

YCCCART 2022/Y11

**Watching brief for Landmark Trust on wall repairs at Woodspring Priory
2021-2022 Reports: PART 1 Introduction and walls 1 - 7**

**YATTON, CONGRESBURY, CLAVERHAM AND CLEEVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)**

General Editor: Vince Russett



Wall 12/15 (west wall of garden) under repair and repointing, January 2022

| Page | Contents |
|-------------|---|
| 1 | PART 1 Introduction and walls 1 - 7 |
| 3 | Abstract Acknowledgements Introduction |
| 4 | Site location Land use and geology |
| 5 | Historical & archaeological context |
| 12 | Results |
| 2 1 | PART 2 Walls 9 - 19 |
| 49 | Some conclusions re dating of walls |
| 51 | Recommendations References |
| 3 1 | PART 3 Appendices |
| 1 | Appendix 1 Bryant and Beauchamp field records |
| 28 | Appendix 2 Concordance of wall numbers |
| 30 | Appendix 3 Site Archive |

Abstract

Repair and repointing of walls and structures at Woodspring Priory, by Orchard Stonemasons for Landmark Trust, during 2020-2022 proved both academically instructive and very worthwhile in conservation terms. While many of the walls' origins seem to fall outside of the known floruit of Woodspring Priory (c1214-1536), their structures and sites illuminate the history of both the priory and its successor activities, including a very long-lived farm, a short-lived early 20th century private golf course, and even some of the early activities on site of Landmark itself.

Acknowledgements

This survey would also not have been carried out without the willing permission of the landowner, Landmark Trust; the tenants, the Toogood Partnership; the National Trust for lands outside of the Scheduled Monument, and staff of Landmark Trust, National Trust and Historic England.

Notes to report

Works carried out in 2020 have been reported elsewhere (YCCCART 2020a). The works in 2021-2022 often took place in non-ideal winter weather: mortar simply does not set in near-freezing conditions, and from time to time, it was necessary to protect the new works from frost with heavy tarpaulins, and these may be seen in some of the photographs.

The works recorded consisted of

- i) Reduction and rebuild, where damage and/or collapse was most obvious
- ii) Repointing, over repaired areas (i) or where surface mortars were weathered out
- iii) One area of new build, a buttress to remedy the settlement of wall 13 gatehouse

Due to field recorder illness, works connected with minor repointing in the buildings and structures of the Monument were not recorded in detail at the time: most of the major repairs, though, were sited in the outer walls of the complex, and these are the main features reported on here.

'After' photographs, however, were recorded in October 2022, and are presented here. It was gratifying to note that all mortar work seems to be now cured and settled, with no visible loss due to winter frost in early 2022.

Site location



Fig 1: Woodspring Priory (2018) (starred)

Woodspring Priory (c1214-1536) is a former Victorine (Augustinian) priory beside the [Severn](#) Estuary in the parish of Kewstoke, about 3 miles (5 km) north-east of Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset. Its centre lies at ST34336615. After the Dissolution, it became in turn a country house and hospital, a farm, and for a short period in the early 20th century, a private golf course. It is today in the ownership and care of the Landmark Trust.

Land use and geology

The site lies on the Blue Lias Formation – at this site, it consists of interbedded Mudstone and Limestone. The Lias outcrops in the stream (Sand Rhyne) to the south of the priory. Sand Hill, to the north, has complex geology, among which is the Oxwich series (Carboniferous Limestone) used as rubble construction in the priory and its successor buildings (British Geological Society 2022).

To the south of the priory, Kewstoke Moor consists of the alluvial clays and interbedded peats of the Northmarsh.

Much of the priory site is open to the public, and is used for grazing. Part of the site, including the farmhouse and its adjacent gardens, is let by the Landmark Trust to private individuals and is only open by special arrangement. Vehicular access is by signposted road from Queens Road, Worle. There is limited parking.

Historical & archaeological context

Woodspring Priory is, and always has been, a somewhat remote site, most easily reachable by water through the Woodspring Pill, which lidar and air photographic evidence shows once reached the edge of the priory property, beside the modern entrance bridge.

The site features a number of standing medieval buildings, including the nave of the church, a structure known as the refectory (although this is clearly the former infirmary), and the ruins of other buildings, such as part of the cloister and the entrance gate. Fragments and indications of other buildings survive in arches and old stairs in the walls of surviving buildings. Outside of the precinct that is open to the public is a great medieval barn (although its roof is 20th century pastiche after a fire in the 1920s). This is in private use and is not available for public visits.

In the outer precinct, what appears to be a medieval moated site has been recognised. During heavy rain in the past winters of 2020-22, this was very noticeable and water filled.

The whole site (including the site of the infilled fish ponds and surroundings to the west of the adjacent farm) is Scheduled (SM22847) (LEN1012722: Woodspring Priory and associated fishponds and field system); several structures are also Listed:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Priory Church | LBI |
| Gatehouse, gates etc | LBI |
| East cloister wall | LBI (the Listed structure is actually the west wall of the cloister) |
| West wall chapter house | LBI |
| Infirmary | LBI |
| Barn and well | LBI |
| Farmhouse range | LBII* |

Surprisingly little reported archaeological work has been carried out at Woodspring Priory.

An excavation is recorded in the 1885 Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (Paul 1885) as follows:-

'..excavations commenced in Sept., and continued to the previous Saturday, the foundations of the walls of the choir had been laid bare. Where the high altar had stood, was found a quantity of 14th century pavement, and among the armorial tiles were the arms of England, France, the Isle of Man (with roses between each leg), lion rampant, a portion of the arms of Clare, and fragments. Ten feet from the east wall was found a large hole, containing human remains, including skulls; and four feet beneath the surface, near the tower, were found slabs, which appeared to have formed the end of a vault. Leaden coffins had been found:

Large pieces of tracery and finials, evidently portions of the choir windows, were also unearthed.; also glazed tiles and some large white squares, either of very fine freestone, or marble. From the position of these relics, it would appear that the pavement of the west end was more plain than at the east, where the more elaborate remains were found.

The total length of the chancel was 43 ft. 5 in., and the width 19 ft. 10 in, the side walls being 3 ft. in thickness..'

An excavation was carried out by Major Vernon Hill in the late 1920s, but the sole remaining record appears to be an article in the Bristol Times and Mirror (BT&M 1927).

In the early 1970s an excavation by Tomalin and Crook resulted in a guidebook (Tomalin 1974; Tomalin & Crook 2007), but no substantial excavation report would seem to have been published.

An unpublished geophysical survey was carried out to the south of the infirmary and to the east end of the church in the early 1990s (GBP Prospection 1998) in conjunction with Bristol University. This has not been published, although there is a copy in the North Somerset HER: it's results, while not as detailed, help to support the basic accuracy of the YCCCART geophysical report.

Substantial (and somewhat repetitive) antiquarian study of the sparse medieval documentary evidence for the priory has been published, but it does not appear that the national archives have been trawled in detail, a process which, for example, Prosser (1996) employed to great effect in his PhD thesis on Keynsham Abbey (B&NES). An earthwork study in the orchard is in the North Somerset HER (Henderson 2012): it identified previously unrecorded earthworks, while a walkover survey in December 2011 identified a previously unrecognised moated site in the outer precinct, from which a collection of high-status 18th century pottery was recovered. (YCCCART 2018). These all tell roughly the same story, of a fairly wealthy Domesday manor replaced in the early 13th century, around 1214, when the Victorines (a branch of the Augustinian canons) arrived from a former site called Doddelynych (whose site is currently unknown). The priory never had more than a handful of occupants and a meagre land-owning, mostly in the surrounding countryside. It was closed at the reformation, with subsequent land owners carrying out work to demolish the chancel of the church and various other demolitions and buildings.

The original place-name of the manor, Worspring, probably derives from 'Worle' + OE '*spring*' (coppice growth), the whole meaning 'coppice wood attached to Worle', and indeed, coppice wood is mentioned in its Domesday entry (1086).

One aspect of Woodspring's history is surprisingly, only mentioned by a local historian, F A Knight, who in 'The Seaboard of Mendip' refers to payments by several local parishes to a 'hospital for maimed soldiers' apparently at the site for over a century in the post-medieval period. Woodspring is specifically mentioned as the site of this hospital in the parish records of Kewstoke in 1722 and 1725 (Knight 1902: 193). The earliest map of the site (1768; in private hands) shows buildings that are no longer extant (See Fig 2 below).

An excellent guide book has been produced (Tomlinson D & Crook C, 2007) and further information can be found on line at

www.landmarktrust.org.uk/BuildingDetails/Overview/184/Woodspring_Priory

Since 2010, a number of geophysical and other surveys have been carried out by Yatton Congresbury Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCART): reports on these can be accessed on the YCCART web site (www.yccart.co.uk): full details are given in the reference section.

These surveys have identified several buildings previously unknown at the site, as well as evidence for a potential Tudor garden (probably related to the known 'hospital' at the site in the 17th and 18th centuries) as well as many features related to the subsequent use of the priory as a working farm. A previous report on wall repairs in 2020 (YCCART 2020a) indicated the probable post-priory origins of many of the field walls within the Monument, accounting for the availability of a few scraps of worked medieval freestone (presumably from demolished priory buildings) to appear in the current walls. Other work on the properties belonging to the priory has been published (YCCART 2018; YCCART2021b).

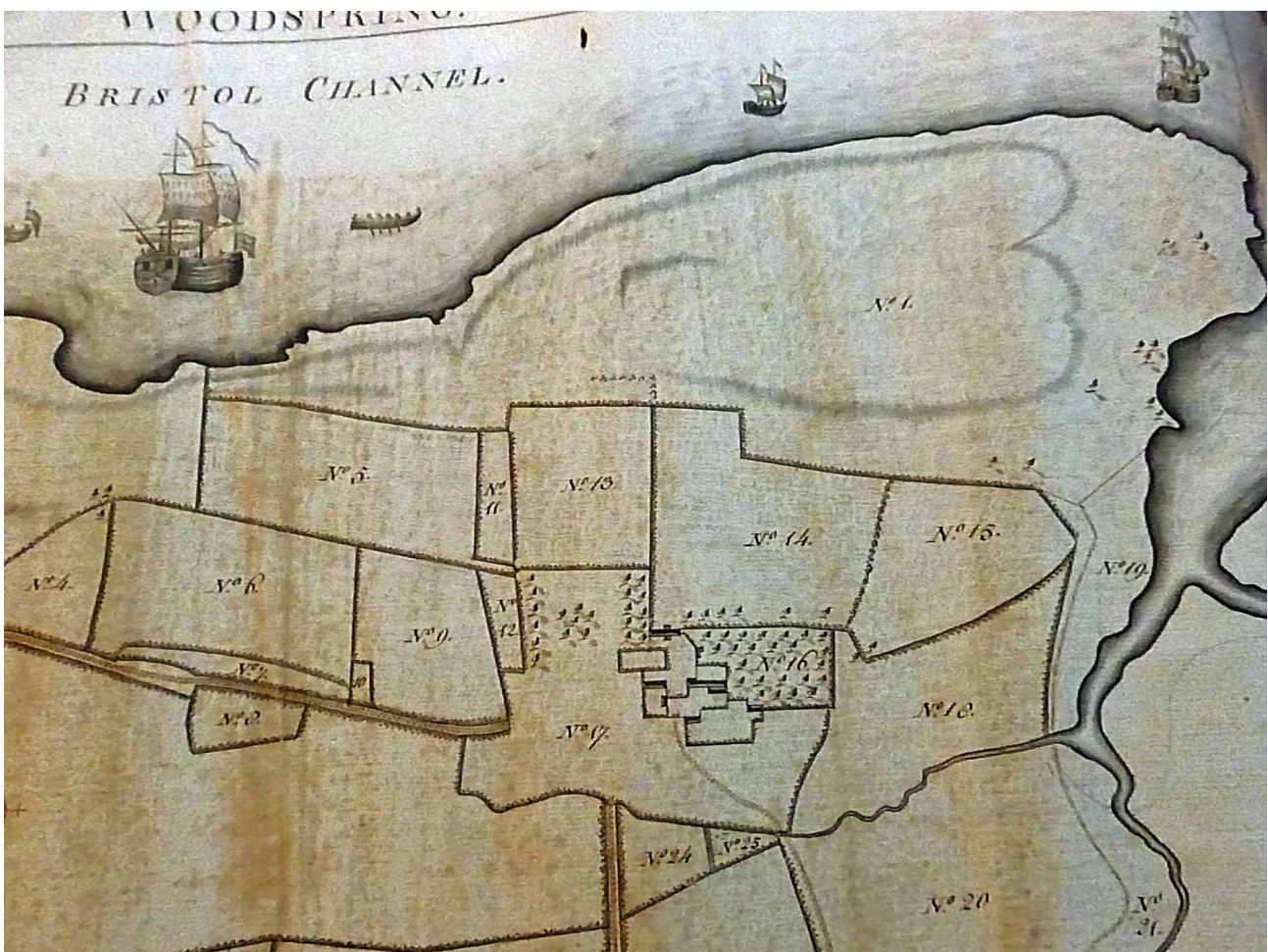


Fig 2: 1768 map of Woodspring Priory. Courtesy of Mr D Ridley. A copy of a second version of this map in the museum at Woodspring Priory has an illustration of the main buildings standing at that time.

It is important to note that the walls around the precinct (apart from that around the orchard) have all been slightly altered in plan: this map also shows a building west of the farmhouse that corresponds exactly with a building standing in the farm buildings today.

Although it today has a 19th century roof, the walls could well be early post-medieval or even monastic in origin: it certainly shares the same axis as the other buildings at the site.

In addition to the text description of the dig at Woodspring in 1885, Paul published a plan of the priory, including many of the outlying walls the subject of this report.

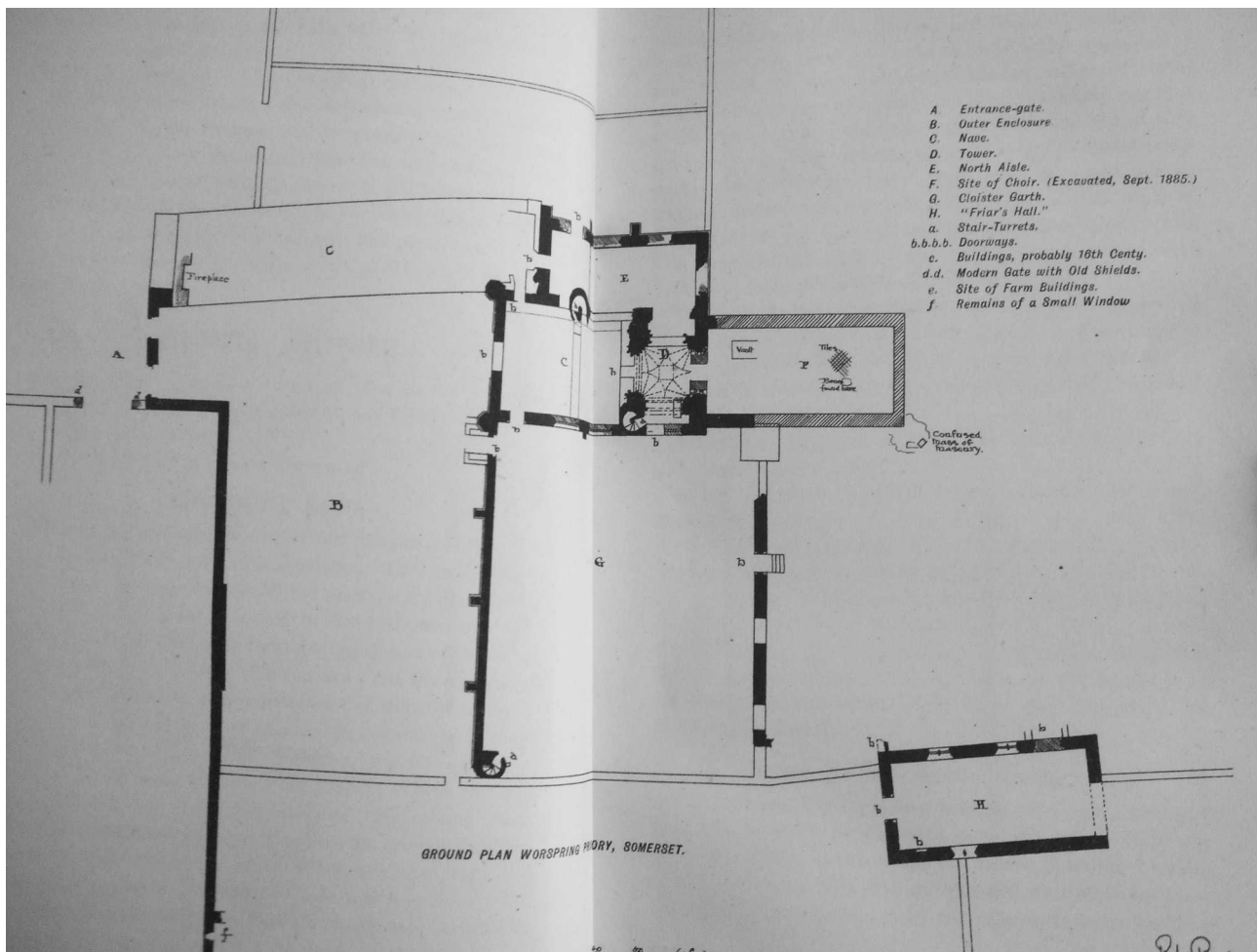
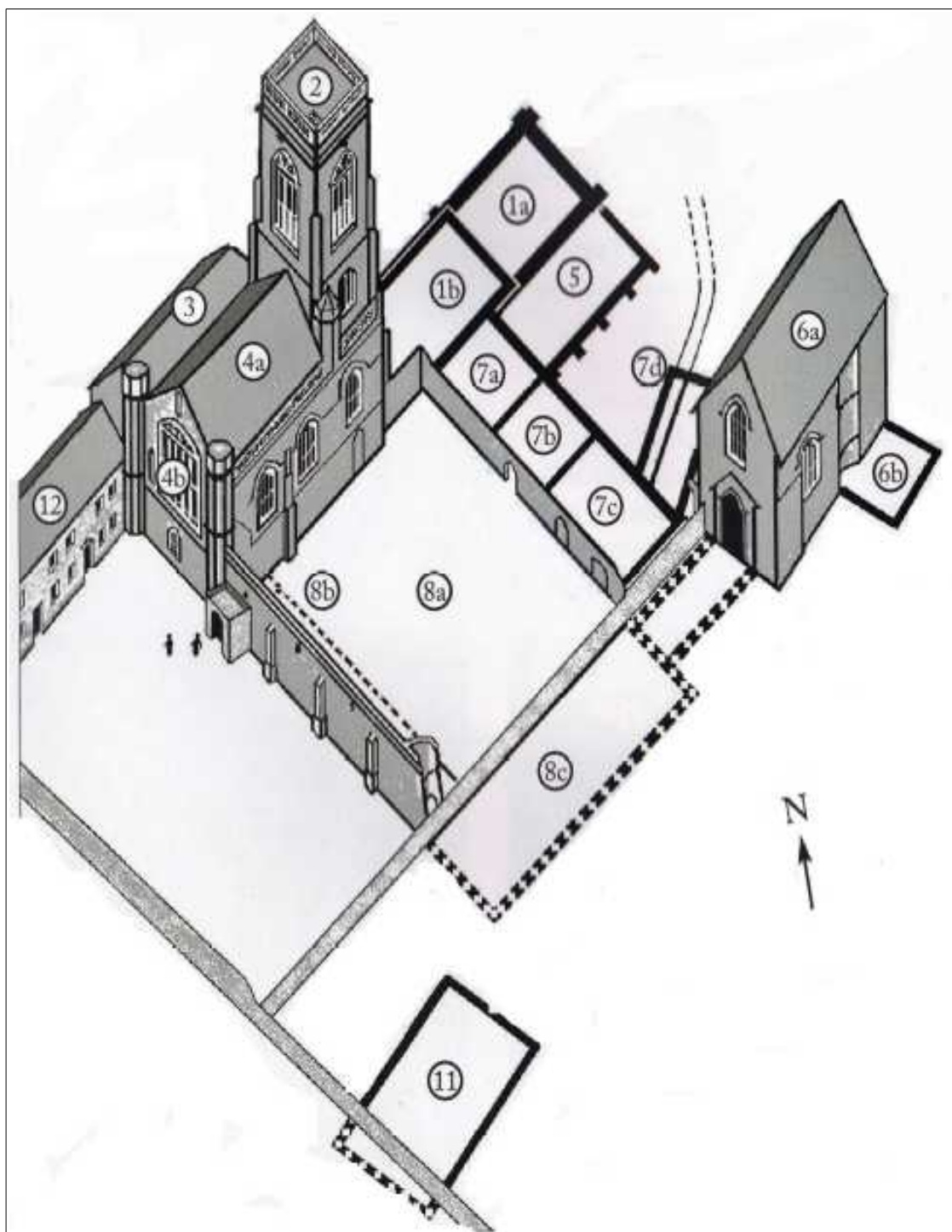


Fig 3: Ground plan of Woodspring Priory and excavation by Paul (1885)

Little of this plan is new. An exception is the state of the infirmary (lower right) with the huge 'entrance' hacked out of its eastern gable in the mid 19th century.

Some few details of the dig are present, including the outline of the chancel, the site of a 'confused mass of masonry' to its SE; the 'remains of a small window' (f) in the paddock wall 17, which is no longer extant, but could just possibly have related to the 'missing' building there; the inclusion of the whole of the spiral staircase at the south end of wall 10 (which could have been no more true in 1885 than it is now).

He did at least recognise the bogus nature of the northern and southern ends of wall 7, along with the stub of a wall (Fig 48 below) which may have been part of a slype; and the inexplicable thickening of wall 12/15, which on the ground resembles the end of a building on side 12 of the wall, but is not visible on the other (15) side; and the non-monastic (post-Dissolution) dates of walls 6, 9 and 11 (among others) (Fig 7).



Worspring (now Woodspring) Priory today. Above- and below-ground remains. (1a), the long chancel of the thirteenth-century church. (1b), the shortened chancel of the fifteenth-century church. (2), the fifteenth-century tower. (3), north aisle. (4a), the nave and later residence. (4b), west front. (5), lady chapel. (6a), infirmary. (6b), infirmary chapel with infirmary's lodging above. (7a), sacristy. (7b), chapter house. (7c), parlour. (7d), reredorter (lavatory). (8a), cloister. (8b), west range. (8c), refectory. (11), gatehouse/guesthouse. (12), the post-Dissolution farmhouse (now available for holidays through the Landmark Trust).

Fig 4: General axonometric plan, Woodspring Priory (Landmark Trust)

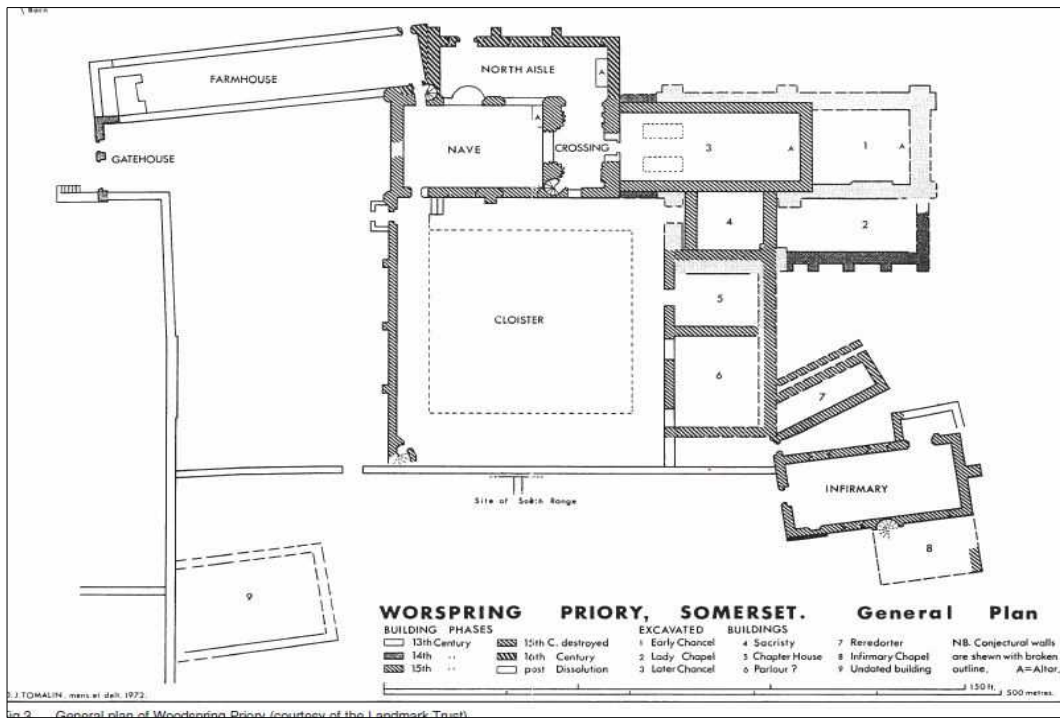
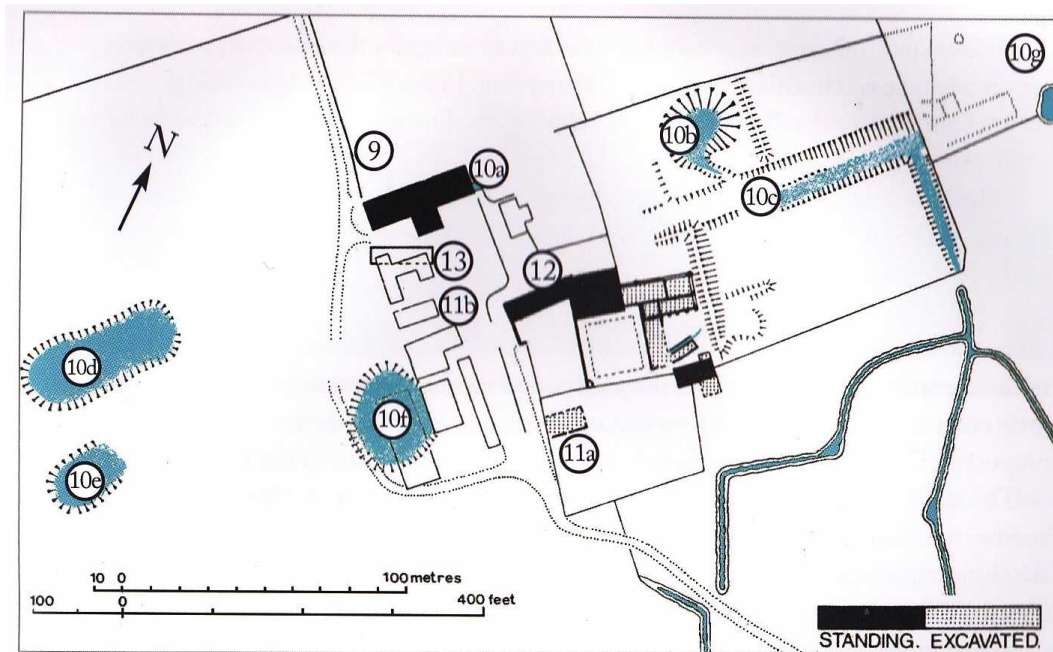


Fig 5: Woodspring Priory general ground plan (Landmark Trust)



Springs and ponds past and present at Woodspring Priory. 10a and 10b are the principal springs. 10c-10f are spring-fed ponds. A further pond at 10g is adjoined by crop-marks that may belong to the lost Norman chapel noted at Five Elms. 11a-b marks the supposed shift of the gatehouse/guesthouse. 12, the later farmhouse range, now let as a Landmark, which incorporates the earlier prior's lodging. 13, lost building of unknown purpose.

Fig 6: Woodspring Priory: ponds and springs (Landmark Trust)

All the ponds shown above have been backfilled, with the exception of the spring in the orchard. The moat in the outer precinct utilises the ditches there: the 'knees' on the ditches are the points where the ditch meets the moat. The ditch on the east side is actually far wider than depicted here.

Two inhumations recovered from St Thomas' Head, some hundreds of meters away at the eastern end of Sand Point, and associated with a parch mark thought to be that of a chapel, radiocarbon date to the 14th/15th century AD, not the Late Antique period as previously expected. It is not clear how this fits into the story of Woodspring Priory as yet (*pers comm* R Smisson c 2011).

Results

Messrs Bryant and Beauchamp (Wedmore) prepared the schedule of works for Woodspring Priory: their schedule diagrams form Appendix 1 of this report (see below).

For convenience sake, a simpler numbered reference to the walls was used in this record: a concordance between this and the Bryant and Beauchamp numberings forms Appendix 2 of this report.

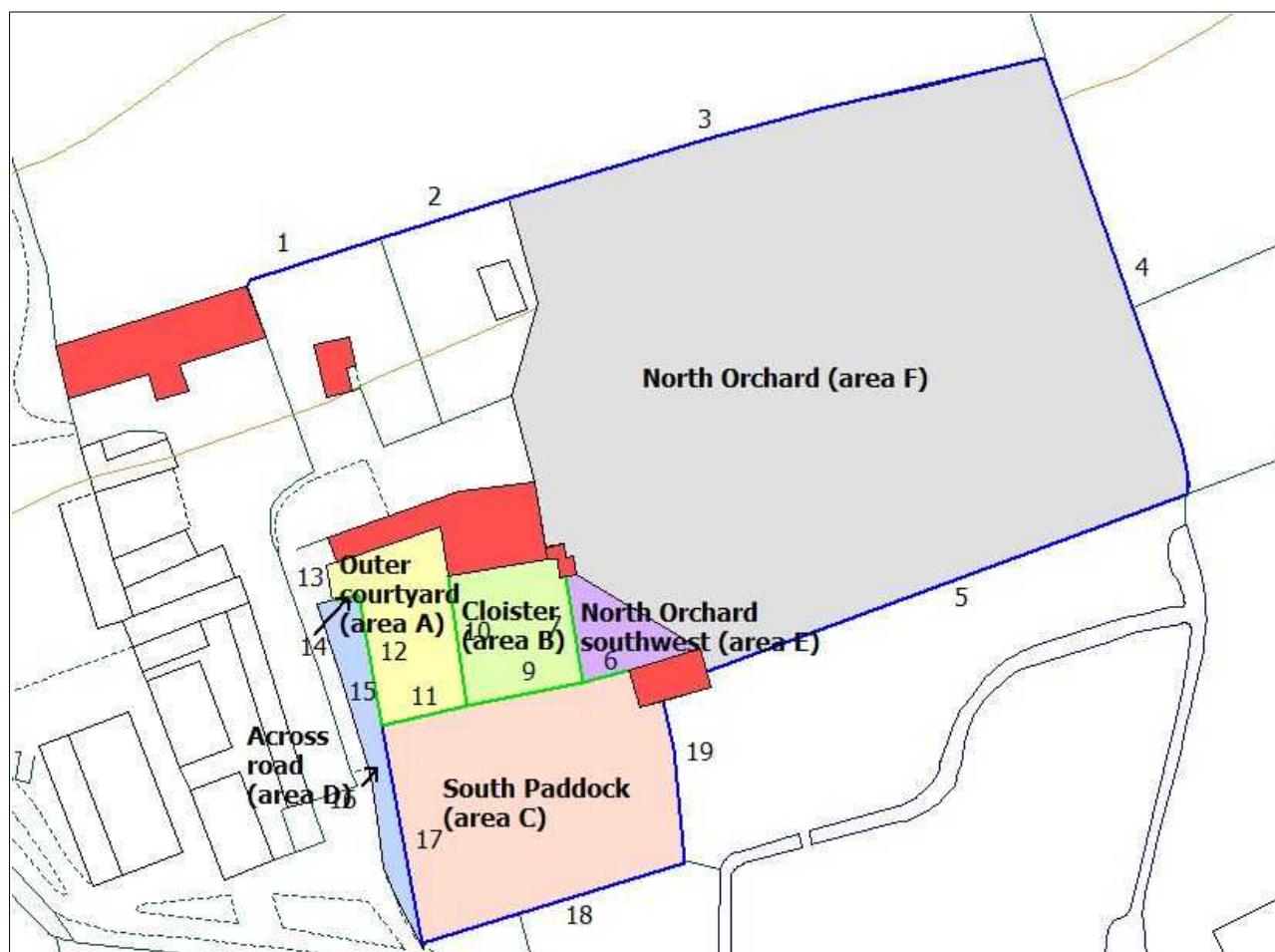


Fig 7: Wall numbering and Areas used in this report

In the above figure, red areas represent roofed buildings of the priory and Woodspring Cottage: other colours represent the areas of works as allocated by Bryant and Beauchamp.

Previous works to walls and structures have been largely unrecorded, although photographic and other evidence is held by Landmark Trust (see Ref above - p6) to works carried out since their acquisition of the site in 1969.

Wall 1 (Fig 8) (Repairs and works mainly during November 2021)

This wall runs from close to the medieval barn NSHER04644 (a gap between the wall and the barn was probably used to access the well between the SE corner of the barn and Woodspring Cottage - in 2021-22, very overgrown and inaccessible) to a junction with the current east boundary wall of Woodspring Cottage.

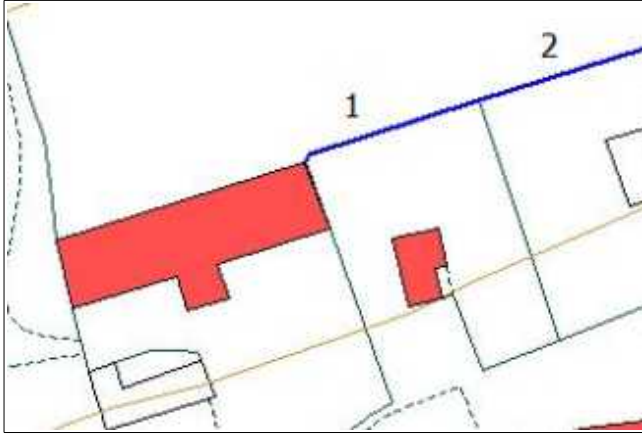


Fig 8: Wall 1, with barn and Woodspring Cottage

The wall is largely of roughly coursed squared blocks of local Carboniferous Limestone, and occasional blue lias, with some repairs in brick. All were set originally in a pale brown ochreous lime-scarce mortar (Munsell 5YR 7/3).

Repeated repointing in later mortars and cements has largely obscured this.

Only one major repair was carried out on this wall: a roughly square area in elevation, approximately 1.8m from the wall's western end. This was cleared and repointed (see Figs 9 and 10 below).



Fig 9: Defect in wall 1, November 2021



Fig 10: Wall defect as repaired November 2021

Wall 2 (Fig 11) (Repairs and works mainly during November 2021)

This wall runs from the junction of wall 1 with the east boundary wall of Woodspring Cottage, to the junction with the boundary wall of area F ('The North Orchard').

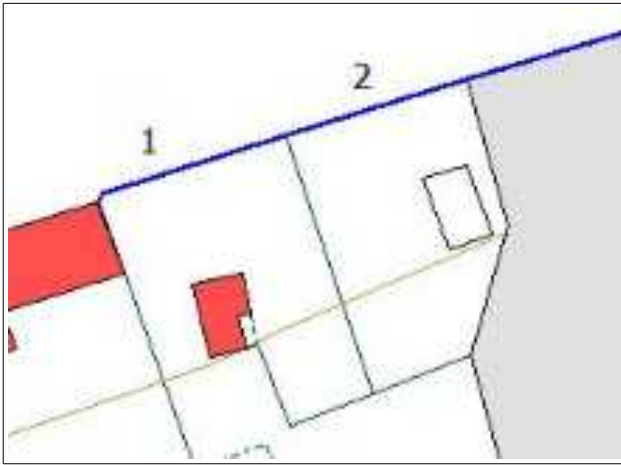


Fig 11: Wall 2 with Woodspring Cottage and disused farm building NE of the priory church

The wall is largely of roughly coursed squared blocks of local Carboniferous Limestone, and occasional blue lias. All were set originally in a pale brown ochreous lime-scarce mortar (Munsell 5YR 7/3), but repeated repointing in later mortars and cements has largely obscured this.

A single defect in this wall was rebuilt and repointed.



Fig 12: Defect in wall 2 (Woodspring Cottage is yellow building)

In addition, a section of wall approximately 1m long was recorded, where a squared freestone block with bevelled edges was laid along the top of the wall and capped with a semi-cylindrical mortar topping (Fig 14 below).



Fig 13: Wall 2 defect as repaired



Fig 14: Unusual block-and-mortar structure in top of wall 2

Wall 3 (Fig 15) (repairs and works mainly during November 2021)

This wall runs from the junction of Wall 2 and the west edge of Area F ('North Orchard') to the east end of the orchard, and a junction with wall 4 (Fig 15) (approximately 100m).

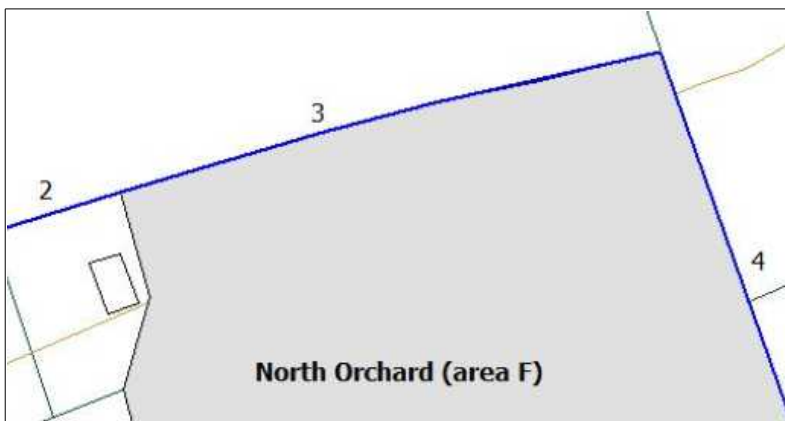


Fig 15: Wall 3 on north side of orchard area F against Sand Hill

The wall is largely of roughly coursed squared blocks of local Carboniferous Limestone, and occasional blue lias.

All were set originally in a pale brown ochreous lime-scarce mortar (Munsell 5YR 7/3).

Repeated repointing in later mortars and cements has largely obscured this.

Defects to wall 3 were largely loss of surface mortars, repaired by repointing: two larger defects (Fig 16 below) also occurred.



Fig 16: Two major defects in wall 3

These were repaired during winter 2021-2022.



Fig 17: Minor defect in wall 3



Fig 18: Minor defect as repaired and repointed November 2021

Wall 4 (Fig 19) (repairs and works mainly during November and December 2021)

This wall comprises the east wall of area F ('North Orchard'), although it appears to be along a historically arbitrary line, and structures can be detected (YCCCART etc) outside and to the east of the wall. It terminates at Wall 3 on its north end, and wall 5 on its south. At its southern end, a gate gives access to and from the fields to the east of the priory.

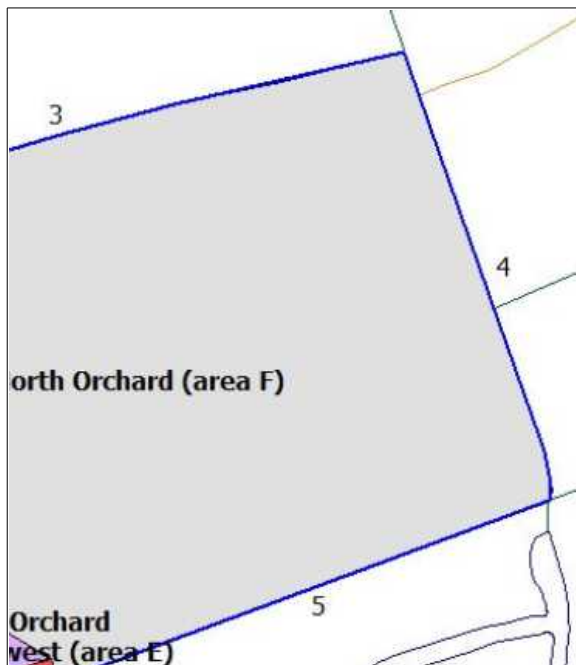


Fig 19: Wall 4 forming the eastern boundary of the orchard (Area F)

The wall is largely of roughly coursed squared blocks of local Carboniferous Limestone, and occasional blue lias.

All were set originally in a pale brown ochreous lime-scarce mortar (Munsell 5YR 7/3), but repeated repointing in later mortars and cements has largely obscured this.

Walls 1-3, 4 and 5 are constructed in the same style, and using an identical mortar, probably indicating that all were built in a single campaign. Their stratigraphic relationships, however, are obscured by later alterations.

A likely origin seems connected with the potential Tudor garden / hospital at the site in the early post-medieval period (see discussion below)

Wall 4 is more complex in current structure than walls 1-3, and fragments of medieval worked freestone were found in its core, their availability for this construction being a further clue to the probable post-Dissolution origins of walls 1-5.

The wall also once extended further north than today: an extension can be seen in the gateway some 15m north of the walls current end (Fig 20). This may relate to a known rearrangement of the field walls around the site between maps of 1768 and 1840 (Figs 40 & 56).

At the southern end of the wall, a series of integral through-steps next to the gate (Fig 21) may imply a way to cross the wall while the gate remained shut, possibly as a means of stock control. These are integral to the original wall.



Fig 20: Gateway in field to north, showing former continuation of wall 4 to north of wall 3



Fig 21: South end of Wall 4, showing through-steps by gate (2011)

A further significant section of wall 4 towards its southern end had been reduced to foundations at an unknown date: air photographs of 1949 (Cambridge University CE003) (Fig 22) show the line as already ragged, but not as reduced as at present. This may be one of several possible alterations during WW2 (such as the new gateway in wall 19 - see below) and perhaps are responses to wartime agricultural conditions.



Fig 22: Wall 4 in 1949: note the northern section appears freshly repaired at that date



Fig 23: Repairs to southern defect of wall 4 north of junction with exterior wall

Two major defects in wall 4 were recorded and corrected in late 2021.

Unfortunately, work began on the collapsed area in Fig 23 before recording began, but in recompense, the area yielded several worked freestone fragments (Fig 24).



Fig 24: Freestone carvings recovered from Wall 4 repair

All carved stones were returned to the wall after recording.

The stones all appear to be late medieval in origin, and their presence (as stated above) is further evidence that the walls were constructed after considerable demolitions had taken place at the priory.



Fig 25: Wall 4 southern defect repaired and repointed

Further north in wall 4, only 8-10m south of its junction with wall 3, an overgrown section of wall proved, when cleared of undergrowth, to have the second defective wall area (Fig 26).

This was repaired, and major repointing to the exterior surface of the wall followed.

A collapse of the centre of the wall (seen in an exterior view in Fig 26 below) was exacerbated by the levels above it having been repointed with hard concrete, leaving them suspended above the collapse.

A second area of collapse (only 3m from the junction with wall 3) was revealed only after extensive overgrowth clearance.

Both areas were repaired (Fig 27 below), and the exterior face of wall 4 extensively repointed (Fig 28 below). Some repointing of the inner face also took place, but owing to the better conditions of this face, this was largely confined to the areas of repair.



Fig 26: Collapse of wall in northern defect of Wall 4 (external view)



Fig 27: Formerly overgrown collapse of wall 4 close to junction with wall 3 under repair



Fig 28: Subsequent repointing of exterior surface of wall 4

Wall 5 (Fig 29) (repairs and works mainly during November and December 2021)

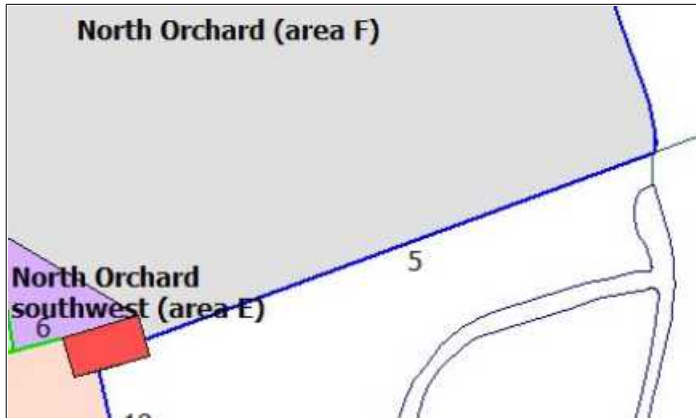


Fig 29: Wall 5, forming the southern boundary of the orchard (area F) from its junction with wall 4, to the (1970s) entrance stile against the infirmary

The wall is largely of roughly coursed squared blocks of local Carboniferous Limestone, and occasional blue lias. Walls 1-3, 4 and 5 are constructed in the same style, and using an identical mortar, probably indicating that all were built in a single campaign.

Their stratigraphic relationships, however, are obscured by later alterations. A likely origin seems connected with the potential Tudor garden / hospital at the site in the early post-medieval period (see discussion below).

Wall 5 was in better condition than walls 1-4, with no major collapses. Apart from a field gate into the orchard, and a recent entrance stile immediately adjacent to the infirmary (and probably dating to the 1970s), there were no openings in the wall, although one or more underdrains were noted taking any excess water from the orchard out into the outer fields.



Fig 30: Typical weathered section of wall 5 (close to junction with wall 4)



Fig 31: Section of wall as seen in Fig 30 (above) after repointing

A few pieces of worked freestone also occur in this wall, and are visible on the surface.



Fig 32: Example of a carved freestone fragment visible in wall 5

Apart from the repair of one very minor collapse, this response to the wall was largely repointing of areas where surface mortars had weathered out.

Some repointing was also carried out around the openings in the wall (Fig 33 below).



Fig 33: Wall 5: repointing of west jamb of field gate between orchard and outer fields

The reason for wall 5's relatively good state of preservation (*vis-a-vis* walls 1-4) is not entirely clear.

Its status as an internal wall (walls 1-4 are very much external) may be significant, but such status has not prevented (say) walls 18 and 19 from significant collapses necessitating repair, and its preferential survival is otherwise unexplained.

Certainly the area seems to have been wetter in the past than at present. As well as the culvert excavated in the 1970s (Tomalin and Crook 2007), a number of constructed gaps at the foot of wall 5 seem designed to drain the orchard of excess water. These are sometimes constructed of re-used medieval stone.

The problem of the 'missing water' is, however, a real one. There was sufficient water at Woodspring (apparently arising from the spring in the orchard, among other places) to feed the reredorter (toilets) of the priory through a fairly sizeable conduit running between the two (Tomalin and Crook 2007).

In addition, there was obviously enough water to furnish two large ponds in the orchard, and presumably to serve the drinking and washing requirements of the canons: where has this water gone?



Fig 34: Drain hole from orchard under wall 5 (one of at least three present)

Wall 6 (Fig 35) (repairs and works mainly during January 2022)

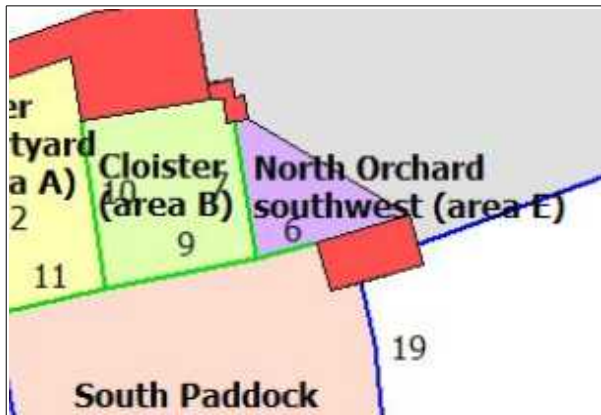


Fig 35: Wall 6, running between the infirmary and the junction of the east cloister wall and south wall 9

This wall is clearly, from its stratigraphic relationships to its surrounds, a different, much less organised structure, also indicated by its absence from the 1768 map of Woodspring (see below), later than others in the vicinity.

Its structure is also compromised by being re-used to support 20th century agricultural buildings (specifically a pig sty recorded in early 20th century post card illustrations -YCCCART 2nd miscellany).

Most of the works to this wall were limited to repointing.



Fig 36: Relationship of wall 6 and the infirmary building

The wall has been constructed against the west gable of the infirmary (Fig 36).

The adjacent structures, however, argue for a fairly complex story.

There are the remains of a stone doorway, and the ragged remains of a removed wall above, at the north-west corner of the building.

These argue for the entrance into a structure north of the current position of wall 6. This has been interpreted as a slype, leading into the east side of the cloister, and what may be remaining walls in 1768 are recorded (Fig 40).

This slype would have run to the south of the reredorter, which still remains as a substantial earthwork, and presumably a closing structure to its south (also implied by the

existence of a gable scar above the west window of the infirmary).

There seems to be no other trace of this structure on the ground, and it is possible that works for the pig sty on the south of the wall before WW1, and the installation of its concrete floor, as seen on 1940s air photographs, may have disrupted, or even destroyed such evidence.

A high-resolution resistivity survey (Russett 2020) clearly revealed the remains of the concrete floor (or its footings), but cast no light on any potential earlier structures.

Wall 6 appears to be of one build with wall 9 (see below), but neither appear to be original priory features. Although not itself early, Wall 6 is obviously earlier than the southern end of wall 7 (see below).



Fig 37: Butt joint of wall 7 (right) against north side of wall 6 (2021)



Fig 38: South side of wall 6, showing re-used freestone block and a socket (possibly two) for insertion of 20th century wooden structural members (2012)



Fig 39: Wall 6 during repointing works, 2022

While the lower part of wall 6 (as seen in Fig 39 above) is regularly coursed, the area above appears irregular, and uses a mortar with coal flecks, generally held to be 19th century in North Somerset.

This agrees with similar features on the north side of the wall, showing that, like the northern end of wall 7, it retains traces of an earlier and lower (although still post-Dissolution) wall, and a more random upper section.

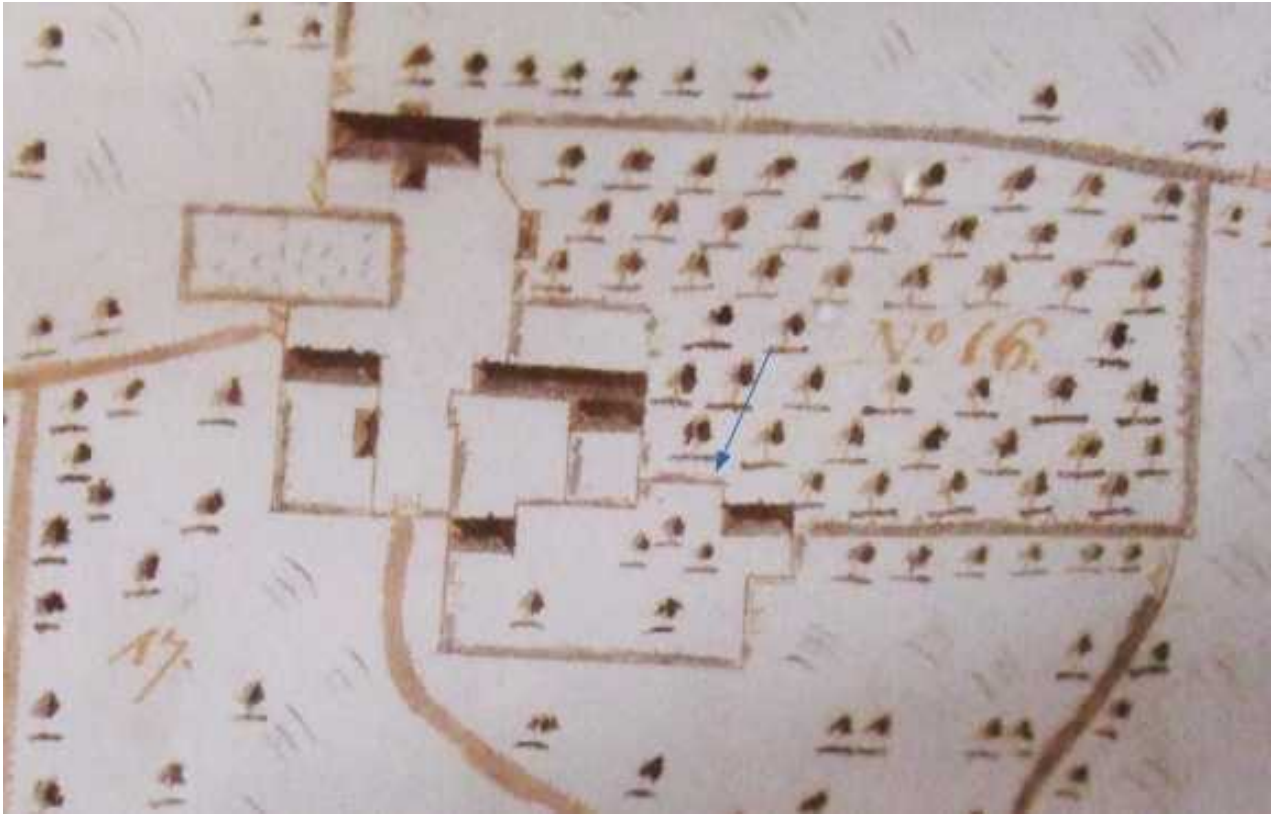


Fig 40: Woodspring map, 1768, showing pre-existing wall pattern before erection of wall 6 (arrowed)

The 1768 map of Woodspring (above) makes it clear that the precursor to wall 6 was some metres to its north (and that a wall was in existence that would encompass the door and the wall scar in Fig 36).

It is possible that these were the original walls of the slype: there are some projecting stones at the foot of wall 7 that might meet this pattern (see below).

By the time of the Tithe Map (1840) a 'new' building was constructed on the line of the present wall 6, and this may have been its origin.

Wall 7 (Fig 41) (repairs and works mainly during August and September 2020, and during 2022)

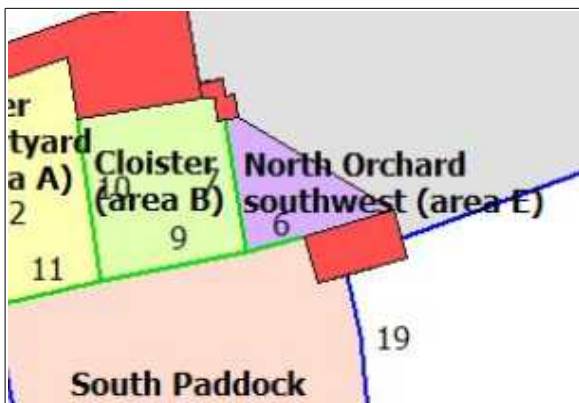


Fig 41: Wall 7 (the 'East Cloister wall') incorporating the Chapter House west wall.

Wall 7, being among the core structures of the priory, has a complex history of additions and repairs, including much that is of post-Dissolution date.

The heterogeneous nature of wall 7 is immediately obvious in photographs of 2013.



Fig 42: Wall 7 from church tower (2013)



Fig 43: South end of wall 7 from church tower (2013)

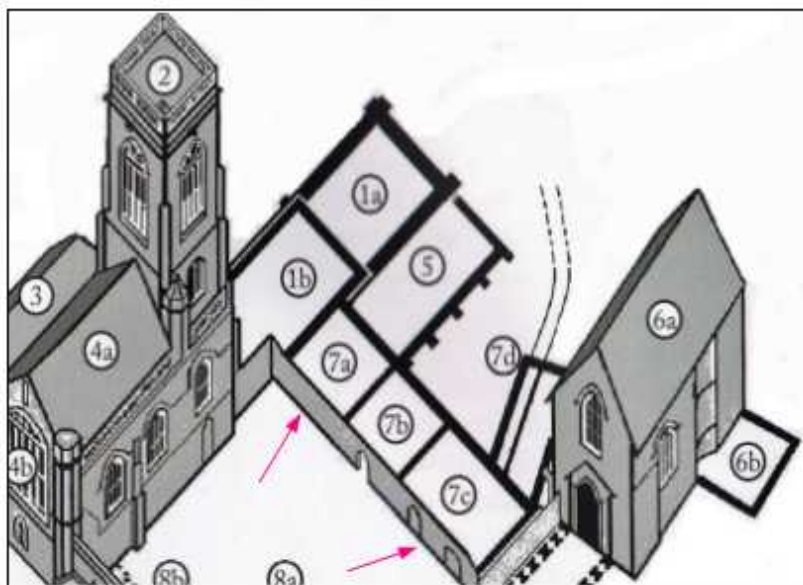


Fig 44: Interpretation of Wall 7 (arrowed) by Tomalin and Crook (2007).

Tomalin and Crook's buildings are interpreted as
 1b & 1a: Chancel
 5: Lady chapel
 7a: Sacristy
 7b: Chapter House
 7c: Parlour
 7d: Reredorter

Some of these structures were visible as cropmarks in 2013:



Fig 45: Structures attached to wall 7, visible from church tower as cropmarks in summer 2013

Doors in wall 7 may have served these rooms.

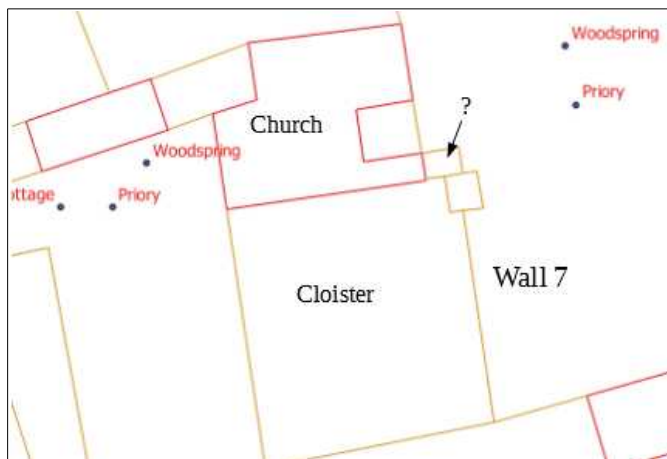


Fig 46: Wall 7 from OS digital data (2009)

It is worth pointing out here that the Ordnance Survey maps of Woodspring Priory are confused, when a sufficient level of detail is reached.

The detail shown in Fig 46 appears to show the church tower as unroofed (something not true since the 1820s).

It also shows an apparently spurious building (Marked '?' in Fig 46). This is not a modern error, but has been in place since at least the 1885 Epoch 1 OS plans. It is possible that a small temporary outbuilding was marked here at some point, but if so, there is no trace of it on the walls or ground in the vicinity.

The second, more southern structure shown corresponds to an unroofed building visible at the northern end of wall 7 today (see Fig 47 below).

This structure is not acknowledged in Tomalin & Crook (2007), unless it is the structure there referred to as 7a: The sacristy. Most sources refer to the sacristy of a church as a room set aside for the storage of vestments and possibly celebration silverware. Such a structure would need to have solid walls and few small openings, for the sake of security.

The structure in Fig 47 has a door into the area that would have been the east walk of the cloister, and is close to the blocked doorway in the former north aisle of the cloister, which should represent a ritual Victorine entrance to activities in the church. Although the structure clearly butts against chancel 1b, defined by Tomalin and Crook as 'the 15th century chancel', it could, of course, have replaced an earlier structure elsewhere.

Otherwise, with its internal plastering, 'lamp niche' and evidence of a possible bench seat, it might be a garden room, relating to the 16th century great house or later farm: this would at least be consistent with its stratigraphic relationship to the chancel. The walls do seem rather solid and thicker than most on the site, but this might simply be due to easy availability of stone.



Fig 47: Thicker-walled structure at the northern end of wall 7, butted against the remaining chancel wall

Immediately south of the above is the section of the east wall repaired in 2020 (YCCCART 2020a), which clearly was built (in possibly two phases) to span the gap between the above structure and the corner of the former chapter house.

At the southern end of wall 7, a section of the wall is not only much thinner in build (see Fig 43 above), but, like the repaired wall described above, has clearly been constructed to make good the gap between the southern end of the medieval section of wall 7, and the later wall 6 (see Fig 37 above).

The southern end of the 'old' section of wall 7 at its terminal, curves in towards the east cloister walk (see Fig 48 below), and the southern section of wall 7 springs from this.

Notable in Fig 48 below is the junction of the 'old' and the 'infill' sections of wall 7, but also a group of stones lower down in the 'old' section which are firmly embedded in wall 7. Despite their initial resemblance to a horse-mounting block, they are too low to serve this function: are these stones the last remaining stump of the north wall of the slype (see Paul map Fig 3 - 1885)? Unfortunately, digging over this area has prevented any clear indications on resistivity surveys (Russett 2020).



Fig 48: Junction of curved terminal to 'old' section of wall 7, and infill wall between it and wall 6

The southern 'infill' wall even has a broken firebrick incorporated into its structure, emphasising its later date.

The central 'old' section of wall 7 has its own complications. While (after Tomalin and Crook) it is accepted that these form the west wall of the former chapter house, and at least part of a possible parlour, the structures to the east of the wall themselves have been dug without adequate publication on at least three occasions, in 1885 (Paul), the

1920s (Major Hill) and 1970s (Tomalin and Crook), so vital evidence is currently not available.

A number of obvious questions arise:

Why has a northern corner to the chapterhouse wall survived, where there is no trace of a southern corner?

Of the two southern blocked openings in the wall, why is the northern visible on both sides of the wall, but the southern only visible from the east? (I am very surprised this has not been commented on before).

Why are all three openings of such different shape and span?



Fig 49: The upper stage of wall 7, clearly later, is thinner than the lower

Wall 7 above the level of the door arches (Fig 49) is clearly of a later construction than the doors and their surrounds.

The three entranceways in wall 7 are all different, with only that to the north including a carved freestone structure, with drop tracery, and dating to around 1300, and thus almost certainly re-used in this context (Tomalin and Crook 2007).

The southern and central apertures have no surviving frames, that to the south being not even evident today on the inner side of the wall.



Fig 50: Northern doorway in wall 7: left from west (2022), right from east c1910

The view into the garden in c1910 shows garden features (a sunken path) no longer visible today. The same door seems to have survived.



Fig 51: Central doorway, wall 7 and three doorways, wall 7 (from east) (2022)



Fig 52: Southern opening to wall 7: (left) from east; (right) from west

Clearly, further work is necessary to resolve some of the questions and issues of this part of the priory complex.