

**ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL, MEDWAY, KENT
NGR TQ 742 684**

**REPORT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND
WATCHING BRIEF IN ASSOCIATION WITH
CONSERVATION WORK ON THE SOUTH TRANSEPT
AND LADY CHAPEL, 2007-8**



View along the north cloister walk at Rochester Cathedral in October 2007, with the South Transept shrouded in scaffolding.

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Keevill Heritage Consultancy
For the Dean and Chapter of Rochester
March 2009

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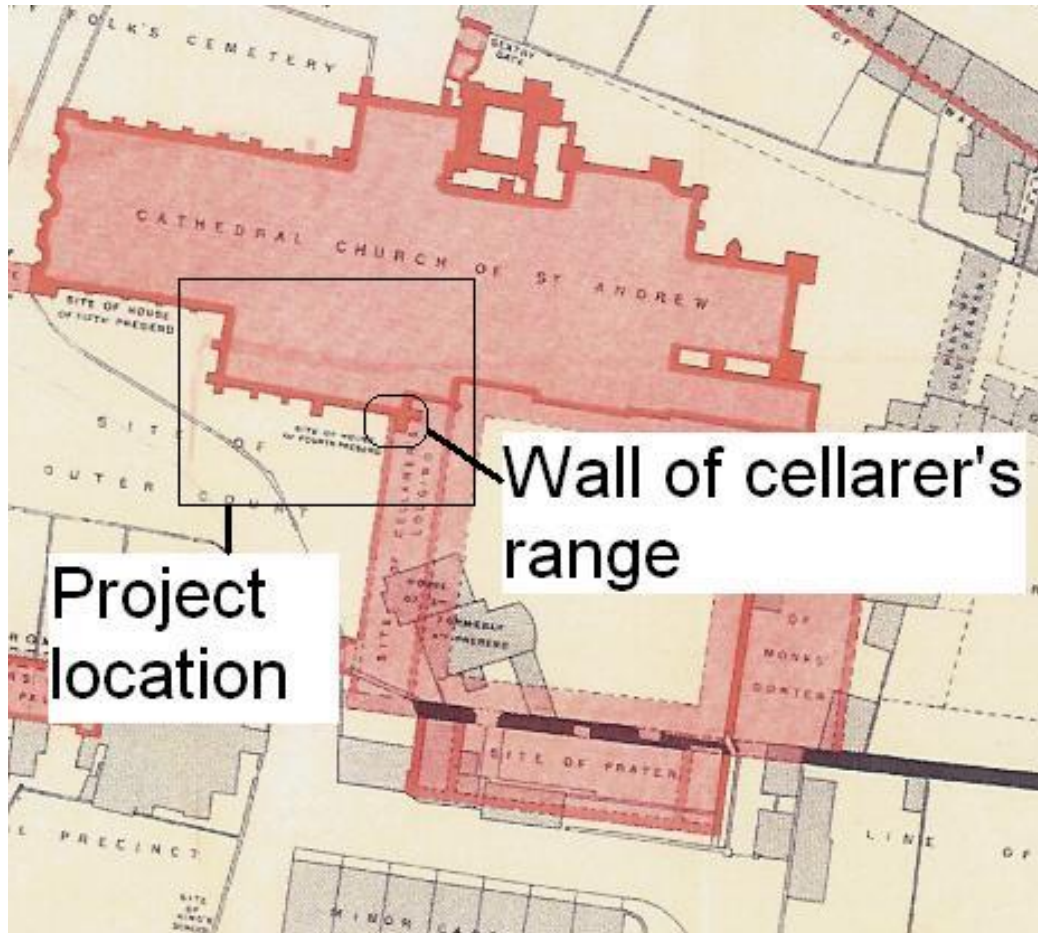
Report of archaeological survey and watching brief in association with conservation work on the South Transept and Lady Chapel, 2007-8

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The Lady Chapel (foreground) and South Transept seen from the west.



St John Hope's survey of Rochester Cathedral from the late 1890s, showing the location of the works described in this report. The outline of the Cellarer's Range is shown on the west side of the cloister, with the location of the wall exposed in 2007 indicated.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Photographic survey work and an archaeological watching brief were carried out on the South Transept and Lady Chapel at Rochester Cathedral during 2007-8. This was in association with a substantial programme of conservation work carried out with grant-aid from English Heritage and the Wolfson Foundation. The greater part of the archaeological input consisted of making a basic photographic record of the areas of building that would be the subject of conservation works. A watching brief was also carried out on seemingly very superficial work to repair a brick and concrete footpath at ground level. The value of this attentive approach was demonstrated when a substantial stone wall or foundation was uncovered immediately under the existing paving close to the south-east corner of the transept. The masonry is interpreted as the outer (west) wall of the Cellarer's Lodgings, a substantial building range

that ran fully along the west side of the cloister. This short report describes the approach taken to the archaeological work and the results of it.

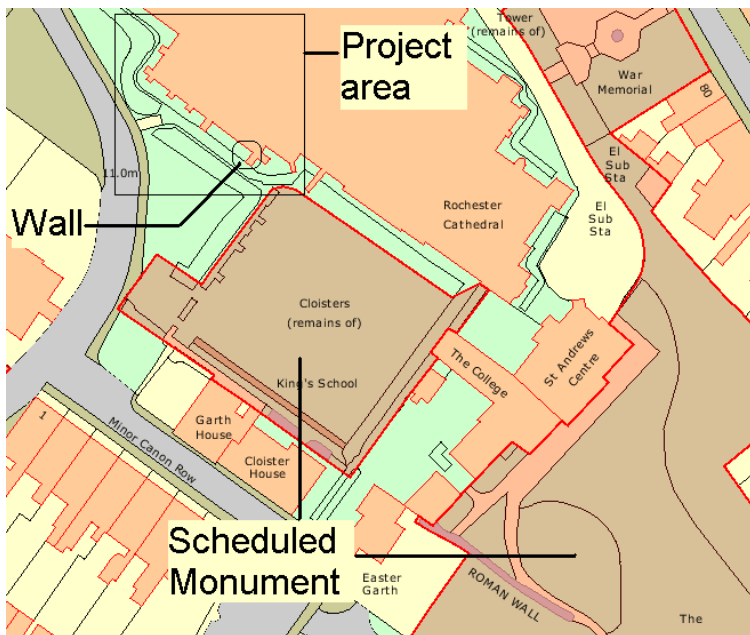
INTRODUCTION

Historic buildings tend to require a near-continual process of conservation, maintenance and repair if they are to be retained for the future. This can be a

complex and expensive process, especially for substantial buildings and estates. Rochester Cathedral is a classic example of this. Huge sums of money have been spent on its walls and roofs over many years, with a history of conservation projects going back to the 19th century at least. This is a continuing process, however, and in any given year a substantial amount of relatively routine maintenance and repair is all but inevitable. Occasionally more substantial investment is required to carry out major campaigns of repair and conservation. This has been the case over the last few years at Rochester, thanks in large part to the

cathedrals grant scheme funded by the Wolfson Foundation and English Heritage, and administered by the latter. Once such campaign focussed on the South Transept and Lady Chapel during the 2007-8 financial year. While some work was carried out internally, the main concentration was on the outer walls. Much of the stonework needed attention here, although stone replacements were kept to the minimum possible.

The conservation project was specified by Ian Stewart, Surveyor of the Fabric at Rochester Cathedral, and carried out by Universal Stone Ltd under his direction. Marked up survey drawings and the specification described in some detail the extent of stone replacement, cleaning (internally and externally), pointing and other repairs that were necessary. There was also a ground-level element to the project, in that the existing brick and concrete paving along the outside of the transept and chapel needed re-laying. An application for permission to proceed was lodged with the cathedral's Fabric Advisory Committee in accordance with normal procedure. This was copied to the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE), whose response was to request that a programme of archaeological survey be carried out in advance of and during the work, along with a watching brief when the paving was being renewed. The site lies adjacent to but wholly outside of the cloister, one of the cathedral's Scheduled Monuments designated for their archaeological potential (see plan above). Scheduled Monument Consent was therefore not required.



SURVEY AND RECORDING METHODS

The CFCE's request involved carrying out a simple photographic survey of the area covered by the conservation works. The particular concern was to make a record of the areas where stone replacement would be necessary before work began. It was also agreed that some photographs would be taken during the contract as well. The watching brief was expected to be straightforward given that the work only required the lifting of the existing surfaces and their bedding, followed by re-instatement (for the bricks) or replacement (for the concrete) at the same level as existing on a new base.

The following schedule of formal visits was maintained. Other more brief visits were not logged because no photographs or other records were made at the time.

- 19 June 2007, by Graham Keevill. Sixty-eight pre-contract digital and 36 slide photographs of the interior and exterior work areas, with details of heavily eroded stones that would need replacing.
- 24 July 2007, by Graham Keevill. Ten additional pre-contract photographs (digital only) of the external clasping buttresses at the south-west corner of the Lady Chapel, showing details of the stone erosion here.
- 19 October 2007, by Graham Keevill. Thirteen digital photographs taken during contract, with general views and details of work where stones were being replaced.
- 22 November 2007, by Graham Keevill. Watching brief on paving works. Ten digital photographs of the western and central portion of the work. No archaeology exposed.
- 27 November 2007, by Graham Keevill. Watching brief on paving works. Masonry wall or foundation exposed. Forty-five digital photographs with details of the wall and general/contextual photographs of the work area and the west side of the cloister.
- January-February 2008, two visits by Alan Ward when Graham Keevill was away on business in Scotland. Watching brief on paving works where scaffolding had been. Three colour slide photographs.

The digital photographic archive on CD is arranged in folders corresponding to and referenced with these dates. The colour slides are held in archive folders. Bernard Worssam took other photographs during his survey of the geology and petrological source of the building stones on the external elevations. A copy of his report is on the project archive CD.

The survey work was carried out at English Heritage's Level 2,¹ and was thus predominantly photographic, but the Surveyor of the Fabric's survey drawings were also used on site for reference purposes. The watching brief involved checking progress of the excavations and examining the exposed surfaces. During the second watching brief visit a stretch of stone wall or foundation running across the footpath was examined, drawn and photographically recorded. The wall's upper surface lay at the base level needed for the new paving, so there was no impact upon the masonry.

¹ In accordance with English Heritage's *Understanding Historic Buildings: a Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006).

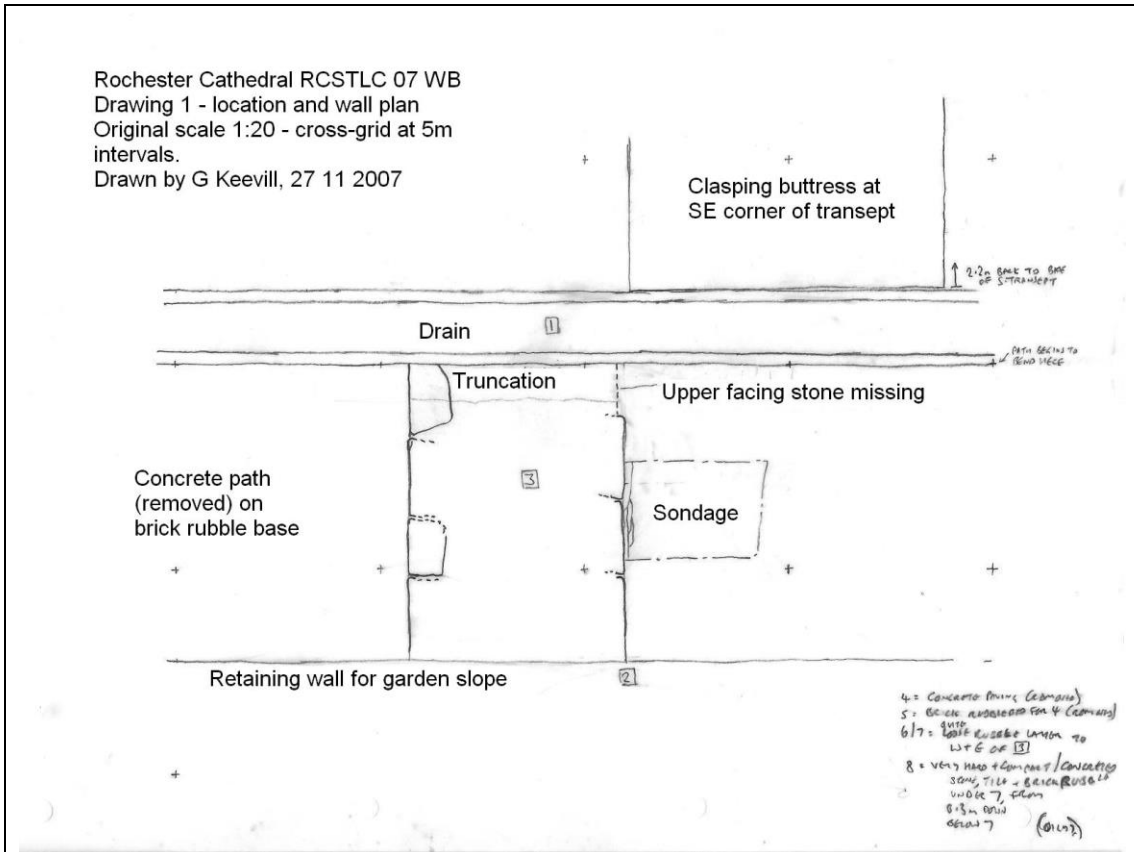
Photographs (whether for the survey or the watching brief) were mostly captured digitally but some images were also taken on standard media (colour slide). A small selection of the digital photographs has been used in this report, and all have been burned to CD as part of the project archive. One copy each of this is to be deposited with the National Monuments Record (English Heritage), the Kent Historic Environment Record and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England. The full archive set will be retained by the Dean and Chapter.

Most of the digital photographs were taken with a Fuji FinePix 9500 digital SLR-equivalent camera operating at its highest resolution (9.1Mp), with some taken with a Fuji FinePix F650 compact camera, also operating at its highest setting (6Mp). Images were captured mostly in colour, with monochrome (black and white) duplicates taken where this was felt to be necessary or useful. The FinePix 9500 was usually mounted on a tripod and operated with a remote cable shutter release. This helps to achieve stability, and minimises the need for flash photography. The F650 was hand-held, and the flash was used on internal photographs. The standard media (colour slide) photographs were taken with an Olympus OM-1N SLR camera using Fuji Sensia 200ASA slide film.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESULTS

No further description of the survey photographs is required as they are self-explanatory, especially in the case of the pre-contract ones, but a simple catalogue of locations is provided in Appendix 1, using the architect's plans and elevations. A simple description and interpretation of the archaeological watching brief results is provided here. The location of the watching brief is shown on the plans on pages 3 and 4, and the scanned site drawing is included on page 7 (not to original scale).

The concrete footpath (4) and its compact brick rubble base (5) were removed as part of the process, but the brick drain (1) and the retaining wall (2) on the north and south sides respectively were retained. These are of no importance except that the path sealed the archaeology below. The brick rubble rested directly on fairly loose rubble in a dark brown silty soil matrix. This was recorded as layer 6 to the west, and layer 7 to the east, of the most significant feature uncovered. This was a stone wall or foundation (3) running at a right-angle across the pathway. The surviving upper surface lay directly beneath the brick rubble base (4). The wall was immediately adjacent to the west face of the southern clasping buttress on the south-east corner of the transept. The masonry was 1.05m wide, and with a rubble core and facing stones of Kentish rag. One of these was missing on the east face where a shallow area had been truncated (cut away) by the construction of the brick drain. Otherwise the remaining part of the wall was in good condition. A 0.5m-wide and 0.7m-long sondage was dug down the east face of the wall to a maximum depth of 0.5m. The masonry appeared to be laid in courses, and continued beyond the base of the sondage.



Plan (above) and photograph (below) of wall 3 viewed from the east showing the excavated sondage. 1m scale in equal 0.5m halves.



The loose rubble (7) was present for the first 0.3m of the excavated sondage. It sealed a very hard and compacted layer of stone, tile and brick rubble (8), which had a distinctive 'oily' appearance and aroma. This layer continued to beneath the maximum excavated depth and was visible in all faces of the sondage.

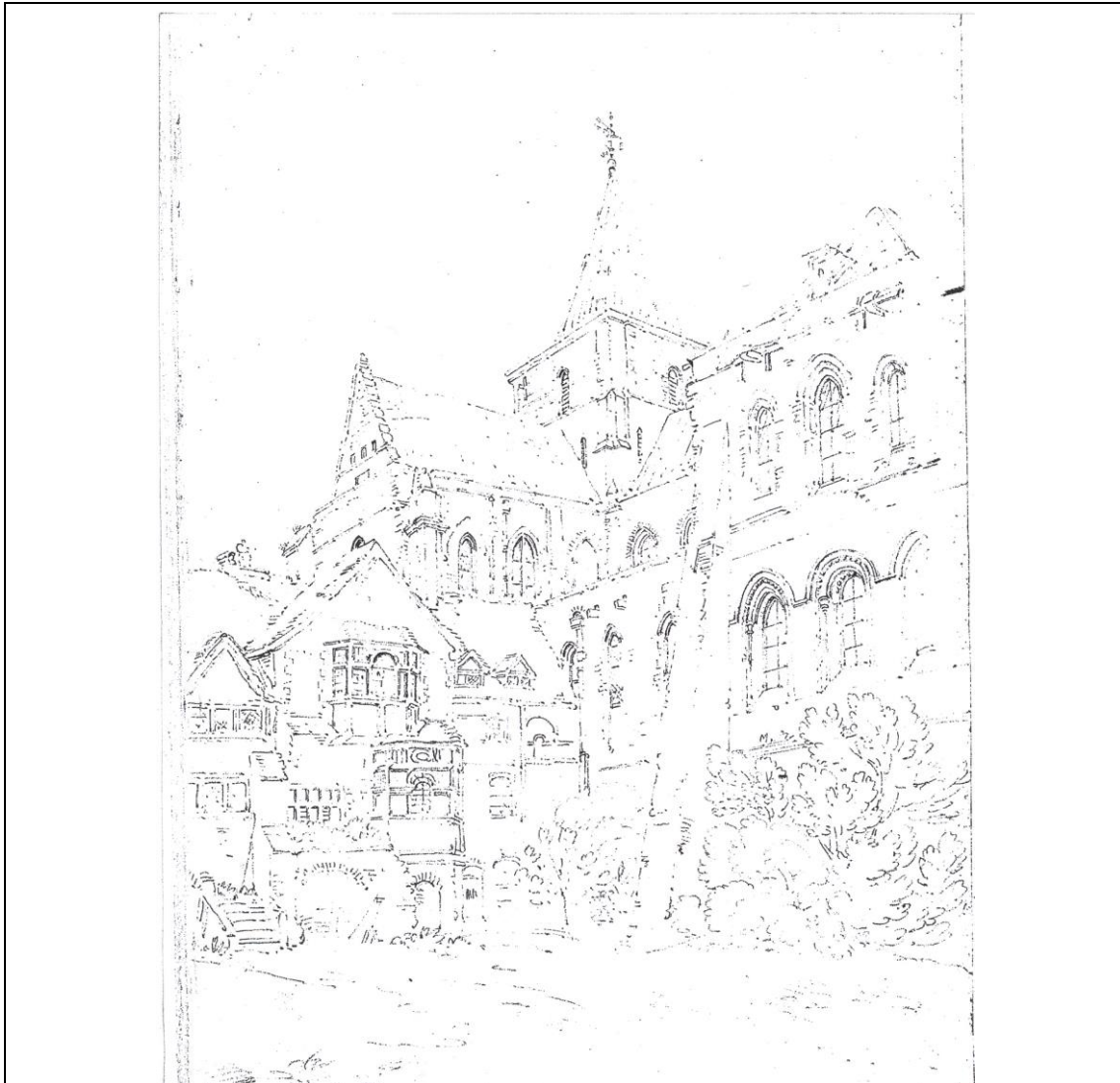
The paving to the north of the brick drain had to be kept in place when wall 3 was discovered because the scaffolding here precluded excavation at the time. The excavation continued here in January-February 2008 once the scaffolding had been removed. The watching brief recommenced at this stage but no trace of the wall was seen extending north beyond the drain. The level was slightly higher here, and it is possible that the wall lay immediately below the required depth of excavation. Alternatively it may have been removed at some time in the past. Two fragments of bone were found on the surface immediately below the base for the paving here, but were not retained.

No deposits with potential for environmental archaeology were encountered during the watching brief, and so no soil samples were taken. A few artefacts were noted, but these only consisted of a few small pieces of post-medieval and Victorian pottery and tile, all from modern contexts. These finds had no archaeological or interpretative interest and they were not retained.

INTERPRETATION

Masonry structure 3 was clearly medieval in character, and the exposed part would appear to represent a standing wall rather than a foundation. The top facing stones and the courses exposed in the (albeit limited) sondage were carefully laid and well built, in a fashion not to be expected in foundations. The wall was in precisely the position anticipated for the outer (west) wall of the Cellarer's Lodging or Range on St John Hope's plan of the cathedral (see page 3). There is no obvious reason to doubt that wall does indeed belong to the Cellarer's Range. The latter survived the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and indeed is shown in a remarkable sketch of 1801 (see following page). Sadly the building was demolished c 1805, at which point a Prebendal House was built in the south-west corner of the cloister. The compacted rubble (8) found against the east face of the wall in the sondage can be interpreted as demolition rubble dating from around 1805. The subsequent layers (6 and 7) are likely to date from the re-landscaping of the cloister and adjacent areas in the mid-late 1930s.

It was disappointing that the wall was not seen under the paving to the north of the drain. The Cellarer's Range was a 12th-century structure in origin, whereas the south transept was rebuilt in the following century. It had been hoped, therefore, that the excavations would expose the point at which the transept wall would presumably have cut away the north end of the Cellarer's Range. Sadly this did not occur, and a separate excavation would now be necessary to prove this point.



1801 sketch of the cloister and the Cellarer's Range just before its demolition

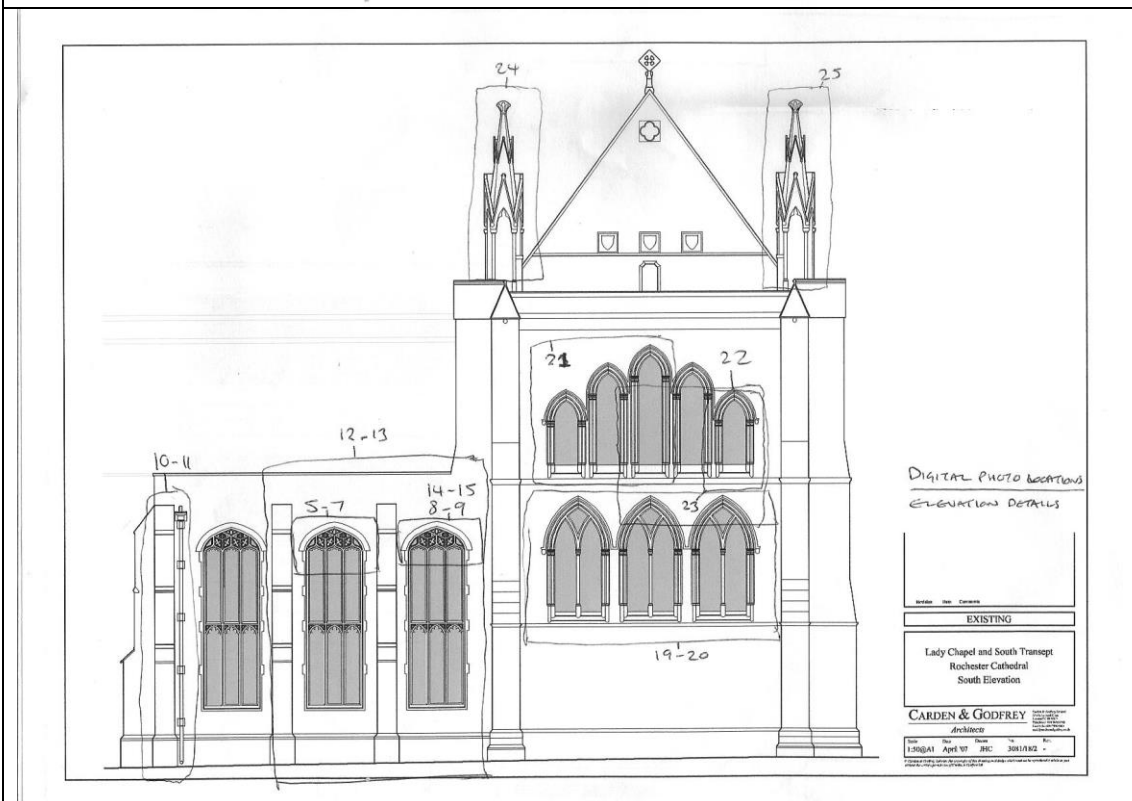
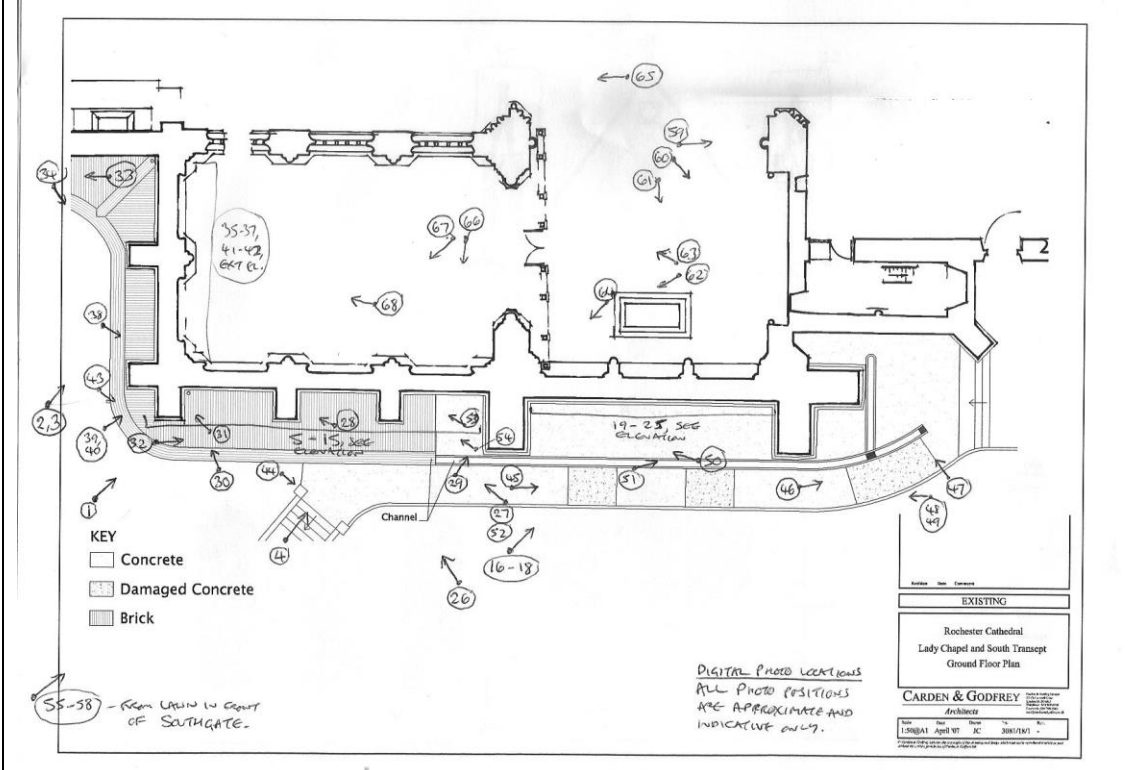
Graham Keevill
Archaeological Consultant to the Dean and Chapter of Rochester
5 March 2009

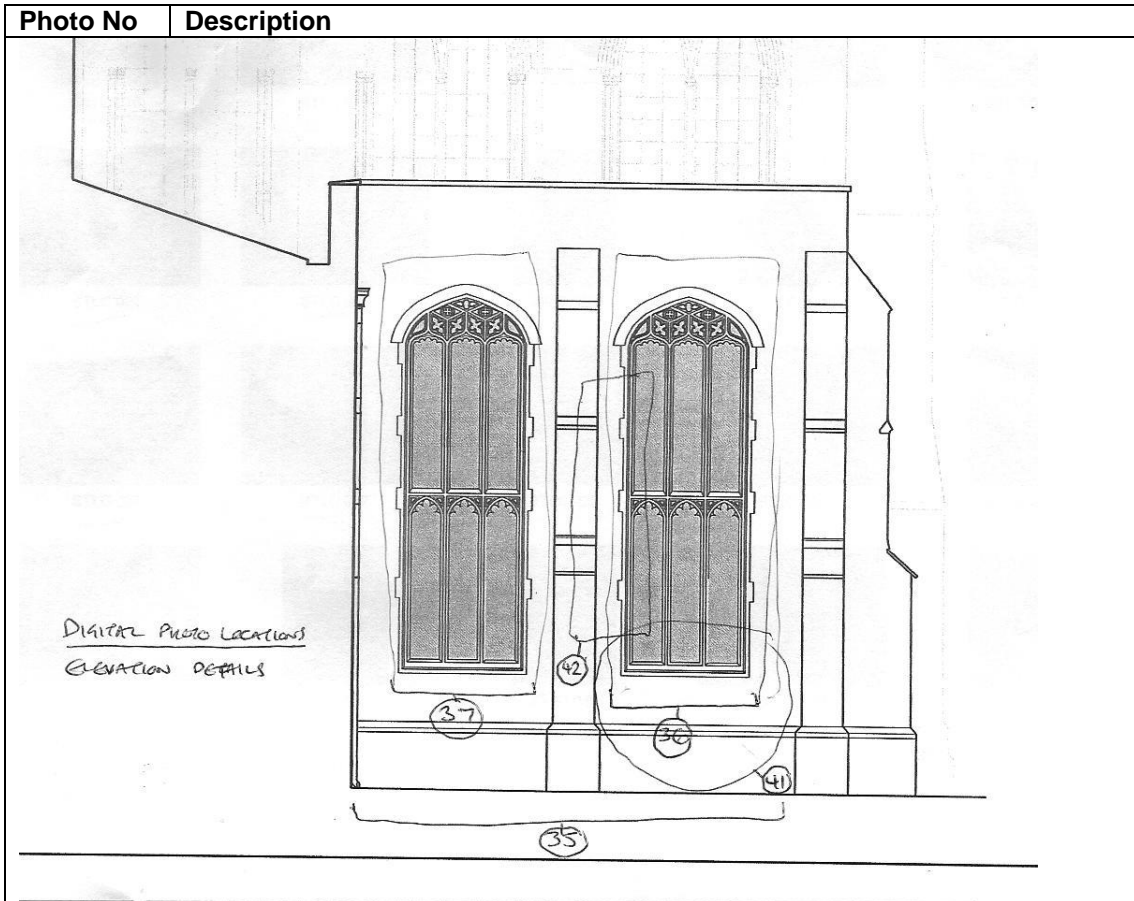
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Dr Edwina Bell, Cathedral Administrator, and Ian Stewart, Surveyor of the Fabric, for their help throughout this project. I am also grateful to the staff of Universal Stone Ltd for their help and co-operation. I am also very grateful to Allie Nickell of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England for advice and assistance. Alan Ward assisted in the watching brief during January/February 2008 during my absence on business in Scotland.

APPENDIX 1: CATALOGUE OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo No	Description
Folder: Photos 19 6 07 (all prefixed STLC) – see plans for location and direction of photos	





Folder: Photos 24 07 07
 113-122 Photos at ground level of clasping buttresses at SW corner of the Lady Chapel.
Folder: Photos 19 10 07 (0989-95, 1000-5), 22 11 07 (1014-25) and 27 11 07 (1098-1142)

