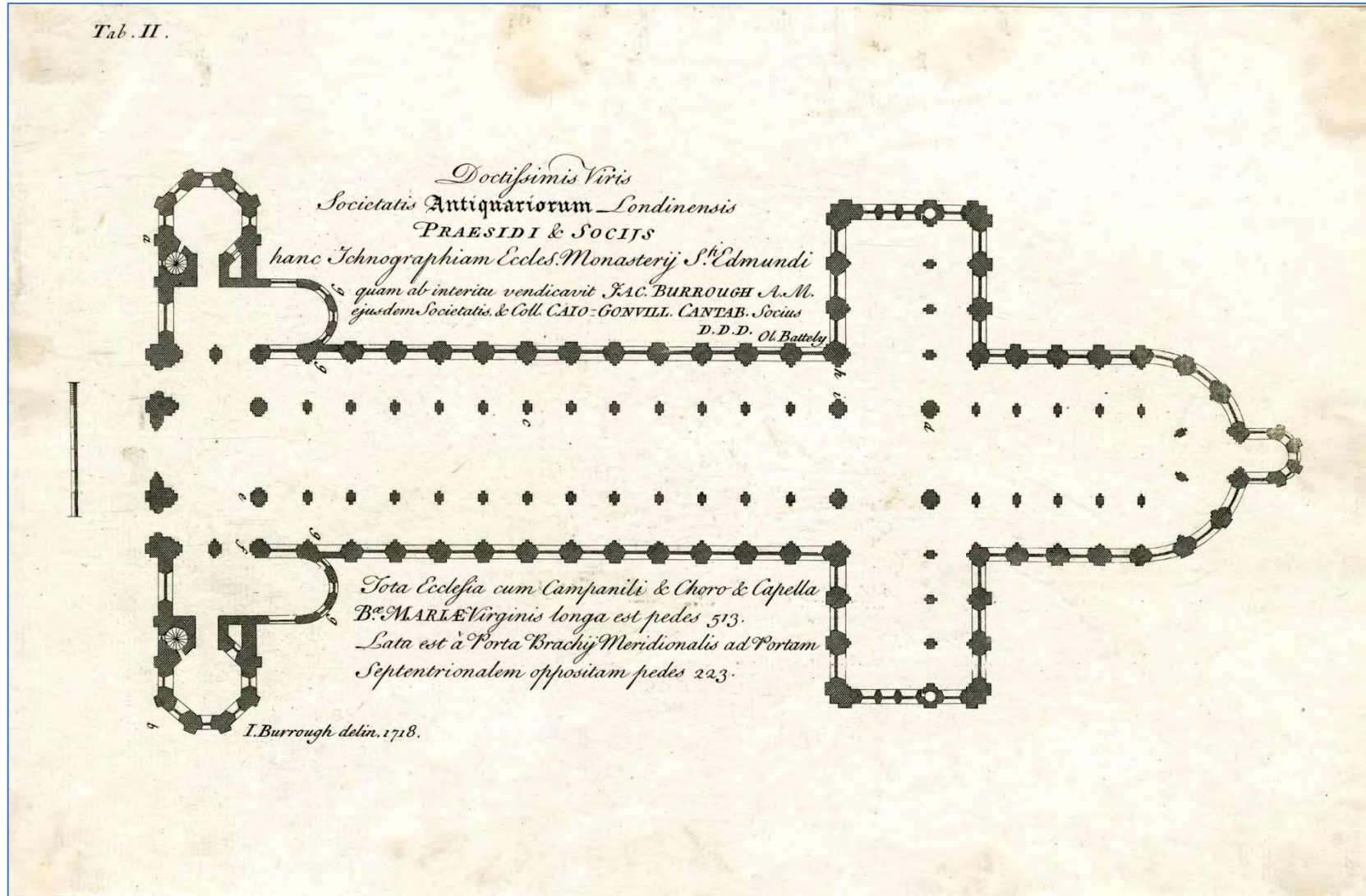
**Figure 33:** View of the Abbey of St Edmund drawn by James Burrough and engraved by George Vertue. Published in Batteley's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745).

In terms of the material remains of the abbey and its buried archaeology, it is reported that the wholesale demolition of the ruins of the abbey church was stepped up a gear in 1767, when workmen were given orders to undermine and dig up every stone, and this episode of work seems to have culminated with two significant discoveries being made in 1772 (Gibbs 1948, 206). The first was the discovery of the burial of Thomas Beaufort, and the second was the uncovering of more of the ground-plan of the abbey than had previously been exposed.

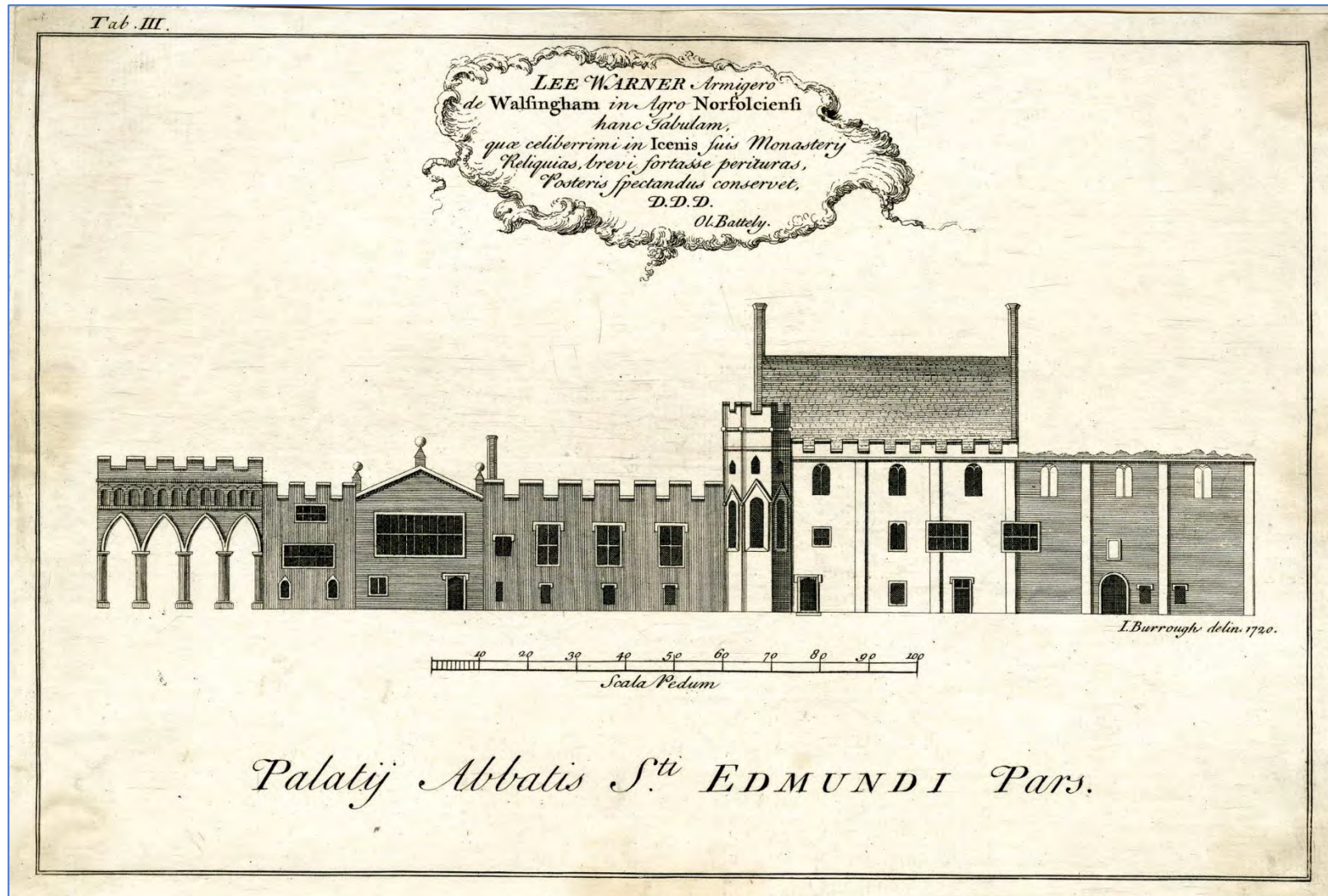




**Figure 34:** View of the west face of the Abbey Gate drawn by James Burrough and engraved by George Vertue. Published in Bateley's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745).



**Figure 35:** The first published plan of the abbey church, derived from observations made on the site and measurements recorded by William Worcester. Drawn by James Burrough and engraved by George Vertue. Published in Batteley's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745).



**Figure 36:** A view of the eastern range of the Abbot's Palace, drawn by James Burrough shortly before its demolition in 1720 and engraved by George Vertue. Published in Batteley's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745).

An accidental, but significant, archaeological discovery was made in February 1772, when workmen digging among the ruins of the abbey discovered a lead coffin containing the unusually well-preserved remains of a man, later identified as Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter and third son of John of Gaunt. In life, Beaufort had been one of Henry V's most trusted commanders and advisers, and was a leader who commanded his men's loyalty and the king's confidence. In his will, made days before his death on the last day of 1426, he stipulated that he should be buried in the Abbey of St Edmund's Bury, near to his wife, at the entrance of the Chapel of Our Lady, close to the wall. The discovery quickly excited the interest of a number of significant local figures in the medical community, and the details were reported in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society by Charles Collignon, an eminent Cambridge anatomist and physician, who had been schooled in Bury St Edmunds (Collignon 1772; Bevan 2004). The circumstances of the discovery were also described in a manuscript penned by one Joseph Pater of Bury St Edmunds, which was subsequently published in 1860:

*On the 20th of February, 1772, some labourers employed in breaking up part of the old abbey church discovered a leaden coffin, which contained an embalmed body, as perfect and entire as at the time of its death; the features and lineaments of the face were perfect, which were covered with a mask of embalming materials. The very colour of the eyes distinguishable; the hairs of the head brown, intermixed with some few gray ones; the nails fast upon the fingers, and toes as when living; stature of the body, about six feet tall, and genteelly formed. The labourers, for the sake of the lead (which they sold to Mr. Faye, a plumber, in this town, for about 15s.) stript the body of its coffin, and threw it promiscuously amongst the rubbish.'* (Jeaffreson 1860, 272)

The burial was apparently located 'near the wall, on the left-hand side of the choir of the chapel of the blessed Virgin; not inclosed in a vault, but covered over with the common earth' (Collignon 1772, 465), and from its location it was soon identified as being the remains of Thomas Beaufort. The identification is based on the fact Thomas Beaufort's burial in the Lady Chapel had been recorded by William Worcester some 50 years after the actual event.

The corpse was examined by local surgeon Thomas Cullum, who later became the seventh baronet of Hawstead Place and Hardwick House, and served as an alderman of Bury St Edmunds four times between 1780 and 1807 (Boulger 2004). Cullum communicated his observations to Collignon thus:

*The body was inclosed in a leaden coffin, surrounding it very close, so that you might easily distinguish the head and feet. The corpse was wrapped round with two or three large layers of cere-cloth, so exactly applied to the parts, that the piece, which covered the face, retained the exact impression of the eyes and nose. (Collignon 1772, 465–6)*

Cullum conducted a detailed medical examination of the corpse, which due to the combination of waxed cere-cloth and tight-fitting lead coffin was exceptionally well preserved. The skin, brain, lungs, eyes and muscles all still survived, and he was also able to discern the method by which the viscera had been removed as part of the embalming process (Collignon 1772, 465–6). As part of his post-mortem, Cullum preserved the corpse's hands in spirits, and these were subsequently passed to the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. Further aspects of the story were discussed in a paper published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1929 (Thompson 1929), although further enquiries have revealed that the Royal College of Surgeons no longer holds the hands in its collection, believing them to have been disposed of in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Pater's account continues:

*On the 24th February following, the mangled remains were inclosed in an oak coffin, and buried about eight feet deep, close to the north side of the north-east pillar, which formerly assisted to support the Abbey belfry. . . . Before its re-interment, the body was mangled and cut with the most savage barbarity by Thomas Gery Cullum, a young surgeon in this town, lately appointed Bath King-at-arms. The skull sawed in pieces, where the brain appeared it seemed somewhat wasted, but perfectly contained in its proper membranes; the body ript open from the neck to the bottom, the cheek cut through by a saw entering at the mouth; his arms chopped off below the elbows, and taken away.*

A PLAN of the Abbey of S<sup>t</sup>. EDMUNDS BURY, SUFFOLK: shewing the additions that ought to be made to S<sup>r</sup>. JAMES BURROUGH'S Plan.  
A. The great Chapel of the Virgin & Mary B. The little Chapel of the Virgin & Mary. C. another small Chapel. a. The place where the body of Thomas Beaufort Duke of Exeter was dug up. b. The place where it is now buried. D. another small Chapel discovered very lately.

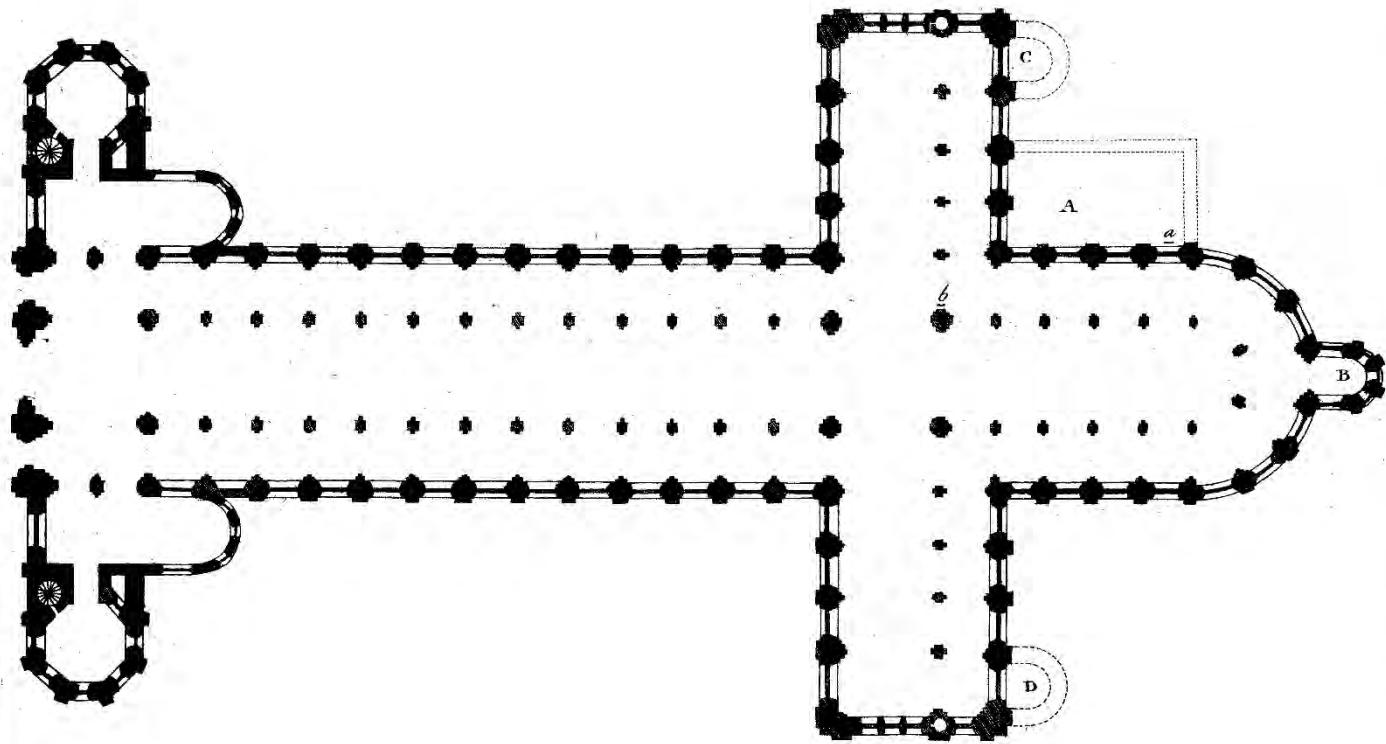
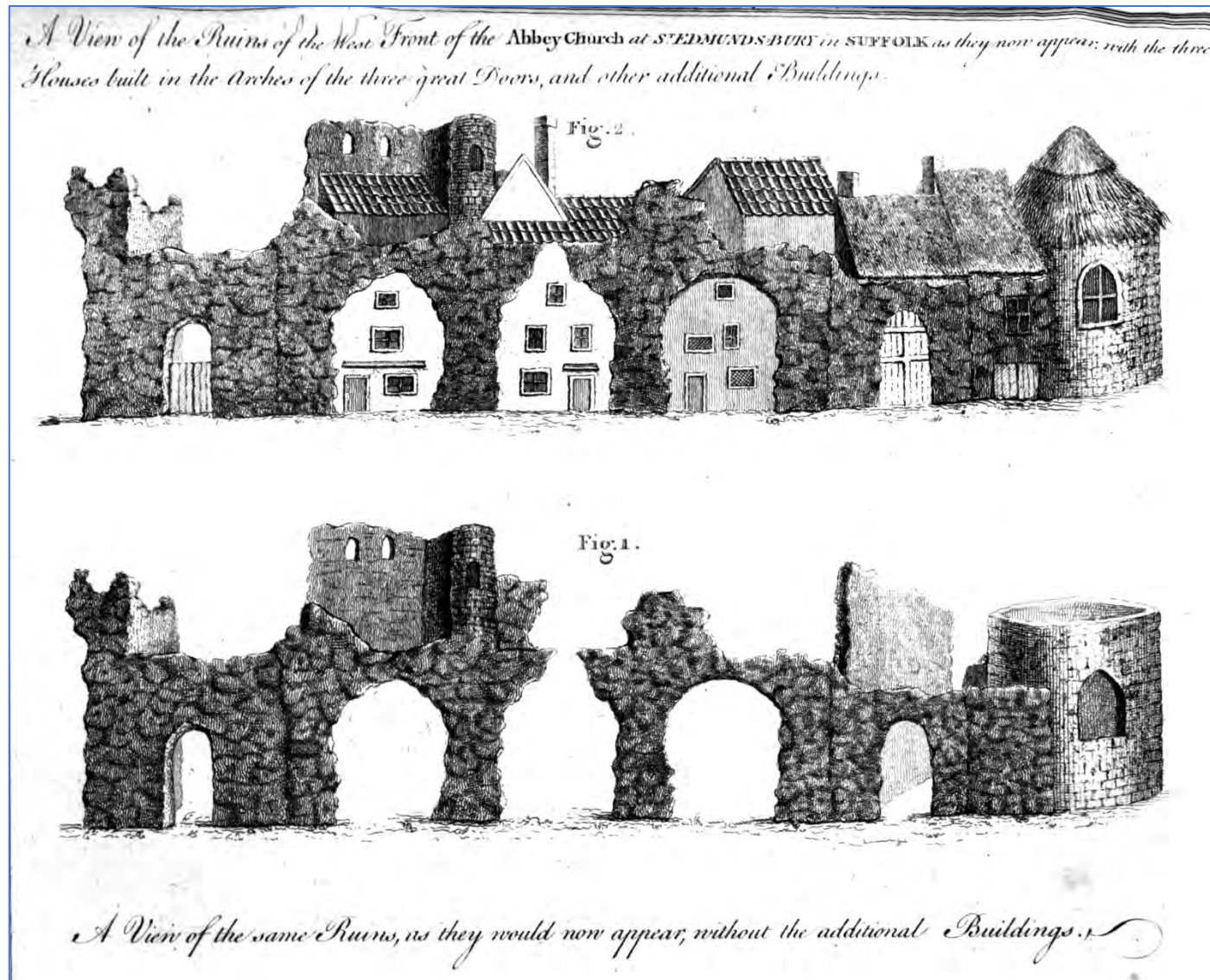


Figure 37: Edward King's 1774 plan of the abbey church published in Archaeologia in 1775.



**Figure 38:** Edward King's 1774 drawings of the houses in the western front of the abbey church published in *Archaeologia* in 1775

*It is believed the body of the Duchess was found (within about a foot of the Duke's) on the 24th of February. If she was buried in lead she was most likely conveyed away clandestinely the same night.*

*In this church several more of the ancient royal blood were interred, whose remains are daily expected to share the same fate. Every sensible and humane mind reflects with horror at the shocking and wanton inhumanity with which the princely remains of the grandson of the victorious King Edward the Third have been treated – worse than the body of a common malefactor, and 345 years after his death.*  
(Jeaffreson 1860, 273–4)

The antiquary Edward King later recorded the location of both the original grave and the reburial on his 1774 plan of the abbey church (Figure 37) and also commented that the new burial was made 'seven feet deep, at the foot of one of the great pillars, which still remains of a vast height, and may be considered as supplying the place of a monument' (King 1775, 313). King made significant contributions to our understanding of the abbey site in his own right, and later (briefly) became the President of the Society of Antiquaries of London (Sweet 2008), making him another significant figure of the emerging antiquarian class to be involved with the former Abbey of St Edmund.

In a letter to the Society of Antiquaries of London dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1774 and published in *Archaeologia* the following year, King presented the results of what was the first serious attempt to study and record the ruins of the abbey church. In his letter, King described how in the summer of 1772 the ruins of the abbey church 'were laid quite open to the view' (King 1775, 311) giving him the chance to make a detailed examination of the ground-plan of the abbey church (Figure 37) and compare it to the plan drawn by Burroughs which had been published at the end of Battely's *Antiquities* (Figure 35).

In commenting on the original plan, King stated that it 'is indeed in most respects exact, and very curious', but found that the ruins in various areas 'differ somewhat from the plan' and he published an amended and annotated version of the plan with his letter (Figure 15) 'to shew the difference; and in order to render Sir James Burroughs's plan the more compleat and useful' (King 1775, 311). His own additions



were marked with dotted lines and depicted walls which were 'buried under ground in the time of Sir James Burroughs', but which by 1772 were 'sufficiently exposed to view' (King 1775, 313).

The major addition made by King was the observation and identification for the first time of the ruins of the Lady Chapel to the north of the presbytery, which are marked 'A' on his plan. As King also pointed out, in making this identification he was finally able to make sense of the dimensions given by William Worcester, whose two references to a chapel of St Mary are confusing if it is not appreciated that there were, in fact, two chapels to St Mary: the axial chapel of the presbytery and the northern Lady Chapel. Accordingly, the small chapel to St Mary is marked 'B' on King's plan.

The other annotated details of King's plan are the remains of the northernmost and southernmost apsidal chapels of the transepts, which are annotated 'C' and 'D' on the plan, the latter having apparently been discovered 'very lately'. King also annotates his plan with the location at which the burial of Thomas Beaufort was discovered, which is marked 'a' on the plan, and the location at which he was reburied, which is marked 'b'. Presumably it was the events surrounding the discovery of Beaufort's burial which first drew King's attention to the site, and it is clear from his letter that he had taken a close interest in the matter, had conversed with Thomas Cullum and had seen some of the artefacts first hand.

In addition to his plan, King submitted two drawings of the western front of the abbey church with his letter, the first of which showed the west front in its then-present state, with three houses constructed within the three main archways of the façade, while the second drawing showed an attempted reconstruction of the same, but without the houses being present (Figure 38).

Finally, in a postscript to his letter, presumably added between its penning in 1774 and its publication in 1775, King stated the following:

*Mr Godbolt, of Bury, a gentleman whose house is adjoining to part of the Ruins, and who has taken great pains to trace out the foundations, and to ascertain the true situation of the different parts of the Building, has informed me, that they have very lately discovered the foundations*

*of another semi-circular chapel, answering to that which adjoins the great chapel of the Virgin. And he has moreover made it plainly appear that, in the transepts, or cross isles, there were in reality four pillars; whereas in Sir James Burrough's plan there are only three marked. He shewed me their foundations, as well as those of the chapel; and I have therefore ventured to make this addition to the plan. I ought also to mention, that the passages down to the Crypts, on each side the Campanile, have lately been discovered; and that there has been dug out of the Crypts a very beautiful head of an image; and several little leaden crosses, rudely cut, with inscriptions still more rudely scratched upon them, as with a pin, which were placed on the breasts and shoulders of bodies that had been interred. It deserves to be mentioned also, that the body of Mary, sister to Henry VIII, and queen of France, who afterwards married Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk (having been removed from the Abbey, soon after the dissolution), has within a few years been very honourably deposited by the side of the altar, under a plain marble tomb, erected at the expense of a private gentleman. The body was found wrapped in lead fashioned to it, in the same manner as that of the duke of Exeter was; but it had moreover, on the breast, the inscription, Mary, Queen of France (King 1775, 315).*

On 24<sup>th</sup> January 1775, King wrote another letter to the Society of Antiquaries, subsequently published in *Archaeologia* in 1777, in which he presented news of further discoveries made on the site of the abbey (King 1777). The first artefact, apparently found under the floor of the great aisle of the abbey church by Mr Godbold, was a lead seal of Ranulph de Gernon, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Chester, dating from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century (Figure 39). In a lengthy exposition, King supposed that the seal had been left with the abbey for safekeeping during the tumultuous period of Stephen's reign, the son of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Chester, Robert, having served as abbot of Bury between 1100 and 1102 (King 1777, 120–8).

The second of the discoveries reported by King, recovered from the crypt by Mr Godbold, was a fragmentary piece of fired clay bearing clay lettering in relief. Unfortunately, this fragment was not illustrated, but the third discovery, also from

the crypt was. This was an inscribed stone, thought to be part of a tomb, which was engraved with the name 'Lydgate' (Figure 40; King 1777, 130–1). John Lydgate entered the abbey as a novice in 1382 and rose to prominence as one of the foremost poets of the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, producing a prolific output and enjoying extensive royal patronage (Gray 2004). Lydgate died at Bury c. 1449/50 and was buried in the abbey church, and it is therefore likely that the engraved fragment reported by King might well relate to his tomb.



*Figure 39: The lead seal of Ranulph de Gernon, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Chester, dating from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century (King 1777).*

The last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a flourish of additional images of the site which captured the state of the site at the end of the century. The Suffolk artist John Kendall produced three images depicting the site in the 1770s and 80s, which were subsequently engraved. The first, entitled *Angel Hill in Bury St Edmunds* (1774) depicts the view south-east across Angel Hill and shows the Abbey Gate with the ruins of the abbey visible behind, and the churches of St James and St Mary beyond (Figure 41).



*Figure 40: An inscribed stone, thought to be part of a tomb, which was engraved with the name 'Lydgate' (King 1777).*

The second of Kendall's images, from the same period, is entitled *A View of the Church Yard at St Edmunds Bury* and shows the view looking north-west from the Great Churchyard looking towards the Norman Tower (Figure 42). The ruins of the Chapel of the Charnel are depicted in the foreground to the left of the frame, while the thatched remains of Samson's Tower and the ruins of the western front of the abbey church are depicted on the right. Across the churchyard, in the distance, is the Norman Tower, with St James' church adjacent to it, and the buildings which linked the two in this period are clearly visible. A third image by Kendall also focusses on the western front of the abbey church. Entitled *Ruins of the Western Front of the Abby Church in St Edmunds Bury* (1787), it presents a face-on elevation showing the dwellings which had colonised the ruins of the western complex from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Figure 43). The image is accompanied by a lengthy paragraph summarising the history of the abbey, with a particular focus on the notable figures whose tombs lay within its grounds.

A very instructive view of the northern end of the abbey precinct by Richard Godfrey was published in Grose's *Antiquarian Repertory* in 1779 (Figures 44 to 46). The image shows the view from the west bank of the river, looking east, and shows the dovecote and wall of the Abbot's Garden on the extreme left of the frame, beyond which are the ruins of the abbey church in the distance and the extant arcading of the cloistral buildings in the middle-ground. To the right, through a gap in the masonry, it is possible to see the abbey gate, and the surviving walls of the Abbot's Palace are shown extending to the precinct wall at the right of the frame.

A rare and unusual view of the ruins was engraved by Sparrow in 1790 and used in Harding's *Shakespeare Illustrated* edition of King John, playing on the historical link to the Magna Carta (Figure 47). The engraving was apparently based on an original drawing 'in the collection of Dr Coombe, drawn in 1680' and shows a view from inside the former abbey church, looking west, and gives a clear rendering of the backs of the houses which had been inserted into the west-front complex by this date. The house at the northern end of the complex is shown as very well developed, but the other houses had not yet been developed and the internal details of the construction which are now concealed are clear to view.



**Figure 41:** John Kendall's Angel Hill in St Edmund's Bury (1774) (© Trustees of the British Museum: [1870,0514.2827](#))



**Figure 42:** John Kendall's *A View of the Church Yard at St Edmunds Bury* (date unknown) (© Trustees of the British Museum: [1853.0112.2255](#))



**Figure 43:** John Kendall's Ruins of the Western Front of the Abby Church in St Edmund's Bury (1787) (© Trustees of the British Museum: [1853,0112.2276](#))





**Figure 44:** Godfrey's view of the northern half of the precinct, published in Grose's Antiquarian Repertory in 1779.



**Figure 45:** Detail of Godfrey's view of the northern half of the precinct, published in Grose's Antiquarian Repertory in 1779.



*of St Edmund at Bury.*  
*by Rich<sup>d</sup> Godfrey N<sup>o</sup> 120 Long Acre*

**Figure 46:** Detail of Godfrey's view of the northern half of the precinct, published in Grose's *Antiquarian Repertory* in 1779.



**Figure 47:** Sparrow's 1790 engraving of the west front of the abbey complex from the east, apparently based on a drawing from 1680. (© Trustees of the British Museum: 1868,0822.6183)



**Figure 48:** Thomas Girtin's 1793 watercolour of the interior of the Abbey Gate. (© Trustees of the British Museum: 1878,1228.22)

The 18<sup>th</sup> century depictions of the abbey are completed by a beautiful 1793 watercolour of the Abbey Gate, viewed from inside the precinct, painted by the artist Thomas Girtin (Figure 48). Girtin was one of the foremost landscape artists of his generation, and a close friend of J.M.W. Turner, who considered Girtin's skills to be greater even than his own. Following Girtin's early death, Turner is recorded as stating that 'I should have starved if Tom Girtin had lived'. Girtin's image captures a wonderfully idyllic scene, and is also notable for its depiction of two buildings constructed immediately adjacent to the gatehouse on the insides of the precinct walls.

## 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Investigations

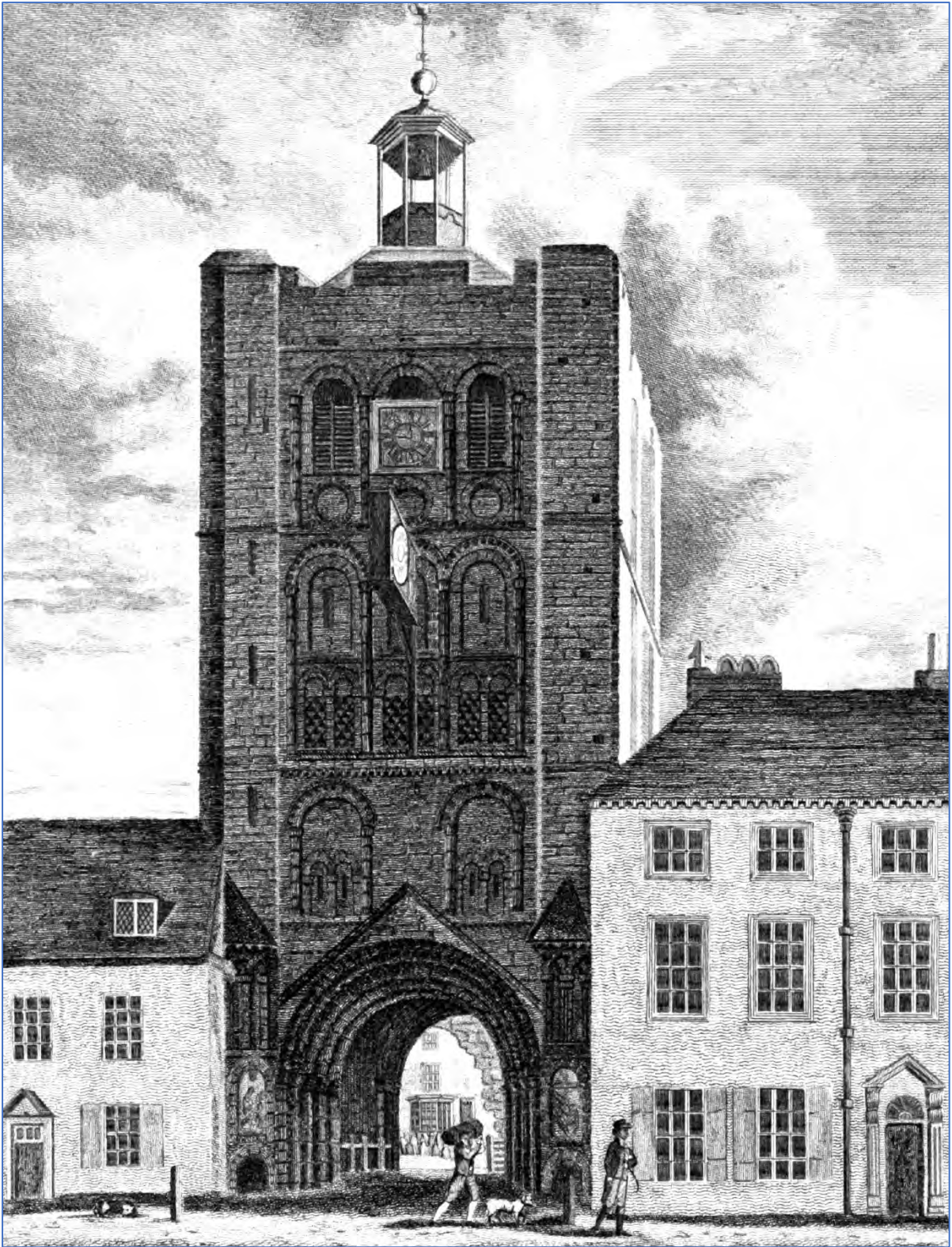
A number of rudimentary 19<sup>th</sup>-century archaeological investigations are alluded to in documentary sources and museum collections, although the details of the investigations are often not recorded and many of them were clearly not undertaken in a systematic fashion. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century interest in the abbey was also boosted by the publication of several synthetic studies, which attempted to collate the documentary history with the material remains on the ground, with increasing degrees of success. It should be stressed that many of these surveys were conducted without the benefit of the larger-scale archaeological works which were to characterise the 20<sup>th</sup> century and which would ultimately refine our understanding of the site. The 19<sup>th</sup> century also saw a proliferation of engravings of the site, with views of the Abbey Gate and the Norman Tower being particularly singled out for attention, although there were a number of more obscure illustrations and maps which did have the effect of further advancing our understanding of the site.

Richard Yates was a clergyman, antiquary and native of Bury St Edmunds. His father had served as custodian of Bury's abbey for decades, and when he died in 1803, Richard began a project to consolidate and publish his father's extensive archive of drawings and notes on the building. The first part of the publication appeared in 1805, but Yates did not live to see the project finished. His friend John Bowyer Nichols, attempted to revive the work some years after Yates' death, publishing a revised edition of the text with fourteen new plates and transcriptions of previously unpublished charters, in 1843. The 1805 incarnation of Yates' work

included a number of significant views of the various surviving elements of the abbey complex, including several views of the Abbey Gate, the west front of the abbey church and the Norman Tower, as well as his own plan of the abbey church. His view of the Norman Tower is particularly noteworthy, as it shows the tower with buildings abutting it on both sides, as well as recording the raised level of the ground surface and detailing both the protruding clock and flush clock-face which were attached to the tower's western side at this time (Figure 49). The church plan published in 1805 (Figure 50) built upon those published previously by Battely (Figure 35) and King (Figure 37) and was annotated with the measurements listed by William Worcester. The plan also contained additional details of structures which had been revealed since the earlier surveys, of particular note being the addition of the outline of St Botolph's chapel east of the south transept, which was not featured on the earlier plans.

As noted above, the 1843 edition of Yates' work included additional illustrations, which included a pair of views looking east (Figure 51) and west (Figure 52) along the ruins of the abbey church. These images clearly show the raised platform of building rubble which had amassed over the footprint of the church by this period, contrasted with the lower-lying ground in the area of the cloister immediately to the north. The new edition also contained a pair of images depicting the west face of the Abbot's palace in 1720 and 1803 (Figure 53), which can be compared with the drawings by Prideaux (Figure 29) and Battely (Figure 36) and which clearly demonstrate the degree of destruction experienced in this area of the site during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps the most important image included in the new edition was a view of St Margaret's Gate, which once stood at the southern entrance to the Great Churchyard and which has now been destroyed (Figure 54). This is one of very few images of the gate to have survived and gives us a very clear impression of the ornate carving and statuary which adorned the gateway.

Other collections of contemporary images also survive, which provide many views of the abbey ruins. These include publications such as Jacob George Strutt's *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821) and Henry Davy's *Series of Etchings Illustrative of the Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk* (1827), and their environs, although very few of these images provide new details.



**Figure 49:** William Yates' West Front of the Church Gate, published in Richard Yates' *An Illustration of the Monastic History and Antiquities of the Town and Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury* (1805).



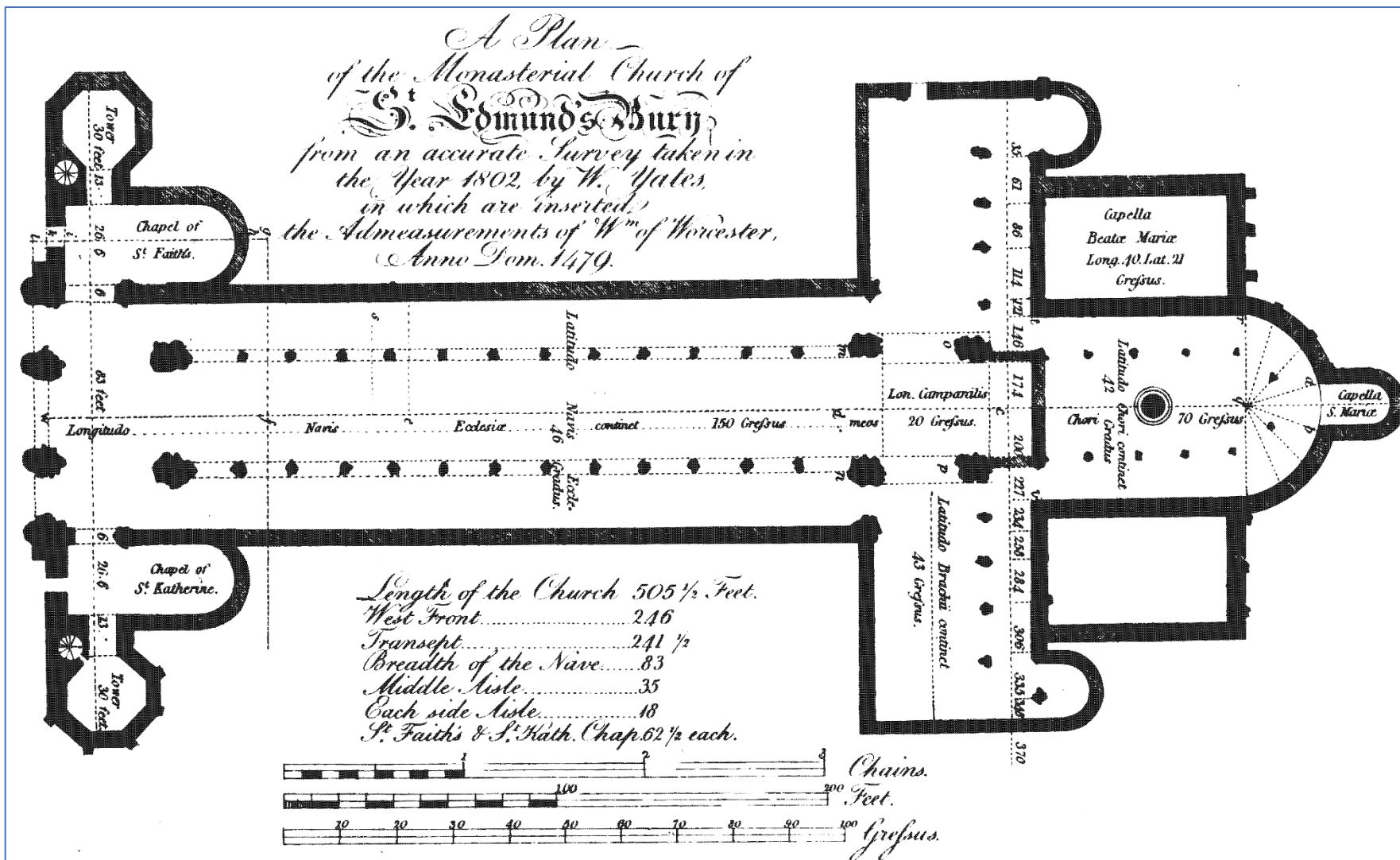


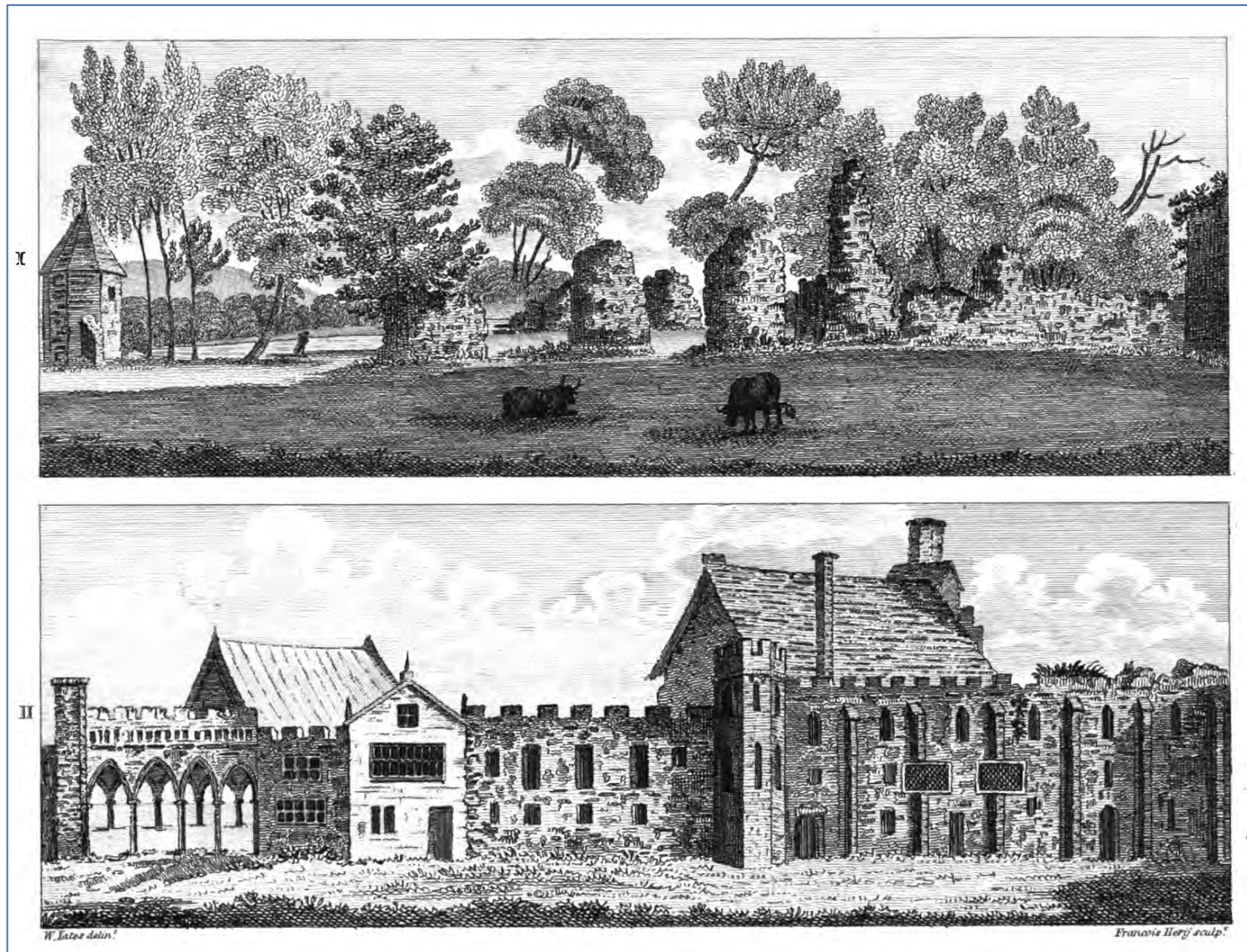
Figure 50: William Yates' plan of the abbey church, published in Richard Yates' *An Illustration of the Monastic History and Antiquities of the Town and Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury* (1805).



**Figure 51:** *St Edmund's Church Looking to the East*, published in Richard Yates' *An Illustration of the Monastic History and Antiquities of the Town and Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury* (1843).



*Figure 52: St Edmund's Church Looking to the West, published in Richard Yates' An Illustration of the Monastic History and Antiquities of the Town and Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury (1843).*



**Figure 53:** Two contrasting views of the Abbot's Palace in 1720 (bottom) and 1803 (top), published in Richard Yates' *An Illustration of the Monastic History and Antiquities of the Town and Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury* (1843).



**Figure 54:** A view of St Margaret's Gate, seen from the south, published in Richard Yates' *An Illustration of the Monastic History and Antiquities of the Town and Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury* (1843).

The middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a series of archaeological excavations and chance discoveries made on the site. A note of a Quarterly Meeting of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History held in Bury St Edmunds on 20 December 1849 records that, in 1834, the reburied coffin of Thomas Beaufort was apparently excavated again and found to have decayed, along with the body so that it was possible for one of his bones to be collected and exhibited at the 1849 meeting.

In 1844, the crypt of the Chapel of the Charnel was partly dug into, revealing a floor of Barnack stone 'covered two feet deep with bones', although no further details of this work are known (Hills 1865b, 118). In 1848, an article published in the *Bury and Norwich Post, and East Anglian* on 27<sup>th</sup> September (p. 2 col. 3.) gives the only surviving, but fortunately quite detailed, account of the discovery by workmen of a cache of wolf bones in the vicinity of the Norman Tower. The article appears to have been informed by Samuel Tymms, and reads thus:

*INTERESTING DISCOVERY – In removing the earth on the north side of the Norman Tower, just within the line of the Abbey wall, and about nine feet from the Tower, opposite the entrance to the chamber now used as the ringing loft, the workmen came upon a number of skulls and other bones of animals, lying about two feet below the present surface, and rather more above the original base-line of the Tower. Altogether about twenty skulls, more or less perfect, were taken out, and bones of the trunk and limbs in proportion. They were evidently animals of various ages, some of the tusks and teeth being blunted with use, whilst others had all the sharpness of full vigour, and others had not arrived at maturity. Doubts being entertained whether they were the bones of dogs, or of wolves, the osteology of which is so nearly identical, the most perfect specimens were sent up to Professor Owen, of the Royal College of Surgeons, as the highest authority in comparative anatomy, for his opinion. The learned professor's reply is as follows: -*

*"London, Royal College of Surgeons*

*"Sept. 23 1848*

*"Sir*

*"I duly received the box of bones to which yours of the 21st refers, and have completed an examination of them. They are all of the Wolf, with the exception of one skull, which is of a large Dog. There was not a trace of human remains.*

*"Believe me truly yours*

*"RICHD OWEN"*

There followed a short discussion piece which pondered why so many bones of an animal long extinct should come to be buried here. Stratigraphically, it is clear that the remains sat higher than the original floor of the abbey gate, and it must therefore be presumed that they post-date the dissolution of the abbey and the building up of the ground in this area. Although the newspaper suggests that the bones may have been buried beneath a mound raised against the wall, or beneath a stair ascending to the tower. Inevitably, a connection with Edmund was

suggested, and other ideas were invited from the readers. A further report in the same paper for the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1848 (p. 2 col. 6) quoted a letter from Richard Owen in which he declined the offer to retain sample bones from the collection and one of the skulls is still on display in Moyse's Hall Museum (Figure 55). It is also interesting to note the involvement of another notable scientist of the day in the Bury Abbey Story. As is alluded to in the article, Richard Owen was an immensely important figure in 19<sup>th</sup>-century anatomical studies, was responsible for the coining of the term 'dinosaur' and was instrumental in the establishment of the Natural History Museum (Gruber 2004).



**Figure 55:** *The skull of a wolf discovered by St James' tower in 1848 now on display in Moyse's Hall Museum.*

In 1849, John Darkin, clerk of the works for the restoration of St James' church, carried out excavations at the eastern end of the abbey and monastic buildings near the river (Hills 1865b, 128). Extensive foundations were uncovered and drawn, before being largely reburied, and the resultant plan was incorporated into the site plan published by Hills (1865a, Pl. 2). From this plan, it would seem that the area excavated was relatively large and that the walls uncovered were substantial (see

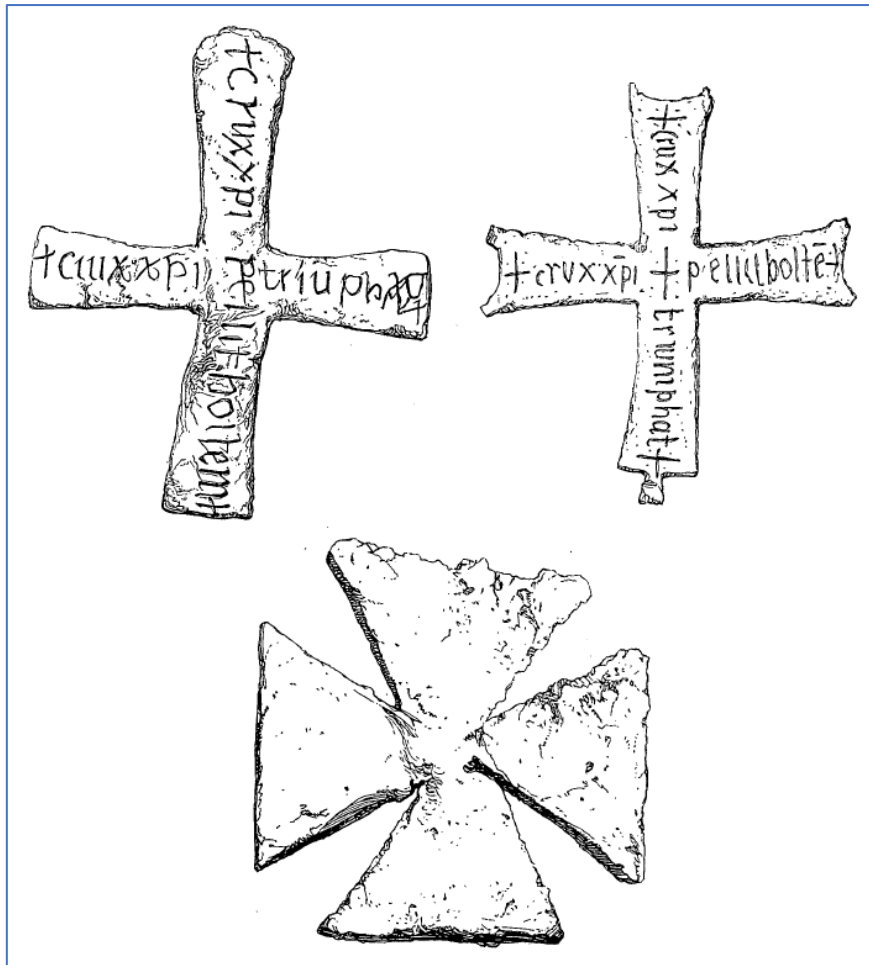
Figure 58). This would seem to have been the remains of Bradfield Hall, a range of buildings attached to the infirmary, and their foundations were revealed again during excavations ahead of the construction of a sewer trench in 1962 (see below). In 1849, it is reported that the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology uncovered part of the original paving of the choir (Gibbs 1948, 208), and Whittingham refers to excavations in the crypt which explored the three radiating chapels, revealing tiled paving and details of the altar in the northern chapel (1952, 170). This may be related to a note made in the first volume of the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology* of the Institute's Quarterly Meeting held in Bury on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1848 which states (1856, 25):

*The Rev. J.W. Donaldson mentioned that Professor Willis had kindly promised to furnish the Institute with a plan of the Abbatial Church of St Edmund, with suggestions for the examination of the site in certain spots, to ascertain the existence of the various lateral chapels, etc.*

Whittingham cited a card index held at Moyse's Hall Museum for details of the excavation, but recent enquiries undertaken as part of this research have failed to reveal these cards and there is a strong possibility that they have not been retained. Another excavation about which almost nothing is known was undertaken in 1871 and focusses on the St Margaret's Gate area. The work apparently revealed the remains of the gateway and demonstrated that the ground level in the area had been raised by about five feet, as was also the case at the Norman Tower, although no further details are recorded (Morant 1873, 393). In addition to excavations amongst the ruins, stray finds were also often discovered, the most common type of which has been the lead mortuary crosses which were apparently buried with members of the monastic community. In 1855, at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries of London held on 15<sup>th</sup> March, Samuel Tymms presented three small lead mortuary crosses (Figure 56) which were accompanied by the following note:

*I take this opportunity also of sending some leaden Crosses, found in Bury St. Edmund's, which may perhaps be of sufficient interest to exhibit.*





**Figure 56:** The three mortuary crosses presented by Samuel Tymms to the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1855 (Tymms 1859).

*They were found on the breasts of skeletons in that part of the Cemetery of St. Edmund, known, I believe, as the Cemeterium Fratrum. Such Crosses have been occasionally met with for many years, and in every instance within my own observation the body on which it was found appeared to have been buried without a coffin of any kind; but the Bury Post Newspaper of Nov. 16, 1791, noticing the discovery of two stone Coffins in the same locality, mentions that in each of them was found a leaden Crucifix, inscribed on one side Crux xp'i triumphat [The cross of Christ triumphs], and on the reverse Crux xp'i pellit nostem [The cross of Christ drives away the enemy]. Similar Crosses from the same churchyard are now to be found in many private Collections in the county, and the Museum of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology has*

*several specimens of a larger size than those now sent, but the Inscription in every instance appears the same. (Tymm 1855)*

Tymm's three crosses remain in the museum of the Society of Antiquaries of London (LDSAL 372.1–3), where they are complemented by another example which Edmund Waterton presented to a meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1863 (LDSAL 373). Another example is held by the British Museum, having been donated in 1867 by Sir John Evans (BM 1867,0711.14), and three more crosses are in the collection of the Moyse's Hall Museum (Figure 57), including one which was found in the grave of Abbot Samson when it was excavated in 1902 (1976.278–280).



**Figure 57:** *The three lead mortuary crosses held by Moyse's Hall Museum. The central cross was found in the grave of Abbot Samson in 1902.*

Academic interest in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by attempts to collate and synthesise documentary references to the history and layout of the monastic precinct, with a view to identifying and interpreting the extant ruins of the abbey. There are, therefore a number of published plans based on such exercises, which offer differing views of the precinct. The first of these was an in-depth consideration of the antiquities of Bury St Edmunds published by Gordon M. Hills in two successive parts of the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* in 1865 (Hills 1865a; 1865b). These papers began with an account of the visit to Bury made by the British Archaeological Association in 1864, and discussed some of the ancient sites and historic buildings around the town, but their main focus is on the history and development of the abbey and its precinct.

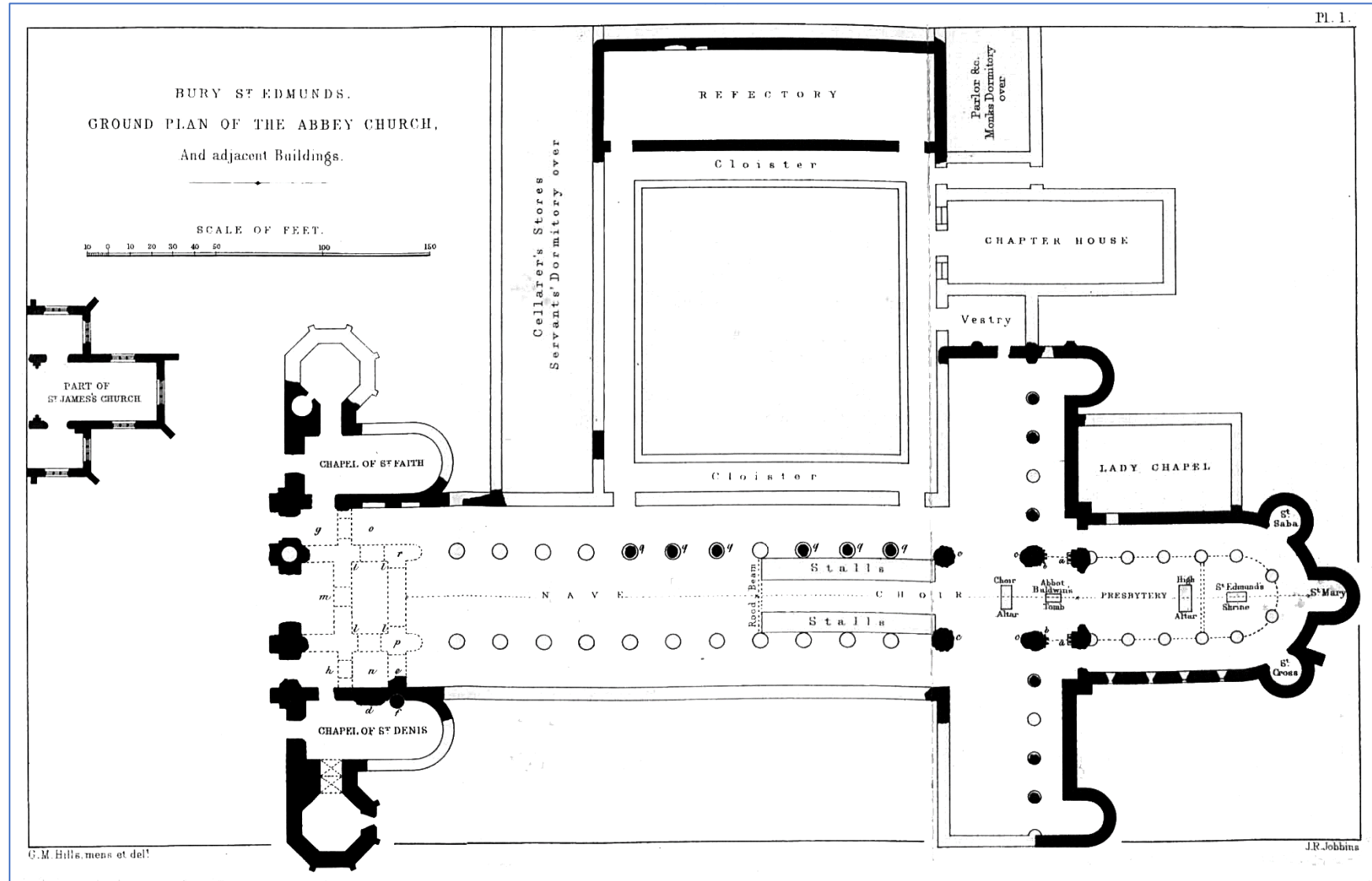
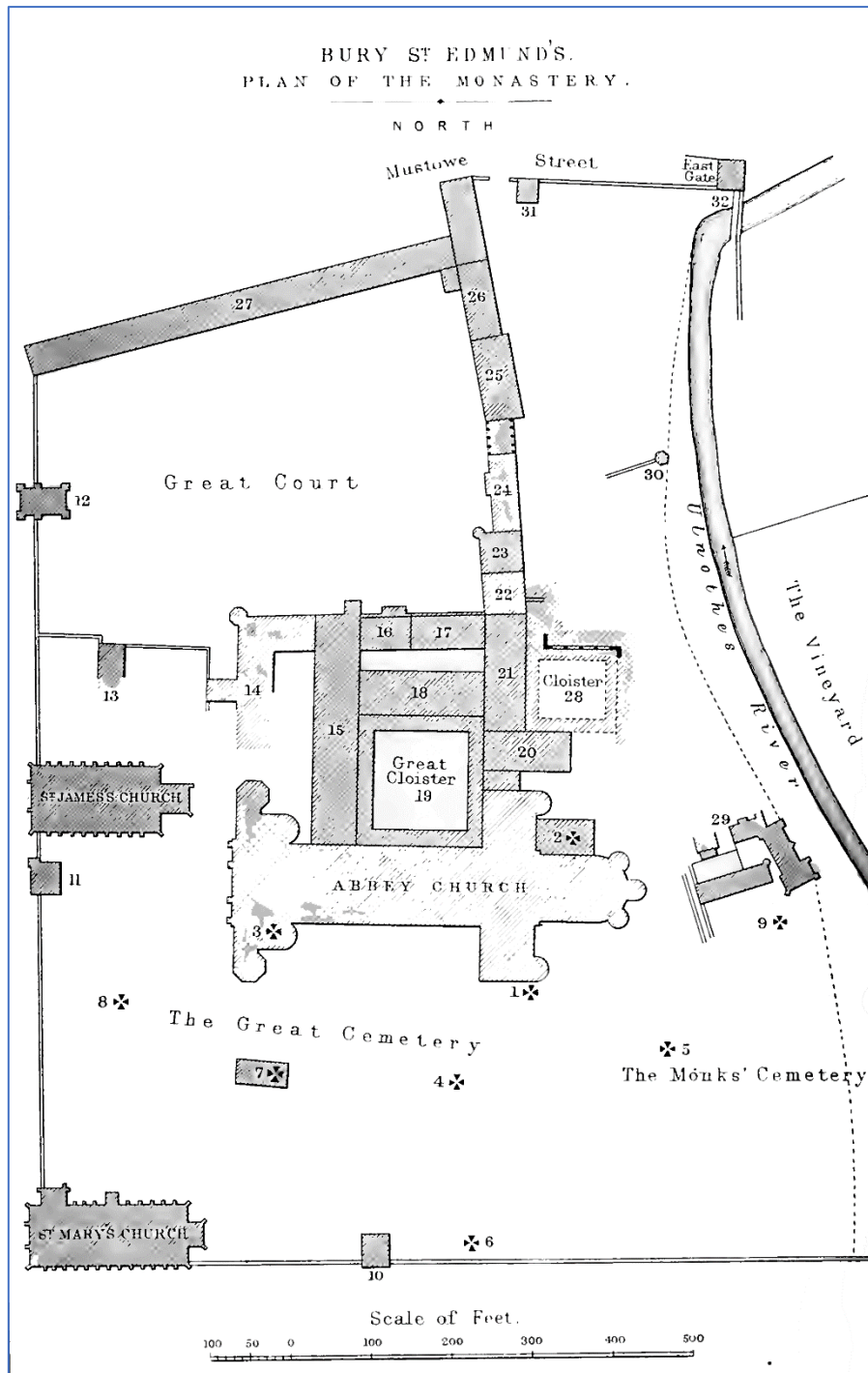


Figure 58: Hills' reconstructed plan of the abbey church, published in 1865.



**Figure 59:** Hills' conjectural reconstruction of the monastic precinct, published in 1865.

As part of his analysis, Hills published a plan showing the extent of the surviving masonry of the abbey church, to which he added the two apsidal transept chapels reported on by King, but which had presumably been covered over again during the intervening period (Figure 58). This was complemented by a more speculative plan of the wider monastic precinct as he understood it from the historical, architectural and archaeological sources available to him (Figure 59).

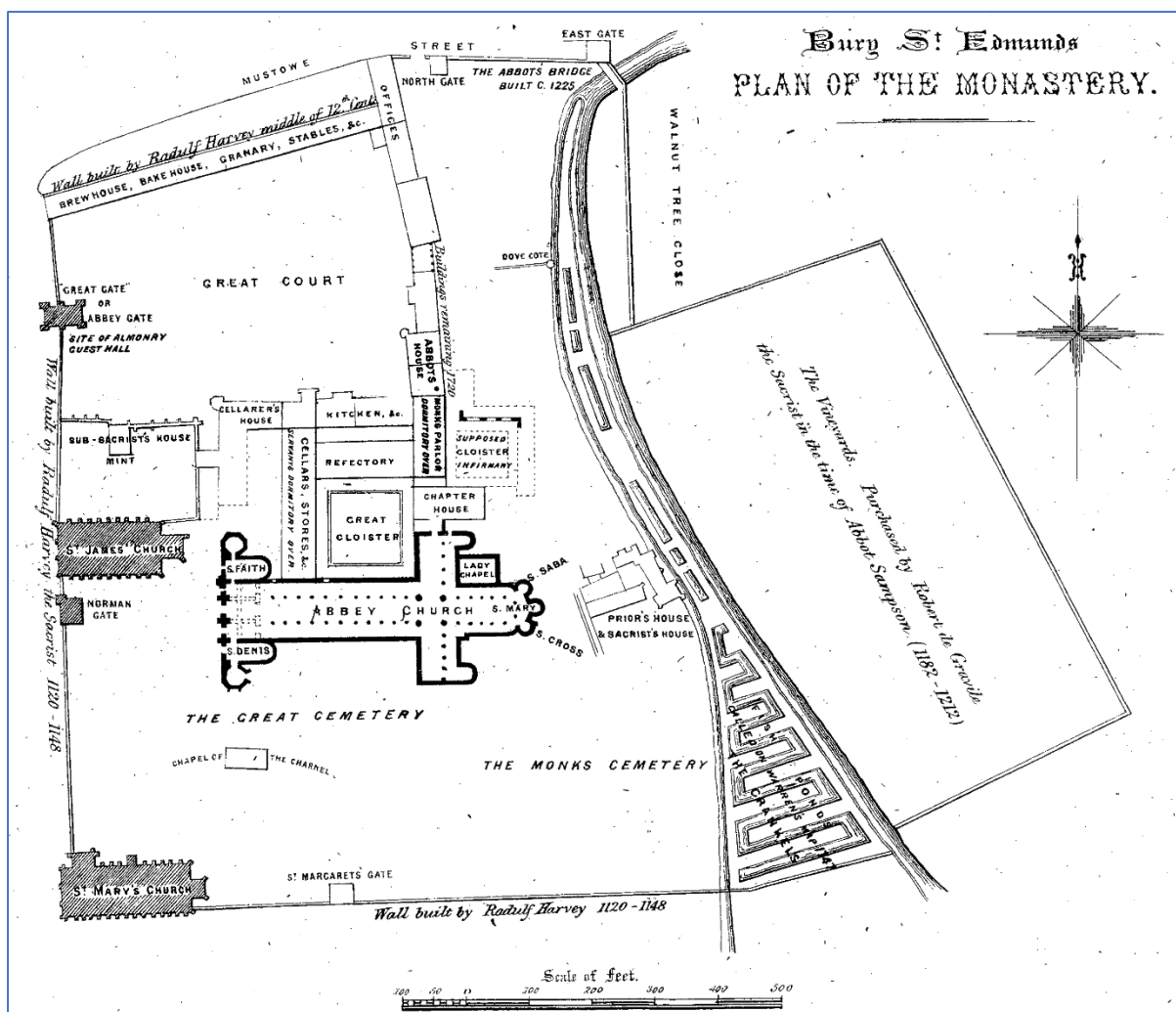


Figure 60: Morant's interpretative plan of the abbey complex, published in 1873.

Another synthetic account of the history and architectural remains of the abbey was published by Morant in the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* in 1873, who read his paper at the meeting of the British Archaeological Institute held in Bury St Edmunds on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1869 (Morant 1873). In it, Morant presented a succinct synthesis of the history of the abbey, which drew heavily on the work of those who had gone before, especially Hills, and was able to describe the features of the monastic buildings. He also published a map, which summarised the state of knowledge accrued thus far (Figure 60), although he did not contribute much that was new. Morant did, however, present the information about the abbey buildings as if giving a tour of the abbey in its latter days, a method which was subsequently adopted by M.R. James (1895, 127–50) and, most recently, by Francis Young (2016, 177–87).

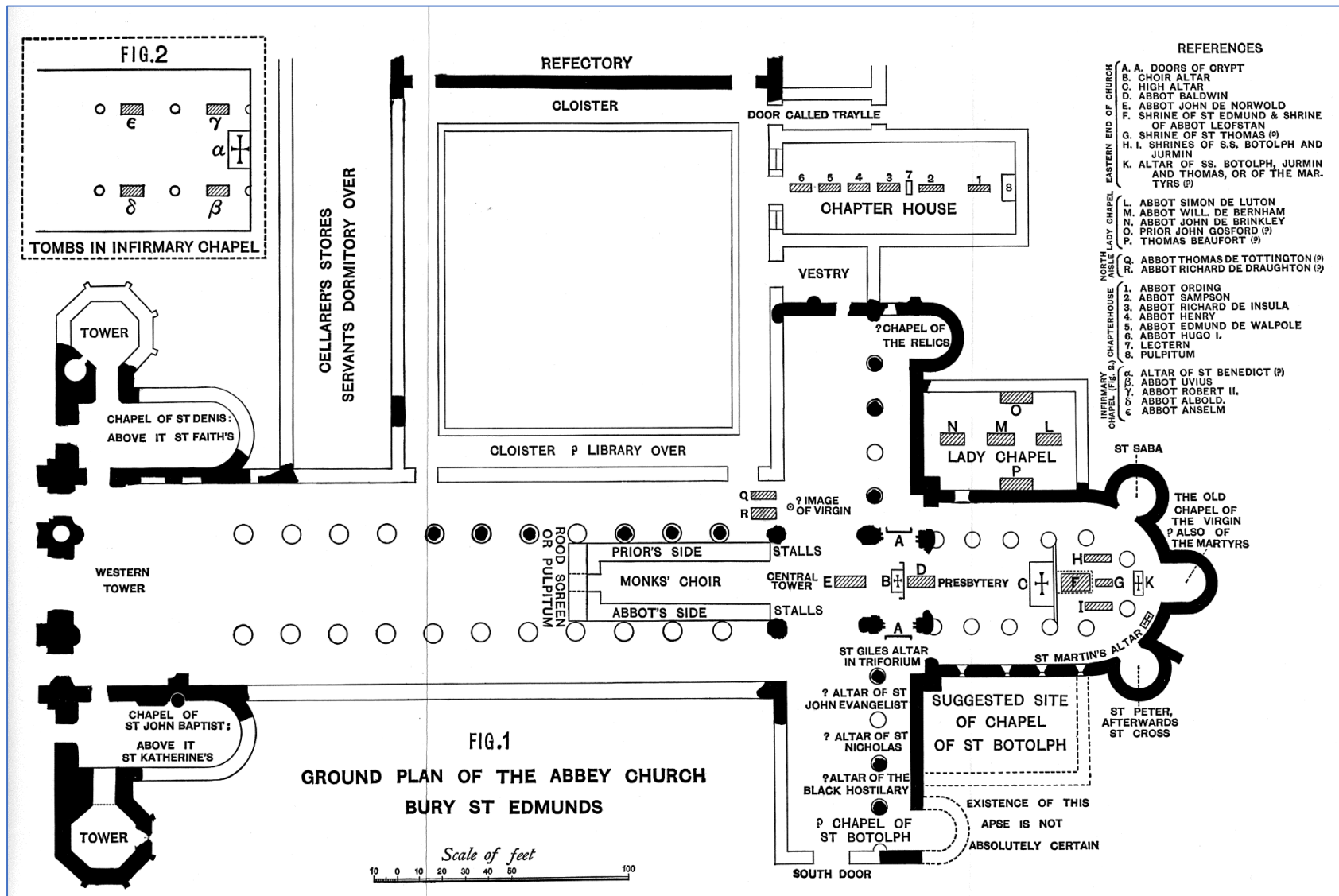


Figure 61: The reconstructed plan of the abbey church and other conventual buildings published by M.R. James in 1895.

The most substantial contribution made to our understanding of the developmental history of the abbey and of the layout of the abbey church in particular which was made by M.R. James in his 1895 book has already been alluded to in the previous chapter. In it, James included numerous extracts from the relevant manuscript sources, some of which were previously unknown prior to his work, which described the liturgical use of the church and enabled the locations of many of the chapels, altars and abbots' burials to be ascertained. The conclusions drawn by James, and the interpretative plans which he published (Figure 61), have stood the test of time (with minor variations suggested by later authors) and his identification of the resting places of the abbots in particular was responsible for the most well-known and widely publicised episode of archaeological fieldwork conducted on the site, which provided a spectacular opening to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century investigative history of the site.

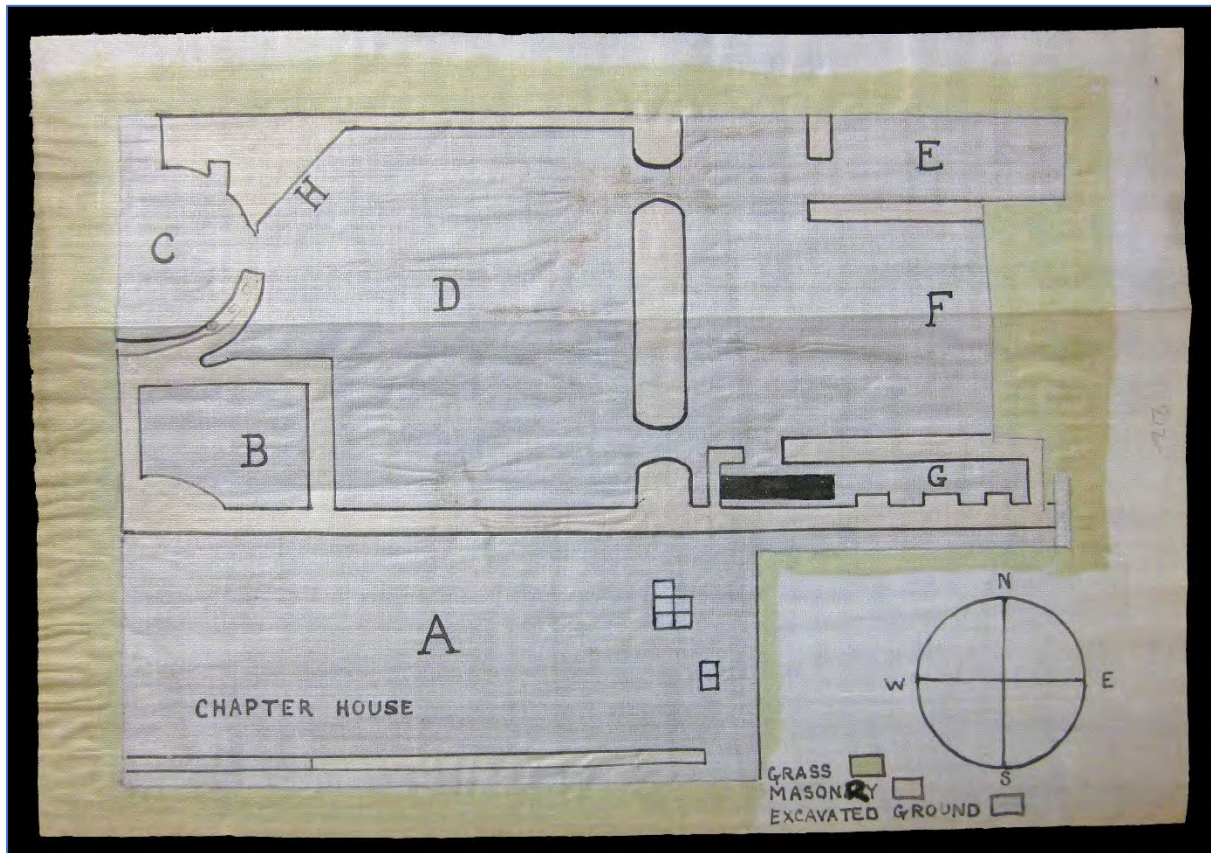
## 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Investigations

In 1902, as a consequence of James' conclusions and at the instigation of local antiquary Sir Ernest Clarke, an excavation committee was formed with the aim of investigating the validity of the historical sources which identified the tombs of six abbots lying buried in a line along the centre of the former chapterhouse of the monastery (Hervey 1905; Barker 1907, 53–8).

The work had the full support of the landowner, Lord Bristol, and having raised enough funding by subscription, excavations began on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1902 and continued until 5<sup>th</sup> January 1903. Initially, even the location of the chapterhouse was not known with certainty, but this was quickly identified and its north, south and east walls revealed (these are still to be seen on the site today). The west wall lay outside the excavation area, which was hard up against the fence line of the private gardens which lined the western side of the precinct during this period (see Figures 62 and 63). The demolition rubble within the chapterhouse was removed and the original floor level, indicated by patches of *in situ* tiling, was reached.

Although the monument slabs had gone, the stone coffins of five abbots and the uncoffined remains of a sixth were quickly identified lying in a row a few inches below the floor-level, exactly where James predicted that they would be. The

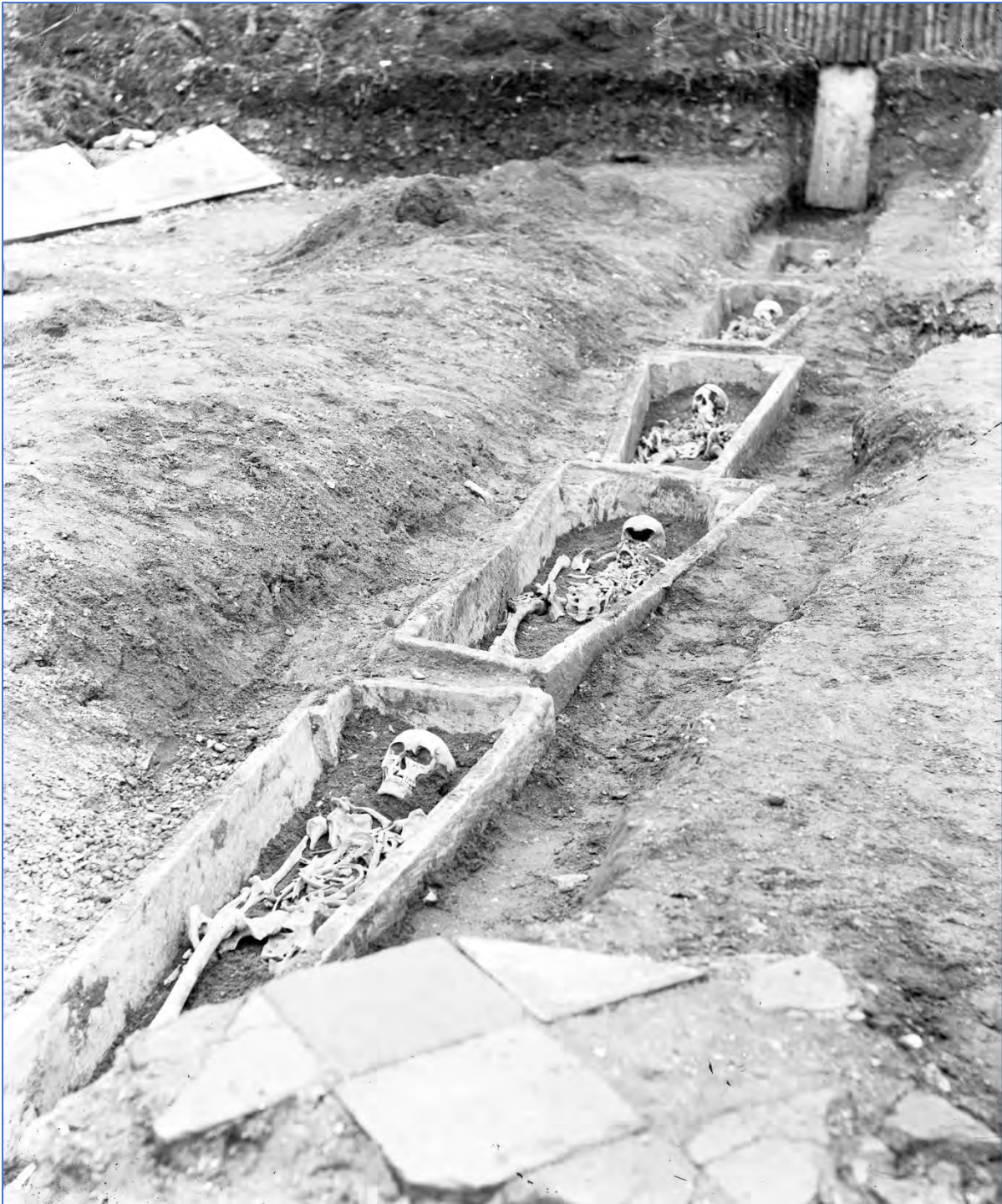
discovery was made on New Year's Day 1903, and news quickly spread through a series of announcements made in the local and national newspapers.



**Figure 62:** A plan of the 1902/03 excavations in and around the chapterhouse, produced by the excavation committee and sent to M.R. James. Found among his personal papers in the Cambridge University Library. The letters refer to descriptions in a cover letter not kept with the plan. (© M.R. James literary estate, reproduced with the permission of Nick James (Cambridge University Library MS Add 8399))

The skeletons themselves were very well preserved, and James' documentary evidence allowed the individual abbots to be identified. From east to west, the easternmost burial was that of Abbot Ording (1148–57), then Abbot Samson (1182–1211), Abbot Richard de Insula (1229–33), Abbot Henry de Rushbrook (1234–48), Abbot Edmund de Walpole (1248–56) and, uncoffined, Abbot Hugh I (1157–80). A lead mortuary cross was recovered from the tomb of Abbot Samson (Figure 57) along with a silver mount which is thought to have been part of his crozier (Figure 64). A short note on the crozier mount was published by Barker in 1924, and it and the cross are now in Moyse's Hall Museum.





**Figure 63:** Excavations in progress in January 1903 showing the in situ skeletons of the abbots in their coffins, in an image from the Spanton Jarman Collection. (© Bury Past and Present Society, reproduced with permission (SRO K505 2071))

The skeletons were lifted and stored in the house of Henry Donne, Lord Bristol's agent, who lived on the site. They were reportedly carefully studied and measured by a Dr Lucas and Dr Masters and were afterwards analysed by Professor MacAlister of Cambridge University. It would appear that photographs of the skulls

were also taken by local photographer Spanton, although no trace of these has yet been discovered in the archives of his images held by the Suffolk Record Office. Similarly, no trace has yet been found of any reports on the skeletons of the abbots themselves.



**Figure 64:** *The silver crozier mount from Abbot's Samson's grave, now displayed in the Moyse's Hall Museum. (© Moyse's Hall Museum (1976.285))*

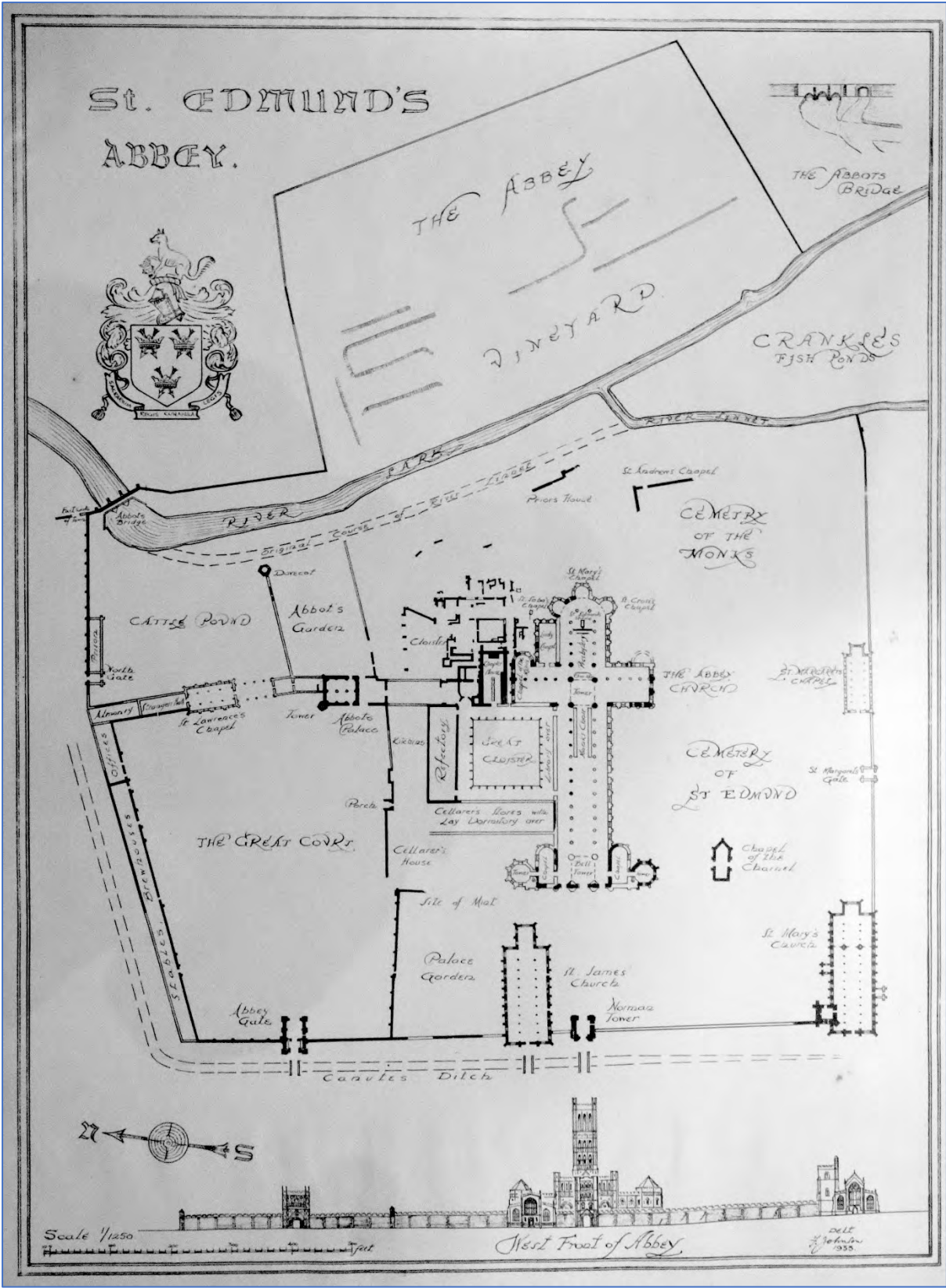
The skeletons were reburied with due ceremony on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1903, and newly made stone lids inscribed with their names were placed over the coffins, where they can still be seen to this day set into the floor of the chapterhouse.

In addition to the chapterhouse excavations, a wider area was also excavated, revealing the foundations of many more walls in the north-eastern quarter of the cloister (Figure 62). These remains were felt to be too fragmentary at the time for more detailed interpretations to be put forward, but the ruins were consolidated and left open, and have subsequently informed more detailed analyses of this area of the site.

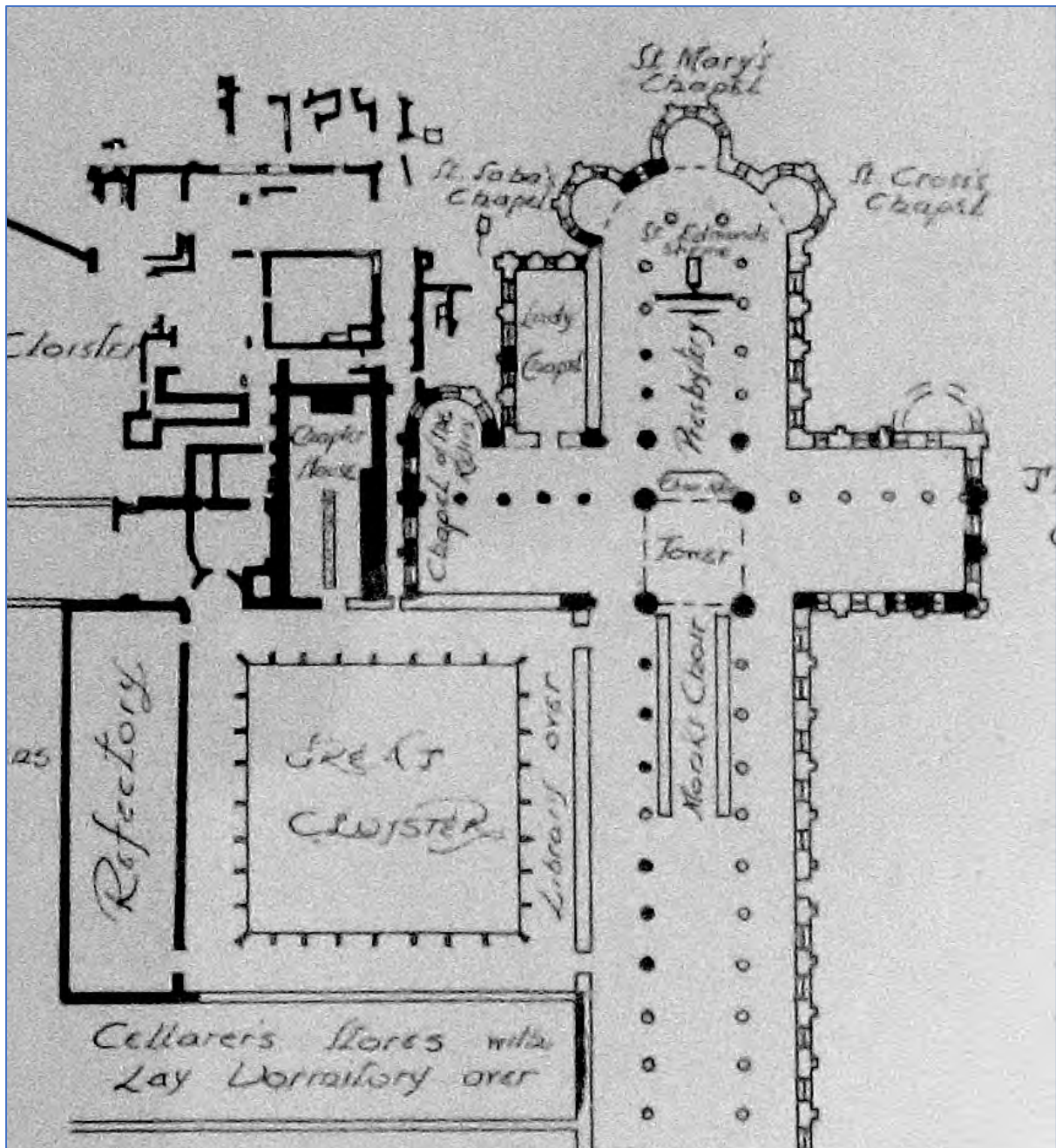
Following the discoveries, in 1904 the excavation committee decided that their efforts should cease for the time being, although the committee apparently retained the hope that the entire abbey church and the crypt would eventually be excavated, revealing the site in all its splendour. This was never to happen, although the first half of the 20th century saw an orchestrated campaign to clear and consolidate more of the ruins of the claustral buildings.

There is very little to suggest that the excavation of the monastic precinct was high in the public consciousness during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although much of the site had been opened to the public as part of the new Abbey Gardens. That said, there was much work being done behind the scenes by the Ministry of Works to consolidate the areas which were gradually being taken into guardianship and to work with the relevant landowners and the Town Corporation to ensure that the masonry remains were being well treated.

It is not until the later 1920s that we start to find traces of a new campaign to gradually clear and consolidate the ruins of the claustral buildings to the north of the abbey church. The notes of a site meeting held in late 1933 between representatives of the Ministry of Works and the Bury Corporation give an account of the clearance and restoration undertaken of the monastic ruins between 1928 and 1933 (TNA WORK 14/1031). The report states the Corporation spent £500 on the work in the first year and £200 each subsequent year, that the work had laid bare much of the eastern range and infirmary buildings, with the ground between the walls being turfed and the walls consolidated. A more detailed breakdown of the areas cleared is also given, thus (the dates are annotated in pencil):



**Figure 65:** Frederick Johnson's map of the abbey precinct in 1934, showing excavated masonry in black and conjectural masonry as dotted lines. (Moyse's Hall Museum)



**Figure 66:** Detail of Frederick Johnson's map of the abbey precinct in 1934 showing the extent of the claustral buildings uncovered by this date. (Moyses Hall Museum)

1929 (a) All boundary walls and other portions of masonry above ground within the area leased to the Corporation have been treated.

1930 (b) the ground has been excavated north of the Chapterhouse and the walls found treated.

*1931 (c) The ground has been excavated east of [the] Church and the walls found treated.*

*1932 (d) The ground has been excavated north of the Slype and the walls found treated.*

*1933 (e) The ground has been excavated at the Infirmary and the walls have been treated.*

This summary only gives a very broad account of the works undertaken, but a more specific picture of the extent of the clearances which had occurred by 1934 was given by Frederick Johnson, who was engaged in architectural studies of the site at the time and who mapped the extent of the exposed ruins (Figures 65 and 66). Johnson's site plan is now curated at the Moyse's Hall museum, and demonstrates that the notes referred to above were broadly accurate in their descriptions.

An archaeological insight into the nature and extent of these 1930s clearances was obtained in 2004, when a portion of the grassed area to the north-east of the chapterhouse suddenly subsided. The collapse was found to be due to an L-shaped hollow containing a flight of medieval stone steps leading down to a cellar, which had been excavated during 1934 and the mortar consolidated (Whittingham 1952, 179). Stacked stone blocks were found outside the line of the wall to the south and west, which had presumably been excavated from the stairwell. The excavated stairs and corridor were subsequently covered over with timbers supporting corrugated iron sheeting before being backfilled, and these eventually collapsed in 2004 when the site was re-excavated and reinstated (Rolfe 2005).

Clearance of the site continued in earnest following the Second World War, with a particular emphasis on the eastern end of the abbey church. Among the first recorded excavations undertaken in the area of the crypt are those conducted by N.C. Goldsmith, Borough Engineer and Surveyor, and H.J.M. Maltby, Curator of Moyse's Hall, in December 1948 and early 1949 (Maltby 1949). This work revealed the eastern face of the western wall of the crypt and explored the full depth of the crypt itself. The wall was revealed to be plastered, with traces of decorative paintwork visible, and the base of one of the piers supporting the vaulted ceiling

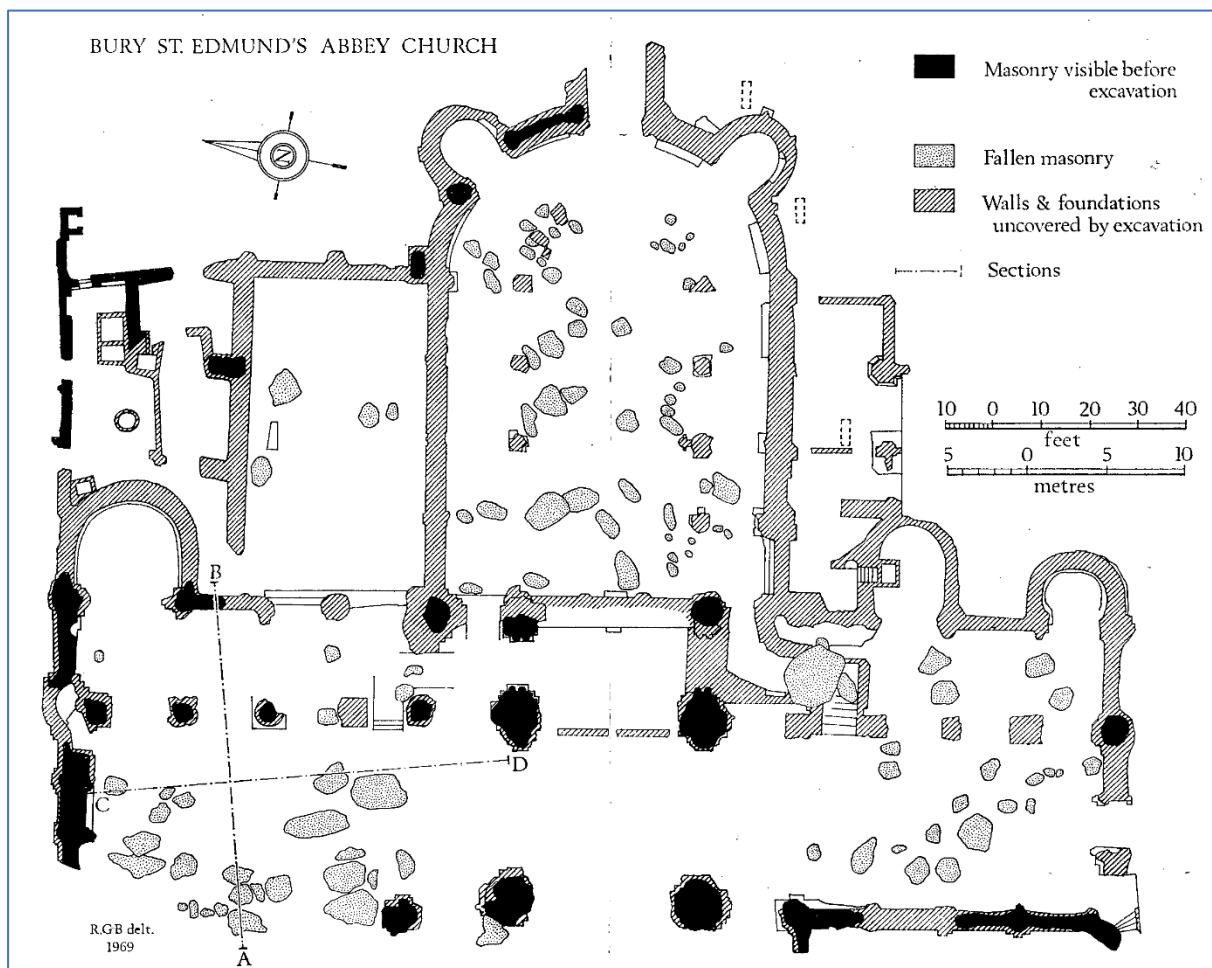
of the crypt was also revealed. Maltby also reported that unsuccessful attempts had been made to search for the original steps to the crypt and that additional work had also been undertaken within the east of the crypt in order to locate one of the piers at the chord of the apse. No plan was published, so we cannot be sure which areas were opened and which piers exposed. Unfortunately, nor can we be certain of the location of the top of a buried wall referred to by Maltby as being located running diagonally across the crypt trench (Maltby 1949, 257). This wall apparently shared no alignment with the abbey church and was thought by the excavators to be an earlier feature, making it one of the only sub-medieval-floor-level features to have been identified in the area of the crypt. Maltby concluded his very brief published summary by stating that: 'this preliminary work has established the existence of the original crypt, and though the vaulting has disappeared a great amount of useful information would be obtained if the whole of the crypt were cleared and properly excavated' (Maltby 1949, 257).

The Borough of Bury St Edmunds placed the eastern parts of the abbey church into the guardianship of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works in 1955, at which point the entire area of the church was covered with a thick layer of demolition rubble topped by an accumulated soil and overgrown with shrubs and mature trees and known as The Wilderness (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 256). Plans drawn at the time indicate that areas of flint masonry protruded from the ground in various places across the site, some of which pertained to the upstanding remnants of the abbey church and others of which were substantial pieces of fallen masonry lying within the ruins.

In order to clarify the nature and plan of the remains and enable them to be better understood, the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works excavated the ruins of the transepts, crossing, eastern chapels and crypt of the abbey church between 1957 and 1964 (Gilyard-Beer 1969). In terms of excavation strategy, initial trial sections were excavated across the area, in order to ascertain the depth of the overburden, after which the site was excavated using a grid pattern, so that continuous cross-sections were revealed as work progressed. Fallen masonry was recorded before it was removed. The excavation of the north transept began in May 1957 (cf. Wilson and Hurst 1958, 191) and was followed by the excavation of the crossing and south

transept from July 1958, so that by June 1959 both transepts and the crossing were cleared (cf. Wilson and Hurst 1959, 305–06). In March 1959, work began on clearing the crypt, the Lady Chapel, and the Chapel of St Botolph, and these too were cleared by May 1964. All of the excavations were directed by A.D. Saunders and M.W. Thompson of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, and resulted in the clearance of the eastern end of the abbey church down to its original floor levels, followed by the consolidation of the exposed masonry.

Figure 67 shows the masonry which was visible before and after the excavations, as well as recording the position of the major pieces of fallen masonry encountered during the work. Figure 68 shows representative cross-sections through the rubble layers which had amassed over the northern transept at the points marked in Figure 67.

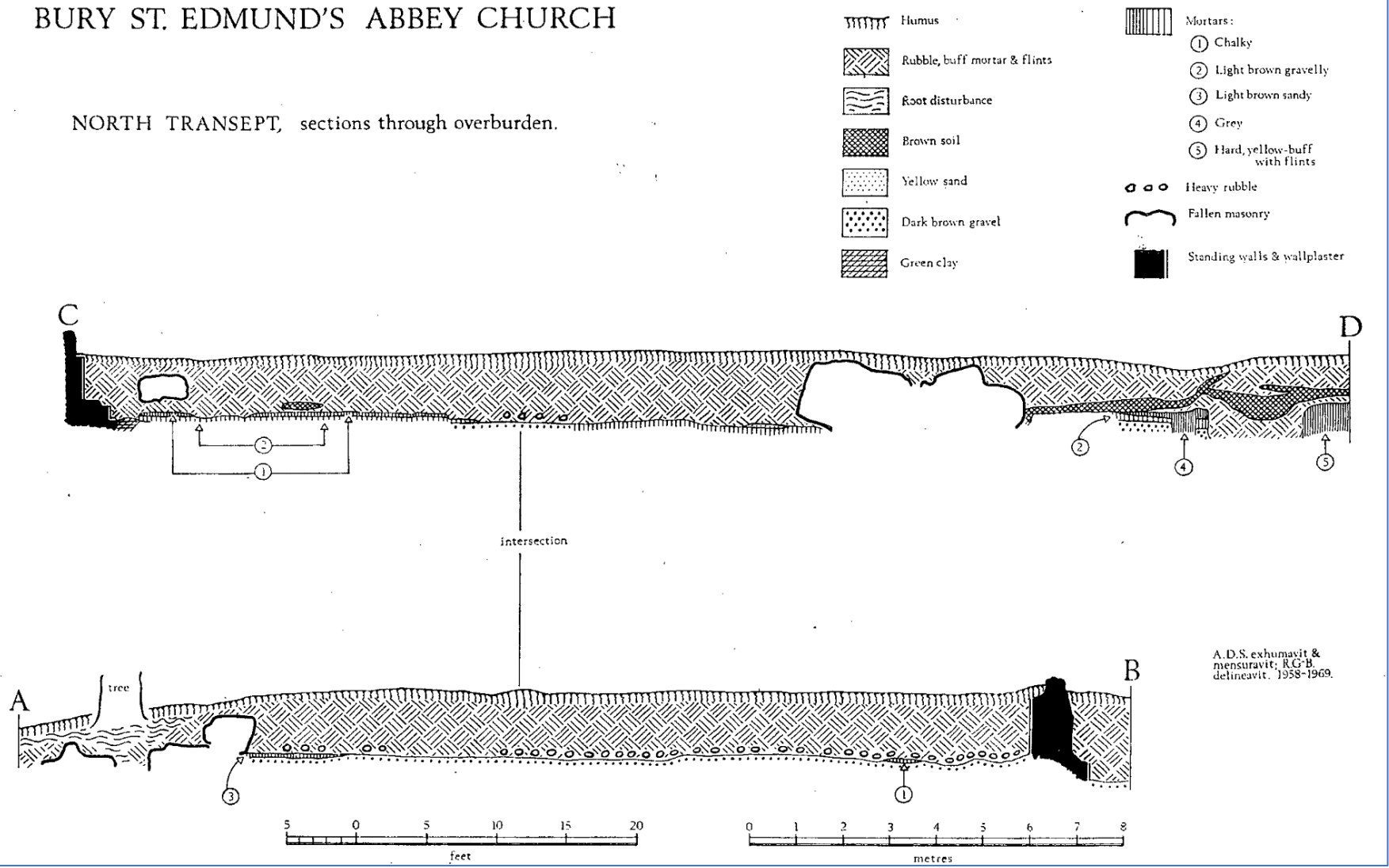


**Figure 67:** Plan showing the masonry which was visible before and after the clearance of the eastern end of the abbey church, published by Gilyard-Beer in 1969. (© Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, reproduced with permission)



# BURY ST. EDMUND'S ABBEY CHURCH

NORTH TRANSEPT, sections through overburden.



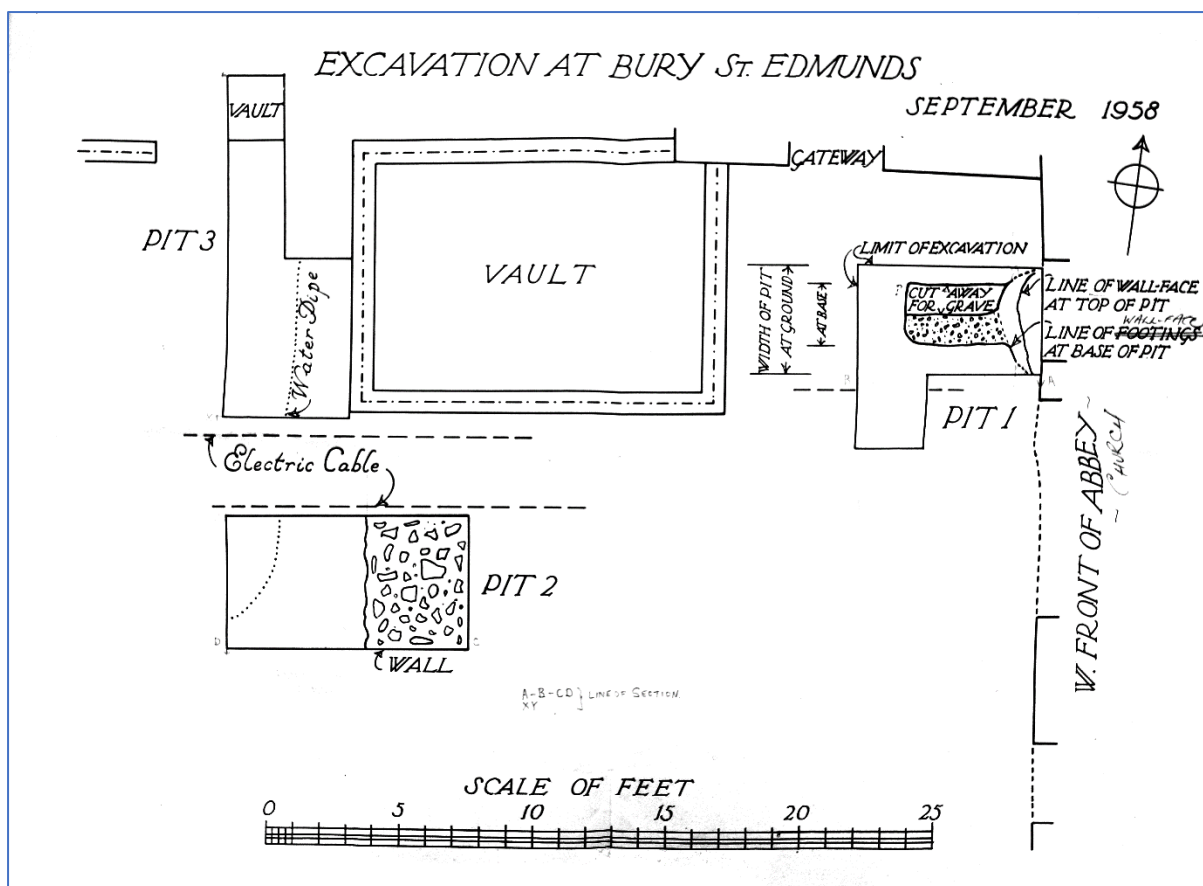
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Figure 68: Sections showing the depth of the rubble in the northern transept prior to its clearance, published by Gilyard-Beer in 1969. Section lines marked on Figure 24. (© Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, reproduced with permission)

The overburden across the area of the transepts and crossing was found to be approximately 1.5m (5ft) above the original ground surface, while the depth of overburden and rubble in the crypt was 4.25m (14ft), meaning that the ground surface above the backfilled crypt was broadly level with that of the crossing and transepts. In many places, the traces of known and unknown excavations in and around the site of the church were identified as dark soil fills within the rubble, mortar and loose flints which comprised the bulk of the fill.

Elsewhere on the site, the late 1950s and early 1960s saw two archaeological excavations undertaken which have shed considerable light on the development of the precinct. In 1958, following the announcement of plans to rebuild the chancel of the cathedral church of St James', a series of trial trenches were excavated within and around the footprint of the proposed new building, as it was understood that archaeological traces of the former church of St Denis, which was removed to make way for the later abbey church might lie on the site (Wilson and Hurst 1959, 305). The work was conducted by A. R. Dufty and C. A. Raleigh Radford on behalf of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and the pair produced a typewritten report of their findings, accompanied by a site plan and section drawings, but unfortunately the copy which was lodged with the library of the Society of Antiquaries is now missing. Fortunately, Radford handed copies of his site notes, including an annotated draft of the typescript to Anthony Fleming, who had excavated the Queen's Chamber between 1976–80 and who had conversed with Radford on the subject in the 1990s. A full copy of the report and the site plans is therefore to be found within the Queen's Chamber excavation archive, which is held at the English Heritage Collection at Wrest Park.

Dufty and Radford sank a number of linear trenches and test pits in the space which then existed between the north-western corner of the surviving west front of the abbey church and the eastern end of St James' church, although the exact location of their trenches is difficult to ascertain from the recorded plan (Figure 69). They were hampered by the presence of a number of burial vaults and service runs, but they were able to locate the footings of dressed-stone foundations of the western facade itself surviving at a depth of nearly 2m below the ground surface. These are visible at the eastern end of section A–B in Figure 70



**Figure 69:** Dufty and Radford's trench plan, from their 1959 typescript report, showing the footings of the western façade of the abbey church and the footings of the former church of St Denis.

Approximately 6m (20ft) to the west, a further set of Romanesque footings were discovered, which the excavators interpreted as belonging to the western wall of the church of St Denis, which was built c. 1081 and demolished c. 1140. The footings were located south of the proposed extension and about 30 feet in front of the porticus of St Faith, which formed the northern end of the Romanesque west front, and now lies under the paved area adjacent to the chancel of the cathedral. Only the western wall was identified and the church must have extended under the site of the later west front, as the historical sources suggest (Dufty and Radford 1959).

In November 1962, a further archaeological excavation was undertaken at the eastern extent of the abbey precinct, adjacent to the river Linnet, during the construction of a main sewer which was laid north-south across the site. This sewer replaced the line of an older pipe, and crossed the site of Bradfield Hall, apparently the infirmarer's lodging (Whittingham 1952, 182), which had been partially excavated in 1849 (Wilson and Hurst 1964, 244; Biddle 1964).

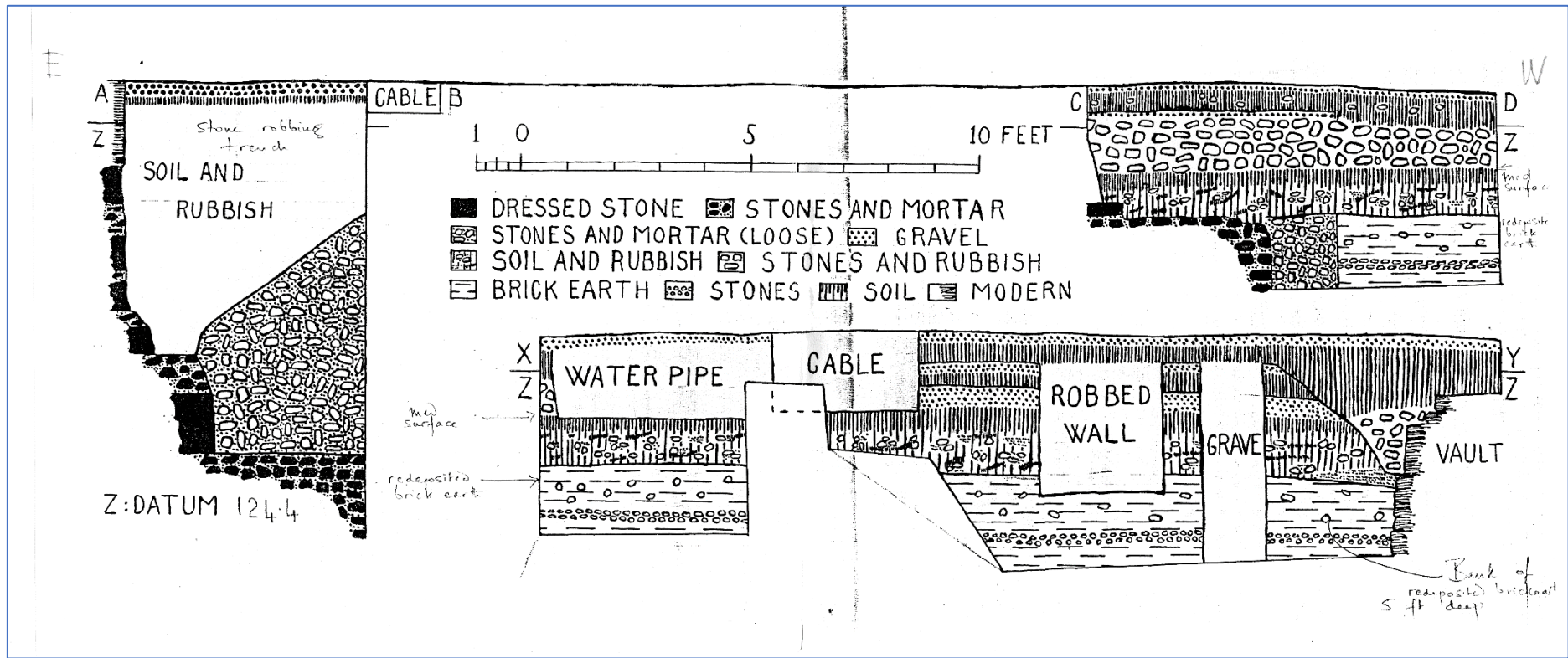


Figure 70: Dufty and Radford's section drawings, from their 1959 typescript report, showing the footings of the western façade of the abbey church and the footings of the former church of St Denis. See Figure 69 for the position of the section.

The area was excavated by Martin Biddle for the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works. Although the excavation was never published as more than a short note in the annual round-up in the journal *Medieval Archaeology*, contact was made with Martin Biddle as part of this assessment and he has since forwarded his original site notebook for the work, site photographs and negatives, which complement the official plan of the excavations drawn by the Ministry of Works (Figure 71). Full analysis of this material is beyond the scope of this report, but it will be necessary for a more detailed assessment of this material to be made in order that this area of the site be better understood. This archive material has been lodged with the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

The plan of the building, which had been partly excavated in 1849 was corrected, and although no dating evidence was found, the structural sequence was established, showing that the hall had begun as a building with two square rooms on the ground floor, and perhaps with a first-floor hall (Figures 72 and 73). The western wall of this building had been rebuilt, and what seems to be an hexagonal turret added at the south-western corner. At some later date a cross-range was added at the southern end and this in turn underwent considerable alteration. Excavation below the floors of the hall showed that it was built on made-up ground, overlying part of the original bed of the River Linnet. No trace was found of any earlier structures, in particular of the earlier manor house thought to be in this area.

In 1973, as part of a wider programme of restoration in and around the Norman Tower, the Department of the Environment carried out small-scale excavations beneath the archway of the tower and small areas immediately adjacent to it to the north and the south (Drewett and Stuart 1975). This work revealed evidence for the ground surface pre-dating the construction of the tower, as well as post-holes relating to its construction, and traces of the subsequent path laid from the tower to the west front of the abbey. Outside the tower, the foundations and footings of the precinct wall were revealed, and these have been consolidated and left visible. All of these features were overlain by the layers which had built up within and round the gateway following the Dissolution.

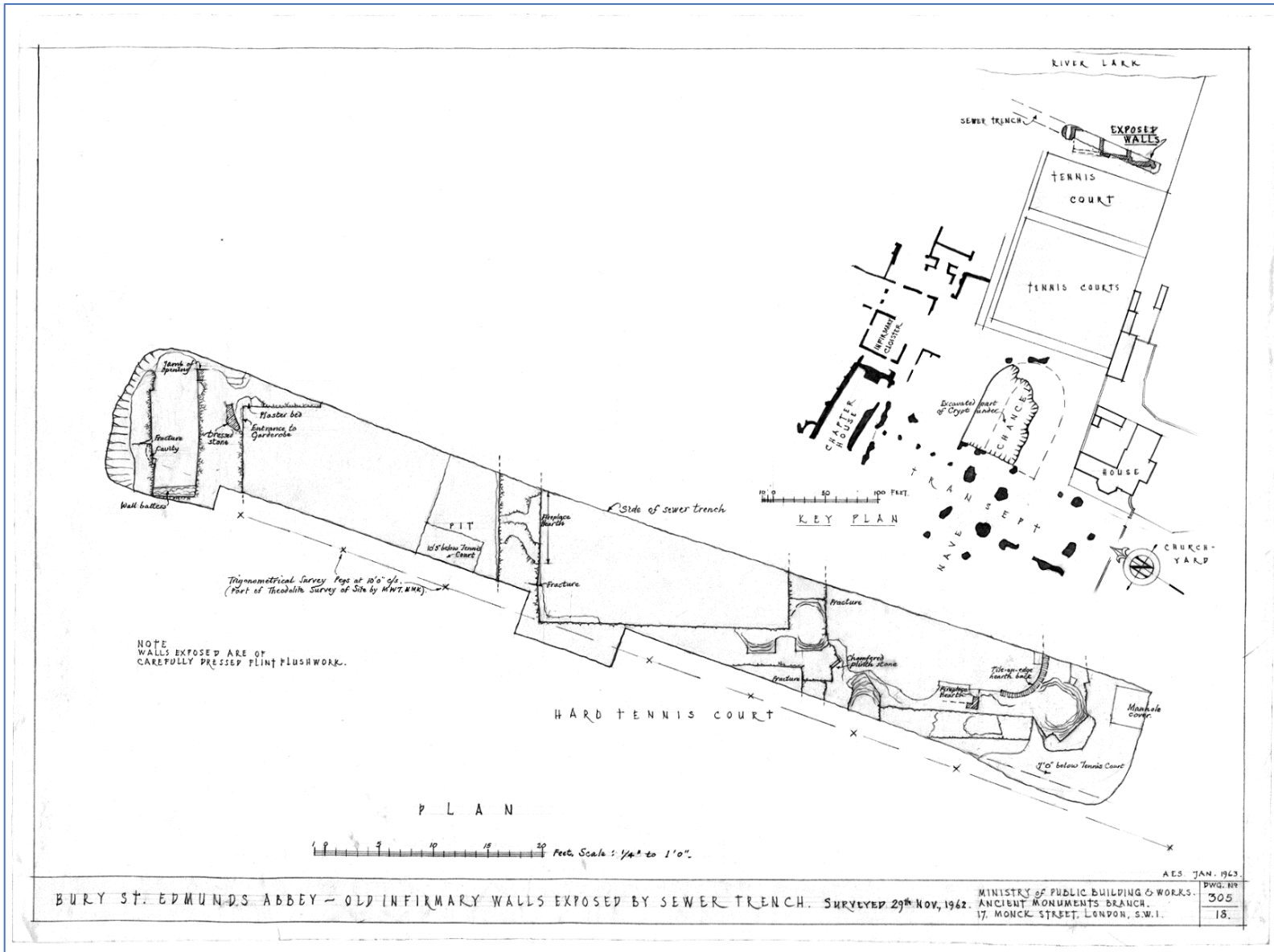


Figure 71: Ministry of Works plan showing the 1962 sewer trench in relation to the abbey church and tennis courts (inset) and the excavated walls.



**Figure 72:** Site photograph of the 1962 excavations by Martin Biddle looking south, showing the relationship between the buried walls of Bradfield Hall and the later tennis courts.



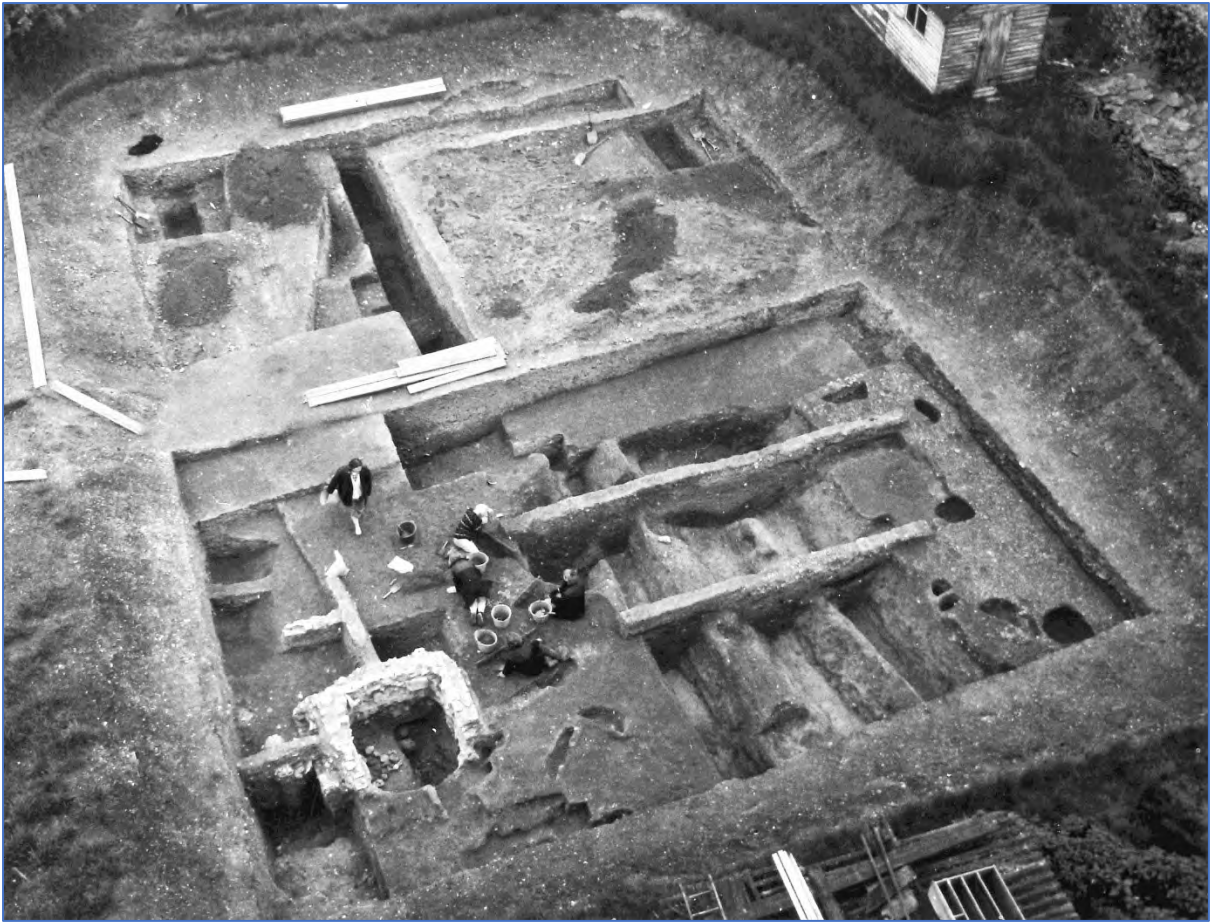
**Figure 73:** Site photograph of the 1962 excavations by Martin Biddle looking south, showing the relationship between the buried walls of Bradfield Hall and the later tennis courts.

Between 1976 and 1980, the area of the Queen's Chamber on the eastern side of the Great Court was excavated by Anthony Fleming of the Department of the Environment, who was then the Inspector of Ancient Monuments responsible for the site. This work was undertaken to investigate the archaeological sequence of the site and the interrelationship of the medieval buildings, but also with a view to conserving that area of the site and displaying the results. The fieldwork seasons were hampered by very dry summers which made digging difficult, but the work was eventually able to demonstrate archaeological occupation of the site from the Middle Anglo-Saxon period onwards, with substantial phases of Late Anglo-Saxon timber buildings being present, which were then replaced by the masonry of the monastic buildings.

The results of the excavations remain unpublished, although brief summaries were published in *Medieval Archaeology* (Webster and Cheery 1980, 240) and in English Heritage's regular radiocarbon round-ups (Bayliss *et al.*, 45–9), while the excavator delivered a lecture on the subject to the British Archaeological Association conference in Bury St Edmunds in April 1994. A considerable amount of post-excavation analysis has been undertaken on the material from the site, primarily by the English Heritage Laboratory, including detailed faunal analyses, the production of publication-quality plans and sections, and a suite of radiocarbon dates. The excavation archive has been consolidated and microfilmed and is currently held in the English Heritage Collection at Wrest Park, and it would not take much more work to bring the excavation to publication. Fortunately, the excavator has been very generous with his time and notes, and the results of these excavations have been able to be integrated into the relevant sections below.

The only other major campaign of intrusive archaeological investigation to have taken place within the abbey precinct is the series of three, linked excavations which were undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service in response to the proposals to construct the new Cathedral Centre extension to the north of the cathedral in the 1980s, and the excavations associated with the construction of a new north transept for the cathedral in the late 1990s.





**Figure 74:** Excavations in progress on the site of the Cathedral Centre, 1988. (© Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service)

The first of these excavations was undertaken in 1983 on the site of the proposed Cathedral Centre to test the theory that, prior to the enlargement of the abbey precinct to its present shape, the main north–south road through Bury St Edmunds linked Northgate and Southgate Street, passing directly in front of the west front of the abbey church (Martin *et al.* 1984, 327). The medieval courtyard surface was found to be buried beneath a 1.5m thick layer of topsoil, beneath which were a series of cobbled surfaces, built up on a base of rammed sand and bounded on the west by a substantial north to south ditch, which had been recut at least once. Although the surfaces were not of very heavy construction, the alignment of the road and the ditches correspond with the projection of Northgate Street. The road cannot be precisely dated, but its position suggests that the route is at least pre-Norman. Traces of this road were seen again during excavations carried out in 1988 and 1999 within the Cathedral Precinct Yard (Figure 74), which revealed evidence of occupation activity prior to the enclosure of the precinct and its subsequent

development as part of the abbey complex (Gill 2005). Evidence of a succession of timber buildings from the Late Anglo-Saxon period to stone-built conventual buildings of medieval date were found and these are discussed in more detail in the relevant sections below.

## Modern Archaeological Investigations

The vast majority of the archaeological investigations since the 1980s have been undertaken as a requirement of Scheduled Monument consent for groundworks within the precinct or, especially in the post-PPG16 era, as a result of conditions placed on granted planning permissions and Listed Building consents. The Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service was established in 1974, and one of their first publications was an assessment of the archaeological potential of Bury St Edmunds (Carr 1974). The SCCAS offices were located within the precinct until 2017, and consequently much of the archaeological work undertaken in that time was conducted by them, with results being entered into the county Historic Environment Record and archaeological archives. Recent years have seen a wider range of archaeological contractors working in the town, and many of the more recent pieces of archaeological fieldwork have been undertaken by these contractors, whose results have similarly been lodged with the HER.

Details of all of the known episodes of archaeological fieldwork are listed in Appendix IV and mapped in the project GIS, and it is apparent that the vast majority of the later fieldwork episodes comprise archaeological monitoring of routine groundworks, the installation or replacement of service runs, or restorative works around the precinct. Most of this fieldwork produced limited evidence or recorded that the groundworks in question did not penetrate the overlying rubble layer, but there are several pieces of fieldwork which have achieved positive results and greatly enhanced our understanding of the archaeological record of the study area and, where relevant, the results of these disparate episodes of fieldwork are integrated into the following sections at the appropriate points.

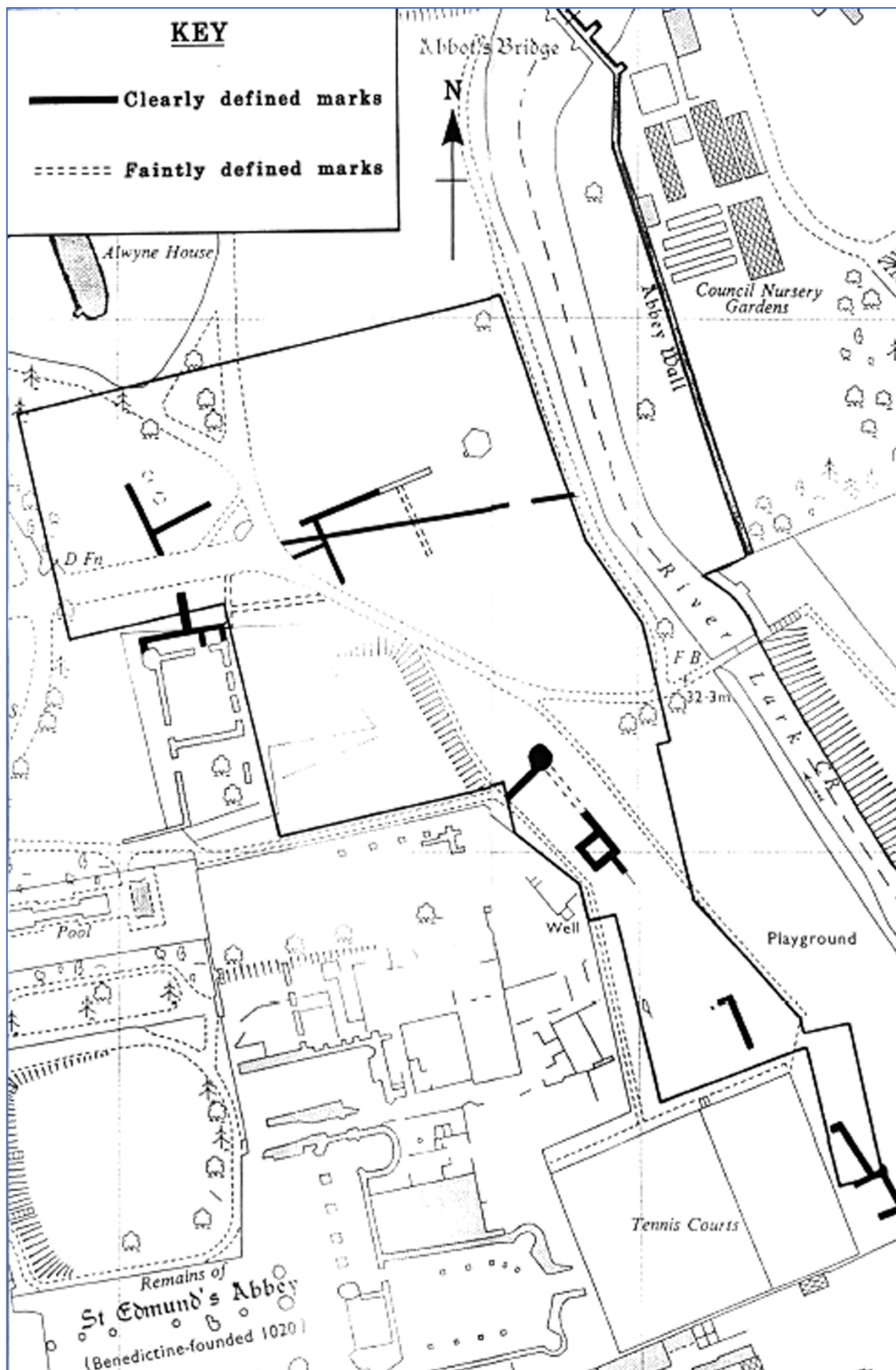
One feature of the modern archaeological investigations of the site, which has demonstrated good results and has enormous potential for furthering our understanding of the former precinct, is the application of archaeological geophysics. Geophysical survey enables buried archaeological remains to be

detected and mapped in a non-invasive fashion, and the open grassed spaces of the study area are particularly conducive to such surveys, with the varying techniques responding differently to different types of buried features.

In March 1990, a resistivity survey was conducted in the grounds of the Abbey of St Edmund in the areas of the Infirmary, the Abbot's Garden, the dovecote and the reputed site of the mill. The findings indicated that extensive buried foundations of walls and buildings are likely to be present in many of the areas investigated. Although the geophysical response was good, the definition of precise structural patterns was not particularly clear (Payne 1990).

A large-scale geophysical assessment of the abbey gardens was undertaken by GSB Prospection in 2008, during which resistance survey, magnetometry and ground-penetrating radar were used. Later disturbance and metallic interference restricted the abilities of the magnetometry to identify features, but resistance survey was able to identify buried walls and other structures in the vicinity of the dovecote. The ground-penetrating radar survey of the tennis courts was inconclusive and seemingly hampered by the material used to build up the courts, although there were traces which could relate to the apsidal chapel of the abbey church and to buildings associated with Bradfield Hall (GSB Prospection Ltd 2008).

A second non-invasive technique used in the 1990 survey was the assessment of the parch-marks caused by the grass drying out over lines of buried masonry, which had been visible during the hot summer of 1989 (Figure 75). The features mapped correspond very closely with those captured in a photograph taken by the SCCAS in May 1980 (Figure 76), which shows buried wall lines as white marks against the darker grass, as well as illustrating the compound which then surrounded the Queen's Chamber. A more detailed survey of the aerial photographs held at the Historic England Archive was undertaken as part of this analysis, demonstrating that the 1980 photograph reproduced here is one of the clearest images there is and that the 1990 map is sufficiently detailed to make further air photo transcriptions unnecessary at this time. In any future hot summer, it is suggested that the grass is monitored for the presence of parch-marks and that these are photographed from an elevated position or from the air, perhaps with a drone.



**Figure 75:** Transcription of parch-marks recorded in the grass of the Abbey Gardens in 1989 (Payne 1990).



**Figure 76:** Aerial photograph taken by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service in May 1980, showing many buried wall lines as white marks against the darker grass. (© Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SAU LC 15))

## Whittingham's Analysis

The final part of this section is dedicated to the single most significant piece of interpretative work undertaken concerning the abbey: the architectural and historical analysis of the ground-plan of the abbey which was undertaken by Arthur Whittingham and published in the *Archaeological Journal* in 1952 (Whittingham 1952). Drawing on all of the known historical references, architectural details and archaeological discoveries which had been made thus far,

Whittingham was able to put together a written account of the history of the abbey in which he set out a detailed plan of the layout of the monastic precinct, identifying individual buildings from their position within the monastic ground-plan and their relationship to one another, as inferred from allusions to these relationships in the historical sources (Figure 77).

While criticisms can, and have, been made of the nature of Whittingham's article, which was published as part of a series of pieces intended to aid the visit of the Royal Archaeological Institute to Suffolk in 1951, none of the archaeological and architectural discoveries which have been made in the last 70 years have greatly altered Whittingham's conclusions. It is true that Whittingham's presentational style left a little to be desired, and that an enormous number of facts and references are included in the article, without too much thought being given to the ability of the user to follow his argument. It is true that the article could have benefitted from considerably more illustrations and photographs to help explain the points being made and features referred to. It is true that he approached the progress through the buildings in a less-than-logical manner, and switched focus from the interior to exterior of buildings without leading the reader, but these problems with the medium should not and do not distort the message. When worked through slowly and carefully, with particular attention being paid to the physical remains on the ground as one does so, Whittingham's account never fails to make perfectly coherent sense and give an interpretative structure to the monastic ruins which is second to none. It is no coincidence that his work has gone on, in a greatly simplified form, to underpin several incarnations of the official guidebook for the site, as remains the case many decades later (Whittingham 1971; 1992). While there may be a need to revisit and revise this guide-book as part of a wider reassessment of the interpretation and presentation of the site (issues which will be considered more fully in the Conservation Plan), the substance of Whittingham's analysis is still valid.

Whittingham's 1952 plan is complex and very detailed, with every major building element annotated and labelled. Extant masonry and inferred masonry are indicated separately, as are the piers of arcading and other features. For all its complexity Whittingham's plan is a nothing short of a masterpiece in

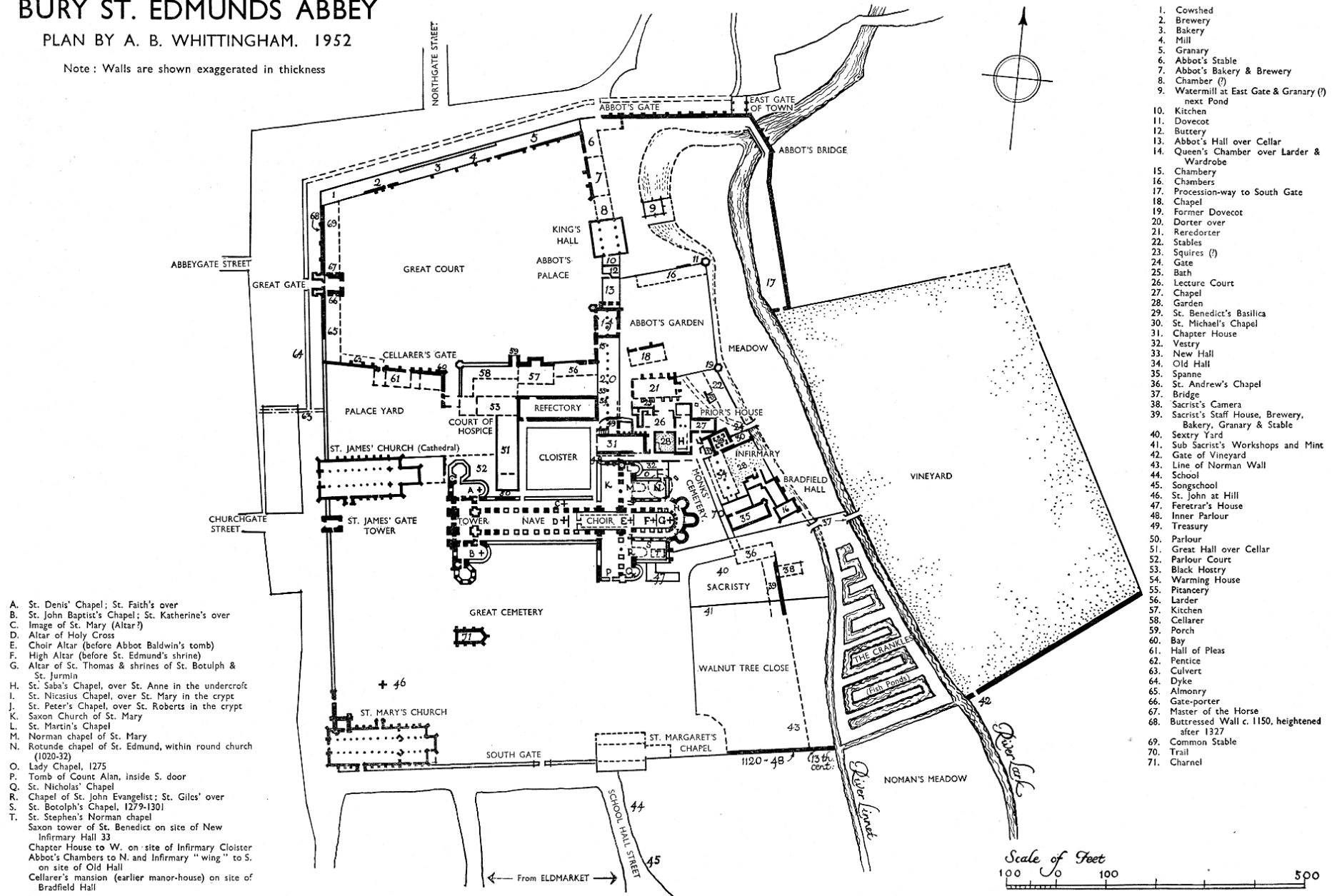
archaeological and architectural interpretation and it has yet to be bettered. The only major factor which the more recent episodes of archaeological fieldwork on the site have served to demonstrate as a shortcoming of Whittingham's work is the fact that his plan only provides a snapshot of the monastic complex at its height. With the exception of the initial rotunda, which is shown as a dotted outline beneath the later Lady Chapel, Whittingham's plan does not capture or convey the subtleties of the phasing of the site. From historical sources we know that many phases of rebuilding and expansion of the site occurred, both as the institution grew, but also as it recovered from the setbacks caused by the various episodes of rioting and fire. Whittingham was clearly aware of this state of flux, and at various points in his narrative he refers to buildings being destroyed or augmented, accesses being blocked and paths between buildings being rerouted.

However, it is telling that, despite his in-depth analyses, Whittingham did not offer up a developmental phase plan of the site or describe the development of the monastic complex in much detail. While such plans, many of which are often colour-coded, are a common interpretative feature of historic sites, especially monasteries and castles, to date it has not proved possible to produce such a plan for the Abbey of St Edmund. It had been hoped that it would be possible to produce a plan of this kind as part of this heritage assessment, but, despite the intervening years, this remains as elusive a prospect as it was in the 1950s. The difficulty in producing such a plan is a direct reflection of the fact that, although we have an extensive ground-plan of the abbey, and an approximate historical framework within which to work, the lack of above-ground architectural features makes it difficult to ascribe precise dates to particular ranges of buildings. It is also apparent from the historical sources that some buildings were rebuilt on earlier foundations, confusing the picture further, and the more recent campaigns of archaeological fieldwork have served to demonstrate that substantial phases of timber buildings pre-dated and were perhaps also contemporary with the masonry elements of the site. For the same reasons, it is currently very difficult to produce plans of the monastic complex at particular points in time, for again we are unable to identify with certainty which elements were present at any given point in history.

# BURY ST. EDMUNDS ABBEY

PLAN BY A. B. WHITTINGHAM. 1952

Note: Walls are shown exaggerated in thickness



- A. St. Denis' Chapel; St. Faith's over
  - B. St. John Baptist's Chapel; St. Katherine's over
  - C. Image of St. Mary (Altar?)
  - D. Altar of Holy Cross
  - E. Choir Altar (before Abbot Baldwin's tomb)
  - F. High Altar (before St. Edmund's shrine)
  - G. Altar of St. Thomas & shrines of St. Botolph & St. Jurmin
  - H. St. Saba's Chapel, over St. Anne in the undercroft
  - I. St. Nicasius Chapel, over St. Mary in the crypt
  - J. St. Peter's Chapel, over St. Roberts in the crypt
  - K. Saxon Church of St. Mary
  - L. St. Martin's Chapel
  - M. Norman chapel of St. Mary
  - N. Rotunde chapel of St. Edmund, within round church (1020-32)
  - O. Lady Chapel, 1275
  - P. Tomb of Count Alan, inside S. door
  - Q. St. Nicholas' Chapel
  - R. Chapel of St. John Evangelist; St. Giles' over
  - S. St. Botolph's Chapel, 1279-1301
  - T. St. Stephen's Norman chapel
- Saxon tower of St. Benedict on site of New Infirmary Hall 33  
 Chapter House to W. on site of Infirmary Cloister  
 Abbot's Chambers to N. and Infirmary "wing" to S. on site of Old Hall  
 Cellarer's mansion (earlier manor-house) on site of Bradfield Hall

- 1. Cowshed
- 2. Brewery
- 3. Bakery
- 4. Mill
- 5. Granary
- 6. Abbot's Stable
- 7. Abbot's Bakery & Brewery
- 8. Chamber (?)
- 9. Watermill at East Gate & Granary (?) next Pond
- 10. Kitchen
- 11. Dovecot
- 12. Buttery
- 13. Abbot's Hall over Cellar
- 14. Queen's Chamber over Larder & Wardrobe
- 15. Chambery
- 16. Chambers
- 17. Procession-way to South Gate
- 18. Chapel
- 19. Former Dovecot
- 20. Dorter over
- 21. Reredorter
- 22. Stables
- 23. Squires (?)
- 24. Gate
- 25. Bath
- 26. Lecture Court
- 27. Chapel
- 28. Garden
- 29. St. Benedict's Basilica
- 30. St. Michael's Chapel
- 31. Chapter House
- 32. Vestry
- 33. New Hall
- 34. Old Hall
- 35. Spanne
- 36. St. Andrew's Chapel
- 37. Bridge
- 38. Sacrist's Camera
- 39. Sacrist's Staff House, Brewery, Bakery, Granary & Stable
- 40. Sextry Yard
- 41. Sub Sacrist's Workshops and Mint
- 42. Gate of Vineyard
- 43. Line of Norman Wall
- 44. School
- 45. Songschool
- 46. St. John at Hill
- 47. Feretrar's House
- 48. Inner Parlour
- 49. Treasury
- 50. Parlour
- 51. Great Hall over Cellar
- 52. Parlour Court
- 53. Black Hostry
- 54. Warming House
- 55. Pitancery
- 56. Larder
- 57. Kitchen
- 58. Cellarer
- 59. Porch
- 60. Bay
- 61. Hall of Pleas
- 62. Penvice
- 63. Culvert
- 64. Dyke
- 65. Almonry
- 66. Gate-porter
- 67. Master of the Horse
- 68. Buttressed Wall c. 1150, heightened after 1327
- 69. Common Stable
- 70. Trail
- 71. Charnel

Figure 77: The plan of Bury St Edmunds Abbey published by Arthur Whittingham in the Archaeological Journal in 1952. (© Royal Archaeological Institute, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd on behalf of Royal Archaeological Institute)



It is to be regretted that Whittingham was not able to revisit his work on Bury and expand it into the major piece of work which it needs to be. In many ways, we are now at the point where technology has caught up with what Whittingham was trying to do, and his analysis would very much lend itself to a detailed GIS-based analysis, to be complemented by new architectural survey and recording of the remaining masonry, and by modern geophysical techniques to gain a better understanding of the buried archaeological remains. Such work would also greatly enhance the ability of the individual visitor to understand, interpret and visualise the site, with the modern techniques of augmented reality and three-dimensional reconstruction adding greatly to the experience of the site. Such work is, of course, of a scale far beyond the remit of this assessment, but capitalising upon the groundwork laid by Whittingham remains a valid research aim for the future and as part of a suite of new research initiatives would doubtless pay dividends. These are considered more fully in the conclusion to this assessment (Section 13).

With Whittingham's plan in hand, the following sections present an overview of the results obtained thus far by more than three centuries of archaeological and architectural investigation of the site, and give an indication of how our understanding of the site has changed in that time. Given what has just been said about Whittingham's work, the focus of these discussions does not lie in an in-depth description of the architectural ruins, rather it focusses on those aspects of the site which have been less well understood and explored thus far, beginning with those archaeological deposits which pre-date the foundation of the monastery itself.

## 7. Pre-Monastic Archaeological Deposits

The many episodes of archaeological investigation which have taken place within the study area have demonstrated that the archaeological record survives largely intact across much of the abbey precinct, and that in many areas the underlying archaeology is protected by a layer of demolition rubble. While many of these archaeological investigations have not penetrated the rubble layer, or have only evaluated the nature and depth of the monastic remains themselves, there have been several episodes of fieldwork which have penetrated deeper archaeological deposits and which give an indication of the earlier use of the site.

A palaeo-environmental assessment undertaken of by Birmingham Archaeo-Environmental in 2009 identified well-preserved pollen and organic deposits within the floodplain (Krawiec *et al.* 2009; Gill 2009a). These provided reliable radiocarbon dates from the Neolithic (2900–2700 BC), Middle Anglo-Saxon (7th–8th centuries) and medieval (11th–12th centuries) periods. Pollen samples indicate the site was open sedge fen prior to the foundation of the abbey and the distribution of the peat showed a river course that fluctuated within the flood plain.

### Prehistoric

The earliest archaeological assemblages identified on the site comprise worked flints indicative of sporadic Mesolithic and Neolithic utilisation of the site. The excavations in the Queen's Chamber undertaken between 1976 and 1980 revealed a small group of Mesolithic flints, which were thought to be indicative of wider Mesolithic activity within the area of the confluence of the Lark and the Linnet (Fleming 1994 and pers. comm.). A further flint assemblage was recovered from excavations ahead of the construction of the north transept of St Edmundsbury Cathedral in 1999. The flints were residual in a soil which sat over the natural geology, and was found to seal a group of small pits and linear features which were also thought to be prehistoric (Gill 2005, 7–8). The Suffolk HER records that at least 135 worked flints were found, which could be divided into three separate groups: 64 Mesolithic flints, a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age assemblage and a later Bronze Age or Iron Age group (Suffolk HER: BSE 052; MSF6755). Residual worked flints have also been recovered from a number of the archaeological

watching briefs undertaken across the site, although the picture is confused by the numerous 'struck' flints resulting from the construction and demolition of the rubble cores of the abbey masonry.

The Queen's Chamber excavations also identified a red sandy soil above the natural flint and gravel, which was thought to be suggestive of prehistoric cultivation of the river terrace. This soil contained a number of freshly broken sherds of Iron Age pottery dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, which cannot have been far from their point of deposition and which indicate activity on the site in this period (Fleming 1994). Two residual sherds of Iron Age pottery were also discovered during excavations within the Cathedral Precinct Yard undertaken in 1983 (Martin *et al.* 1984, 327). These sherds were residual, and may be Early Anglo-Saxon, the respective fabrics being hard to distinguish.

## Roman

It is telling that none of the archaeological investigations of the site has identified traces of any Roman occupation or any Roman material in primary contexts. Several later hearths and ovens have been excavated which reuse Roman brick and tile, including a Late Anglo-Saxon example excavated in the Queen's Chamber (Fleming 1994), while ground up Roman tile was mixed into the mortar in several parts of the monastic complex, especially in the four main piers of the crossing of the abbey church. Roman tile was also recovered from the excavations ahead of the construction of the Cathedral Centre in 1988, although in every case it was residual and is likely to have been brought to the site at a later date for reuse (Gill 2005, 7–8). It is unclear where this Roman tile was brought from, although there are a number of possible sources within the wider Bury St Edmunds hinterland.

## Early Anglo-Saxon

The excavations in the Queen's Chamber revealed traces of a low north–south bank, interpreted as an Early Anglo-Saxon hedge-bank or boundary, along with ephemeral traces of occupational activity. Fifteen Early Anglo-Saxon sherds from two burnished biconical urns and half a glass bead were discovered, some of them redeposited in later features, and these may have been associated with the redeposited human vertebra and other bones which were also discovered. It is

possible, therefore, that a small Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery may have existed on the river terrace, although this apparently had no bearing on any later use of this area of the site.

## Middle Anglo-Saxon

As was discussed above, we cannot be certain of the identification of *Beodricsworth* with the unnamed monastic house referred to by Bede to which Sigeberht abdicated in the late AD 630s, the connection only being made for the first time in historical documents dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. What we can be certain of, however, is that the landscape of Middle Anglo-Saxon East Anglia was densely populated and there is archaeological evidence for many more settlements, some with a decidedly religious focus, than historical sources indicate. We should, therefore, not be surprised to find traces of Middle Anglo-Saxon settlement evidence within the study area, but we can be less sure that any such evidence represents a Middle Anglo-Saxon monastic precursor to the later abbey complex.

That said, the question remains as to why *Beodricsworth* was considered to be a suitable resting place for Edmund's body, and there must have been a substantive existing presence, or at least one with significant connection to Edmund and his dynasty, for the settlement to have become the focus of the later cult. The surviving historical sources have nothing to say on this subject, but it is possible that an archaeological answer to the question may lie buried beneath the remains of the later abbey complex. Tantalising glimpses of a Middle Anglo-Saxon presence have been afforded thus far, although no substantive features or *in situ* finds have yet been recovered.

Several sherds of Middle Anglo-Saxon Ipswich Ware were discovered during the Queen's Chamber excavations, although all of them were residual, and no excavated features contained solely Ipswich Ware. Its presence on the site, however, is sufficient to demonstrate some form of activity here during the period AD c. 720–850 and hints at the wider traces of Middle Anglo-Saxon occupation evidence which might lie buried.

In 1994, five fragments of pale blue glass were found eroding from the surface of the earthen bank between the modern tennis courts and the eastern end of the crypt (SHER: BSE 12). These sherds were identified as being from a Middle Anglo-Saxon vessel, although without further archaeological context and given the extensive ground disturbance in the area, again little more can be inferred from their presence.

Such is the extent of our current understanding of the pre-monastic archaeological deposits on the site, although it should be stressed again that this understanding is only informed by a small number of investigative episodes, and that the potential for intact archaeological deposits which pre-date the monastic settlement itself remains high across the study area. Most of the archaeological investigations undertaken to date have focussed on the later monastic remains, rarely penetrating beneath the medieval floor levels, and consequently our archaeological understanding of the site from the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards is considerably better. These phases of the site's occupation are considered in more detail in the following sections.

## 8. The Late Anglo-Saxon Monastery

Whatever weight may be attached to the tradition that an Anglo-Saxon *minster* (monastery) was founded at *Beodricsworth* by Sigeberht in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (see Section 5), there can be little doubt that the single most important event in the history of the abbey at Bury St Edmunds, was the acquisition some time before AD 939 of the body of Edmund, king of the East Angles, who had been martyred by the Danes in the year AD 869.

The translation of Edmund's remains is traditionally recorded as having taken place in the reign of Æthelstan (AD 924–39), although some uncertainty surrounds even this account, and dates have been suggested as early as AD 889 (Young 2018). When Edmund's body arrived at *Beodricsworth*, according to the later account of Abbo of Fleury, a 'very large church of wonderful wooden plankwork' (*permaxima miro ligneo tabulatu ecclesia*) was built to house it (Gem and Keen 1981). In AD 945, the new wooden church received important patronage from King Edmund of England, making it one of the richest churches in the country. Edmund's body remained in *Beodricsworth* until c. 1010, when his body was taken to London for safekeeping by Ailwin in order to avoid the ravages of the Danes, only to be returned to the site after a period of three years.

We cannot be certain, even in general terms, of the location of the wooden church, but the presumption is that it would not have stood far from the later monastic complex and perhaps lies buried within the confines of the later precinct. Beyond the fact that the church was served by a community of priests, historical sources tell us nothing more about its nature, shape or size, but there is a growing number of excavated examples of Late Anglo-Saxon timber churches, from sites such as Brandon (Tester *et al.* 2014) and Norwich (Ayers 1985), which give us a flavour of what such a structure might have looked like, while the only extant example of a timber church in the country still stands at Greensted (Ongar) in Essex (Christie *et al.* 1979). Entirely coincidentally, Greensted church is one of the locations at which Edmund's body was said to have rested overnight during its return to Bury from London in 1013 (Young 2018, 86–7). All of these sites demonstrate the ephemeral archaeological footprint of timber structures of this kind, especially those which

are dismantled to make way for later buildings, and it is unlikely that any substantive remains of this earliest church would survive intact.

The wooden church would not have existed in isolation, and we should expect it to have been complemented by a complex array of surrounding buildings, each of which would have left similarly ephemeral traces. It is therefore encouraging that several of the episodes of archaeological investigation within the area of the precinct which have penetrated the medieval layers have come down onto significant phases of Late Anglo-Saxon occupation which may represent ancillary buildings belonging to this earlier phase of the monastery. These buildings may also have remained standing or been reconstructed throughout the phases of reconstruction of the abbey complex in stone which occurred during the 11<sup>th</sup> century and which are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The excavations within the Queen's Chamber revealed several phases of Late Anglo-Saxon timber buildings and associated structures which spanned the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and were sealed by the construction of the Romanesque reredorter range. The earliest of these buildings was of post-in-trench construction and associated rubbish pits contained the butchered bones of domesticated farm animals, but also fish bones and oyster shells. Traces of other structures, in part comprised of wattle and daub, were also identified extending beyond the excavated area.

In the latest timber phase, these buildings were aligned parallel to the river and were bounded to the west by a metalled surface, interpreted as being part of a road. The main building was large, with internal partitions and external extensions, and was constructed using the plank-in-trench method. Traces of the planks survived as stains in the soil. This building contained a central hearth and at one end was a clay oven which incorporated reused Roman bricks. Other wattle-and-daub buildings extended out of the excavation area to the north, and appear to have subsequently burnt down.

These later buildings were associated with a rich midden deposit, which contained pottery and large quantities of animal bone, including the usual range of domesticates, but also horse and deer, as well as crane bones and sea-fish. The kill-pattern of the sheep remains and the array of weaving tools recovered during

the excavation, indicate that wool and textile production were significant parts of the economic activity of the area, while traces of iron-smithing and tinning were also recovered. A broken piece of what may have been an iron stylus was also recovered, styli being a class of artefact which have long held monastic associations, albeit not exclusively (Pestell 1999).

Ultimately, these timber buildings decayed or were dismantled and the ground was levelled with further midden material before the foundations for the Romanesque dormitory range were dug and the later stone buildings constructed. It is not clear from the excavated sequence to what extent the timber buildings remained standing during the period which saw the construction of the first stone church – the rotunda – on the site, that is, between 1020 and 1081, and this should be borne in mind throughout the discussion in the following section.



## 9. The First Phase of Abbey Buildings

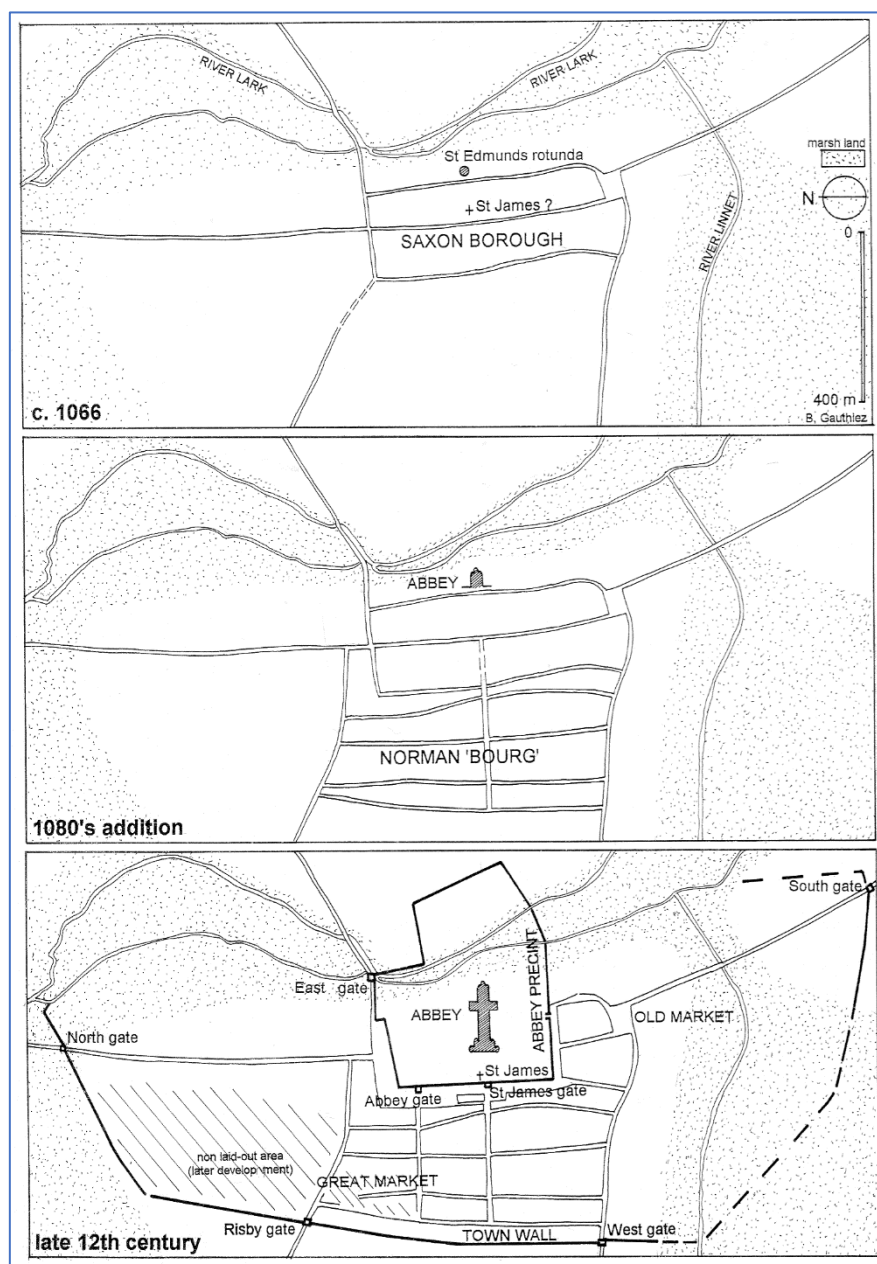
At a date traditionally thought to be AD 1020, King Cnut approved the replacement of the secular priests who served St Edmund's church with a community of Benedictine monks. This act may have been intended as thanks to God for Cnut's victory at the Battle of Assandun, or it may have been to make amends for his father Swein's contempt for Edmund. The new monastery was founded on the principles of the rule of St Benedict, which was already followed by the major East Anglia houses of Ely and St Benet's at Holme, as well as a number other monastic houses across England (Pestell 1999).

Along with the church at the Benedictine monastery of St Benet at Holme, which historical sources indicate was also constructed in stone for the first time at the behest of Cnut in about 1020, this new abbey church (if it was made of stone) would have been one of the first stone buildings to be constructed in East Anglia (Heywood 2013, 260).

Archaeological and historical evidence demonstrates that the western precinct boundary as it survives today does not represent the line of the original monastic precinct. During its initial phase, the western boundary of the precinct seems to have lain further to the east and was delineated by a 15m-wide north–south road which linked Northgate Street and Southgate Street. This road was sampled by trial trenching in 1983 (Martin *et al.* 1984) and excavated ahead of the construction of the Cathedral Centre in 1988 (Gill 2005). Both excavations demonstrated that the road was metalled and flanked by substantial ditches (only the western example of which was identified), and it is presumed to have been laid out as part of the establishment of the gridded street plan of the new town in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, the area to the west of this road, including the Cathedral Precinct Yard, potentially contains the remains of secular buildings constructed as part of the laying out of the new town, and two examples of such post-built structures were revealed during the excavations.

There is clearly a strong relationship between the laying out of the abbey precinct and the geometrically laid out street grid of the town itself. The deliberate alignment of Churchgate Street with the arch of the Norman Tower and the axis of

the abbey church places this beyond doubt, but what is less certain is the chronology of the establishment of this relationship. The laying out of a gridded street system has parallels with the approach to planning new towns adopted in continental Europe from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and there are similar examples to be found in the Alfredian burghs of the early 10<sup>th</sup> century. It seems that the street plan of Bury St Edmunds dates from the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, but as is clear from the discussion above, there are some strong Anglo-Saxon elements of the grid which survived within the abbey area and probably further afield (Figure 78; Gauthiez 1998).



**Figure 78:** Hypothetical reconstruction of the road networks in Bury St Edmunds (Gauthiez 1998).

Fernie has demonstrated that the north–south subdivisions of the grid of streets formed by Guildhall Street, Whiting Street, Hatter Street, Bridewell Lane and the abbey gate in the Norman Tower are laid out in a pattern which follows the same root-2 derived scheme as is evident in the abbey church and other aspects of Anglo-Norman planning both in Bury and elsewhere (Fernie 1998, 12–14). The standard unit of the scheme seems to be 163m (535 ft), and this dimension is also reflected, albeit to a lesser degree, in the spacing of the main west–east streets of the grid – Westgate Street, College Lane, Churchgate Street, Abbeygate Street – although these alignments are less well preserved in the modern townscape.

It has also been suggested by Gauthiez that there may have been a parallel road further to the east – linking Cotton Lane and Rainwater Lane – which further marked the eastern extent of the Anglo-Saxon borough, outside which the original abbey buildings stood (Figure 78). Although this conjecture has yet to be tested archaeologically, it is based upon a sound premise, and its further investigation should be considered in any future programme of research.

## Rotunda of St Mary and St Edmund

The original chapel of St Edmund was built between 1021 and 1032, and the new church was dedicated on 18 October 1032 by Archbishop Æthelnoth in honour of St Mary and St Edmund. From later references, it is clear that the church was round, comprising a central rotunda with a surrounding ambulatory. Herman the Archdeacon indicates that the remains of St Edmund lay in a wooden reliquary or coffin on one side of the sanctuary and screened off by a curtain. On the other side, the sanctuary was closed off by doors and in front of these lay the choir. The rotunda still stood to the north of the eastern end of the abbey church in 1095, and in the account of his translation, Edmund's sarcophagus was apparently taken out of the south door of the old church, suggesting that the church lay to the north of the north wall of the presbytery (Fernie 1998, 9).

The central part of the rotunda was demolished to make way for the new Lady Chapel, constructed in 1275, although the surrounding ambulatory had already been demolished by that time, perhaps to accommodate the laying out of the north transept and its chapels. Work on the transept was begun by Godfrey, who was sacrist in the time of Abbot Robert II (1102–07).

The excavations undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works in the late 1950s and early 1960s revealed that the ground beneath the Lady Chapel had been built up prior to the chapel's construction, blocking the northern windows of the crypt in the process, and there remains the strong possibility that traces of this chapel might survive buried beneath the floor of the Lady Chapel (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 259).

## Basilica of St Benedict

The basilica of St Benedict was constructed in the latter part of the abbacy of Ufi (1020–44). It apparently stood east of the rotunda, near to the later Infirmary, although its exact location has not been identified. The basilica comprised a great tower and a porticus, while internally it had at least two bays and was divided by piers running east–west. During the abbacies of Ufi and Leofstan, the infirm son of the donor, Aelfric, apparently lived in the tower. Ufi and three of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century abbots were also ultimately buried there (Licence 2011, 75, 83–4).

The basilica remained intact until the abbacy of Samson (1182–1211) when the tower was demolished as part of the construction of the new infirmary. The part of the basilica containing the burials of the abbots was still standing c. 1425, when it was noted, and may have survived to the Dissolution.

## Church of St Denis

One of Abbot Baldwin's earliest works on the site was the construction of the church of St Denis (or St Dionysius), apparently a 'large and beautiful basilica', which was large enough to contain the entire monastic community (giving an indication of the smaller scale of the extant buildings at this period). The church was apparently the first parochial church of the parish which was to become St James' (Hill 1865a, 46).

The church stood on the site of the later chapel of St Denis in the northern arm of the western transept of the abbey church, the former having been demolished to make way for the abbey church itself during the abbacy of Anselm (1121–48). As was discussed above, traces of the footings of the western wall of the church of St Denis were subsequently revealed in excavations conducted by Radford and Dufty in 1958 (Figures 69 and 70), and there is the potential for further foundations

of the church to survive beneath the paving outside the west front of the abbey church (Dufty and Radford 1959).

## Chapel of St Margaret

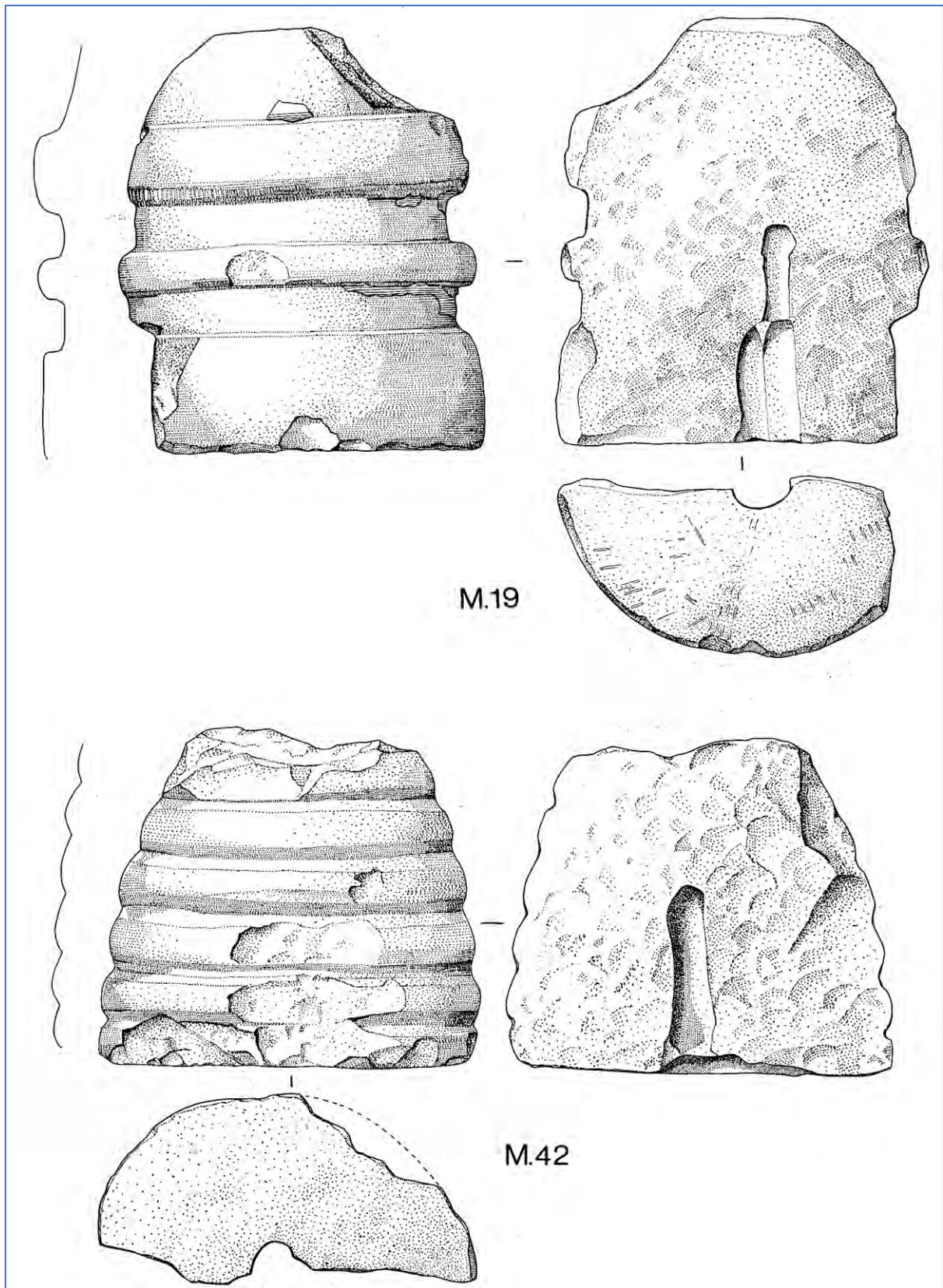
At about the same period as the church of St Denis was constructed, the priest Ailbold constructed a chapel to St Margaret of Antioch, which comprised a large tower with adjoining chapel in which a virgin named Langlifa was enclosed as an anchorite and eventually buried (Licence 2011, 83). Although its exact location within the precinct is not known, Abbot Anselm (1121–48) demolished this chapel and rebuilt it – perhaps on the same site – where it was dedicated in his abbacy at the south gate of the Great Churchyard (Licence 2011, 84).

## Remains of the Earlier Buildings

In terms of identifying the remains of earlier buildings, of particular note are a number of pre-Conquest baluster shafts and floor tiles, which may well have belonged to the original chapel of St Edmund which was built between 1021 and 1032 and which was demolished in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century to make way for the new Lady Chapel (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 259; Gem and Keen 1981).

The fragments of moulded balusters had been reused in rubble corework, which the excavators identified as having come from the upper parts of the church, which they took to be parts of repairs undertaken following the fire of 1465. This is significant, as these balusters would not have been carved for the Romanesque abbey church begun in 1081, and so must therefore be remnants of an earlier structure, and two interpretations suggest themselves.

If the excavators were correct and the stonework was reused for the first time in the 15<sup>th</sup>-century repairs, then these could conceivably be fragments of the chapel which was still standing well beyond the construction of the eastern end and north transept, until its demolition in 1275 or thereabouts. The alternative suggestion, as put forward by Gem and Keen (1981, 3) is that these fragments may have been reused for a second time during the late 15<sup>th</sup>-century repairs, having already been built into the fabric during the initial Romanesque phase.



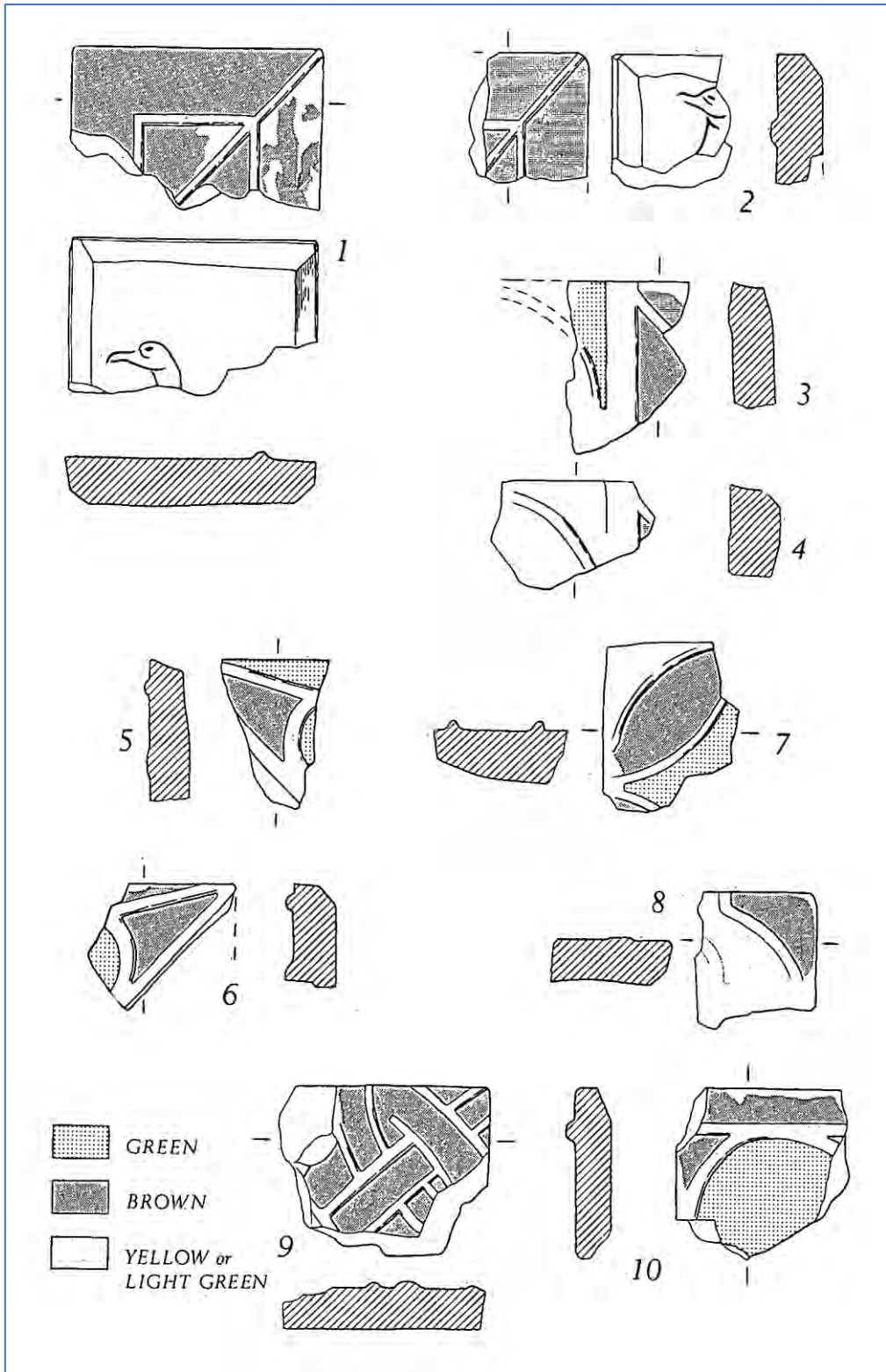
**Figure 79:** Examples of two baluster fragments published by Gem and Keen (1981). Shown at 1:4. (© Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, reproduced with permission)

Given their proximity to the eastern arm of the abbey church, it is most probable that these derive from the early 11<sup>th</sup>-century buildings which were demolished to make way for the north transept, that is, the sanctuary and ambulatory of the chapel dedicated to St Mary and St Edmund, or the church of St Mary. In either case, the balusters cannot be earlier than 1020 and are no later than 1081.

There are 43 identifiable pieces derived from moulded shafts or their bases, all but five of which are illustrated in the article published by Gem and Keen in 1981 (see Figure 79 for examples). The fragments include bases and several different shafts, the latter decorated with a variety of different combinations of carved rings and corrugations. Many of the pieces contain drilled holes, which would have enabled the sections of the shafts to be pegged together with dowels. Surface analysis has identified the presence of paint representing several coats of limewash and a topcoat of plaster of Paris containing haematite to give a dark red pigmentation (Knight 1980).

Comparison with other structures of a similar period indicates that balusters of this kind were used to form balustrades around features such as sanctuaries, cloisters or shrines, or, as is more often the case, as subdivisions within the double-openings of 11<sup>th</sup>-century windows or tower openings. All of these uses are possibilities at Bury, given what we know of the range of 11<sup>th</sup>-century buildings which pre-dated the abbey church of 1081. In terms of design, there are close parallels between the Bury examples and fragments of similar balusters recovered from the site of Peterborough abbey. This, and the fact that the Barnack limestone from which the Bury balusters are formed is derived from quarries in the Peterborough area, are suggestive of their having been produced in a workshop before being brought to the site (Gem and Keen 1981, 15–19).

In addition to the baluster fragments, ten pieces of polychromatic relief tiles were also recovered from the ruined corework during the 1957–64 excavations undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works (Gem and Keen 1981, 20–6). The mortar adhering to the tiles contained much crushed brick and tile, suggesting that they were reused in the Romanesque crossing piers, which are the only recognised features to contain this mix of mortar.



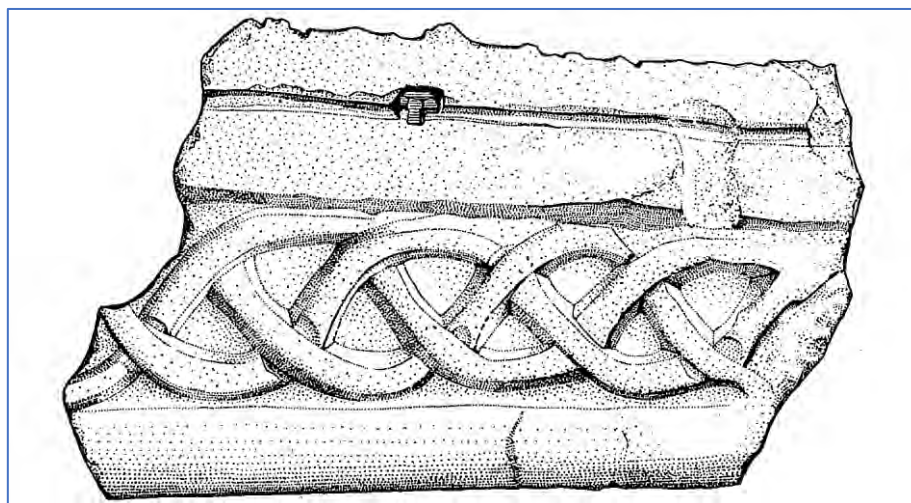
**Figure 80:** Examples of polychromatic tiles published by Gem and Keen (1981). Shown at 1:3. (© Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, reproduced with permission)



The tiles are roughly made from white and red clay, and several designs are in evidence and repeated between the tiles, with raised patterns of ribs being used to enclose areas of black, brown, green and yellow glazes (see Figure 80). Stylistically, these tiles belong to a small, but geographically widely distributed series, which includes Peterborough, St Alban's and Winchester, which again suggests their production in a regional workshop (Gem and Keen 1981, 22–6).

Some of the Bury tiles show very little sign of wear, suggesting they were wall tiles, rather than floor tiles, while others exhibit diagonal cuts from having been laid in a diamond pattern. It seems most likely that, like the balusters, these tiles had originally been laid in the chapel of St Mary and St Edmund, or in the church of St Mary, both of which were demolished (at least in part) to make way for the construction of the crossing and transepts in the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Another unusual survival is a piece of interlace-carved stone built into the rubble core of the eastern end of the crypt (Figure 81). The design comprises a roll moulding bordering a recessed panel containing a three-strand interlace, with a groove and an iron fitment on its opposite side. The style of the interlace cannot be dated closely, but the slab clearly formed an upright part of a larger composite structure, perhaps a screen (Gem and Keen 1981, 19–20). There is great potential for other features of this kind to have been reused and built into the later structure, only to be revealed when the structure is broken apart, and this is something which those working on the site in the future need to be aware of.



**Figure 81:** Reused piece of carved stone interlace published by Gem and Keen (1981). Shown at 1:4. (© Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, reproduced with permission)



*Figure 82: The Norman Tower from the north-east, viewed from the roof of St Edmundsbury Cathedral.*

## 10. The Romanesque Abbey

In the manuscripts of the abbey and its surviving archives are contained numerous details of the progress to completion of the main fabric of the abbey church, but there is also much scattered information about its subordinate parts, its ritual arrangements, its ornaments and furniture. These are discussed in detail in the published histories of the abbey (e.g. James 1895; Gransden 2007; 2015; Young 2016) and are referred to here for context. Despite having been published nearly 70 years ago, the interpretative map and accompanying account of the abbey precinct published by Whittingham in 1952 should still be considered to be current and presents the most definitive statement of our understanding of the site. Rather than reiterate Whittingham's conclusions here, the reader is likewise referred to his published plan (Figure 77) and the simplified versions thereof published in subsequent site guidebooks (Whittingham 1971; 1992). The comments and discussions presented here concentrate on what the archaeological investigations of the site have been able to tell us about the development of the site and how that augments the narrative put forward in the cited publications.

### The Abbey Precinct

At its height, the abbey precinct enclosed an area of some 23 acres on the west bank of the river, with an additional six acres of The Vineyard and three acres of the adjacent Walnut Close enclosed on the east bank of the river. On the west bank, the precinct was enclosed on the north, west and south by a high wall strengthened with buttresses, with the river forming the eastern boundary, while the area on the east bank was also enclosed by a wall, and the two parts of the precinct were linked by fortified bridges which spanned the river. The wall was erected by Radulf Harvey the Sacrist, in the time of Abbot Anselm (1120–48). The detailed route of the precinct wall and the stretches of it which survive as listed buildings were described in Section 4, above.

From the outside, the western side of the precinct wall was punctuated by two gateways – the Norman Tower (also known as St James' tower; Figure 82) to the south and the Abbey Gate (Figure 83) to the north – and the façades of two churches – St Mary's at the south-western corner of the precinct (Figure 84) and

St James' church (now St Edmundsbury cathedral) immediately to the north of the Norman Tower (Figure 85). Along the northern edge of the abbey, the precinct could be entered via a postern gate from Mustow Street (Figure 86), while the downstream waters of the Lark could be accessed beneath the Abbot's Bridge. To the south, the precinct was entered via St Margaret's Gate, which was set broadly in its centre (Figure 87). There were apparently no external entrances into the eastern portion of the precinct, which could only be reached from the western precinct via a bridge (Figure 88).

Historical documents and later sources highlight the fact that the precinct was encircled with a ditch, which served as a moat and presumably also a drain. Traces of the ditch can still be seen in later illustrations, and archaeological traces of the moat have been identified in several places around the perimeter of the precinct. This is the case on Mustow Street in the 1980s, and also in observations made in the vicinity of the Norman Tower when sewers were constructed in the 1930s.

As well as being physically divided into west and east portions by the line of the river, the precinct was also divided internally into a southern 'spiritual' area, accessed via the Norman Tower and comprising the abbey church and cloister, the Great Cemetery and associated churches and chapels, and a northern 'secular' area, which was entered from Angel Hill via the Abbey Gate and comprised the Great Court, stables, storehouses, and other buildings (Figure 77). This notion of the division of space within the precinct is a concept which was engrained in the monastic ground-plan since its earliest incarnations, as was set out in the idealised Plan of St Gall in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and enacted in numerous houses belonging to the Benedictines, and later monastic orders, over the ensuing centuries (Price 1982; Aston 2000, 65–6, 101–24).

### *The Norman Tower / St James' Tower*

To the west, the Norman Tower straddles the precinct wall and stands on the primary axis of the abbey church and the wider town. It was built in the time of Abbot Anselm (c. 1121–46) as a four-stage gateway and probable bell-tower to the abbey church, and stands in line with its primary west–east axis, which continues through Churchgate Street (Figure 89). It is the only Romanesque feature on the site to survive intact, although it was considerably restored c. 1846–7 by L.N.

Cottingham and his builder Thomas Farrow. As a result of raising the ground to prevent the flooding of the Cathedral church of St James during the post-Dissolution period, as was demonstrated during archaeological excavations undertaken around the foot of the tower in 1973 (Drewett and Stuart 1975), its footings now lie more than a metre below the level of the road.

The Norman Tower is a Grade I listed building ([National Heritage List No. 1375555](#)). It is constructed of Barnack stone, and has a large, unvaulted gateway with heavy block capitals to the columns and large roll-mouldings. The building is richly ornamented on all four sides and the west face is the most ornate, with a sculptured inner order and the arch projecting like a porch with a gable and fish-scale decoration. To each side of the gateway are two tiers of niches with billet decoration; short buttresses above have intersecting arches and pyramid roofs. The second stage has two tall blank arches with small two-light windows within them. The third and fourth stages each have three deep window openings, divided by colonnettes and hood-moulds with billet decoration: below the third stage openings are paired blank arches, below the fourth stage blank roundels. The details of the three western upper stages are repeated on the other faces (see Figures 49 and 82).

### *St Margaret's Gate*

Set roughly centrally within the southern wall of the precinct was the gate of St Margaret, which was constructed as part of the same scheme as the rest of the precinct wall and gates. Traces of the gate stood until 1760, when it was finally removed, although it was later depicted by Yates (Figure 54), and the site of the gate is now marked by a cobbled opening in the wall, sitting at the convergence of the Great Churchyard avenues which focussed on the gateway (Figure 87). Morant recorded that an 1871 excavation revealed remains of the gateway and demonstrated that the ground level in the area had been raised by about five feet (Morant 1873, 393). An archaeological evaluation trench was excavated in the Magistrates' Court car park in 2009, which exposed part of the south precinct wall of the abbey and a mortar surface inside the wall which was overlain by destruction debris that may date from the Dissolution (Tester 2009).



**Figure 83:** *The Abbey Gate viewed from the west, showing the imposing façade presented to the town.*



**Figure 84:** Aerial photograph of St Mary's church from the south-west, showing its relationship with the south-western boundary of the precinct. (© Mike Page, reproduced with permission)



**Figure 85:** Aerial photograph of St Edmundsbury Cathedral (formerly St James' church) from the south, showing its relationship with the Norman Tower and the west front of the abbey church. (© Mike Page, reproduced with permission)



**Figure 86:** The postern gate on Mustow Street viewed from the north.



**Figure 87:** The site of the former St Margaret's Gate, now an open space, looking north-east with the former Magistrates' court building beyond.





**Figure 88:** The footings of the former bridge from the monastic precinct on the west bank to the Vinefields on the east bank, looking west.



**Figure 89:** A long view of the Norman Tower, looking east along Churchgate Street.

## *The Abbey Gate*

The northern, 'secular' part of the abbey precinct was accessed via a great gate (Figures 34, 41, 48 and 83). The original gate was constructed by Radulf Harvey as part of the encircling wall, and was aligned with what is now known as Abbeygate Street. The gate that still stands today was constructed after the riots of 1327, during which the original gate was destroyed. The heraldry carved onto the extant gate indicates a construction date after 1327, due the presence of the arms of Henry, Earl of Lancaster, and before 1346, as the arms of England appear alone and are not quartered with France (see Walford 1859).

The Abbey Gate is a Grade I listed building ([List Entry No. 1375545](#)) and like the Norman Tower is of Barnack stone. The gate has two storeys and battlements and the west façade is richly decorated: a broad segmental entrance arch has three niches over it and a large ogee gable above has foiled circles to left and right. Buttresses to each side have ogee-headed steeply gabled niches in three tiers, the top tier relating to the upper storey, which has five tall blank niches. The taller centre niche has a crocketed gable, flanked by two circles containing six-pointed stars. The east façade has a shafted doorway; there are leaf capitals to the shafts and an arch with a double quadrant moulding. There is a large transomed three-light window to the upper storey. The inner side walls of both chambers have large blank arches with bold flowing tracery; both originally had vaulting with ribs and tiercerons, which are now fragmentary. The principal chamber on the upper storey has the remains of an original fireplace.

## *The Postern Gate and Abbot's Bridge*

Along the northern edge of the abbey, the precinct could be entered via a postern gate from Mustow Street, traces of which can still be seen today (Figure 86). This was flanked by a tower, supposedly used as a prison, which can be identified from changes in the masonry height in this area. The location of the postern gate is linked to the Abbot's Bridge by the best-preserved length of precinct walling, which stands to its full height and is well supported by buttresses (Figure 90). The Abbot's Bridge (Figure 91) is a Grade I listed building ([List Entry No. 1375552](#)) and abutted the east gate of the town, which stood on the outside of the precinct wall.



*Figure 90: The extant stretch of precinct wall on the south side of Mustow Street, looking west.*



*Figure 91: The outside face of the Abbot's Bridge crossing the Lark, looking west.*

The bridge itself is late 12<sup>th</sup> century with 14<sup>th</sup>-century additions and is constructed from rubble flint and stone with freestone buttresses and arches. A central pointed arch and flanking segmental arches on the north-east face carries the precinct wall, with two 14<sup>th</sup>-century cutwaters and two flying buttresses added between the arches. On the south-west face, three segmental arches, each said to have formerly carried a portcullis, support a walkway which links the bridge with the 12<sup>th</sup>-century precinct wall leading to The Vineyards on the east side of the river.

## The Abbey Church

The abbey church at Bury St Edmunds was begun by Abbot Baldwin in the 1080s, with construction continuing throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the floorplan of the building can be reconstructed with some certainty, despite its ruinous state, although we can be less certain about the heights of the church's roofs and central and western towers. This church too belongs to the phase of Norman consolidation in the late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, when many of the region's churches were being replaced with stone structures for the first time (Heywood 2013, 262–6). The new abbey church is an example of the Norman desire to impress through the scale, quality, design and materials used in its architecture, and belongs to the tradition of great pilgrimage churches of the late 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries in Normandy and France (Ferne 1998). At the same time, it also belongs to a much more regionally-focussed school of Romanesque architecture, which included Norwich, Ely and Peterborough (Cherry 1978).

The abbey church was vast. In the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century it was one of the longest churches in western Christendom, being some 10m longer than Norwich Cathedral, Canterbury Cathedral and the church of St Peter in Rome, less than 10m shorter than Winchester Cathedral and just over 20m shorter than the great abbey church at Cluny (Ferne 1998, 5). In its completed form, the abbey church comprised a five-bay eastern arm, with ambulatory and radiating chapels, four bays of which were raised over a crypt of four bays with an ambulatory and three radiating chapels, accessed from stairs in the north and south transepts. The transepts themselves were each of five bays and had eastern aisles; both had a pair of apsidal chapels. The crossing was surmounted by a central tower, and with 12 bays the nave was exceptionally long and wider than the eastern arm. The

church terminated in a western transept with two-storey apsidal chapels to the north and south and a central tower of its own. The western front was flanked by octagonal structures at the northern and southern ends, which may have been towers and which are unique.

Several published plans of the abbey church have been discussed in this report thus far (e.g. Figures 35, 37, 50 and 61), but again, the most authoritative plan which we currently have of the abbey church is that published by Whittingham as part of his 1952 assessment (Figure 77) and a subsequently enlarged and more detailed version of the plan which was published in his guidebooks to the site (Figure 92).

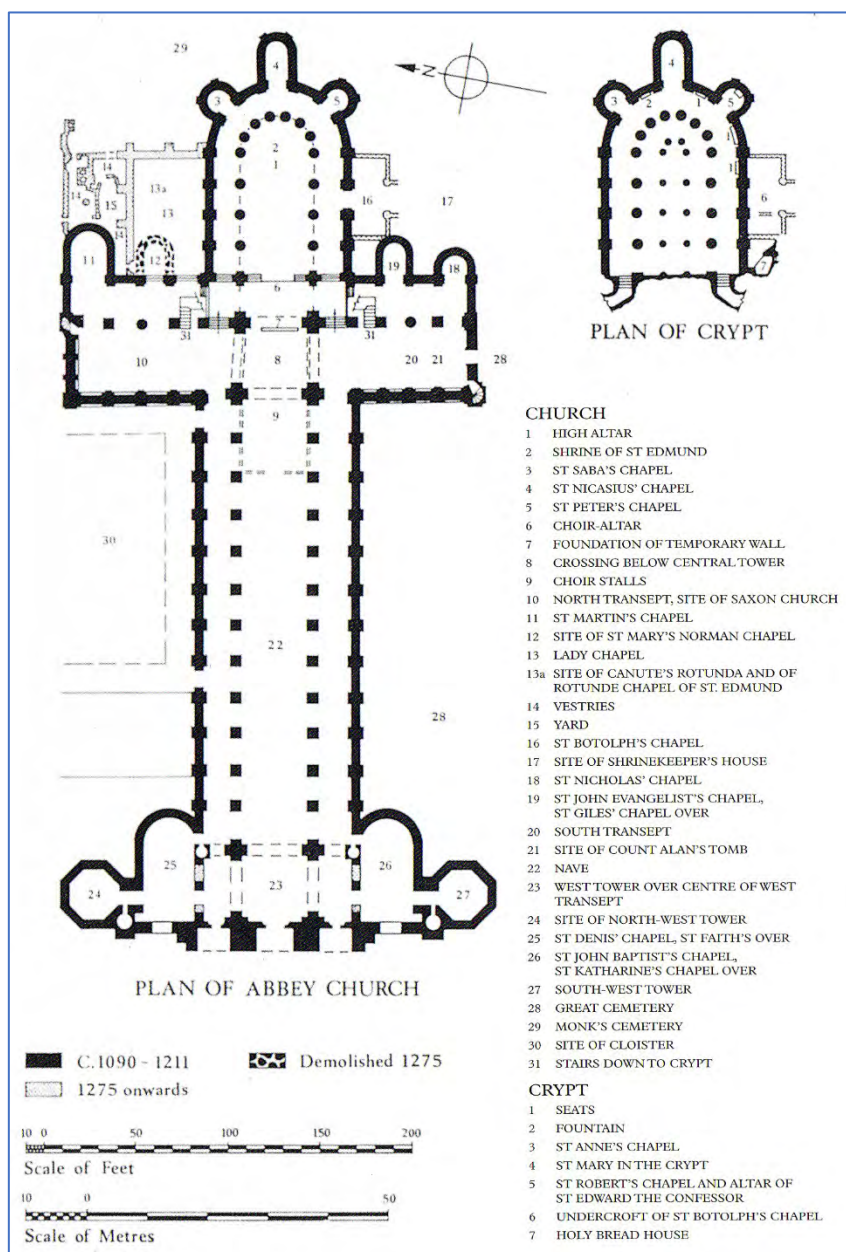


Figure 92: Whittingham's plan of the abbey church, published in 1971.

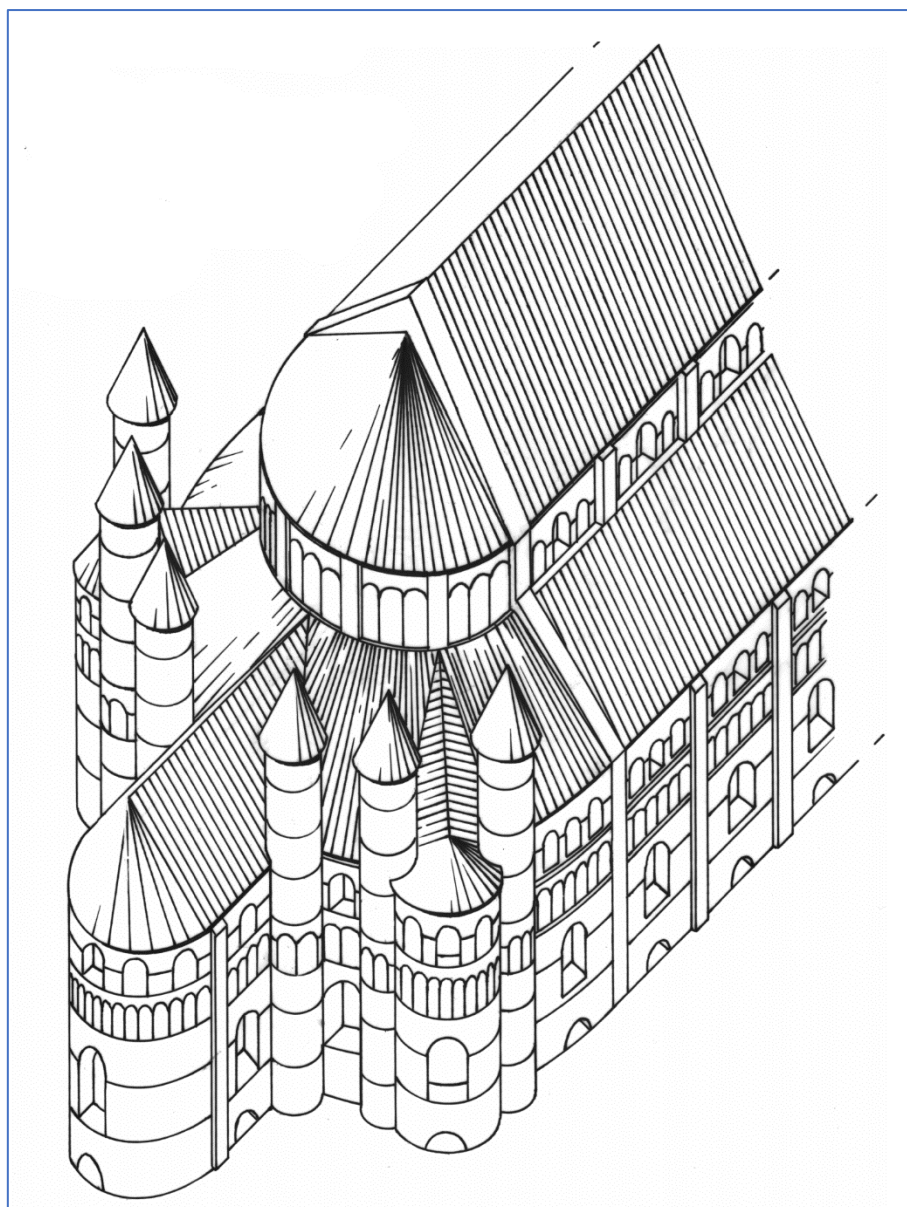


**Figure 93:** The ruins of the eastern arm of the abbey church, showing the crypt and radiating chapels with tennis courts beyond, looking east.

### *Eastern Arm*

The eastern arm of the abbey church was started in 1081 and completed by 1095 (Figure 93). Following the dispute over jurisdiction between the bishop and the abbot, construction work began in Norwich in 1095, and the eastern arm of Norwich cathedral is very closely modelled on that of Bury, both in terms of layout and scale. It is tempting to see the *ad hoc* enlargement of the planned church at Bury as a direct response to the Norwich design, with the amended abbey church being wider across the nave and aisles, with thicker arcade walling and aisled transepts (Fernie 1993, 139–40; 1998, 8–12).

Further evidence of the architectural similarities and rivalry between Bury and Norwich have been explored by Heywood, who cites the near-identical designs of the radiating presbytery chapels and other features, as proof that the designers of the two buildings had a detailed awareness of each other's work, or may even have been the same person (Heywood 1998, 19–20; 2013, 266–7). Heywood's reconstruction of the eastern end of the abbey church is reproduced as Figure 94.



**Figure 94:** Heywood's reconstruction of the eastern end of the abbey church, published in 2013. (© Stephen Heywood, drawn by Jason Gibbons, reproduced with permission)

There are strong architectural parallels with other near-contemporary churches: in England, the ambulatory with radiating chapels is a feature seen most notably at Battle Abbey, St Augustine's Canterbury and at Wokelin's cathedral at Winchester, while the eastern aisle of the transept is also paralleled at Winchester (Fernie 1998, 4). The development of the plan can be traced back to 10<sup>th</sup>-century France, and, as a native of Chartres, Abbot Baldwin himself would have been familiar with the plan, which was used in the cathedral c. 1020–37 (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 259–60). There are also very close parallels between the abbey church and the eastern end of the Norman cathedral at Norwich (Fernie 1993; 1998; Heywood 2013).



**Figure 95:** *The ruins of the Chapel of St Mary in the Crypt, looking east, showing the unexcavated material at its eastern end and the fencing of the overlying tennis courts.*

The altar in the chapel of St Mary in the crypt (Figure 95) was dedicated by the Bishop of Rochester before 1114, and during his visit to the abbey in 1497, William Worcester made the following notes and observations about the crypt of the abbey church (Harvey 1969, 161):

*The Crypt of the Chapel of St Mary beneath the Shrine of St Edmund is 50 paces long and 40 paces wide, and there is a very fine spring of water there. The Dedication of St Mary's Crypt is on 5 November. In it are 24 columns.*

Of the three radiating chapels linked to the ambulatory of the crypt, Mary's axial chapel was considerably longer than the two other chapels, and consequently its eastern end extends beyond the area of the excavations and lies beneath the modern tennis courts which were established immediately to the east of the abbey church (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 258).

Among the first recorded excavations undertaken in the area of the crypt are those conducted by N.C. Goldsmith, Borough Engineer and Surveyor, and H.J.M. Maltby,



Curator of Moyses's Hall, in December 1948 and early 1949 (Maltby 1949). This work revealed the eastern face of the western wall of the crypt and explored the full depth of the crypt itself. The wall was revealed to be plastered, with traces of decorative paintwork visible, and the base of one of the piers supporting the vaulted ceiling of the crypt was also uncovered.

Maltby also reported that unsuccessful attempts had been made to search for the original steps to the crypt and that additional work had also been undertaken within the east of the crypt in order to locate one of the piers at the chord of the apse. No plan was published, so we cannot be sure which areas were opened and which piers exposed. Unfortunately, neither can we be certain of the location of the top of a buried wall referred to by Maltby as being located running diagonally across the crypt trench (Maltby 1949, 257). This wall apparently shared no alignment with the abbey church and was thought by the excavators to be an earlier feature, making it one of the only sub-medieval-floor-level features to have been identified in the area of the crypt.

The full excavation of the crypt, undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works between 1959 and 1964, confirmed that that the whole space had been infilled with masses of rubble corework, some pieces being of quite considerable size. Some of this corework incorporated reused dressed stonework, and this was collected and recorded as part of the clearance (Figure 96). The majority of this stonework came from the backfill of the crypt and it is thought to have been reused during the reconstruction of the upper parts of the church following the great fire of 1465.

Unlike the 1949 excavations, the 1959–64 excavations were able to reveal the two entrances to the crypt, stairs descending from between the first and second columns of the eastern arcades of the north and south transepts (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 258). The southern entrance as it can be seen today remains much as it did then (Figure 97), but the northern entrance to the crypt had been deliberately blocked with clay and chalk during the lifetime of the abbey and the mortar bed of the transept floor extended over the top of the blocked opening.



**Figure 96:** *The western wall of the crypt, looking west, showing the wall scars of the former arcading and the locations of the northern and southern staircases into the crypt.*



**Figure 97:** *View of the surviving staircase leading from the south transept to the crypt, looking west.*



**Figure 98:** View of the position of the staircase leading from the north transept to the crypt, looking west, showing the wooden shuttering now used to support the backfilled passage..

On excavation, the walls of the northern entrance to the crypt were found to be decorated with painted wall plaster, which survived *in situ*, and was recorded in a site notebook which is to be found in the files still held by Historic England. The scheme comprised diamonds in double black lines on a yellow background, each containing a pointed quatrefoil counter-changed in red and white (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 258). The line of the flight of steps down into the crypt was also delineated by a white line, indicating 0.45m (1 ft 6 in) treads and 0.15m (6 in) risers, as were also the dimensions of the excavated southern crypt stairs. Following the excavation, the northern stairs were again backfilled in order to preserve the wall plaster, although they have eroded since and are now becoming increasingly visible again (Figure 98). The excavation of the crypt revealed the footings of nine of the fourteen main piers of the crypt arcades, but no trace was found of the ten lesser piers which would have divided up the crypt into five aisles.

## *The Presbytery*

As has been discussed, the remains of St Edmund were translated from the rotunda into the new abbey church in 1095 in a ceremony overseen by Bishop Wakelin of Winchester. Edmund's body is described as having been contained within a wooden shrine, which was carried out of the southern door of the rotunda and into the presbytery of the abbey church, where the shrine was set up in pride of place at the centre of the eastern end of the church.

The shrine is depicted several times in the illuminated 15<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript of Lydgate's *Life of St Edmund*, which is now in the British Museum (Harlean MS 2278). Lydgate, one of the foremost poets of his day, was also a monk of Bury and it is to be presumed that the illustrations in the work are drawn from his first-hand knowledge. The shrine is depicted as a gabled chest, adorned with pinnacles and panels and decorated with jewels and gold, standing on a sculpted stone plinth (Figures 26 and 27). There are parallels between the depictions of Edmund's shrine and the extant shrine of St Alban in his Cathedral, which gives a flavour of what the shrine might have looked like. The shrine narrowly escaped destruction during a fire in 1198, a graphic account of which was given by Jocelin of Brakelond. Following the fire, the coffin was opened and examined and the shrine was placed on a new stone base, where it remained until the events of the Dissolution.

Three radiating chapels were added to the presbytery in the time of Abbot Anselm (1120–48). The north-eastern chapel was dedicated to St Saba, the eastern chapel to St Mary and the south-eastern chapel to St Peter (later rededicated as St Cross).

## *Crossing, Transepts and Chapels*

It has long been recognised that the design of the church was changed during construction, and that the two westernmost piers of the presbytery were originally intended to support the crossing tower (Figure 99; Hills 1865, 44). Under the revised scheme, the four surviving crossing piers were established further to the west, lengthening the presbytery by an extra 7.5m and resulting in the addition of eastern aisles to the north and south transepts (Figure 100). This change of plan resulted in the nave and aisle being deliberately widened from the intended 21.5m to 26m-wide in as subtle a way as the builders could manage in an ongoing project.



**Figure 99:** Close-up view of the base of the north-western presbytery pier, intended to support the original crossing of the abbey church before its enlargement.



**Figure 100:** Aerial view of the crossing, looking north-west, showing the pier footings in the crypt, the surviving elements of the crossing piers and the piers of the eastern aisles of the north and south transepts. (© Mike Page, reproduced with permission)



**Figure 101:** The south transept, looking south, showing the piers of the eastern aisle of the transept.



**Figure 102:** The north transept, looking north, showing the piers of the eastern aisle of the transept and the remnants of the cloistral buildings beyond.

In applying these mathematical rules to the abbey church, Fernie identifies two main inconsistencies in the symmetry of the abbey church, both of which are to be found in the area of the north-eastern corner of the crossing, where it meets the north wall of the presbytery. These inconsistencies, he argues, indicate mistakes in laying out and changes to the design which were implemented as the construction programme progressed (Fernie 1998, 8–12). The first of these is the gradual tapering outwards of the line of the northern wall of the nave from east to west, so that the width of the nave and aisles is 25m at the junction with the crossing but is 25.9m at the western end. By contrast, the southern nave arcade and the southern nave walls do not taper outwards and are aligned straight with the southern arcade and the southern wall of the presbytery respectively. As part of this outwards tapering, the axis of the north-eastern crossing pier is offset to the north of the westernmost presbytery pier.

Fernie infers that the original design of the abbey church was such that the nave and aisles should have been wider than the eastern arm, with the presbytery sitting centrally within the space. It is possible that the abbey church was laid out erroneously, with the southern walls being placed in line with the presbytery, rather than being offset to the south. Such an error would have had the knock-on effect of throwing out the architect's calculations, so that by the time the northern side of the abbey church was constructed it was necessary to taper the wall outwards in this fashion to achieve the correct dimensions for the western façade of the abbey church. Possible explanations offered for this error include the presence of previous buildings on the site, the alignment of pre-existing roads, and simple human error.

An alternative explanation, and the one which Fernie prefers, is that the design of the church was deliberately altered during the construction phase. It has long been recognised that when construction of the body of the abbey church resumed c. 1107–20, a fifth bay was added to the western end of the presbytery in order to enable the creation of, and facilitate access to, the eastern aisles, which were added to the transepts at this time (Figures 101 and 102; Gilyard-Beer 1969, 260). The use of eastern transept aisles with radiating chapels in this fashion is unique in England, and has parallels with a few major continental Romanesque churches,

among the earliest being Sainte-Croix d'Orleans and Saint-Martin de Tours, although later examples include Saint-Martial de Limoges and Santiago de Compostela (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 260–62).

Tellingly, both the ambulatory and eastern transept aisle are features of churches constructed to accommodate large numbers of pilgrims, as they provide a circulation route around the eastern apse and enable ready access to the chapels projecting from the transepts, apse and crypt. Their incorporation into the design of the new abbey church at Bury, therefore, is strongly suggestive that Abbot Baldwin anticipated and actively encouraged the prominent part which pilgrimage would come to play in the abbey's prosperity from its earliest days.

In seeking an explanation for this change, Whittingham (1952, 170) suggested that extra space was needed in the transepts to accommodate the stairs which descended into the crypt from both transepts, although there are examples where this was accommodated perfectly well in aisle-less transepts. A more likely explanation is that the design was changed as a direct response to events unfolding at the site of the new Norman cathedral being constructed in Norwich. In effect, the abbey church was in itself being used as a physical manifestation of the rivalry between the abbey and the episcopal see at Norwich, in which Bury was ultimately triumphant (Fernie 1993, 139–40; 1998, 11–12; Heywood 1998, 19–20).

### *The Lady Chapel*

To the north of the crypt, and on approximately the same ground level as the north transept, lay the Lady Chapel, constructed by Abbot Simon de Luton in 1275 (Figure 103). In 1497, William Worcester noted the following (Harvey 1969, 161):

*The length of the Chapel of St Mary on the north side of the choir, where Thomas Beaufort [Duke of Exeter] lies buried, is 40 paces, and its width is 21 paces.*

The remains of the Lady Chapel were cleared during the course of the excavations undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works between March 1959 and May 1964 (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 258–9). It was revealed to be three bays long and two bays wide, and a burial was discovered near the centre of its north side which has been identified as being of Prior Thomas Gosford.





**Figure 103:** The ruins of the Lady Chapel of 1275, looking south-east towards the body of the church.



**Figure 104:** The ruins of the Chapel of St Botolph, tucked against the southern side of the presbytery, looking west.

## *Chapel of St Botolph*

To the south of the crypt stood the Chapel of St Botolph, which was built between 1279 and 1301 by Abbot John de Norwold (Figure 104). Excavations undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works between 1959 and 1964 revealed that the chapel was three bays long and one bay wide, but only its vaulted undercroft survived, tucked into the angle between the southern wall of the crypt and the eastern extent of the northern apsidal chapel of the south transept. The central bay of the undercroft was open to the south, but the projecting building extended beyond the area of the excavation and now lies beneath the house immediately to the south. The small space between the undercroft and the south transept was found to contain a small oven, which the excavators attribute to the preparation of eucharistic wafer, and this space was linked to the south transept chapel by a steep flight of stairs.

## *Nave*

The nave of the abbey church comprised a central aisle, with two side aisles, and was twelve bays long (Figures 105 and 106). The bases of many of the piers protrude from the accumulated build-up of rubble which covers the site, while others remain buried or have been removed from the site. Almost all of the exterior dressed stonework from the piers has been stripped away, with the exception of a few courses of facing around the bases of some of the piers, which give a flavour of the architectural splendours which are now lost to us.

The nave was lit by windows set in each of the bays, totalling 24 openings, and this is confirmed by the number of tapers which were ordered to be placed in the windows to light the church. The upper storeys of the nave comprised a clerestory and triforium, akin to those still in evidence at Ely and Norwich cathedrals. There is evidence in the upper fabric of the west front complex which suggests that the clerestory was repaired and at least partially rebuilt following the fire of 1465. The west front also contains traces of the higher-level gallery walks which would have run within the walls and behind the arcading. In one such example, the traces of the hobnails of the monks' shoes were visibly worn into the floor surface and were revealed during building work.



**Figure 105:** Looking westwards from the crossing along the nave of the abbey church. Note the stepped raises in the ground level which mark the edge of the cleared post-Dissolution rubble layers.



**Figure 106:** Looking eastwards along the abbey church, with ground level dropping to the cloister.



**Figure 107:** *The eroding foundations of the north-eastern corner of the Deanery's garden wall, which was clearly constructed on top of the post-Dissolution rubble layer.*

The southern aisle of the nave lies partially within the boundaries of the Deanery garden (formerly Clopton's Asylum), the brick wall of which clearly sits on top of the extensive rubble layer which covers the site of the nave (Figure 107). Ministry of Public Buildings and Works documents held in The National Archives indicate that there were lengthy discussions in the 1950s and 1960s between the Ministry and the episcopal authorities about the desirability of moving the line of the garden wall southwards so that the full extent of the nave could be taken into the guardianship area. As is apparent, the proposed relocation never happened, but as part of the negotiation process an archaeological trench was excavated within the garden in order to ascertain something of the nature, depth and survival of the archaeological remains of the south aisle. Very little documentation from this excavation has survived, but sketch plans within a site notebook preserved in the Historic England Registry files indicates that the depth of the rubble was much the same within the garden as it was outside it.



**Figure 108:** *The reoccupied ruins of the western front of the abbey church, looking east along the central axis of the church.*

### *The West Front*

The ruins of the western end of the abbey church are imposing, and the single-most complete surviving element of the building (Figure 108), but although the complex is broadly intelligible from the outside, the construction of houses within the ruins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century has rendered it difficult to fully appreciate the architectural complexity of the space (see Figures 38 and 43). More positively, the existence of and need to renovate these dwellings have presented numerous opportunities to study and analyse the fabric of the west front in some detail, so that it is now relatively well understood.

Perhaps one of the most striking facts about the surviving west-front complex, and one not appreciated by most visitors to the site, is the fact that the current exterior and interior ground levels of the west front are between 2.5m and 3m higher than they were during the medieval period, the ground being largely made up with rubble resulting from the demolition of the abbey buildings. This depth was demonstrated by Radford's excavations in 1958, which revealed the lowest

courses of dressed stone surviving on the foundations of the northern end of the west façade, while a geotechnical borehole sunk inside the northern end of the range in 1988 reached a depth of 2.5m before a presumed floor surface was encountered. Subsequent archaeological monitoring of works in and around the west front have demonstrated that many very large pieces of masonry are 'floating' within this accumulated rubble, while an observation recorded in the Suffolk HER mentions the uncovering of several steps leading up to the arches of the west front during the 1930s.

The most detailed studies of the west front are those made by McAleer, who considers the west front a Bury to be 'perhaps the most complex façade structure ever built in Britain, or, indeed, on the Continent' (McAleer 1998a, 22). In its original form, the west front of the abbey church comprised three main elements, two of which were symmetrically repeated. At the centre of the complex was a western transept, the arms of which paralleled the nave and aisles of the abbey church, but did not extend beyond them, as might be expected of a more conventional transept. The west front of the transept was punctuated by three large arched openings, which (if they all contained portals, and we cannot be sure) led into the corresponding nave and aisles. The west door (or doors) of the abbey are recorded as being intricately made in bronze in the Italianate style by the famed abbey craftsman Master Hugo.

The transept was surmounted by an axial crossing tower, which was an unusual feature in the Romanesque architectural canon, but has much closer parallels with the great churches of Anglo-Saxon England, and it has been suggested that its presence was a deliberate acknowledgement of the significance of the Anglo-Saxon royal saint and martyr whose remains were housed within the church.

Historical accounts of the construction of the abbey make no mention of the form of the tower, although it is apparent that it was served by a spiral stair turret in its north-west corner (and maybe also the south-west corner for symmetry). We have no idea as to the roof structure of the tower, however records do survive indicting that the south and east sides of the western tower partially collapsed in 1430 and 1431, with the remainder being taken down the following year. However, although

the fall is documented, the extent of the damage to the surrounding structure, including the transept, nave and adjacent chapels is not recorded.

Reconstruction work began on the tower relatively quickly, but it is not clear how far this had progressed by the time of the disastrous fire of 1465, which broke out in the tower as a result of carelessness on the part of the builders and inflicted major damage on the abbey church. Rebuilding began again following the fire, but although there is extensive evidence of 15<sup>th</sup>-century repairs, especially to the northern side of the tower, and phases of repair cannot be related to particular episodes. The tower was apparently nearing completion in the early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, although we cannot be sure of its status at the Dissolution.

The western transept was flanked to the north and south by double-storeyed chapel blocks, each of which contained two chapels stacked one above the other. These chapels comprised an eastern apse, which projected beyond the eastern line of the western complex, and a rectangular nave-like space within the western complex itself. Most traces of the apses have been subsumed within the later fabric of the west-front houses, but an archaeological investigation undertaken within the yard at the northern end of the range in 1988 revealed traces of the walls of the northernmost apse surviving below the present ground level. This arrangement of apse and nave-space would have given each chapel the feel of a small church in its own right, and the nave-space would also have served as a vestibule to link the chapels to the transept and also to the octagonal structures which were erected to the north and south of the western complex (see below).

References contained within documents relating to the management of the abbey give us an indication of the dedications of the four western chapels, and it would seem that the southern chapels were dedicated to St John the Baptist (ground floor) and St Katharine (first floor) with the northern chapels dedicated to St Denis (ground floor) and St Faith (first floor), although we cannot be completely certain about these identifications. The dedication to St Denis seems to have been at least in part due to the fact that the earlier church of St Denis, founded by Abbot Baldwin, had stood on almost exactly the same spot, having been subsequently demolished to accommodate the construction of the west-front complex.



**Figure 109:** Samson's Tower, at the southern end of the west front of the abbey, looking north.



**Figure 110:** The site of the former northern octagon, looking south, showing the wall scars, openings and stair turret where it would have joined the west front.



The northern and southern ends of the west-front complex were flanked by octagonal structures, of which the southern example still survives (Figure 109), while the northern structure has been completely destroyed (Figure 110). We cannot be sure if this was a result of the tragedies which affected the west front in the 15<sup>th</sup> century or of post-Dissolution stripping of the site, although the structure was clearly missing by the time of the first published illustrations of the west front. These structures were famously constructed by Samson, and medieval sources refer to them as *turris*, i.e. towers, but give no further indication of their form or function. We cannot be sure of their original height from the surviving architectural fragments, which preserve no trace of eaves (McAleer 1998b, 129).

Each of the elements of the west-front complex is unusual in its own right, and the combination of features at Bury is unique: a west transept is found only in four other British churches, of which Ely and Peterborough are two, while Ely is also one of two other examples to have an axial western tower. Chapel blocks are not present at any of these sites, although Ely has a similar arrangement of chapels opening eastward from the transept, while the octagonal structures are features unique to Bury (McAleer 1998a; 1998b).

## The Cloister

One of the most characteristic features of monastic sites, the cloister is the square space sited adjacent to the nave and transept of the abbey church and enclosed by ranges of buildings associated with the core functions of the lives of the monks (Aston 2000, 24–8, 65–6). The idealised plan of the monastic cloister was set out in the Plan of St Gall in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and in it can be seen the arrangement which was to prevail throughout the Benedictine houses of Europe. Later monastic orders developed and modified the standard monastic plan to suit the needs of their own orders.

The standard arrangement sees the main ranges comprising the dormitory and day rooms to the east, the refectory across the south, the buttery, pantry and associated buildings to the west. The cloister itself comprises a square covered walkway linking all of these elements to each other and to the abbey church, and the central garden – or cloister garth – was often a very tranquil spot, perhaps ornamented with a fountain, and in some instances used for the burial of monks.

Such a structure seems to have stood within the cloister at Bury, for in his notes on the abbey compiled in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the antiquary John Leland described the *lavatorium* (at which the monks washed) which stood in the cloister and called it a splendid work, describing how it was supplied with water brought in leaden pipes from a source two miles distant.

In most monastic houses it was standard practice for the cloister and associated ranges to be laid out to the south of the abbey church, but at Bury the cloister was laid out to the north of the abbey church, making the site something of an anomaly (Figures 111 and 112). Many possible reasons have been put forward for this, including the need on the part of the builders to avoid earlier buildings on the site, but as has already been seen, several churches and, indeed, elements of the rotunda of St Mary and St Edmund itself had already been cleared in order to accommodate the new abbey church, so this argument is clearly not valid in the case of Bury.

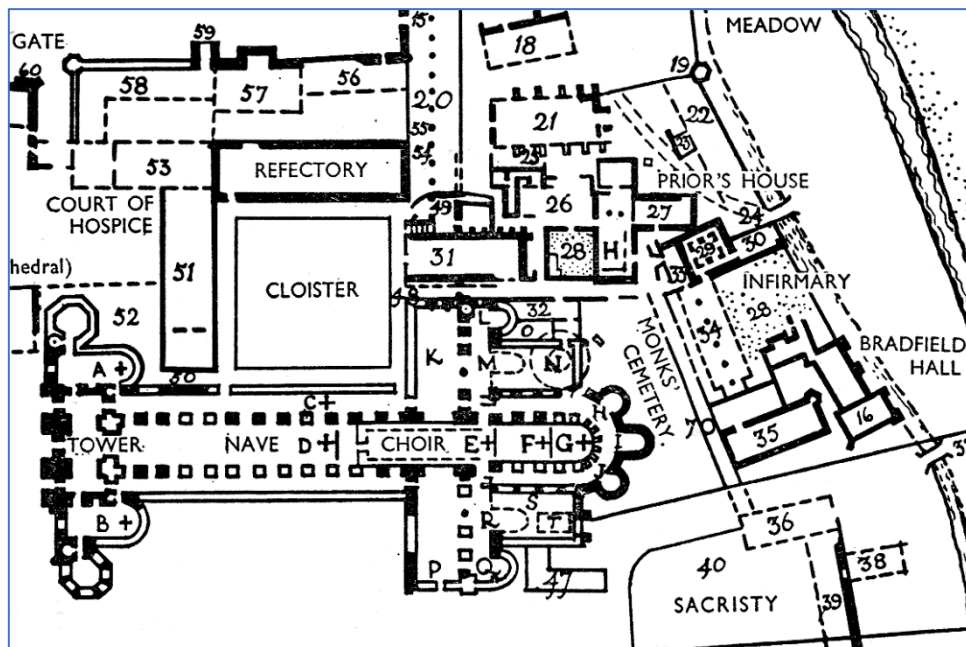
While a northern cloister is an anomaly, it is by no means a unique occurrence, and a survey of other monastic sites with northern cloisters quickly reveals that the main factors affecting the location of the cloister are first, access to a source of running water in the form of a river, and, second, the direction of flow of that water through the buildings of the monastic precinct. Studies of monastic water management have shown that the claustral complex was almost always placed further down the watershed than the abbey church, so that fresh water would flow to the church first and then work its way through the precinct, becoming increasingly dirty on the way as it passed through kitchens, latrines, fishponds and drains (Bond 2001). In almost all cases, when the axis of the church was parallel to a stream, the buildings were sited between it and the church, whereas when the church is end on to a stream, as is the case at Bury, the claustral buildings are located downstream of the church. So significant is this juxtaposition with flowing water, that the architects of monastic complexes were even prepared to alter the axis of the abbey church itself in order to achieve it, as is seen at sites such as the Cistercian abbey at Rievaulx, where the orientation of the abbey church is almost north–south rather than the liturgically more correct east–west alignment (Aston 2000, 24–8, 90–3, 101–124; Bond 2001).



**Figure 111:** Aerial photograph of the ruins of the abbey church and cloister, showing the layout of the cloistral buildings and relationship with later features. (© Mike Page, reproduced with permission)



**Figure 112:** The view across the cloister from the chapterhouse, looking west, showing the higher ground levels of the abbey church (left), refectory (right) and cellar range (background). The cloister itself forms a low-lying hollow in the centre of the ruins.



**Figure 113:** Detailed view of the church and cloister from Whittingham's plan of Bury St Edmunds Abbey, published in the *Archaeological Journal* in 1952. For key to letters and numbers, see Figure 77. (© Royal Archaeological Institute, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd on behalf of Royal Archaeological Institute)

At Bury, the rivers Lark and Linnet both flow through the precinct from south to north, having reached their original confluence within the area of the Abbot's Garden to the north of the precinct, before passing out under the arches of the Abbot's Bridge. This is harder to appreciate in the modern landscape, as the rivers now converge much further to the south and the northern course of the Linnet has been lost under later deposits. There is, therefore, a simple, environmentally-determined explanation for the claustral complex at Bury lying to the north of the abbey church, and this fact has long been recognised (e.g. by Morant 1873, 398–9, quoting Hills), but has often been overlooked by later commentators.

The southern side of the cloister at Bury comprised a covered walkway which ran along the northern side of the abbey church, in which is it likely the monks had carrels and/or desks at which to study and write, as is often the case at other monastic sites. Although the north-facing orientation of the cloister at Bury would not have afforded the direct sunlight which a more usually oriented cloister would have provided, this does not seem to have hindered the use of the space. James suggested that the monastic library, which was built (or rebuilt) by William Curteys, was extensive and held numerous books in specially made presses. He suggested that this was located in an upper storey above the southern cloister walk, although this is by no means certain (James 1895) and it was suggested by Morant (1873, 399), quoting Leland, that the library was presumably over the vestry and chapterhouse.

Ranged along the eastern side of the cloister were a number of different structures related to the running of the abbey, and the immediate proximity to the north transept was a great aid to the smooth running of the offices of the monastic day. Whittingham studied the area of the cloister in considerable detail, and his conclusions need not be rehearsed here – Figure 113 reproduces the area of the cloister and its environs as depicted in his 1952 plan.

North of the north transept was a covered passage called the Trayle which led from the eastern edge of the cloister, through the eastern range and into the space beyond (Figure 114). This area was populated with a high concentration of buildings relating to the running of the monastery and also linked to the monks' cemetery and the infirmary.



**Figure 114:** Looking eastwards along the line of the Trayle, showing the adjoining north transept (right), chapterhouse (left) and cloistral buildings beyond.



**Figure 115:** Looking eastwards across the chapterhouse, with the row of abbots' graves in the centre.

To the north of the Trayle was the chapterhouse, in which the monks assembled daily to conduct the business of the abbey (Figure 115). William Worcester provided paced measurements of the chapterhouse following his visit in 1497, while M.R. James was able to identify the locations of several graves of the abbots who lay buried in the chapterhouse (James 1895). As has already been described in Section 6, the area of the chapterhouse and the ruins to the north were excavated in 1902–03 and the graves of the abbots which can still be seen today were revealed (Figure 116).



*Figure 116: Historic postcard showing the reinstated abbot' graves in the chapterhouse, looking west.*

To the north of the chapterhouse was another north–south oriented building which formed the north-eastern corner of the cloister which shares the eastern wall of the east–west refectory range (see below). The ground floor of this range contained the Monks' Parlour with their dormitory above it. The dormitory would have been linked to the cloister by a night stair, which would have facilitated easy access to the north transept of the church for the nocturnal offices of the monastic day.



**Figure 117:** Looking eastwards across the ruins of the refectory, still largely full of rubble. Contrast the ground levels inside the building (left) and outside in the cloister (right).



**Figure 118:** View westwards across the water garden constructed on the site of the kitchen and buttery.



To the east of the chapterhouse was a discrete group of interlinked rooms referred to as the treasury and vestries, in which the excavations undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works between 1959 and 1964 revealed evidence for a cistern and a well, along with other features (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 258–9).

The northern range of the cloister comprised the refectory, the foundations of which still survive, and the centre of which is still largely full of rubble, given its relative height (Figure 117). To the north of the refectory are the foundations of what was likely to be the associated kitchen or buttery, which are now sealed beneath the water garden constructed in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 118). This garden is constructed on top of the post-Dissolution demolition rubble, and it is likely that the buried archaeological remains are preserved intact beneath.

The western range of the cloister comprised a long building which extended from the abbey church to the Great Court. Following the usual monastic plan, the ground floor of this building should have contained the wine and beer cellars and stores, managed by the cellarer, while the upper storey may have been a guest hall or hostry for more important guests.

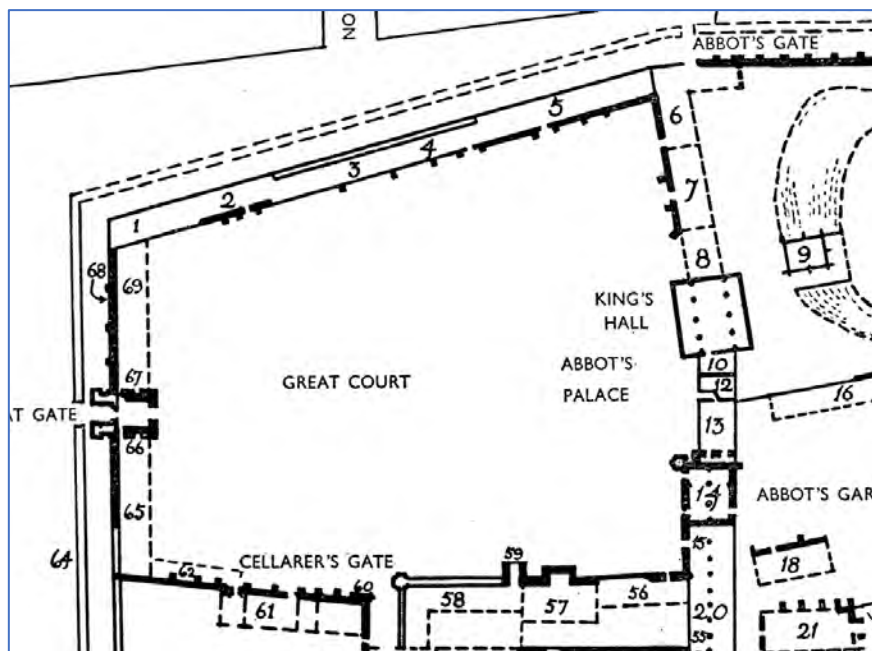
To the north-west was the probable site of the Black Hostry, set between the refectory and the cellars to the east and south respectively, and flanked to the north by the cellarer's house. Morant describes the foundations as still surviving in 1873, with a staircase turret at the north-west angle.

## The Great Court

The northern 'secular' part of the abbey precinct primarily comprised the area of the Great Court. When William Worcester paced out the site in 1497, he found the courtyard to be 550 feet west–east and 350 feet north–south. This area was the main interface between the secular world and the more earthly aspects of monastic life – commerce, provisioning of the monks, the administration of monastic estates and the great affairs of state (Figure 119). Again Whittingham's plan of the Great Court contains a lot of relevant detail and an enlargement is included as Figure 120.



**Figure 119:** Aerial view of the precinct looking south-west showing the area of the Great Court, now containing the circular flower-beds of the Abbey Gardens, with the Abbot's Garden in the foreground and the cloistral complex to the left. (© Mike Page, reproduced with permission)



**Figure 120:** Detailed view of the Great Court from Whittingham's plan of Bury St Edmunds Abbey, published in the *Archaeological Journal* in 1952. For key to letters and numbers, see Figure 77. (© Royal Archaeological Institute, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd on behalf of Royal Archaeological Institute)



**Figure 121:** The Sensory Garden against the northern face of the Great Court, looking north, showing preserved architectural details of the medieval lean-to structures.



**Figure 122:** The Aviary, looking north, within which are preserved many medieval architectural features.

To the north of the Great Court, running as a series of lean-to buildings constructed off the inner face of the precinct wall, were ranges of buildings performing the functions of the Abbot's Stables (with chambers above for servants), more general stabling (sufficient for 300 horses), brewhouse, bakehouse, granaries and stores. This range was commenced under Abbot Ording (1148–57), although most of the finished structures belong to Samson (1182–1212).

The southern wall of these structures survives almost in its entirety and exhibits numerous windows and doors (Figure 121 and 122). Stretches of the northern precinct wall also survive within some of the housing constructed along this edge of the precinct in later years. Very few traces of cross-walls survive, although it is possible to suggest something of the lengths of the individual buildings in this area from the plot sizes of the external structures. Historical accounts of the rioting in the 14<sup>th</sup> century tell of the systematic burning of these buildings by the insurgents. In 1873 Morant commented that it was still possible to see reddening of some of the stonework in this area as a testament to the fire (Morant 1873, 396). These walls have formed the site of an aviary and other features since the development of the pleasure gardens in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in 2009 and 2010 the walls in this area were subjected to extensive archaeological recording and analysis (Gill 2009; 2010).

The eastern range of the Great Court was formed by the various buildings which comprised the Abbot's Palace (Figures 123 and 124). The Palace apparently comprised a dining hall, chapel, chamber, garderobe, buttery, kitchen, cellar, stable, bakehouse and brewhouse. These buildings were built by Helyas the sacrist (1148–57) and renovated by Walter de Banham in Abbot Samson's time (1182–1211). The historical engravings which depict the Abbot's Palace have already been discussed (Figures 29 and 53), and they show the buildings as they survived into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1873, Morant described how the substructure of the dining hall still survived as did other elements of the building.

To the east of the Abbot's Palace was his garden, which spanned the area between his buildings and the river (Figure 125). Within the Abbot's Garden, adjacent to the river Linnet (which originally had its confluence with the Lark at this point) stands a hexagonal dovecote, with a wall extending to the Abbot's lodgings (Figure 126).



**Figure 123:** The exterior of the upstanding remains of the Abbot's Palace, known as the Queen's Chamber, looking south-east.



**Figure 124:** The interior of the Queen's Chamber, excavated in the late 1970s, looking north-west.



**Figure 125:** *The view eastwards across the area of the Abbot's Garden, with dividing wall and dovecote.*



**Figure 126:** *The ruins of the dovecote in the Abbot's Garden, looking north.*

Abbot Anselm (1121–48) is recorded in a charter as building a mill in the abbot's court, to the north of the dovecote, and the possible footprint was identified in the 1990 geophysical survey undertaken by English Heritage (Payne 1999). The former course of the river Linnet flowed northwards through this area of the precinct and was channelled through the mill. Although now filled in, the contour survey of the area conducted by the SCCAS in 2009 revealed traces of a linear hollow running in the appropriate location (see Figure 9). A subsequent palaeo-environmental assessment of peat deposits sampled from this possible mill-lead dated from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries and produced abundant cereal pollen, demonstrating that crop processing had occurred close by (Krawiec *et al.* 2009; Gill 2009a).

The southern boundary of the Great Court was demarcated by a high stretch of buttressed and crenelated wall which separated the area from the space known as the Palace Yard to the south of it (Figure 127). The southern range of the yard represented the interface between the secular northern half of the precinct and the sacred area of the cloister, and in it were located the Cellarer's lodgings and offices. The Palace Yard itself contained the Hall of Pleas, which was built against the southern side of this dividing wall, in which traces of its structure can still be discerned (Figure 128). The southern return of the dividing wall preserves traces of the eastern gable of the Hall of Pleas, as well as the western gable of a second building to the south which has been incorporated into its structure (Figure 129).

The former Palace Yard was the primary focus of one the most prolonged archaeological investigations within the precinct, having been excavated ahead of the expansion of the Cathedral Centre in the 1980s and 1990s (Martin *et al.* 1984, 327; Gill 2005). The discovery of the course of a Late Anglo-Saxon road in this area has already been described, and the implication is that the Palace Yard lay outside the area of the earliest precinct and was effectively a part of the secular town. Excavations here revealed that in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, two successive and well-built timber buildings encroached onto this area, one replacing the other. The first was aligned north–south and was a large post-in-trench timber building, of a scale suggestive of monastic origins rather than secular. The replacement building was of similar proportions and construction, and aligned east-west.



**Figure 127:** View of the dividing wall at the southern side of the Great Court, looking south-west.



**Figure 128:** The former site of the Hall of Pleas, looking north from the roof of the cathedral. Note the architectural detailing which survives in the southern face of the dividing wall.





**Figure 129:** *The eastern wall of the Cathedral Garth, looking east, showing the preserved gable end of a medieval building, with a blocked doorway to the north..*

When the precinct boundary was expanded westwards in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the area of the Palace Yard was incorporated into the precinct and the later phases of the excavation demonstrate that stone buildings stood on the site and were associated with traces of ancillary timber buildings. A large, cellared medieval building had been removed, creating a large pit which filled half the site. A test-hole suggested that the floor was 5.7m below the turf, and the building had been completely robbed. An aisled building seems to have been constructed running southwards from this building, and a third ran westwards out of the excavation area. This building had a clay-lined cellar, suggesting attempts at damp-proofing, and had also been largely robbed. A second building had been constructed within the hole, which had a tiled floor. This excavated evidence from the Palace Yard sites has yet to be fully published, but the density of occupation and frequency with which the buildings were replaced are indicative of the fact that we should be thinking about the periphery of the precinct, at least, as a highly dynamic area which was subject to considerable changes over a relatively short length of time.



**Figure 130:** Aerial view of the Great Churchyard looking north-east, showing St Edmundsbury Cathedral, St Mary's church and the Chapel of the Charnel. (© Mike Page, reproduced with permission)



**Figure 131:** The cordoned-off ruins of the Chapel of the Charnel, looking north.

## The Great Churchyard

The Great Churchyard is the name given to the area to the west, south and south-east of the abbey church, which contained the abbey church itself as well as several subordinate churches and chapels, including St James' church, St Mary's church and the chapel of St Margaret. The eastern part of the churchyard was defined as the monk's cemetery (Figure 130).

The Chapel of the Charnel stands in the centre of the Great Churchyard, to the south of the west front of the abbey church (Figure 131). It was founded in 1301 by Abbot John de Norwold, who appointed two chaplains to celebrate masses in the chapel for the repose of the dead. By 1637 the chapel had become an alehouse, then it became a blacksmith's shop, and finally, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was to become the private mausoleum of one John Spink, although his bank failed before the transaction could be completed (Hills 1865b; Morant 1873). Hills (1865b, 118) records that in 1844 the crypt of the Chapel of the Charnel was partly dug into, revealing a floor of barnack stone 'covered two feet deep with bones'. Although technically scheduled as part of the designation of the wider abbey site in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Chapel of the Charnel was also scheduled in its own right in the 1940s following a period of confusion over the status of the monument in response to proposals to remove the railings which surround it.

The Brothers' Cemetery lay at the eastern end of the area of the Great Cemetery, adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the abbey church between the south transept and the presbytery. It originally wrapped around the eastern arm of the church to incorporate the northern side of the presbytery too, in which the rotunda of St Mary and St Edmund originally stood and part of which area is now covered by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century tennis courts. The discovery of numerous lead crosses in the area of the Brothers' Cemetery has already been described (Figures 56 and 57), and it has been suggested that the Brothers' Cemetery might be the final resting place of the remains of St Edmund, their having been hidden at the Dissolution (Young 2018).

A chapel of St Andrew was founded in the Brothers' cemetery by Radulf Harvey, the sacrist under Abbot Anselm (1120–48). To the east of the south transept is a fragment of wall described on historic Ordnance Survey maps as St Andrew's

Chapel. These maps also identify the area immediately to the south of this (now a car park) as the monks' cemetery, based on finds of burials made earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A trench excavated in the course of an archaeological assessment of the south-east precinct undertaken in 2007 revealed two graves about 60m to the south-west of the supposed site of St Andrew's chapel. The burials were close together, possibly part of a row, and seem to date to the 14<sup>th</sup> century or later.

The chapel of St Edmund and St Stephen stood in the Great Churchyard to the south of the south transept, between the chapel of St Andrew (to the east) and the Chapel of the Charnel (to the west). It was dedicated on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1275, and was built following the destruction of the remaining portions of the original rotunda of St Mary and St Edmund during the construction of the Lady Chapel. The chapel was intended to contain the bier of St Edmund, on which his body had been transported to London for safekeeping in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, and was the place where pilgrims to the shrine of St Edmund left financial offerings.

Another chapel, known as St John ad Montem is described in historical documents as also standing in the Great Churchyard, and from its name it is assumed to have stood at the highest point, somewhere in the south-western corner of the site. No trace of either chapel survives today and given the very heavy levels of disturbance caused by the intensive use of the Great Churchyard for burials, it is highly unlikely that any archaeological evidence for these structures would survive.

## St James' Church / St Edmundsbury Cathedral

The original church of St James was constructed during the abbacy of Abbot Anslem and was consecrated by William de Corbeuil, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1123–36. As has been discussed, it may have originally stood outside the western boundary of the precinct, with the boundary later being extended westwards to incorporate the western façade of the church into the precinct wall, although we cannot be certain of the chronology of these events.

The present church comprises a nave, north and south aisles, crossing and transepts, with a chancel and a central tower (Figure 85). It is faced in coursed squared limestone on the south and west apart from the clerestory which is in

rubble flint. The chancel was apparently rebuilt in 1390–1402, and again in 1711 and 1865–9, the latter under the auspices of George Gilbert Scott. Early engravings (Figures 30, 33, 41 and 42) and historic photographs of the site show the church in its early forms (Figure 132). The original nave was probably also rebuilt in 1390, was rebuilt again in 1503 and was completed c. 1550. It is likely that the architect of this work was John Wastell, master mason at the abbey and architect of King's College Chapel, Cambridge (Bettley and Pevsner 2015, 134–7).

The church was elevated to the cathedral of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich in 1914, and a chancel added by the architect Stephen Dykes Bower in the 1960s. Reference has already been made to the archaeological excavations which were undertaken prior to the construction of the new chancel, which revealed traces of the underlying archaeology and remains of the church of St Denis (Dufty and Radford 1959). A central tower was also envisaged as part of the 1960s scheme and partially built, but it was not until 1999 that work began on the present tower under the auspices of the Gothic Design Practice. The tower was completed in 2005 and the neighbouring Cathedral Centre, which is linked to the church by a new north transept configuration, was completed in 2008 (Figure 133; Bettley and Pevsner 2015, 134–7).

## St Mary's Church

Late 12<sup>th</sup>-century documents preserve the tradition of an ancient stone parish church dedicated to St Mary, which apparently stood on the site of the later northern transept of the abbey church and was demolished in order to make space for it. The new parish church of St Mary's, which still stands at the south-western corner of the precinct, was built in the time of Abbot Anselm (1121–48), although nothing of the fabric of that church survives either (Figure 84). The lower parts of the present church are of 14<sup>th</sup>-century origin, and the church has a northern tower that is slightly offset to the east, perhaps indicating the integration of the structure into the south-western corner of the precinct wall, to which the church is still attached. The upper part of the building was rebuilt in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the chancel chapels and sanctuary were added. The church was restored twice in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the south porch was taken down in 1831 (Figure 134; Bettley and Pevsner 2015, 137–40).



*Figure 132. Historic photograph from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century looking north-west across the Great Churchyard towards the Norman Tower and St James' church.*



*Figure 133: St Edmundsbury cathedral looking north-west. The area excavated by Radford and Dufty in the late 1950s lies under the nearest corner of the building.*



**Figure 134:** St Mary's church, looking westwards, showing the offset northern tower and the traces of the precinct wall extending to the north of the tower.

## The Dissolution

In November 1535, Thomas Cromwell's commissary John ap Rice visited Bury and on 5<sup>th</sup> November wrote a letter to Cromwell in which he described the relics held in the church and set out his suspicions that the monks had colluded to conceal the truth about the wealth and running of the house. By this time Bury was one of the largest Benedictine establishments in the country, with an annual revenue of £1,650. With specific regard to the relics of the house, Rice wrote:

*Amongst the relics we found much vanity and superstition, as the coals that St Lawrence was toasted withal, the parings of S. Edmund's nails, S. Thomas of Canterbury's penknife and his boots, and divers skills for the headache; pieces of the holy cross able to make a holy cross of; other relics for rain and certain other superstitious usages, for avoiding of weeds growing in corn, and such other. (Cook 1965, 65–6)*

Many of the religious houses which survived the first Act of Suppression, of which Bury was one, were visited by Cromwell's commissioners for the purposes of

destroying holy relics and images. In 1536, four commissioners – John Williams, Richard Pollard, Philip Paris and John Smith – visited Bury, where they dismantled the shrine of St Edmund and confiscated a large amount of gold, silver and jewels. Reporting to Cromwell, they wrote that:

*Pleaseth it your good lordship to be advertised, that we have been at Saint Edmunds Bury, where we found a rich shrine which was very cumbrous to deface. (Cook 1965, 114)*

The Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1539, stripped and the ruins left to become a quarry for local builders. As has been mentioned, the fate and whereabouts of Edmund's body remain unknown, although it has been suggested that they may have been concealed somewhere within the precinct (Young 2018, 139–53). Among the more obvious possible hiding places are the monks' cemetery to the south-east of the abbey church, somewhere within the Great Churchyard or within either of the two churches – St James' and St Mary's – which survived the Dissolution.



## 11. Post-Dissolution History

The post-dissolution history of the monastic precinct is a long and varied one, and this section examines the fate of the monastic buildings themselves, as well as presenting the changes which occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and resulted in the site that we know today. Although no contemporary maps, plans or drawings survive which show the abbey in its heyday, meaning that any attempt to reconstruct the ground-plan of the abbey is very much an exercise in conjecture and historical detective work, the post-dissolution history of the abbey site and the wider study area is well illustrated by a series of maps and other graphical representations which have been made since the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

### The Fate of the Monastic Buildings

The excavations of the eastern arm of the church undertaken by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works between 1956 and 1964 shed considerable light on the processes by which the ruins of the abbey church were systematically stripped of their dressed stone facings in the post-Dissolution period (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 257). These excavations demonstrated that the floors of the eastern arm of the church had been completely removed prior to the demolition of the church, with the exception of a small area of flagstones in the south transept chapel, and that the floor of the church was covered with a layer of debris comprising patches of yellow sand, burnt daub and broken window glass presumably resulting from the stripping of the church (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 257). Many of the large pieces of masonry which were encountered during these excavations had clearly fallen from higher parts of the church, and were too large to have been subsequently moved by hand. It is telling, then, that the dressed ashlar stonework had been systematically stripped from all of the faces of this masonry prior to its collapse, indicating that the stonework must have been removed from scaffolding while still *in situ* rather than the walls being brought down first (Gilyard-Beer 1969, 257). Much of the ruined stone from the abbey site made its way into the buildings of the town or the surrounding villages, and there are precious few post-medieval structures in Bury St Edmunds which have not got some part of the abbey in their fabric or gardens.

It appears that the fate of the abbey church was shared by most of the other stone buildings within the monastic precinct, with a few notable exceptions. On 14<sup>th</sup> February 1560, Queen Elizabeth granted the 'Mansion House' within the monastic precinct (presumably the former Abbot's House) to one John Eyre, and in the process listed the details of what the grant entailed. The description, transcribed by Gillingwater (1804, 158–60), gives us a good picture of the extent and names of many of the features which survived the Dissolution: 'And all that parcel of the house called the Dorter, containing in length fifty feet, to the said house adjoining, and two houses and buildings called Garners on the East part of the said mansion house, and one stable, called the Abbot's Stable; and one house, called the Hey House, to the said stable annexed; and all the house called the Gate House of the said Monastery.' The grant also specified the following:

- all the land, ground, and soil, within the walls and precincts;
- one piece of land called the Great Court, containing four acres;
- one garden, called the Polly's Garden;
- two small closes of land on the back side of the hall, called the King's Hall;
- two small gardens next the Chamberer's Office;
- one garden called the Lectury Yard;
- all those small gardens next Bradfield Hall;
- four gardens ... lying between Bradfield Hall, the Walnut-Tee, and the Walnut-Tree Close ;
- all the churchyard of the said late Monastery of Bury;
- one piece of land called the Pond-yard, and all the ponds within the same between the rivers;
- one piece of ground called the Vyne, containing six acres;
- one close called the Walnut-Tree Close, containing six acres;
- and all and singular the walls, pillars, wells, messuages, wind-mills, houses, buildings, toft-moors, marshes, sabula, fishery, fishings, rivers, fountains, conduits heads, and all things whatsoever to the conduits belonging.

In 1685, the former Abbot's Palace became a Jesuit school, after the monks of St Edmund's abbey in Paris turned down the chance to buy the property. The school survived until late in 1688, when a mob attacked the house and partially

demolished it (Young 2006). As was discussed in Section 6, James Burrough made a drawing of the standing structure in 1720, which was subsequently published in Battely's *Antiquitates* in 1745, by which time the house had been demolished by its then owner, Major Richardson Pack. By 1803, the site was shown in ruins (Figure 53).

A different fate befell the remains of the western front of the abbey church. Once stripped of its dressed-stone facings, the remains of the western façade of the abbey church were left standing and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century a number of rudimentary houses were built into the open remains of the arcading, their layout and design being determined to a large extent by the monastic ruins themselves (Figures 38 and 42). These troglodytic dwellings remain a distinctive feature of the site to this day, albeit much altered over the years, and their presence has had the dual effect of preserving the ruins and also giving Bury one of its most characteristic and unique post-Dissolution features (Figure 108). Nowhere else in Britain have ruins been re-occupied in this fashion. As has been noted, the upstanding remains of the western façade are not included within the Scheduled areas of the site, but the overall building complex is listed at Grade I.

Reference has already been made to the archaeological and architectural studies which have focussed on the west front complex and attempted to reconstruct its medieval appearance. In the process of analysing the original structure of the western façade, McAleer made extensive investigation within these houses, recording their details, but only as a means to understanding the earlier fabric (McAleer 1998a; 1998b). However, in 1992, the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) undertook a detailed survey specifically focussed on the west-front houses themselves, recognising them as important historical structures in their own right, and incorporating documentary records and engraved and photographic views, with their own programme of surveying and recording (RCHME 1992).

The RCHME survey demonstrated that the houses were renovated to varying degrees during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the central house being extensively refurbished (RCHME 1992). It is possible that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century one or more of the upper rooms belonging to the central house were relinquished for use by the north

arch house. Such a flying-freehold arrangement was certainly established in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the house within the central arch ceased to exist as a self-contained unit and its rooms were taken over by the houses on either side.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century restorations were not to everyone's tastes. In his 1865 assessment of the abbey ruins, Hills wrote of the west front:

*The once magnificent work is now not only reduced to a fragment of the roughest part of the walls of its base, but is disfigured by dwelling-houses which have been crowded into the church along the whole breadth of the west front, blocking up its arches, and filling them with doors and windows, which, not long since, were all of the meanest character. In the attempt to relieve the venerable fragments from this depth of contemptuous treatment, a mistaken notion had lately led to the production of a series of Norman windows executed in cement in the south octagon tower and front of the adjoining chapel – a perversion of taste which has been avoided in the new stone windows of the house in the northern part.* (Hills 1865a, 40)

Hills' sentiments have echoed down the years, and the administrative history of the site features numerous discussions about the nature and character of the west-front houses and, in particular, the question of whether or not they should be retained or removed. English Heritage even went so far as to commission drawings illustrating proposals to remove some or all of the houses in order that the full grandeur of the abbey church might be appreciated, but none of these proposals has ever come to fruition and the houses remain occupied to this day.

The post-Dissolution histories of the churches of St Mary and St James have already been mentioned, and both continue as active places of worship to this day. The elevation of St James' church to cathedral status and the expansion of the episcopal complex which has come with that are both significant factors in the later developmental history and ongoing spiritual significance of the site itself, and this is an aspect of the study area which is due to be considered in greater depth in the Conservation Plan phase of this project.

Similarly, the Norman Tower, the only surviving Romanesque structure on the site, remains an iconic building within the town and the wider region. The tympanum on the west side was apparently removed in 1789 to allow carts to pass through the arch, and the condition of the building decayed until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Historical maps and illustrations also indicate that, until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, buildings stood between the northern face of the tower and the south-western corner of St James' church. This was Rookes' Coffee House, which was demolished to open up the tower again. To the south stood John Deck's Post Office.

In 1865, Hills (1865b, 120) described the state of the Norman Tower as follows:

*A few years ago the tower had fallen into a state of deplorable decay and dilapidation. In several parts the walls were so rent as to permit views of the Cemetery to be had from the interior of the tower, through what should have been its solid parts. Considerable portions of the principal arches had fallen out; and though a large part of its defects had been concealed by a coat of cement outside, yet some of the most intelligent of the inhabitants took alarm at the state of things, caused the cement to be removed, and a thorough restoration to be effected.*

The restoration work was undertaken in 1846–7 and resulted in a greatly improved outward appearance, along with internal strengthening offered by the insertion of new ironwork and a reconstructed roof. However, Hills states that 'it is a matter for a slight regret that a desire for neatness procured the effacing from the sides of the tower, of the abutments of the walls through which it was the entrance, giving to it an isolation which it did not originally possess' (Hills 1865b, 120).

## Warren's Map of 1776

As a significant part of an established town, there are a lot of maps which provide a series of snapshots of the study area and can be used to chart its development over time. Of these, there are a few key maps which can be used to give a clear indication of the post-Dissolution development of the area. As with so many aspects of Bury's history, one of the earliest and best snapshots is given by Thomas Warren's map of 1776, which was based on a map produced by his father in 1748, and shows how the study area had developed by the later 18<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 135).



Figure 135: An extract of Thomas Warren's 1776 map of Bury St Edmunds, showing the area of the former monastic precinct.

One of the most striking features of the Warren map is the completeness with which the abbey ruins are depicted, and it should be remembered that the 1770s were the period during which the archaeological and historical sources indicate that the ruins were uncovered out of antiquarian interest, those of the abbey church being singled out for particular attention (King 1775). Beginning with the abbey church, and heading north (left on the image) the map shows that several of the buildings which had comprised the eastern range of the cloister and the Abbot's Palace were still in evidence, albeit as ruins. This tallies with the historical accounts of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatment of these buildings discussed above.

Of the remains of the northern side of the cloister, the map depicts the surviving outline of the refectory adjacent to a parallel west-east building which is labelled as a dormitory. The western side of the cloister is shown as grazing land and devoid of structures, although it is still separated from the area of Palace Yard by a substantial range of buildings. The area of Palace Yard itself is depicted as a bowling green, and this attribution may go some way to explaining the 1.5m depth of levelling topsoil which the archaeological investigations undertaken within the Yard have revealed were laid down at about this time.

Of the remains of the Great Court, we are again shown an area down to grass, but the mapping indicates that a substantial range of lean-to buildings still stood against the inner face of the northern boundary wall. These are labelled 'Brew House and Stables of the Abbot'. The line of the precinct wall is less clear amongst the backyard plots of the mass of buildings which are shown fronting onto Mustow Street, and this arrangement remains confusing to this day, with many properties in the row having incorporated the wall into their fabric.

To the west of the Great Court, the Abbey Gate is clearly shown, but so too is a small rectangular building tucked into the angle between it and the precinct wall on the Angel Hill side. This building is not shown in any of the earlier images discussed thus far, but a building is depicted in this location in a scene from 1785 showing Captain Poole's famous balloon flight from Bury (Figure 136). The building was evidently short-lived, as it is not shown later maps either, but only a wall scar is shown on the north face of the Abbey Gate in the painting *The Fair at Bury St Edmunds* by Joseph Clarendon Smith, which must post-date 1789 (Figure 137).



**Figure 136:** Kendall's *The Departure* (1785) showing Captain Poole's famous balloon flight from Bury. Note the stone building immediately adjacent to the Abbey Gate. (Moyses's Hall Museum)





**Figure 137:** Joseph Clarendon Smith's *The Fair at Bury St Edmunds* (after 1789). Note the roof-scar on the northern face of the Abbey Gate, indicating the former presence of a building. (Moyses Hall Museum).



*Figure 138: Clopton's Asylum, now the Deanery, looking north.*

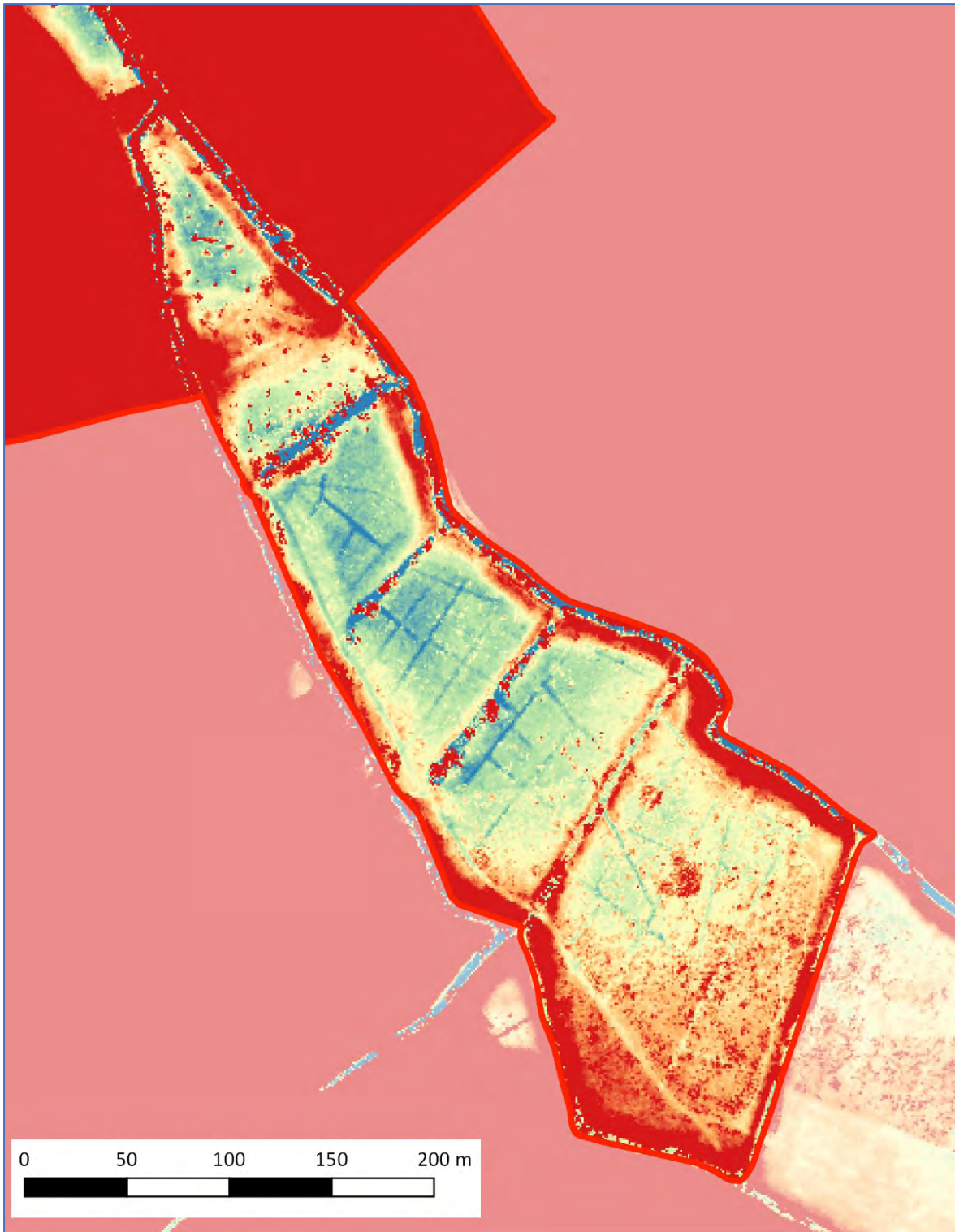
Moving westwards along the western boundary of the precinct, we can see the development of the shops and houses which front onto Angel Hill, before reaching St James' church, which is shown with its smaller chancel and cluster of outbuildings and enclosures at its eastern end. Buildings are clearly depicted filling the gap between St James' church and the Norman Tower and further buildings are shown to the south, indicating that the closely packed hemming in of the tower depicted in Figure 23 had already occurred by this date. The row of buildings continues along Church Govel Street (now known as Crown Street) and includes a complete row of houses along the edge of the Great Churchyard north of St Mary's church. These were presumably built westwards off the extant precinct wall, and have subsequently been removed. St Mary's church itself stands at the corner of the precinct, just as it has for centuries, and the south porch, which was removed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, can clearly be seen on the map.

Following Honey Hill eastwards, again it is possible to see the gradual accumulation of buildings along the line of the former precinct boundary, and the arch shown in the position of St Margaret's Gate is suggestive of the structure still

being extant at this period. In the Great Churchyard itself, the Chapel of the Charnel is clearly shown among the grazing animals, as are two avenues of trees, which were deliberately planted in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to create town walks. Nestling against the southern wall of the nave of the abbey church is the Clopton Asylum, which was built c. 1744 under the will of Dr Poley Clopton who died in 1730 (Figure 138). The area between the Great Churchyard and the river is shown as a series of rectilinear plots of ground, perhaps gardens or allotments.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Warren map is its depiction of the river valley, and of the courses of the Lark and the Linnet in particular. Both rivers are shown flowing through the abbey precinct and meeting their confluence at a point near the Abbot's Bridge, as they had done throughout the life of the abbey, although they now no longer do so and therefore the land must have been reclaimed since that date. To the south-east, No Mans Meadow is shown as tree-lined grazing land, but as the rivers start to converge the map depicts a very peculiar zig-zag arrangement of water channels in The Crankles. This arrangement is said to relate to the monastic fishponds, which would have provided a key part of the monks' diet, although we cannot be sure of this identification. There are other, more conventionally shaped fishponds shown to the north and these are also visible in the Bucks' panorama of 1741 (Figures 30 to 32), but the zig-zag arrangement is not visible. Without further evidence it is hard to be sure of the antiquity of these features, and there is a strong possibility that they are post-medieval. To date there have been no archaeological assessments of The Crankles and the ponds no longer survive. After years as a willow plantation it is perhaps not surprising that a detailed analysis of the LIDAR data for the area does not reveal any trace of the geometric design (Figure 139).

Finally, moving back downstream, the map depicts the west bank of the river, between the Linnet and the line of the monastic ruins as grazing land, divided up into numerous smaller portions and interspersed with the remains of monastic buildings. Amongst these, it is possible to discern the dovecote tower which is still extant, and a second tower appears to be depicted further upstream. On the opposite bank, the area of the abbey vineyard is shown enclosed by the former precinct wall and at this stage was undeveloped, being again given over to grazing.



**Figure 139:** False-colour image mapping of the relative ground heights of The Crankles and No Mans Meadow, derived from the 1m-resolution LIDAR DSM. Blue is the lowest ground and the highest points are red. (Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018. OS Licence No. 100019675. LIDAR: Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015. All rights reserved.)

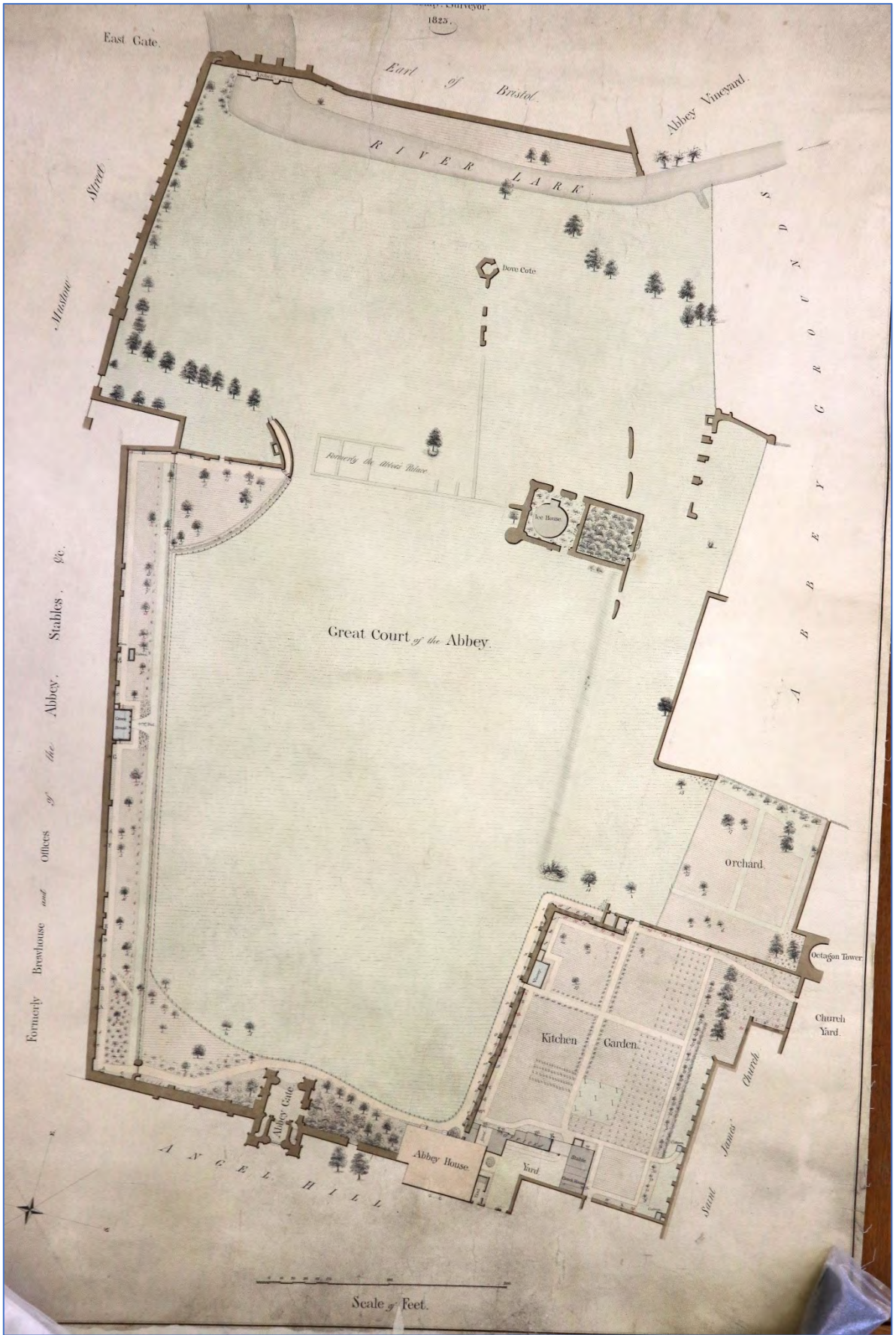


Figure 140: Lenny's 1823 Survey of Abbey House and Garden (Suffolk Record Office BRO 1167/5)

## Lenny's Survey of the Abbey House and Grounds, 1823

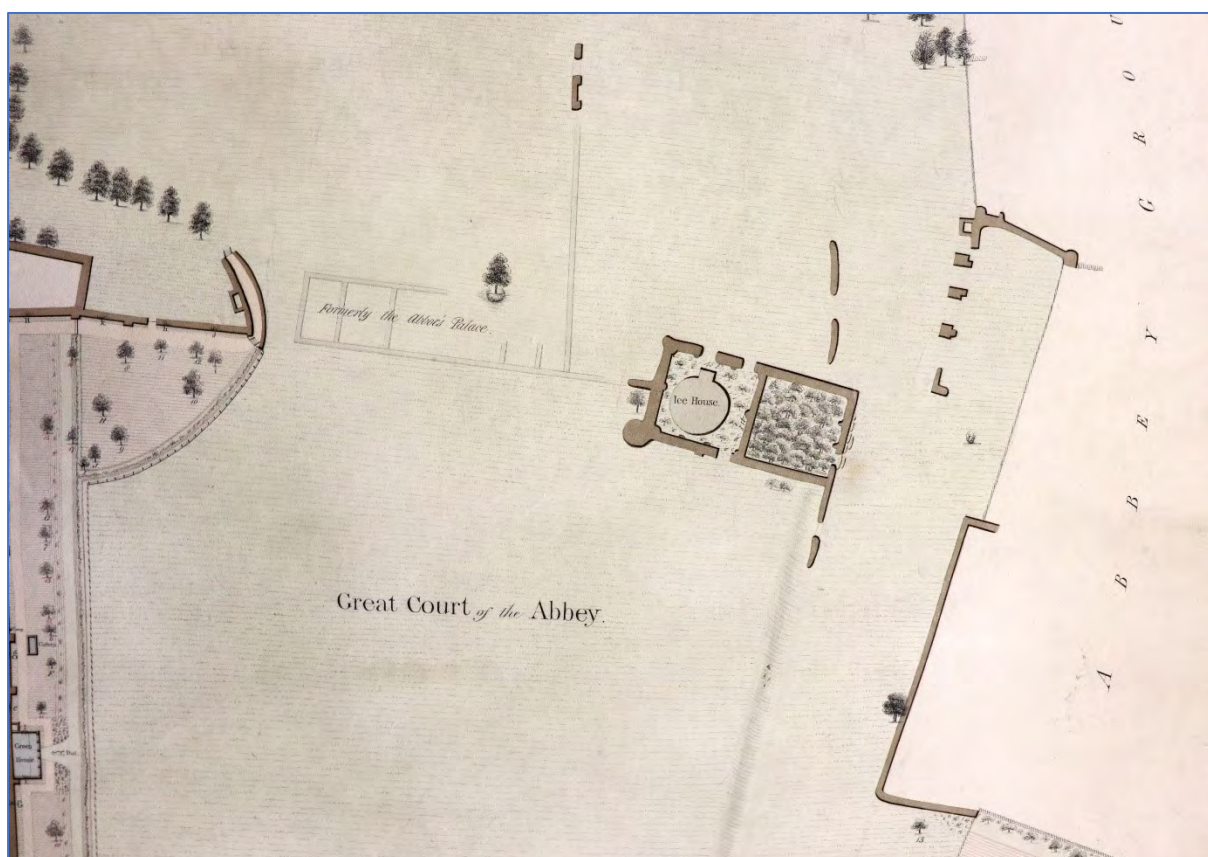
The second map which sheds great light on the development of the northern end of the former monastic precinct is J.G. Lenny's *Survey of the Abbey House and Grounds* which he produced in 1823 (Figures 140 to 142). Abbey House (a Grade II\* listed building [List Entry No. 1141178](#)) is situated on the south side of the Abbey Gate and has a 19<sup>th</sup>-century front facing Angel Hill with an 18<sup>th</sup>-century back facing onto Abbey Gardens. It was built by the Davers family c. 1720 and, in 1806, Abbey House and its garden were inherited by the Marquis of Bristol, whose main residence was Ickworth House.

Taking in the overall view to begin with, Lenny's survey highlights the strong contrast between the site of the former Great Court in the 1770s and the 1820s. No longer is the space shown as open grazing land, for it has been gentrified and has the air of a landscape park. Lenny's map paints an idyllic scene, and there is no indication that this is a garden at the heart of a busy town. The Abbey Gate is clearly shown, leading to a bordering trackway which follows the outside wall of the precinct. The central grassed area of the Great Court is shown largely featureless and is depicted surrounded by a fence. This path leads to stands of trees and along the northern wall of the precinct splits into a pair of parallel paths. Halfway along the length of this wall is shown a glasshouse, with a sundial in front of it, and it is likely that this is the same structure which now serves as a tearoom for the abbey garden (Figure 143).

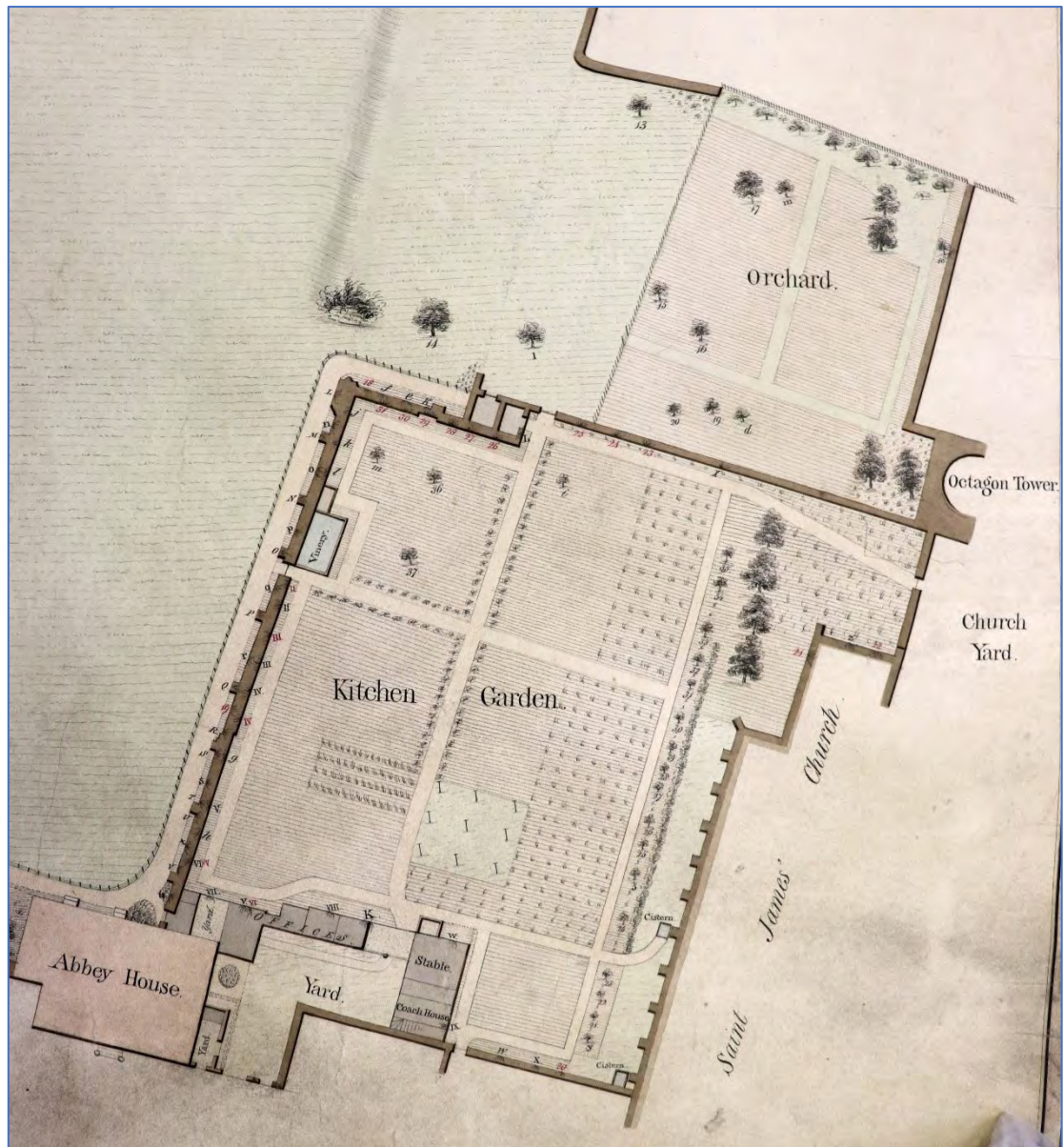
Progressing further east one passes a water-filled cistern and reaches a quarter-circle enclosure set against a surviving stretch of precinct wall, which is circumvented by a small gated path. This wall is the northern surviving extent of the eastern range of buildings which hemmed the Great Court, and Lenny also shows the ghostly outlines of the foundations of the Abbot's palace which must still have been visible. Extending eastwards from the Abbot's palace is the stretch of wall linking to the dovecote, which is shown as being extant. Tellingly, although the Lark is clearly shown, there is no sign of the Linnet within the garden, suggesting that its channel had been backfilled and reclaimed by this period.

The southern extent of the Abbey House garden is marked by traces of the ruins of claustral buildings, which the boundary of the garden follows. One exception to

this is the masonry remains of what we know as the Queen's Chamber, which are clearly shown as a two-celled ruin with a turret on the north-western corner. The northern range is depicted as containing an ice house, which serves to enhance the view of the site being treated as a landscape park, and which raises archaeological questions as to why no trace of an icehouse was found during the excavations undertaken between 1976–80 (Fleming 1994). There are two possible explanations for this: the first, that the ice house was built above ground and that all traces of it were subsequently removed, or that Lenny was mistaken in the location of the ice house and that it was perhaps intended to be shown in the southern of the two cells. This cell contains a large mound of earth to this day, with mature trees growing on the top of it and although it has often been assumed to be a spoil heap, there is a possibility that it could be the remnants of an ice house (Figure 144).



**Figure 141:** Detail of Lenny's 1823 Survey of Abbey House and Garden, showing the ruins of the Abbot's Palace and the site of the ice house (Suffolk Record Office BRO 1167/5)



**Figure 142:** Detail of Lenny's 1823 Survey of Abbey House and Garden, showing the kitchen garden of Abbey House, now the site of the Cathedral Garth and Centre (Suffolk Record Office BRO 1167/5)

Closer to Abbey House itself, the map gives a very clear depiction of the landscaping and formal laying out of the kitchen garden and orchard which had been done in this area. Immediately adjacent to the house was a range of offices, a stable block and coach house which fronted onto a yard. These buildings are still standing (Figures 145 and 146). Beyond the yard, within the boundary wall of the former Palace Yard, was laid out a formal kitchen garden, complete with vinery in its north-western corner. This garden extended the full width southward to abut the northern wall of St James' church, and is now almost all covered with the later extensions and expansions of the cathedral church and centre.





**Figure 143:** The glasshouse to the north of the Great Court, looking north-east.



**Figure 144:** The ruins of the Abbot's Palace looking north-west, showing the tree-topped mound of soil (left) which may be the site of the former ice house.



**Figure 145:** Abbey House looking north-east, with the Abbey Gate beyond and extensions to the rear.



**Figure 146:** The stable-block and cart-lodge associated with Abbey House, looking south. The wall to the west (right) preserves the medieval precinct wall.

The northern edge of the garden is marked by a wall which springs from the north-western corner of the western front of the abbey church, and it is possible that this is the same brick wall which now lines the western edge of the rose garden (Figure 147). To the north of the wall, an orchard was planted in the area between the north wall of the abbey nave and the western edge of the cloister, which is now covered by the rose garden itself. It is particularly interesting to see the complex arrangement of paths, gates and garden walls within the area to the east of St James' church, as this area has changed considerably since the early 19th century.



**Figure 147:** *The Rose Garden, looking west, with St Edmundsbury Cathedral behind. The wall separating the two is likely to be that depicted on Lenny's map.*

## The Botanic Gardens

Nathaniel Hodson first established a botanical garden within the grounds of the former monastic precinct in 1821, on the east side of the Great Churchyard, outside the area of Lenny's 1823 survey on the site that was to become the County Council car park in later years. In a letter of November 1826 to the *Gardeners' Magazine*, Hodson proudly described his new project (Hodson 1827):

*In the year 1820 three acres of ground were occupied for the purpose of establishing an ornamental and scientific garden for the recreation and amusement of the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, who might become subscribers at two guineas per annum, the proprietor allowing the curator to dispose of such superfluous plants as could be spared from the collection, to be purchased (by subscribers only) at a moderate price, for the benefit of the establishment; and as the garden has now arrived at no inconsiderable degree of perfection, it has been found expedient to add two additional acres of meadow land for the cultivation of ornamental trees and shrubs; there are also spacious grass walks and rustic seats on the margin of the river Lark, which incloses the east end of the pleasure-grounds. The upper part of the garden is chiefly devoted to the cultivation of the more ornamental and showy plants on the borders, the quarters being laid out in long narrow beds, containing the classes and orders of the Linnean arrangement. Climbing plants and shrubs ornament the walls inclosing two thirds of the garden. The grounds are on a gentle declivity to the ancient vineyard of the Abbey, divided only by the river, which is accessible to the subscribers by crossing a rustic Swiss bridge. The salubrity of the air, for which the neighbourhood is proverbial, has been found highly beneficial for the cultivation of many of the more rare herbaceous and alpine plants; it may also be proper to observe, that the summer of 1826 has proved particularly favourable in ripening seeds of many tender exotics in the open ground, and which it is presumed will ultimately become sufficiently acclimated to withstand the vicissitudes of our climate. In order to encourage a taste for botany and horticulture, information is always solicited and as freely given. The terms of subscription is also reduced to one guinea per annum for families residing beyond ten miles from the garden, and strangers are admitted by printed tickets upon application to a subscriber. I hope at a future period to send you a plan of the garden and pleasure-ground for the information of the readers of your interesting and useful publication, and I am, Sir, &c.*



**Figure 148:** *Alwyne House, looking north-east.*

In 1831, the Marquis offered him a larger area for the garden, at the northern end of the abbey precinct on the site of the Great Court, where it remains to this day. Hodson rented the land, together with the newly built Alwyne House, a Grade I listed building which incorporates a stretch of 14<sup>th</sup>-century walling into its fabric, from the Marquis (Figure 148). The garden he laid out was first recorded in 1834 by Payne on his map of the town and was later depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 (Figure 149). Originally purely scientific in nature, the planting of the circular garden with its concentric beds was widened to include ornamental plants to attract more subscribers. The central feature of Hodson's gardens was a circular garden, although his design was rather different from that seen today, for it consisted of radiating concentric beds planted with native flowers and herbs laid out in their natural botanical orders and relationships. Many of the larger shrubs and trees Hodson introduced still survive, some of them with the white discs with which the specimens were marked. Hodson was a respected citizen and became Mayor of the Corporation before dying in 1861 at the age of 79.



**Figure 149:** The design of the Botanic Garden, as depicted on the First Edition 1-to-25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1886.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the gardens were open to the public at a cost of one shilling for adults and sixpence for children, a high cost for the time. A determined group of local people started to campaign and raise money to turn the gardens into a free public park. In 1912, the Borough Council leased the gardens from the Marquis of Bristol. It was declared open by Lady Evelyn Guinness, wife of Bury St. Edmunds' MP, W.E. Guinness, and later Baron Moyne.

In 1936, to mark the succession and coronation of George VI, the central area of the gardens was redesigned and Hodson's concentric circles replaced by sixty-four island beds which have remained there ever since. Shortly afterwards, in 1939, the drinking fountain and sundial dating from 1870 were moved from the southern end of The Traverse in the town centre to stand on a triangle of grass to the south-west of the main planted roundel of the Abbey Gardens.

In 1953 the Borough bought the Gardens from the Marquis of Bristol and began to manage the area around the abbey ruins, thus reuniting the two main parts of the

Abbey Precinct – the Abbey Gardens and the Great Churchyard – into single ownership once again. Public amenities soon followed, and it is to this period that the creation of the bowling green and the municipal tennis courts appear to belong. The Abbey Gardens are also notable for the large number of memorials which are to found within it, commemorating many different aspects of the town's history and interactions with the outside world. One of the most recent, and most poignant being the Garden of Reflection, which commemorates the murder of 57 Jews in Bury St Edmunds on Palm Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1190 and all victims of genocide. The centrepiece of the Peace Garden is a 1.5m tall teardrop and it also includes 57 cobble stones – one for each of the victims of the massacre.

## The Great Churchyard

In the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century two public houses backed onto the churchyard which by this time was widely used for public recreation and promenading, prompting the town Corporation in 1732 to plant two lime avenues to line the main walks, both radiating from the Norman Tower. The Great Churchyard was purchased by the town Corporation in 1798. The churchyard was closed as a burial site by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and two further lime avenues were planted at its eastern end.

In 1903, a memorial was erected in memory of 17 16<sup>th</sup>-century Protestant martyrs immediately to the south-east of the Norman Tower. The memorial was erected by public subscription and takes the form of a stone obelisk surmounted by a ball finial. Each face of the rectangular base has an inscribed panel, three giving the names and known details of those commemorated, most of whom were burnt at the stake.

Photographs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries clearly illustrate the density of tombstones which was to be found throughout the Great Churchyard and, although the churchyard was closed to burial, their deteriorating state meant that something would have to be done to address the overcrowding (Figure 150). The surviving gravestones were surveyed in the 1960s and early 1970s, and copies of the inventory can be found in the Suffolk Record Office. The report made recommendations about both the retention and removal of gravestones, such that a number of them were listed at Grade II in the early 1970s (Figure 19), while

substantial areas of the gravestones were cleared away from the grassed area between the Norman Tower and the former west front of the abbey church.



*Figure 150. An early 20<sup>th</sup> century view of the west front from the top of the Norman Tower clearly showing the density of the burials in the Great Churchyard.*

In the centre of the newly cleared grassed area between the western front of the former abbey church and the Norman Tower stands a sculpture by Dame Elisabeth Frink, who was born in Thurlow, featuring Edmund as a young man holding a cross (Figure 151). The sculpture was commissioned by West Suffolk County Council to mark the end of its independent administration of the area of the ancient liberty of St Edmund upon the establishment of Suffolk County Council in 1974. It was originally intended to be placed in the town centre, but was eventually located in the Great Churchyard. The statue stands a fitting memorial to the Anglo-Saxon king and martyr whose mortal remains were brought to the site in the early decades of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and whose presence made the Abbey of St Edmund one of the most important pilgrimage sites in western Christendom.





**Figure 151.** *Statue of St Edmund by Dame Elisabeth Frink, commissioned in 1974.*

## 12. Sub-Area Assessments

Having described and assessed the heritage of the study area in general terms, this section discusses briefly each of the sub-areas defined by the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership and outlined in the consultancy brief. These sub-areas group together geographically- and/or functionally-linked areas of the study area and provide a sound basis for evaluation of this kind. Each summary characterises the historic environment of each sub-area, and describes the designated heritage assets which are to be found within it. The findings of fieldwork undertaken within each sub-area are used to characterise the surviving archaeological deposits and present an assessment of the area's archaeological potential. In doing so, the impact of later building and activity on earlier remains is considered, and any key risks which the heritage of the sub-area faces are identified. It is intended that these summaries will inform fuller recommendations and management strategies for each sub-area, which will be presented in the forthcoming Conservation Plan.

### Sub-area 1: Churchgate Street & Crown Street

Sub-area 1 lies outside the formal boundary of the study area, but fronts onto the line of the former precinct wall, St Mary's church and the Norman Tower (Figure 14). Many of the buildings within and immediately adjacent to the sub-area are listed, and it lies within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. There has been a limited degree of archaeological fieldwork within the sub-area, but where fieldwork has been undertaken medieval deposits relating to the town have been identified, with possible traces of the external ditch of the precinct wall being located along the eastern edge of the sub-area. The later development of the townscape and the road have greatly impacted on the buried archaeology in this sub-area, although it does survive in part. Heritage in this sub-area would be at risk from unsympathetic development, with any such works requiring design-led and/or archaeological mitigation, and the extant structures should be managed in accordance with the tenets of the forthcoming Conservation Plan.

## Sub-area 2: Angel Hill & Mustow Street

Sub-area 2 also lies outside the formal boundary of the study area, but fronts onto the line of the former precinct wall to the west and north, the Norman Tower, St Edmundsbury Cathedral and the Abbey Gate (Figure 14). Like sub-area 1, many of the buildings within and immediately adjacent to the sub-area are listed, and it lies within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. Archaeological fieldwork within the sub-area has revealed medieval deposits relating to the town and traces of the external ditch of the precinct wall have been identified fronting the northern precinct wall. Elements of medieval monastic structures have been preserved in the fabric of later buildings. The later development of the townscape and the road have greatly impacted on the buried archaeology in this sub-area, although it does survive in part. Heritage in this sub-area would be at risk from unsympathetic development, with any such works requiring design-led and/or archaeological mitigation, and the extant structures should be managed in accordance with the tenets of the forthcoming Conservation Plan.

## Sub-area 3: Abbey Industries

Sub-area 3 lies within the north-eastern corner of the study area, on the eastern bank of the river, but technically lay outside the boundary of the monastic precinct itself (Figure 14). To the west, the sub-area fronts onto Abbot's Bridge and an extant stretch of the precinct wall, and the entire sub-area is a Scheduled Monument and lies within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. Archaeological evaluation within the former Eastgate Nursery site has demonstrated that intact archaeological deposits relating to medieval industrial practices lie across the sub-area, and that, apart from the construction of a few buildings, the later land usage has had little impact upon the extant or buried remains. The archaeological potential of this sub-area remains very high, but is well understood. The heritage in this sub-area would be at risk from unsympathetic development, with any such works requiring design-led and/or archaeological mitigation, and the extant structures should be managed in accordance with the tenets of the forthcoming Conservation Plan.

## Sub-area 4: Abbey Vineyards

Sub-area 4 forms much of the eastern part of the study area, and lies on the eastern bank of the river (Figure 14). The area lay within the boundary wall of the monastic precinct, extant stretches of which survive to the east and south, and the sub-area comprised the monastic vineyards. The precinct walls within the sub-area are a detached part of the Scheduled Monument encompassing the abbey site, but the rest of the sub-area is not Scheduled and lies outside the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. None of the buildings within the sub-area is listed. Limited archaeological investigation within the sub-area has demonstrated that the hillside may have been terraced to accommodate the later buildings, but that traces of earlier archaeological features may still survive. Although the later buildings and landscaping have impacted upon substantial portions of this sub-area, the extent of this impact has not yet been fully quantified and the archaeological remains of the vineyard remain uncharacterised but with high potential. The heritage within this sub-area would be at risk from being poorly understood, and from unsympathetic development, with any such works requiring design-led and/or archaeological mitigation. The extant sections of precinct wall are publicly accessible and should be managed in accordance with the tenets of the forthcoming Conservation Plan.

## Sub-area 5: River Lark Valley Floor

Sub-area 5 encompasses the northern part of the river corridor as it flows through the precinct (Figure 14). Bounded to the north by the extant precinct wall and Abbot's Bridge, with further walling to the east, the sub-area encompasses the area of the former Abbot's Garden, which contains the extant dovecote and dividing wall. Historically, this area was also the site of a monastic watermill, and also contains the former channel of the Linnet, the confluence of which with the Lark lay in the northern part of the sub-area. The sub-area is a Scheduled Monument, a Registered Park and Garden, and lies within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. The extant medieval structures are also Listed Buildings. The sub-area has been subjected to limited archaeological investigation, with 19<sup>th</sup>-century excavations revealing monastic buildings at the southern end of the sub-area, adjacent to the tennis courts. These buildings were partially excavated during

the construction of the main sewer in 1962, and still survive below ground. In the northern part of the sub-area, a palaeoenvironmental sampling survey revealed riverine archaeological deposits dating back to the prehistoric period and environmental evidence for the presence of the mill. Aerial photography and geophysical survey have demonstrated that additional structures lie buried beneath the grass, some of which, such as the traces of former fishponds and water-courses, are visible on the surface as earthworks. The archaeological potential of the sub-area is therefore very high. The construction of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century and 1962 sewers had a very destructive impact, but in more recent times the creation of two phases of children's play areas have had little impact on the buried archaeology. Now largely laid to grass, the buried heritage of this sub-area would be at risk from penetrative groundworks and erosion from the river and footfall. The extant structures are publicly accessible and should be managed in accordance with the tenets of the forthcoming Conservation Plan.

## Sub-area 6: River Lark Water Meadows

Sub-area 6 comprises the water meadows known as No Mans Meadow, which extend upstream to the south-east of the study area, between the courses of the Lark and the Linnet, and the triangle of land known as The Crankles, which sits between their confluence to the north (Figure 14). Historic maps indicate that The Crankles lay within the monastic precinct and show a zig-zag configuration of channels which is said to be the remains of monastic fishponds, although no trace of these features survives today. The Crankles are encompassed within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area, although No Mans Meadow is not, and neither part of this sub-area is included within the Scheduled Monument or the Registered Park and Garden. Archaeologically, we know very little about this sub-area, although the palaeoenvironmental findings from sub-area 5 to the north and other nearby sites suggest that there is a similar potential for buried archaeological deposits. The only traces of earthworks now visible on the site pertain to the later drainage and planting of the sub-area, which will have had an as-yet-unquantified impact on the buried archaeology. The archaeological potential of this area is unknown, but likely to be high, although more for its palaeoenvironmental potential rather than the potential for any buried structures. Now laid to grass, the

buried heritage of this sub-area would be at risk from penetrative groundworks and planting, and erosion caused by the river, footfall and grazing.

## Sub-area 7: St Mary's Church & Honey Hill

Sub-area 7 lies along the southern edge of the precinct boundary, and incorporates St Mary's parish church, the built frontages of Honey Hill, the former magistrates' court, extensive areas of car-park, and a health clinic (Figure 14). St Mary's formed the south-western corner of the monastic precinct, and the line of the southern precinct wall is preserved in some of the later structures. The opening between the housing on Honey Hill and the magistrates' court preserves the former location of St Margaret's gate, and an extant length of precinct wall extends across the car-park to the south-east of the sub-area. The site of the gate is included in the Scheduled Monument, as is the area of the car-park and offices to the east, and the open spaces between the buildings on Honey Hill is included within the Registered Park and Garden, along with St Mary's church. There are numerous listed buildings within the sub-area, and the whole area is included within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. Archaeological fieldwork in this sub-area has been largely confined to the areas of car-park, and has indicated that medieval and later buried archaeological deposits survive beneath the hard surfaces, justifying their Scheduled status. The later buildings within the sub-area have had a localised impact on these deposits, but the archaeological potential of the open spaces remains very high. The heritage in this sub-area would be at risk from unsympathetic development, with any such works requiring design-led and/or archaeological mitigation, and the extant structures should be managed in accordance with the tenets of the forthcoming Conservation Plan.

## Sub-area 8: The Great Churchyard

Sub-area 8 comprises the majority of the Great Churchyard and encompasses the later buildings along the western precinct boundary, as well as the Chapel of the Charnel (Figure 14). The Great Churchyard comprises a densely packed cemetery with many hundreds of extant memorials, later landscaped to incorporate tree-lined avenues. With the exception of the former line of the western precinct wall, the sub-area is not included within the main Scheduled Monument for the abbey,

but the medieval Chapel of the Charnel is a Scheduled monument in its own right, as well as being Grade I listed. The whole sub-area is included within the Registered Park and Garden, and the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area, and over 90 of the memorials are listed at Grade II. Very little archaeological fieldwork has taken place within the Great Churchyard itself, but that which has indicates a typical churchyard soil comprising much disturbed ground, disarticulated human remains and intact burials. The ground level has apparently accumulated between 1.5 and 2m during the use of the cemetery, as is usual with such intensive use. Fieldwork within the adjacent properties indicates that human remains are to be found extending to the line of precinct wall. While it is obvious to state that the archaeological potential for discovering human burials is therefore very high, and the Great Churchyard appears to have existed throughout the lifespan of the abbey, the potential for earlier archaeological deposits to survive undisturbed beneath the burial horizon is therefore relatively low. Later burials and buildings will have had an impact, as will the planting of trees, but as yet this has not been tested archaeologically. As an open and widely used public space, the extant heritage in this sub-area is susceptible to erosion and mis-treatment, while the buried archaeology would be at risk from penetrative groundworks and planting.

## Sub-area 9: Norman Tower and West Front

Sub-area 9 comprises the Norman Tower and its surroundings, the surviving West Front complex of the abbey (now infilled with later housing) and the area of open ground between the two, with St Edmundsbury Cathedral forming its northern boundary (Figure 14). The Norman Tower is the most complete architectural survival from the abbey's buildings and marked the entrance to the sacred part of the precinct. Later buildings which had encroached upon the tower were demolished as part of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century campaign of restoration. The west front is all that now survives of the elaborate western façade of the abbey church, and the housing incorporated within its fabric is unique and highly characterful. The open space was formerly the formal approach to the abbey church, and later became part of the Great Churchyard, although the burial monuments were cleared in the 1970s. The area of the Norman Tower and the gardens to the rear of the west-front properties are included within the main Scheduled Monument, while the whole

sub-area lies within the Registered Park and Garden and the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. All of the standing structures within the area are listed at Grade I.

Both the Norman Tower and the West Front have been subjected to extensive archaeological investigations of their built fabric and associated buried remains. Fieldwork has demonstrated the accrual of between 1.5 and 3m of soil during the post-Dissolution period, in part the result of deliberate dumping to ease flooding, demolition rubble and the intensity of later burials. Despite the impact of these later features, the archaeological potential of this sub-area is very high. This is especially the case in the area around the Norman Tower, where intact archaeological deposits survive beneath the made-up ground, and within the west front, where intact medieval floor levels have been demonstrated to lie buried at approximately 2.5m. Excavations conducted prior to the construction of the new Cathedral chancel indicated that the buried remains of the earlier church of St Denis also survive within the north-eastern corner of this sub-area. The upstanding heritage of this sub-area is publicly accessible and susceptible to erosion and mis-treatment, the West Front in particular is vulnerable to unsympathetic development and maintenance, while the buried archaeology is currently well protected by the thick layer of overburden. Any proposals to penetrate this overburden would need to be mitigated.

## Sub-area 10: St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Sub-area 10 is relatively small and comprises the built structure of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, formerly St James' parish church until its elevation to cathedral status in 1914, and the associated open courtyard and buildings to its north-west (Figure 14). Historically, this area lay outside the original extent of the monastic precinct, which was extended westwards in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Extant lengths of medieval walls survive to the north and east of the sub-area, and these contain structural evidence of monastic buildings. The Cathedral building incorporates fabric from numerous campaigns of restoration and augmentation, beginning in the medieval period and continuing until the relatively recent past with the completion of the Cathedral Centre and the Millennium Tower. Abbey House and its associated outbuildings post-date the abbey, and incorporate



elements of the medieval precinct wall into their fabric. The open ground (with the exception of the Garden of Remembrance) is included within the main Scheduled Monument, and the whole sub-area is included in the Registered Park and Garden and the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. With the exception of a former stable block (the Anselm Building), all of the buildings within the sub-area are listed.

Archaeological excavations prior to the construction of the Cathedral Centre indicated the presence of an earlier north–south road running across this area of the site, with multiple phases of timber urban structures to its west. These were overlain by phases of medieval buildings associated with the abbey complex. Other fieldwork within the area has demonstrated that a substantial layer of soil was brought onto the site in the post-medieval period. Although the later buildings and expansion of the Cathedral have had localised impacts, the archaeological potential for the remaining open spaces is very high, as is reflected in their Scheduled status. It is very likely that Late Anglo-Saxon urban features and medieval monastic features, complementing those visible in the extant medieval masonry, survive well beneath the imported topsoil. The extant heritage in this sub-area is in a heavily used public space and is therefore susceptible to erosion and mis-treatment, as well as unsympathetic development and maintenance. Although cushioned by topsoil, buried archaeological features are susceptible to penetrative groundworks, and any such works would require design-led and/or archaeological mitigation.

## Sub-area 11: The Abbey Gateway

Sub-area 11 comprises the 14<sup>th</sup> century abbey gateway and its immediate environs, which formerly acted as the entrance to the Great Court of the abbey and now provides access to the Abbey Gardens (Figure 14). The gateway is a Grade I listed building, and stands within the area of the Scheduled Monument, the Registered Park and Garden, and the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. The fabric of the building has been subject to programmes of recording and conservation, but no below-ground archaeological work has been conducted in this area, and consequently very little is known about the nature of any buried deposits. It is noteworthy that the flint footings of the gatehouse are exposed to some depth on

their eastern side, suggesting that the medieval ground surface was higher in this area than it currently is now. As one of the main entrances into the abbey, the archaeological potential of this sub-area is very high, although this has not yet been tested. This is a very heavily used public space, and the extant heritage is susceptible to erosion and mis-treatment, as well as to unsympathetic development and maintenance. Below-ground deposits are currently sealed under a hard surface, but are vulnerable to penetrative groundworks. Any such works would require design-led and/or archaeological mitigation.

## Sub-area 12: Abbey Gardens Facilities

Sub-area 12 comprises the north-western corner of the study area, bounded by the monastic precinct wall, and incorporates the later buildings constructed along the eastern and southern sides of Angel Hill (Figure 14). Historically, this area was occupied by long ranges of lean-to buildings built off the inner face of the wall and lining the northern edge of the monastery's Great Court. Today, the inner wall of these buildings still survives and the sub-area is now the location of public toilets, a sensory garden, café, aviary and gardeners' depot. The open spaces in the sub-area are included within the boundary of the Scheduled Monument and the Registered Park and Garden, while the whole sub-area is included within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. The surviving medieval walls are Grade I listed, while many of the properties which front onto Angel Hill are listed at Grade II. There has been a large number of archaeological investigations in this area of the site, many of them relatively minor and associated with the construction and operation of the facilities described above. The extant walls preserve many important architectural features, and fieldwork conducted in and around the properties to the north has indicated that traces of medieval fabric have been incorporated into some of the later structures. Traces of buried medieval archaeology have been revealed, but these are often heavily disturbed by the impacts of later land use and facilities, but despite this the archaeological potential of this sub-area remains very high. As a publicly accessible and heavily utilised part of the study area, the heritage in this sub-area is susceptible to erosion and mis-treatment, as well as to unsympathetic development and maintenance. Below-ground deposits are

vulnerable to penetrative groundworks, and any such works would require designed and/or archaeological mitigation.

## Sub-area 13: Formal Gardens & Amenity Area

Sub-area 13 comprises the circular flowerbeds and formal gardens which began as the Botanic Gardens in 1820, as well as the area to the south which incorporates the bowling green, water garden and rose garden (Figure 14). Historically, the northern part of this sub-area comprised the open centre of the Great Court of the abbey, while the area to the south formed the northern and western sides of the monastic cloister and associated buildings. The entire sub-area lies within the Scheduled Monument, Registered Park and Garden, and the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. The sub-area is bounded to the west by the Abbey Gate, and to the south-west by surviving lengths of medieval wall. These are listed, as is the sundial which stands near to the bowling green. Numerous episodes of archaeological fieldwork have occurred within the sub-area, most of them connected with the management and planting of the flowerbeds, and the installation and maintenance of the amenities. This fieldwork has demonstrated that the medieval ground level lies very close to the surface across much of the central circular area, but that this was historically an open space and that the cultivation of the flowerbeds has resulted in the disturbance of the upper levels. To the south, there is a marked rise in ground level caused by the presence of demolition rubble overlying the monastic buildings which stood in this area. Fieldwork has demonstrated that this rubble layer is of some considerable thickness, and that as a consequence the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century construction of the rose garden, water garden and bowling green have had little or no impact on the underlying archaeological deposits. As a consequence, the archaeological potential of the southern part of the sub-area is very high, with intact medieval and earlier deposits surviving below the post-Dissolution demolition rubble. To the north, within the area of the flowerbeds, traces of buried medieval archaeology have been revealed, although these are often heavily disturbed by the impacts of later land use, but the archaeological potential here too remains very high. As an extensively cultivated, publicly accessible and heavily utilised part of the study area, the heritage in this sub-area is susceptible to erosion and mis-treatment, as

well as to unsympathetic development and maintenance. Below-ground deposits are vulnerable to penetrative groundworks, although works within the existing cultivation areas will have little impact, and any more major works would require design-led and/or archaeological mitigation.

## Sub-area 14: Abbey Ruins

Sub-area 14 extends from the northern boundary of the study area to the abbey church and encompasses the heart of the medieval monastic buildings on the western bank of the river (Figure 14). To the south of the sub-area, the extensive foundations and architectural ruins of the abbey church are still standing, have been exposed by archaeological excavations or still lie buried beneath later demolition rubble. To the north of the abbey church, the remains of the monastic cloister and the ranges of buildings which surrounded its north and, especially, eastern sides are similarly well preserved and have been partially excavated. Further north stand the ruins of the Queen's Chamber, all that survives above ground of the range of buildings which formed the Abbot's Palace and linked the cloister to the Great Court. At the northern end of the sub-area stands Alwyne House, built along with the Botanic Garden, and which incorporates medieval fabric into its structure. At the eastern extent of the sub-area are the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century municipal tennis courts which partially overlie the eastern apse of the abbey church and also the foundations of the buildings identified during the construction of the sewer in 1962 (see sub-area 5). By far the most archaeologically significant and sensitive part of the study area, the whole sub-area is a Scheduled Monument, part of the Registered Park and Garden, and fully within the Bury Town Centre Conservation Area. The upstanding ruins themselves are also Grade I listed structures in their own right.

As has been discussed at length in this report, the abbey church and cloister have been the primary focus of antiquarian and archaeological interest in the study area since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and as such have seen extensive campaigns of investigative fieldwork. However, on closer examination it is clear that the vast majority of this fieldwork has concerned itself with the clearance of the overlying post-Dissolution demolition rubble and has rarely penetrated beneath the medieval floor levels. In areas where deeper excavation has happened, for example within the Queen's

Chamber, extensive and complex sequences of Late Anglo-Saxon and medieval buildings have been identified. Given the intensive use and study of the sub-area, the impacts of later developments have been relatively minor – the construction of Alwyne House had a localised impact, but also retained medieval fabric, while it would seem that the tennis courts were constructed on top of the demolition rubble with very little below-ground impact. As a consequence, this sub-area should be considered to be of the highest possible archaeological potential, even in those areas which have nominally been investigated previously. In terms of risk, the fact that so much of the medieval fabric lies exposed makes it vulnerable to erosion and mis-treatment, as well as to unsympathetic maintenance. In those areas where the ruins have been cleared down to the medieval floor level, the intact archaeological deposits beneath are likewise vulnerable to erosion and mis-treatment, as well as penetrative groundworks. Those areas where the medieval floors and underlying deposits lie beneath post-Dissolution overburden are currently well protected and consequently face a lower degree of immediate risk.

### Sub-area 15: Cathedral Residences

Sub-area 15 forms a thin west–east strip across the centre of the study area, and encompasses the building and grounds of Clopton's Asylum, now the Deanery, and a group of houses and their gardens further to the east which all belong to the Cathedral (Figure 14). All of these properties were constructed hard up against the southern side of the abbey church: in the case of the Deanery, much of the south aisle of the abbey church itself now lies within the rear garden of the property, while the eastern properties are most likely to be constructed on part of the former monks' cemetery. Extant pieces of medieval masonry are to be found in the gardens of these properties. Given its location, the entire sub-area is included within the Scheduled Monument and Bury Town Centre Conservation Area, but although the Deanery is included in the Registered Park and Garden, the eastern properties and their grounds are not. The Deanery is a Grade I listed building, as is the extant medieval fabric in the gardens of the eastern properties. While the construction of the later buildings will have had a localised impact, doubtless sealing important archaeological deposits, the limited archaeological fieldwork conducted within this sub-area indicates that the remains of the southern aisle of

the abbey church remain intact beneath the Deanery garden, while the occasional discovery of human remains further to the east are indicative of the former cemetery in the area. As the majority of sub-area is in private hands, the heritage in this area does not share the same risks as that in more public areas, but there is still a risk presented by unsympathetic development and maintenance, as well as from penetrative groundworks.

## 13. Conclusions and Recommendations

In the early decades of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, for reasons which remains obscure, the decision was taken to translate the mortal remains of the martyred East Anglian King Edmund to the Anglo-Saxon settlement of *Beodricsworth*, which nestled on the banks of what are now known as the rivers Linnet and Lark. This was undoubtedly the single most significant event ever to happen in the history of the settlement which was to become Bury St Edmunds, a town which was to go on to experience a long history of significant events. As a direct result of its holding the royal relics, during the medieval period the emergent Abbey of St Edmund grew to be one of the wealthiest and most powerful monasteries in England, and became one of the major pilgrimage sites in western Europe. In the 500 years since the Dissolution, the site has enjoyed a rich and varied 'afterlife', which has seen the study area develop and adapt with the changing needs and fortunes of individual landowners and the wider town. The great significance of the heritage of the site is well represented in the high concentration of Designated Heritage Assets which it has attracted and which ensure that its individual elements and wider landscape are suitably recognised and protected. This is a theme which is explored more fully in the forthcoming Conservation Plan being produced by Purcell.

The abbey church was vast. In the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century it was one of the longest churches in western Christendom, being some 10m longer than Norwich Cathedral, Canterbury Cathedral and the church of St Peter in Rome, less than 10m shorter than Winchester Cathedral and just over 20m shorter than the great abbey church at Cluny. One of the first stone buildings in East Anglia, in its completed form, the abbey church comprised a unique five-bay presbytery, with ambulatory and radiating chapels, four bays of which were raised over a four-bay crypt with its own ambulatory and three radiating chapels, accessed from stairs in the north and south transepts. The transepts themselves were each of five bays and had eastern aisles; both had a pair of apsidal chapels. The crossing was surmounted by a central tower, and with 12 bays the nave was exceptionally long and wider than the eastern arm. The church terminated in a western transept with two-storey apsidal chapels to the north and south and a central tower of its own. The western

front was flanked by octagonal structures at the northern and southern ends, which may have been towers and which are unique.

The abbey was the stage for visits from royalty, hosted parliaments and was the burial place of many notable figures, including the sister of Henry VIII. Ultimately, however, like all monastic sites, the abbey succumbed to the politics of the Reformation and was dissolved in 1539. The relics and treasures were taken and the site was subsequently sold, the monastic buildings being systematically stripped of their stonework and reduced to ruins. As a microcosm of national events, the site is a reminder of how monasteries greatly shaped the economic as well as religious and social fabric of society, and is also a telling reminder of the huge destruction of the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Writing in 1873, Morant bemoaned the fact that: 'We can but deplore that buildings originally so magnificent are now so utterly destroyed, and that we are quite unable to restore them, even upon paper, almost every fragment of architectural character having long since been removed, and no engravings or drawings being known which can in any way assist us' (Morant 1873, 400). Yet even the Dissolution did not erase the abbey entirely. The boundary of the monastic precinct survived largely intact, and its medieval walls have continued to shape the development of Bury St Edmunds up to the present day. The long history of antiquarian, archaeological and architectural investigation which has focused on the site since the 17<sup>th</sup> century has shed considerable light upon the history of this august institution, although in many cases, metaphorically and literally, this work has only really scratched the surface.

The research undertaken for this assessment has identified over 100 individual episodes of archaeological or antiquarian investigation, ranging from stray finds and chance archaeological discoveries made during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to set-piece archaeological excavations undertaken in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, antiquarian syntheses of historical documentation to the masterful interpretation of the abbey site published by Arthur Whittingham in 1952. This total is far higher than had been anticipated at the outset of the project, yet many of the archaeological investigations which have taken place in the past have been piecemeal and the site has not been systematically investigated or synthesised.



It is apparent that the majority of the excavations undertaken to date have been primarily concerned with uncovering and consolidating the walls and foundations of the claustral buildings, and not archaeological work *per se*. For example, there has been very little artefact collection and retention from any of these pieces of work, and a minimal level of recording, so that we cannot always be sure whether fieldwork has even taken place, let alone find out more about it. In so far as can be told, very little of this clearance work has penetrated the medieval floor-layers, concentrating instead on the removal of tons of demolition rubble which sit over the top of the main structural features. This is particularly evident in the abbey church, which would have been the greatest concentration of masonry on the site and had consequently accrued the greatest depth of rubble overburden.

It has been demonstrated that the ground level surrounding and within the west front of the abbey church is some 2.5–3m higher than it was during the active use of the abbey, and this also applies to the area of the Great Churchyard between the west front and the Norman Tower, and to the area to the south, including the Chapel of the Charnel. While such a build-up is to be expected within a cemetery which has been intensively used for nearly a millennium, it is clear that the ground level has also been deliberately raised by the dumping of material during the post-Dissolution period, apparently to combat the flooding which is recorded in the area and which results from the road network of the town effectively funnelling water to the foot of the Norman Tower. The area of the former Palace Yard was found to lie under a 1.5m layer of dumped soil, which may be related to the laying of a bowling green in the post-Dissolution period.

It is similarly apparent that the nave of the abbey church is still largely buried under a 2m depth of demolition rubble, but that the crossing and transepts have effectively been cleared down to their medieval floor levels, and the stepping of the edge of this excavation is still clear in the eastern end of the nave. Across much of the rest of the site, however, it would seem that the ground surface is not too far different from its medieval levels, and that although there is a protective layer of overburden across much of these areas, in places it is apparently not very thick. In terms of archaeological fieldwork, once the large number of modern watching briefs relating to Scheduled Monument and Listed Building consents have been

removed from the equation, many of which have produced negative results or remained within the rubble layer, there are surprisingly few fieldwork episodes which have encountered medieval archaeological horizons in primary contexts. Even fewer excavations have breached archaeological deposits which pre-date the medieval period, but fieldwork reaching these depths has demonstrated that there is the potential to uncover complex sequences of archaeological deposits from the Middle Anglo-Saxon period and beyond across much of the site.

The potential for the discovery of Anglo-Saxon and medieval human remains on the site is likewise very high, not only within the areas of the Great Churchyard and Brothers' Cemetery where one would expect to find them, but also scattered across the site, as we know that burials were made in a variety of locations. Many of these burials were of high-status individuals from both within and outside the abbey, and in some cases the use of lead coffins has resulted in extraordinarily good levels of preservation.

The limited degree of palaeoenvironmental sampling which has taken place on the site has demonstrated that there are intact deposits containing good environmental sequences going back to the prehistoric period, and that these can tell us a great deal about the changing environment and exploitation of the landscape in the past. Several excavations have discovered background traces of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze-Age worked flints, suggestive of the potential for discovering evidence for prehistoric occupation on the site. A few tantalising sherds of Iron Age pottery have also been uncovered, hinting at occupation of the site during this period too. Interestingly, all of the fieldwork undertaken so far suggests that there was no significant Roman presence on the site, the only Roman material having been brought in at a later date to be reused.

It is clear that there are Middle Anglo-Saxon deposits on the site, although to date evidence for these has only been redeposited in later contexts. Of greater significance are the Late Anglo-Saxon structures and deposits which have been discovered in both of the major set-piece excavations which have been conducted – the Queen's Chamber excavations and the Cathedral Centre excavations. The former, situated within the probable boundary of the Late Anglo-Saxon precinct, demonstrated that multiple phases of ephemeral timber buildings might lie buried

beneath the later masonry phases of monastic structures and, indeed, might be interspersed among them. The Cathedral Centre work, by contrast, focussed on an area of the site which lay to the west of the north-south Anglo-Saxon road linking Northgate and Southgate Streets which shaped the earlier precinct, meaning that in this western portion of the site there is the potential to excavate remains of secular structures relating to the Late Anglo-Saxon town too. Realistically, there is high potential for the discovery of timber structures of this kind across much, if not all of the site, and given that we know from the historical accounts that Edmund's body was housed in a timber church in the first instance, there is a chance that some of these buildings might be of particularly high status.

When faced with a monastic site of the scale and complexity of the Abbey of St Edmund, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that we are looking at a site which has been intensively occupied for many hundreds of years. Although some elements of the site might have been relatively static during that time, both the historical and archaeological records give us a strong impression of continual change either brought about deliberately from a desire for constant improvement and betterment, or brought about accidentally in response to disasters such as fires, collapsing masonry or rioters. Consequently, we are dealing with highly complex and potentially deeply stratified archaeological deposits which will be subject to a great deal of intercutting and will therefore be hard to interpret. One of the lessons to be learned is that the precinct was not static, the upshot of which is that, while it is possible to produce a very broad-based phase plan of the study area during the post-medieval period, it is not currently possible to compile a detailed phase plan of the study area's medieval development with any great degree of certainty. Any plan of the monastic elements of the study area, including that by Whittingham, masterful though it is, will only ever be able to offer a snapshot of a particular period of time.

## Recommendations

Having collated and assessed the total archaeological knowledge and historical information about the site amassed since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is possible to highlight some of the gaps in our current knowledge and understanding of the study area and indicate areas in which further fieldwork could be beneficial.

## *Backlog Publications*

The excavations of the Queen's Chamber directed by Anthony Fleming between 1976 and 1980 remain unpublished, although the post-excavation process is well advanced, with numerous publication drawings, specialist reports and radiocarbon dates having been completed. It is recommended that means be sought to fund and support the completion of the post-excavation analyses and publication of this work, which is the only instance of a complete archaeological sequence having been obtained under modern archaeological conditions.

Similarly, the excavations on the site of the Cathedral Centre undertaken by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service in 1983 and 1988, and their excavations undertaken ahead of the construction of the North Transept of St Edmundsbury cathedral in 1999 have been completed to Post-Excavation Assessment Report level, but the required post-excavation analyses need to be funded and the excavations brought to publication. A proposal to publish a report on these excavations in the *East Anglian Archaeology* monograph series was accepted by the editorial committee several years ago now, and this would still seem to be a fitting outlet for the work.

There are also a large number of smaller pieces of fieldwork – for example the excavation of the five abbots in 1902/03, Biddle's sewer trench across the site of Bradfield Hall, and Dufty and Radford's excavations outside the west front in 1957 – which either warrant publication in their own right or which would lend themselves to being brought together into a synthetic monograph which could pull together the disparate strands to form a suitably engaging narrative.

A good template for such an initiative has recently been offered by the work undertaken by the Glastonbury Abbey Archaeology project, which has resulted in the publication of an archaeological monograph collating all of the previous archaeological fieldwork on the Glastonbury site (Gilchrist and Green 2015), as well as a new website featuring accessible interpretations of the evidence and 3D

visualisations of the abbey.<sup>37</sup> There are numerous parallels between the abbeys of Glastonbury and St Edmund,

### *Historic Environment Record Enhancement*

It has become apparent during the later phases of the project that there are substantial gaps and omissions in the records held by the Suffolk Historic Environment Record and, although this Heritage Assessment has not been undertaken as an HER enhancement exercise, the new heritage data have been collated in such a way as to ensure compatibility with the Suffolk HER system. It is recommended that this assessment is following by a period of HER enhancement, which would need to be undertaken by or in liaison with the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, who manage the database. The Suffolk HER is seen as the definitive database of known archaeology in the county and much of its contents are publicly available online via the Suffolk Heritage Explorer website.<sup>38</sup> Users of the website can browse textual records and digital mapping, and this would be a good mechanism for placing the majority of the heritage data pertaining to the site into the public domain.

### *Knowledge Gaps*

Whittingham's plan of the abbey published in 1952 is complex and very detailed, and it has yet to be bettered. However, we are now at the point where technology has caught up with what Whittingham was trying to do, and his plan would very much lend itself as the basis of a detailed GIS-based analysis of the study area, which could be used to capture and process the complexities of the multiple phases of the site and enable the construction of developmental phase plans of the site. Such work would also greatly enhance the ability of the individual visitor to understand, interpret and visualise the site, with the modern techniques of augmented reality and three-dimensional reconstruction adding greatly to the experience of the site. Possible future approaches to interpreting the site are due to be assessed in the Conservation Plan.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://research.reading.ac.uk/glastonburyabbeyarchaeology/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/>

In order to compile such a system and undertake these analyses, additional non-invasive fieldwork would be required in order to better understand the upstanding remains on the site, and also to identify and attempt to characterise the buried archaeological features within the study area. It is somewhat surprising that there is as yet no comprehensive topographical survey of the abbey ruins themselves, with Whittingham again providing the most comprehensive record which we have, complemented by the modern digital Ordnance Survey mapping used as the basis of the figures in this report. Such a survey would give accurate locations for all of the identifiable elements of the monastic complex and allow them to be related to each other and to the wider environs of the site. The resultant ability to compare ground height across the site, for example, would shed considerable light on the likely ground levels of the abbey and the depths of later overburden, which can at present only be assessed in the most general terms.

A new topographic survey should be complemented by a more detailed architectural analysis of the upstanding fabric than that which has been undertaken previously, with a particular emphasis being placed on those fragmentary ruins in which only small architectural elements still survive. Such an analysis represents our best chance at being able to produce the subtlety of dating necessary to produce detailed developmental plans of the site.

The analyses presented in this report have demonstrated the potential for recording and interpreting the site which is offered by aerial remote sensing. Currently, only 1m resolution LIDAR data for the study area is available, which, while detailed, is not of sufficiently high resolution to identify small and subtle archaeological features of the kind found on the site. It is to be hoped that future surveys undertaken by the Environment Agency might be flown at 0.5m or even 0.25m resolution, which would enable a much more finely grained analysis of the site. If such data are not to be forthcoming as part of planned reconnaissance, then the possibility of commissioning a new LIDAR survey of the study area should be considered.

It has also been noted that during dry periods the parts of the study area laid to grass occasionally show parch marks, as the drier conditions caused by buried archaeological remains make the grass dry out and yellow more quickly than that

in the surrounding areas. In this fashion the outlines of buried walls and buildings can be discerned, recorded and added to the developing plan of the site. While conventional aerial photography tends to be taken from too high an altitude or be too expensive and time consuming to commission, the possibilities presented by drone-mounted cameras to produce low-level, low-budget but high resolution images should be explored and employed on the site.

The potential for archaeological geophysical surveys to facilitate a better understanding of the buried archaeological features within the study area has been demonstrated during several different surveys conducted on the site since 1990. Although large areas of the site have been surveyed previously, with mixed results, geophysical survey techniques have improved considerably in recent years, meaning that it is now possible to produce very high-resolution images relatively quickly. The potential of ground-penetrating radar surveys to produce detailed site plans was recently demonstrated by a survey of the Roman fort at Brancaster, which produced amazingly clear results (Wessex Archaeology 2014), with the added benefit of ground-penetrating radar also being able to be used to provide images of the archaeological features at different depths. It is recommended that all of the open spaces within the study area be subjected to high-resolution geophysical survey, in order that as complete a picture of the buried archaeology as possible can be obtained. The Crankles and No Mans Meadow should be included in these surveys, in the hope that traces of the earlier fishponds and related water-features, some of which are depicted on historic maps, might be identified.

### *Intrusive Archaeological Fieldwork*

The study area comprises a largely unthreatened site of national importance, and is subject to numerous overlapping heritage Designations. All of the new fieldwork proposed here is non-intrusive and would greatly enhance our understanding of the site without the need to break the ground and destroy any archaeological deposits. It is possible that the proposed survey work may identify specific points which merit further investigation, and in such situations there should be a presumption against any unnecessary intrusive archaeological fieldwork, unless undertaken in order to address site-specific research priorities.

The Conservation Plan should consider how any proposed investigations should be managed within the existing system of Scheduled Monument consents, Historic England guidance, and advice from the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS). Any investigative fieldwork which may be proposed should be focussed on the furtherance of site-specific research priorities, the *East of England Regional Research Framework* (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Medlycott 2011) or relevant period-specific research frameworks. Any research excavations should accord with the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2015) and any archaeological fieldwork should conform with the Standards and Guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.<sup>39</sup>

Archaeological fieldwork required to facilitate essential conservation or management within the study area is currently handled separately under the terms of Scheduled Monument consents and the NPPF, with input from the SCCAS, and this approach works well. Archaeological watching briefs for approved groundworks have been undertaken on a large number of occasions within the study area. Many of these episodes have been uninformative (although surprises do occur), but the monitoring of service runs has proved to be a very effective way of gaining an insight into the buried archaeology. The linear nature of these services means that they enable the study of long transects across the study area to be undertaken, and any opportunities presented by such necessary works should be pro-actively used and managed to further archaeological research aims.

## *Designations*

The study area already contains a very high concentration of heritage designations of the highest levels, but in the light of the material collated here and any further material likely to be forthcoming during the new fieldwork proposed above, it might prove necessary to consider the suitability and extent of some of these designations. Again, this is a subject which will be considered more fully in the Conservation Plan, but there are areas which lie within the former monastic precinct which are not currently covered by any of the existing designations, for example The Crankles and much of the east bank of the river. As our understanding of these parts of the study area increases, it may prove necessary for them, and other areas, to be designated.



While the existing heritage designations recognise the national significance of the study area as one of the foremost monastic sites in the country, it is also apparent that as a major pilgrimage centre the Abbey of St Edmund was also one of the largest and arguably most important sites in western Christendom, and consideration should be given to how best the undoubted international significance of the site might be recognised and designated.

## A Final Word

Finally, it is fitting to end this assessment of the rich heritage of the Abbey of St Edmund with a quote from M.R. James, whose work inspired so much of the historical and archaeological attention which has focussed on the site since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. When lecturing on the subject of the abbey to an audience at the Bury Athenaeum in April 1932, he concluded with the words:

*'My wish has been to impress upon you the ancient beauty and splendour of the great church and the fact that in the unexplored ruins of it you have the happiest hunting ground for the historian and antiquary that is to be found in the length and breadth of England'*  
(University of Cambridge Library MSS Add. 8389).

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*Note: Where publications and sources are available online, hyperlinks have been created to the relevant webpages. Most of the linked sources are now in the public domain, but a few are still behind paywalls and these are indicated with [Paywall] at the end of their entry. Entries from the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography can often be accessed with a local library card.*

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# Appendix I: Archival Sources

This appendix lists the archival sources of information consulted during the preparation of this Heritage Assessment. Material is listed here by archive, with links provided to the relevant catalogue pages where available.

## The National Archives

*WORK 14: Office of Works and successors: Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings: Registered Files*

- [WORK 14/1031](#): Suffolk, Bury St Edmunds: Guardianship, 1915–1847
- [WORK 14/2515](#): Suffolk, Bury St Edmunds: Guardianship of nave, 1954–1966

*WORK 31: Office of Works and successors: Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings: Plans and Drawings*

- [WORK 31/916](#): Suffolk: Bury St Edmunds Abbey. Survey of transept after excavation (1959)
- [WORK 31/917](#): Suffolk: Bury St Edmunds Abbey. Sketches of fallen masonry (1959)
- [WORK 31/918](#): Suffolk: Bury St Edmunds Abbey. Survey of south gate to vine fields (1960)
- [WORK 31/919](#): Suffolk: Bury St Edmunds Abbey. Drawing of old infirmary walls exposed by sewer trench (1963)
- [WORK 31/920](#): Suffolk: Bury St Edmunds Abbey. Survey of church (1970)
- [WORK 31/2041](#): Suffolk: Bury St Edmunds Abbey. Survey plan (1968)

*AT 13: Department of the Environment: Ancient Monuments Branch: Maps and Plans*

- [AT 13/74](#): West Front: sections AA and DD (1972)
- [AT 13/75](#): West Front: sections DD and CC (1972)
- [AT 13/76](#): West Front: third floor plan (1972)
- [AT 13/77](#): West Front: second floor plan (1972)
- [AT 13/78](#): West Front: ground floor plan (1972)
- [AT 13/79](#): West Front; floor plan (1972)
- [AT 13/80](#): West Front; sections EE and FF (1972)

- [AT 13/81](#): West Front: basement plan (1972)
- [AT 13/82](#): West Front: west elevation (1972)
- [AT 13/83](#): West Front; first floor plan (1972)

## The Historic England Archive

- [PF/BSA](#): *Bury St Edmunds Abbey, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk*: 236 drawings of Bury St Edmunds Abbey dating from the 1920s to the early 1990s, and including thirty oversized sheets.
- [BF086426](#): *St Edmund's Abbey and the West Front, Bury St Edmunds*: Building File – Miniature Format Film Number: 177/A, 223/P, 224/E. 1 File, 4 Report, 110 Photograph (Print), 51 Photograph (Print), 8 Photograph (Print), 21 Measured Drawing.
- [AL0568](#): *Bury Abbey – Abbot's Bridge, garden and Charnel House*: Album of 29 pages containing 65 black and white photographic prints showing general and detailed views of Charnel House including repairs to wall in danger of collapse (many duplicate views), and renovation work on Abbots Bridge.
- [AL0569](#): *St Edmund's Abbey in Bury St Edmunds*: A Blue Album of 103 pages with general views of most parts of the Abbey complex with a particular focus on the church and the crypt during excavation.
- [AL0570](#): *Bury St Edmunds Abbey Vol. 2 – Norman Tower*: Album of 30 pages containing 30 black and white photographic prints showing removal of bells onto lorry, the interior of the bell tower and the roof.
- [AL0571](#): *Bury St Edmunds Abbey Vol. 3*: Album of 49 pages containing photographs showing repair works to Abbots Bridge and the School Precinct wall carried out during the early 1970s
- [EHCH01/240](#): *Measured drawings relating to the excavations at Bury St Edmunds Abbey*: The collection consists of fifty measured drawings created by English Heritage to document the excavations at Bury St Edmund's Abbey. They date from between 1976 and April 1986 and show plans, sections, and details of finds recovered at the site.

# The Historic England Archive: Air Photos

## **Standard Obliques**

<b>PHOTO REFERENCE</b>	<b>FILM &amp; FRAME No.</b>	<b>DATE</b>
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### ***Military Obliques***

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RAF 30056	/ SFFO-0397	TL 8564 / 68	05 APR 1950

## Verticals

<b>SORTIE NUMBER</b>	<b>LIBRARY No.</b>	<b>FRAME No.</b>	<b>DATE</b>
RAF/106G/UK/1557	386	6172	07 JUN 1946
RAF/106G/UK/1707	459	3068	29 AUG 1946
RAF/106G/UK/1718	463	3037	06 SEP 1946
RAF/CPE/UK/1836	512	4004	13 NOV 1946
RAF/CPE/UK/1836	512	4005	13 NOV 1946
RAF/CPE/UK/1836	512	4006	13 NOV 1946
RAF/58/189	976	5033	18 FEB 1949
RAF/58/189	976	5034	18 FEB 1949
RAF/58/189	976	5062	18 FEB 1949
RAF/541/512	1070	4067	10 MAY 1970
RAF/58/1780	1650	9	06 JUN 1955
RAF/58/1780	1650	10	06 JUN 1955
RAF/543/2409	2180	275	16 SEP 1963
RAF/543/2409	2180	293	16 SEP 1963
RAF/543/2409	2180	294	16 SEP 1963
RAF/543/T/899	2660	37	05 MAY 1960
RAF/543/T/899	2660	38	05 MAY 1960
RAF/82/1077	3940	7	11 FEB 1955
RAF/82/1077	3940	8	11 FEB 1955
RAF/82/1077	3940	19	11 FEB 1955
RAF/82/1077	3940	20	11 FEB 1955
MAL/70028	5629	13	03 MAY 1970
MAL/70028	5629	14	03 MAY 1970
MAL/70028	5629	15	03 MAY 1970

MAL/70028	5629	175	03 MAY 1970
MAL/70028	5629	183	03 MAY 1970
RAF/2H/BR166	6293	9	24 DEC 1941
RAF/2H/BR166	6293	10	24 DEC 1941
US/7PH/GP/LOC125	6834	5020	29 DEC 1943
US/7PH/GP/LOC125	6834	5021	29 DEC 1943
MAL/73013	7078	36	29 MAR 1973
MAL/73013	7078	37	29 MAR 1973
OS/70171	10581	228	03 JUN 1970
MAL/83025	12538	167	23 OCT 1983
MAL/83025	12538	168	23 OCT 1983
OS/88223	13333	108	07 AUG 1988
OS/88224	13334	228	07 AUG 1988
OS/88224	13334	229	07 AUG 1988
OS/88224	13334	252	07 AUG 1988
OS/88224	13334	253	07 AUG 1988
RAF/58/2693	15366	4	27 JAN 1959
RAF/58/2693	15366	44	27 JAN 1959
RAF/58/2693	15366	45	27 JAN 1959
RAF/58/2677	15372	180	21 JAN 1959
RAF/58/2683	15374	111	23 JAN 1959
RAF/58/2683	15374	112	23 JAN 1959
MAL/62559	21144	106276	03 DEC 1962
MAL/62559	21144	106277	03 DEC 1962
MAL/62559	21144	106278	03 DEC 1962
MAL/55162	21586	22970	01 JUN 1955
OS/97267	22351	56	06 OCT 1997
OS/98088B	22597	278	30 MAY 1998
OS/98088B	22597	279	30 MAY 1998
OS/00199	23288	54	12 JUN 2000
OS/02094	23813	58	16 MAY 2002
OS/05999(Z)	24730	3457	30 AUG 2005

ADA/611	26849	88	25 APR 1994
ADA/611	26849	89	25 APR 1994
ADA/691	27330	168	04 APR 1996

## Suffolk Record Office

EE500/A:	Bury St Edmunds Borough Records: Abbey
EE500/13:	Bury St Edmunds Borough Records: Abbey Gardens
EE500/17:	Bury St Edmunds Borough Records: Churchyard
EE500/46:	Bury St Edmunds Borough Records: Borough Surveyor
EE500/5076:	Bury St Edmunds Borough Records: Tidying of the Churchyard
E500/9714:	Bury St Edmunds Borough Records: Abbey Ruins
586/1-4:	Plans of Bury St. Edmunds
586/5-11:	Plans of particular places in Bury St. Edmunds
1167/5:	The Abbey House and Grounds by J. G. Lenny
1167/6:	Plans of the Will office
1783/6:	East Prospect of St. Edmunds-Bury in the County of Suffolk
FE501/E2:	Cathedral Church of St James: Statue of Edmund
HD526/26/8:	Abbey Gardens Excavations Leaflet
K505:	The Spanton-Jarman Collection
ACC 429/24-68:	Abbey Excavations, 1902-03

## Cambridge University Library

- MS Add. 8389: The Abbey Church, Bury: Lecture at Bury Athenaeum 21 April 1932 by M.R. James. Handwritten lecture transcript.
- MS Add. 8399: *On The Abbey of Bury St Edmunds* by M.R. James. Author's annotated copy.

## Moyse's Hall Museum

- BSEMS: 1976.278: Lead mortuary cross.
- BSEMS: 1976.279: Lead mortuary cross discovered in the tomb of Abbot Samson in 1903.
- BSEMS: 1976.280: Lead mortuary Cross
- BSEMS: 1976.285: Silver crozier mount discovered in the tomb of Abbot Samson in 1903.
- BSEMS: 1976.294: Wolf skull discovered near the Norman Tower in 1848.
- BSEMS: 1994.1: Romanesque masonry head discovered built into the west front in 1994.
- John Kendall: *The Departure: Captain Poole in a Balloon* (1785)
- Joseph Clarendon Smith: *The Fair at Bury St Edmunds* (after 1789)
- Frederick Johnson: *St Edmund's Abbey* (1938)

## Society of Antiquaries of London

- [LDSAL 372.1](#): Flat lead mortuary cross in three pieces. It is engraved on one side with an inscription in Latin. Donated by S. Tymms, 1855.
- [LDSAL 372.2](#): Flat lead mortuary cross in three pieces. Three of the extremities of the cross are concave in shape, while the other has a small rectangular extension. The cross is engraved on one side with an inscription in Latin. Donated by S. Tymms, 1855.
- [LDSAL 372.3](#): Flat lead mortuary cross in two pieces. It is of a 'Maltese' cross shape with expanding terminals. Donated by S. Tymms, 1855.
- [LDSAL 373](#): Flat lead mortuary cross in two pieces. The cross is engraved on one side with an inscription in Latin. Donated by E. Waterton, 1863.

## Victoria and Albert Museum

- [Victoria and Albert Museum: 1616-1871](#): Joseph Clarendon Smith: *Norman tower at Bury St. Edmunds* (1800 x 1810).

## The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

- [63.12](#): *The Cloisters Cross*

## Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

- [MS 002I](#): *The Bury Bible*
- [MS 002II](#): *The Bury Bible*
- [MS 002III](#): *The Bury Bible*
- [MS 210](#): William Worcester, *Itineraria*.

## The British Library

- [Add. MS 14850](#): RENTALS, Customaries, and Charters of lands of the monastery of St. Edmund's Bury.
- [MS Harley 2278](#): John Lydgate, *Lives of SS Edmund and Fremund*.
- [Maps K.Top.39.13.a](#): Samuel and Nathaniel Buck: *The East Prospect of St. Edmunds-bury, in the County of Suffolk* (1741).

## The British Museum

### *Prints and Drawings*

- [British Museum: 1850,0223.667](#): George Vertue: *View of St Edmund's Abbey* (1745). Published in John Batteley's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745)
- [British Museum: 1850,0223.680](#): George Vertue: *Western view of the gate to St Edmund's Abbey* (1745). Published in John Batteley's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745).
- [British Museum: 1850,0223.682](#): George Vertue: *Plan of St Edmund's Abbey church* (1745). Published in John Batteley's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745).

- [British Museum: 1850,0223.681](#): George Vertue: *The Abbot's Palace at St Edmund's Abbey* (1745). Published in John Batteley's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745).
- [British Museum: 1870,0514.2827](#): John Kendall: *Angel Hill in St Edmund's Bury* (1774).
- [British Museum: 1853,0112.2255](#): John Kendall: *A View of the Church Yard at St Edmunds Bury* (1774 x 1812).
- [British Museum: 1853,0112.2276](#): John Kendall: *Ruins of the Western Front of the Abby Church in St Edmund's Bury* (1787).
- [British Museum: 1909,0406.38](#): Joseph Clarendon Smith: *The Tower at Bury St Edmund* (1778 x 1810)
- [British Museum: 1868,0822.6183](#): S. Sparrow: *St Edmunds Bury* (1790). Apparently based on drawing of 1680.
- [British Museum: 1878,1228.22](#): Thomas Girtin: *Gate of St Edmond's Bury Abbey, Suffolk* (1793).
- [British Museum: 1870,0514.1495](#): Henry Davy: *West Front of St James's Tower Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk* (1820). Published as Plate 1 in *A Series of Etchings Illustrative of the Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk* (1827).
- [British Museum: 1870,0514.1496](#): Henry Davy: *South East View of St James's Tower Bury St Edmund, Suffolk* (1819). Published as Plate 2 in *A Series of Etchings Illustrative of the Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk* (1827).
- [British Museum: 1870,0514.1497](#): Henry Davy: *South West View of the Abbey Gate Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk* (1820). Published as Plate 8 in *A Series of Etchings Illustrative of the Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk* (1827).
- [British Museum: 1870,0514.1497](#): Henry Davy: *South West View of the Abbey Gate Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk* (1820). Published as Plate 9 in *A Series of Etchings Illustrative of the Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk* (1827).
- [British Museum: 1870,0514.1499](#): Henry Davy: *West Front of St James's Tower Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk* (1820). Published as Plate 9 in *A Series of Etchings Illustrative of the Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk* (1827).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2233](#): Jacob George Strutt: *The Churchyard* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).

- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2234](#): Jacob George Strutt: *The Abbey Gate* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2235](#): Jacob George Strutt: *Ruins of St Edmund's Church* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2236](#): Jacob George Strutt: *View in the Abbey Grounds* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2237](#): Jacob George Strutt: *The Dove Cote* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2238](#): Jacob George Strutt: *The Broken Bridge from the Vine Field* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2239](#): Jacob George Strutt: *View from the Botanic Gardens* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2240](#): Jacob George Strutt: *View in East Gate Street* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2241](#): Jacob George Strutt: *East Gate Bridge* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2242](#): Jacob George Strutt: *East Gate Bridge from the Abbey Grounds* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2243](#): Jacob George Strutt: *Gardener's Cottage, East Gate Street* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).
- [British Museum: 1868,0612.2244](#): Jacob George Strutt: *Chapel House* (1821). Published in *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).

*Britain, Europe and Prehistory Department*

- [British Museum 1867,0711.14](#): Lead-alloy cross, made from flat plate engraved with inscription. Donated by Sir John Evans.





## Appendix II: Designated Heritage Assets

This appendix lists all of the Designated Heritage Assets within the study area contained within the National Heritage List for England. These are given here by category, with links to the relevant webpages given in brackets. Copies of the relevant GIS layers can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM.

### Scheduled Monuments

- Chapel of the Charnel ([List Entry Number 1003763](#))
- Abbey of St Edmund ([List Entry Number 1021450](#))

### Registered Parks and Gardens

- Abbey Gardens and Precincts' ([List Entry Number 1001493](#))

### Grade I Listed Buildings

- Abbey Gate and Gatehouse ([List Entry Number 1375545](#))
- Precinct Wall to north of the Abbey Gate ([List Entry Number 1375546](#))
- North Wall of Great Court of the Abbey ([List Entry Number 1375553](#))
- Precinct Wall to the north of the former Abbey of St Edmund ([List Entry Number 1375548](#))
- Abbot's Bridge and adjoining east precinct wall ([List Entry Number 1375552](#))
- Wall to the east of the former Abbey Vineyard ([List Entry Number 1375551](#))
- Precinct wall of former Vineyard along north side of Kevelaer Way ([List Entry Number 1375550](#))
- Precinct wall on south to east of Shire Hall ([List Entry Number 1375549](#))
- Church of St Mary and attached wall and railings ([List Entry Number 1342765](#))
- Norman Tower ([List Entry Number 1375555](#))
- Cathedral Church of St James ([List Entry Number 1377001](#))
- Precinct wall to south of the Abbey Gate ([List Entry Number 1375547](#))
- Numbers 1, 1a, 2 and 3 West Front and Samson's Tower ([List Entry Number 1375539](#))
- Ruins of Abbey Church of St Edmund ([List Entry Number 1375540](#))
- Ruins east and north of Abbey Church ([List Entry Number 1375541](#))

- Ruins to north of the Cloister ([List Entry Number 1375542](#))
- Ruins of Hall of Pleas and south west of Great Court ([List Entry Number 1375543](#))
- Ruins of Abbey dovecote and part of wall ([List Entry Number 1375544](#))
- Ruins of the chapel of the Charnel ([List Entry Number 1375556](#))
- Alwyne House and Alwyne Cottage ([List Entry Number 1375554](#))
- Provost's House and No. 4 Churchyard (Clopton Cottage) ([List Entry Number 1375558](#))

## Grade II\* Listed Buildings

- Abbey House ([List Entry Number 1141178](#))
- 31, 32 and 33 Angel Hill ([List Entry Number 1141179](#))
- St Margaret's House ([List Entry Number 1375562](#))

## Grade II Listed Buildings

- Sworders ([List Entry Number 1141177](#))
- Crescent House ([List Entry Number 1141176](#))
- The One Bull Public House ([List Entry Number 1141173](#))
- Richard Green and Partners ([List Entry Number 1141171](#))
- 24 Angel Hill ([List Entry Number 1141170](#))
- 22, 22a, 23 and 23a Angel Hill ([List Entry Number 1141169](#))
- 19, 19a and 21 Angel Hill ([List Entry Number 1141168](#))
- 26, 28 and 29 Mustow Street ([List Entry Number 1022602](#))
- Lark House ([List Entry Number 1022601](#))
- Eastgate Cottage ([List Entry Number 1343603](#))
- Garden wall to numbers 1 and 2 Churchyard ([List Entry Number 1375560](#))
- Martyrs' memorial ([List Entry Number 1375565](#))
- Drinking Fountain and Sundial ([List Entry Number 1245038](#))
- Table Tomb 30 Metres to the South of the Cathedral of St James ([List Entry Number 1245042](#))
- A3, Monument 104 ([List Entry Number 1245047](#))
- A3, Monument 134 ([List Entry Number 1245049](#))
- A3, Monument 219 ([List Entry Number 1245092](#))

- A3, Monument 35 ([List Entry Number 1245044](#))
- A3, Monuments 107, 110, 111, 112, 118, 119, 125, 126, 143 and 152 ([List Entry Number 1245048](#))
- A3, Monuments 178, 179 and 197 ([List Entry Number 1245050](#))
- A3, Monuments 206 and 208 ([List Entry Number 1245051](#))
- A3, Monuments 207, 210, 211, 216 and 217 ([List Entry Number 1245091](#))
- A3, Monuments 29, 43a, 44, 49, 50 and 51 ([List Entry Number 1245043](#))
- A3, Monuments 48, 54, 60, 67, 73, 74, 80 and 86 ([List Entry Number 1245045](#))
- A3, Monuments 57, 58 and 63 ([List Entry Number 1245046](#))
- A4, Monument 1 ([List Entry Number 1245093](#))
- A4, Monument 25 ([List Entry Number 1245095](#))
- A4, Monument 47 ([List Entry Number 1245097](#))
- A4, Monument 5a ([List Entry Number 1245094](#))
- A4, Monument 82 ([List Entry Number 1245099](#))
- A4, Monuments 31 and 34 ([List Entry Number 1245096](#))
- A4, Monuments 65 and 68 ([List Entry Number 1245098](#))
- A5, Monument 164 ([List Entry Number 1245111](#))
- A5, Monument 219 ([List Entry Number 1364037](#))
- A5, Monument 281 ([List Entry Number 1364039](#))
- A5, Monument 3 ([List Entry Number 1245100](#))
- A5, Monument 348 ([List Entry Number 1364041](#))
- A5, Monument 392 ([List Entry Number 1364042](#))
- A5, Monument 397 ([List Entry Number 1364043](#))
- A5, Monument 40 ([List Entry Number 1245102](#))
- A5, Monument 449 ([List Entry Number 1364044](#))
- A5, Monument 453 ([List Entry Number 1364045](#))
- A5, Monument 96 ([List Entry Number 1245104](#))
- A5, Monuments 101, 119, 126 and 127 ([List Entry Number 1245106](#))
- A5, Monuments 121, 122 and 123 ([List Entry Number 1245107](#))
- A5, Monuments 131, 153 and 154 ([List Entry Number 1245108](#))
- A5, Monuments 14, 15 and 30 ([List Entry Number 1245101](#))

- A5, Monuments 159, 159a, 161, 292, 294, 295, 319 and 320 ([List Entry Number 1245109](#))
- A5, Monuments 186 and 187 ([List Entry Number 1364034](#))
- A5, Monuments 194, 195, 196, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204 and 205 ([List Entry Number 1364035](#))
- A5, Monuments 208, 209, 210, 211, 213, 214 and 215 ([List Entry Number 1364036](#))
- A5, Monuments 275, 276 and 277 ([List Entry Number 1364038](#))
- A5, Monuments 282, 283, 284 and 285 ([List Entry Number 1364040](#))
- A5, Monuments 69, 70 and 71 ([List Entry Number 1245103](#))
- A6, Monument 13 ([List Entry Number 1364046](#))
- A7, Monument 20 ([List Entry Number 1364048](#))
- A7, Monument 7 ([List Entry Number 1364047](#))
- A8, Monument 47 ([List Entry Number 1272036](#))
- A8, Monument 141 ([List Entry Number 1272041](#))
- A8, Monument 149 ([List Entry Number 1272042](#))
- A8, Monument 15 ([List Entry Number 1364049](#))
- A8, Monument 55 ([List Entry Number 1272037](#))
- A8, Monuments 104, 116 and 122 ([List Entry Number 1272039](#))
- A8, Monuments 123 and 124 ([List Entry Number 1272040](#))
- A8, Monuments 153, 161a, 162 and 176 ([List Entry Number 1272043](#))
- A8, Monuments 177 and 177a ([List Entry Number 1272044](#))
- A8, Monuments 186, 187, 189, 206 and 207 ([List Entry Number 1272045](#))
- A8, Monuments 214, 215 and 218 ([List Entry Number 1272046](#))
- A8, Monuments 37 and 72 ([List Entry Number 1272035](#))
- A8, Monuments 82 and 93 ([List Entry Number 1272038](#))
- A9 Monument 78 ([List Entry Number 1272049](#))
- A9, Monument 154 ([List Entry Number 1272067](#))
- A9, Monument 186 ([List Entry Number 1272070](#))
- A9, Monument 200 ([List Entry Number 1272071](#))
- A9, Monument 207 ([List Entry Number 1272072](#))
- A9, Monument 25 ([List Entry Number 1272048](#))
- A9, Monuments 147 and 148 ([List Entry Number 1272066](#))

- Ag, Monuments 176, 177 and 178 ([List Entry Number 1272068](#))
- Ag, Monuments 182 and 189 ([List Entry Number 1272069](#))
- Ag, Monuments 211 and 215 ([List Entry Number 1272073](#))
- Ag, Monuments 5 and 6 ([List Entry Number 1272047](#))
- A10, Monument 15 ([List Entry Number 1272074](#))
- A10, Monument 185 ([List Entry Number 1272080](#))
- A10, Monument 209 ([List Entry Number 1021924](#))
- A10, Monument 38 ([List Entry Number 1272075](#))
- A10, Monument 72 ([List Entry Number 1272076](#))
- A10, Monument 92 ([List Entry Number 1272077](#))
- A10, Monuments 125, 126, 139, 140, 178 and 179 ([List Entry Number 1272078](#))
- A10, Monuments 171 and 191 ([List Entry Number 1272079](#))
- A10, Monuments 246 and 247 ([List Entry Number 1021925](#))
- A10, Monuments 281, 282, 303 and 304 ([List Entry Number 1021926](#))
- A11, Monument ([List Entry Number 1021931](#))
- A11, Monument 172 ([List Entry Number 1021933](#))
- A11, Monument 19 ([List Entry Number 1021927](#))
- A11, Monument 190 ([List Entry Number 1021935](#))
- A11, Monument 199 ([List Entry Number 1021936](#))
- A11, Monument 201 ([List Entry Number 1021937](#))
- A11, Monument 310 ([List Entry Number 1021938](#))
- A11, Monument 349 ([List Entry Number 1021939](#))
- A11, Monument 44 ([List Entry Number 1021932](#))
- A11, Monuments 33 and 34 ([List Entry Number 1021929](#))
- A11, Monuments 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 301, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410 and 411 ([List Entry Number 1021940](#))



## Appendix III: Suffolk HER Records

This appendix lists and summarises the entries pertaining to the study area recorded in the Suffolk Historic Environment Record on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Each entry gives the relevant reference numbers, followed by the name of the record and, where one exists, its summary. These records have been reproduced as they are recorded in the HER, and reflect the structure and content of the data as it currently stands. Where possible, links are given to the online versions of these records which can be found on the Suffolk Heritage Explorer website, and copies of the 'monument' and 'event' GIS layers can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM.

### 'Event' Records (see Figure 21)

ESF20205	Respite Care Home, Chestnut House, Vinefields, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, September 2008–April 2009)
ESF20343	Shire Hall Complex Assessment, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, January–February 2007)
ESF20550	Eastgate Nursery (SCCAS, March 2009)
ESF20575	Abbey wall C, Cathedral precinct garden, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, September 2001)
ESF20596	St James' Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS)
ESF20597	Houses in the West Front, Bury St Edmunds Abbey (RCHME)
ESF20605	West Front of the Abbey Church, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, March–April 2005)
ESF20627	Aviary wall monitoring, Abbey Gardens (SCCAS, February–April 2010)
ESF20628	Aviary Wall Recording, Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, August–October 2009)
ESF20638	Cathedral Centre Excavation (SCCAS, January –December 1988)
ESF20639	North Transept excavation, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, January–December 1999)
ESF20791	Archaeological Assessment, North Precinct; internal buildings south wall; area of the aviary (SCCAS, July 2009)
ESF20810	Abbey Gardens Management Plan (SCCAS, March–July 2009)
ESF20962	The Rose Garden, St Edmunds' Abbey, Bury St Edmunds

ESF21001	Former Eastgate Nursery Site, Desk Based Assessment (SCCAS, December 2008)
ESF21032	Shire Hall, Carpark, Cable Ducts, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, March 2011)
ESF21169	Monitoring of footing for the model of the Abbey (SCCAS, March 2003)
ESF21170	Electricity trench at the Bowling Green, Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, January 2003)
ESF21171	NE Boundary Wall (not medieval precinct wall) Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS)
ESF21172	South boundary wall of the bowling green, Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, August 2001)
ESF21277	Magistrates Car Park, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, March 2010)
ESF21309	Shire Hall car park, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, September 2011)
ESF21351	Abbey Garden Play Area, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, April–June 2011)
ESF21527	Monitoring of Gas Main Replacement, Great Churchyard, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, October 2011)
ESF21714	Evaluation - Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds (Archaeological Solutions, March–April 2011)
ESF22604	Monitoring - Proposed Car Park - Borehole Survey, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, January 1998)
ESF22634	Monitoring, Water Gardens Refurbishment, Abbey Gardens (SCCAS, December 2013)
ESF22697	Watching Brief - The Martins, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, August 1997)
ESF22880	Watching Brief - Electricity Trenches, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, September 2002)
ESF22891	Monitoring - Abbey Gate floodlight, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, October 1996)
ESF22973	Boundary wall at Crankles Corner, Shire hall, Bury St Edmunds: Historic assessment (SCCAS, July 2014)
ESF23228	Monitoring and Building Recording - Ford House, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk Archaeology CIC, November 2015–February 2016)
ESF23391	Monitoring, Abbey Gardens, new water pipe, Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk Archaeology CIC)
ESF23621	Monitoring - Cathedral Precinct Yard Storm Drains, Bury St Edmunds (SCCAS, May 2008)
ESF24253	Evaluation at Priors Lodge (SCCAS, February –July 2004)



ESF24585	Monitoring - Abbey Gardens, Removal of the aviary flowerbed (SCCAS, June 2012)
ESF24883	Monitoring - Memorial Tree, Rose Garden, Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk Archaeology CIC)
ESF25310	Monitoring - Water main behind 6 and 9-10 The Churchyard, Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk Archaeology CIC)
ESF25608	Watching Brief: 9-10 The Churchyard, Bury St Edmunds (Archaeological Solutions)
ESF25779	Excavation - Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds (Archaeological Solutions, September 2012)

## 'Monument' Records (see Figure 22)

BSE 010 (MSF15053)	<i>Bury Abbey; Queens House (Sax)</i> Scheduled Monument - A small monastery was founded in circa AD633.
BSE 010 (MSF15054)	<i>Bury Abbey; Queens House (IA)</i> Scheduled Monument - IA finds from Fleming/Woods excavations.
BSE 010 (MSF18054)	<i>Ice House, Bury Abbey Gardens (Pmed)</i> Ice-house recorded in Bury Abbey grounds as shown on plan.
BSE 010 (MSF21857)	<i>Abbey Gardens and precincts (PMed)</i> Botanic garden of 1831 beside early C18 Town Walks, opened as public park at end of C19 (registered).
BSE 010 (MSF437)	<i>Abbey Grounds, Bury St Edmunds; Abbot's Bridge; St Marys [1st] church (Med)</i> Scheduled Monument - Abbey complex.
BSE 019 (MSF6719)	<i>Findspot of Norman pottery</i> Norman pottery found AD 1846.
BSE 040 (MSF6741)	<i>Chapel of the Charnel</i> Scheduled Monument - Early C14 chapel.
BSE 041 (MSF6742)	<i>Abbey Vinefields</i> C14 Med pottery sherds, two tokens, and a silver ring brooch with garnets C13 early C14.
BSE 052 (MSF6754)	<i>Cathedral Centre and North Transept (Sax)</i> Excavations on site of proposed Cathedral Treasury and North Transept.
BSE 052 (MSF6755)	<i>North Transept, St James Cathedral (Preh)</i>

At least 135 worked flints were found (in a buried soil in the 1999 excavations) which could be divided into three separate groups - one of the largest Mesolithic groups in the area (64 flints), a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age assemblage and a later Bronze Age assemblage.

BSE 052 (MSF24515) *Cathedral Centre and North Transept (Med)*

Excavations identified an early road and its abandonment at the time of the Abbey precinct enclosure and a succession of timber buildings to stone-built conventual buildings.

BSE 058 (MSF5094) *St Mary's Church (Med)*

Church of St Mary, built circa 1125 by Abbot Anselm to replace former church of St Mary demolished for construction of Abbey Church (see BSE 010).

BSE 058 (MSF18365) *St Mary's Church (Sax)*

LSax(?) decorated stone or long and short work present in this church.

BSE 062 (MSF10187) *The Crankles*

The Crankles, site of the abbey's large fish pond complex, SE of abbey (BSE 010).

BSE 063 (MSF10188) *Vineyard*

The Vineyard of the Abbey' shown on Thos Warren's map of Bury in 1776.

BSE 068 (MSF10194) *Eastgate Street*

East Gate of Bury St Edmunds, site of.

BSE 087 (MSF11468) *3 Crown Street*

Human bones from well at rear of 3 Crown Street.

BSE 090 (MSF11748) *Great Churchyard of Abbey*

Two large piles of flint and mortar rubble wall material, cleaned and planned, exposed during excavation of 45cm wide x 80cm deep water-pipe trench.

BSE 092 (MSF12187) *Cemetery of the Monks (site of)*

Area defined as site of 'Cemetery of the Monks' on OS 25 inch map.

BSE 104 (MSF14195) *3 Honey Hill*

Abbey precinct wall incorporated in No 3 Honey Hill, exposed during building conversion and restoration.

BSE 110 (MSF14389) *Abbey Church West Front*

- Excavation by SAU to establish location of the apsidal wall of the N chapel of the West Front.
- BSE 111 (MSF14390) *Abbey Church West Front (Med)*  
Excavation by engineers to establish load bearing capacity of soil within '1A The Courtyard' before restoration.
- BSE 111 (MSF14401) *Abbey Church West Front (PMed)*  
Excavation by engineers to establish load bearing capacity of soil within '1A The Courtyard' before restoration.
- BSE 112 (MSF14391) *Abbey Church West Front*  
Observation of garden wall footing trench at rear of south arch West Front house (area of apsidal chapel and S aisle wall).
- BSE 113 (MSF14392) *Abbey Church West Front (Med)*  
Observation of two contractor's pits within the St Samson octagon.
- BSE 113 (MSF14402) *Abbey Church West Front (PMed)*  
Observation of two contractors pits within the St Samson octagon.
- BSE 118 (MSF18360) *Church of St James (Med)*  
St James' Church built 1125 by Abbot Anselm as replacement for St Dennis's church (BSE 386). Cathedral since 1914.
- BSE 118 (MSF18361) *Church of St James (Sax)*  
LSax(?) decorated stone or long and short work present in this church.
- BSE 120 (MSF15088) *Middle Saxon glass fragments*  
Five fragments of pale blue glass from surface of eroding face bank between tennis courts and crypt.
- BSE 123 (MSF15613) *West Front of Abbey*  
A pipe trench dug by workmen working on the northern half of the West Front restoration uncovered wall fragments.
- BSE 143 (MSF16522) *St Edmunds Abbey Cloister*  
Scheduled Monument - monitoring of stump removal pit within the area of the cloister revealed considerable depth of buried deposits.
- BSE 147 (MSF16785) *Eastgate Bridge & chapel*  
'Eastgate Bridge (site of)' located at cited NGR on OS 1886 and shown on Warren's 1747 and Downings 1740 maps, with bridge-chapel as illustrated pre 1732.
- BSE 158 (MSF18055) *Bridge leading from Abbey to Abbey vineyard, probably Medieval.*

- Bridge leading from Abbey to Abbey vineyard, probably medieval, as illustrated in 1741..
- BSE 172 (MSF19072) *No 30 Mustow Street*  
Section excavated through E-W ditches running along south edge of Mustow Street.
- BSE 174 (MSF19000) *Norman Tower; St James Gate Tower*  
Scheduled Monument – Norman Tower. Entrance leading to W Front of Abbey Church of Bury St Edmunds (see BSE 010) and churchyard.
- BSE 195 (MSF19609) *Telephone cable, Abbey Gardens*  
Monitoring of cable trench located small group of unstratified PMed sherds.
- BSE 222 (MSF28147) *Bury Abbey Priors Lodge*  
An excavation in the grounds of St Edmunds Abbey revealed an L-shaped section of wall and the remains of a previous excavation in the 1930s.
- BSE 241 (MSF22273) *Beodricsworth; St Edmund's Bury (Sax)*  
Middle and Late Saxon settlement area of Bury St Edmunds (Beodricsworth, then St Edmund's Bury).
- BSE 241 (MSF22274) *Medieval Urban area of Bury St Edmunds*  
Medieval Urban area of Bury St Edmunds (St Edmund's Bury in medieval period)..
- BSE 276 (MSF28163) *Remains of medieval wall and 19thC graves, St James' Cathedral*  
Remains of the east wall of the medieval predecessor of the current church and three 19th century brick-lined graves/vaults were identified through excavation.
- BSE 281 (MSF24872) *Houses in the West Front, Bury St Edmunds Abbey*  
West front of the Abbey Church of St Edmunds Abbey.
- BSE 291 (MSF24766) *Shire Hall Complex Assessment, Bury St Edmunds*  
Archaeological assessment, comprising a documentary search, geophysical survey and the excavation of trial holes was carried out at the Shire Hall site.
- BSE 327 (MSF34560) *Large Pit or Medieval cellar identified during monitoring of new Storm Drain within the Cathedral Precinct*  
Large Pit or Medieval cellar identified during monitoring of new Storm Drain within the Cathedral Precinct.
- BSE 329 (MSF24806) *Eastgate Nursery*

Evaluation identified two ditches, a series of pits, deposits associated with the Abbey Precinct wall and possible floor surfaces.

BSE 330 (MSF28176) [Outline Record: Abbey Gardens – Core Sampling](#)

BSE 331 (MSF28177) [Outline Record: Respite Care Home, Vinefields](#)

BSE 332 (MSF25037) [Abbey Gardens Management Plan](#)

An archaeological assessment included topographic and geophysical surveys, palaeoenvironmental assessment and test-pitting, within the Abbey Gardens.

BSE 334 (MSF24894) [Aviary Wall Recording, Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds](#)

Photographic and drawn study of the 'Aviary Wall', the remains of a range of monastic service buildings, constructed against the inside of the precinct wall within the medieval Abbey.

BSE 336 (MSF25777) [Mint; Sacrist's House; Shire Hall.](#)

Possible site of "all the sacrist's house outside the labbey - see BSE 010] walls v13, hall solar, rooms, and kitchen, bake houses, kitchen, granary and there hay store with stables, carpenter's house, sub-sacrist's house with the mint and other offices"

BSE 364 (MSF25257) [Shire Hall, Carpark, Cable Ducts, Bury St Edmunds](#)

Monitoring identified part of the Abbey southern precinct wall and two post medieval garden walls.

BSE 365 (MSF26644) [Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk](#)

Evaluation identified 12th-14th century features, post-medieval deposits and associated pits and possible undated structure was partially revealed.

BSE 375 (MSF25591) [Shire Hall car park, Bury St Edmunds](#)

Evaluation showed the landscape had been raised in the 15th century to create fishponds, a mill-lead and grazing meadows, and also revealed the base of the original phase of the 12th century precinct wall.

BSE 383 (MSF26506) [Gas Main Replacement, Great Churchyard, Bury St Edmunds](#)

Monitoring of trenches identified a medieval layer containing disarticulated human remains, animal remains, medieval roof tile and a lime mortar and flint wall.

BSE 386 (MSF25554) [Church of St Dennis \(site of\)](#)

Former church of St Dennis, built by Abbot Baldwin (1065-1097) and demolished by Abbot Anselm (1121-1148) for construction of N tower of West Front of Abbey church.

- BSE 393 (MSF28200) *Medieval ground level*  
 Medieval ground level revealed through monitoring work in the Abbey Gardens
- BSE 470 (MSF32227) *Flint and mortar wall that possibly indicates a structure adjacent to the Abbey Gate, Bury St Edmunds.*  
 Flint and mortar wall that possibly indicates a structure adjacent to the Abbey Gate, Bury St Edmunds.
- BSE 485 (MSF33189) *Chapel? Adjacent to The Abbey Gate*  
 Small chapel adjacent to the north side of the Abbey Gate, outside the precinct.
- BSE 489 (MSF33874) *Section of Abbey Wall at Ford House*  
 Section of Abbey Wall at Ford House
- BSE 497 (MSF34422) *OUTLINE RECORD: Abbey Gardens, new water pipe (SA) MON*
- BSE 510 (MSF35437) *OUTLINE RECORD: Memorial Tree, Rose Garden, Abbey Gardens (SA) MON*
- BSE 514 (MSF35733) *OUTLINE RECORD: Water main behind 6 and 9-10 The Churchyard (SA) MON*
- BSE 517 (MSF36396) *OUTLINE RECORD: 9-10 The Churchyard, Bury St Edmunds (AS) WB*
- BSE Misc (MSF20384) *All Souls Gate, Eastgate Street (Med)*  
 According to Tymms there was an All Souls Gate, higher up than the Eastgate.
- BSE Misc (MSF10111) *Angel Hill (PMed)*  
 Lead token, 'probably C17/C18', obverse a fleur-de-lys with a cross or star in each upper quarter; reverse I-I.
- BSE Misc (MSF1452) *The Abbey (Un)*  
 A roundel of yellow stained glass depicting St Edmund's dripping head and a wolf under an oak tree.

## Appendix IV: Investigative History

This appendix presents a chronological summary of the episodes of antiquarian and archaeological investigation undertaken within the study area which have been identified during the researching and writing of this Heritage Assessment. Where possible, these episodes have been cross-referenced with existing records in the Suffolk HER. There are a lot of episodes which are not yet recorded in the HER, and a programme of HER enhancement to rectify this shortcoming is one of the key recommendations of this report. A GIS table recording the extents of these investigations (where known) can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM.

### 1479: William Worcester's Itinerary

The earliest attempt to intentionally document the dimensions of the abbey church is that made by William Worcester in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Worcester visited Bury in 1479, and during his visit he took the opportunity to take paced measurements of the abbey church and precinct, which he listed on folio 171 of his notes (British Library MS Harley 2278; Harvey 1969).

### 1530s: John Leland's Description

A final eyewitness account of the monastery was recorded by John Leland, the King's librarian, when he visited the site on the eve of the Dissolution, making him one of the last to see the abbey in its splendour (Camden 1722, 439).

### 1617: Mary Middlemore's Treasure Trove

In April 1617, a royal licence was granted to Mary Middlemore to seek treasure-trove within the abbeys of St Albans, Glastonbury, Ramsey and St Edmund. Mary dies nine months later, and it seems that the licence was never enacted (Rymer 1742, 9–10).

### 1634: William Hawkins' Poetic Ramble

In 1634, William Hawkins, the master of Hadleigh Grammar School, published an autobiographical poem in which he described how, during a break in legal proceedings at the old St Margaret's church, he went walking in the former abbey grounds and searched for the remains of St Edmund (Scarfe 1970, 317; Young 2016, 157–8).

### 1735: Edmund Prideaux's Sketches

Sketches of the site made by Edmund Prideaux, including the Norman Tower, the Abbey Gate, the eastern end of the former abbey church, and a pair of panoramic views of the surviving southern and eastern sides of the Great Court (see Figure 29; Historic England Archive).

## 1738 and 1741: Buck Brothers' Engravings

In 1738, Samuel and Nathaniel Buck published an engraving entitled *The West View of St Edmund's-Bury Abby, in the County of Suffolk*, which depicted the western face of the abbey gate. This was followed shortly afterwards in January 1741 by the publication of *The East Prospect of St. Edmunds-Bury, in the County of Suffolk*, which presents a view over the former precinct from the hills to the east (see Figures 30–32).

## 1745: John Battely's *Antiquitates*

The first work to focus solely on Bury St Edmunds was John Battely's *Antiquitates S. Edmundi Burgi ad Annum MCCLXXII perductae* (1745), which he researched and wrote in the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but which was not published until several years after his death in 1708. This publication included the first attempt to draw the ground-plan of the church.

## 1769: Ashby's *Ancient and Present State*

The publication of Ashby's *A Description of the Ancient and Present State of the Town and Abbey of Bury St Edmund's in the County of Suffolk* (1769).

## 1772: The Burial of Thomas Beaufort

In February 1772, workmen digging among the ruins of the abbey discovered a lead coffin containing the unusually well-preserved remains of a man, later identified as Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter and third son of John of Gaunt (Collignon 1772; Jeaffreson 1860, 273–4; Thompson 1929).

## 1772: Exposure of the Ground-Plan of the Abbey Church

In a 1774 letter to the Society of Antiquaries, King described how in the summer of 1772 the ruins of the abbey church 'were laid quite open to the view' giving him the chance to make a detailed examination of the ground-plan of the abbey church (see Figure 37). This resulted in the identification of additional apsidal chapels and the Lady Chapel (King 1775). King also recorded the houses of the West Front.

## 1775: Discoveries in the Abbey Church

In 1775, King wrote to the Society of Antiquaries about the discovery of a lead seal of Ranulph de Gernon, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Chester (see Figure 39) and an inscribed stone, thought to be part of a tomb, which was engraved with the name 'Lydgate' (see Figure 40; King 1777, 130–1).

## 1770s–80s: John Kendall's Views

The Suffolk artist John Kendall produced three images depicting the site in the 1770s and 80s, which were subsequently engraved. The first, entitled *Angel Hill in Bury St Edmunds* (1774; see Figure 41), the second *A View of the Church Yard at St Edmunds Bury* (see Figure 42) and the third *Ruins of the Western Front of the Abby Church in St Edmunds Bury* (1787, see Figure 43).



### 1779: Godfrey's Engraving

A very instructive view of the northern end of the abbey precinct by Richard Godfrey was published in Grose's *Antiquarian Repertory* in 1779 (see Figures 44–46).

### 1790: Sparrow's West Front

A rare and unusual view of the eastern face of the west front ruins was engraved by Sparrow in 1790 and used in Harding's *Shakespeare Illustrated* edition of King John, playing on the historical link to the Magna Carta (see Figure 47).

### 1793: Thomas Girtin's Gatehouse

In 1793, a beautiful watercolour of the Abbey Gate was painted by the artist Thomas Girtin, one of the foremost landscape artists of his generation and a close friend of J.M.W. Turner (see Figure 48).

### 1804: Gillingwater's *Descriptive Study*

The publication of Gillingwater's *An Historical and Descriptive Study of St Edmund's Bury, in the County of Suffolk* (1804).

### 1805: Yates' *Illustration*

Publication of Yates' *Illustration of the Monastic History and Antiquities of the Town and Abbey of St Edmund's Bury* (1805), which consolidated his late father's extensive archive of drawings and notes on the abbey.

### 1821: Strutt's *Twelve Etchings*

The publication of Jacob George Strutt's *Bury St Edmunds Illustrated in Twelve Etchings* (1821).

### 1827: Davy's *Architectural Antiquities*

The publication of Henry Davy's *Series of Etchings Illustrative of the Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk* (1827).

### 1834: The Burial of Thomas Beaufort II

A note of a Quarterly Meeting of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History held in Bury St Edmunds in December 1849 records that, in 1834, the reburied coffin of Thomas Beaufort was apparently excavated again and found to have decayed, along with the body so that it was possible for one of his bones to be collected and exhibited at the 1849 meeting.

### 1843: Yates' *History and Antiquities*

When Yates himself died in 1834, he left an expanded version of the work incomplete, and this was finally published as *History and Antiquities of the Abbey of St Edmund's Bury* (1843), a text which incorporated the earlier publication and numerous illustrations of the monastic ruins.

## 1844: Chapel of the Charnel

In 1844, the crypt of the Chapel of the Charnel was partly dug into, revealing a floor of Barnack stone 'covered two feet deep with bones', although no further details of this work are known (Hills 1865b, 118).

## 1848: Wolves at the Norman Tower

In 1848, an article published in the *Bury and Norwich Post, and East Anglian* on 27<sup>th</sup> September (p. 2 col. 3.) gives the only surviving, but fortunately quite detailed, account of the discovery by workmen of a cache of wolf bones in the vicinity of the Norman Tower.

## 1849: John Darkin's Excavations

In 1849, John Darkin, clerk of the works for the restoration of St James' church, carried out excavations at the eastern end of the abbey and monastic buildings near the river (Hills 1865b, 128). Extensive foundations were uncovered and drawn, before being largely reburied, and the resultant plan was incorporated into the site plan published by Hills (1865a, Pl. 2).

## 1849: Suffolk Institute's Excavations

In 1849, it is reported that the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology uncovered part of the original paving of the choir (Gibbs 1948, 208), and Whittingham refers to excavations in the crypt which explored the three radiating chapels, revealing tiled paving and details of the altar in the northern chapel (1952, 170).

## 1855: Tymms' Mortuary Crosses

In March 1855, Samuel Tymms presented three small lead mortuary crosses found in the Brothers' Cemetery to the Society of Antiquaries (see Figure 56; Tymms 1855).

## 1863: Waterton's Mortuary Cross

In November 1863, Edmund Waterton presented a lead mortuary cross found in the Brothers' Cemetery to the Society of Antiquaries.

## 1865: Hills' Analysis

The publication of Gordon Hills' two-part analysis of the abbey, including a plan showing the extent of the surviving masonry of the abbey church (see Figure 58) and a more speculative plan of the wider monastic precinct (see Figure 59; Hills 1865a; 1865b).

## 1867: Sir John Evans's Mortuary Cross

In 1867, Sir John Evans donated a lead mortuary cross found in Bury St Edmunds to the British Museum.

## 1869: Morant's Analysis

In July 1869, Morant addressed the meeting of the British Archaeological Institute held in Bury St Edmunds and presented his synthesis of the history of the abbey and monastic buildings. He also

published a map, which summarised the state of knowledge accrued thus far (see Figure 60; Morant 1873).

### 1871: St Margaret's Gate Excavation

In 1871, excavation in the St Margaret's Gate area revealed the remains of the gateway and demonstrated that the ground level in the area had been raised by about five feet, although no further details are recorded (Morant 1873, 393).

### 1895: M.R. James' *On the Abbey of St Edmund*

The publication of M.R. James' *On the Abbey of St Edmund at Bury*, a comprehensive account of the history of the abbey, with a particular focus on the abbey church and the monastic library (James 1895). James included numerous extracts from the relevant manuscript sources, which described the liturgical use of the church and enabled the locations of many of the chapels, altars and abbots' burials to be ascertained (see Figure 61).

### 1902–1903: Chapterhouse Excavation

In 1902, as a consequence of James' conclusions and at the instigation of local antiquary Sir Ernest Clarke, an excavation committee was formed with the aim of investigating the validity of the historical sources which identified the tombs of six abbots lying buried in a line along the centre of the former chapterhouse of the monastery (Hervey 1905; Barker 1907, 53–8). Excavations began on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1902 and continued until 5<sup>th</sup> January 1903. The demolition rubble within the chapterhouse was removed and the original floor level, indicated by patches of *in situ* tiling, was reached. Although the monument slabs had gone, the stone coffins of five abbots and the uncoffined remains of a sixth were quickly identified lying in a row a few inches below the floor-level.

### 1929–1933: Clearance of the Monastic Buildings

The notes of a meeting held between the Ministry of Works and the Bury Corporation in 1933 gives an account of the clearance and restoration undertaken of the monastic ruins between 1928 and 1933.

- 1929: All boundary walls and other portions of masonry above ground within the area leased to the Corporation have been treated.
- 1930: The ground has been excavated north of the Chapterhouse and the walls found treated.
- 1931: The ground has been excavated east of [the] Church and the walls found treated.
- 1932: The ground has been excavated north of the Slype and the walls found treated.
- 1933: The ground has been excavated at the Infirmary and the walls have been treated.

## 1934: Clearance of the Prior's Lodge

In 1934, an L-shaped corridor containing a flight of medieval stone steps leading down to a cellar were excavated in the Prior's Lodge, and subsequently covered with iron sheeting (Whittingham 1952, 179). This gave way in 2004, and the site was re-excavated (Rolfe 2005).

## 1948–49: Goldsmith and Maltby Excavations

Excavations were undertaken in the crypt by N.C. Goldsmith, Borough Engineer and Surveyor, and H.J.M. Maltby, Curator of Moyses's Hall, in December 1948 and early 1949 (Maltby 1949). This work revealed the eastern face of the western wall of the crypt and explored the full depth of the crypt itself. Maltby also reported that unsuccessful attempts had been made to search for the original steps to the crypt and that additional work had also been undertaken within the east of the crypt in order to locate one of the piers at the chord of the apse.

## 1951: Whittingham's Plan of the Abbey

The development and presentation of Arthur Whittingham's plan (see Figure 77; Whittingham 1952).

## 1954: Group Captain Knocker's Trenches

In June 1954, Group Captain G.M. Knocker excavated three trenches, thought to have been in the area of the public conveniences, which revealed post-medieval material (SCCAS Archive BSE 010).

## 1957: The Provost's Garden Trial Trench

In November 1957, a trial trench was excavated in the Provost's Garden (now the Deanery garden) to ascertain the presence and survival of the remains of the south aisle (TNA WORK 14/2515).

## 1957–64: Ministry of Works Clearances

Between 1957 and 1964 the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works excavated the ruins of the transepts, crossing, eastern chapels and crypt of the abbey church (Gilyard-Beer 1969). The excavation of the north transept began in May 1957 and was followed by the excavation of the crossing and south transept from July 1958, so that by June 1959 both transepts and the crossing were cleared. In March 1959, work began on clearing the crypt, the Lady Chapel, and the Chapel of St Botolph, and these were cleared by May 1964. The excavations were directed by A.D. Saunders and M.W. Thompson of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, and resulted in the clearance of the eastern end of the abbey church to its original floor levels, and consolidation of the masonry.

## 1958: Dufty and Radford Excavations

In 1958, a series of trial trenches were excavated within and around the footprint of the proposed new chancel of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, as it was understood that archaeological traces of the former church of St Denis might lie on the site (Wilson and Hurst 1959, 305). The work was conducted by A. R. Dufty and C. A. Raleigh Radford on behalf of the Society of Antiquaries. The western wall of the basilica of St Denis was located south of the proposed extension and about 30 feet in front of the porticus of St Faith.

## 1962: Sewer Trench Excavation

In November 1962, the line of a sewer-trench across Bradfield Hall, apparently the infirmary's lodging of the abbey (Whittingham 1951, 182), was excavated under by Martin Biddle for the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works (Wilson and Hurst 1964, 244; Biddle 1964). The plan of the building, which had been partly excavated in 1849, was corrected and the structural sequence established, showing that the hall had begun as a building with two square rooms on the ground floor, and perhaps with a first-floor hall.

## 1970–1972: West Front Survey

Between 1970 and 1971 the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, and subsequently the Department of the Environment, produced several drawings of the Samson Tower and the houses built over the west front of the Abbey (Historic England Archive PF/BSA).

## 1973: Norman Tower Excavation

In 1973, the Department of the Environment carried out small-scale excavations beneath the archway of the tower and small areas immediately adjacent to it to the north and the south (Drewett and Stuart 1975). These revealed evidence for the ground surface pre-dating the construction of the tower, as well as post-holes relating to its construction, and traces of the subsequent path laid from the tower to the west front of the abbey. Outside the tower, the foundations and footings of the precinct wall were revealed.

## 1973–78: Norman Tower Surveys

Between 1973–78, the Department of the Environment made several surveys of the Norman Tower (Historic England Archive PF/BSA).

## 1976–80: Department of the Environment Excavations

Between 1976 and 1980, the area of the Queen's Chamber on the eastern side of the Great Court was excavated by Anthony Fleming of the Department of the Environment. The work demonstrated archaeological occupation of the site from the Middle Anglo-Saxon period onwards, with substantial phases of Late Anglo-Saxon timber buildings being present, which were then replaced by the masonry of the monastic buildings.

## 1979: Playground Borehole (BSE 010)

The Suffolk HER records the sinking of a trial borehole in the playground, revealing dumped material overlying the flood plain (Carr 1979).

## 1981–1983: Abbey Gate Survey

Between 1981 and 1983, the Institute for Advanced Architectural Studies made a full photogrammetric survey of the Abbey Gate for the Department of the Environment (Historic England Archive PF/BSA).

### 1983: Old Bowling Green Excavation (SHER: BSE 052)

In February 1983, a trench was excavated on the site of the proposed Cathedral treasury to test the theory that, prior to the enlargement of the abbey precinct, the main north–south road through Bury St Edmunds linked Northgate and Sparhawk Street, passing directly in front of the west front of the abbey church (Martin *et al.* 1984, 327). Beneath a 1.5m thick layer of topsoil was a courtyard surface, probably part of the Palace Yard of the abbey, beneath which was a series of cobbled surfaces.

### 1984: 19–21 Angel Hill Observation

A length of the precinct wall was revealed during works to the rear of the property (Carr 1984).

### 1985: 21 Mustow Street Observation

A length of the precinct wall was revealed during works to the rear of the property (Carr 1985).

### 1985–90: 3 Crown Street Observation (SHER: BSE 087)

The Suffolk HER records the discovery of human remains from well to the rear of 3 Crown Street at some point between 1985–90. The site backs onto the Great Churchyard.

### 1988: Cathedral Centre Excavation (SHER: ESF20638)

Excavations carried out in 1988 and 1999 within the Cathedral Precinct Yard Centre revealed evidence of an early road forming part of the planned town grid pattern, and a succession of timber buildings from the Late Saxon period to stone-built conventual buildings of medieval date were found (Gill 2005).

### 1988: 1a West Front Survey

In 1988, Philip Aitkens conducted an extensive survey of the medieval stonework within the property (Aitkens 1989).

### 1988: 1a West Front Excavation (SHER: BSE 110; ESF15376)

In 1988, excavation behind No. 1a West Front uncovered the continuing wall line of the eastern apse of the northern chapel at approximately 60cm below the ground level (Caruth 1993).

### 1988: 1a West Front Borehole (SHER: BSE 111; ESF15366)

The Suffolk HER records an excavation by engineers within 1A West Front establishing that the interior of the West Front has more than 2.8m of post-medieval deposit above a rough cobble surface.

### 1989: Abbot's Palace Survey

In 1989, a drawn survey of the Abbot's lodging was undertaken by Survey International for English Heritage (Historic England Archive PF/BSA).

## 1989: Abbey Gate and Norman Tower Photogrammetric Surveys

In 1989, English Heritage undertook photogrammetric surveys of the Abbey Gate and the Norman Tower (Historic England Archive PF/BSA).

## 1990: Norman Tower Survey

In 1990, English Heritage made a survey of the Norman Tower (Historic England Archive PF/BSA).

## 1990: English Heritage Resistivity Survey

In March 1990 a resistivity survey conducted in the areas of the Infirmary, Abbot's Garden, dovecote and mill indicated that extensive buried foundations of walls and buildings are likely to be present in many of the areas investigated (Payne 1990).

## 1990: Water Pipe Trench Observation (SHER: BSE 090)

The Suffolk HER records that in 1990 two large piles of flint and mortar rubble were exposed during the excavation of a water-pipe trench in the Great Churchyard.

## 1990: Public Conveniences Watching Brief

A watching brief undertaken during rebuilding of the public conveniences in March 1990 revealed disturbance to a considerable depth, thought to relate to a Second World War air-raid shelter.

## 1991: 9–10 The Churchyard Test-holes (SHER: BSE 092)

The Suffolk HER records that two test-holes were dug in garden of 9–10 Churchyard in order to test the nature and depth of the deposits in an area thought to be part of the Monk's Cemetery.

## 1992: Houses in the West Front Survey (SHER: ESF20597)

An extensive survey was made of the houses in the West Front by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME) in 1992 (RCHME 1992).

## 1993: 3 Honey Hill Observation (SHER BSE 104)

The Suffolk HER records that in July 1993 a stretch of the abbey precinct wall incorporated in 3 Honey Hill was exposed during building conversion and restoration.

## 1993: West Front Observation (SHER: BSE 112; ESF15365; ESF25682)

The observation on 1993 of the footing trench dug for a north–south garden wall constructed behind the West Front revealed three fragments of flint and mortar wall (Caruth 1993).

## 1993: Samson Tower Observation (SHER: BSE 113; ESF15367)

The Suffolk HER records the observation in 1993 of two contractor's pits within the Samson octagon revealed bands of soil, flint and mortar, but no structures.

## 1994: Crypt/Tennis Courts Stray Find (SHER: BSE 120)

The Suffolk HER records that in 1994 five fragments of pale blue Middle Anglo-Saxon glass were recovered from the eroding face of the bank between the tennis courts and the crypt.

### 1995: West Front Watching Briefs (SHER: BSE 112; ESF25682)

A succession of watching briefs associated with the conversion of areas within the West Front of the abbey church demonstrated that large lumps of bonded core work have been torn or fallen down and are 'floating' in the accumulated demolition debris.

### 1995: West Front Observation (SHER: BSE 123)

A pipe trench dug by workmen working on the northern half of the West Front restoration uncovered wall fragments. Three areas of bonded material were identified, two representing columns/pillars in the north wall and north arcade (see Gill 2005b).

### 1995: St Mary's Church Test-hole

A small test hole was examined beneath the wooden flooring within the tower of St Mary's church, revealing a considerable drop between the base of the wall and the ground beneath the floorboards (Tester 1995).

### 1995: Abbey West Front Observation

Monitoring visits during April and June 1995 recorded part of the aisle wall, an arcade pillar and flint rubble, along with post-medieval overburden (Gill 1995).

### 1995: West Front Sewerage Trench

Flint and mortar wall remains were exposed and recorded during the excavation of new sewer pipes behind the West front of Bury Abbey (Caruth 1995).

### 1996: Abbey Gate Floodlight (SHER: ESF22891)

Monitoring of the laying of replacement lighting for the Abbey Gate revealed bricks below the benches and a short wall (Tester 1996).

### 1996: The Cloister (SHER: BSE 143; ESF15973)

The Suffolk HER records the removal of a stump from the area of the cloister, revealing post-Dissolution rubble.

### 1997: The Martins Watching Brief (SHER: ESF22697)

The Suffolk HER records that trial pits were observed during the construction of The Martins, revealing a wall made from brick and reused abbey stone.

### 1997: Abbey Precinct Wall, Mustow Street Observation

Observation of an area of post-medieval wall being dismantled and rebuilt following damage by a lorry (Carr 1997).

### 1998: North Precinct Wall Survey

The North Precinct wall was surveyed during an English Heritage project to repair and consolidate part of the standing monument (Gill 1998).



### 1999: 30 Mustow Street Evaluation (SHER: BSE 172; ESF18038)

An archaeological evaluation at 30 Mustow Street revealed traces of the ditch encircling the precinct boundary wall (Gill 1999).

### 1999: North Transept Excavation (SHER: ESF20639)

Excavation in advance of the new transept and cloister- extension on the north side of the cathedral investigated evidence of the church pre-dating St James', a narrow cobbled road and two early medieval timber buildings (Gill 1999; 2005).

### 1999–2000: St James' Cathedral West Front Survey (SHER: ESF20596)

The fabric was examined and analysed during a period of stone replacement, conservation and cleaning in late 1999 and early 2000. The west front was in construction from c. 1503 to c. 1550. A final phase of medieval work using salvaged abbey stone to raise the aisle walls and parapets is suggested, along with major repairs in the mid-19th century (Carr 2001a).

### 2000: The Rose Garden Observation (SHER: ESF20962)

Excavation in the Rose Garden to remove diseased soil, identified a probable path dating to late 19th century and may relate to the glasshouses visible on the 1880's OS map (Carr 2000).

### 2001: 'Wall A' North-East Boundary Observation (SHER: ESF21171)

Trial holes located against the south face of a wall which forms the boundary of the Abbey Gardens and a party wall with 26 Angel Hill were inspected (Carr 2001b).

### 2001: 'Wall A' Stone Recording (BSE 196; ESF 18392)

The collapse of a large section of boundary wall within the Abbey Gardens complex released a number of abbey stones, which were recorded (Jones 2001).

### 2001: 'Wall B' Observation (SHER: ESF21172)

Trial holes located against the south face of a wall which forms the south boundary of the bowling green were inspected, suggesting an early to mid-19th century construction date (Carr 2001c).

### 2001: 'Wall C' Survey (SHER: ESF20575)

In September 2001 a survey was made of the west gable of a north–south aligned building which could be dated to the 13th century by the small lancet in the south wall (Gill 2002).

### 2001: Telephone Cable Watching Brief (SHER: BSE 195)

In 2001 a negative watching brief was undertaken within the Abbey Precinct in anticipation of a telephone cable being laid (Jones 2001).

### 2002: South of St Mary's Church Watching Brief (SHER: ESF22880)

In 2002, a negative watching brief was undertaken on electricity trenches on pavement south of St Mary's Church (Tester and Powell 2002).

## 2002: 'Wall A' Buttress Holes Observation

In January–February 2002, footing holes excavated against the north boundary wall of the Abbey Gardens were monitored (Gill 2002).

## 2003: Bowling Green Electricity Trench Watching Brief (BSE: ESF21170)

In January 2003, a trench was dug across the path from the keepers' hut to the bowling green, revealing a post-reformation demolition layer (Carr 2003a).

## 2003: Abbey Model Watching Brief (SHER: ESF21169)

In 2003, a watching brief on the footings for the model of the abbey (which has since been moved) revealed demolition material from the abbey (Carr 2003b).

## 2003: St James' CEVA Middle School Watching Brief

In 2003, an archaeological monitoring carried out during the excavation of footing trenches for an extension to St James Middle School demonstrated that the earth bank, into which the section was cut, was largely comprised of re-deposited spoil and that there may be a substantial portion of the original wall preserved beneath the modern turf (Tester 2004).

## 2004: Prior's Lodge Evaluation (SHER: ESF24253)

Following the collapse of a backfilled trench from 1934, a single trench evaluation revealed the top of an L-shaped section of flint and mortar wall. Stacked stone blocks were found outside the line of the wall to the south and west. Beneath the walls were corrugated iron sheets and wooden beams which had collapsed into the space between the walls. Underneath this was a staircase running east to west (Rolfe 2005).

## 2005: West Front of the Abbey Church Assessment (SHER: ESF20605)

The results of the archaeological events undertaken in and around the West Front of the Abbey Church, Bury St Edmunds were examined in order to assess the impact of the proposal to conserve and convert the empty 17th–19th century dwellings formed within the medieval fabric (Gill 2005). There have been five small archaeological excavations (BSE 110, 111, 112, 113 and 123) in and immediately around the west front, in addition to the more extensive excavations in the cathedral cloister (BSE 052) and alongside St James' tower (BSE 182). These demonstrated that the archaeological deposits around the Abbey precinct are deeply buried and as a consequence well preserved. The medieval occupation surface is largely intact and unseen remains of the Abbey Church lie just below the surface.

## 2006: Cathedral Heating Ducts Excavation (SHER: BSE 276; ESF25952)

In 2006, excavation was undertaken in the north and south transepts of St Edmundsbury Cathedral ahead of the installation of heating ducts and a lift (Duffy and Antrobus 2010). Two trenches identified the remains of the east wall of the medieval predecessor of the current church, and three 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick-lined graves/vaults were also identified.

### 2007: Shire Hall Complex Assessment (SHER: ESF20343)

An archaeological assessment (Carr and Gill 2007), comprising documentary research, geophysical survey (GSB Propection Ltd 2007) and the excavation of trial holes was undertaken as part of the study into the possible future use and development of the Shire Hall site. The investigation identified the site of the Sacrist's yard beyond the south precinct wall. The yard would have contained the homes, offices and workshops of the Sacrists' staff, and part of the gatehouse into the yard was identified. Evidence of a return wall on the east side of the precinct and a possible ditch alongside the south wall were also found. Within the precinct human burials – part of the monks' cemetery – were found and finds from the test-pits included medieval pottery and tiles. Glazed medieval rooftiles were also found and these are thought to be directly associated with the abbey. Ipswich and Thetford-ware pottery confirms that this part of the town is also within the Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon settlement area.

### 2008: Cathedral Precinct Yard Storm Drains (SHER: ESF23621)

In 2008, a watching brief was undertaken on the replacement of storm drains in the Cathedral Precinct Yard, confirming the 1.4m depth of overburden sealing the medieval archaeological horizon in this area (Gill 2008).

### 2009: Eastgate Nursery Desk-Based Assessment (SHER: ESF21001) & Evaluation (SHER: ESF20550)

In 2009, following the completion of an archaeological desk-based assessment (Rolfe 2008) and documentary survey (Breen 2008), an archaeological evaluation was carried out on land adjacent to Eastgate Street and Minden Close (Muldowney 2009). This fieldwork identified two ditches, a series of large pits (one containing a deposit of horn cores), two smaller pits, deposits associated with the Abbey Precinct wall and possible floor surfaces. The majority of these features have been spot-dated to the mid-12th and 14th centuries, whilst only one ditch was dated to the post-medieval period.

### 2009: North Precinct Wall Assessment (SHER: ESF20791)

In July 2009, an archaeological assessment was undertaken on behalf of English Heritage of the wall fabric of the buildings on the southern side of the northern precinct wall in order to assess areas of archaeological sensitivity (Carr 2009).

### 2009: Abbey Gardens Management Plan (SHER: ESF20810)

An archaeological assessment was undertaken within the Abbey Gardens (Gill 2009). The work was concentrated mainly within the flood plain of the River Lark in the 'events area' and the playground. The investigative work included topographic and geophysical surveys, palaeoenvironmental assessment and test-pitting. The survey work confirmed that archaeological deposits lay close to the current surface with layers of rubble encountered at depths of 100–250mm. In the main these were post-Dissolution deposits associated with the post-medieval use of the gardens, but

structural remains of the abbey, including a bonded flint wall and a robbed wall trench (both identified in the geophysical survey) were also found. The medieval ground level and finds-rich occupation debris deposits were recorded and evidence of the secondary channel, or mill-lead which formerly ran alongside the river and which is shown on early maps of the abbey, was identified as both a landscape and archaeological feature. The palaeoenvironmental assessment identified well-preserved pollen and organic deposits within the floodplain.

### [2009: Aviary Wall Recording \(SHER: ESF20628\)](#)

In 2009, an archaeological study was undertaken of the 'Aviary Wall' in the Abbey Gardens (Gill 2009). The wall is the remains of a range of monastic service buildings, constructed against the inside of the precinct wall within the medieval Abbey, and the work included a drawn and photographic survey of each elevation of the wall and the hand-excavation of two test holes.

### [2009: Magistrates' Court Car Park Evaluation](#)

In 2009, an archaeological evaluation trench was excavated in the Magistrate's Court car park, trench exposing part of the south precinct wall of the Abbey and a mortar surface inside the wall which was overlain by destruction debris that may date from the Dissolution (Tester 2009).

### [2010: Aviary Wall Watching Brief \(SHER: ESF20627\)](#)

In 2010, the aviary wall repair works were monitored in order to complete the record regarding the work carried out in 2009 (see above). This work uncovered no further results than in the previous work (Gill 2010).

### [2010: Magistrates' Court Car Park Watching Brief \(SHER: BSE 335; ESF21277\)](#)

In 2010, the monitoring of groundworks in the Magistrates' Court car park indicated that archaeological levels were not reached (Tester 2010).

### [2011: Shire Hall Cable Ducts Watching Brief \(SHER: ESF21032\)](#)

In 2011, a continuous watching brief was carried out during the excavation of cable trenches in the car park of Shire Hall, revealing the southern precinct wall of the Abbey and two probable 19th-century garden walls (Sims 2011).

### [2011: Play Area Watching Brief \(SHER: ESF21351\)](#)

In 2011, a watching brief of groundworks for the construction of a new play area and the removal of old play equipment in the Abbey Gardens revealed no archaeological features, but did identify former banks of the River Lark and its channel to the west (Feider 2011a).

### [2011: Great Churchyard Gas Main Watching Brief \(SHER: ESF21527\)](#)

In 2011, a watching brief on a gas main replacement in the Great Churchyard, revealed disarticulated human remains were also recovered. A medieval occupation soil, as well as a lime mortar and flint wall (Feider 2011b).

## 2011: Shire Hall Car Park Evaluation (SHER: ESF21309)

In 2011, an evaluation was carried out at Shire Hall car park, showing that the landscape had been raised. This occurred in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with the dumping of gravels to create fishponds, a mill-leat and grazing meadows. This required the precinct wall to be extended. Excavation at the base of the original phase of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century wall uncovered a buttress and possible rendering. Further ground heightening was carried out to create the garden for St Margaret's House in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Gill 2011).

## 2011–12: Shire Hall Evaluation (SHER: ESF21714) & Excavation (SHER: ESF25779)

In March and April 2011, an archaeological evaluation at Shire Hall revealed 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup>-century features (predominantly pits and postholes), post-medieval deposits and associated pits (including a possible cess pit) (Newton and Mustchin 2014). Follow-on excavation of an area c.300m squared within the footprint of the foundations of the new building revealed further pits and postholes (Barlow and Mustchin 2014).

## 2012: Aviary Flowerbed Removal Watching Brief (SHER: ESF24585)

In 2012, monitoring of the excavation of a brick lined flower bed revealed a mortar-and-gravel cobbled surface. There was also an east to west aligned bonded brick wall that was probably related to the aviary buildings (Sims 2012).

## 2012: Shire Hall Car Park / Great Churchyard (SHER: BSE 291)

The Suffolk HER records the observation in October 2012 of leg bones underneath the wall which divides the eastern end of the Great Churchyard from the Shire Hall Car Park.

## 2013: Water Gardens Refurbishment Watching Brief (SHER: ESF22634)

In 2013, a negative watching brief was carried out during the refurbishment of the water gardens (Brooks 2014).

## 2014: Crankles Corner Assessment (SHER: ESF22973)

In 2014, an assessment was made of the flint and rubble wall that forms part of the boundary to the Crankles Corner offices revealing it to date from the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but making use of a pre-existing wall (Gill 2014).

## 2014: Refectory Garden Wall Assessment

In 2014, an assessment was made of the blocked door in the east boundary wall of the Cathedral Precinct Yard; the door is partly buried and excavation recorded its full extents. The wall is part of a ruined building of the medieval abbey and the door is a contemporary feature that dates to no later than the c. 14<sup>th</sup> century (Gill 2014b).

### 2014: Cathedral Yard Drain Repairs Watching Brief (SHER: BSE 449)

In 2014, the sudden appearance of a large void in the access drive to the Cathedral offices (adjoining 30 Angel Hill) exposed extensive erosion caused by collapsed drains. The wall of a probable medieval building was exposed running at right angles to the precinct wall. Three post-medieval wells were also exposed (Tester 2014a).

### 2014: St Mary's Church Watching Brief

In 2014, a watching brief during the relocation of the Cenotaph in the north aisle of St Mary's church recorded the exposure of a substantial flint and mortar wall, which was on a similar alignment to the standing building (Tester 2014b).

### 2014: St Margaret's House Watching Brief (SHER: BSE 440)

In 2014, a watching brief of excavations at St Margaret's House revealed a probable 18<sup>th</sup>-century rubble deposit and wall, along with other post-medieval and modern material (Gill 2014).

### 2015–2016: Ford House, Shire Hall, Watching Brief (SHER: ESF 23228)

In 2015–16, a negative watching brief was undertaken on the stripping of tarmac and the excavation of fence posts and service trenches, and a photographic survey was carried on the section of Abbey wall that extends into the courtyard between Ford House and 9/10 The Churchyard (Brooks 2016).

### 2016: Abbey Gardens Water Main Watching Brief (SHER: ESF23391)

In 2016, a watching brief undertaken during the replacement of a water main across the Abbey Gardens identified medieval and post-medieval deposits which have provided new evidence of the location of monastic buildings, former ground levels and the evidence of deliberate soil dumping across the area in the post-medieval period (Gill 2017a).

### 2016: Rose Garden Memorial Tree Watching Brief (SHER: ESF24883)

In 2016, a watching brief on the planting of a new tree in the south-east corner of the Rose Garden revealed post-medieval rubble layers (Gill 2016).

### 2017: 9–10 Churchyard Soakaway Watching Brief (SHER: ESF25608)

In 2017, a programme of archaeological monitoring associated with the construction of a new soakaway pit and related works at 9–10 The Churchyard revealed a pit or ditch, and a quantity of medieval pottery and prehistoric struck flint (Smith 2017).

### 2017: 9–10 Churchyard Water Main Watching Brief (SHER: ESF25310)

In 2017, an evaluation carried out to replace a leaking water main in the grounds of Nos 6, 9 and 10 The Churchyard and Ford House revealed dumped material 50cms deep preserving the medieval ground surface. Medieval surface features comprised the remains of a hearth or oven and a spread of lime mortar, whilst below these was an earlier pit which may have originally been excavated to extract the gravel from the river terrace (Gill 2017b).