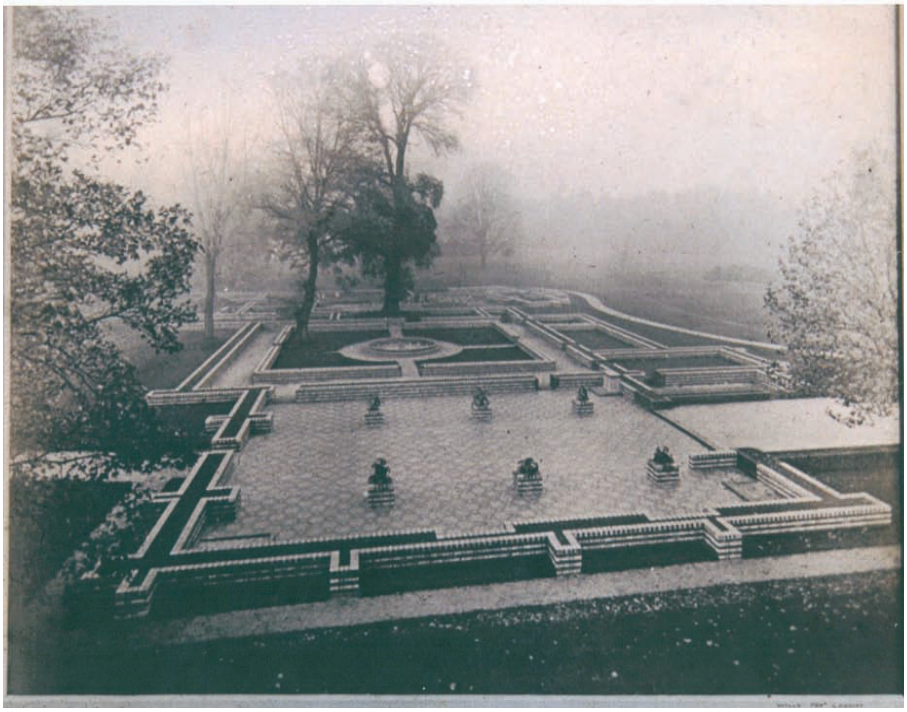
Archaeology Wales

Blackfriars Priory, Bute Park, Cardiff

Archaeological Evaluation



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Report No. 1062

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at the site of Blackfriars Priory, Bute Park, Cardiff, by Archaeology Wales Ltd. The investigative work, commissioned by Bute Park Restoration Project and approved by Cadw, was designed to inform proposals for forthcoming restoration work at the Priory, a scheduled ancient monument (GM173). Nine test-pits were excavated in order to examine the nature of the surviving medieval remains and their Victorian interpretation. The excavations established that the Priory's reconstructed Victorian brick walls were more extensive and in better condition below ground level than previously supposed. The evaluation also examined and identified the key indicators of Victorian threshold interpretations which were, in the main, marked by contrasting courses of red bricks and gravel. Where medieval wall remains had been incorporated into the nineteenth-century reconstruction it is likely that some demolition took place for leveling purposes. Only one segment of surviving medieval wall displayed two forms of construction technique, incorporating dressed stone on top of courses of rounded, rougher masonry.

1. Introduction

Blackfriars Priory is located in Bute Park, Cardiff (NGR: ST 17787 76687; fig. 1), 90m east of the River Taff and 200m north-west of Cardiff Castle. The site comprises the remains of a medieval priory overlain by a Victorian reconstruction in brick and concrete. In accordance with instructions provided by Jonathan Green, Senior Landscape Officer for the Bute Park Restoration Project, as outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Pannett 2012), and following the granting of Scheduled Monument Consent on the 29th March 2012, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Blackfriars Priory. The work was carried out in two short phases during April 2012. Six test pits measuring approximately 1m by 1m were excavated during the first phase (2nd to 10th April 2012). Following further consultation with Cadw a further three test pits were excavated (16th to the 19th April 2012).

The site work was carried out by Iestyn Jones, Mair Jones and Amelia Pannett. Amelia Pannett also project managed the work.

2. Historical Background

2.1 Priory Foundation, Dissolution and Demolition

Blackfriars Priory was established by the Dominican order in the 1240s AD after land was granted by the Crown for the building of a church and domestic buildings outside the West Gate of Cardiff, on the east bank of the River Taf. Evidence for the dating of the Priory, in terms of a *terminus ante quem,* came from a lead seal associated with Innocent IV (1243-54) discovered during nineteenth century excavations (Rees 1962, 33). The Priory was described as being thirteenth century Early English style with a 120 foot (36.5m) long Nave and a Choir and Presbytery 60 feet (18.2m) long. The Priory buildings may have been attacked by Owain Glyndŵr in December 1404 as the Welsh destroyed many properties within Cardiff, although the neighbouring Greyfriars priory was spared.

An account of the Dissolution in Cardiff describes how, on the 6th September 1538, seven members of the surviving Black Friars were summoned to the Chapter House by bell where they signed a deed of surrender. The house and its contents were

handed over to John Loveday, a merchant and deputy-bailiff of Cardiff (Randall and Rees 1954, 13). The buildings were later dismantled by Lewis Bleddyn and others, reducing the site to ruin (Ree 1954, 14). By the time John Speed came to map Cardiff in 1610 the site was in ruins – his map depicts only two standing buildings, at least one of which is roofless (Rees 1954, 14; fig. 2).

2.2 Nineteenth Century Excavation and Reconstruction

Acting under instructions from the third Marquess of Bute, the site was excavated by C.B. Fowler in 1887 and 1888. The excavator found that most of the lower walls of the monastery still survived 'about a foot above the original wall line' (Fowler 1897, 6). A post-excavation plan dated 1893 with handwritten annotation suggests that no wall masonry survived in the area of the Choir, and that most of the doorways were 'assumed'. Six, possibly seven, burials, noted as monks, were discovered within the nave and aisles and are indicated by crosses on the 1893 plan (Brock 1893). In an 1897 report, however, (Fowler 1897, Plan No. 1) twelve burials are marked. Fowler states that very few of the skeletons discovered within the Priory Church were in a good state of preservation, a fact he draws a contrasts with the excellent preservation of burials at Greyfriars (Fowler, 1897, 6).

Using information collated during Fowler's excavation, the footprint of the Priory was 'reconstructed' during the 1890s, as part of the Marquess of Bute's landscaping project in Bute Park. The work used different coloured bricks to distinguish between the areas reconstructed over actual medieval remains (black and yellow bricks), and those where only evidence for demolition or tentative evidence for walls (such as rough foundation trenches) were found (red bricks; Brock 1893, 308). This can be clearly seen in a photograph taken shortly after the completion of the site in the 1890s (fig. 3) The walls were built up 'about 3 feet above the ground' and the tops were so made to contain 'a good quantity of soil in which flowers will be planted'. The priority, it would seem, was to make the site look 'as much in keeping with (the) grounds as possible' (Editor 1893, 296).

3. Aims and Objectives

Nine test pits were excavated at strategic locations on the site, positioned to provide as much detail as possible about the Victorian and medieval remains (fig. 4). The primary aim of the evaluation was to examine aspects of the archaeological resource at the Priory site ahead of forthcoming restoration work. Generic site-wide aims were to establish the depth and nature of the Victorian walls below ground and to investigate the possibility of surviving medieval walls. In specific areas, the investigation set out to establish the following:

1. <u>Priory Church:</u>
   - The depth of floor concrete
   - The nineteenth-century interpretative treatment of the entrance thresholds for the main western entrance, the Church into the Cloisters in the north-west corner of the North Aisle and the Choir into the Sacristy on the northern side of the Choir.

2. <u>Cloister Garth:</u>
   - The extent of the exposed surviving medieval stonework and the nature and state of preservation of the eastern and western Victorian Cloister path.

3. Chapter House
   - The Victorian interpretation of the entrance threshold and the remains of the Victorian Cloister path.

4. Archives/Calefactory
   - The Victorian interpretation of the threshold entrance into the Calefactory/Archives room.

4. Evaluation results

4.1 Test Pit 1

Test pit 1 was located on the southern side of the South Aisle within the church, adjacent to a modern path entering the site from the south. The trench measured 1m by 1m and was excavated to establish the depth of the nineteenth century concrete and investigate the extent of the brickwork in the Victorian wall marking the southern church wall (fig. 4).

The visible Victorian brick wall [104] surface was cleaned by hand. It was in L-shaped in plan, with the width exceeding 1m at its widest point, and 0.5m at its narrowest point. The first visible course of bricks was yellow on the unmarked underside and a worn reddish hue on the marked side. A collection of disturbed grey bricks to the east may have originally overlain this brick surface. The yellow bricks measured 0.23m x 0.10m x 0.075m (9″ x 4″ x 3″), were machine pressed (post-1870) and marked 'Noel Bros and Co'. A concrete surface abutted this wall on its northern and western sides.

A pneumatic jackhammer was used to cut an L-shaped trench through the concrete adjacent to the inner edge of the brick wall [104]. The concrete was examined and appeared to comprise three distinct surfaces. The upper deposit (101) consisted of a 0.05m thick layer of skim cement for the (missing) Victorian tile floor. Underlying this was a 0.02m deep deposit of cement (102) that may have been used to level areas of the floor prior to the tile laying. This surface was found to be on top of a hard light grey concrete (103) that was 0.15m deep including 25% gravel (stones measuring 0.05-0.20m) and 35% crushed brick (fragments measuring 0.02-0.20m). The total depth of these three combined Victorian surfaces in this section of the reconstructed Priory floor was 0.22m.

Immediately below the concrete surface a dark compact silt (106), up to 0.3m in depth, was uncovered. This contained 10% crushed brick, 15% dark mortar fragments and 10% 0.1-0.23m rounded and angular stones. Lenses of powdery white mortar were identified within this deposit, together with a pipe stem, a sherd of blue and white striped ceramic and fragments of slate tile. This thick layer of silt is thought to be a landscaping deposit contemporary with the construction of the Victorian features. On the southern side of the trench, adjacent to the wall the silt deposit (106) was contained within a cut [107]. This ran east to west and parallel to wall [104] - it was located up to 0.70m from the wall and is thought to be a construction cut for the wall. Within the construction cut [107], the silt fill (106) was excavated to a depth of 0.50m, with a small sondage (measuring 0.3m x 0.3m) cut in the south-western corner of the trench to investigate the depth of the brickwork foundations for the Victorian

wall [104]. This revealed that the brickwork extended for at least 11 courses (not bottomed) and was over 0.75m deep. The brickwork was extremely robust and substantial. It had been carefully constructed using alternating layers of yellow and grey/blue bricks, as seen in the walls above ground, mortared with a dark grey lime mortar.

Underlying the landscaping deposit (106) on the northern side of the trench, and cut through by the construction cut [107], was yellowish-brown silty-sand (105) the upper surface of which contained some dark mortar fragments, probably derived from context (106) above. This deposit contained 10% stone pebbles measuring between 0.05-0.2m. The deposit was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m (fig. 5).

On the north-eastern side of the trench the head, arms and torso of a human burial were identified within the yellow silty-sand (105) (fig. 5). No grave cut was identified, and the burial was only 0.4m below the modern ground surface and consequently it is not known whether this represents a burial contemporary with the medieval or Victorian activity on the site. The construction cut [107] was positioned extremely close to the right arm. The burial was that of a small adult lying supine with its arms extended by its side. It was aligned east-west (head to the west) in typical Christian burial tradition. The skull had been crushed and only the teeth of the lower mandible were visible. Most of the right humerus (0.26m long) was visible although the head appeared degraded whilst the radius and ulna were only clearly visible at the elbow joint. A section of the pelvic girdle was also visible in the eastern section. Seven vertebrae as well as a number of ribs could also be identified. The teeth demonstrated that the burial was an adult, although the size of the body was more reminiscent of a pre-teenage child. The burial lies close to one marked on Fowler's 1897 priory plan. Due to the limited dimensions of the trench the burial could not be fully investigated and its relationship to the Victorian works on the site is not known. The Coroner and South Wales Police were informed of the discovery and, following consultation with Cadw and the Bute Park Restoration Project, it was decided to leave the burial in situ.

4.2. **Test Pit 2**

Test pit 2 was located at the north-west corner of the North Aisle of the church, on the site of the doorway from the Cloisters to the Church (see fig 4). It measured 1m by 1m and incorporated a section of the northern church wall and the concrete floor inside the church. The trench was excavated to discover the extent of the underlying brickwork and investigate the Victorian interpretive treatment of the entrance threshold (fig. 2 and 3) .

Preliminary work involved using a jackhammer to cut through the nineteenth century concrete on the southern side of the Victorian wall defining the northern side of the church. This work confirmed that the concrete, as in test pit 1, consisted of three distinct layers. The upper surface (201) consisted of a 0.05m deep skim cement for the Victorian tiles. Underlying this upper surface was a light grey fine-grained concrete with grit (202), while the third layer (203) comprised the main 0.18m deep concrete containing angular stones and crushed brick. These surfaces were the equivalent of (101), (102) and (103) in test pit 1, although (202) was not as thick or as distinct as (102) and (203) was slightly thicker than (103). The total depth of these three combined surfaces was 0.24m.

Underlying the concrete surfaces (201), (202) and (203) was a dark blackish-brown clayey silt (206), containing large pebbles (dimensions varying between 0.05-0.2m) and 10% crushed brick (fig. 6). This was contained within a cut [207]. The cut ran parallel within the Victorian wall [204] and was up to 0.19m wide. It is probably the construction cut for the Victorian walls.

On the southern side of trench, cut by the construction cut [207] was a compact yellow-brown sandy silt (209). This contained 25% grey/white mortar fragments, a single animal bone and a sherd of unglazed pottery, and was exposed for a width of 0.32m. It was up to 0.55m deep and continued underneath the Victorian wall [204]. Underlying the yellow silt (209) was a lens (212) of light brown mortar-filled silty sand. This was up to 0.05m deep and contained angular stone fragments, and animal tooth and sherds of pottery, including a sherd of green glazed ceramic that is early post-medieval in date. Underlying the lens of mortar (212) and the Victorian construction cut [207] and dark fill (206) was a layer of large rounded pebbles (214). These were set into a rough surface, possibly a floor surface, which pre-dates the Victorian activity on site (fig. 7). The small size of the test pit meant that it was not possible to fully investigate this feature and therefore the interpretation is tentative.

The full depth of the Victorian wall (204) was revealed on the northern side of the trench. As with the wall in trench 1, it was substantial, 0.5m wide and built of alternating courses of grey/blue and yellow bricks. On the western and eastern sides of the trench the wall was four courses (0.3m), while the section below the threshold was only three courses (0.23m) deep (fig.7). The threshold was marked by a 1.22m wide gap in the northern church wall (fig. 6). On the southern side of the threshold gap a line of 5.5 red bricks (211) had been set, standing on edge – it is thought likely that a similar line of red bricks exists on the northern side of the threshold although this was not revealed during the excavation. Within the threshold area was a deposit of dark brown silt containing fine gravel and crushed tile (205). This overlay a deposit of crushed tile and broken brick (210) which had been set on the surface of the underlying wall (204). The threshold therefore appears to have been defined using red brick and gravel, and was constructed so that the surface was on the same level as the concrete slab within the Church.

On the western side of the trench the Victorian wall was not exposed, although the removal of the concrete revealed a probable drain (208) built into the brickwork. This comprised hollow box measuring 0.23m by 0.27m, formed using red bricks with what appeared to be a crude spout constructed from a brick split in half, designed to move the water away from the surface of the wall.

4.3 **Test Pit 3**

Test pit 3 was located on the northern side of the Choir within the doorway leading into the Sacristy. The trench measured 0.98m east/west by 1.6m north/south and was excavated to examine the extent of the underlying brickwork and establish the Victorian threshold interpretation. It incorporated the threshold between the two rooms and a section of the grass-covered Sacristy floor (fig. 4).

Immediately below a layer of trampled topsoil (301) the threshold through the Victorian wall (305) was revealed. It measured 0.92m wide (north to south) and

0.90m long (east to west), and comprised a surface of machine pressed red bricks measuring 0.23m x 0.1m x 0.075m (9" x 4" x 3") bonded by a black course mortar. Seven courses were revealed, 0.57m deep, but the base was not reached owing to the constraints of the size of the trench. The walling was substantial and robust and in good condition (fig. 8).

The wall was found to have been built in a construction cut [303] that measured 0.66m wide from the northern edge of the wall (305). The cut [303] was filled with a dark brown silt (302) containing 25% Victorian tile fragments, 10% brick fragments and 15% small sub-rounded pebbles, some with adhering mortar (fig. 8). Clay pipe stems and sherds of modern pottery were also recovered. The construction cut cut through a soft orange/brown sandy silt (304) containing 5% mortar fragments. It was exposed for 0.25m on the northern edge of the trench and evidently pre-dates the Victorian activity on site.

4.4 **Test Pit 4**

Test pit 4 was located on the western side of the Cloisters over an exposed section of cobbled walling, presumed to be part of the original medieval structure. It measured 1m north/south by 2m east/west and was excavated to examine the depth and extent of the surviving medieval wall and to identify and examine the Victorian Cloister path (fig. 4).

The exposed stone wall structure formed part of a wall (404) combining both presumed medieval and Victorian elements that separated the Cloister Garth from the west alley of the Cloisters (fig. 9). It measured 0.52m wide and was orientated north/south. The eastern side of the wall comprised squared limestone blocks (possibly Blue Lias) bonded by a light brown lime mortar, overlying several courses of undressed, rounded, pebbles and thick spreads of mortar. The total depth of the stone wall was 0.7m, and it was found to have been built on a soft orange/brown silty sand deposit (403) which contained frequent pebbles. No cut for the stone wall was identified. This wall is thought very likely to be the remains of the medieval structure. It is robust and survives in good condition below ground. It is important to note that the medieval wall extends eastwards beyond the edge of the Victorian bricks on the surface.

On the western side the wall comprised courses of alternating yellow and grey/blue bricks, as seen elsewhere on the site. Four courses were exposed, up to 0.33m deep, although the base of the wall was not reached. The brickwork below ground was substantial and robust, while the bricks on the surface were relatively poorly preserved (fig. 9).

The evidence suggests that the western side of the medieval wall was encased in Victorian bricks during the reinterpretation of the site, with the eastern side left as it was, with the Victorian brickwork built directly on top of original stonework. This is possibly due to the medieval wall being narrower than the intended width of the Victorian wall or reflecting poor preservation of the medieval wall on the eastern side. It would not be possible to investigate further without dismantling the Victorian wall.

Abutting the medieval wall (404) on the eastern side of the trench was a loose dark brown clay silt topsoil (401). Underlying the topsoil was a compact dark brown silt

(402) containing 20% brick fragments, a large quantity of dark mortar (40%), slate fragments, rounded pebbles, Victorian tile fragments and a sherd of green-glazed pottery of probable post-medieval date. The deposit was up to 0.11m thick and overlay the orange/brown silty sand (403). This dark material appears to be contemporary with the Victorian activity on site and may represent a landscaping deposit.

On the western side of the wall (404) a loose dark brown silty topsoil (1201) was identified. This overlay a compact layer of grey/brown gritty silt deposit (1202) containing damaged Victorian tiles, yellow brick fragments and a shingle-type pea gravel (70%). The compact deposit was up to 0.1m deep and was found to overlie a firm orange/brown clay silt (1203) containing fragments of decorated tiles, small stones and chunks of white mortar (fig. 10). A small brown glazed pot-sherd was recovered from this deposit. The gritty shingle deposit is thought to be the surface of the Victorian pathway leading through the west alley of the Cloisters.

4.5 **Test Pit 5**

Test pit 5 was located on the eastern side of the Cloisters over an exposed section of cobbled walling presumed to be part of the original medieval structure. It measured 1m north/south by 2m east/west and was excavated to examine the depth and extent of the surviving medieval wall and to identify and examine the Victorian Cloister path (fig. 4).

The exposed stone wall (504) was 0.7m wide and orientated north/south between the Cloister Garth and the east alley of the Cloisters. It comprised four courses of undressed rounded stones bonded with a light brown lime mortar, and was 0.56m in depth (fig. 11), and was robust and well preserved below ground. A thick layer (0.11m deep) of this lime mortar was identified between the third and fourth courses of the wall and appears to form a foundation deposit for the wall. The wall had been constructed on top of a soft orange/brown silty sand (503) containing rounded pebbles. No construction cut for the wall was identified. A layer of blue/grey Victorian bricks had been laid over the medieval wall on the northern side of the trench, forming the lowest surviving level of the Victorian reinterpretation in this area. It is important to note that, as in test pit 4, the medieval wall extends outwards on both the eastern and western side further than the line of Victorian bricks on the surface suggests.

On the western side of the wall (504) a dark brown clay silt topsoil (501) was identified. This contained large quantities of broken Victorian tiles. Underlying the topsoil was a mid greyish-brown loose silt (502) up to 0.18m deep. This contained containing some angular stones and fragments of light brown mortar, a small number of green glazed pottery sherds, clay pipe stems, animal bone and a large fragment of worked sandstone. This deposit overlay the soft orangey-brown silty-sand (503) identified below the medieval wall.

On the eastern side of the wall a dark brown silty topsoil (1101) up to 0.12m deep was identified below the turf. Underlying the topsoil was a compact dark brown gritty silt deposit (1102) which contained pea gravel (65%), damaged fragments of Victorian tile, a single Ruabon brick, sub-angular stones and lumps of dark mortar (fig. 12). This deposit was 0.13m deep and comprises the surface of the Victorian Cloister path.

The path overlay a loose light brown sandy silt (1103) containing lumps of light brown lime mortar – this deposit was particularly powdery at the southern end of the trench.

4.6 **Test Pit 6**

Test pit 6 was located in the doorway of the Chapter House on the eastern side of the Cloisters. The test pit measured 1m by 1m and was excavated to investigate the Victorian interpretative treatment of the entrance threshold and to examine whether any medieval stonework survived (fig. 4).

The Victorian wall comprised at least six courses (not bottomed) of alternating yellow and blue/grey bricks bonded with dark grey lime mortar, and was at least 0.53m deep. On the southern side of the test pit was a line of red bricks marking the southern edge of the threshold. Between this line of bricks and the northern edge of the test pit a deposit of light grey sandy silt (602) containing black mortar and 50% pea gravel was discovered immediately below the turf (fig. 13). This was up to 0.08m deep and overlay the width of the Victorian wall (603). The base of the threshold was one course below the modern surface of bricks. The line of red bricks and the gravel deposit were deliberately designed to highlight the entrance threshold. The upper surface of the wall had been disturbed and lifted by tree roots, but otherwise the wall was substantial and in good condition.

On the western side of the wall a thick deposit of loose mid-grey/brown sandy silt (604) was identified below the topsoil. This contained sub-angular stones, some with mortar still adhering, lumps of degraded lime mortar, two animal teeth and a part glazed pot sherd. This deposit was up to 0.46m deep and is likely to be the fill of a construction cut associated with the Victorian wall, although no cut was identified within the trench.

4.7 **Test Pit 7**

Test pit 7 was located in the north western corner of the Calefactor/Archive room, covering the entrance threshold and sections of the northern and western walls. The trench measured 2m by 2.5m and was excavated to establish the extent, phasing and construction of the brickwork, confirm the presence or absence of medieval masonry and identify the Victorian interpretive treatment of the entrance threshold (fig. 4, 14, 15 and 16).

The wall [S703] was 8 courses deep (0.72m) and comprised alternating yellow and blue/grey bricks bonded with dark grey/black mortar. The wall was 1.2m wide at the entrance threshold and was partly covered by a thin layer of turf. A number of different bricks had been used in the construction of the wall (fig. 16):

- The top most surface consisted of a number of loose red/grey two-tone machine pressed unmarked bricks which were bonded on the top surface. The bonding material (dark mortar) was weathered and many of these bricks were loose.
- The second brick surface consisted of yellow bricks. The majority were marked Cattybrook, Bristol, with a smaller number of Noel Bros and Ruabon bricks. There was one example of an Ebbw Vale brick and a single example with an unidentifiable design rather than plain lettering.

The marked yellow bricks all derive from brick makers active in the late nineteenth century and are therefore thought to be contemporary with the original construction of the garden feature. The grey/red bricks are comparable to mass produced house and paving bricks in use in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and are also thought to be contemporary with the original construction.

A number of drainage features were observed within wall, evidently original features built at the time of construction. Two drain features were visible in the upper surface of yellow bricks. These comprised square voids filled with fragments of air bricks. Drain 1 was located near the centre of the external north-west corner of the Calefactor whilst Drain 2 was located near the centre of the wall 1.3m from the southern threshold of the western wall. The outlet for Drain 2 was located on the east facing side of the wall where a half-brick void was located two courses below the surface. A small circular ceramic drain outlet was also located adjacent to this void approximately one course lower and 0.15m to the north (fig. 16).

The southern end of the western wall was edged by a line of red bricks marking the threshold (fig. 15). Three red bricks were laid lengthways and at right angles to the remainder marking the centre of the threshold (fig. 15). The excavation revealed that this single line of red bricks had been built into the three courses of brickwork that survived above the threshold level. The threshold itself comprised a firm dark brown silty gravel (705) containing lumps of dark mortar, glass fragments and rounded stones. It was up to 0.23m deep and overlay the width of the wall. Four decorated Victorian tiles were set into the eastern side of the threshold deposit – the designs included heraldic symbols and birds and are comparable to those tiles in situ elsewhere on the site (fig. 15). The tiles appear to be in their original position, although they have subsided, and were evidently laid to define the inner edge of the threshold. It is possible that originally more tiles were laid on the gravel deposit within the threshold.

The upper surface of the gravel within the threshold was located two courses of bricks below the course of blue/grey bricks that forms the modern surface of the walls around the Cloister. The threshold deposit was itself one brick course deep and overlay the blue/grey bricks of the wall four courses below the modern brick surface.

To the east of wall (703) a 0.6m x 1.7m wide slot was excavated to examine the depth and morphology of the wall. A loose dark brown sandy silt (702) containing frequent brick and tile fragments, green glazed pottery sherds, lime wall plaster, a broken black-glass fragment (possibly a vessel base), large fragments of highly glazed (varnished appearance) decorated Victorian tile and a complete section of light grey triangular ceramic air brick. This was 0.48m deep and overlay a yellow brown silt (706). The base of the wall (703]) sat on a deposit of black mortar that appears to overlie a thin (0.1m deep) layer of white lime mortar (704) and one rounded cobble. This may be the remnants of the original medieval wall or demolition deposits associated with it.

4.8 **Test Pit 8**

Test pit 8 was located in the centre of the West Alley and measured 1m by 1m. It was excavated in order to examine the extent of brick work below ground and identify any possible phasing of above ground bricks. The trench was also located to establish the

presence of Victorian threshold interpretation and the make up of the Victorian Cloister path (fig. 4 and 17).

The trench was positioned on the eastern side of the Victorian Cloister wall [806], and a presumed entrance point. Below the turf a dark brown silty topsoil (801) was identified. This was 0.13m deep and overlay a compact dark-grey/brown gritty silt (802) containing broken tile fragments, dark mortar, rounded stones and 60% pea gravel. It was between 0.13-0.15m deep and is thought to be the remains of the Victorian Cloister path. Below the path layer (802) was a loose light brown sandy silt containing frequent fragments of lime mortar. A linear cut [802], orientated north/south cut was identified 0.17m from the wall [806], and is thought to be a construction cut. This contained a loose dark brown/black silty sand with frequent fragments of white/brown lime mortar (805).

The wall structure [806] located on the west side of the trench was excavated to a depth of 0.70m (8 courses) and consisted of alternating courses of blue/reddish and yellow bricks. The base of the wall was not revealed in the trench. No evidence for a threshold was identified.

4.9 **Test Pit 9**

Test pit 9 was located outside the western wall of the church, in the area of the main western entrance as indicated by Fowler (1897). It measured 2.5m north/south and 1m east/west and was excavated to establish whether anything of the original medieval wall survived and to investigate the Victorian and later treatment of the threshold (fig. 4 and 18).

Underlying the turf was a loose clay silt topsoil (901) up to 0.17m deep, which overlay a compact grey/brown silt (902). This deposit was 0.09m deep and contained frequent angular and sub-rounded stones that are thought to represent the surface of a path following the exterior of the church. Underlying the path was a compact grey silty grit (903) containing mortar fragments and pieces of slate tile. This was 0.11m deep and overlay a loose orange/brown sand (904) containing fragments of light brown lime mortar and rounded stones. This deposit was not fully excavated but appeared to be cut on the north-western side by an irregular feature [906] 0.08m wide (east/west) and 0.8m long (north/south) that contained a dark brown sandy silt (907). This feature was not excavated.

The western Priory wall [905] was excavated to a depth of 0.28m (3 courses). It was 0.85m wide and comprised alternating yellow and grey/blue bricks. The original entrance threshold was evident as a three brick deep gap in the western wall, which had been filled in more recent times by a mix of bricks covered by rounded pebbles set in concrete. Interestingly, the red bricks identified as defining thresholds elsewhere on the site were not identified here.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Whilst this investigation established a number of things it was, to an extent, limited by the dimensions of the test pits. It was possible, for instance, to identify some Victorian wall cuts and back fill deposits. In contrast it was difficult, given the confines of the test pits, to conclusively identify pre-Victorian deposits other than the walls in test pits 4 and 5. The historical record suggests that there may have been

several phases of disturbance to the fabric of the remains before the Victorian work to landscape and reinterpret the site. The mixed deposits of medieval mortar, Victorian tile fragments, early post-medieval and modern pottery seem to confirm this, suggesting that the destruction of the site occurred both prior to and during the Victorian work on site. The confused nature of Fowler's plans, published between five and ten years after his 1877/78 excavations, did little to aid interpretation. The number of burials, as stated in section 2.2, changes from plan to plan. Given this confusion the burial in test pit one remains enigmatic. It was located near one of the burials marked on the 1897 plan but not on the 1893 version.

This evaluation, nevertheless, established that the below ground condition and extent of the Victorian brick walls bears little resemblance to that expected from a superficial surface inspection. Much of the surface brickwork has been disturbed, not only by weathering but also through general abuse by visitors to the public park. The depth of the Victorian walls was unexpected, ranging from three courses (0.23m) deep in test pit 2 to twelve courses (0.75m) deep in test pit 1. The evaluation did not disturb any of the in situ Victorian brickwork, except where surface bricks had weathered and become detached, which were removed to facilitate the excavation. In general the Victorian walls preserved below ground are in extremely good condition and need little consolidation. The surface layer(s) of bricks, by contrast, will need relaying across much of the Cloisters and within the Church.

A number of brick makers were identified during these investigations, although only the yellow bricks were frogged and stamped. All of the bricks were machine pressed (post-1870), with the majority of marked bricks manufactured in Bristol (Cattybrook – which were also used in the construction of the Severn tunnel in 1886) and Ruabon (north-east Wales). Other bricks manufactured at Llantrisant and Ebbw Vale were also used. The most common dimensions are 0.23m x 0.10m x 0.075m (9″ x 4″ x 3″), with slight variations between manufacturers. The grey/blue and red/blue bricks used in the walls were not marked, although they displayed markings such as dumbbell imprints, diagonal grooves and octagonal imprints. These are thought to be late nineteenth century in date for use in paving or house building (N. Phillips pers comm.). All of the bricks identified on the site are thought to be contemporary with the Victorian reinterpretation works.

Drainage features were identified in the Victorian wall in test pits 2 and 7. In test pit 7 these comprised rectangular holes identified in the surface of the bricks, and continuing vertically down for two courses. The holes were filled with broken fragments of airbrick. The outlet for the drains were identified on the side of the walls, again comprising a gap in the brickwork extending back into the structure of the wall – it is assumed that these two features connected up although it was not possible to investigate this. A similar drain outlet was identified in test pit 2, and it is thought that the inlet would also have formed a hole in the surface of the brickwork, although this was not identified. These are likely to have facilitated drainage within the planters constructed on the top of the original Victorian walls. A ceramic drainage tube was also identified outflowing from the eastern side of the wall in test pit 7. It was not possible to identify how this functioned, but it is possible that it allowed water to drain through the width of the wall.

The evidence suggests that all the Victorian thresholds followed the same pattern, with a gap left within the structure of the wall (1.22m wide in test pit 2), and the walls either side of the threshold faced with red bricks. The threshold itself comprised a deposit of gravel overlying a brick surface (thought to be between 1 and 3 courses below the modern brick surface in the Cloisters). This deposit was up to 0.1m deep in test pit 7 and 0.13m deep in test pit 2. In test pit 2 the gravel overlay a deposit of broken brick and tile, 0.1m deep, which sat on a brick surface two courses below the modern surface of the surrounding walls and approximately in line with the base of the concrete slab within the Church.

Evidence for the (partial) demolition of medieval masonry was identified across the site as loose pebbles and spreads/chunks of light brown lime mortar. This occurred in both the Victorian and pre-Victorian deposits, suggesting that the demolition of the site occurred over a protracted period of time. The evaluation suggests that where medieval walls were substantial or well preserved enough to build upon they were left, with perhaps some leveling of the upper surface, and used as foundations for the Victorian walls. Elsewhere, the Victorian walls were probably constructed along the lines of the medieval walls where it suited the plan, resulting in remains such as seen in test pit 7 where the cut for the medieval wall was found but only scant evidence for walling.

The evaluation has demonstrated that much of the surviving Victorian brickwork is substantial and in relatively good condition. The deterioration of the above ground brickwork seen across the site is not reflective of the state of the masonry below ground, which is robust. Evidence for the medieval structures on the site is limited, although where walls survive they are also fairly robust. The bricks used in the construction of the Victorian structures are all likely to be late nineteenth century in date, contemporary with the works on site. There is no evidence for the use of later, twentieth century, bricks in any of the extant structures. Indeed, it is considered likely that the twentieth century saw the destruction of much of the site rather than repair and rebuilding, with the walls lowered to ground level in the Cloisters. In the Church and Choir some of the walls retain their original height, with the planters built into the top of the walls still evident in places. It is thought likely that when Bute Park was taken into the care of Cardiff Council the site was made safe, with unstable walls reduced, to prevent accidents and to minimise the management of the structures. Subsequent erosion, accidental and deliberate damage has caused the displacement of many bricks across the site leading to the dilapidated state of the site today.

In conclusion, the brickwork below ground is more extensive and in better condition than expected. It is unlikely that carefully reinstating above ground sections of these walls will damage any Victorian brickwork or medieval masonry. Any reconstruction process around surviving sections of medieval walls, however, must take into account that fact that, below ground, walls project outwards more than surface bricks would suggest.

6. Acknowledgements

The excavators would like to thank Jonathan Green, Senior Landscape officer for the Restoration Project, for his assistance and cooperation. Thanks also to Dr. Neil Phillips for comments regarding the bricks.

7. References

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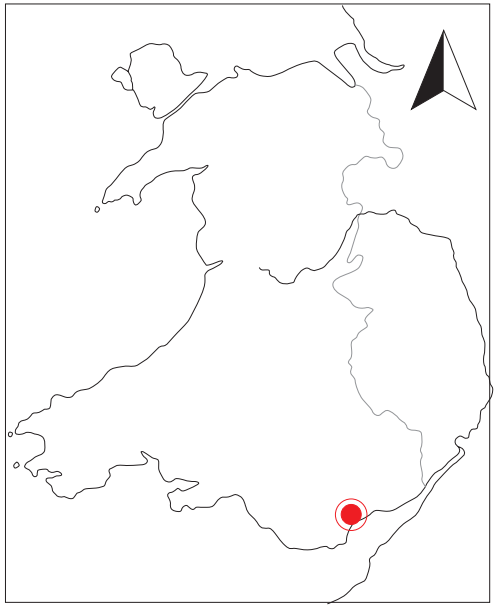

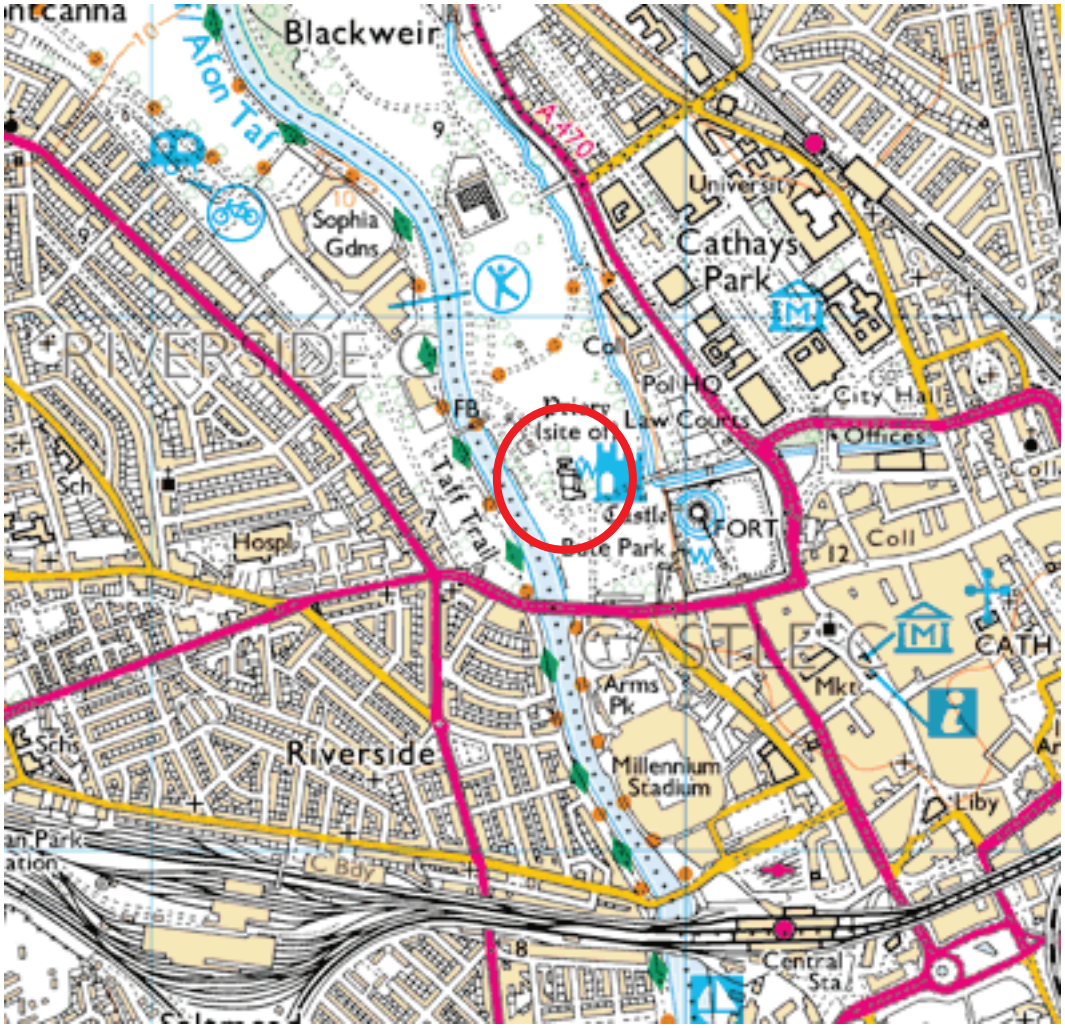

Fig. 1
Location of site

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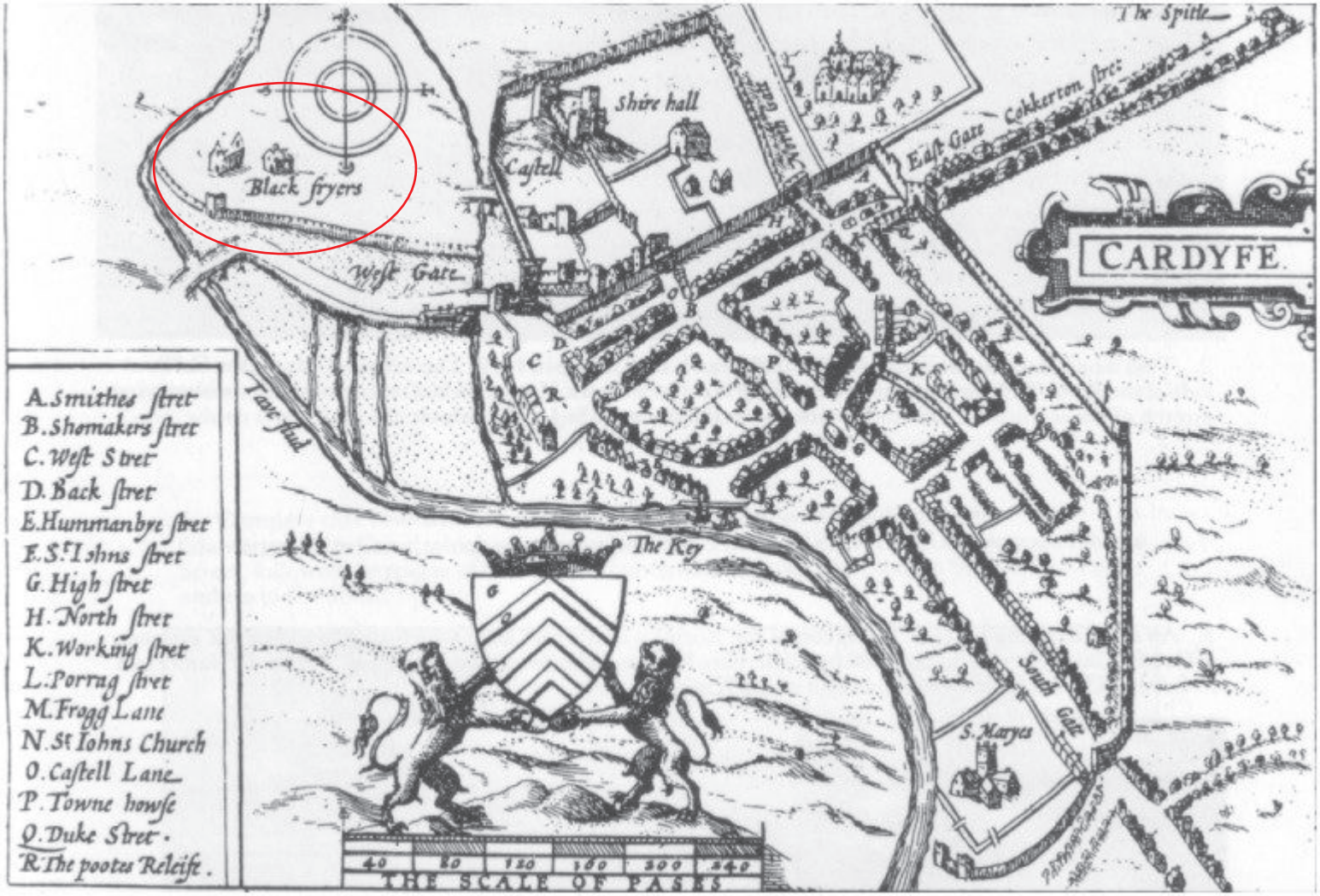

Fig. 2
John Speed's map of Cardiff from 1610. The location of Blackfriars Priory is circled

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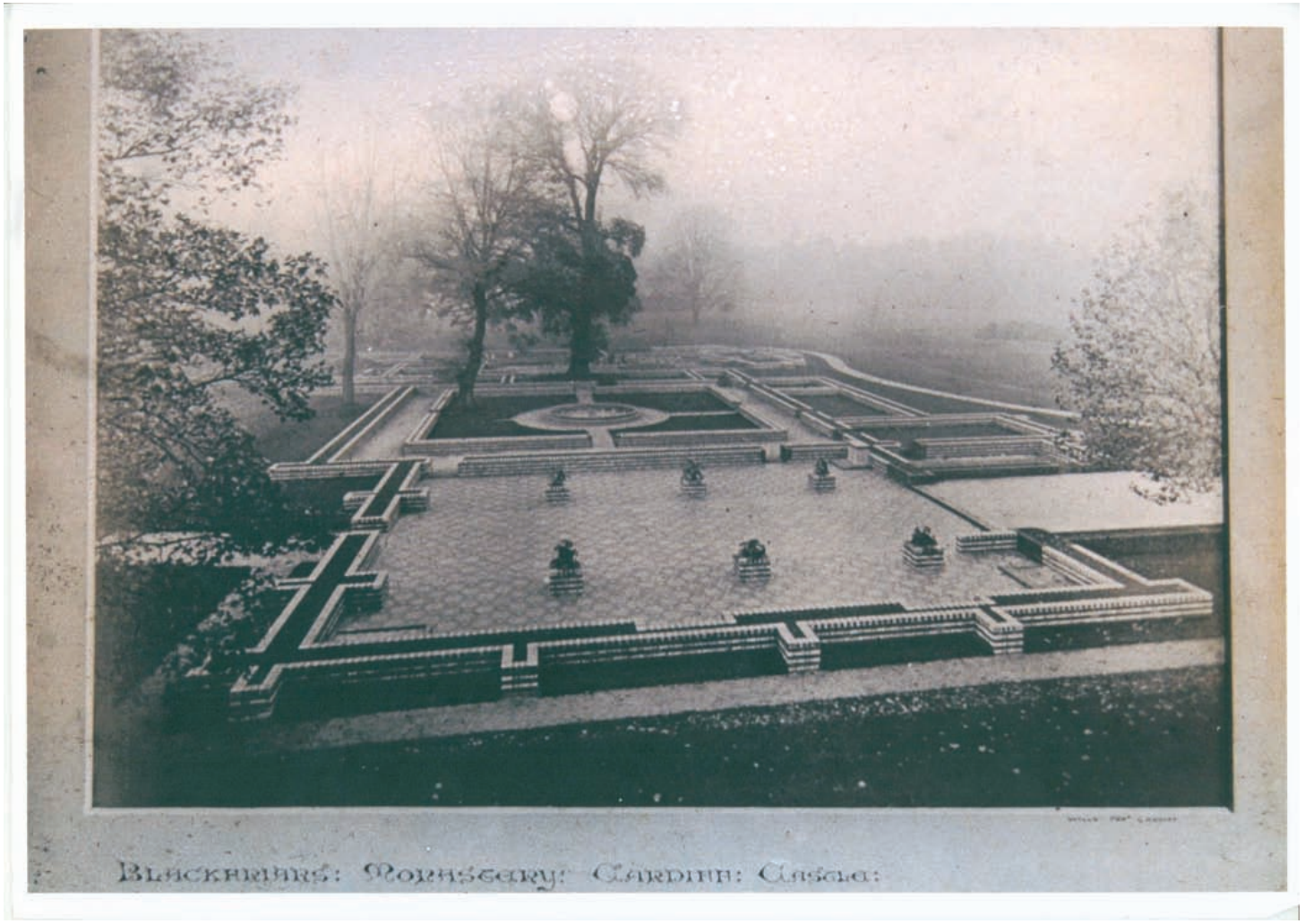

Fig. 3
Nineteenth century photograph of the Priory site soon after completion

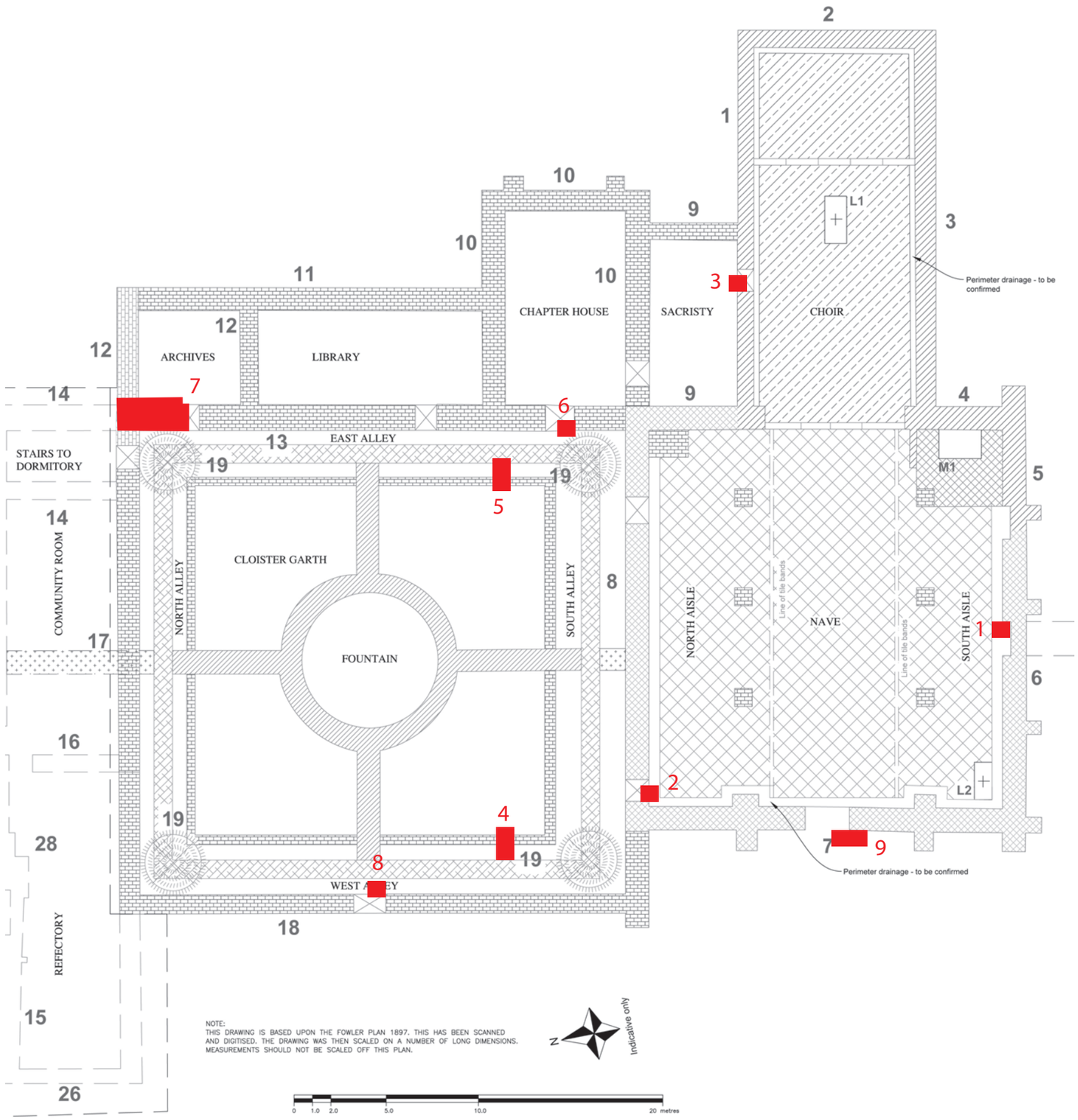

Fig. 4
Location of the test pits

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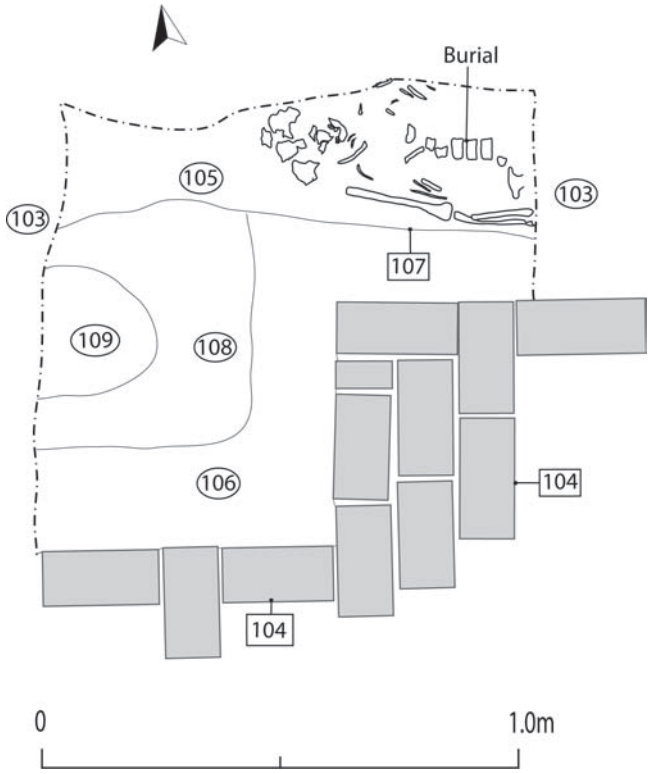

Fig. 5a. Plan of Test Pit 1

Fig. 5b. Post-excavation view of Test Pit 1 from the east showing burial next to cut [107]

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Fig. 5
Test Pit 1

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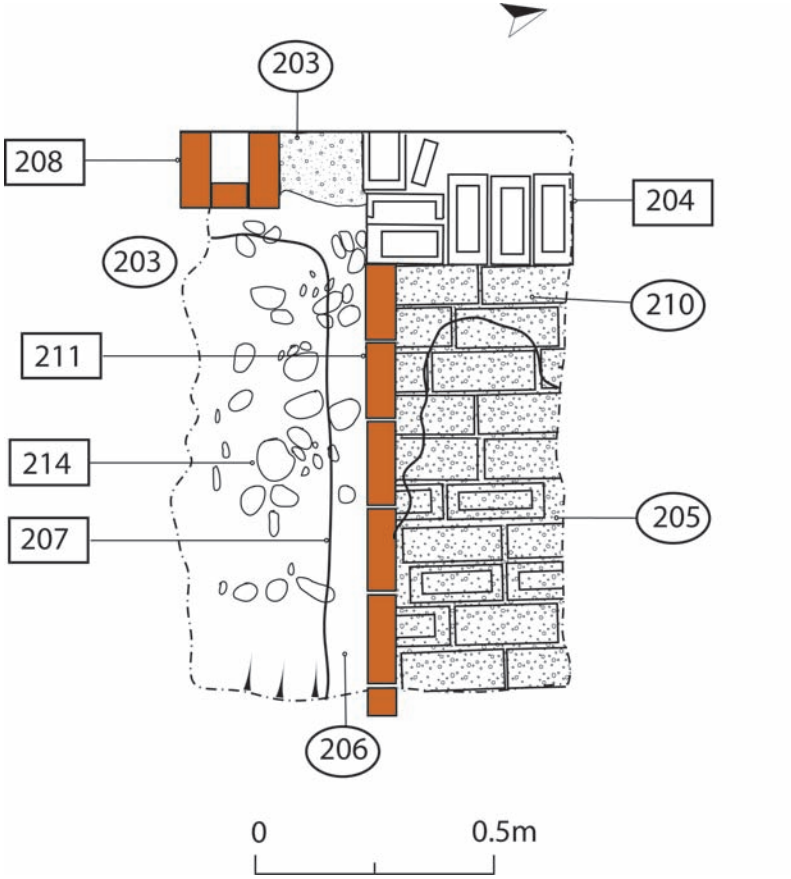

Fig. 6a. Post-excavation plan of Test Pit 2

Fig. 6b. Mid-excavation view of the north-west Priory entrance from the east, showing in situ threshold deposit (205) and linear red brick threshold [211]

Fig. 6
Test Pit 2

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Fig. 7a. Eastern view of cobbled surface (214) at the base of Test Pit 2

Fig. 7b. Southern full depth view of wall [204] (with threshold deposit removed) under linear brick feature [211]. Drain [208] is seen at the west end (left)

Fig. 7
Test Pit 2

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Fig. 8a. Test Pit 3 view from the north showing excavated depth of wall [305]

Fig. 8b. Closer view of Test Pit 3 showing wall cut [303] and dark back fill (302)

Fig. 8
Test Pit 3

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Fig. 9a. View from the south of Test Pit 4 showing the rounded medieval wall [404] stones projecting eastwards under the current ground level

Fig. 9b. View from the east of the full depth of medieval wall {404] and showing the contrasting square and rounded stones

Fig. 9
Test Pit 4

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Fig. 10a. View showing depth of path deposit (1202) on the western side of wall [404]

Fig. 10b. View from the east of the excavated depth of wall [404] on its western side

Fig. 10
Test Pit 4

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Fig. 11a. View from the north of Test Pit 5 showing medieval wall [504] and surface of deposit 503

Fig. 11b. View from the west of the full depth of medieval wall [504], showing mainly rounded stones and light brown mortar

Fig. 11
Test Pit 5

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Fig. 12a. View of the east side of wall [504]

Fig. 12b. View from the south of the east side of wall [504]

Fig. 12c. View of the east side of wall [504] showing depth of deposit 1102

Fig. 12
Test Pit 5

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Fig. 13a. View of Test Pit 6 from the west showing extent and excavated depth of the Victorian wall [603]. Red bricks (601)seen at top right

Fig. 13b. View from the north of the red brick deposit (601) at the southern end of Test Pit 6 (top left)

Fig. 13
Test Pit 6

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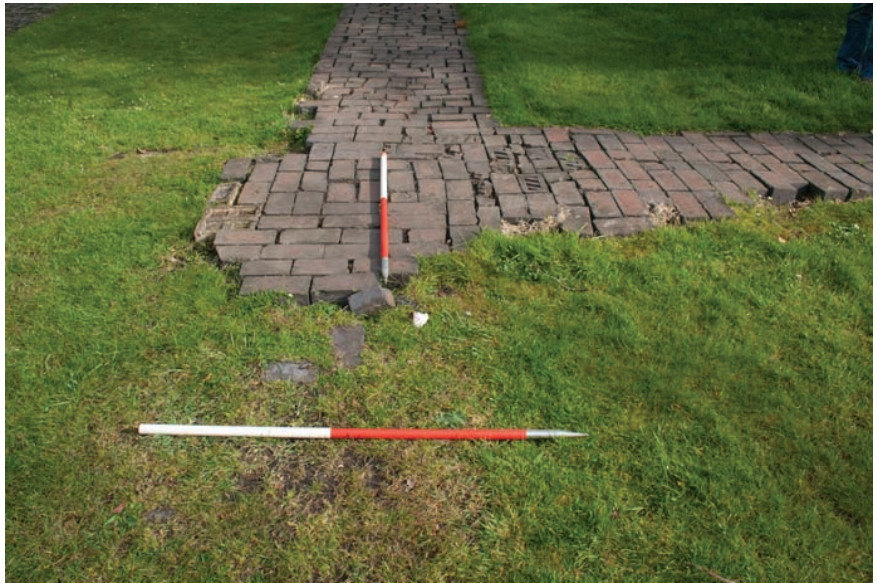

Fig. 10a. Pre-excavation view from the south of the north west corner of the Priory Calefactor, showing loose surface bricks of the wall [703]. The remainder of the wall is under the turf (foreground)

Fig. 10b. View from the south of the partially excavated wall [703] surface showing Drain 2 (in the centre), surface of deposit 702 (right) and a section of the threshold with in situ Victorian tiles (foreground)

Fig. 14
Test Pit 7

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Fig. 15a. Plan of Test Pit 7

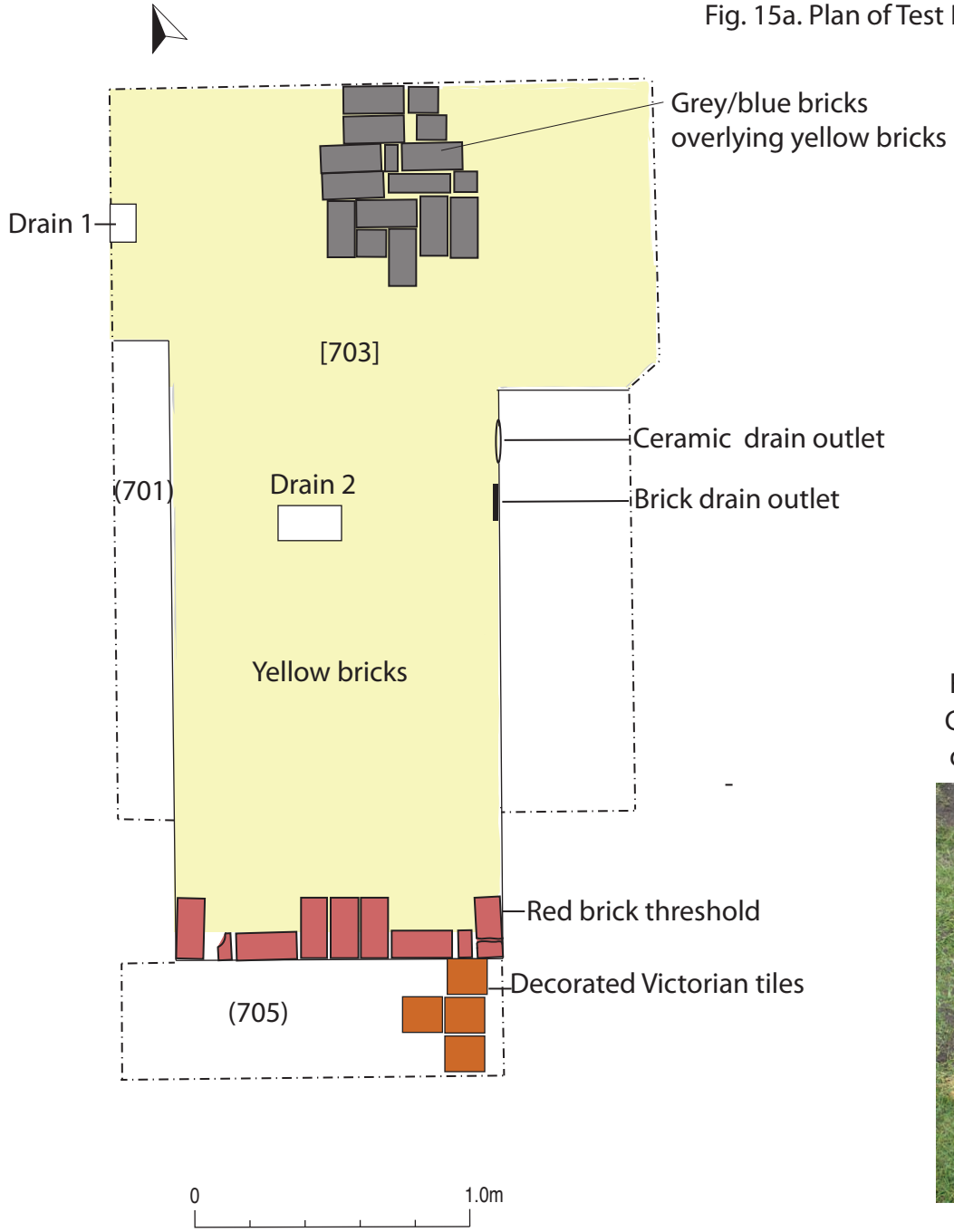

Fig. 15b. View from the south of the threshold into Calefactor, showing deposit 705, onto which decorated tiles had been placed

Fig. 15c. View of same threshold from the west

Fig. 15
Test Pit 7

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Fig. 16 a. View from the east of below ground drain outlets in north east corner of wall [703].

Fig.16b. Noel Brothers & Co. brick
c. Cattybrook Brick Co. Ltd, Bristol
d. Ebbw Vale brick
e. Unidentified brick
f. Bricks on surface of 703

b

c

d

f

e

Fig 16
Test Pit 7

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Fig. 17a. View from the north of Test Pit 8 showing wall [806] and cut [804] and related back fill deposit (805) and surface and half-sectioned deposit 802

Fig. 17b. View from the east of Test Pit 8 showing excavated pre-sondage depth of the wall [806]

Fig. 17
Test Pit 8

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Fig. 18a. Pre-excavated view from the south of the Priory Church's western entrance

Fig. 18b. View from the west of the entrance wall and surface of deposit 903

Fig. 18c. View from the west of wall [905], showing possible entrance modifications and (foreground) deposit 904

Fig. 18d. View of northern sondage within Test Pit 9 showing base of deposit 904 and (indicated by arrow) cut 906

Fig. 18
Test Pit 9

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