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THE TOMB OF PRIOR HUNTON IN ST JAMES' CHURCH, HUNTON, HANTS, AND THE BURIALS IN THE LADY CHAPEL OF WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

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ABSTRACT

A monument within the north wall of St James' Church, Hunton has traditionally been attributed to Thomas Hunton, prior of St Swithun's Winchester 1470–98, an identification that suited its decorative style. Building works in 2005–6 included an investigation of the monument, which was found to mark the grave of an elderly man. The burial chamber had been formed within the walls of the church during its construction, lending weight to the theory that this was the founder's tomb. But there were no indications that this was the grave of a priest, and the identification with Prior Hunton contradicted recently discovered documentary evidence that the prior had been buried in Winchester Cathedral. The design of the decorative tomb-front is discussed, and evidence is presented showing that the monument never included an effigy or even a top slab. In the second part of the paper the documentary and physical evidence for Hunton's burial in the cathedral is examined. It is concluded that Prior Hunton probably still lies buried in the Lady chapel whose remodelling he initiated; the grave at Hunton church may have been prepared for a major benefactor (not necessarily the prior), but could finally have been used for the burial of someone else.

INTRODUCTION

As part of major refurbishment works undertaken in 2005–6 at St James' Church, Hunton, the Parochial Church Council included the conservation of the church's only significant monument, the so-called 'tomb of Prior Hunton', which appeared to be deteriorating owing to a damp problem. Following a condition report by Cliveden Conservation Workshop Ltd. (Herridge 2005), a grant towards the conservation of the tomb was obtained from the Council for the Care of Churches, conditional on historical and archaeological investigation. This was undertaken by the present writer after the appropriate ecclesiastical consents had been obtained.

The monument bears neither effigy nor inscription, and at the start of the research it was therefore unclear whether it was a tomb or merely a cenotaph. Furthermore, the visible parts of the monument showed evident signs of post-medieval reconstruction. In order to solve the damp problem it was necessary to remove the water saturated material filling the upper part of the monument, and further investigation of the structure then proved that the grave beneath was indeed inhabited. The skeleton was examined in situ and the grave was backfilled as soon as possible.

The identity of the body was not established, but the position of the tomb, on the north side of the nave, and the fact that it was created as an integral part of the primary fabric of the church, suggested that it might be that of the patron or founder. Although it would be pleasant to think that the body was, as local tradition has long maintained, Thomas Hunton, Prior of the Benedictine Priory of St Swithun, Winchester (d. 1498), such an interpretation is at variance with the explicit statement of an early sixteenth-century chronicler, written within four decades of the prior's death, that he was buried in Winchester Cathedral. Thus in the second part of this paper the focus of investigation moves to the cathedral and the documentary and

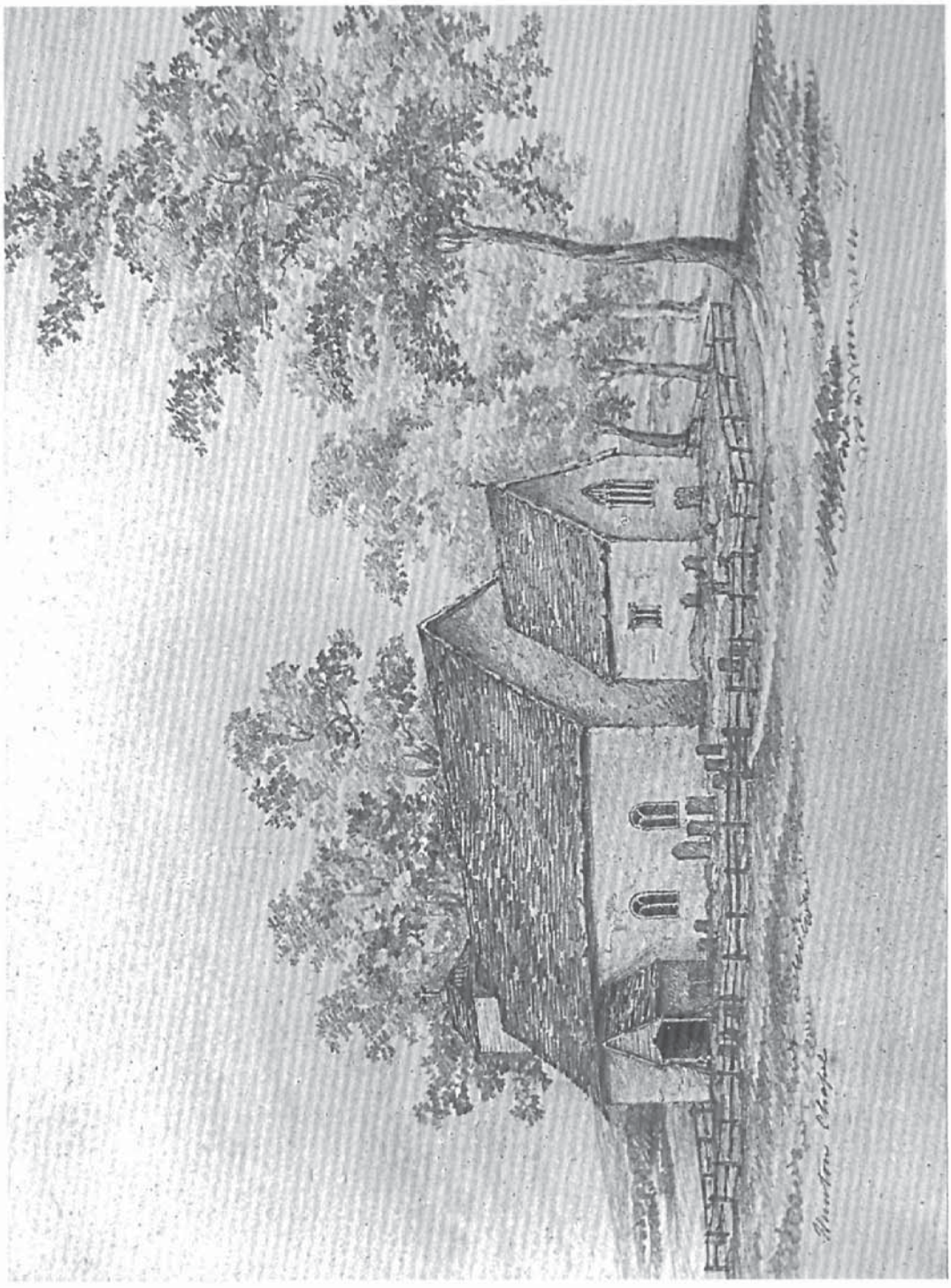

Fig. 1 Pencil drawing of 'Hunton Chapel' in the early 19th century. *Parochial Church Council of St James' Church, Hunton*

physical evidence for Hunton's burial at Winchester is examined.

HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH

Historical background

Hunton is a small village mid-way between Wonston and Stoke Charity, on the north side of the River Dever (OS Grid Ref SU 481 396). Its church originated as a parochial chapel attached to Crawley (Elders 1999). The first secure reference to the chapel occurs in 1291 ('*Crawley cum capella*'), but the link between Crawley and Hunton is indicated by a charter of 909 whereby King Edward the Elder granted lands at Crawley, Ampfield, and Hunton to Bishop Frithestan (Kemble item 609; Sawyer item 827); and thereafter Hunton remained a dependency of the land at Crawley (Grundy 1926, 147–8 (item 174)). In 1909 the Dean and Chapter of Winchester became patrons, and the following year the rector of Stoke Charity was licensed as perpetual curate of Hunton, which thereby effectively became a parish church. Since 1939 the benefice has been combined with Stoke Charity (Edwards 2006).

It is uncertain whether the present, demonstrably fifteenth-century church occupies the exact site of its predecessor. A local miller in the 1890s, the parish clerk and sexton Edmund Hillary, reported that 'during a very dry summer he was able to trace in the ground some twenty yards to the north of the present church, the outlines of foundations of a building of similar size and shape to the existing church' (King n.d., 17). It is conceivable that the church changed its location at the time of an earlier rebuild, but the 'outlines' seen by the parish clerk could have been of some other building. There are obvious signs (such as platform-like areas) of former buildings in the field north of the churchyard, presumably cottages that have been demolished; the 1871 Ordnance Survey sheet shows a clear site by that date (Hampshire sheet 33W).

From the early nineteenth century a little more written information is available about the fabric of the building (Elders 1999, *passim*). Repairs are documented in 1834 (at a cost of £150). Much more extensive works took place in 1865–6. They cost £700, contributed by Robert Pitter, who lived in Hunton Manor House, and included the reconstruction of the western bell turret, whose new design included a crenellated parapet (King n.d., 17). In 1936 further works took place, and the parapet was replaced by a short wooden belfry with a pitched roof (HRO 9M49/B.136). At the same time the chancel, north wall of the nave, and east ends of the nave side walls were replastered. The remainder of the nave was probably replastered during 'extensive repair works' in 1948 (Edwards 2006).

The appearance of the church before the 1865 works is shown in an early nineteenth-century pencil sketch of 'Hunton Chapel' (Fig. 1), discovered at Farnham Castle by Archdeacon Fearon who gave it to the church, where it is normally displayed. It shows a western turret terminating in a low pyramidal tiled roof, with a cross at the apex: amongst other features discussed below, the absence of crenellations indicates a date before 1865–6.

Description

Exterior (Fig. 2)

In its present form the church comprises a rectangular nave, measuring 14.72m × 7.48m externally, with a narrower, slightly irregular eastern chancel. This has a mean length of 4.76m and width of 3.85m. The walls are approximately 700mm thick. The south wall is faced in checker brick of late eighteenth-century character, on a stone plinth which is presumably earlier. The wall leans noticeably southwards, and wide buttresses in brick with flint panelling have subsequently been added (they clearly abut the brickwork of the walls). The buttresses have insubstantial foundations and one of them bridges a tomb. They are not shown on the pre–1865 pencil drawing, and the dimensions of the bricks confirms that they are nineteenth-century, almost certainly

Fig. 2 Exterior of St James' Church, Hunton, from SE

added in 1865–6. The exterior of the north wall of the nave is rendered, probably over flint and rubble. Four buttresses on this side are similar in design to those of the south elevation of the nave and must be of the same date. The pair flanking the window above the 'Hunton tomb' have certainly been repointed in the twentieth century and might even have been rebuilt, but the window between them appears to be identical to those of the 1865 refurbishment.

The nave windows are all nineteenth- or twentieth-century replacements and are of Portland stone. They comprise paired lights with cinquefoil heads, in rectangular surrounds, probably replicating the earlier window tracery. Although the cinquefoil heads are not obviously depicted in the pre–1865 pencil drawing it is likely that the artist simplified these small details. The windows in the south wall of the nave are set vertically, rather than in the sloping plane of the earlier wall.

Towards the west end of the south wall is the entrance porch, which abuts the eighteenth-century fabric and whose detailing (notably the softwood roof timbers replicating a medieval roof) suggests a nineteenth-century date, and indeed a porch of different design is shown in the pre–1865 sketch. This porch shelters a doorway which, as the *Victoria County History* observes, is – together with the so-called Hunton tomb – the oldest feature of the church (VCHH iii, 412). Its two-centred arch is formed of three blocks of chalk clunch. Some claw-chisel tooling survives: the absence of weathering of such a soft stone suggests that the doorway has always been sheltered within a porch. The front arris of the arch has a broad hollow chamfer, which recurs on

the surviving blocks at the foot of the jambs, but the two jambs have been mostly rebuilt in brick, probably in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The left-hand (west) jamb bears the crudely inscribed initials TB (or less probably TD) and IT and the date 1785. This graffito seems too crudely carved to commemorate the churchwardens responsible for the alterations, but does at least provide an *ante quem* date for the brickwork, which may be the same as the brick facing of the entire south wall of the church.

The west turret, datable to 1865–6, is in brick with flint panels whose fabric is very similar to that of the buttresses. But the reconstruction of the earlier turret may also have involved that of the entire west façade, for the turret is well bonded by means of brickwork into the coursed flints of the façade; and, crucially, there is no sign of the change in roof pitch that was decried in 1866 (Elders 1999). The west façade is rather crudely bonded to the earlier brick facing of the side walls of the nave.

The chancel is faced in uncoursed flint and occasional greensand and other rubble, on a stone plinth. Together with the flanking east wall of the nave these are the church's oldest visible wall surfaces. The east window has three lights and Perpendicular tracery of fifteenth-century style. Similar tracery is depicted in the pre–1865 drawing, but the entire window has been replaced in Bath stone. Although this replacement might have taken place in 1865–6, it is perhaps more likely to be contemporary with the window glass. This commemorates a former incumbent, the Venerable Philip Jacob, archdeacon of Winchester (d. 1884), and was created in 1885 by the London firm Cox sons, Buckley and Co. Almost certainly of still later date are the chancel's north-east and south-east quoins and the kneeler stones and flat coping of the east front. The chancel also has a Portland stone south window matching those of the nave. In the east wall of the nave, north of the chancel, an external memorial tablet commemorates Sarah, wife of Thomas Jeffery, d. 1728.

The roofs of the church are of tile and, as is evident internally, were reconstructed during the 1860s works. The pitch of the nave roof was increased in 1865–6, as noted above.

Interior

In the nave the low, seven-canted timber roof structure of 1865–6 is a dominant feature of the eastward view. The walls are rendered in hard cement and whitewashed. The church appears to have been repaved in 1865–6. The present floor slabs retain their tooling and are likely therefore to be of mid-nineteenth century date or later; the wooden pew platforms were replaced in 1935 (HRO 9M.49/B.136), replacing platforms contemporary with the pews themselves, which must date from 1866. The pews were, however, painted in a grained effect in 1948. A four-centred arch, enclosing a spindly wooden chancel screen of 1919, leads from the nave into the chancel with no immediate change in floor level, though the sanctuary is raised by one step.

THE 'TOMB OF PRIOR HUNTON'

Introduction

The monument traditionally said to contain the mortal remains of Prior Hunton (Fig. 3) stands in a recess in the north wall of the nave, in the easternmost bay, off-set slightly east of the centreline of the window. The recess comprises a very flat four-centred arch, 2065mm wide at the front, tapering to 2020mm at the rear. The apex is 769mm above the floor at the front of the monument, but slopes down slightly to 758mm at the back. These dimensions exclude a plain chamfer, 32–38mm wide, which runs around the front of the recess. The total depth from the face of the wall to the back of the recess is 541mm at the apex, increasing to 563mm at the level of the top surface of the tomb. This represents nearly two-thirds of the total thickness of the nave wall at this point (870mm), so the average thickness of the wall at the rear of the recess is only 350mm. The recess is rendered internally in a very hard cement, which overlaps the capping of the tomb and is of mid-twentieth century date. Similar render appears to cover

Fig. 3 The monument before excavation and subsequent conservation

all internal walls of the church. The nature of the walling behind the render within the recess has not been established.

The front of the tomb is formed of two slabs of chalk, with a total width of 2091mm, rising 329–345mm above the pavement. This tomb-front is decorated with quatrefoils and other motifs, analysed in great detail below. The top edge is exposed, and bears graffiti and other marks. The top of the monument is a flat, rendered surface. This capping was of soft lime mortar render, 15–19mm thick, before it was replaced during the conservation works of 2006, and was extremely damp, water having penetrated the nave wall or risen up through the loose fill beneath the capping. A bright green algal slime coated the render and the lower parts of the slabs forming the tomb-front. The capping sounded hollow when tapped and the fill beneath appeared to have subsided.

The excavation

Methodology

Even before it was opened up, it was clear that the tomb had been subject to unskilled repairs, probably within the past century. Crucially, the capping had been patched in two areas using hard Portland cement. Removal of these patches provided the first glimpse of the fill within the monument. It was immediately clear from the ceramic content (notably post-medieval tile and brick fragments) that the material immediately below the capping was not medieval, and a decision was therefore made to continue the excavation in order to devise a method for dealing with the water problem.

The remainder of the capping was removed, and in the first instance a narrow, exploratory trench was excavated immediately behind the chalk slabs and down to floor level. It was judged that if the excavation was not taken deeper still, this would at least provide the opportunity of inserting a damp-proof membrane to protect the slabs from moisture passing from the damp infill within the monument. It soon became clear that the present fill was of recent date, to a depth well below floor level, and that the slabs forming the tomb-front had been reset, almost certainly when the church was repaved in 1866. A decision was therefore taken to continue the excavation, initially in the form of a *sondage* at the west end of the monument, in order to determine the nature of its construction.

The extent of post-medieval fill having been determined, the *sondage* was continued at the east end of the monument in order to determine the full depth of the structure. At this stage it remained uncertain whether the unmarked monument really was a grave, a cenotaph, or even some completely different structure, such as the remains of an Easter Sepulchre. The discovery of an articulated skeleton therefore came as a surprise.

Excavation conditions were extremely difficult. Apart from the cramped nature of the interior of the monument (entered via the letter-box like slot beneath the arch), the fill at the bottom of the grave was saturated with water, and consisted of a sticky clay. The summer of 2006 was characterised by a drought; during a normal summer the bottom of the excavation might well have reached the water table. Constraints of space dictated that the entire skeleton could not be exposed without removing the bones, and this was not felt appropriate. Accordingly, the investigation of the skeleton, down to the level of the knees, was carried out entirely in situ, with the exception of the cranium, which was temporarily removed (though remaining within the church precincts) for washing and more detailed recording.

The excavation was completed on 26 September 2006 and the grave was partially backfilled to within 400mm of floor level. A space was left above this level to permit air circulation, with a view to preventing the moisture penetration that previously threatened to destroy the decorative features of the monument.

The tomb cavity

The excavation proved conclusively that the monument was contemporary with the first construction of the church. The recess, of which only about one-third rises above floor level (Fig. 4), terminating in the four-centred arch described above, was found to continue downwards to the bottom of the foundations of the walls around it, a depth of 888mm below the floor, and 1325mm below the present external ground level.

These walls were founded on a basal layer of large flints, laid at the bottom of the foundation trenches, whose depth was probably determined by the water table. Above the large flints the footings of the nave walls were constructed in flint and rubble in a very hard mortar. These foundations were presumably trench-built, but the face of the foundation walls lay outside the area of excavation. The tomb chamber had been planned from the outset, being reserved within the footings, and when construction reached pavement level the inner faces of the chamber had been continued upwards as the recess in the nave wall, terminating in the four-centred arch already described.

Whereas the north, west, and east sides of the grave were formed of the actual masonry of the nave wall, the south side of the cavity had to be specially built as a retaining wall. As shown in the cross-sectional drawing (Fig. 5), this wall is not vertical, but slopes northwards. This was undoubtedly a deliberate design feature, intended to provide a larger area at the bottom of the grave without reducing the thickness of the remaining wall footings to a dangerous extent.

The retaining wall appeared to comprise two phases. The lower part, 558mm above foundation level, was constructed of flint and rubble similar to the materials of the nave wall. Then there was a change in construction technique, and some red brick was apparent. Both phases were rendered. The flint and rubble was

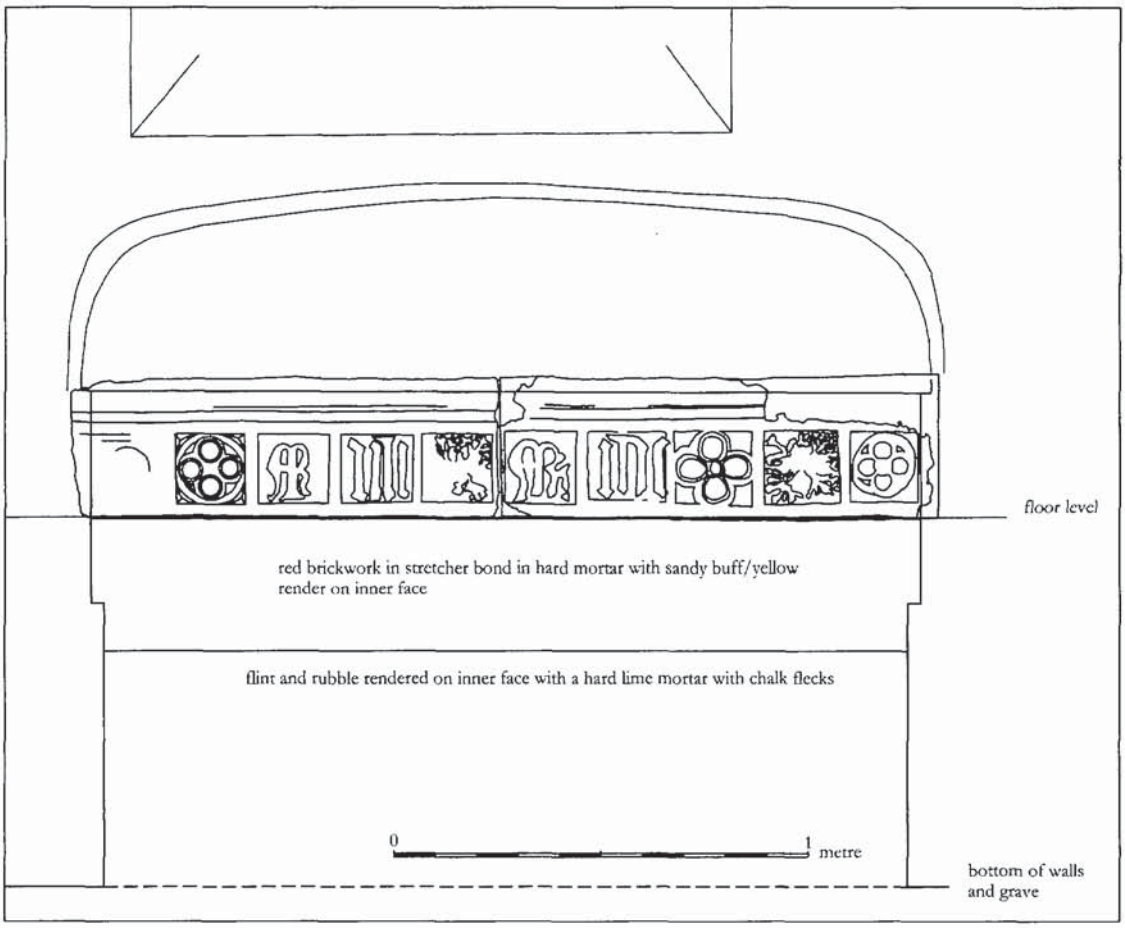

Fig. 4 South elevation of monument, showing below-ground structure of the front retaining wall of the tomb cavity

rendered in a very hard, pale lime mortar containing fragments of unburnt chalk up to 4mm in diameter. This was similar to the render of the entire north side of the cavity. The render over the later phase of red brickwork was a hard, yellow/buff lime mortar which appeared distinct in character from that previously described. The use of brick and the different render suggested that this part of the retaining wall might have been rebuilt, most probably during the reflooring of the nave in 1866. As will be seen, this conjecture is supported by the nature of the fill within the monument, which shows evidence of disturbance to a depth of 190mm below the disjunction in the south wall of the tomb cavity.

The chalk slabs forming the front of the visible part of the monument were bedded on top of the retaining wall, in what appeared to be Portland cement. This, together with other indications of refixing, suggested that the front had been taken apart and reassembled, probably during the 1865–6 works. The floor slabs, almost certainly of this period as noted above, ended flush with the front face of the slabs; the slabs were not however lifted, so the precise relationship between the floor and the retaining wall is unclear.

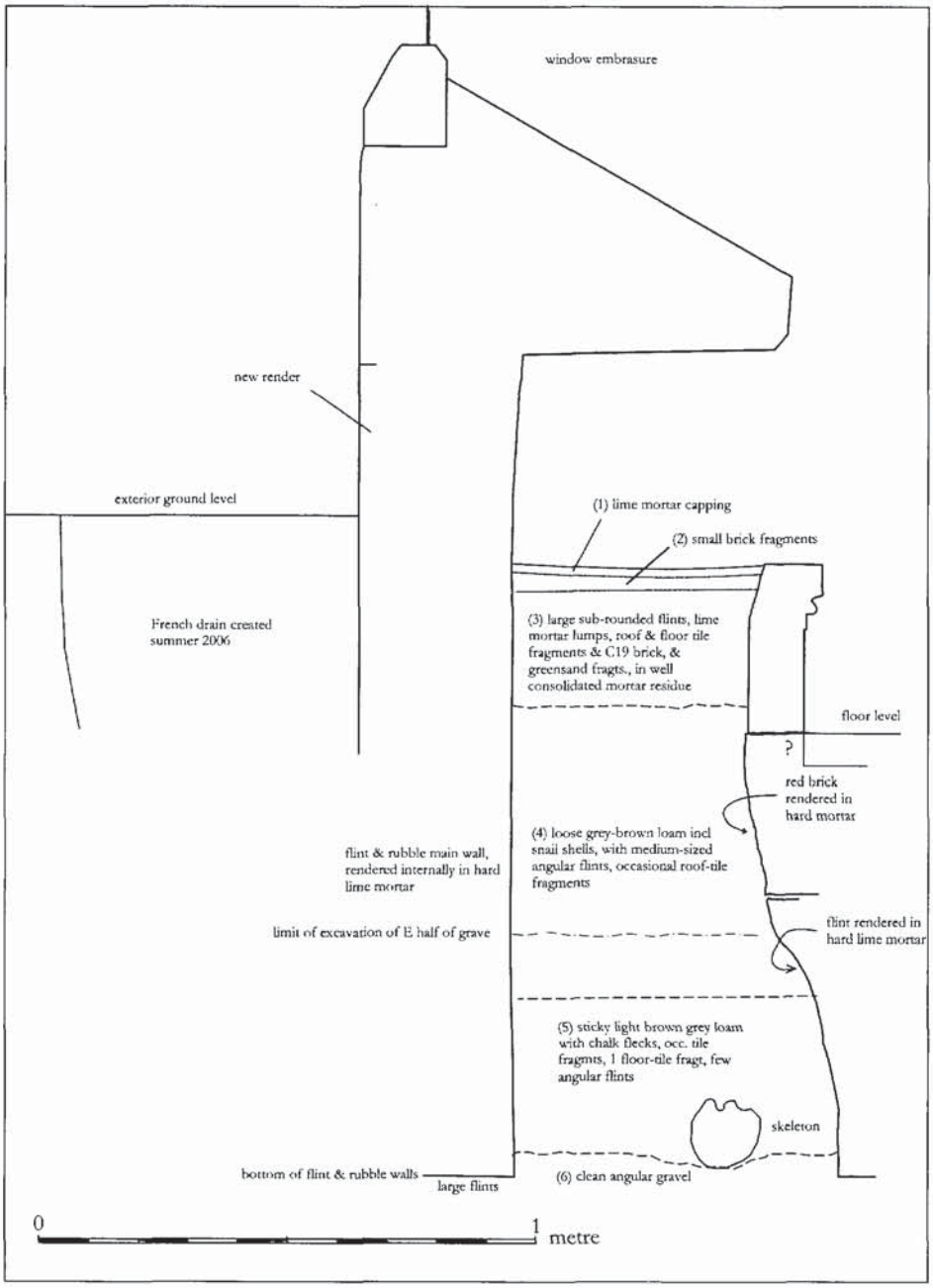

Fig. 5 Section through the monument looking east

The ends of the upper part of the tomb cavity and monument also showed signs of alteration. Below the level of the capping the ends of the cavity were formed of brickwork in hard cement, probably contemporary with the upper part of the front retaining wall. It seemed possible that the four-centred arch over the recess was formed of the same brickwork, but the hard cement render prevented confirmation of this point. As noted above, this render dates from the mid-twentieth century and overlapped the earlier lime-mortar capping of the monument until the latter was replaced in 2005.

The skeleton

At the start of the investigation it was by no means clear whether the monument marked a grave at all; and, if a grave, whether it had ever been occupied. The monument lacked any form of effigy or inscription. Furthermore, its traditional identification as the tomb of Prior Hunton contradicted manuscript evidence that the prior had been buried in his own cathedral church at Winchester. In addition, the fill within the tomb cavity seemed to indicate that it had previously been excavated to a depth of about 523mm below floor level. In the light of all these factors, the discovery of a skeleton came as a surprise (Fig. 6).

Owing to access problems, only part of the skeleton was exposed; the bones were not removed apart from the temporary lifting of the skull for photographic purposes (Fig. 7). The articulated skeleton was that of a mature adult male, of an estimated height of 1.66m (5ft. 6ins), assuming that the longbones of the leg were normally proportioned. The assumption seems reasonable given the position of the skeleton at the bottom of the grave: at this height the distance from the end walls to the crown of the head and the feet respectively would have been equal.

The individual was lying in a supine position, hands over the groin, the head turned slightly to the right. The conditions of burial are described later in this report.

Owing to the waterlogged conditions at the bottom of the cavity, the condition of the bones was only fair, and some were very friable.

The sex of the individual was indicated by the narrow sub-pubic angle (60°), and the shape of the pelvis, notably the narrow greater sciatic notches, which were almost parallel sided; also the robustness of the mastoid processes and other processes of the skull. The cranial index was 75.7 (breadth 140mm, length 185mm). Supra-orbital foramina were noted. The sutures of the skull were still visible, and in various stages of obliteration. The sagittal suture was completely obliterated, the squamous and lambdoid sutures nearly obliterated, but the coronal sutures were still apparent.

Almost all the teeth were lost before death, the only ones remaining *in situ* being the two lower canines. Apart from the front teeth already noted, the sockets of the lower incisors seemed partially healed (though some deterioration of the bone had occurred since death). The remaining sockets (pre-molars and molars) were completely obliterated. All the upper teeth appeared to have been lost ante mortem, and the sockets were healed, though not completely obliterated; again some degradation of the bone had occurred in the grave. The two remaining teeth were worn, and the right canine had a small caries cavity approximately 1.5mm in diameter. There was some build-up of calculus at the gum-line on the labial surface.

The cervical vertebrae were complete, and showed no obvious pathology such as fusion or eburnation, but the rims of the articulating surfaces were polished suggesting breakdown of the intervertebral discs. No pathology was noted in the remaining visible part of the skeleton. The epiphyses of the femora were completely united. The symphysial faces of the pubis were pitted and featureless, again suggesting an individual of advanced age (Brothwell 1981, 64–72).

Mode of burial

It is quite clear that the burial did not take place in a coffin, though of course a careful watch was kept for any indications that this had been the case. Staining of the gravel at the bottom of the excavation suggested that the corpse had

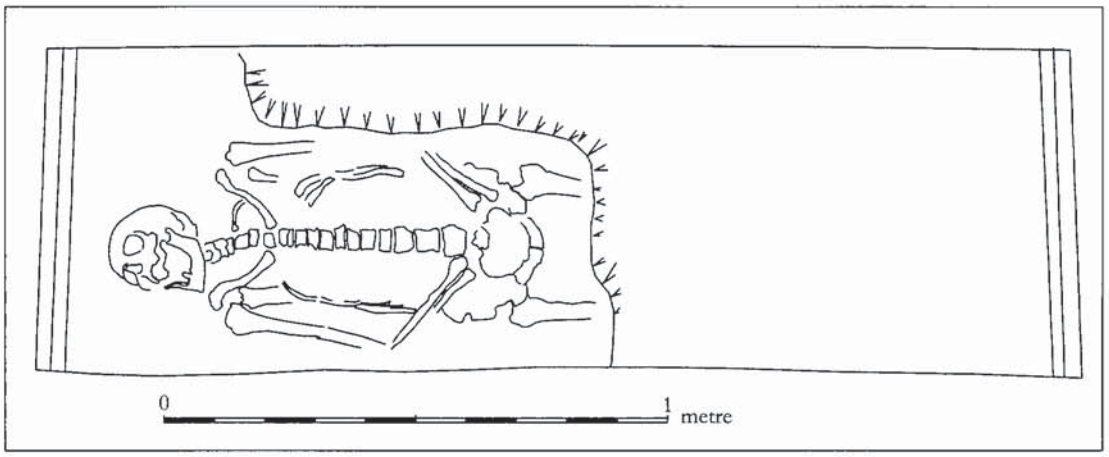

Fig. 6 Plan of bottom of tomb cavity

simply been lowered, presumably in a shroud, on to the natural gravel deposits at the bottom of the tomb cavity.

The absence of a coffin may perhaps be taken as evidence that burial did not occur whilst the church was under construction, but some time after. Once the monument had been created it would not have been possible to insert a coffin through the narrow slot beneath the four-centred arch; though of course there would have been more room to do this had the burial taken place before the tomb-front was set in place.

The absence of a coffin is, however, confirmed by another observation. The earth fill of the tomb chamber appears to have been poured in immediately after burial; the lowest layers comprised a dense clayey loam, and perceptible cavities remained around the arm-bones, presumably reflecting the shape of the arms before decomposition of the flesh occurred. The shrouded corpse would appear to have been lowered into the grave, which was backfilled with earth immediately.

Burial posture

The burial position (hands over pelvis) is probably of little or no value as an indicator of the status or occupation of the deceased. One authority (Daniell 1997, 118) has commented, 'The significance of burial position is problematical as there does not seem to be a universal trend across cemeteries. The most common positions are with the hands over the pelvis, arms crossed on the chest, or arms by the sides of the body.' The first position seems to be the most common.

Instances are often recorded of ecclesiastics being buried with chalices, often made of pewter for burial purposes; but in such cases the arms would probably have been arranged so that the individual was holding the chalice against his sternum. But in this case no grave-goods were discovered. This is particularly significant given the tradition that the grave was that of Prior Hunton. Had this been the case, it might have been expected that he would be buried with a chalice and, perhaps, with his ring. In short, there is no evidence for the status or occupation of the individual apart from the style and position of the monument.

The grave fill

The character of the grave fill supports the theory, adumbrated above, that the grave was partly reopened probably in the context of repairs to the monument above it, or the relaying of the church pavement. This account follows the order of deposition, starting with the earliest phases.

Fig. 7 Right lateral view of cranium showing bone remodelling of mandible following tooth loss

The natural deposits (Context 6) at the bottom of the excavation comprised clean, angular flint gravel, orange in colour, ranging in diameter from 15mm to 20mm. This gravel was presumably a fluvial deposit formed by the River Dever in the post-glacial period. As already noted, the corpse was laid directly on this gravel surface which formed the floor of the tomb cavity.

The first layer of fill to be deposited, at the time of burial (Context 5), was a sticky greyish loam, almost a clay, containing many small chalk fragments and some angular flints (typically 100–120mm long by 60–70mm in diameter, with blunt, spiky protuberances). This context also contained a substantial proportion (1.5Kg per 0.14 cu.m.) of building debris; mainly clay peg-tile fragments, also some amorphous lumps of Greensand, and one fragment of a black floor tile (T1). The roof tile fragments had adhering mortar, suggesting that they came from a demolished building rather than deriving from the construction of the present church. The Greensand is not a local material, but might have come from the dressings of an earlier building. The floor tile fragment was the most interesting artefact and is discussed more fully below.

Context 4 comprised a darker brown loam, again with angular flints, roof-tile fragments and tile flakes; also a considerable number of terrestrial snail shells. It also contained a fragment of floor tile (T2). The roof tiles in this context appeared identical in fabric, thickness, and manufacturing detail (notably the clear marking-out lines) to those from Context 5.

Context 3 was very different from the previous ones, consisting of large, sub-rounded flints (120–170mm in diameter), a high proportion (up to 40% by estimation) of lumps of lime mortar, and more ceramic debris: nineteenth-century brick and roof tile fragments. Four further pieces of late medieval floor tile were also found (T3–6)

The floor tile fragments (Fig. 8)

The floor tile fragments, one of which occurred in the primary grave fill (Context 5) are potentially the best indices for dating the actual burial, which need not necessarily be the same as the construction of the monument.

Context 5 was undoubtedly the primary fill of the grave, and the dating of the single floor tile fragment found in that layer, designated T1, is therefore crucial. It comprised only one corner of the tile, so the length of its edges could not be established. The tile was 35mm thick, with bevelled edges. There were no keys on the underside. The fabric was bright red, sandy, and homogeneous, with no evident inclusions. The tile was glazed a greenish black on the upper surface. The glaze was worn which, together with some adhering white lime mortar on the sides, suggested that it had been used in a previous building.

Fragment T2, from Context 4, was more complete, with an entire edge measuring 131mm. This tile was 28–30mm thick, with bevelled edges, and unkeyed. The fabric was buff to brown, less sandy than T1. It was glazed in a mottled rather metallic-looking black glaze showing no sign of wear. It had been bedded in a hard yellow-grey lime mortar. The differences in thickness and fabric between this fragment and T1 make it unlikely that they derived from the same pavement.

The remaining floor tile fragments are all from Context 3. Fragment T3 was designed from the outset as a half-tile, cut on the diagonal whilst the clay was still plastic, before firing. The square edges measured 134 x 134mm. The thickness varied from 28–30mm, with bevelled edges, and the underside was unkeyed. The fabric was brownish-red. The glaze was an opaque cream colour, showing some wear. The tile had been bedded in a hard yellow-grey mortar. On the basis of edge dimensions, thickness, and bedding mortar, this fragment may possibly have formed part of the same pavement as T2.

Diagonally cut tiles such as T3 were produced for incorporation in pavements where all the tiles were set diagonally, as in the early sixteenth-century Oxenbridge chapel at St George's Church, Brede, East Sussex; the cut tiles formed the borders. It is possible that fragments T2 and T3 derived from a checker floor of this sort.

All the other fragments derived from Context 3. T4 lacked a measurable edge. The thickness was 30mm, with bevelled edges and unkeyed. The fabric was bright red, the glaze opaque cream, and the bedding mortar a white lime-mortar.

It is not possible to date T2 and T3 with any certainty, but their edge dimensions (130–134mm) are consistent with a date as early as the fourteenth century. The other two fragments, T5 and T6 were undoubtedly related. T5 was the larger, with edges measuring at least 180mm. The edges were bevelled, the bottom face unkeyed. It had been diagonally cut before firing. The thickness was 34–35mm, the fabric fine-grained and reddish-brown. The glaze was translucent and mottled. The tile had been bedded in white lime-mortar, and a patch of lime-mortar on the glazed surface was also noted. T6 resembled T5 in thickness, fabric, and glaze. T5 and T6 almost certainly came from the same pavement, perhaps comprising all clear-glazed tiles set diagonally. The dimensions are typical of the sixteenth century (for example the pavement at St George's Brede, where the tiles measure 180mm).

To conclude: the tiles appear to form three groups. T1 is an isolated example. Although

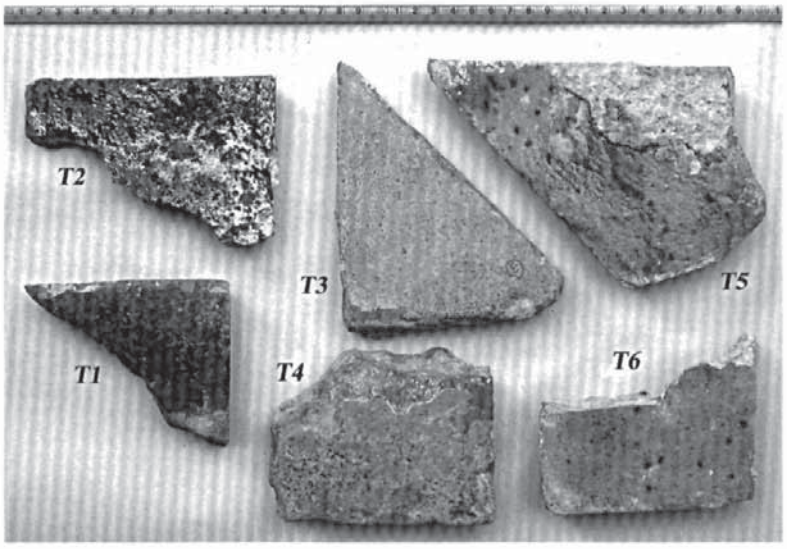

Fig. 8 Floor tiles from grave fill

its thickness resembles fragments T5 and T6 there is no reason to suggest that they derived from the same pavement. We there have three probable groups:

T1. ?14th-century (but could be later)
T2-T4. ?14th-century (but could be later)
T5-T6. Sixteenth century.

Interpretation of the grave fill

The levels and nature of these three phases of fill appeared to reflect the development of the structure of the monument. It is not possible to date Context 5 precisely, but it is undoubtedly part of the primary grave fill and it is reasonable to suppose that the grave was used soon after the completion of the church, i.e. around 1500. If so, tile fragment T1 and other building debris in Context 5 is likely to derive from the demolition of the previous church.

In view of their identical roof tile content Context 4 is best regarded as a reworking of the upper part of the primary grave fill, Context 5. The upper level of the fill was probably disturbed during the reconstruction in brick of the upper part of the retaining wall on the south side of the tomb cavity. The most likely scenario for this reconstruction is when the floor was relaid, presumably in 1865. The snail shells, which occurred in Context 4 but were not observed in Context 5 might possibly have resulted from the over-wintering of a heap of fill removed from the tomb during the works and temporarily lying outside.

Context 3 is harder to explain. The lime mortar debris might have come from the earlier render of the upper part of the four-centred arch over the tomb, retained as fill before the lime-mortar capping of the monument was formed. On balance it seems likely that this mortary fill is contemporary with Context 4: possibly the nineteenth-century builders recognised that the replacement of loam within the monument could create a damp problem and therefore used a drier more porous material for the final fill, after the panels of the tomb-front had been refixed. It will be noted that the bottom of Context 3 is only 50mm (2ins) above floor level, which seems an adequate correlation. The fact that the junction of Contexts 4 and 3 are well above the church floor level supports this theory: the tomb-front panels could not easily have been reset without disturbance to the primary fill (Context 5). The lime mortar and building

Fig. 9 Tomb front detail: panels 3 and 4

debris forming Context 3 probably derived from nineteenth-century building works: if so, the cream-glazed tiles fragments T5 and T6 may have come from a sixteenth-century tile pavement (presumably the first pavement of the reconstructed church of *c.* 1500) which survived until the 1860s.

It must also be emphasised that, even if it could be precisely dated, the ceramic content of the primary fill (Context 5) provides only a *terminus post quem* for the burial, all the artefactual material being redeposited building debris. The tomb could have remained empty for a considerable period after its construction, but this seems implausible. The most probable interpretation is that the grave was prepared during the reconstruction of the church, and that the burial took place within a few years of the completion of the works.

The monument

The decorated tomb-front (Figs, 3–4 & 9)

The general construction of the entire monument has already been discussed. This section is uniquely concerned with the decorated slabs forming the front of the tomb above floor level.

The tomb-front is formed of two vertical slabs of hard chalk (generically known as 'clunch') decorated with square panels. Their front face is flush with the main wall face; in other words, the total width of the two slabs (max. 2091mm) equals the width of the front of the recess plus its chamfer. The bottom of the slabs is level with the floor surface (but the paving slabs appear to stop on the line of the face of the slabs); the top of the slabs is 328mm above floor level at the west end, rising slightly to 345mm at the

east end. The upper edge of the slabs is 114mm deep; as the excavation showed, this was not their maximum thickness owing to their irregular section. On this edge were graffiti and other marks.

The use of chalk clunch is not surprising. This is a local material, Hunton being located in the great Chalk belt, and as already noted chalk was used for the jambs and arch of the south door of the church. Chalk is more widespread and common a building material than is often recognised. As Alec Clifton-Taylor (1972, 62–3) pointed out, it is frequently used in eastern and southern England. Being relatively soft compared with other stones, it is best suited for internal use. At Hunton, the chalk forming the south door appears always to have been sheltered by a porch, so no weathering is apparent and even the original tooling of the stones is still visible. The great virtue of chalk is that being fine-grained it is eminently suitable for detailed work, and the front panels of the so-called Prior Hunton tomb are an excellent example of this.

The tomb-front is decorated with ten panels, one evidenced only by a few marking-out lines. Above it is a moulding, now very defaced; enough survives for the profile to be established. The front slabs therefore form the frieze and part of the cornice of an entablature. The cornice would, however, have been more satisfactorily completed had the monument possessed a moulded top slab, which was perhaps the designer's original intention. It is clear from graffiti evidence that no such slab was ever installed.

Reading from west to east, the individual panels are decorated as follows:

1. incomplete: a few marking-out lines suggest that a geometric decoration was envisaged.
2. quatrefoil within a circle.
3. MR monogram (for Maria Regina).
4. IHS monogram (first three letters of ιησος, also interpreted as acronym for Iesus hominum salvator.
5. foliate decoration.
6. MR monogram.
7. IHS monogram.
8. quatrefoil.
9. foliate decoration.
10. quatrefoil.

The decoration is fairly crude in conception, the lettering in particular being rather uneven in its spacing (notably the MR monograms). This defect was partly concealed by the simple vertebrate and foliate motifs which fill the rest of the fields around the lettering. The most relevant *comparanda* for the various features of the frieze, including the lettering, are found in English church architecture of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. The frieze of the south porch at St Mary's Church, Mendlesham, Suffolk, is a reasonably close parallel. This has a band of quatrefoils and, above it, square panels enclosing the 'M', 'MR' and 'R' monograms. Likewise the east front of Blythburgh church (Suffolk) has a row of quatrefoils enclosing similar monograms in contrasting flint flushwork and Caen stone. Both these examples date from *c.* 1500.

It is necessary, however, to prove that the tomb is of the same date as the decorative frieze. Even though the two slabs forming the frieze satisfactorily match the width of the tomb, they might nevertheless have been architectural *spolia* obtained from elsewhere and perhaps adapted for new use. Fortunately the evidence of graffiti along the top edge of the frieze panels indicates that tomb and frieze are of similar date.

Graffiti

The top edge of the monument is marked by various graffiti. The best example is the Christian name 'William' (Fig. 10). The lettering style, with W formed by two intersecting V's, the crossbar to the I, and the form of the A are all typical of the sixteenth century. Other graffiti on the top edge appear to be of similar date.

The date of the graffiti is important for two reasons. Firstly, it shows that the monument does indeed date from *c.* 1500, the date on stylistic grounds of the decorated front panels. The graffiti were evidently carved soon after the installation of the monument.

Fig. 10 Graffito 'William' on top edge of right-hand tomb-front panel

Secondly, it indicates that the monument can never have possessed a top slab. There would have been room for an effigy within the low arch above the monument, but if this was ever envisaged it was not undertaken.

THE RIVAL CLAIMS OF HUNTON AND WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL FOR THE BODY OF PRIOR HUNTON

Prior Hunton and Winchester Cathedral

The grave in St James' Church is traditionally identified as that of Thomas Hunton, Prior of Winchester from 1470 to 1498 (VCHH iii, 412), and this long-standing tradition is not one to be abandoned lightly, though it would perhaps constitute a unique example of a prior not being buried within his own monastery church. In his survey of the monuments of Winchester Cathedral, Canon John Vaughan (1919, 74) was, however, sceptical: 'Prior Hunton ... almost certainly was buried in his Cathedral'. Hunton is remembered there above all for initiating the work on the reconstruction of the Lady chapel (Lindley 1993, 114). The wooden screen at the entrance to the chapel probably dates from his priorate (Tracy 1993, 233). His rebus has been identified in various places, notably on the inside and outside of the projecting east bay of the chapel, and internally on the spandrels of the doorway which once led to a vestry abutting the chapel's north side, where the surname takes the form of an 'H' piercing a horizontal barrel or 'tun'.

On the chapel's vault the prior's name is represented by the syllable 'Hun' plus a barrel; this is

fortunate, as it confirms that Thomas's professed name was indeed 'Hunton' rather than 'Hinton' or 'Henton', a variant form encountered as early as 1530 as shown in a document cited below. To add to the confusion, in the 1520s another St Swithun's monk took his professed name from the priory's manor of Hinton Ampner, namely John Hyntone alias Henton or Hentone (Greatrex 1997, 705). The later references to the Prior as 'Thomas Henton' perhaps resulted from the misreading of another rebus in the Lady chapel, taken to be a 'Hen on a Tun'. Thus, the anonymous author of a mid eighteenth-century history of Winchester, now identified as Thomas Warton (Crook 2003a, 233), suggested in 1760: 'The Roof [i.e. the vault of the Lady chapel] is painted with a Hen on a Tun, being a Rebus on Henton, the place of his Nativity, and partly on his Name' (Anonymous 1760, 95). Martin Biddle has, however, pointed out that the 'hen' is in fact a cockatrice and suggesting that the pun refers rather to Winchester, 'wine-tun', wine being characterised in the Book of Proverbs as 'stinging like a cockatrice' (Biddle 1993, 258).

Documentary evidence for Prior Hunton's tomb in Winchester Cathedral

Thomas Hunton is listed as a simple monk in the election proceedings for William Waynflete, 1447; the first time his name crops up in surviving documents from St Swithun's Priory (Greatrex 1978, 100 (item 316); *eadem* 1997, 703–4). Holding the post of prior from 1470, he died in 1498, but no contemporary records survive of where his body was laid to rest. Within a few decades of Hunton's death, however, one of the St Swithun's monks unequivocally stated that Prior Thomas had been buried within his priory church, i.e. the cathedral. The information is provided in an updated list of bishops of Winchester in the so-called *Liber Historialis Wintoniensis*, in a manuscript of that text which must have been compiled soon after 1528 (the list ends with the death of Bishop Fox in that year) (Crook 2003b, 173–6). In his account of an earlier bishop, Peter Courtenay (1487–92), the continuator stated: *Deinde successit Dominus Petrus Curtney, qui sedit annos .5. sepultusque est in crypta ante altare beate Marie Virginis, ad caput viz. Thome Henton prioris* ('Then succeeded Lord Peter Courtenay, who occupied the see for five years and was buried in the crypt in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that is to say, at the head of Thomas Hunton, prior.') (BL MS Vespasian D.ix, fo. 24). The Vespasian continuator's concern was with the bishop, and the fact that he mentions Hunton's tomb merely as a supplementary reference point explains the illogical order of the two names, the sequence of burials being of course first Courtenay (1492) then Hunton (1498).

Somewhat over a century later, Lieutenant Hammond visited Winchester and observed two large slabs in the Lady chapel (Legg 1936, 48): 'In the Lady Chapell is Pryor Silkstead, and Pryor Hunton, under 2. faire Marble Grauestones, of 3. yard long. These 2. founded this Chappell, as appeareth by the Badges they gave it, the gilded Tun and Steed all over the Roofe, pretty Conceits that Priors and Officers then vsed.'

It is of course tempting to identify Hammond's two 'faire marble gravestones' with the large, plain Purbeck slabs on the central axis of the chapel. He was, unfortunately, the last antiquarian to mention any burials in the chapel. Henry Hyde, Earl of Clarendon did not mention the ledger stones in the survey later published by Gale (Clarendon & Gale 1715), being presumably more concerned with larger upstanding funerary monuments, nor did the eighteenth-century antiquarians, Warton and Milner. The chapel has however been repaved at least twice since Hammond's day, and as we shall see, the present ledger stones cannot be directly over actual graves. Furthermore other ledgers are in existence which have from time to time been associated with Priors Silkstede and Hunton. So before discussing the evidence provided by the pavement, we should first consider the archaeological evidence for burials within the Lady chapel.

Dean Kitchin's excavations in the Lady chapel and its crypt

Our main source for the below-ground archaeology of the chapel is the investigation conducted

by Dean Kitchin in 1886, which is particularly relevant to the present study as he initially claimed to have discovered the tomb of Prior Hunton. The dean had decided to remove from the crypts of Winchester Cathedral a layer of up to 1m of earth and chalk fill whereby, from as early as *c.* 1100, the crypt floor had gradually been raised in order to cope with Winchester's rising water table. Kitchin's team began work in January, starting with the thirteenth-century crypt beneath the Lady chapel. 'Here, after clearing out the soil to the original level, we found ourselves face to face with a broad wall of ancient brickwork and masonry, which completely filled up the central and western bays, leaving only the eastern bay free' (Kitchin 1886). The expression 'face to face' and 'completely filled up' at first gives the impression that two-thirds of the crypt was entirely filled with solid masonry. Fortunately a plan of the crypts made by the cathedral's architectural surveyor, John Colson Sr. in 1869 (Fig. 11), shows that what Kitchin was attempting to describe was an elongated block of masonry along the axis of the Lady chapel crypt, completely enclosing the westernmost free-standing pillar, but with sufficient space to north and south to allow access to the east bay.

The dean was naturally worried about whether it would be wise to remove a possible support to the crypt's thirteenth-century rib vault, and 'We accordingly thought it well to open a hole in the Lady Chapel above, so as to look down on the roof [i.e. the top of the vault] and see whether it was firm. In doing so, on the 21st of January last [1886] we most unexpectedly happened on a vault [i.e. burial cavity], of which there was no indication whatever on the floor above it.' Within the 'vault' was a wooden coffin.

The discovery was reported in *The Hampshire Chronicle*, 23 January 1886. The floor of the chapel had been opened 'about in the centre, where the work of Hunton and Silkstede (Priors) met.' Beneath a 'massive moulded Purbeck marble slab', which, cracked in two, had been turned upside down to form the pavement, were large and oblong slabs of stone', beneath one of which

> a finely jointed stone vault, about 18 inches deep and seven feet long, was found, with ledges for the top stones to rest in, and within the cist or vault were the decayed but dry remains of a wooden coffin, with a perfect skeleton of its occupant, an aged man, judging by the teeth and the missing ones. Curiously enough the body was evidently once covered with grass, for a substance like perished dry grass remained all over the skull and bones, and the remains of a linen or woollen winding sheet were evident at the top of the skull, which rested on a block of wood. The coffin was originally wound round or secured with ropes formed of a triple twisted rope of some material which, perished with dry rot, remains perfect to the eye, but crumbled to the touch. There were evidences of something like pitch on the decayed wood of the coffin, but a careful examination failed to reveal chalice, paten, ring, or pastoral staff, or any indication of the ecclesiastical rank of its occupant. The corpse rested on a thick plank on which it was placed in the coffin. It would not be presumptuous or unreasonable to assert that it might be the remains of Prior Hunton himself, thus laid in the centre of his own work, and under his rebus in the roof T, the syllable *Hun* and a *tun*.

By April 1886 Kitchin had changed his mind about the identity of the burial in the centre of the Lady chapel. Writing up his findings for *The Hampshire Chronicle* (Kitchin 1886), after describing the wooden coffin, bound with 'ropes of grass', he now asserted that 'The person thus strangely buried was apparently an elderly layman of note; there was nothing to indicate his rank, or age, or name.' Presumably the dean could no longer accept that a person of Prior Hunton's status would be buried without appropriate ecclesiastical grave-goods. This was a difficulty that he had initially overcome by comparison with the grave beneath a huge Purbeck slab with indents for a lost brass on the central axis of the retrochoir, in front of the feretory screen and the 'Holy Hole'. Following Milner (1699, 69–70 and 'iconographical plan', Table III), Kitchin assumed it was that of Prior Silkstede. This grave had first been opened by Henry Howard on 5 July 1797 (Milner 1798–9, ii. 66–70) who discovered neither chalice nor ring; Kitchin had reopened it in February 1886,

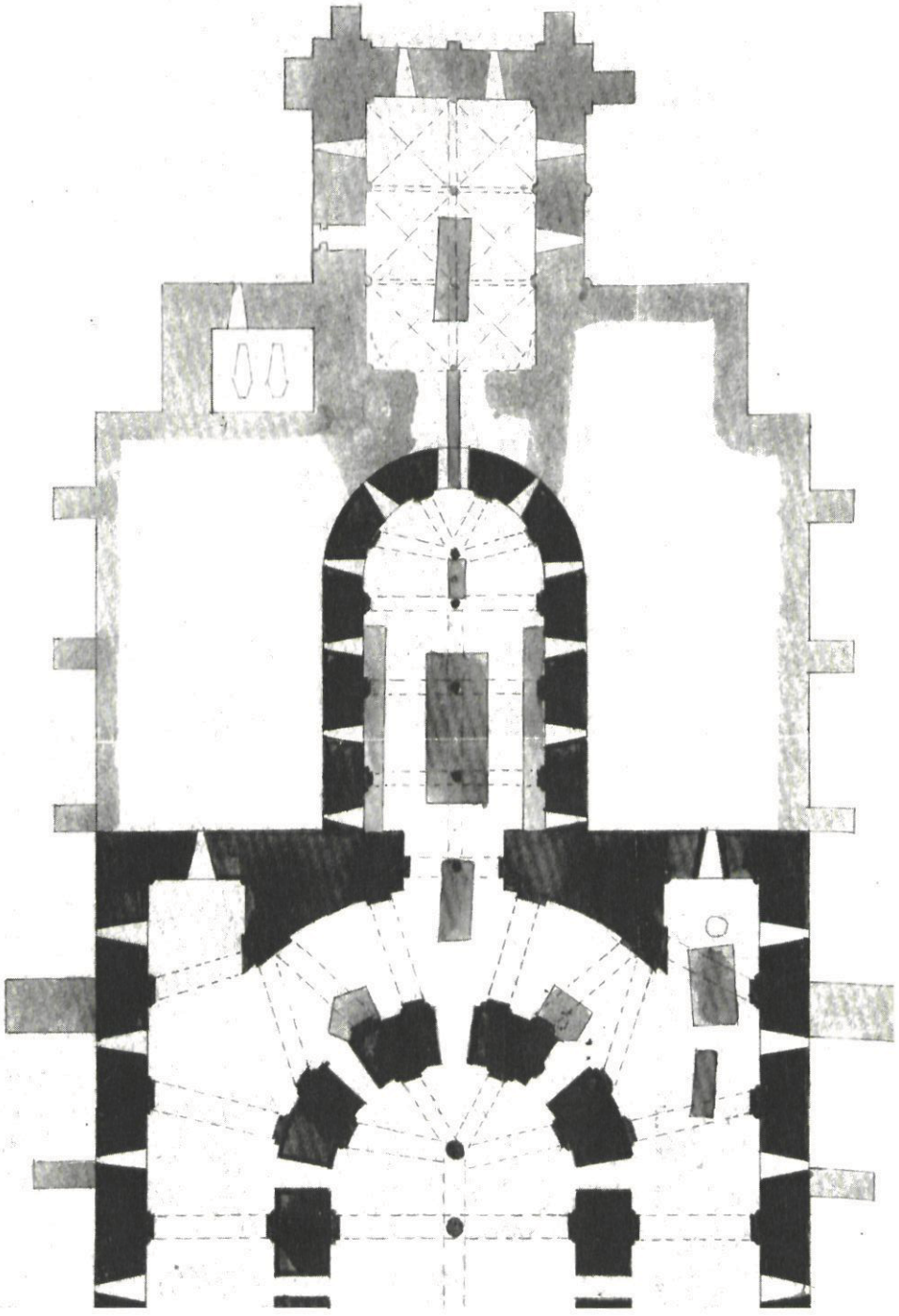

Fig. 11 Detail from plan of Winchester Cathedral crypts by John Colson Sr., 1869, showing inserted masonry blocks. *Society of Antiquaries of London*

discovering a bottle containing an account of the earlier excavation (*Hants Chronicle*, 13 February 1886). The grave is now thought to be that of William Westkarre, bishop of Sidon as the suffragan of Bishop Waynflete. Westkarre was one of the participants at the translation of St Swithun in 1476, before whose final shrine he had elected to be laid to rest.

It is of course extremely unlikely that a layman would ever have been accorded burial in the Lady chapel, which from a structural point of view forms a 'chancel' to the 'nave' which is the retrochoir, and Kitchin subsequently changed his mind yet again about the identity of the grave in the centre of the chapel. Influenced perhaps by the local antiquary Francis Joseph Baigent, the dean identified a more likely occupant, namely Bishop John White, the former Warden of Winchester College (1542–54) who was elevated to the bishopric of Lincoln soon after the accession of Queen Mary, then translated to Winchester in 1556 in succession to Stephen Gardiner. A copy of White's original memorial brass in Winchester College bears witness to his earlier hope of being buried in the antechapel there, but in a new will drawn up after his translation to the bishopric of Winchester he had requested to be buried in his cathedral church. He was, however, deprived of his bishopric on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, after refusing to take the oath of supremacy, and died at South Warnborough on 12 January 1559/60. According to the contemporary diarist Henry Machyn his body was brought to the cathedral for burial on 15 January, though he does not specify the exact place (Nichols 1847, 224).

Various features of the interment discovered by Kitchin seemed consistent with the attribution to Bishop White: the coffin had, he thought, been filled with hay and bound with cords 'in order to break the jolts and jars of the journey' from South Warnborough; the napkin found wrapped around the head of the corpse was fancifully interpreted as the chrysom-cloth used at the bishop's consecration, which his sister would have 'reverently placed ... around his head before the coffin was filled up with hay, and started on its rough journey to the Cathedral city that cold January morning in the year 1559–60' (Vaughan 1919, 78).

By the time Canon John Vaughan wrote his *Winchester Cathedral* in 1919 all doubts had been dispelled about the identity of the body in the wooden coffin. 'To several distinguished antiquarians, including the late Dean Kitchin and Mr. F. J. Baigent, the conclusion seemed irresistible that the remains were those of John White, Bishop of Winchester' (Vaughan 1919, 77). By a chapter act of January 1919 (*CA* 1915–29, 103) Archdeacon Fearon was granted permission to place an inscription on the centremost of the eight stones covering the burial (the cracked Purbeck ledger mentioned by Kitchin appears to have been discarded): 'The Body beneath this stone is believed to be that of John White, Bishop of Winchester 1556–1560, who was suspended by Queen Elizabeth in 1559, and died on 11th [sic] of January, 1560, when his body was brought to Winchester and privately buried in the Cathedral.'

Although the presence of the burial chamber prevented further investigation of the crypt vault, Kitchin felt bold enough to 'return into the crypt; where, cautiously removing a small part of the wall at a time, we felt our way onwards' (Kitchin 1886). And there, embedded in the middle of the masonry, on 28 January the excavators 'came upon a leaden coffin, embedded in the middle of the wall', whose occupant was identified by the arms, on the lid of the coffin, of Bishop Peter Courtenay (d. 1492). A watercolour drawing in a volume entitled 'Churchyard and Crypt' in Winchester Cathedral archives (Fig. 12) illustrates the discovery. Possibly by Francis Baigent, it is clearly a very idealised depiction, with neat facing masonry apparently on the centreline of the crypt, so that the tomb is displaced southwards. It bears little relation to John Colson's plan, which is inherently more likely to be accurate. Possibly the drawing was done from memory or from Kitchin's account of the excavation.

The locations of the two burials discovered by Dean Kitchin are shown in Figure 13. It is apparent from the longitudinal section that there is very little room for burials beneath the Lady chapel floor because the vault below rises

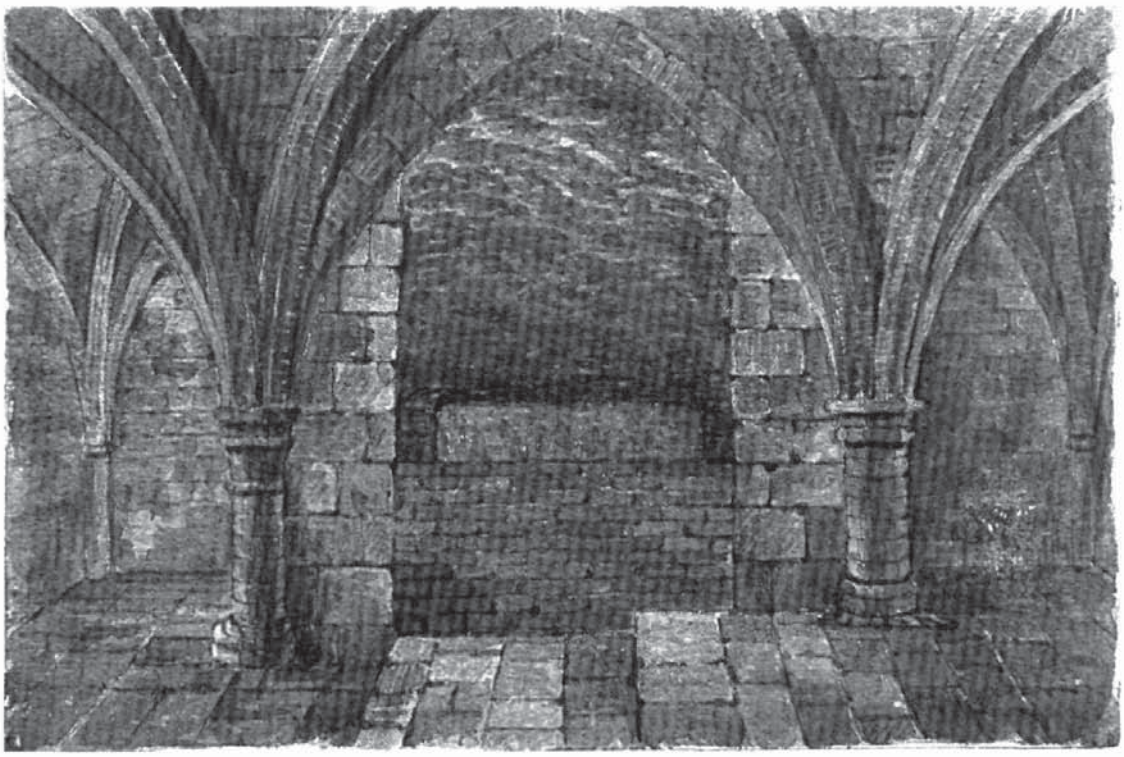

Fig. 12 Watercolour drawing, possibly by Francis Joseph Baigent, *c.* 1886, entitled 'Sketch shewing position of Bishop Courtney's Tomb – when discovered – in the centre of Crypt under Lady Chapel.' Winchester Cathedral Archives

nearly to the underside of the paving. The only spaces available for burials are in the pockets above the piers, i.e. at points 'a', 'b', and 'c'.

The grave which Kitchin eventually considered that of Bishop White is designated 'b'. There is room between the pavement and the top of the crypt vault for a burial cavity with maximum dimensions of 2050 × 460mm, which corresponds to Kitchin's dimensions of 7ft x 18ins. It is marked by a rectangular array of seven small stones, rather than the cracked Purbeck marble slab mentioned by Kitchin, which was presumably discarded. This arrangement either dates from 1886 or perhaps from 1919 when the inscribed panel was added. As the section shows, the stones forming the grave marker are not precisely over the cavity but are displaced westwards. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about the location of Kitchin's discoveries, which he described as 'about in the centre [of the Lady chapel], where the work of Hunton and Silkstede (Priors) met'.

The discovery of the tomb of Bishop Courtenay is clearly of fundamental importance in the discussion of the burial place of Prior Hunton. The Vespasian continuator's statement that Courtenay was buried in the crypt of the Lady chapel is thereby shown to have been completely accurate, and gives confidence in his statement that the bishop lay at the head (i.e. to the west) of Prior Hunton. But Hunton could not have been interred in the crypt – the masonry block did not extend eastwards far enough to accommodate a second burial – and the only place that preserves the correct relative position is vault pocket 'c'.

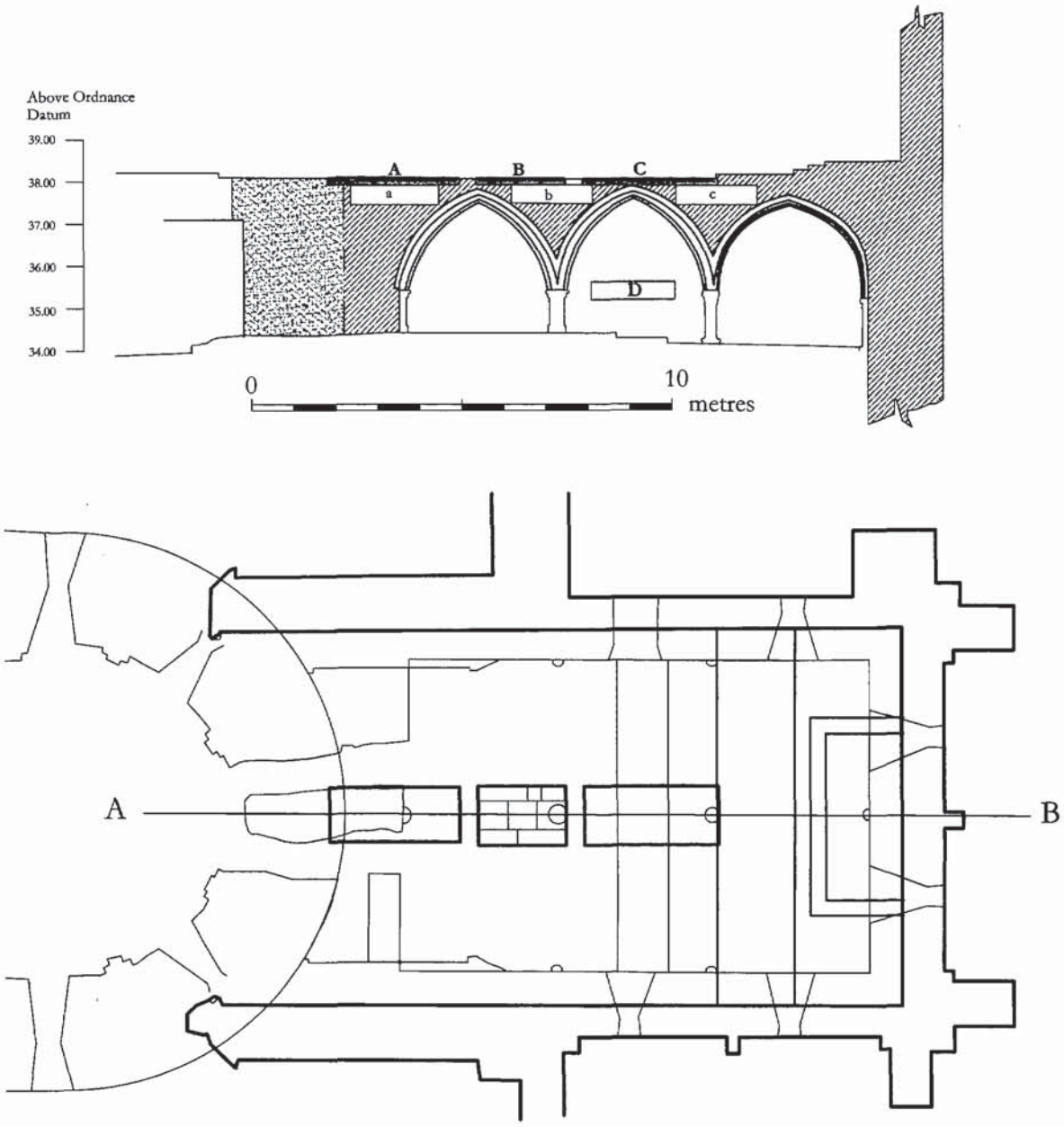

Fig. 13 Longitudinal section (on line A–B) and plan of the Lady chapel, Winchester Cathedral, showing position of ledger slabs and location of burials

It is of course improbable that Hunton's grave was unmarked; and indeed the Vespasian continuator may have mentioned the prior's grave as a reference point for that of Bishop Courtenay precisely because Hunton's grave was an obvious feature of the chapel, with the implication that Courtenay's was not. Likewise a century later, Lieutenant Hammond either identified for himself the graves of Hunton and Silkstede or was shown them by the virger who also famously pointed out to him the 'Chair of Mary Tudor' in the Lady chapel (Legg 1936, 48). Again, Courtenay's grave was not mentioned.

The Lady chapel pavement

It is perhaps unlikely that the two priors' graves would have been marked by plain marble ledger stones like the two in the chapel today. Furthermore, the position of at least one of these ledgers was affected by the repaving of the chapel undertaken at the expense of Canon Charles Layfield in 1705 (Milner 1839, ii.121). The east edge of the easternmost slab is precisely aligned to the chapel's sanctuary step, but this step was probably Layfield's innovation, intended to provide a larger sanctuary area; if the medieval step had been further east, perhaps on the line of the second step, there would have been room for a full-sized ledger stone at the main chapel floor level and centred over vault pocket 'c'.

To add to the interpretative difficulties, the arrangement of steps has evidently been modified since Layfield's repaving. Both Milner's 'Iconographical Plan' of 1799 and Garbett's plan of *c.* 1818 (Britton 1817, Pl. I) show three steps extending right across the chapel, the first being, as today, aligned to the middle of the east bay. Such was still the arrangement *c.* 1885 as shown in a photograph of the chapel in the Winchester City Museums Collection (PWCM 9248). The second and third steps were reconfigured to the present arrangement in 1900 when the entire chapel, including the sanctuary, was repaved in polished Ashburton and Dove marble (*Winchester Diocesan Chronicle* vii, May 1901, 71).

Hammond saw, or was shown, just two ledger slabs, describing them as 'faire' (his habitual epithet for anything he admired) and measuring three yards long (2750mm). This agrees tolerably well with the two exceptionally large, dark Purbeck marble slabs on the central axis of the present floor, which measure 3100mm and 3190mm respectively. But these slabs, though polished, and from their material undoubtedly medieval, are completely plain; there are no indents or fixings for brasses, and no sign of any inscriptions. One possibility is that that they originally bore brasses and were turned over and refaced during the repaving of the chapel in 1705.

Other ledger slabs associated with Priors Silkstede and Hunton

Two other large slabs should also enter the debate at this stage. One may be discounted, namely the huge Purbeck slab, measuring 3730 × 1525mm (equivalent to the exact imperial measurements 12 × 5 feet) in front of the Holy Hole, now thought to cover the grave of Bishop Westkarre, as noted above. The second is another large Purbeck slab, measuring 3300 × 1270mm (10ft 10ins × 4ft 2 ins). It is now located near the wall of the south presbytery aisle, arbitrarily placed with regard to the bays of that aisle. The indents of its brass, commensurate with the size of the slab, shows that it commemorates a prior or bishop, wearing a mitre and holding a crozier, with small heraldic shields either side of his head, and standing beneath an elaborate canopy, also bearing shields. A band round the outside suggests an inscription, and roundels at the corners presumably held evangelist symbols. The slab was raised by Henry Howard in 1797 (Milner 1799, 55), when it was discovered that 'the stone ... had no grave at all under it'. The conclusion reached at the time was that 'it had probably been removed to the place in which it lies from some other part of the church' (Milner 1799, note 1).

The style of the vanished brass, recoverable from its well preserved matrix, suggests work of no later than around 1490, a date for which there are two candidates, Bishop Courtenay (d.

1492) and Prior Hunton (d. 1498), the latter attribution being preferred by the authors of the latest study of the county's monumental brasses (Lack *et al.* 2007, 332). Unfortunately, because the inscription has been torn away, there is no way of distinguishing between the two men: although the nobleman Courtenay could have displayed his family arms (as on his coffin lid) and those of the see of Winchester, Hunton could equally have displayed the arms of his priorate and those of the cathedral priory.

By 1635 there were just two large Purbeck ledger stones in the Lady chapel; but could there previously have been three? If so, could the ledger in the presbytery aisle, tentatively attributed to Bishop Courtenay, have been moved in 1550 in order to make room for the burial of Bishop White postulated by Dean Kitchin. But here we are in danger of piling one largely unsubstantiated speculation upon another, and – as already noted – the Vespasian continuator's evidence could suggest that Courtenay's tomb within the crypt was not marked at pavement level.

The burials in the Lady chapel, conclusions

To return to verifiable facts. Assuming that burials do exist in vault pockets 'a' and 'c', we have a total of four burials beneath the Lady chapel: three in the vault pockets and one at greater depth. The last is the only one to be securely identified by the heraldry on its coffin lid, as Bishop Courtenay. To complete our account of the bishop: Kitchin's initial intention was to create a table tomb for Courtenay in the same position within the crypt: 'It is intended, we believe, to rebury the remains in an altar tomb on the floor of the Lady Chapel itself, the tomb to be designed by Mr. Kitchin, the Dean's son, who has adopted the Vitruvian profession, and is a lover of archaeology' ('Churchyard and Crypt', 55). Finally, however, Courtenay was reinterred in a tomb chest on the south side of the presbytery, built by a 'Mr Whitley' and the cathedral's masons in order to prove their competence at tackling the restoration of the Great Screen (Crook *forthcoming*; CA 1876–96, 254 dated 1 Mar 1887).

The identification of the coffin within the blocking wall in the Lady chapel crypt as that of Peter Courtenay is crucial to our argument, given the reference to Courtenay's grave in the Vespasian manuscript of the *Liber Historialis*, which was unknown to Dean Kitchin. Courtenay was indeed buried 'in the crypt in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary', as the early sixteenth-century chronicler observed. The second part of the Vespasian continuator's statement that Courtenay lay 'in the crypt in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *viz. at the head of Thomas Hunton, prior*' (my italics) allows us to identify the easternmost putative burial ('c' on the section) as that of Hunton. The chronicler's clarification might be intended to make clear a relative arrangement of tombs which would not be apparent within the chapel, Courtenay's coffin being deep within the crypt. This position was presumably necessitated by the building works then either in progress or about to take place at main level. The crypt was probably little affected by the building works, but burials within its vault pockets may not have been considered feasible or suitable within what at the time of Courtenay's death was probably an active building site.

Burial 'b', discovered by Kitchin in January 1886, cannot be that of Prior Hunton, for 'b' is at Courtenay's head rather than the other way around. Kitchin's theory that the body within cavity 'b' was that of Bishop White is attractive, but rests on tenuous circumstantial evidence. As to the identify of 'a', the best indications that we have are the testimony of Lieutenant Hammond. He was told that the large ledgers were the graves of Priors Hunton and Silkstede, though he does not specify which was which. Even if their grave markers were simple plain slabs, the obits of Priors Hunton and Silkstede would have been scrupulously observed until the dissolution of St Swithun's priory in 1539, and even after a century the traditional burial spots might have remained in local memory in the 1630s, probably to be lost during the hiatus of the Commonwealth.

It would be expected that Hunton, dying first, would take the prime position in front of the altar; by 1498 the lower parts of the walls of the rebuilt east bay of the chapel were sufficiently complete for burial to take place. Silkstede, dying in 1524 might have felt appropriate to be buried at the centre of the bay associated with his works, between the choir stalls that he commissioned.

Needless to say, the question of whether a burial exists at 'c' is one that could only be solved by archaeology; and even then it might not be possible to identify the body with certainty as that of Prior Hunton. Nevertheless, the reference in the Vespasian continuation of the *Liber Historialis*, written within a few decades of the deaths both of Bishop Courtenay and Prior Hunton, and the archaeological evidence for the possibility of a burial in the place indicated by the chronicler, might be thought to outweigh an oral tradition of doubtful antiquity that Hunton was buried elsewhere

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The tomb at Hunton – other possible candidates

To return to the tomb in Hunton church. Other names have been suggested for the occupant. Canon King pointed out that for the last quarter of the fifteenth century the Lord of Hunton Manor was Edward Earl of Warwick, a potential claimant to the English throne, executed for treason at Tower Hill on 28 November 1499; he suggested that perhaps his body was brought back from London to his estate at Hunton and buried in the tomb. This theory was said to be supported by articles in *The Daily Telegraph*, January 1921, by Walter E. Bell, who had examined the records of St Peter ad Vincula in the Tower, and found no evidence of Edward Neville's burial. However, a more recent study of Edward Earl of Warwick (Carpenter 2008) states that he was buried at Bisham Abbey.

Furthermore, the nature of the skeleton does not support this theory. The individual had certainly not died as a result of decapitation, the cervical vertebrae being intact and undamaged. There were no indications of dislocated vertebrae due to hanging, and the spinous process on the seventh cervical vertebra was undamaged.

Conclusions

The investigation of the so-called Hunton tomb has left several unanswered questions and uncertainties. Above all, there is the question of the identity of the occupant. To continue to sustain the tradition, itself of doubtful age and origin, that the tomb is that of Prior Hunton requires disqualifying the explicit statement of a Winchester Cathedral chronicler, writing within 30 years of the prior's death, that Hunton was buried in his own church. Furthermore, it would be extraordinary for a prior, or indeed any monk, *not* to be buried within his own monastery, according his monastic vow of *stabilitas*.

The structure of the monument indicates that it was constructed at the same time as the church of which it forms an integral part. The monument may be dated on stylistic grounds (supported to a certain extent by the evidence of graffiti) to *c.* 1500. Its position, in the wall on the north side of the nave, close to the chancel, is typical of that normally accorded to the founder of a church. In the present case it would be more accurate to postulate that the person was the man or woman who paid for the reconstruction of the chapel. It is of course tempting to proffer the names of Prior Hunton and Edward Earl of Warwick, being the only historical personages known to be associated with the village of Hunton at the period in question, but both are thought to have been buried elsewhere.

The possibility cannot be excluded that the tomb was not finally occupied by the person for whom it was initially intended. Little is known of Hunton's background, but he was probably a local lad of modest means who rose to eminence within St Swithun's Priory – not the sort of person likely to have been able to endow a church. And even as a simple monk he would have been buried in his priory church – nor is

it likely that as a prior he would have rebuilt the chapel of his childhood.

The date of burial is also subject to question. Nothing in the archaeological evidence conclusively proves that burial occurred in 1500: it could indeed have remained empty for several hundred years. It must however be regarded as inherently unlikely that the tomb was not occupied soon after its construction.

Yet, whatever the intentions of the designer, the monument was never completed with the expected top slab, which might at this date have featured a cadaver effigy or a funerary brass. The graffiti evidence indicates that the monument was finished in a manner similar to its present form: i.e. it was capped over in plaster or mortar, flush with the top edges of the front slabs. Related to this rough and ready way in which the monument was finished is the fact that the carving of the tomb-front remained incomplete. As noted above, the left-hand panel has marking-out lines indicating an intention to add a geometric design which was never carved.

The interpretation which best fits the evidence is that the tomb was initially prepared for a person of some distinction, perhaps a demesne lessee, who might have funded the reconstruction of the church. The fact that the burial is in the nave rather than the chancel certainly indicates a lay person. The monument was created in advance of burial, but conceivably the individual concerned was finally buried elsewhere and the tomb became available for someone whose social station or financial situation did not allow the monument to be completed by means of an effigy, or brass. If an inscription was ever incised on the capping, this would have been lost when it was renewed. The fact that the tomb cannot be that of the eponymous prior does not lessen its interest, and the excellent recent conservation means that its design can once more be appreciated.

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