

## WELLS CATHEDRAL: WEST FRONT EXCAVATIONS, 1987-1989

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The enhancement scheme for Wells Cathedral Green, when the old tarmacadam surface was replaced by stone paving, enabled a series of small-scale archaeological excavation and recording works to be implemented. Eight separate trenches or areas were investigated between 1987 and 1989, mostly recording the surfaces which were graded down to receive the new paving slabs but occasionally excavating or recording to a greater depth where new mains services were installed (Fig. 1). Most of the recording was of relatively recent construction layers associated with the 19th-century renovations of the West Front but a number of large postholes were excavated which allowed recording of medieval features and stratigraphy including the disposition of the 12th-century foundation pad for the cathedral. This short note will only detail the medieval features or layers recorded in these works (Fig. 2).

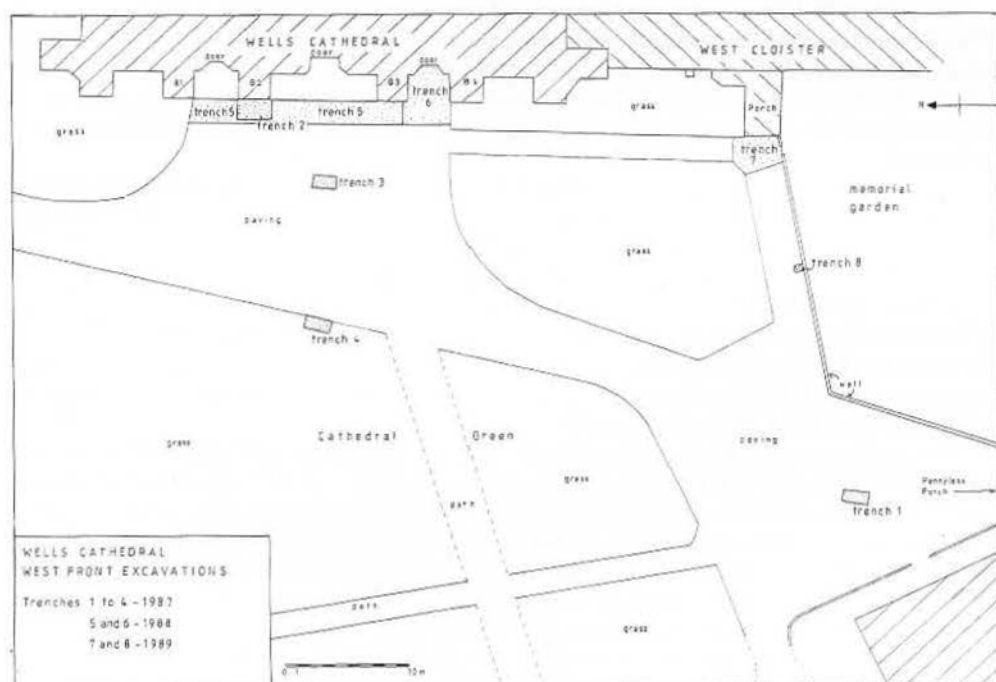


Fig. 1 Trench locations



any stone dust and it is possible that the area north of the wall and south west of the west front was used as a masons' yard during the west front constructions. The stone dust is probably connected with the 13th-century works although it may be associated with the building of the south west tower which started in 1365; it is certainly pre-15th century.

Three large posthole complexes were excavated and recorded in trench 5 – cuts 027, 065 and 088 (Fig. 2). Each of these features had been reused in the 19th century for large wooden scaffolding poles but all contained medieval pottery in their fills. None of the pottery was closely dateable but all appeared to be of the 14th or 15th century. No postholes or pits were seen to belong to the 13th century, but it seems probable that whenever new construction or renovation projects were undertaken on the west front the builder reopened earlier scaffold holes.

The various phases of the west front archaeological works were directed by R.A. Croft, R. Adkins, J. Sampson, E. Dennison, R. Lunnis, and C. and N. Hollinrake. The full archive has been deposited with the Somerset Record Office. The finds have been accessed by the Somerset County Museum, Taunton.

AUTHORS

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