

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT TEMPLECOMBE, 1995

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SUMMARY

An earthwork survey, supplemented by geophysics, north-east of Manor House, Templecombe, has redefined the extent of the former Templar preceptory. The site, of which only fragments of the former chapel survive, is defined by a stone wall lying within tithe-free land. Excavation has confirmed the survival of archaeological features and shown that medieval buildings with tiled floors once occupied the site.

The work formed part of the Channel Four series *Time Team*.

Subsequent small-scale rescue excavations by the South East Somerset Archaeological and Historical Society at a development site in the north-east corner of the preceptory identified robbed stone wall footings from an additional building. They also reassessed the evidence for changes to the road layout in Templecombe following the Dissolution.

INTRODUCTION

Early in 1995 the producers of the Channel Four programme *Time Team* were investigating potential locations for a third series. Following an approach from Mr G. Wilson of Templecombe and discussions with Robert Croft, Somerset County Archaeologist, it was agreed to reexamine the former preceptory of the Knights of the Temple of Solomon, or Templars, which was located in the village. This military order, which had its origins in the Holy Land, was established in the early 12th century with the aim of protecting pilgrims, but soon developed into a fighting force defending Christian interests there. The order was regular and monastic, following a rule based on that of St Benedict, with a General Chapter similar to that of the Cistercians. As well as fighting in the East, the order soon spread to Western Europe, acquiring extensive property to provide wealth and resources for its activities (Forey 1992).

The full extent of the site, its condition and relationship to the present Manor House were unknown. The report argues that the site has been previously mislocated and shows that the preceptory complex lies to the north-east of Manor House.

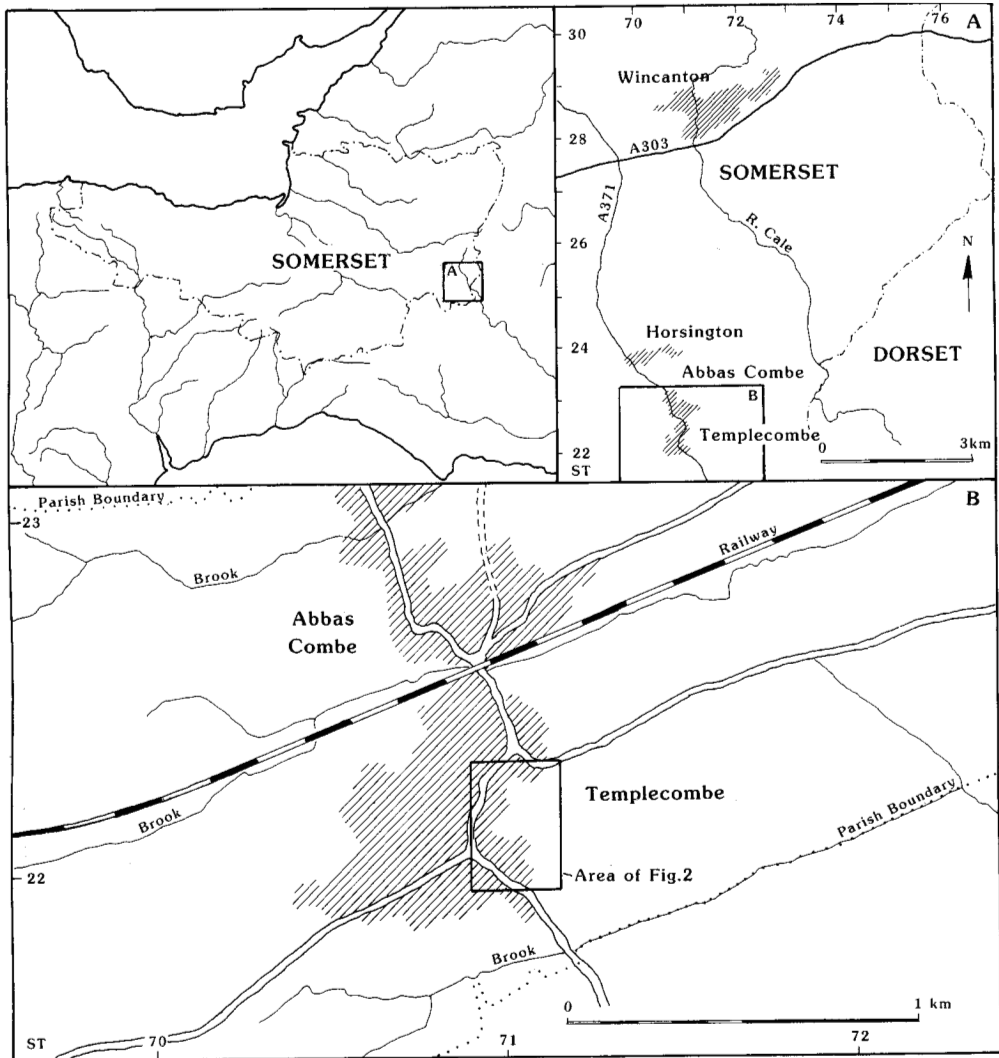


Fig. 1 Site locations

SITE AND LOCATION

The site of the preceptory has been previously associated with Manor House on the south-eastern side of the village of Templecombe, Somerset at ST 709221 (SMR 53469) (Fig. 1). The location occupies a gentle east-facing spur of Cornbrash of the Jurassic series overlooking the Oxford Clay vale (Geological Survey of England Sheet 313) at c. 100m OD. No medieval masonry survives in the 17th-century Manor House, although the northern perimeter wall of Manor Farm, east of Manor House (Fig. 2), retains the lower part of an earlier doorway with moulded jambs. This wall and doorway, which was rebuilt and blocked in the 1960s, is shown on a photograph of 1896 (Weaver 1897) pierced by lancet windows, when it was declared to be the Templar chapel. The chapel stands on an imposing scarp, 2m high, which extends 62m to the east before turning south under the farm and its buildings. The eastern section of this

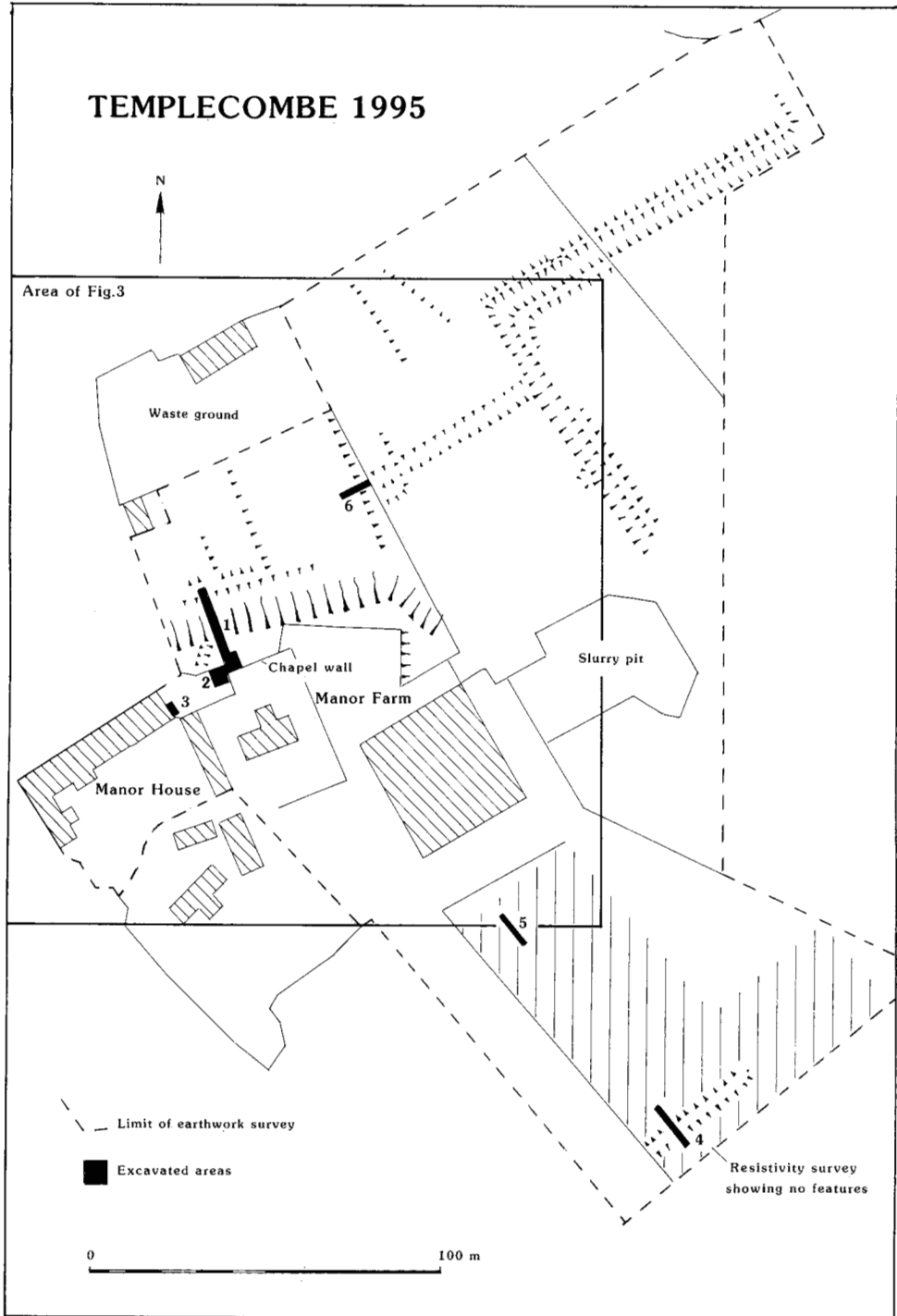


Fig. 2 Site plan showing trench location and earthwork survey

scarp and its return formed part of a depression 40m square which is now occupied by Manor Farm. This feature has been variously described as a fish pond, moated enclosure or 'cockpit' but is probably an ornamental garden associated with Manor House.

Paddocks to the north of the chapel which slope down from the scarp were formerly orchards and contain a network of slight earthworks, including further probable fishponds.

DOCUMENTARY BACKGROUND

In 1066 an estate at Combe, later known as Temple Combe, was held by Earl Leofwin (d. 1066) and, at the time of the Domesday survey, by Bishop Odo of Bayeux and his tenant Samson, bishop of Worcester from 1096 (VCH Somerset, 1, 445; *ibid.* 7, 76–86; *DNB*).

The Order of Templars, founded in 1118, had been established in England by 1128 (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 290). In 1185 the Templars held an estate at Combe, which was possibly Temple Combe but may have been West Combland in Buckland St Mary (Dugdale, Mon. vi. 801). Templars were certainly resident at Temple Combe by 1240 when it was recorded that members of the order had been buried in Bruton priory (*SRS* 8, 62). Among those arrested and examined on the orders of Edward II in 1308 was William Raven who was received into the order at Temple Combe before transferring to Cambridge. The preceptor and two brethren from Temple Combe were held in custody in Sherborne castle. The order was suppressed in 1312 and its estates confiscated (Wilkins 1737, 334, 340–1, 346–7; Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 290, 295; PRO, E 142/111).

The manor of Temple Combe, valued at £26 12s. 6d. in 1308 (PRO, E 142/111) was farmed out until 1332 when it was given to the Hospitallers who retained it until their dissolution in 1540 (*Cal. Mem. R.* 1326–7, 347; *Cal. Pat.* 1327–30, 88; 1330–34, 130; *Cal. Close*, 1330–3, 514). In 1388 the manor comprised a house, two dovecots, 488 acres of arable, sterile and meadow land and pasture for 45 cattle and 200 ewes. The house was occupied by a preceptor and two brothers with their servants (Larking 1855–6, 183–6). A large part of the estate was farmed out by 1392 (PRO, C 143/412, no. 34) and the whole by the early 16th century. In 1514 the commandery, comprising chapel, hall, great parlour with chamber over, pantry, brewhouse, bolting house, kitchen, wheat larder, dairy, new chamber with a chamber within it, little parlour with chamber over, yeoman chamber, milk house and study, was let with husbandry tools, pigs, geese, ducks, and peafowl (PRO, E 326/9056). In 1540 the manor was valued at £19 10s 7d when it passed to the Crown (PRO, SC 6/Hen VIII/7262). It eventually came into the hands of Richard Duke (d. 1572) and he and his successors seem to have been resident until 1632, thereafter the site was occupied as a farmstead (*SRS* 15, 163; *SRS* 67, xix; *SRS* 69, 47; *Som. Wills* (ed. Brown), 1, 4; *ibid.* 6, 75). The chapel continued in private use until the early 18th century (*SDNQ* 4, 126; *SANH* 112, 74) although a parishioner was buried there in 1621 (SRO, D/P temp 2/1/1).

METHODS

The project set out to define the limits of the preceptory and locate any internal structures using a combination of earthwork and geophysical surveys. These surveys were centred on Manor Farm but included the previously unrecorded earthworks and associated features north of the chapel. Exploratory trenching was then used to establish the state of preservation of any anomalies and provide corroborative dating and phasing evidence of the preceptory.

A standing building survey of the Manor House, Templecombe, was also undertaken to supplement an existing record compiled in 1983 by Williams and Penoyre (SMR archive

report). This survey was supported by a programme of dendrochronology to date phases of construction or repair of Manor House and establish the relationship of the house with the preceptory.

This report summarises the results of the archaeological investigations of the project, incorporating data from the geophysical report (GSB 1995). Full details are retained in the archive deposited with the finds in Taunton Museum (Accn no. TTNCM16/1996). The results of the standing building and dendrochronology surveys are contained in separate reports (Morley 1995; Howard 1995) which are retained in archive and will be published separately.

RESULTS

Earthwork and geophysical surveys

The complex of features north of the chapel (Figs 2 and 3) lies partly within an intermittent stone wall enclosing an area approximately 130m north–south by 70m east–west (0.91ha). Significantly this area is shown on the Tithe Apportionment Map of 1839 (Fig. 4) to have been tithe free which suggests that it may have had monastic attributes and may represent the extent of the preceptory. The wall has been rebuilt on the west where it runs adjacent to the line of the former main road through Templecombe. Its line on the south has been largely destroyed by Manor Farm although a short rebuilt section south of the farmhouse may perpetuate the line. The north side is fossilised by a garden wall in the north-east corner but has otherwise been destroyed by former industrial premises. The east side, although partially collapsed, survives as a narrow, high stone wall, approximately 32m long. Its continuation towards Manor Farm, visible as a slight east-facing scarp, was detected by geophysics and a former occupier could recall its demolition.

The earthworks are visible within the southern half of this enclosed area (Fig. 2), the northern part now being overgrown waste ground. Flanking the scarp a shallow ditch-like earthwork, 6m across, with traces of a slight intermittent bank on the north side runs approximately east–west. In the south-west corner of the survey area a short, narrow linear depression leads to a modern gate. This depression has the appearances of a wear-line, however it also coincides with an h-shaped walled structure identified by geophysics. These features were investigated in Trench 1. A pair of parallel earthworks, one of which projects the approximate line of the east gable of the chapel to the north beyond the scarp, maintain the symmetry of the enclosure.

The geophysics within this area (Fig. 3) also revealed probable structural walls, including the eastern boundary wall, represented by linear high-resistance readings symmetrical with the earthworks. These alignments were apparent despite fluctuations in the background resistivity caused by topographic and geological variations. Other high-resistance responses, particularly along the western and southern edges of the survey area, including the area of the chapel, suggested rubble or accumulations of archaeological deposits. This was confirmed by excavation. A damp area, evident as low-resistance readings, may represent a pond.

A number of additional earthworks perpetuate these alignments beyond the walled area to the north and north-east. A slight ditch, which is apparently overlain at its west end by a small earthwork platform extends north-east away from the walled enclosure towards a substantial L-shaped, double-banked ditch or trackway. This feature, *c.* 170m in length and *c.* 4.5m wide and 0.5m deep, has a flat-topped bank, 5m wide, on the south and east sides and a slightly narrower bank to the north. Geophysical survey identified a line of high resistance, interpreted as a wall, approximately coincident with the west side of this earthwork and low-resistance readings within the slight ditch which probably indicate modern drains.

A similar survey in paddocks south of the farm produced no significant anomalies, which suggests that this area lies beyond the southern limit of the preceptory.

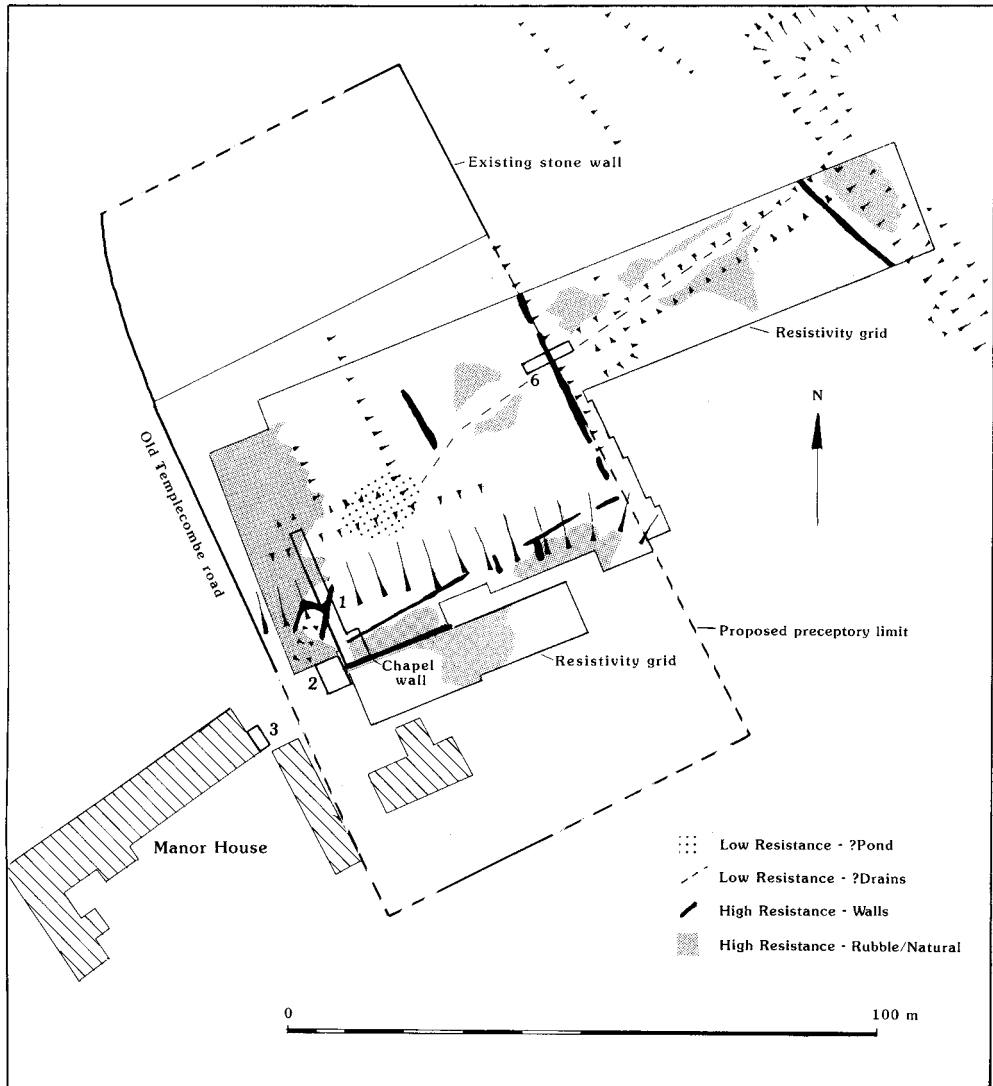


Fig. 3 Plan showing geophysics results and extent of preceptory

Excavation

Six trenches (Fig. 2) were excavated using a JCB excavator fitted with a 1.5m bucket to remove overburden until undisturbed archaeological deposits were reached. Trenches were then cleaned and all subsequent excavation undertaken by hand.

TRENCH 1

This trench (Figs 5 and 6) measured 23.8m long and 1.5m wide from the north door of the chapel wall southwards across areas of high resistance, including the h-shaped anomaly, to the shallow ditch recorded in the earthwork survey. The south end of the trench was later widened to 3m.

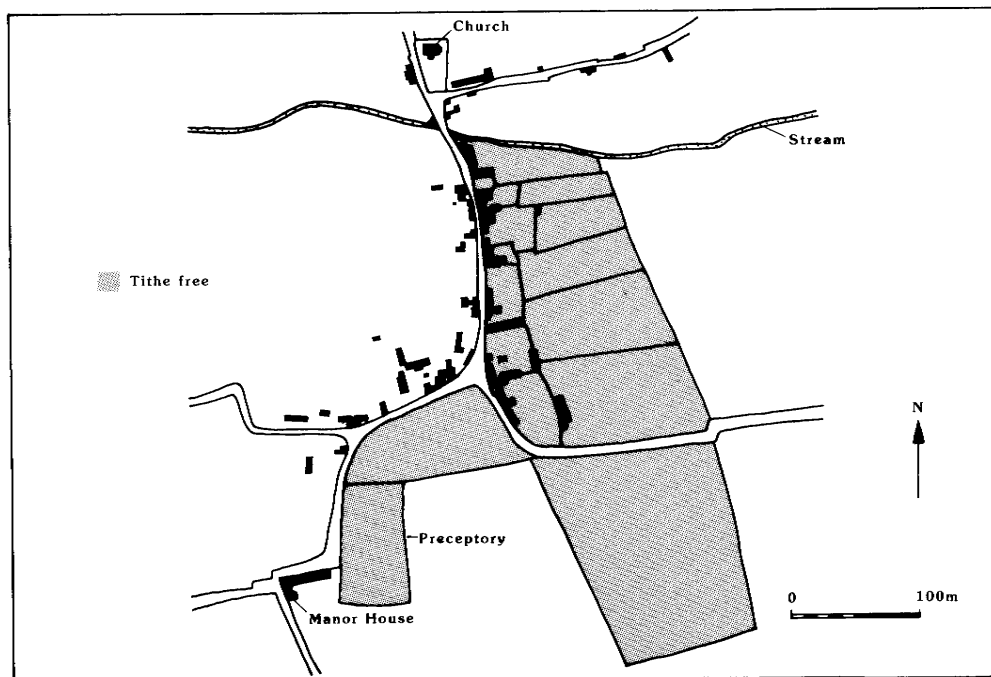


Fig. 4 Detail from the Tithe Apportionment map of 1839

Early medieval activity was indicated by two fragments of pottery, in an irregular oval pit (122), measuring 2.20m long, 1.10m wide and 0.25m deep, at the north end of the trench. It was cut with steeply sloping, rounded sides and an irregular base and was filled with mid grey-brown loamy clay (107).

There is no convincing evidence for the existence of wooden buildings before the construction of the main chapel wall (120) (Fig. 7). The original stonework survives to a height of approximately 0.50m for most of its recorded section and comprises seven courses of uncut mortared limestone slabs. However at its junction with wall 121 it survives to a height of 1.60m in 27 courses. It is pierced by a doorway, 1.04m wide, framed by chamfered ashlar jambs and a chamfered cill. It is likely that the wall was constructed directly onto the bedrock surface without a foundation trench.

Approximately 10.5m north of the doorway a stone-lined pit or trough (125) projected from the western section. The base sloped to the north and was formed by a single large limestone slab. The lining of thin, coursed, unshaped limestone slabs formed a sub-rectangular cistern over 1m long from east-west, 0.90m north-south and 0.50m deep. A stone roof tile in the construction suggests that it was not part of the initial development of the site. The feature was apparently deliberately backfilled with limestone slabs and rubble, up to 0.30m across (117), much of it placed on edge and set in a grey-brown clay loam matrix. This material contained a single medieval sherd but may be contemporary with the large scale post-medieval demolition phase (108).

At an unspecified date, probably in the 15th century, extensions were added to the north wall of the chapel. Wall 121 is of a similar construction to wall 120 to which it is butted. It has a progressively stepped foundation and extends 1.80m to the north before turning west. A second wall (109) was also added which is aligned north-west to south-east before turning to run north-south. It is constructed of two limestone faces, 0.78m apart, with a rubble core. The

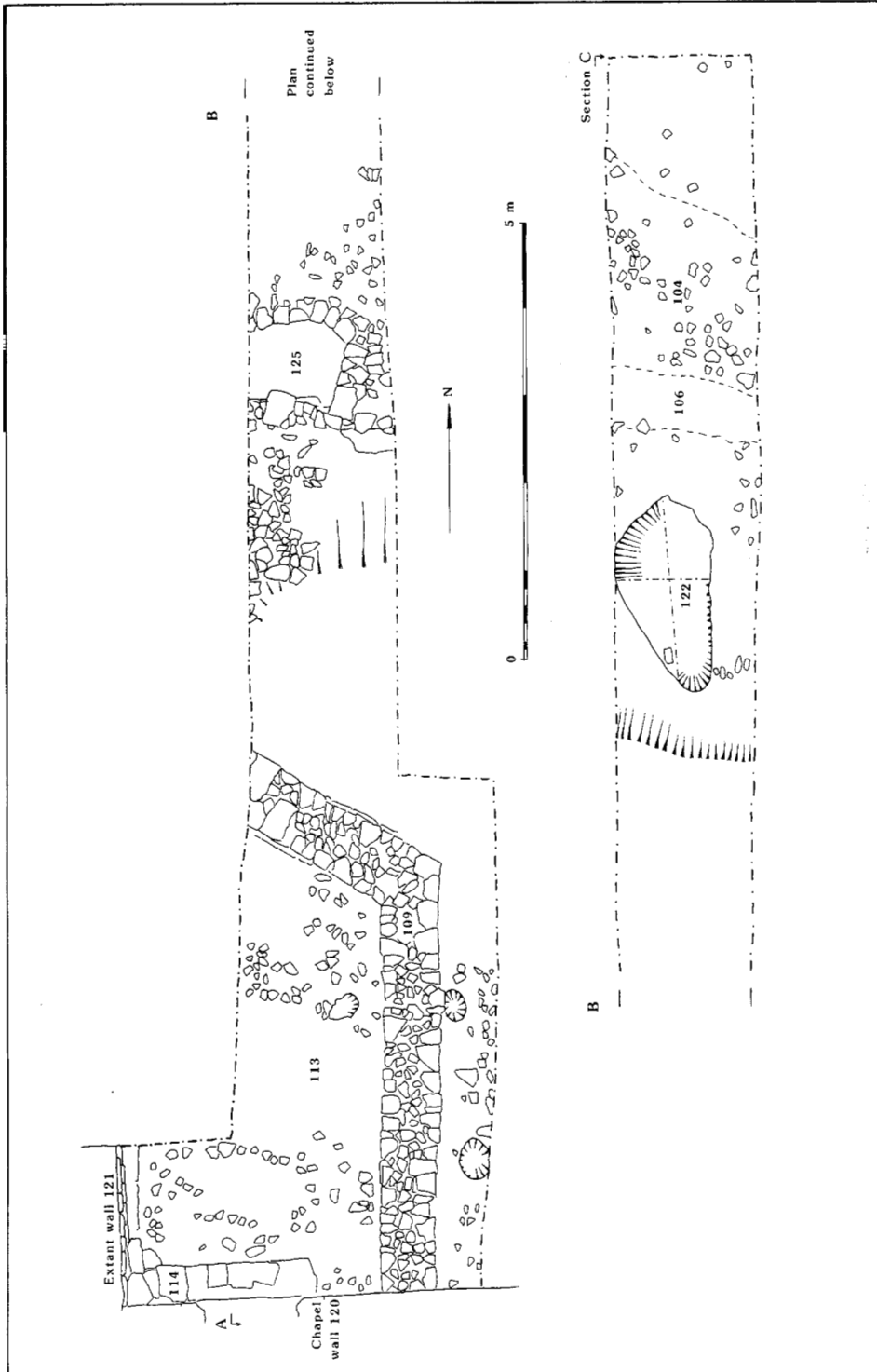


Fig. 5 Plan showing excavated features in Trench 1

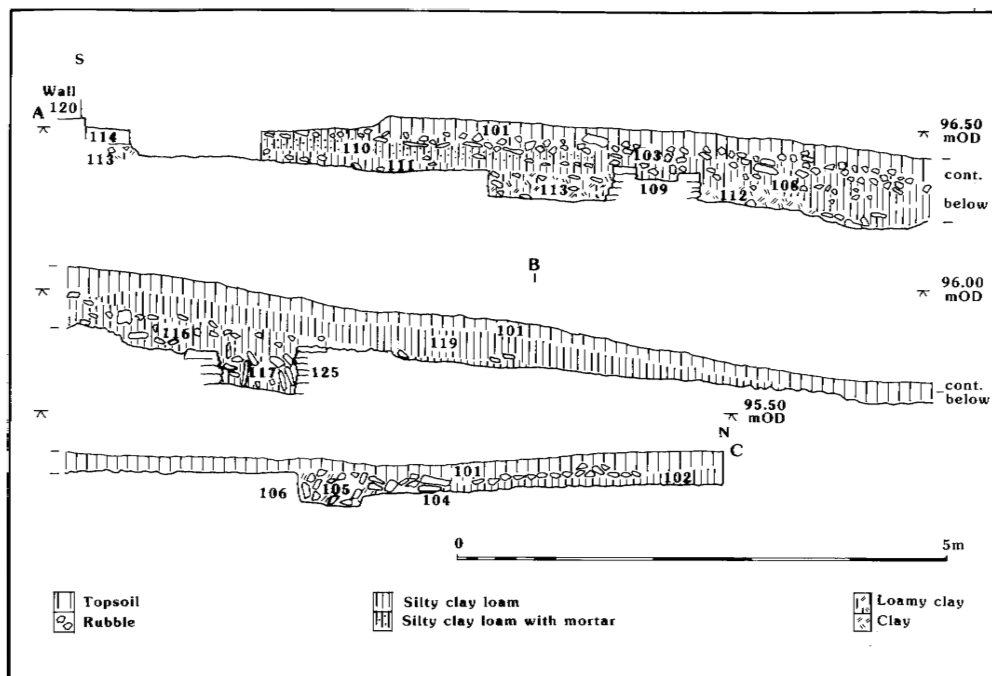


Fig. 6 West section along Trench 1

foundation courses are also stepped at the base. The area defined by wall 109 was infilled with limestone rubble in a pale brown gritty clay loam with mortar flecks (113) apparently as a levelling horizon for a floor. It extends to both wall 120 and 121 although the precise relationship with the latter is unclear. Pottery within this make-up suggests that this occurred not later than the 15th century, during the occupation by the Hospitallers. This foundation base carried a floor of limestone slabs (114) of which only a small remnant in the angle of walls 120 and 121 survives. Two large pieces, up to 0.15m thick, immediately north of the chapel door may represent an earlier threshold predating wall 109 which has been incorporated within floor 114.

The entire sequence is overlain by a series of limestone rubble layers with roof and floor tile fragments which relate to the demolition of wall 109 and the subsequent abandonment of the site. Much of the floor tile is medieval in date, however it is accompanied by large quantities of post-medieval pottery. This may be related to the construction of the present Manor House.

A surface of limestone fragments (104) at the north end of the trench suggests that the shallow ditch, visible as an earthwork, represents a holloway, possibly associated with the preceptory. It runs parallel to a post-medieval stone-lined land drain (106). None of the excavated features can be directly related to the h-shaped anomaly.

TRENCH 2

This trench measuring approximately 4m by 4m was excavated to establish whether the line of the north wall of the chapel could be traced beyond its intersection with wall 121 of Trench 1.

The excavation of a sondage, within the trench, revealed pale yellow brown clay and limestone bedrock into which a flat-bottomed feature (213) with vertical sides, 0.3m deep, had been cut. Its extent was not established but it was filled with red brown silty clay (212). There was no continuation of the chapel wall.

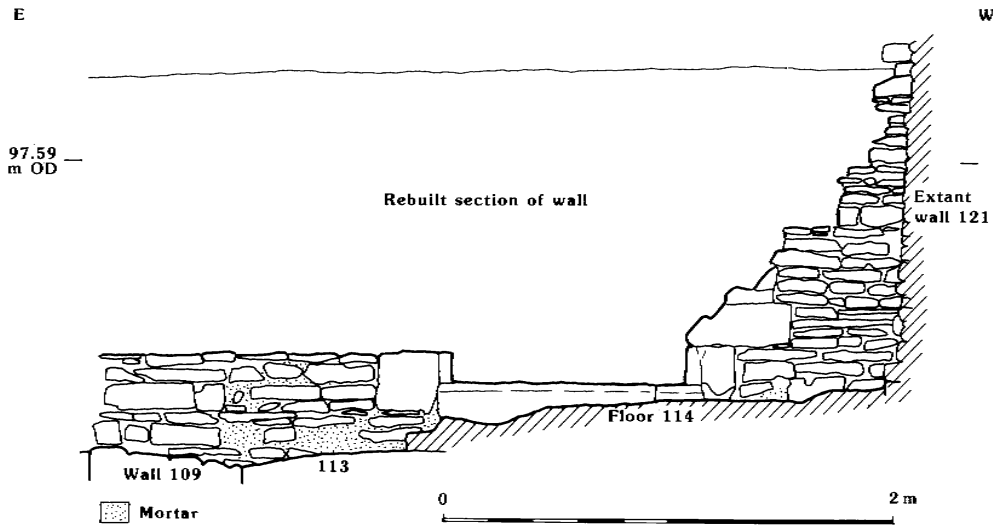


Fig. 7 Elevation of chapel doorway and wall showing original stonework

Most of the trench comprised made up ground, 0.50m thick above the natural bedrock. The upper surface was capped by a floor of cobbles (205) and pitched limestone fragments (209) of a thatched post-medieval outbuilding shown on a photograph of 1896 (Weaver 1897). These floors ran to a blocked doorway in wall 121 with a rough stone threshold and to a rectangular mortared limestone block (207), 1.40m long by 0.60m wide, in the central area of the building. The base of a small internal drystone wall (206) extended from this central structure to the east.

The entire sequence was capped by 0.50m of garden soil.

TRENCH 3

This hand-excavated trench was located along the east wall of the main east range of the Manor House and was 4m long. It aimed to examine whether the present structure, dated by dendrochronology to 1615–20 (Howard 1995), lay on earlier Templar foundations. The excavation revealed a pitched limestone slab floor (303) of post-medieval date leading to a series of robbed-out steps to a subterranean structure or cellar. The pitched limestone floor appeared to be cut by a limestone drain (305) which ran below the east wall of the manor range. Inspection of the interior of the range showed that only half a bay is represented at this end of the building, indicating that it had been shortened since its construction (B. Morley, pers. comm.).

TRENCH 4

A machine-excavated trench, measuring 14m long, was dug across an extant linear bank and ditch 135m south of the preceptory site to ascertain its date and function. The ditch (408), on the southern side of the bank, measured 2.5m across and was excavated 0.6m deep to a modern ceramic field drain. The ditch fill of red-brown silty clay (407) was sealed by a buried turf line (403), up to 0.20m thick. A thin layer of dark red-brown silty clay loam (402) lay immediately below the modern topsoil.

The bank, constructed from the ditch upcast, was 5m across and 0.4m high. It was composed of orange-brown clay (409) with partially oxidised grey clay with fossil shell fragments (406)

on the southern side. Root fragments suggest that it was once hedged. There were no finds.

TRENCH 5

This trench was also machine excavated north–south across a shallow depression in the field surface 65m south of the preceptory. It measured 11m long and was dug 0.5m deep to the natural clay. There were no features apart from a post-medieval land drain.

TRENCH 6

The foundations of the eastern wall of the enclosure were examined by a trench 9m long where it had been identified by geophysics. This line marks the boundary of the tithe-free land and is therefore likely to be the precinct boundary. It confirmed that the wall was of drystone construction, 0.80m across, and built of limestone slabs with a rubble core. The basal three courses were laid directly on the natural subsoil and were overlain by a dark grey-brown clay loam topsoil, 0.25m deep. The subsoil horizons on both sides contained heavily abraded medieval pottery.

THE FINDS

The total number of finds from each context is shown in Table 1.

The pottery by Lorraine Mepham

A total of 229 sherds (3445g) recovered from Templecombe was examined. This small assemblage dates largely to the medieval and post-medieval periods, with a single sherd of Romano-British date. A chronological breakdown of the pottery by context is given in Table 2.

ROMANO-BRITISH

A single sherd of Romano-British coarseware came from the topsoil in Trench 1. This sherd is not closely datable within the Romano-British period.

MEDIEVAL

Approximately one quarter of the total assemblage by weight is dated to the medieval period, and this can be subdivided into two chronological groups. The earliest material consists of 47 sherds, generally small and abraded, in a variety of coarse fabrics, some sandy, some tempered with flint and/or crushed limestone. Few diagnostic sherds are present, but this group seems largely to represent coarse, utilitarian vessels such as jars for storage or cooking purposes, although at least one glazed jug or pitcher form was distinguished. This small group of sherds finds parallels in larger medieval assemblages from sites such as Sherborne and Ilchester (Harrison and Williams 1979; Pearson 1982); within the local area several smaller comparable groups, although none well-dated, are known from the Dorset/Somerset border area between Sherborne and Shaftesbury (e.g. Ellison and Pearson 1978; Ross 1985; Newman *et al.* forthcoming; Mepham 1992). A number of different sources for the pottery are likely to be represented. Scratchmarked sandy wares, of a type comparable to material from the Laverstock kilns outside Salisbury (Musty *et al.* 1969), have been recognised in very small quantities; other potential sources are the Yeo valley around Ilchester, and the putative medieval production centre at Crockerton in west Wiltshire. A general date range of late 12th to 13th century may be suggested for this small group.

Table 1 All finds by context. Key: 1 Pottery (number/weight); 2 Floor tile (number); 3 Roof tile (number); 4 Animal bone (number); 5 Oyster shell (number); 6 Others (listed)

Context	Description	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Trench 1</i>							
101	Topsoil/overburden	82/1887	30	129	46	–	7 glass
102	Base of topsoil	5/54	–	–	1	–	–
103	Rubble spread	6/36	3	8	26	6	3 nails
107	Fill of hollow	2/8	–	–	2	–	–
108	Base of 103	47/544	29	87	63	11	3 nails
110	Demolition	7/86	2	5	1	–	–
111	Base of 103	6/46	9	15	–	–	–
112	Rubble	8/48	1	–	7	3	2 stone slates, 1 nail
113	Infill inside wall 109	17/200	5	15	12	3	3 nails
115	? Demolition of wall 109	2/74	1	–	2	–	1 stone slate
116	? Demolition of wall 109	2/16	–	2	6	–	–
117	Deliberate backfill	1/4	–	–	–	–	–
118	Weathered natural	6/70	–	1	–	–	–
<i>Trench 2</i>							
201	Topsoil	7/176	–	19	–	–	–
202	Clearance	6/56	1	8	18	11	–
203		–	–	–	17	–	–
204	Make-up	8/66	2	12	82	25	–
205		–	–	–	4	–	–
210		–	–	1	7	–	–
211	Make-up	3/16	–	–	7	–	–
212		–	–	–	1	–	–
<i>Trench 3</i>							
301	Clearance	2/6	–	7	4	–	–
302	Modern infill	1/10	–	–	–	2	–
<i>Trench 6</i>							
601	Topsoil/clearance	11/42	–	–	7	2	–
<i>Totals</i>		229/3445	83	309	313	63	20

The remaining medieval material (45 sherds) is of different character and appears to be slightly later in date. This consists of sherds in finer sandy fabrics, nearly all oxidised, some partially glazed. Similar sandy wares are widespread across west Dorset and beyond, and were probably manufactured at several centres, amongst them the kilns at Donyatt in Somerset (Coleman-Smith and Pearson 1988). A date range of 14th to 15th century is likely for these wares.

POST-MEDIEVAL AND MODERN

Approximately three-quarters of the total assemblage by weight may be dated to the post-medieval or modern periods, and this was again concentrated in Trench 1, mainly from the topsoil and underlying demolition layers. The majority of this comprises sherds of coarse red earthenwares, generally glazed. These represent the ubiquitous utilitarian domestic wares of the post-medieval period, and have a wide date range, although the relative absence here of the pale-firing earthenwares of Verwood type from the Dorset/Hampshire border industry, which swamped the market from the 18th century, might indicate that their date range falls generally within the 16th and 17th centuries. Templecombe is situated roughly halfway between two known sources of redwares – Donyatt in Somerset and Crockerton in west Wiltshire, and is likely to have received products of both centres.

Table 2 Chronological breakdown of the pottery by context

Context	Description	R-B	Medieval	Late-medieval	Post-medieval	Modern	Total
<i>Trench 1</i>							
101	Topsoil/overburden	1/4	–	7/142	68/1655	6/86	82/1887
102	Base of topsoil	–	3/22	–	2/32	–	5/54
103	Rubble spread	–	1/4	2/12	3/20	–	6/36
107	Fill of hollow	–	2/8	–	–	–	2/8
108	Base of 103	–	7/40	11/104	29/400	–	47/544
110	Demolition	–	1/2	2/40	4/44	–	7/86
111	Base of 103	–	1/2	5/44	–	–	6/46
112	Rubble layer	–	4/14	4/34	–	–	8/48
113	Infill at base of wall 109	–	5/118	12/82	–	–	17/200
115	?Demolition of wall 109	–	–	–	2/74	–	2/74
116	?Demolition of wall 109	–	1/4	1/12	–	–	2/16
117	Deliberate backfill	–	1/4	–	–	–	1/4
118	Weathered natural	–	6/70	–	–	–	6/70
<i>Trench 2</i>							
201	Topsoil	–	1/36	–	5/134	1/6	7/176
202	Clearance	–	–	–	5/52	1/4	6/56
204	Levelling/make-up	–	–	–	7/60	1/6	8/66
211	Levelling/make-up	–	3/16	–	–	–	3/16
<i>Trench 3</i>							
301	Clearance	–	–	–	2/6	–	2/6
302	Modern infill	–	–	1/10	–	–	1/10
<i>Trench 6</i>							
601	Topsoil/clearance	–	11/42	–	–	–	11/42
	<i>Totals</i>	1/4	47/382	45/480	127/2477	9/102	229/3445

Contemporary with these local wares are German stoneware jugs of Raeren and Cologne/Frechen type, and one deep hook-rimmed bowl in North Italian polychrome marbled slipware. The latter is an unusual find in a rural location such as Templecombe; it is known in contexts of the first half of the 17th century from upwards of 50 sites in England, but generally occurs on coastal sites and larger urban centres (Hurst *et al.* 1986, 33–7). One other example, a bowl of identical form, is known from Old Wardour Castle in south-west Wiltshire (Hurst 1967, fig. 4, no. 8).

Other less common wares amongst the post-medieval group are the base of a tinglazed earthenware ointment pot of 18th-century type, probably of British origin (1 sherd), and white saltglaze, an English stoneware of 18th-century date (1 sherd).

Modern wares, in the form of fine whitewares and stonewares, and redware flowerpot, are present in much smaller quantities, and occurred only in topsoil, clearance and make-up layers in Trenches 1 and 2.

DISTRIBUTION

The overwhelming majority of the pottery derived from contexts in Trench 1 (191 sherds out of the total of 229), and this included sherds covering the whole of the medieval to modern date range represented, as well as the single Romano-British sherd. Of this early medieval (12th to 13th century) material, 32 sherds out of the total of 47 came from Trench 1, where it occurred in small quantities in a number of contexts, in nearly every case mixed with later material, although some contexts towards the base of the stratigraphic sequence produced

only early medieval sherds, as did one context in Trench 2 (see Table 2). Trench 6 produced only medieval pottery, but this was derived from a topsoil context.

Later medieval sherds (14th to 15th century) came almost exclusively from contexts in Trench 1 and, like the earlier material, occurred in a number of contexts in relatively small quantities. Post-medieval sherds, again concentrated in Trench 1, derived mainly from topsoil and underlying demolition layers. Closely datable types amongst the post-medieval assemblage, in the form of the German stonewares and Italian slipware, would indicate a date range for the bulk of the Trench 1 material within the 16th and 17th centuries, and this is supported by the scarcity of Verwood-type earthenwares. There are just a handful of sherds which can be definitely dated to the 18th century or later (white saltglaze, modern stonewares and fine whitewares), and these all came from the topsoil.

The medieval floor tile E. Murphy

GENERAL

No *in situ* pavement or unbroken floor tiles were found but 83 fragments of square and border tile were found in the present excavations. These are of red clay with very few inclusions, mostly heavily worn and of typical Wessex style, green or yellow glazed with white slip-inlaid design (where recognisable). A few have been glazed over a plain white slip.

DESCRIPTION

The majority of the square tiles would have been between 140 and 150mm square and on average 20mm thick when complete, one exception being the larger version representing the Arms of Ferrers (Emden 1977, no. 157), and possibly one thought to represent the Arms of Clare. Other large fragments comprise part of a square tile with the Catherine wheel design (*ibid*, ill. 114) from context 111, measuring <140 x <120 x 21 mm and a side piece of Emden (*ibid*) design no. 100 or similar (<143 x <84 x 20mm). The border tiles fragments are dark green without pattern and between 48 and 50mm wide.

One worn 20mm thick tile, triangular cut, from context 101, has a peg or stab hole in the back, 10mm in diameter and c.10mm deep, apparently made with an implement, probably to hold it in place. This feature is not repeated in any of the other tiles, nor was it possible to establish whether this was a random feature or one of several such holes, as used by the Hailes Abbey tilers of the period to facilitate drying (Eames 1992, 51). There was no evidence of nail holes in the top surface, as found on some imports from the Low Countries (Keen 1980).

On the back of most fragments of sufficient size, keys are positioned which suggest a pattern of four or five to a square. Some of the border tiles also have keys in the back that were seemingly scooped out along the length of a longer slab, from which the tiles were broken off.

DESIGNS

Examples of approximately ten known Wessex designs were recognised. These included the arms of Brian, probably Clare, Ferrers and Wyvill. Using the Emden (1977) numbering, overall the following designs are represented: E.100, 109, 114, 115, 129, 130, 135, 140, 157, 217 in addition to plain coloured and border tiles.

Further details of all fragments are available in the archive.

DATING

Tiles of this type were current in the late 13th to mid 14th centuries. No attempt has been made to date these examples closely from design, since tilers reused stamps and copies by other tilers were frequently used throughout the Wessex region over an extended period, many of them based on the 13th-century Clarendon series. In certain cases, such as some heraldic

designs, an earliest design can be given on historic evidence, as in that of the Arms of Robert Wyvill, Bishop of Salisbury from 1330–1375.

SUMMARY

The spread and broken nature of the floor tile is such that it would seem difficult to establish with any certainty the location of any pavement or pavements to which the various examples belong. However, with the variety of designs present, including both heraldic and other less common patterns, such as E.114 and E.115, alongside a number of dark green border tiles, there is enough to suggest the presence of one or more fairly elaborate tile floors, probably divided into sections by the dark green border tiles.

The roof tile by E. Murphy

The 309 ceramic roof tile fragments, most of which are unstratified, included examples of glazed and unglazed, shallow curved, half round and flat tiles, as well as a quantity of ridge tiles of several designs. Fragments of three stone slates of Oolitic Limestone were also found in the demolition layers. These tiles may have formed part of a slated roof or have been used to add weight at the bottom edge of the roof.

Some of the ceramic tiles are still highly green glazed and in relatively good condition. With a single exception (see below), the basic fabric in all contexts is red, generally grey cored and with few visible inclusions. The outer tile surface is predominantly smooth or lined, with a fairly crude inner finish. Most of the flat tiles were probably unglazed and some have lipped edges.

Tiles worthy of comment include two joining small pieces (context 111) which show a pattern of combing, three bands crossed with five. This could be either decorative or a form of masons' mark. Another exceptional example (context 113) is of a creamy colour, minutely speckled with granular inclusions. It is a small hooked tile, length 55mm, width 32mm and 20mm deep at the hook.

Decorative forms of the crested ridge tiles include four-sided twin or single points, knife-cut and acutely angled, some with slanted stabblings in the curve of one of the sides only, and edges emphasised with raised strips. In most of these cases, the height, base to peak, is between 30 and 40mm, the points accounting for about 8 to 10mm of the overall height. More rounded crests, scooped between the points (Draper 1983, fig. 6, no. 39) are also present. Average length could not be established as the tiles were not complete. Most are, or have been, green glazed. Two related green-glazed fragments (context 108) show a combing design along the narrow tops of the crest, where they would be unlikely to be seen.

DATING

The presence of knife-cut crests is probably indicative of a date after the late 13th century (Jope 1951).

CONCLUSIONS

The mix of styles suggests that the medieval roofs in this part of the site conformed with patterns in other such buildings of the period as described by Eames (1992, 6), in that decorative crests and coloured, weather-proof glazing were used in the more exposed and visible positions, with the plainer ones at the lower levels, possibly finished off by heavy slabs at the lowest edge (Draper 1983).

Animal bone by Michael J. Allen

A small assemblage of 313 bone fragments was recovered from the excavations. Preservation was good and fragmentation moderate. The faunal assemblage is summarised in Table 3,

Table 3 Summary table of bone fragments

Feature type	Cow	sheep/ goat	pig	large mam	small mam	fowl	bird/ amphib	unid	total
Topsoil and modern	37	36	11	34	24	5	1	10	158
Post-med demolition	28	18	9	14	15	–	–	21	105
Post-med building	4	3	1	12	10	7	6	4	47
Medieval	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Early medieval	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	1	2
<i>Total</i>	69	58	21	60	50	12	7	36	313

where large mammal is cow/horse sized and small mammal is sheep/pig sized. The majority of the stratified assemblage was associated with the post-medieval phases and probably represents refuse from the manor. Most of the bone from topsoil and modern contexts is also of a similar character with similar butchery traits to those from post-medieval layers. They are discussed together.

MEDIEVAL

Only three bones can be securely placed into the medieval period and potentially associated with the Templars or Hospitallers. They are probably all sheep/goat, two of which are long bones.

POST MEDIEVAL

Some modern damage and physical abrasion was noticed in the post-medieval assemblage, particularly from fragments associated with modern topsoil and the rubble/demolition horizons, but dog gnawing or weathering was not common. The remains had not been left to be scavenged by dogs, but had become broken (fragmented). Most the bone was probably buried relatively soon after discard

The assemblage is typical of discarded kitchen waste with long bones (ulna, radii metapodials etc) and mandibular fragments of cow, sheep/goat and pig. Some fowl leg and wing long bones were also present but no horse, deer or dog was identified. Most butchery included chopping of distal and proximal ends and the cutting through femoral heads with a sharp metal blade.

DISCUSSION

The work at Templecombe has defined an area which it is thought likely represents the extent of the former Templar preceptory. Much of the argument lies on the evidence of the distribution of tithe-free land in the parish. Land belonging to the Templars was traditionally tithe free, owing to a papal exemption granted in 1139. An ecclesiastical survey of 1705 describes a private chapel belonging to the Manor House, and a farm belonging to the same Manor House which pays no tithes 'under the pretence that they did belong to the order of the Knights Templar' (Dunning 1968, 74). The 1839 Tithe Award map for Abbas Combe and Templecombe (SRO tithe map 89) shows a large amount of land in the parish which was tithe free (Fig. 4). The distribution of these areas suggests that the Templar presence was confined to the south of the parish and is not represented in Abbas Combe, which lies to the north. The tithe-free area of the village demonstrates that the Manor House itself is not in fact on tithe-free ground at all, although the land immediately to the east is.

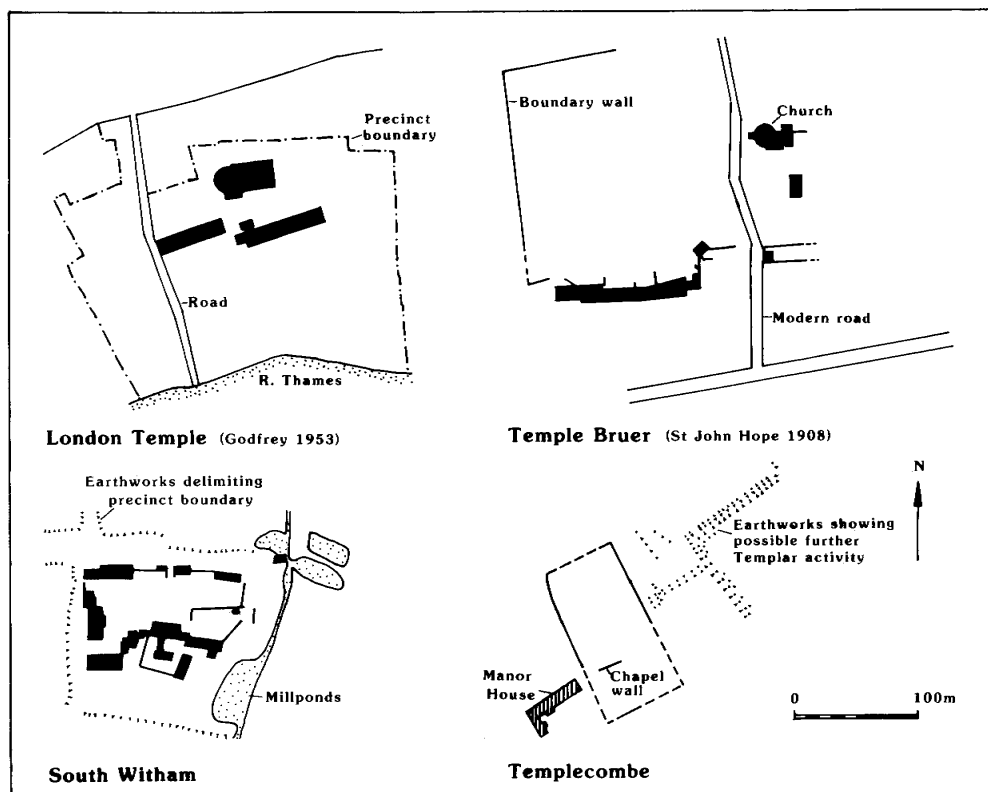


Fig. 8 Comparative plans of Templar preceptories

The work by *Time Team* at Templecombe has been unable to establish an internal ground plan of the preceptory. However similar sites (Fig. 8), about which more is known, provide an idea of what might be expected at Templecombe, in terms of area and buildings, their layout and function. South Witham (Yorkshire) is the only fully excavated example of a Templar preceptory in England (Selkirk 1968, 232). It was a very small and poor house, but it displayed all the features of a substantial medieval secular farmstead. It was built around a courtyard, with extensive barns, storage facilities, workshops and kitchens. In the centre was a hall and chapel, where the preceptor and knights would have lived. The evidence from this site reinforces the fact that Templar houses were not claustral, like other monastic establishments, but instead modelled on secular manors. Temple Balsall (Warwickshire) has surviving architectural evidence, with a late 12th early 13th-century aisled hall still standing, and again, it is more akin to a secular manor house than a monastery (Gooder 1995). This similarity means, of course, that potential preceptories are harder to distinguish in the landscape than other monastic houses. Although not all Templar preceptories were defined by a wall the area of the preceptory at Templecombe with its chapel compares well with that of the enclosed courtyard at South Witham (Fig. 8). The excavations at Templecombe have also shown that substantial buildings with lavish tiled floors once lay within this area indicating considerable wealth.

Beyond the preceptory buildings would have been the precinct, an area which defined the focus of the monastery's activities and fulfilled many functions necessary to it. At South Witham, extensive millponds and fishponds were found, a common feature, and normally some form of walled boundary or earthworks marking the precinct would be expected. It is possible that the

earthworks recorded at Templecombe, beyond the preceptory wall, form part of the precinct complex. Excavations by St John Hope (1908), at the large Templar house of Temple Bruer (Lincolnshire), revealed a church, following the classic circular Templar plan, as well as part of a boundary wall with buildings attached. There is however evidence of rectangular Templar chapels. An examination of 13 recorded preceptoreries showed that six were constructed with rectangular chapels, many of which were associated with preceptoreries in rural surroundings. It has been suggested (Morley 1995) that the angled wall (109) once formed part of the preceptory boundary, allowing parishioners access to the chapel from the main road while denying them entry to the confines of the preceptory. If this is so the excavated evidence suggests that this probably dates to the period of occupancy by the Hospitallers.

Nationally Templecombe formed part of a network of Templar establishments concentrated in the east of the country in an area spreading from the North Riding of Yorkshire, through Lincolnshire, down across the east Midlands. South of this area, the Templar presence was much more fragmentary. Templecombe was probably one of the largest centres in the south-west, the nearest major preceptoreries being Temple Cowley and Sandford (Oxfordshire) and Temple Guiting (Gloucestershire). In value, Templecombe was a wealthy house, assessed at over £106 p.a. by the Hospitallers in 1338, making it the ninth wealthiest in the country. Willoughton (Leicestershire) was the richest at £284 p.a. and Copmanthorpe (Yorkshire) the least at £10 p.a. (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 292–3).

In terms of size, at the suppression, a preceptor and two knights (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 295) were imprisoned from Templecombe, which although a small number, was fairly average, and would have probably also entailed a large household of servants and labourers.

At the suppression of the preceptory in 1541 the site passed to Henry Strangways as a Crown lease before the freehold was granted to Edward Fiennes, Lord Clinton and Say in 1543. It is likely that either or both of these men disposed of the fabric of the preceptory as a means of raising funds. It is unclear how much of the preceptory remained at the time of construction of the Manor House. This building, of later 16th-century date, shows no apparent reused stone (Morley archive report) which suggests that the preceptory had been cleared completely except for the chapel. The majority of the pottery however is of post-medieval date and is associated with demolition rubble possibly from the preceptory.

RESCUE EXCAVATIONS IN 1996 BY SESAHS

Rescue excavations at Templecombe were undertaken by the South East Somerset Archaeological and Historical Society (SESAHS) in an area of *c.* 250m² located at the north-east corner of the preceptory (Fig. 9). The site archive and full report have been deposited with the finds in Taunton Museum. The principal results are summarised here.

The initial phase of work was restricted to the excavation of ten 1m² test pits, which revealed that the site had been heavily disturbed by a former engineering business and a builders yard. However archaeological features and deposits that may have been related to the preceptory also survived.

A line of large, quite well faced stones, was identified that were aligned parallel to and *c.* 5m west of the east boundary wall of the preceptory, as identified by the *Time Team*. The blocks were arranged edge to edge and were found towards the base of a test pit. Much of the line comprised a single course that was laid on disturbed soil but occasionally more than one course survived. The alignment, which was associated with medieval potsherds both in and under the foundations, was traced in a series of additional test pits for *c.* 20m. The blocks were mixed with rubble and loose mortar which suggested that they represented a robbed wall foundation. The discovery of these remains, which possibly relate to a barn, workshop or

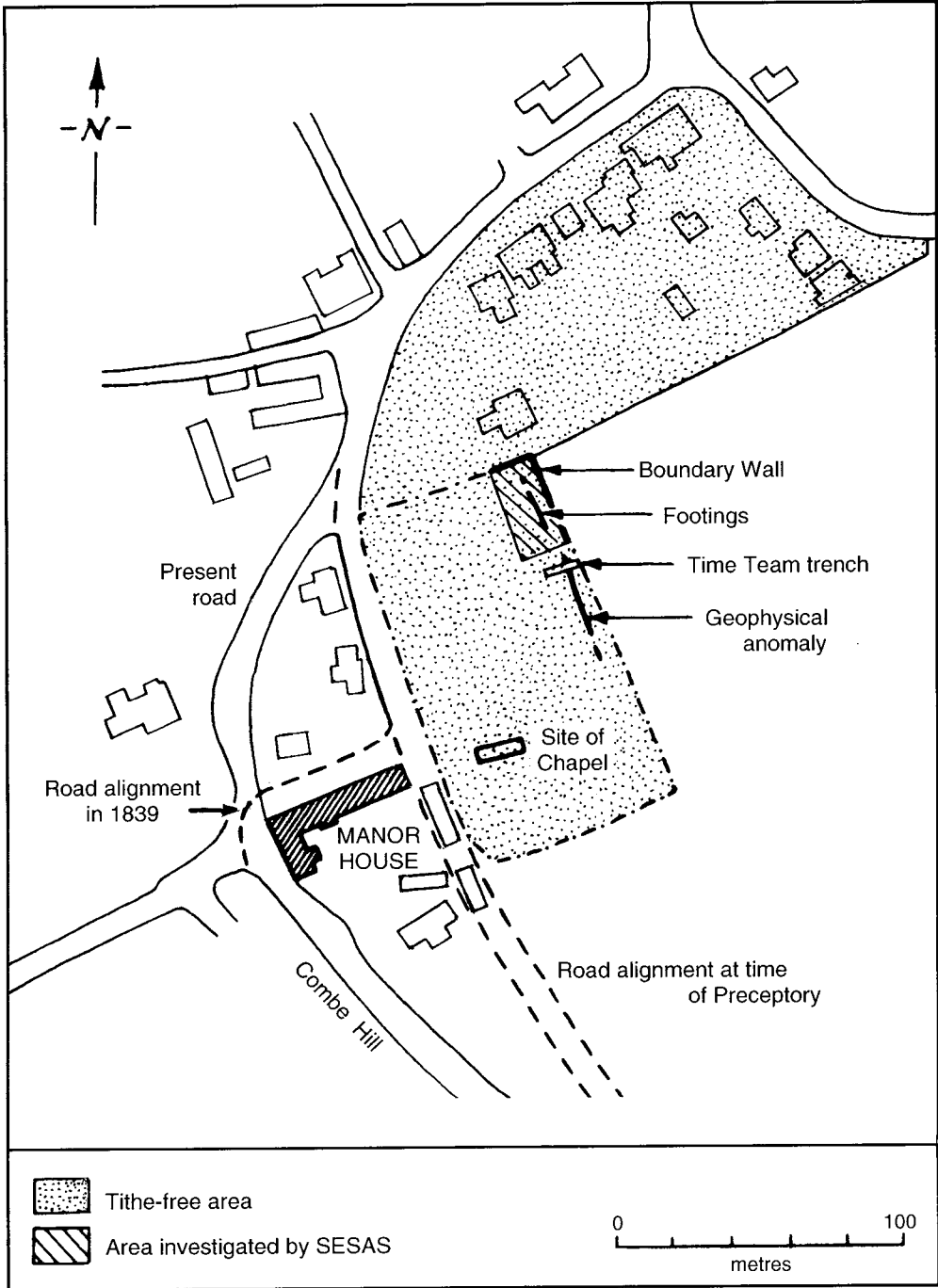


Fig. 9 Location of excavations by SESAHS, and road alignments

kitchen, situated well away from the chapel, marks a significant contribution to understanding the layout of buildings within the preceptory.

Additional features detected by the excavation included a line of flat stones that overlay a soil deposit mixed with rubble and appeared to represent a path or floor.

A total of 534 sherds of medieval pottery were found during the excavation, with ten Roman and 14 post-medieval sherds. A collection of animal bone was also recovered, which broadly resembled that described from the Time Team excavation, with the addition of specimens identified as deer and fish.

The Society was also able to demonstrate that two probable phases of alteration had occurred to the road layout in Templecombe after the Dissolution to bypass the manor house (Fig. 9). The original medieval road alignment lay along the west edge of the preceptory, following the edge of the tithe-free land. The line of this road was subsequently blocked and diverted away from the former preceptory to pass the north façade of the 17th-century manor. This route, with its two right-angle bends, is shown on the Tithe Map of 1839 and may have arisen from the decision of the Lord of the Manor to adopt the former Templar chapel into the grounds of the manor. The road was later realigned through the village, in a gentle curve, to its present course.

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